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# MANIFESTOS





# MANIFESTOS FOR THE BUSINESS SCHOOL OF TOMORROW

CAMPBELL JONES & DAMIAN O'DOHERTY (EDS.)

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## INDUCEMENT

*Damian O'Doherty and Campbell Jones*

### **‘Teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea...’**

The university is a disgrace. Apart from one or two angels, that is. The business school has become a cancerous machine spewing out sick and irrelevant detritus, justified as ‘practical’ and glossed up as ‘business relevant’. In such conditions of scandal and disgrace, who has time for scholarship? Moreover, who has time for the future? And what is the future, what can the future be, if we are so enthralled to the immediacy of the present with all its latest distractions, mission statements, initiatives and administrative paperwork? This forgetting of our responsibility to the future, even when the technocrats claim to speak on behalf of ‘the future’ (in the narrowest sense), is part of the scandal.

The business school is in a state of emergency. We must therefore speak urgently and shed the protocols of polite academic discourse. Nothing short of democracy is at stake in the future of the business school and in order to save democracy we must, at times, suspend the laws of democratic discourse. The polite neutral tone of academic reservation with the quaint embarrassment of its written form – guarded with qualifications, footnotes and references – is not getting the message out. Whether we like it or not, we speak and write today either in or out of crisis.

What is it that the business school does today? Essentially, the business school extorts fees from the middle and upper classes so that it can stamp their offspring with a passport into corporate sleaze, mortgage slavery, burn-out, stress, overwork and repression; a future made bearable by the drugs industry, cosmetic surgery and electrified ‘entertainment’. These are dark times, and most of us don’t want to spill the beans. Many of our best scholars are being beaten and bloodied, worked on with hosepipes and forced into retirement with gagging agreements. Others have formed defensive and self reproducing cabals of ‘expertise’ seemingly galvanized by a commitment to develop ever more arcane and specialist discourse designed to exclude and

bamboozle. Keep your heads down. Grab a little bit of power when you can. Extend your connections so that you can protect the last little perk left in the job, namely the international academic conference circuit. If this sounds like Chile or Guantanamo Bay, then think again. No, this is the world of the business school – for those who are willing to admit it.

In case this sounds extreme, remember that these are *your* children we are talking about. This is the very future of education, or that which is still laughably called ‘higher education’. It is about society and community and the possibility of an appeal to something we might agree to call democracy. It is about values, thinking, creativity, and imagination – in short, nothing less than the very future of the human. Life itself. For let’s be clear: we are failing our children today. Education should be about finding ways of unlocking the full range of abilities and potentials that are being buried ever deeper in the minds of youth. Education should be able to help us think about what kind of abilities and potentials *should* be developed and to find ways of developing the mind so that we can all think clearly and differently. Our children do all think differently. But today, we are forcing them to think in standard and uniform, one-dimensional ways, measured according to a disciplinary criteria that recognises and rewards only parrot fashion learning and conformity. We are failing them.

Education, of course, might be about something that is entirely ‘useless’ – at least for all ‘practical purposes’. It is not, in other words, something which is exercised for a guaranteed ‘end result’ or a ‘means to an end’. You can train a dog to do tricks. You can train a robot to apply rules and formulas, to fit *into* a system, to work *in* an organization, but the ability to think and imagine, to *invent* laws or procedures, to be *responsible*? That is quite another matter. For that requires helping students find ways of getting *out* of the system, perhaps for only a short period of time, in order that they might see and assess it from a different vantage point.

### **Leading Forth**

Education means, from the Latin *edu-care*, to ‘pull out’ or ‘lead forth’: a development, or a becoming of a particular character. Bringing up, coming forward, forming habits, manners and aptitudes. It also means ‘taking one-self out’ or to ‘get out of it’, and the stewardship of education means to take care of the young who are being taken out of it for the first time in those delicate adolescent and heady post-adolescent days. The desire to ‘get out of it’ is basic to the human. This ‘taking-out’, this ‘getting out’, this turning inside-out is literally a fantastic journey.

But the business school of today forces students to pursue their desire for excitement and experiment at weekends, where there are plenty of corporate products and services, drugs and entertainment to cater and placate this desire to 'get out of it'. Sometimes they still might find it with a good book, but they are most likely to discover it by chance. It is certainly not one that they will have found on the reading lists of 'Introduction to Marketing 101', 'The Principles of Accounting', or 'Advanced Corporate Strategy'. School? School sucks.

People want to get out of it, they always will. They want to run and burn, they want to fly and dance. They want to run as fast as they can until they start to collapse and then take flight again, reforming in fantastic colours of sound and light, bursting in a thousand stars on the horizon of all that is possible, at the edge of the world, lighting up the cavernous void that is our fate as humans. Without an understanding of this, and without an appreciation of the kind of individual care and tutoring each student requires in this journey, we fail in our duty. Moreover, without this care and attention we help foster and encourage the sinister forces at work in our societies today. The commercial world of private sector drugs and the products and services of the entertainment industry are expanding and colonizing the desires of students. And who can blame them. We have turned education into the biggest turn-off imaginable.

Education is not about training or development; it is not about league tables and excellence. It's not about measurement and attainment. You cannot offer education if you are thinking in terms of 'teaching aims' and 'module objectives', 'learning outcomes' and 'model answers'. This is idiocy and philistinism of the highest order. The bureaucratisation of education will lead to exactly the same kind of products, services, and workplace employment relations we have witnessed and suffered throughout the twentieth century with its deskilling and assembly lines of smokestack factories, insane bureaucracies and impoverished work organizations. History, of course, repeats itself, the second time as farce. We are seeing the emergence of administrators and academic staff in the university who can only be described as **specialists without spirit** and sensualists without heart; but this time around the logic of order, administration and control is unleashing a whole new series of ironies and paradoxes. **So, you can always tell when the system of education is failing to provide pastoral care and responsibility**, when, for example, bureaucracy tries to design and introduce some abstract 'best practice' model of 'personal tutoring'. Such an impersonal and bureaucratic solution, with its retinue of standardised tutor evaluation forms and tutee feedback questionnaires, devised to assess the 'quality



of personal interaction between you and your tutor', sounds the death-knell of genuine care and education.

Business schools offer up an uninspired carcass of crap and then blame students for not being interested, for being cynical and 'instrumental'. The truth is that business schools are colluding to create a system in which these are precisely the kinds of skills and values that students need if they want to survive and succeed. Lecturers don't even know the names of their students. They are stacked up, hundreds to a classroom, and subjected to powerpoint slides with bullet points and end of year tests to see how much they have remembered. It can be little surprise that increasing numbers of the brightest and the best are making the decision not to come to university today. They certainly do not want to study 'business administration'. Meanwhile our journals accumulate more and more 'research output', as libraries expand their bowels to archive it in an infinitely expanding library of Babel.

You can hear it. Listen: the low hum of server fans, the whine and whinny of circulating data and information, email proliferating, online automatic essay generators producing academic papers encoded to disable and evade plagiarism detection software as 'knowledge' branches out in multiple and endless forks, some of it accumulating, swelling and growing fat, then collapsing, most of it scattering, branching out in lines that reconnect and recombine. Where to? No one knows. And who cares? Now self-replicating, feeding on itself, with new journals being launched, and papers written to order, salami-sliced, done on a deal, a nod and a wink. Subjects and knowledge are being minced into ever finer granulated sub-fields and specialisms in ways that push us ever further towards what is presumably the logical end point of this insane dialectic where the inverted and self-enfolded academic becomes both sole-reader and writer, test subject and practitioner, all rolled into one self-arguing, infinitely frustrated privatized schizo. Nervous twitches, blabbering away to themselves. It is possible that academics are simply the ligament of the system; that little bit of supplementary chance thrown in to keep the Gods amused, the hands and arms of its plugged-in body simply an extension of the keyboard through which data is kept on the move.

### **Raising the Tone**

Do we have to scream and rant? Raise our voices to the point at which we sacrifice any possibility of finding an audience? Utterly co-opted, the business school is perhaps best left abandoned. A double-crossed mongrel lying half dead in the gutter, heaving, tongue lapped out in swollen pink loll, insects crawling in and out of its eyes sucking on

the last vestiges of moisture, maggots spawning flees all dancing an insane whirligig as a collective wake to its passing. A refuge for failed business practitioners, inbred doctoral students and daddy whipped undergraduates accumulating debt to the bank and a future of guilt and feverish busy-ness atonement.

We can hardly temper our anger to write this introduction. And we can hear those who whine: ‘well, why don’t you get out then?’ Or, that old chestnut: ‘well, its not very scholarly, old chap...a bit of rant, if amusing in places’. We might expect this from an institution overrun by an army of dull-witted creatures dressed in cheap nylon off-the-peg pinstripe suits. We might still call them people but they are more like keyboard drones, administrators of a virtual self-writing online library accumulating pointless journals and edited collections, CD-ROM conference proceedings. Zeros and ones to infinity.

Students are being enrolled into this infinite factory of information circulation as they download their notes from the lecturer’s web site that their lecturer has him- or her-self assembled earlier, cut and paste from textbooks and online lecture resources. Students then return essays re-assembled cut and paste, which is then marked by an automated software marking system. In this absurd circulation and exchange there is no human involvement at all. Here, it is only data that circulates; sometimes it might be called ‘information’, but rarely knowledge, never useful knowledge, and in no way at all could it be considered wisdom. It is the World Wide Web where it all begins and ends. We are simply becoming its ciphers.

This is truly a pedagogy of the oppressed, by the oppressed. A cynical, nay saying form of training, discipline, and punishment, ideally suited to turning away the curious and intelligent or rendering them useless and docile, ready to fit right in as one dimensional administrators of the administered business administration organization. The Business School with its global branding is not about education. It is about control, conformity, the ubiquitous if silent violence of normalization, a grey monotone of simplicity, dumbing down, a halfway house somewhere between a soup kitchen for local business practitioners – trying to justify a jolly and a day out from the office – and an imperial clearing house for the rich domestic middle classes and the superrich from ‘developing’ nations. Enough, already!

We are passionate, if not a little desperate. You may have detected the tone. But we want to restore many of the lost (or stolen) values in education and we want to question and innovate, reinvent, renovate

and experiment. We want to take flight again, because nothing short of a wholesale fundamental overhaul is required. And without these changes a whole series of reactions and symptoms are coming that are – whether we like it or not – going to slowly blow up the business school. Once again there's something happening here, and what it is ain't exactly clear. Stop now, everybody look what's going down. Unless we understand these challenges in a mature and responsible way we are heading for disaster. Maybe it is going to take another May '68 before things change. Is that what we want? The truth is, it is already happening, breaking out this time in seemingly random and sporadic acts, through isolated reactions and classroom rage that manages to discharge some tension but inevitably reproduces the conditions for the accumulation of ever more discontent, frustration and anger. We may sound extreme or even fanatical, but unless someone begins to really take a stand on all this, education, as we know it, and as we might imagine it, is finished.

### School's Out

Today, what good will complaining do? Perhaps the time has come to set aside the negativity that has almost completely engulfed us. The disaster that we live, the business school of today, is nothing but the rubble that can be used to prepare for the business school of tomorrow. So let us reject negativity, and no more lament what is. Let us instead say what we are *for*, and that, of course, is the future. This collection is therefore accompanied by a reversal of that injunction to 'abandon hope all ye who enter here'. These manifestos have nothing to say that is simply critical. After all, 'critical management studies' is dead. It died a long time ago. Out of pity.

So now the time has come to act. The present is over. The future is here. A strange future, perhaps, because in many ways this collection of manifestos is not so new. There is a long tradition of preparation and publication of manifestos. With the manifesto, traditionally, one comes out in public, stating one's goals and purposes. A manifesto makes *manifest*, but it is also an 'outing', which, as we know, is always a political act. In this outing we recover what is often forgotten, namely the politics of travel that is involved in this 'outing', one that might rejuvenate the ancient understanding of theory as *theoros*, the *theoros* as practitioner and traveller, the ambassador to foreign lands, or the *theoros* as the one who attends sacrifice before the oracle. First, we need to sacrifice the business school of today.

It might seem perverse to demand something manifest, of course, what with the closure of Western metaphysics and the demise of

that form of existential humanism in which the sovereign agent is held responsible for the heroic self-assertion of values and goals. We demand the impossible. A politics of the impossible, in which the very act of writing becomes an arena of playful creation, of participation, experiment and becoming, a form of writing through which the boundaries between fact and fiction are risked or even blurred.

In French, a *manifestation* is a demonstration, a public event of protestation against the current state of the world. A de-monstration, or a marking out in which the *monstrous* becomes the subject of 'the new': quite literally, a new subject. Here, 'the author' itself is yet-to-come. This requires invention and subterfuge, a clearing of the decks. Our authors make sacrifice to this roll of the dice, so as to give chance to new acts of protest, learning and experiment. The new never arrives without struggle, resistance, and confrontation across complex lines of provocation, invention, resistance, and power. Fucking, weaving, boxing. Becoming animal, high on ketamine and *Jackass*: if the authors of these manifestos are to be believed we can look forward to a vibrant and perverse flourishing of behaviour in the future business school. Sade, the natural point of evolution for the business school? Will the business school of the future be vicious, or queer? We have manifestos on laziness, desire, evil and indifference. Wherever we look the business school is falling apart, in mutation, disseminating in bizarre multiplicities and strange becomings.

### **Dvalin, Rune-God**

What commercial publisher would publish this collection? After all, isn't the publishing industry part of the problem today, and not the solution? Intellectuals today have to seize control of the means of distribution. Which means that we need new presses. Lots of them. Right now.

So we thank Dvalin, the Norse rune-god of writing, for publishing this book.

Despite the imposition of martial law and the intellectual embargo imposed by the business school today there has been a flourishing of essays and writings, articles, manifestos, pamphlets and other clandestine publications circulating in the press. There are no shortage of ideas about what the business school looks like today and what it might look like in the future. Until now they have been hard to find. So we have collected here some of the most outstanding and outlandish manifestos concerning the future of the business school today, some of them bordering on the delirious and prophetic. So, let us call this

a 'coming-out party' in the name of the business school of tomorrow. Often passed on by word of mouth, sometimes even bought and sold in a thriving black market of alternative studies of the business school today, these manifestations look forward and prepare for the business school of the future, that business school on the horizon of today.

This might be the horizon of possibility, the horizon of imagination, the horizon of fantasy or horror, but what we have here is a veritable cornucopia of the most interesting and the most distinctive. Often very short – but remember that Dvalin was a dwarf – these manifestos are like a concentrated download of emotional high pitch fervour. Some of the manifestos that we have collected here have been talked about in hushed tones, their existence sometimes little more than a rumour, some doing the rounds of the insider gossip by way of emails, chat-lines, online web-blogs, and others found littered around coffee bars and photocopier rooms. They came to be known as 'the manifestos', or later as 'manifestos for the business school of tomorrow'. For the past few years we have been hunting down authorship, looking for manuscripts, the unexpurgated and the rare first editions in order to prepare a selection of some of the best and most exciting examples of this recent form of writing.

The manifestos range from the perverse to the puerile, from the scurrilous to the serious, from the vanguardist to the traditional revolutionary agit-prop, from the stupid to the sublime. They are not always easy reading. Some are clearly prankster jokes and self-indulgent spleen, others downright offensive if not slanderous, but bring them forth we must, in this abecedaire of manifestos, as signs of emerging forms of thinking and practice in the business school today. It is possible that some of these manifestos are symptoms of the current crisis, a mutation in contemporary education, shrill and sometimes insane cries for help; but their publication here helps restore a more 'balanced picture' of what is happening in the university today and what might need to happen in the future.

Some of the manifestos are utopian, while others are dystopian. Some are both at the same time. Some are programmatic. Some are mournful laments. Some are metaphorical. Some cut directly to the chase. In these scattered offerings, we can hear the beginnings of a proliferation of new thinking and styles of research that promise a vital and creative diagnosis and response to the current crisis in education and the business school. Here there is nothing hidden beneath the surface. We are, in places, re-discovering 'Pure Superficiality', in which the profound and the superficial collide. These papers announce something

like a call to arms. Do with them what you will, take them as you find them. They are best read quickly, and then passed on to others. Do what you please, but whatever you do, do not ignore the future. Cite, quote, add, respond, cut and paste, write over, write on, let it out, speak your mind, think, lead forth: agitate, educate, organize.

# ANIMALITY

*Janet Borgerson*

00. Should fate smile fondly upon the business school of the future (optimism on this point shall remain tempered here) and energetic, animated shouts and laughter ring through hall and classroom, spurring creative, critical, interrogative modes of being and doing, most business academics might as well slit their wrists pronto, or at least consider mid-career change. I, myself, can only do what I do: Animality speaks for itself.

01. Animality evokes not a description of traits or characteristics associated with being and acting ‘animal’ (which might be opposed to, or might include, the human), nor the sense of a being – lacking consciousness of consciousness and potential for meaning creation – immanent with respect to its milieu. Seized by anima, animated and breathing, animality invokes fundamental aspects of living and learning.

03. Energy-fired potentiality manifests needs and dependencies, drawing upon and giving back to surroundings, and engaging in inter-animation. Interanimation describes undifferentiated, determinate, perhaps, inexplicable, on-going exchanges that create perpetual – sometimes continuous, sometimes disjunctive – moments of existing together.

04. Education in the face of interanimation – much like consciousness – forms and performs core distancing, and directs attention toward something different from either exchange or existing together; yet, at the same time, mobilizes certainty regarding whatever appears clear and distinct. Animality recalls uncertainty to nebulous, unsettled anima, encouraging questioning attitudes and engagement.

05. Animality opens, exploratory and uncertain, onto the world, and provokes the declamatory, pompous know-it-allness of proclamations, especially, in the form of motivated lists and listless mottos and maxims demonstrating lack of interrogative enthusiasm as fundamental mode of elaboration.

06. Fat unshowered and desperately poor  
alcoholic author of *Rembrandt Talks Crazy to Bright Eyes*  
hitched a ride  
from Detroit's south side to Ann Arbor  
giving a reading in dim basement  
classroom with no chairs. Never  
taking off gold corduroy overcoat, he  
recited standing gluttonous  
before a green chalkboard – hands,  
shoulders, legs twitching; but eyes  
under control, sparkled.  
He was funny!  
I laughed myself silly!  
He stared right at me, reeled  
off line after line till I couldn't breathe, till lost  
in hysterical listening his words  
melded into anarchic vibrations  
laying me out on filthy institutional grey  
carpet in tears.

Old Town Bar  
windows shuttered, seeping evening  
light, six of us, including Jim the poet, crowded  
benches around wooden table, dented, stained, quoted  
from Ferlingetti's *Her*, Blake's  
'O Rose, thou art sick!'; ridiculed  
formal and rhyming structures, continuously  
spilling from pitchers of Bell's Amber Ale, mopped up with faded  
fraying increasingly damp denim jacket. Someone  
offered to get a car, because although he could cheerfully stride  
short stretches, Jim couldn't walk  
far without losing his breath. Later, dark  
lying on someone's cramped, cluttered apartment  
floor, we listened to Patty Smith's *Easter* and Laurie Anderson  
with William Burroughs on *Excellent Birds*.



Lotus style, Arapahoe Avenue  
Boulder, Colorado in brightly lit  
high school gym converted into performance space,  
sat Allen, with plenty of money  
advising uninsured writers, Avoid gingivitis!  
The impulse to meditate will keep you sane!  
O Anima! O Animus!  
Everyone should breathe more  
and stop making Things!

Axel-holed  
Zeus's wheels  
stacked as temple pillars,  
never rolled.  
O Morrow!  
O Marrow!  
O Marshmallow!  
Burn down the Agora uniting  
monstrous feet of Greece!  
Olympia's wrestling hall, baptismal pool  
nothing to Karnac and colourless.

07. Poetry's unwieldy last words, foiled for now, have prepared a place for animality's inquiries: Then, how to inquire? How to ask questions? Under a veil of curiosity, interrogative's academic cloak, or wonderment's scholarly mantle, an emergent, disturbing consideration: Who wants to know unexpected, disorienting, disrupting, intolerant, intolerable things? Who can ask a question without wanting to know an answer? Who can ask questions and not want to know the answers? Who can determine a question's labour's worth? Who will determine questions' labours' worth?

08. O Δωρία! O gift!  
O gratitude under duress!  
Facial, optical, symmetry's symmetry,  
other Hellenic fabrications' aesthetic collaborators  
thinking something brilliant  
in it; or God, manifest  
intimate and shameful?  
O Breath!  
O tyger's disturbed plankton phosphorescent  
glow (always ending in mysterious

unknowable) trod forest softing  
saw you, thought: Weak;  
did anyone remember to say thank you?  
Why ask? Why wonder?

# BOXING

*David Murphy*

## **Preamble**

I was recently at a committee meeting reviewing the CVs of young colleagues applying for promotion to senior lecturer. One intensely smug elderly colleague was witheringly explaining why one or another of them, when compared with himself, was utterly inadequate. The central thrust of his argument seemed to be that no one could be seriously considered as a future star in the world class business school firmament without publications in mainstream management journals. As I sat gazing dreamily at this wizened figure casting his certainties about him like fake pearls before real swine, and wondering what a mainstream management journal might look like, I thought that there must be a better way to run a Business School. Rather than bothering with articulating all of the things wrong with his encomium to conformity, I thought, how much better would it be simply to render him silent by a well directed right hook to the solar plexus. This could then become a standard procedure for bringing discussions to a close. Perhaps we would change our name to the Manchester Boxing School – no need to change the initials.

## **Introduction**

It scarcely seems worth the trouble of explaining so self-evident a proposition that for any business school about to relaunch itself anew before the planet's expectant teeming billions, the natural model it should look to for inspiration is the world of boxing. But the few whose peripheral doubts need to be massaged away are entitled to an explanation.

Naturally, there is no purpose in asking what a business school is for, since this implies that its existence is dependent on the achievement of some agreed purpose. All we need to address is the empirical fact of its existence as a more or less permanent aspect of the landscape. The question then is how do we mythologize it as distinct from all those other aspects of the landscape with which the uninitiated might confuse it: a public toilet or a prison.

## **Time**

My sudden enforced immersion into the renewed, re-invigorated and self evidently globally excellent Manchester Business School has recalled for me the first attempt by the use of overwhelming force to introduce me to the unavoidable exigencies of the labour market in the late 1940s. My father (who died two decades ago in an unjust obscurity caused only by the fact that, inexplicably, he had never felt the need to write a single paper in a mainstream management journal in all his 85 years) had a simple theory of survival based on his observations as a migrant worker in the UK and the USA in the 1920s and 1930s. This was, in summary, that there were two possible solutions to the problem of survival in the event of being unemployed. The first was to learn to play the piano. This meant you could always walk into any pub – they all had pianos – and begin playing. The drinkers would then buy you beer all evening. At the same time, you left your cap upside down on top of the piano. As the booze-soaked throng became drunker and drunker, the hat would fill with change. The alternative was to learn to box. This meant you could go to any fairground, find the boxing booth, put yourself up against the resident pug, and win five pounds if you could last the requisite time – normally three rounds – in a vertical posture. Since the pugs were washed out professionals, any reasonably competent amateur who was fit and sober, could dodge and weave for long enough and pick up the fiver.

In case there is any reader so inattentive or whose brain is so weakened by the application of regular doses of class B drugs that she or he does not see the relevance of the line of argument so far, let us clarify (in mainstream business and management journals, of course, we have to). We have a management guru with a theory of success, which relates the chances of the individual to the opportunities available in the labour market, and measurable activities, which can be related to sources of funding. And what more appropriate a model could there be for the management guru, given that he was utterly limited in his vision, totally wrong in his perception of the world, wrong in his assessment of evidence, wrong in prediction, and utterly without relevance to the human condition?

## **And Place**

In furtherance of the Great Guru's dual injunction, scarcely had I passed the stage of practicing minor scales in contrary motion and of performing a rendition of Beethoven's *Für Elise* that no Port-soaked old lady could hear without weeping, than I was moved onto the second plank of my father's theory of business success and was born off as an

eight-year-old to learn the fistic arts at the Standard Motors Amateur Boxing Club. It was housed in a long wooden hut at the foot of a steep bank and surrounded by iron railings. The site beyond the bank was owned by Standard Motors and was occupied by a tractor factory where Massey Ferguson tractors were built under license. But the small field at the top of the bank was still rented to a farmer and was inhabited by a huge fat pig, which used to look down on our world of pugilistic endeavours with undisguised porcine contempt. The name of the pig was, naturally, Charles Clark, but it would just as easily have been Ruth Kelly. The club building was long and narrow and the main area was taken up with a gymnasium, the main feature of which was a boxing ring for sparring bouts.

I remember with perfect clarity my eight-year-old brain instantly registering the fact that there were three distinct forms of human being there. At the base of the clear hierarchical pyramid were the boys and young men, two of whom were sparring while others punched punchbags, or punchballs, skipped, or engaged in the mystic dance known as shadow boxing. A group were engaged in a rough and tumble with a medicine ball. In the middle of the pyramid were a number of men in their thirties generally with broken noses, strangely bulbous ears and tattooed arms. These were either training the youngsters or were themselves engaged in violent exercise. One moustachioed individual who looked as if he had probably been a Marine Corps heavyweight champion was reflectively engaged in lifting a genuine barbell with iron balls at each end. Whether my recollection of the white painted letters denoting 56 lbs on each black ball is myth or reality is a mystery which can only be resolved by a judgement as to whether this image is satisfying in terms of the narrative aesthetic. Another similarly moustachioed military but slimmer individual was spinning Indian clubs. The ruling elite were the paunchy middle-aged men in their late forties and fifties who prowled the place, eyeing up the youngsters and muttering to one another. One of them was looking at the sparring match and casting a contemptuous gaze over a thin youth with long hair – by the standards of the 1940s. ‘Too skinny. Couldn’t punch ‘is way out of a fucking paper bag’, he casually observed to his companion. Suddenly a long thin arm shot out and the slender boxer’s stocky opponent buckled at the knees and fell to the floor.

These older men were boxing club committee members and visitors. Some wore suits; others navy blue serge blazers and grey flannels. The breast pockets of their blazers were emblazoned with the silver badge of the Amateur Boxing Association referees and judges. They were nearly all smoking and their tobacco smoke contributed to the overwhelming

cocktail of odours – wintergreen, leather, sweat, unwashed bodies, rank socks and malfunctioning drains – which pervaded the place. Let any non-believer who hears a description of Standard Motors Boxing Club deny that their first reaction is ‘Blimey this sounds just like Manchester Business School.’

### **Rules of Exclusion**

The typical venue for a boxing tournament would be a drill hall – a vast, hollow, echoing, darkened space: in the centre, a square ring. Round the ring sat the judges. Behind them in the noirish haze, ranks of rough men would be seated in straight rows of hard wooden chairs. Wisps of smoke like dark grey wool would float up and merge in the rafters into a stale cloud. Here and there, in the darkness, the red end of a cigarette would glow brightly as the addict sucked in and then fade, too dull to be visible. On the front rows sat the most prestigious people in the boxing firmament. Sometimes these might include the mayor, often senior police officers, usually a catholic priest or two, headteachers of roughneck boy’s schools.

The focus of a boxing match was the spotlight over the ring. Here the smoke rose and curled in almost white streams up through the light and into darkness beyond. Only what was going to happen in that pool of light would matter. Two young men would appear at diagonally opposite corners with their seconds dressed in whites. The young men in glistening satin shorts and vests would stand in their corners. The referee in pressed trousers shining black shoes and a gleaming white shirt with his referee and judge’s tie would step into the ring and call the pugilists to meet in the middle. I want a good clean fight, he would tell them: no butting no biting no gouging no holding and no hitting below the belt and when I say break you step back immediately. Shake hands. They know they can only hit with a gloved, clenched fist on the boxer’s target, no hitting in the kidneys on top of the head no ‘rabbit punches’ to the back of the neck, nor in the groin. I could never understand why you could not, for instance, punch on the knee or the big toe since none of these could conceivably be regarded as taking unfair advantage of the opponent.

The bell would ring and fighters come forward. The bouts would be three three-minute rounds with one-minute inter-round breaks. Usually there was much more holding and leaning on one another and dodging than would make for excitement but sometimes an heroic contest would provide blood and sometimes knockouts – or, as we would now call it, world-class entertainment. A vivid image from the time remains as strong as ever: a young black man with biceps

like watermelons standing in his corner, his face covered in blood holding his towel with a lurid dripping deep red circle in the middle unperturbed by the pain. But then the referee stepped forward and declared that his opponent was the winner. Then the blood soaked gladiator broke down into tears – because of the public humiliation of being declared the loser.

Later each of the participants in the six or eight bouts on the bill would receive his prize: a biscuit barrel; a set of cheap wine glasses; a tea set. My father later discovered that these were manufacturers' rejects sold to the Coventry Amateur Boxing Association as top quality goods with the price difference being distributed between the supplier and various members of the committee.

So what was going on the spotlight? Fighters, excluded from the rest of the world by the pool of light in the darkness, obliged by social convention to fight yet excluded from pursuing this aim by the normal rational means employed in such a conflict: kicking strangling holding biting one another's ears off gouging eyes and finally, if necessary, running away. And overseeing the procedures the referee enforcing the rules and the judges deciding who has won. Meanwhile, in the outer darkness, only able to look on and cheer or jeer – we find the paying public.

### **Encouraging People in their Foolishness**

The reasons put forward for encouraging young men and lately women (Million Dollar Baby) into the world of boxing are twofold. The first is its inherent rightness and heroism. 'If you boys have differences to settle, do it in the gym in the ring, fair and square not here behind the toilets with hobnail boots on.' The second was most recently put forward by our former Home Secretary, 'Shagger' Dave Blunkett; that boxing was a way up from the gutter to riches for young working class males. My feeling is that these are clearly absurd reasons for a modern business school to adopt the boxing way of life. After all, we would not want the graduates or staff of MBS to be heroic – this would be defeating the object of the enterprise. Even less do we want to encourage upstart working class roughnecks into the staff common room. But most importantly, this sort of justification is based on the idea that there is a virtue in boxing and that virtue and consistency of reason inhabit the world of organised human activity.

To apply this reason to the world of the business school is the way that madness lays. What we require as a model for the business school is a metaphor for doing something stupid. What we see in boxing is a rule

governed organised system of activities with a hierarchy of participants, a cadre of elderly ideologues who enforce their own myopic view of the social world on a captive audience of the impressionable young whilst, almost invisibly, the public pay but cannot influence events. The infrastructure, of course, is paid for by big business and the young are persuaded to participate by the provision of glittering but tawdry prizes, whose provision is a confidence trick.

### **The Rules of Exclusion Revisited**

The world of the business school is mythic. It exists in a social universe which is only occupied by it and other business schools. It claims to be in the university and it claims to be in business.

Our university is like boxing because it is a rule-governed system in pursuit of a stupid aim. El presidentissimo wants a world class university. We all have to obey some simple rules for the game we play. The young are set against one another in a ring set apart from the public darkness. The chair of the promotions committee wants a good clean CV, no plagiarism, only five star journals, no books, nothing that anybody has read, some good networking and lots of citations in journals edited by the chair of the promotions committee – or his or her ilk. And plenty of attendances at conferences, and lots of money raised through research councils and business.

But the Business School is like boxing at a more profound level. In the business school, we are required to do two contradictory things without recognising the contradiction. We are supposed to be scholars who pursue some idea of truth, however distorted and ludicrous this may be. But we are also required to gain the approval of the world of business and serve the profit motive. When there are clear contradictions between the search for the truth and the pursuit of profit what do we do? In a recent seminar here on business ethics a representative of one of our sponsoring businesses was giving a view of ethics, which excluded consideration of his own firm's activities. Academics expressed their disapproval and a genuine exchange of ideas threatened to descend on the gathering like an *al qaida* suicide bomber. At the point the chair stopped the discussion. 'Break! When I say break step back.' Just like the boxer, we have to fight but only one another – no outsiders, especially those who are paying the bills. And, of course, we have to do so within a framework of rules which prevents us from effectively fighting. The result is always going to be contained.



Colleagues – the match between the two worlds is complete. The metaphor is a meta-metaphor.

### **Postscript**

The next time I am at a promotions meeting and another elderly member of staff looks witheringly at the CV of a young colleague and declares that it will not do because there aren't any mainstream management journal articles there, perhaps I shall insist on settling it with a boxing match. But not according to the Marquis of Queensberry rules.

My manifesto for the Business School inmate is:

Fight but fight Dirty.

# CONFERENCES

*André Spicer*

Conferences are eagerly attended. Papers carefully prepared or cobbled together at the last minute. Thirty copies carefully run off to be binned by other conference delegates. Flights eagerly boarded. Irritating exam scripts left to languish on our desks. The dross of suburban life suspended for a few precious days. We arrive with irrational expectations. After a tangle with the local transportation system, we stagger up to the conference venue. The seasoned conference goer knows what will follow: Indifferent food. Petty controversy of the latest theory. Many glasses of the local liquor. Extra-marital affairs. Verbal violence. Arrogant grunts. Closed circles. Dashed hopes. Petty promotionalism. Scholastic policing. Grinding headaches. Boredom. Body pain.

This is the reality of conferences. Every disgruntled conference goer knows how different these realities are to the promises which conferences make. In this manifesto I would like to make a plea for conferences that live up to their promise. To do this, we might make the mild step of returning to the original promises of what a conference is. A conference is a meeting for consultation and discussion, the act of conferring with another, a gathering of the clergy, and a cartel of shipping interests. Let's demand these original definitions of a conference over the reality of what we actually get!

## **Meeting for Consultation or Discussion**

A conference is a meeting for consultation or discussion. At its most basic a meeting means two or more people coming together. A true meeting is not one person dominating, telling, or speaking over another. In practice a conference is the stage for espousals. It is not a meeting point where two come together to exchange words. Meeting so rarely happens at conferences. An actual exchange would not simply involve a skilled monologue and defence. Instead, it would involve a giving of gifts. We would bring our own intellectual gifts. Like any gift, specificity is appreciated. If our gift is to hit the target, it should be appropriate to the audience. A handmade gift usually

delights the receiver. The light touch of one's hand will always invest the cold commodity with a shimmer and life. We always know when a gift is carelessly taken off the shelf. A handmade gift is particularly delightful when it is well made. A poorly made gift is quickly shunted aside. Sometimes it is an offence to the receiver. When we give our intellectual gifts, they must be well wrapped. The wrapping of our speech, its shine and delivery will at least make the process of unwrapping our ideas a hopeful experience. Even if the receiver dislikes what they find inside, at least they will experience the primal joy of tearing away the layers of rhetorical tissue. By recognising that when we deliver a paper that we are giving a gift, we are able to make a number of rather modest demands:

1. All papers should be carefully prepared for the specific audience we hope to address.
2. All papers should at least be the work of our own hand, and are carefully selected.
3. All papers should be carefully presented.

Once an intellectual gift is given, exchange begins. Too often we assume that once we have delivered our gifts. It is incorporated into the receiver's mind or rejected as irrelevant. However, we know this is not how things actually work. The receiver always makes the gift their own. They take the gift home, add it to their collection, perhaps dispose of it with disgust, make use of it, or use it to plug up a drafty hole in a theory. When the receiver makes use of a gift, they change it. This reminds us that intellectual gifts are never given fully formed. Our ideas become other to us. They transform and become something which we cannot easily recognise. And it is through this transformation that our intellectual gifts are animated with life. Thus a further modest demand of the conference might be:

4. When delivering a paper, we must be prepared to meaningfully engage with receivers and recognise that this engagement will change the nature of our paper.

By accepting our intellectual gifts and transforming them, the receiver obliges themselves. When we receive a gift we must return the favour at some point in the future. But when we return the gift, we cannot simply give back what we initially received. This would be an offence to the receiver. Instead we are obliged to give back more than we originally got. Instead, our intellectual gifts must be in excess of what we received in the last round of giving. This reminds us that an appropriate recompense for an intellectual gift is never sycophantic

fawning about how great a gift we received is. This may be an important intermediate step, but if this is all we do, the stakes are not upped. Simple destruction of a gift is also not an appropriate gesture. We all know that spoilt child whose first response to a new toy is smashing it to bits. Yes, there is a moment of exhilaration here, but destruction actually reduces the gift we were given. This reminds us that if we can *only* offer a destructive attack then we are not engaging in gift-giving. We must always add to the intellectual gifts we are trusted with. The modest demand which follows:

5. When receiving a paper, respondents should always aim to positively add to it.

What happens when we get something back from the person to whom we initially gave it? We know that we eagerly await gifts owed to us. We develop all sorts of fantasies about what we will get back. When we give a paper we secretly imagine there will be rapturous applause, we will be mobbed by admirers who claim we have created an intellectual revolution, we will be approached by sexy young things gazing at us with the kind of desirous fire that played in the eyes of the young men of Athens after a session with Plato. Given these unrealistic, filthy and secret desires, it is not surprising that we are always disappointed with what we get back. Of course what we get back is a few friendly comments, perhaps a few thought-providing claims. In short, we get back something which falls far short of what we imagined. The kind of exchange which we get during a conference will always disappoint us. Our thoughts, images and fantasies will always be dashed. So, the act of conferring with others must always be tempered with a preparation for disappointment, for it always awaits you. The disappointing nature of the counter-gift adds a further demand:

6. Papers should be delivered humbly and reactions to the paper should be treasured as a gift.

### **Consult Others**

A conference is an act of conferring or consulting together. To confer clearly relies on another person. One person alone cannot confer. When someone calls upon us to confer with them, trouble begins. We have to confront someone else with their own preconceptions and ways of interpreting our conference. The beauty, serenity and originality of ideas lurking in our skull seem to become a horrible, clichéd and gnarled edifice when they are spoken. When we breath our ideas we fear that they smell rotten. We are afraid the audience just won't understand. And perhaps this fear is very real. It is a fear

based on externalising something which we think is so essential to us. We sometimes go to great pains to conceal these from our lovers, students and colleagues. We are scared they won't understand our morbid interest in a minor intellectual field like the dynamics of fish farming in the Outer Hebrides. We are scared it will come out all wrong, and what we hold most precious will be spoiled. We are scared to communicate because the very act of speaking what we think (particularly when it diverges from received pronunciation) will be taken as strange, boring, irrelevant and perverse. Indeed this fear of speaking is the disease that cripples graduate student for years, paralyses writing and causes some to leave academia altogether. It is this fear that allows one not to expose their most precious gift, and thereby preserve themselves intact.

At a conference we are constantly asked 'what are you working on?' This simple phrase strikes fear into even the most sycophantic among us. The mental reflux is to ask ourselves 'how can this person understand what I am *really* doing? Nevertheless, to save face I must give them some pathetic sketch which will stand in for what I am doing'. So we speak: 'Currently I am working on a study of the organisation of fish sexuality. I am really interested in how we turn fish into cyborgs, mutate them, then eat them. I am amazed that we not only organise people and resources, but also life itself'. But as you speak you find that your project, your inner most ideas are becoming something other than yourself. As the words roll out, they take on a life of their own. Just like the fish you have been studying, your words begin to breed. They float between yourself and your partner in conference like a shoal of unruly salmon, sharp teeth at the ready. Your words leap across the intellectual fords you carefully maintain, looking for other words to fuck. Your partner in conference may munch these words up, but as certainly as your precious ideas disappear into their quick mouth, they emerge again. But when they emerge, they are not the words you know. They are monstrous. Something which you could never have made. Your partner in conference assures you that mingled with your fascination in fish farming is a ghoulish interest in actor network theory, philosophy of science and perhaps even bio-power. Your words have other parts attached to them you wish were not there. So you try and ingest them again, take control, but it is impossible, these little monsters have become something utterly different to what you would have ever intended. You feel like your precious ideas have taken on a life of their own. By recognising the monstrosity of our own ideas, a further demand arises:

7. To give life to our ideas, we need to share them with as many as possible.

### **An Assembly of the Clergy**

A conference is an assembly of the clergy. This is a strange, half-forgotten, but still breathing definition of a conference. Like all submerged thoughts, it haunts our memories and affects. Just as universities strike their foundation upon the crumbling church, so too are conferences anchored to the deeply laid rock of the ancient assembly of the clergy. When observing a church conference we would be struck by one astounding fact – until relatively recently all the delegates would be men. The conference provided these men with a space for ruminating about topics secular and holy. They could argue about the number of stairs to heaven, the price of corn, techniques for controlling fornication during church services and advances in the interpretation of the letters of St Paul. The point is that the topics were deliberately wide-ranging and interwoven. Another striking feature of such conferences is that they took place in deliberately crafted rooms. In many cases, the clergy from each local church had an assigned seat which was dedicated to the faithful servant of God from that area. Each member of the clergy knew their place. The observer of the church conference would also notice that it served as a place where the official ideology of the church would be strengthened. Because the church was such a geographically diffuse organisation, it was difficult to monitor and control exactly what peculiar doctrine the parishioners were being harangued with. The conference provided the Bishop with an opportunity to ensure that all church men held theologically appropriate views. It provided a forum where the clergy could delicately rehearse the rituals holding the church together. The ecclesiastical conference was also used to apportion punishment and reward. If deviations from the official procedures and beliefs came to light, counselling and punishment might follow. This would be done in the name of God. But the rebellious clergyman was always able to at least attempt to defend their position by making some counter-appeal to God. This reminds us that even though conferences may serve as a space for vicious doctrinal policing, there is always the possibility to make appeals to higher powers such as truth. Therefore a further demand might be:

8. Debate at conferences should be mediated by appeals to truth.

As with the church, so it is with academe. In our conferences we also weave together the secular and sacred. Teaching tricks, job offers

and the interpretation of Foucault all curl together around gathered groups drinking coffee. They take place in dedicated temples of chat. Being committed to the ideas of democracy, there is no strict order of seating. It is sometimes possible to arrive nonchalantly late. However, many senior academics need to make their position felt through a few arrogant questions. Perhaps the most striking feature of the modern academic conference is the fact they hold together a loose multinational alliance and insure there are not massive deviations in the teaching which takes place across the world. Any painful lagging behind intellectual fashion is scoffed at, updated readings are distributed, and deviations from the official line are punished with a volley of intellectual buckshot or a few well placed sniggers. If there are any serious threats to the official hierarchy of ideas, then policing activity moves into full swing. The big theories must be defended and those who stray must either be counselled at a later stage or swiftly and publicly punished. This will serve the dual purpose of silencing the offender and warning others of future possible offences. This will always be done in the name of some big Other that replaces God. Rebels always find it handy to have the big Other (reason, democracy, reality) in your pocket to escape the gallows or make an impassioned last stand before being strangled to death. A further demand might be:

9. Meta-narratives should be accepted currency at conferences.

### **A Cartel of Shipping Interests**

A conference is a cartel of shipping interests. Developing a cartel involves businesses banding together to set prices or regulate output. It involves a group of firms wilfully attempting to suspend the rules of the market to drive up the profits which the cartel members can enjoy. Once the laws of the market are suspended, then each shipping line is able to claim a monopoly over a particular part of the market. One shipping line will have New Zealand ports, another will have Australian ports. Once a cartel is established then the shipping lines can take monopoly rents – that is, a price determined by exclusive ownership of a scarce resource rather than market based competition. This allows the shipping cartel to provide poor services and charge high prices. Historically this has allowed high and stable profits for the monopoly capitalist. It has also allowed some organised labour to claim higher wages and relaxed conditions.

The academic conference also involves cartel building. If we observe what actually occurs at a conference, we do not see the free competition of ideas on the intellectual marketplace. Instead we notice that

small cliques develop to dominate one corner of the marketplace. Most intellectual fads like ‘positive organization studies’ or ‘process approaches’ involve a relatively tight clique who claim they are the experts in that area. There must be some tacit agreement between the members of the cartel on a set of ground rules. These agreements might be cemented by shared papers, shared meals and shared beds. The members of the cartel dominate a corner of intellectual life through systems of restrictive referencing (they reference each other), setting standards (they define what the basic assumptions in the field are), regulating access to the market (they review papers in the area and accept only those which play by their rules) and ensuring all deviations are punished (through freezing-out, verbal punishment or price war). By doing this, the small academic cartel is able to capture an idea or a concept. If one wants to talk about ‘their’ idea, it is necessary to at least tip one’s intellectual hat to them and at worst accept their rules wholesale. Because this cartel has developed a monopoly over a particular area of intellectual endeavour, they are able to demand what economists call ‘rents’ from all who stray upon their territory. This rent will usually come in the form of a transfer of cultural capital. The most obvious form it would take is a citation of the cartel’s work. This means that members of the cartel are able to live off the monopoly rents (such as citations) of work they did long ago.

But economic theory reminds us that cartels are inefficient things. They block new entrants into the industry, they drive up prices, and they give a small group inordinate control over key pieces of the infrastructure. This means that cartel profits come at the expense of public good. As we know, economists recommend that cartels should be broken up in order to serve the public good. As it is with shipping, so it is with academia. The tight cartels around particular ideas certainly might bring life to new fields, but they also calcify, regulate entry, and set what are ultimately arbitrary standards for success. Consequently, it seems that there is a case for intellectual cartels to be broken up, or at least regulated. If we follow the theory of cartels, such a move would give rise to a more competitive marketplace, increased quality, wider choice and efficiency gains. To translate this into academic terms – better research would be offered, more vigorous debate would ensue, and more research would be produced. So it seems that a further demand we might make of conferences is the following:

10. Intellectual cartels should be broken up.



# DESIRE

*Stephen Linstead*

There are two possible paths the Business School of the future might take stemming from a reconsideration of the idea of desire. Of course there's always a null option, more of the same, but in my view the whole exchange-based rationalistic approach that sustains current approaches to motivation in particular and spills over into almost all other human organizational considerations, but especially leadership, needs to be exposed for what it is – an exhausted tradition and one that cannot be revived for ontological reasons. More of the same, then, isn't a real option, though it will probably continue to happen in practice if this manifesto isn't taken up.

The two creative options could be labelled the *delirious* or the *erotic*. The first is fully to embrace the illogic of dispersion and move into a permanently fluid state, a *jouissance* or delirium. But there are problems with this, not the least of them being that delirium can result from excessive emotional or physical expenditure or from its opposite – excessive obsession. Saussure, who was an obsessive collector as well as the progenitor of French structural linguistics, suffered from this. We can get carried away on the irrationality of excessive rationalism as well as the flow of pure sensation, as we in both surrender ourselves to a form that is other, that deterritorialises us. In the shape of the former, business schools already demonstrate some delirious tendencies: indeed, when hyped up mathematicians with MBAs and Physics PhDs get let loose in the virtual world of finance, Enrons result. And the delirium doesn't stop when you get busted – Nick Leeson, who served a jail term for ruining thousands of investors in the Barings Bank scandal, now earns £8,000 for an after dinner speech. So much both for rationality and humanity.

The other way is of course what Bataille calls the field of the erotic. This is the space where collection and dispersion meet in reflexive, mobile tension, in play. It is a sensuous field, trembling with anticipation and trepidation rather than tumescent with arrogance and false confidence, but one of reflexivity, ethical engagement, mutuality, the acceptance

of difference and change and imagination, where power/knowledge discourses/fantasies are by definition open to question, as the erotic is the field of the slash (/).

In fact, with this in mind, I think I will put down my mouse, don my Zorro cape (I always keep it handy) and mask (we still need them for the moment) and insinuate myself into an internationally famous top business school's library and beginning with all those texts that have 'management' in the title. I'll take my imaginary rapier and slash the covers with the sign of Desiring Business School...*DBS*...the school for the multitude.

That feels better. And the acronym seems right. Business Schools are unacknowledged structures to direct the channels of Desire – indeed Boards of Directors might be more illuminatingly seen to be Boards of Desirers. If we assume motivation as *a priori*, a condition of life, the problem of Direction is not to Dominate, to set targets, point the way towards them and inspire the non-aspirants to achieve them whilst themselves claiming only a fraction of the surplus value they add, but to surf the waves of Desire, feeling the power of its flow and avoiding its Deluge. So the business school is ontologically subject to a double-motion – on the one hand, the dark urge toward directorial domination; on the other, the demonic demiurge of desire that leaks out all over the place producing worker resistance, entrepreneurial spin-offs, the black economy, Enrons and Easyjets, failures that succeed and successes that fail. Little wonder that the far-from-equilibrium business world adopts a spurious form of equilibrium – double-entry book-keeping – to render its struggles accountable in the far-from-equitarian societies it shapes.

Double-entry of course has another eschatological meaning, one brought into relief by Leo Bersani's question 'Is the rectum a grave?'. Consideration of the traditional symbolic and sexual connections between the anus, the activities associated with it, and death, alerts us to the fact that loss, waste, retention, accumulation, collection and dispersal of resources are all linked in the concept of desire, and its ability to lead into light or dark, renewal or negation, being or nothingness – we really must beware of what we wish for. Desiring that which we are not means risking loss of control, loss of self, perhaps loss of being, and so is always tinged with dread. Desire and dread are a doublet. But the sort of humility found in the fear of rejection in our teenage reluctance to ask a delightful other (of whatever sex) for a date is anathema to the aspirant business school where it is the degree of challenge of goals that is important to motivation, tempered only

by our abilities and desire to succeed, and perhaps, especially post-Enron, by some regulatory requirements. Self-doubt is for wimps, but self-scrutiny is essential to keep desire on the rails. Indeed, business schools are all about the reproduction of techniques through which to operate on the professional self, the competitive other and the unpredictable environment to produce competent members of the business community – professionally and ideologically acceptable business subjects who will nevertheless be more than simply docile and needy subjects but *desiring* subjects, not drifting but driven actively and creatively to extend the economic possibilities of commercial governmentality. What they need is a stiff shot of ontology. A double.

### **The Business of Desire: Desire as Lack/Wish and the Melancholic Business School (MBS)**

Organizations exist to generate utility – they are collectivities of individuals brought together for some kind of purpose. Business schools have often exhibited a tendency to reify organizations, seeing them predominantly in terms of structure, purpose, mission, systems and goals. A more processual approach would recognise that these phenomena have no meaning outside of their performance by human actors and that to organize human activity turns upon the notion of some kind of punctuated endpoint to that activity, where the achievement of some state or output considered desirable might be identified, however temporary. The activity of organizing itself is underpinned by a particular ontology of desire – the predominantly Freudian construction of desire as lack. Organization produces something – whether administrated social order or comfy sofas – that society otherwise would not have and could be said to need. Desire for this object drives the desire to organize – motivated by the perceived lack of something useful, the absence of something which is needed, the urge to generate utility, improve upon our human environment and serve individual and collective interests. Organizing in this perspective stems from notions of scarcity, from considering the end of activity to be the development of productive capacity.

The original source of this reading of desire as lack is found in the work of Plato but it is Hegel's formulation of desire, subjectivity and subjection, and the relation of death and being that has most left its mark on subsequent treatments. Hegel argues that consciousness of difference is always and already self-consciousness, in that it involves the recognition that the subject lacks something – not simply the object (the other) but also the consciousness of the other. Freedom (to be one's self, to follow one's own purposes) also creates discontinuity between different self-consciousnesses. Hegel's project was to demonstrate

how these separate beings, travelling through history in oppression and alienation, would be brought through recognition into continuity by the driving force of desire. Desire propels humankind through unfolding and inevitable, if often bloody, progress in a dialectical movement as a state of affairs turns into its opposite, then temporarily resolves into a third term. Ultimately, discontinuous human spirits will become continuous in attaining Absolute Spirit, at the end of history when no more progress remains to be made.

Hegel establishes the conceptual status of several important elements of the understanding of desire – particularly in positioning desire as an ontological motivating force and recognizing the interdependence of opposites in the dialectic. Judith Butler notes that desire drives on towards absolute knowledge because its objective is self-knowledge – to illuminate the mysteries of its true nature, the origin of its being, and to penetrate the beginning of its own beginning, the preconditions of its own existence. It is the perennial question of ‘who am I?’ and ‘why am I here?’ that has resurfaced with a vengeance in organization studies and more widely in sociology in the twenty-first century in the question of identity – self-identity, brand identity, organizational identity, national, community and ethnic identity – in a ‘post’-everything, globalizing world. It is a central question for managers whether business schools recognise it or not – and often they recognise it by indirectly giving answers to it through the operating logics of economics, strategy, finance, operations, personal development or corporate social responsibility. In this sense, what unfolds through the pursuit of desire for an object or other (person or state of being) is a form of self-discovery. But Hegel would argue that this kind of understanding is a practical consciousness concerned with mastery of the given, which cannot understand movement (progress toward the absolute) – the way that terms continually imply their opposite. The pursuit of such understanding is always concerned to fix its object in the present, and continually mistakes stasis for truth. This seems to characterise much of the learning that takes place in business schools, where business logics extrude into all aspects of life. But for Hegel the distance between continuity and discontinuity in life is critical if paradoxical, as continuity can only be represented by the breaking down and recombination of elements in Death, in loss of self, from which life emerges anew. Ironically self only recognizes itself as such, separate and individual, by being aware of its own estrangement from Life, from the active flux of life, and can only look on with the gaze of the melancholic. There is much that is melancholic about the contemporary business school curriculum, based as it is

around individual development and success criteria, accountability, performance, and mastery of the elements of commerce.

Alexander Kojève extended Hegel in recognising this melancholic longing as a desire for continuity and connectivity, arguing that humans often desire the conditions of their own subjection precisely because, even in oppression, some degree of recognition is afforded. Kojève underlines issue of complicity in the relations of power and the importance of recognition that would seem to be absolutely central to the experience of contemporary managers, especially in a delayering, rightsizing, uncluttering, virtualizing, dromocratic and competitive business environment. In particular, buying into power relations and seeking greater recognition would seem to be almost definitive of the orientation of MBA students. Desire reaches its full extent not just in the desire for the recognition of the other, but in the desire for the desire of the other – to be the object of another's desire, whether that other be a person, a system or a deity – which only defers the real objective that the self should be the objective of the self's own desire. This narcissism can be found plentifully in most business schools – the content of teaching syllabuses focused on case studies of exemplary organizations and heroic leaders, the pursuit by the schools themselves of accreditation by the full range of international bodies, the incessant drive to climb up the various 'league tables', even in the practical exercises used to encourage students to adopt new behaviours and approaches. The whole idea of an MBA is to make the holder more desirable to future employers, the ethos of the programmes being built around the ontology of desire as lack driving a wish to be different.

### **Desire as Force or Exuberance:**

#### **Business School as Desiring-Machine**

Desire is not just a matter for desiring selves or subjects. Georges Bataille's desire operates within a dual anthropological system, both economic and symbolic, of accumulation and expenditure. Life and death are opposed forces culturally regulated by systems of taboos and transgressions. Normal conduct involves following cultural rules which valorise the stultifying effects of work, production and acquisition, whilst what he calls erotic conduct entails transgressing these norms, and is as opposed to normal conduct as spending is to getting. Whilst we may work hard and tirelessly in order to increase our wealth, the sum of our possessions, when the heat of passion seizes us we behave the opposite way, and may risk, or even sacrifice, all that we have earned in brief, ecstatic but ruinous pleasure. Ask any politician.

The dialectic of desire here is not between self and other, but between the mechanisms of accumulation and spending that underpin the tension between self and other. Importantly, whereas for Hegel *eros* and *logos* are conflated, with all desire combining ultimately into a desire for absolute knowledge, Bataille's *eros* is a pure irrational abandonment to unknowing. But this is nevertheless a productive unknowing. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that it was Plato himself who first distinguished between acquisition and production, but when the modern West appropriated his thought, production was identified with acquisition (particularly in Hegel and Marx). Bataille seeks to redress this in his ideas of general and restricted economy. Where the latter refers only to market values, the general economy deals with the use of wealth, and how excess energy is spent. Being excess it cannot be used in a utilitarian manner, so it can have no meaning in a restricted economy. In general economy, because we are not compelled to spend in particular ways, it is not how we work but how we waste that defines us as human.

Bataille's attack on restricted economy, which saw desire as utilitarian and acquisitive, always in search of the object, was also an attack on reason. He sees desire as fluid, energetic, a creative principle evident in expense and effervescence, and stands squarely against the Hegelian and Freudian reading of desire as lack. Our key challenge is not to produce but to consume, to waste, to squander our excesses – raising questions of relational ethics and generosity rather than self-identity. It is the celebration of heterogeneity (in general economy) that makes us human, not the suppression of difference in the service of homogeneity and consequent utility that dominates restricted economy.

Deleuze and Guattari have a different view of the relation between desire and discourse. For them language does not create lack, it merely provides a signifying hook to catch and channel the natural flows of desire as energy. For them the conceptualization of humans as (desiring) selves, with individual wants and needs, is based on the Oedipal repression of natural 'desiring-machines', so that we have come to misinterpret the nature of desire. Indeed their very use of the term 'machines' is deliberately and specifically anti-humanist. They wish to irrevocably displace human consciousness from the centre of the (Hegelian) scheme of things and restore the importance of the physical, the emerging emphasis on the body and the conative (*conatus*) that they find in Spinoza. They argue that the desiring-machines are at work everywhere, breathing, heating, eating, shitting, fucking. These machines are irretrievably connected with each other in that they receive their meaning from the particular system to which

they are coupled at anyone time – but these couplings do not contain desire, they only channel it as it flows through them. Desire ‘couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented’ in a constant entrepreneurial motion. ‘Organ-machines’ are plugged into ‘energy-source-machines’ from which they receive their life force (desire/energy), but are themselves energy-source-machines for other organ-machines, such that what is produced carries over into a new form of producing. Contrary to the conventional representation of machines, moreover, desiring-machines work only by breaking down the flow of the process that they are intended to amplify, reconnecting it somewhere else. Here, however, we might argue that this breaking down does not mean ceasing to work in the usual sense of the term. Instead it implies a process of extraction and interruption, (removal, deduction or cutting) – to allow the desiring-machine to continue to subsist, and for its own flows of desire/energy to be appropriated by other desiring-machines – in other words, to give it, however temporarily, an object. The desiring-machine of the anus uses the products of the desiring-machine of the intestine, which uses the products of the desiring machine of the stomach, which uses the products of the desiring-machine of the mouth, which uses the desiring-machine of the flow of milk of a herd of dairy cattle. There is no desiring subject here – merely an endless flow of desire/energy, of producing. Desire, then, from Hegel onwards driven by the acquisitive principle of the subject in search of a lacking object, becomes a productive process with multiple objects but without any subject.

The subject only appears as the result of repression of the real nature of desire. In Bataille this repression is achieved by cultural prohibitions. Deleuze and Guattari argue that desire is arrested by the Body without Organs. The BwO exists in many forms – full or empty, intense or exhausted – and without a specific image (although many images may be motivated by it). It may be any phenomenon that arrests or obstructs the free flow of desire – such that the BwO of the capitalist entrepreneur is capital. Desire, with all its productive power, becomes appropriated by capital. The object of desire becomes capital itself, which allows its repositioning as the origin of production, rather than its surplus. Capital now appears as the productive power of life, not the desire that it channels, and at the present time global capitalism (in self-satisfied conjunction with liberal democracy) is tempted to view itself as triumphant – the ultimate BwO in the form of Hardt and Negri’s Empire.

Within a perspective of desire as lack, desire desires its own extinction if desire only arises as a want to be satisfied. Desire desires its own

death. Deleuze and Guattari set themselves against any idea of a death drive, and consequently present desire as production/consumption, deliberately and non-dialectically de-emphasizing destruction. For them desire's desire is the proliferation of desire – with neither subject nor utility.

### **Desire as Collection and Dispersal**

An alternative recognition of the double nature of desire is offered by Bob Cooper who discusses it in a way that enables a more direct connection to self-identity and identity work. Cooper argues that human beings are themselves incomplete – the existence of others in alterity confirms this as it did for Plato and Hegel – and that self-image can only persist if it is recovered from a remaking process involving human bodies, their parts and non-human part objects which are the basic raw material for the production and reproduction of society and culture, as Deleuze and Guattari would agree. Desire is an energy which depends on dispersion and loss in order to be renewed – it reassembles identity by collection or recollection and simultaneously disperses self-identity (and re-cognises that dispersion) because every moment of differentiation of self from other recognises a similarity of self-in-other, an alterity that is not radical. Bersani and Dutoit argue that identity is constituted by repetition out of the 'placeless relational mobility' of dispersion, but also that 'there is no moment of self-identification that is not also self-multiplication or dispersal'. Desire then is an autonomous process of collection-dispersion, a play of convertibility from connection to connection, exchange to exchange, a desire for dispersion. Cooper notes that this form of desire is a desire for association through play. Where desire as lack, wish fulfilment or even discourse display the features of collection, seeking specificity, locatability, meaning and significance, this form of desire – as proliferation – seeks dispersion, the general and the transcendent. For Bataille this dispersion may be sacrificial, orgiastic, transgressive or all three, a bid to assert individual sovereignty by evading the rules imposed by Sovereignty, the sovereign Other – whilst merging with a diffuse or collective other. But it is always grounded in corporeality. This dispersion is a giving, a generosity which is fundamentally ethical, a reaching out to the other that embraces learning rather than domination. For Levinas the two modes of response to alterity are question or welcome which, when put together, reflexivity makes ethical without relying on deontology. By arguing for desire as proliferation and dispersion, desire as collection/lack does not disappear, as the two processes are irreducible and implicated in each other – as are life and death, love and dread. Collection/lack circulates in mutuality in the



diffuse space of dispersion/proliferation, bricolating the assemblages of identity within the broader social meshworks of the rhizome.

### **Manifesto: Eroticizing the Business School (EBS)**

If we're going to change the Business School, we have to start where it is now. So here are a dozen bullet points to get us going:

1. Deconstruct the current curriculum, especially in OB. To what extent does it depend on unarticulated assumptions of desire as lack? How does this drift toward the obsessions of delirium?
2. Transgressively reinscribe it with elements of the erotic. Take each topic and ask how it would be different if desire were viewed as force or dispersion. Taking, for example, the traditional leadership approaches that concentrate on task or process, rethink them in terms of collection/dispersion. How does leadership change if you do this? Try it with other concepts like motivation. Then the rest, including strategy.
3. Reconfigure power. If it's a consideration at all it will be via politics, managing change or negotiation, possibly in terms of career and as a personal rather than a social phenomenon. Shift the underpinnings to dispersal and movement and think how its changes? What new character does resistance take on? Whatever happened to Charles Handy?
4. Intensify networks. They will be considered in terms of exchange – of value, knowledge *etc.*, with trust as an important epiphenomenon. Think of them intensively, as Deleuze does. Now how does trust change?
5. Sustain desire, not the environment. Sustainability needs to be rethought in terms of the erotic, when it will have consequences for both innovation and conservation, in a very different field of mutuality.
6. Interact. Let that interaction build, shape and change the becoming of the curriculum. Forget accrediting bodies. Validate and challenge your own ideas and experiences – let the limit-experience be your limit.
7. Tell and retell stories. Think about it.
8. Doubt yourselves. Doubt your motivations. Kick the ass of your own arrogance. Enjoy it. Get high.
9. Embrace the dark side of organization. Acknowledge its oppression and the poverty it can both create and on which it depends. Think how desire is present here. Do something about it.
10. Put bodies back in. Feel the curriculum.

11. Throw away business ethics. Replace it with eroticization. Now how can that be ethical?
12. Tear this up, talk to each other and let your own inspirations guide you. There will be a market, believe me.

## EVIL

*Ruud Kaulingfreks*

There never has been so much evil as that which has been done in the name of goodness for mankind. Much harm is done in the name of care for the other. Because some people see it as their task to coach, help, assess, empower and develop others. By so doing they claim an insight into the right way to live and to act and set standards for others to follow. They implicitly judge and make them follow a path that only they know.

Let there be no misunderstanding. It is evil to think of one person being further, more successful, higher up in a hierarchy, senior and intellectually superior to others. It is evil to think one person can manage another. And it is certainly evil to think of somebody else as an asset or a resource. Even if the other is considered 'the most valuable asset' or 'the richest resource'. People are not resources and certainly are no assets. They can only be conceived as such from a deep disdain and an even deeper arrogance fed by the firm belief that every man should follow the same path as the manager of the assets. Only by denying the possibility of different ways of acting can one consider being successful. By setting the standard, by considering oneself as the keeper of the right way, one can set out to coach others, to assess them and to manage them. Or, to expect, or even demand, others to seek guidance.

In organizations evilness is common practice. To such an extent that it is not an exaggeration to say that organizations are guided by a profound mistrust and contempt for people. This is not something to really be bothered about. The evilness lies in that it is presented as philanthropy and a concern for human wellbeing. A whole system conspires to make people think that the only way to fulfil one's existence is to follow the path of the organization. To become a manager and be responsible for others. To have a bigger span of control. To climb in the hierarchy. To be successful.

Before somebody is offended by what has been said I have to point out that the previous remarks are in no way *ad hominem*. They are directed towards a logic, a discourse that in no way is perceived as evil but brings us to such a position. The logic of organizations thrives on a disdain for people but is perceived as the proper way to deal with others. It is in no way a personal matter or a lack of virtue. Perfectly moral people can engage in evil things, despite their will. It suffices to be involved in a morally suspect environment. I'm not suggesting that either. The point so far is that a perfectly moral and well respected discourse like the one of organizations causes a great deal of harm. We should be aware of that. Defending the discourse as an intrinsically ethical and caring discourse is on the other hand evil. It closes the eyes for the disdain it has for people and negates the possibility of alternatives. It makes the discourse totalitarian because there is no escape from it. Expecting people to be coached and to be 'the most valuable asset' is acceptable as a form of mistrust but becomes oppressing when presented as social responsibility.

Business schools should pay attention to this contempt and make students aware of it. By presenting the world of organizations as something desirable and socially responsible. By adhering to the organizational standard of success and respectability, they reinforce evilness and harm students.

So, there are some arguments at stake here: the supposed humanism of organizations, especially of HRM, and the totalitarianism of organizational logic; but first and foremost there is evilness.

## **Evil**

Ethics has taught us over and over again that evil should be overcome. The reason being quite simple: evilness causes harm and pain. We don't like to be victims and to suffer. The best way to avoid being victimized is not to infer pain. If nobody does it then nobody will suffer. The predominant idea of ethics is that in an original state man was like an animal and capable of all sorts of harm deriving from his egoism. Culture civilized man and morally educated him by inculcating moral precepts. These precepts protect us from evil. However, they quickly become laws and everybody is subjected to them. At this point ethics becomes prescriptive and is reinforced by the state. We have for instance the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man. Laws are, by their nature, universal. They don't take into account specific situations or people. The result is that the moral laws become a definition of human nature. Human 'nature' understood in the sense of those qualities which pertain to the human. We are

all free for instance. From there we can identify evil as that which does not adjust to the law. At the same time it gives a justification for imposing the law. The other is identified as evil, as the president of the USA has demonstrated recently. The law gives the political power to demand submission and of course the moral supremacy of the one who abides. We are all equal and free and other people should adapt to our freedom. Evil is eradicated by imposing a universal goodness and by enunciating human qualities. We know who we are and what we are: well respected members of a democratic community.

The central point here is the supposed knowledge of what man is. Ever since Plato and Socrates we have been preoccupied with attaining this knowledge: Know thy self! This Greek maxim implies that we don't know ourselves, and Socrates demonstrated the value of searching for this knowledge. He never said he had found it. On the contrary! The importance of the maxim lies in its invitation to research. Not in finding (or even 'founding') an answer. Even more, we consider filling in the assignment an extremely dangerous and harmful thing to do. This is precisely what a moral law does. By universalizing moral qualities man becomes detached from circumstances and relationships. He becomes a stable category, unchangeable, predictable, and accountable. All very handy indeed. This is a way of depriving man of all his creativity, the power to wonder, the capacity for change, and the adaptability of power. It is reducing man to a thinking machine, only capable of making calculations, and makes him a prisoner of his utilitarian logic. All passions become automatically evil and must therefore be suppressed. The pretension of knowing human nature equates to castration, to transforming man into an ox. Very strong indeed and able to pull the immense weight of capitalist society. Like an Atlas carrying all the sorrows of the world on his back. To enunciate human nature is to domesticate man and to make him available for work. After all, the qualities of human nature perfectly match the qualities of that servant needed by organizations.

By reducing man to a law of human nature – to his human rights – is to forget everything that responds to chance, to eradicate that which is unaccountable and new, experimental, impulsive, hedonistic, pleasurable, perverse, passionate, and sensual, unstable, capricious, inconstant, unsteady, volatile, giddy, hysterical, laughable, stupid, moody, whimsical, tempered, grumpy, crabby, sentimentalist, humorous, and circumstantial.

The capacity of man to be wrong, to fail, to amaze himself, to change directions on a hunch, is corrected into useful goodness. In short, the

articulation of a human nature, the pretension to know who we are, harms and can be considered evil. As such, there is no more evil than the one being done in the name of goodness. We should stay far away from knowing ourselves. And again, this is not to say that Socrates was wrong. His imperative should be understood as an invitation to research, but not to find it. We definitely do not know who we are.

It may be evil, but man has an undeniable right to trespass, to bend the self imposed rules, to be inconsistent with his own principles when the circumstances ask for it. The right and need to be in infraction is the ground for every freedom. We need to have a choice and the chance to leave duty and nature aside in order to follow a hunch or incongruent whim. We need the possibility of being bad, of surprising ourselves by doing what we never thought possible and maybe disgusted by afterwards, or even ashamed. But only afterwards! There must be space for the unexpected and, perhaps, the unwanted. The right to transgress and to be gratuitous can never be denied, however unsettling this may be.

Not fundamentally taking the unexpected into account is the greatest evil, no matter how ethical and respectable it may appear.

Annunciating and articulating human nature have done too much evil. By pinning it down in words. Everything one could say about it falls short, and so it should be. We can only speak tentatively, gropingly. That is denying what one has said, contradicting oneself, speaking temporally, and perhaps even lying. At all cost making sure it is in no way more than a hunch and only treated as likely – a possibility. We will never attain certainty on this matter and by so doing we make room for the continuous search of who and what we are. One of the forms of evil is wanting at all cost to name the unsayable.

This can be seen as a disaster, comparable to a mayor earthquake, because it makes us homeless by forcing us to live in the prefab *ersatz* homes of formulas, and imposes political truth that we have to follow. It cuts off the possibility of our own search. Articulating the unsayable endangers us to the truth. We even may think that we have achieved the summit of the Olympus. We should know that this is Hubris and is punishable by becoming blind. Once we articulate, it becomes that articulation. Language is always reification and a tautology. Naming the unsayable makes us blind for what is beyond our knowledge and by that, it conceals what is beyond our sphere of influence. We then literally grab everything and have it in our power of speech. It

then makes us blind for the reality of what is said. We only hear the speech.

Now, that is evil!

All in all evil is the conviction that we are capable to articulate what and who we are and to name the unsayable. It is to pretend that we know the truth and that we are good. There is no more evil than the claim of being good!

### **Humanism of Organization**

Organizations nowadays boast about the care they take with the employee. Since much more money is to be made with knowledge and services, instead of products, the worker comes to the fore. It is all about knowledge and services. Those exist only in the mind of people. But minds are quite difficult to control from the outside. Giving the worker a sense of ease enhances productivity. And he must be motivated. A whole new humanist discourse has appeared wherein workers are presented as the core of the organization. He is not just a worker anymore but also a professional who acts and thinks independently and does not need to be told to do the right thing. Personnel changed into HRM and even HRD in order to underline the humanity of it all. The human factor is the most valuable asset, the human capital of the organization, and the boss is a manager by objectives who helps the professional to learn from his mistakes. Together they grow and are in a permanent learning curve where motivation and innovation is at the centre of attention. How this rhetoric really looks in practice, has best been shown on TV in the sitcom *The Office*... Is there anything else to add to the massive recognition of the painful humour of the series?

All this is done for the greater good of the employee, of course. Since organizational hierarchy also means intellectual excellence, it is no more than natural that the manager will help his subordinates, coach them and help them to learn. This is done from the strong conviction of doing good. The subordinate is expected to seek guidance and to follow advice. This advice is – almost – always in accordance with the organizational goals. What is mainly expected of the professional is that he motivates himself to act according to the organization and to be in agreement with it. Not to doubt the policy or to have a different opinion. He is not expected to follow orders but to put his soul in accordance with what is expected. It used to be that only the hands were at stake in production organizations, but this has changed today to personalities. It is our very personality that is at risk today. The professional as a resource has a personality that matches the goals of

the enterprise. Therefore the image of man organizations deal with is a very particular one. A very useful one. Only those aspects of the person who are professional are expected. All non-utilitarian aspects are filtered down. Man becomes more a mockery than a real human being. Frustrations, fears, being unreasonable, headaches, anger, fantasies, neurosis, laziness, being difficult, are not supposed to be part of this humanity. It is the same thing with knowledge. Only those intellectual results that match the job are defined as knowledge. Only utilitarian hunches exist. Silliness has no place, nor does absurdity, sidelines, games, etc. After all, organizations deal with professionals. A professional is opposed to an amateur, or to somebody who does something simply for the joy of it. Professionals are not supposed to enjoy what they do as the use of the word in football clearly demonstrates. A professional foul is committed, for all practical purposes, but it is not necessary to really 'mean' it. To play it professionally is to play in a very boring and sterile way.

The point is that all this professionalism and all this rhetoric about humanity in organizations only implies care and goodness. It sets a standard for being human and for the proper, natural way to behave. It becomes a moral law of helping and coaching each other. The requirements of the organization become morality and workers comply with it as being their nature. It goes without saying that all this care for others takes a very S.M.A.R.T. form and is therefore reduced to formulas as an aid for self-analysis. The professional is in this respect also somebody who is very much aware of his own personality. A whole industry of consultants, management trainers, HRM experts, motivational gurus and the like, help the manager and professional to know himself, to be in control of his own personality and to use his USP's in order to be successful. The unsayable is not only articulated but also put to use for success and respectability.

### **Totalitarianism**

All this is done in the best of intentions and from a morally sound perspective. Still, it is evil. Not only because of the imposed goodness and compulsory care but mainly because it impedes the capacity to be 'not good' in ways other than the approved (but routinely denied and disguised) sense. It reduces man to a working machine, dependent on the appraisal of the organization. It makes man psychically and emotionally subordinate to a logic of being that assumes it can be in control, to a universal law of being professional and making a career. It accepts without question the dynamics of 'organizational logic' and the idea that we all act from egoism. Only dealing in order to obtain gains, helping and coaching others, not for the others sake, but for



the sake of 'the organization'. Seeing the whole world as something in need to be managed and constantly making the balance of gains and losses. Survival of the fittest with only place for the winners and the reproduction of a totalitarian work ethic that goes before all other inclinations.

In other words it is all about respectability and success. All alternatives disappear or become automatically suspect and even evil to the extent that we become ashamed of ourselves if we do not follow this reasonable path. Indeed the greatest evil is done in the name of goodness. There is no alternative because it is goodness itself that leads reason. It is even seen as freedom.

And the business schools? They prepare for it. They train in the humanist logic of imposed care. They cut off the alternatives for the proper work ethic. They teach students to be ashamed of their laziness and contingency. They make successful managers out of people. And they don't warn anybody about the harm that all this implies. It is time the business school starts thinking about the harm they do and to detach themselves from the standard idea of success prevalent in organizations. In other words the business school of the future should start thinking about the question of evil in the name of goodness.

How can we get rid of all this goodness?

# FUCKING

*Martin Parker*

## **The Business School of Tomorrow: 1**

I have a dream about the future of management education. A vision of a world in which the tawdry will no longer need to be justified, and the wide open spaces of thought and fun beckon. A world in which the joys and passions of human organizing can be given the attention that they deserve, and the smell of unwashed insecurity that clings to old CVs and needy students will be washed away in the breeze. Follow me into this world! Dare to be different!

## **Dumb Fuck**

It is common amongst the young to want to shock their elders. Snot nosed punks swearing on TV shows in front of pompous presenters with bad haircuts. Possessed by the idea that they are the first generation to escape the repressed swamp of their fucked up mums and dads, handing on misery to each other that deepens like a coastal shelf. Such hubris, such immodesty. After all, there's nothing clever about showing your bum in public is there?

For a forty-something academic dad with a baggy belly to write on fucking is perhaps even more desperate. Like the menopausal male sports car, this essay smells of fear and self-delusion. 'Oh look at me! Look how radical I am! I am young at heart, and (though important and well paid) I am still an angry young man!' But worse is to come. What if that academic works in a Business School, not a Cultural Studies department? What if they spend their labour time teaching, administrating and writing in order that the cash cow can be milked, in order that the university can swagger through its ruins, in order that orders will continue to be followed? Surely now we are beyond laughing behind our hands at this Professor who uses hair thickener, and into the realms of condemning his ugliest hypocrisy? But he is clever, this faux revolutionary, because he eviscerates himself first, and yet still tinkles on, charmed by his own reflexivity. (And nowadays, reflexivity is something that you can never have too much of.)

## **Fuck You**

In 1965, the British Broadcasting Corporation screened an episode of *The Eamonn Andrews Show* which centred around a live televised debate on censorship. During the debate, the theatre critic, Kenneth Tynan said 'I don't think there are any reasonable people to whom the word 'fuck' would be considered particularly shocking or offensive.' This was the first time that the word fuck was used on British television, and it caused considerable outrage. The House of Commons produced four separate motions signed by 133 Labour Party and Tory backbenchers, and Mary Whitehouse (a well known public defender of public and private morality) wrote a letter to the Queen in which she suggested that Tynan 'ought to have his bottom spanked'. In response, the BBC produced a formal apology and Tynan's television career never recovered.

Alas, poor Kenneth. He was, of course, absolutely right. There are no reasonable people to whom the word 'fuck' could be imagined to be particularly offensive, assuming that Ken and I are merely talking amongst ourselves, as reasonable people do. But still, forty years later, the appearance of the word in a newspaper, before the 'watershed' on TV, in a pop song, said by a politician, in a manifesto, in a CV (and so, endlessly, on) would still provoke some irritation, some complaint, some apology. So there is still a boundary here, and we should take care to understand its contours well. If we don't, we might fall foul of language and morality, and who the fuck would want that?

The most obvious way of beginning to articulate this boundary would be to say that fuck marks the spot where the profane begins. When Tynan, or the Sex Pistols, said that word, they showed where public morality both ended and began. As Emile Durkheim (and many structuralists since) suggested, such boundaries are functional for social groups, since they define what 'we' are and what 'they' are. If 'we' didn't have 'them' to show us what we are not, then where the fuck would we all be? So fuck is a kind of organising principle, an insertion that marks the difference between this and that. Fair enough, but there seems to be the need to insert some historicity and some multiplicity here in order to complicate Durkheim's important insight. For a start, Tynan's or Johnny Rotten's 'fuck', clearly no longer means the same after all the endless FCUKs that have paraded down the global high streets of the 1990s. Tynan's brillcremed hair and tight collar mean that he comes from an age before sexual liberation and class emancipation. Back then, the boundary itself was black and white. (Or so the TV shows.) Now, FCUK has become so normal, so quickly, and made so

much money that who really gives a fuck? Though plenty of tut-tutting had been tutted about the French Connection makeover (from both the new Mary Whitehouses and the anti-corporates) this is clearly a different situation than forty years previously, when Tynan would probably have ended up in Reading gaol had he branded himself with FCUK product on the Beeb. The times, they are a'changing. What's the frequency Kenneth?

But twist history and imagine Tynan wearing that FCUK T-shirt. Difficult, because this is something he himself would probably have found shocking and offensive to reasonable people. This is not merely because of historical change, because of the shifting boundaries of decency, but also of the multiplicities of context that inflect any use of any word. Tynan was not a T-shirt man then, and (as a 'reasonable' man) would probably not wear a FCUK one now. ('Philosophy Football' perhaps, but more likely still something with a collar.) Fuck (and fcuk) is not everywhere, all of the time. You can not say fuck where the fuck you like, but yet are positively encouraged to cuss it up big time in other places and times. (And always have been.) If you are a man's man. Or a certain sort of woman. Or over a certain age. Or not at work. Or not at home. Or not in front of people of a certain age. Class, gender, age, place, timing and all the other endless etceteras help us to explain why it is just fine to shout fuck at some football matches, but not at most interviews. And this manifesto? Fuck knows.

This is all nicely complicated now, and though we can see that there are rules, it is difficult to treat these social facts as things. In fact, the boundary between fuck and flip is not in one place, but actually in many places that are themselves always in movement. Less a boundary than an endless multiple involution of language and morality, a fucking playground and a minefield of meaning.

### **This is Fucking Great**

Fuck is a splendid word. It is a word that moves with such speed from the mouth, like a firework, and can be aimed with such ferocity and gentleness to illuminate so many things. And the really fucking amazing thing about fuck is that it contains its own multiplicities, that its contexts can be found within it too. Fuck is not just one symbol (the four letter word) being moved around in different ways by different people, but is already many different things.

It can be used as a transitive verb ('she fucked me'), a description of a state of affairs ('fucked up'), a noun insult ('you fuck'), an act of betrayal ('he fucked her over'), an intransitive verb ('we fucked all

night'), a sexual compliment ('a great fuck'), an insulting modifier ('your fucking manifesto'), an approving modifier ('fucking great manifesto'), an intensifier ('the fucking manifesto!'), a refusal ('fuck that'), a negative or positive ejaculation ('fuck!') and probably many more depending on the stuff that surrounds it. It seems that fuck can mean what the fuck it wants and (if it weren't for the fact that one fuck sounds pretty much the same as another), you might even be able to construct an entire language from differently inflected fucks. This would be a fizzing language of fireworks, of violence, laughter and passion, with little room for the civilising process or the clock tick-tock (and rustling page) of the study.

It would be so tidy if fuck were found to be a revolutionary word, and if violence, laughter and passion were to become revolutionary emotions. The cries of 'Fucking Management', the FUCK WORK sticker, and [www.fucktheboss.com](http://www.fucktheboss.com). If fuck was a word owned by the free at heart, a word that could sidle up to bourgeois moralists and spit its contempt in their ear. The problem is that fuck owes its allegiance to no-body, and to every-body. It is just as easy to fuck the workers, fuck women and hate those fucking queers. It is a charming mercenary that should never be trusted, but that can not be ignored. Fuck won't be organised, because it already organises its own excess. The word escapes restricted economies, refuses to follow orders, and bites the fat professorial hand that types it.

Fuck is whizzing all over the fucking place, and can't be put back on its shelf.

### **Mani-fucking-festo?**

When a word is in-fucking-sorted into another word, it is called tmesis. You can fuck a word with fuck, both change it and amplify it. Like a triple underline in red and chain of exclamation marks the word now screams 'Look at me! Look how radical I am! I am young at heart, and (though important and well thought of) am still an angry young word!'

Manifestos are such strident little creatures. They demand things, and insist on things. They stand on soapboxes with high hoarse voices denouncing today and celebrating tomorrow. They are sure of their ground, and treat any doubt as treachery against futurism. So how can a manifesto contain 'F is for Fuck', when fuck refuses to stay still and be contained as resistance or power or noun or verb or tomorrow or today? What if fuck isn't a four letter word at all, but a movement of violence, laughter and passion that refuses to be aimed at something

by the manifest purposes of any editors? What if the alphabetical fuck leaked out across the pages to E and G, and reproduced itself through them as a tmesis that infected the entire A to Z. Such a seminal corruption that might generate lots of other things between the lines. That always already does, whether fuck is there or not, whether anyone intends it or not. (Reflexive or not.)

### **The Business School of Tomorrow: 2**

It is spring. We approach through long grass, climbing through a hole in the fence, over what was some landscaped mound, and can see the ruins of other structures in the distance. From a distance, it still looks impressive, but as you get closer you can see that most of the windows are smashed, and some doors are hanging off their hinges. We crunch across broken glass and the building creaks and sighs. There is no one at the reception desk, and most of the offices contain rusting filing cabinets and the disembowelled remains of computers. There is graffiti: 'AGAINST MANAGEMENT', 'FUCK THE BOSSES' – and what looks like piles of shit in some of the corners. Above, in the glass atrium, hang the remains of a mouldering modern mobile, and mounds of dry leaves and mouse droppings rustle in the corridors as we pass. There has been a fire in the Dean's office, and we see dark stains on the desk of the Director of Research. One of the lecture theatres has a leak in the roof, and now small trees and crawling vines are growing amongst the seating.

In the library, almost nothing has been touched, but the damp smell of decay is overwhelming. The books are fattening as they absorb moisture, and the worms and moths are feasting between the lines. A cemetery of forgotten books. We cover our faces with cloth and tip toe down the miles of aisles. The books are bulging, hairy and damp. One of them has been forced onto a puddle in the floor by the fattening of its companions. It was a small elegant volume, nicely typeset, published by Dvalin Press of Finland. It is called *Manifestos for the Business School of Tomorrow*, which we agree is an interesting title. Sadly, the pages are curled and the ink has run, so it is almost illegible now. All the pages appear to be smeared with the remains of their neighbours, and no sense can be made from such confusion. Tmesis.

We drop it back in its puddle. The waterlogged roof groans a little, so we hurry to leave, afraid that we might never escape if the whole structure starts to collapse. Outside, the sun is shining, so we go and have some fun.

## GIFTS

*Pierre Guillet de Monthoux*

Business as usual is understood  
As hard and tough  
But  
When we have come to G  
Why not a G as in Gentle and Good?

A G might of course  
Be a G as in Gain  
Or a G as in Greed  
Full of need, sweat and pain  
Should G in business be hard or soft?  
That's the question  
Begging a suggestion:  
'Gain and Gift support each other'

Which might seem  
To the groups below a true blaspheme

First there is a group that fiercely insists  
On G as in Gain  
The economists  
They drill and train us to see satisfaction  
As deriving from barter, exchange and transaction  
Therefore most MBA's simply can't see  
That the best lunches in life are Gorgeous and free

Economist eggheads make business a narration  
Based on digits and pairs as in schoolbook equations  
Existence to them makes accounts balance  
Spontaneous giving doesn't stand a chance  
For all that do not come in doubles  
Must be ignored to avoid theoretical troubles



The second group hold ideas somewhat the same  
For it sees business as Gamble and Game  
And a Gambler always leaves out unsaid  
The hope for a Gain in the back of his head  
Gratuitous actions never find admission  
Amongst those affected by that suspicion

A third group connected to those above cited  
Provides a perspective that makes them united  
They firmly believe economic progress  
Will civilize primitive excess  
So all Generous Giving in due time will change  
Into market transactions for global exchange

Claim G is a Gift  
And the groups dominating business schools  
Will immediately condemn you as humbugs or fools  
For only in a backward isolated tribe  
Can a Gift be more than simply a bribe

Still books and papers abound of reports  
Of things done in business of a different sort  
For what theory and thinking so sadly delete  
Takes place every day in the real and concrete

The big blind spot on the business school map  
Can paradoxically be filled by rereading the chap  
Mostly quoted by those who feel  
Good business is just a smart deal

Long before *Wealth of Nations* Adam Smith was revealing  
That even Greedy Scrooges had the fellow feeling  
That makes the difference and shapes  
Businessmen of apes

For even business brutes throw parties and make feasts  
They cannot help be Generous although they fare like beasts  
The false idea that deals are clinched in jungles is illusion  
For markets, so says Adam Smith, are social institutions

And institution, says Marcel Mauss  
And others we this G will make us hear  
Are social networks; not snake pits of chaos and fear

For every rip off artist and profiteer needs a stage  
Markets, corporations or firms are generous theatres  
For performing greedy plays of profit, loss or wage  
Mauss and Malinowski and all who study business from Wall Street  
to Bali  
Tell us that it always takes both Kula and Gimwali  
So in conclusion:  
To make G as Gain or Grab or Greed work nice and swift  
We need G as in Gift

# HUMANITY

*René ten Bos*

The philosophical city knows of only one evil. Sophistry is its name. It is embodied by certain parvenu-like and invariably well-dressed people who earn a living by teaching the younger inhabitants of the city lessons about wisdom and beautiful speech. Sophists make a lot of money. Protagoras of Abdera, the first philosopher identified as a sophist, is reputed to charge a fee of roughly 100 *minae* which would now amount to about 150,000 American dollars. It is true, a course by Protagoras can take more than a year, but it is by any standard a gurguesque fee. In terms of rewards, the organization of sophistry can certainly be seen as a predecessor of the contemporary business school.

Plato, poor Plato, hates anything that is fashionable and is at pains to combat the evil of sophistry. He argues that sophists are immersed in a web of lies: they are mixers, artisans, technicians, or manufacturers of untruth. Nowadays, we read the same stuff about management gurus and about business schools. Not everything that Plato says, however, would resonate with contemporary criticisms of business schools. Sophists, he argues must violate the worthiness of philosophy because they have worked with their bodies. Before they become sophists, they were porters, wrestlers, in short, people who used their filthy bodies. That is surely something that can neither be said of managers nor of business schools. It should come as no surprise that Plato's book about the republic has oftentimes been interpreted as the first handbook for management.

Plato's complaints about the artisans of words are particularly sordid: he speaks about dwarfish people with vulgar occupations that cannot but mutilate the soul. The sophist is, according to Plato, a workman who gave up work but who has in no way been able to ward off the physical and mental deformities that is its inevitable result. Rich he may be, but he continues to be dwarfish, mutilated, and vulgar. This is, of course, what only a real philosopher (such as Plato himself or Socrates) is able to see. Evil is always ugly – especially when it is keeping

up appearances. Socrates, for that matter, never kept up appearances. We know that. Indeed, his shameless ugliness is what made him so beautiful. It is better to confront those who are responsible for the management of the state with a guy like him than with ugly dwarfs who can never lay off their dwarfishness.

Here is a question that I would like to ask: Is the business school of the future a place for ugly dwarfs who have experienced with their bodies the all-importance of money or a place for beautiful Platonists who feel only disdain for those who need bodies in order to obtain money?

\* \* \*

If we are to believe Plato, sophists are ugly. But did they *think* or *say* ugly things? Let us go back to Protagoras who is the first and therefore the most important of the entire bunch. Unfortunately, nothing of his written word survives. But we know from other texts that he spoke many beautiful words and one of these words I had to learn by heart when I was a student of philosophy: 'Man is the measure of all things, of those which are that they are, and of those which are not, that they are not'.

This is what pisses the true Platonist off. According to him, the sophist is a harbinger of evil. If it is true that man is the measure of all things, then wisdom or sensible speech will become virtually impossible. Nothing is a thing in itself for it is only a thing for you, for me, or for someone else. The same thing, depending on your or my 'measure', can be light for me or heavy for you. In fact, the very idea of sameness is jettisoned by the sophists. Everything has become relative and since what appears to me now will not necessarily be what appears to you or what will appear to me tomorrow, everything has become subject to change. And if everything becomes both relative and transient, how the hell can the sophist claim that wisdom is still possible? And mind you, this is exactly what he claims when he pretends to be teaching. What the sophist stands for is evil for his ideas deny the possibility of truth and wisdom. And what would life in the city of philosophical citizens be if both cannot be attained?

How does the sophist respond? No, no, you get me wrong, Socrates. I do not deny the possibility of wisdom or even its existence. On the contrary, I claim that wisdom is available for a man, provided that he is able to change the bad things appearing to him into good things. Things can be made better, and what I mean by this is not that they

can be made more truthful but that they can be made more useful, more beneficial, or more healthy. In fact, this is what my musings about the human measure are all about. It is simply narrow-minded to think of truth as something which is on a par with betterment or quality. *Things can be better without being truer.* Truth, in other words, is not a category which is indispensable to the good life. Usefulness and health are. Yet, they are not the same to everyone, to any *man*. Anyway, wisdom doesn't need the bloody truth.

In a manifesto we should, perhaps, not quote, but 'shoot from the hip'. Well, John Wayne decided to consult some famous political manifestos and guess what he did encounter? Right. An awful lot of quotes! He even consulted management manifestos (for example, *Business Process Redesign: A Manifesto for a Business Revolution*) and came across a lot of highly intelligent and beautiful quotes. To shoot from the hip is fine with John, but manifestos should not be stupid (even though they can be stupid). It is well known how doubtful Marx and Engels were about their particular manifesto: they even added footnotes to it. So, I have already inserted a rather short quote and now I will insert a rather lengthy one and then I will engage in an awkward albeit brief philosophical discussion about this:

I do know many things which are unbeneficial for men – foods and drinks and drugs and countless others – but are still beneficial, and some which are neither beneficial nor unbeneficial for men, but are beneficial for horses; some only for oxen, and others for dogs. And then some which are not beneficial to any of these, but are beneficial to trees; and some which are good for the roots of the tree, but bad for its branches, just as dung is good when it's laid on the roots of any plant, but if you put it on the young branches and shoots, it destroys everything. Then, also, oil is utterly bad for all plants and is extremely damaging to the hair of all animals except man. In fact, it's actually beneficial to men's hair, and to the rest of the body. And the good is something so varying and manifold, that this particular thing is good for men's bodies, externally, while, internally, the very same thing is extremely bad.

I do not know what you might think but I love this passage. It is the kind of thinking that Plato attributes to Protagoras. I admire the subtlety with which the speaker moves from the human to the animal and from the animal to the thing and then from the thing back again to the human. Man may be the measure of all things, but it seems

that Protagoras adopts a far more radical standpoint: each thing, alive and lifeless, is its own measure. If we understand this, then we can also understand how easy it is to go from man to animal and from animal to things and vice versa. There are only zones of indeterminacy between them.

So then, why is this evil? Badiou, contemporary Platonic radical and self-declared militant and defender of drastic deeds in our pusillanimous lives, argues that the sophist's relativism privileges meaning over truth. For a bloke like Gorgias, nothing truly exists, nothing can be truly apprehended, and nothing can be truly communicated. Only rhetoric, Gorgias claims, reigns supreme. For Badiou, this merely opens the door to religion: there is no truth with which to refute the zealots of this world. One should bear in mind that religion's hallmark is its perennial search for meaning rather than for truth. Such a search – there can be no misunderstanding about this – must be steeped in blood. However, this is something which can only be grasped by truly non-religious people and not by those who seek inspiration in the work of contemporary sophists such as Nietzsche or Wittgenstein. These are, in fact, religious people who think that they know about truths whereas they are only consumers and producers of that most deadly thing of all: meaning. If Nietzsche, this unthinking idiot, is right in claiming that truth is an army of metaphors and metonymies and nothing else, then we have skilfully destroyed truth. Yes, Nietzsche's silly and evil agenda is to replace mathematics by poetry. As a consequence, we are bogged down in a deadly relativism which feeds on the market of meanings and has done in with any concept of truth. Only Plato, Descartes, and others who embrace the truth of mathematics can save us from this miserable state of affairs.

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Protagoras is the biggest culprit of all for the relativist misery started with him. The best way to counteract this evil tendency is to rephrase or rework the infamous quote: 'Man is the measure of all things ...'. You proceed in two steps. First, you flatly deny that man is the measure of all things. Whatever measure there is, it must lie outside man, in an objective realm to which men can only aspire by dint of mathematics and philosophy. Second, and this is the truly important step, you turn man himself into a thing – and consequently, you will find out that he is no longer afflicted by a flux of appearing things but simply relates as a mathematically thinking subject to a world of mathematically calculable objects. In other words, the subject is the thing and the object is just what it is – an object rather than a thing, or at least a thing

that does not think. The difference between a thing and an object is that the former can, as Protagoras was fully aware, be its own measure and that the object is only an object in relation to a subject.

The subject must become a thing in order to escape the endless affliction by things of the world. The human being can only be liberated if he is rendered immune to animals and things. Protagoras's zones of indeterminacy are not particularly helpful here for they undermine this immunity. At the heart of the enlightenment lies the desire to replace the world and its things by a world of objects that is navigated by a mathematical mind. Descartes refers to this mind as a thinking thing, a *res cogitans*. The world and its objects is the 'extended thing', the *res extensa*. The thinking thing, insofar as it is a human rather than a divine thinking thing, is not only thinking. It also feels and as a feeling thing, not as a thinking thing, it relates to the extended thing. Importantly, however, it is not the body that feels but the thinking thing, that is, the mind. The body is condemned to such a level of passivity that it has almost vanished from the world. It cannot even feel, or if it feels, it does so in a confused and obscure rather than a clear and orderly way, which is why it is, for a scientist at least, utterly irrelevant. Science, Erich Kästner once argued, is what makes the world vanish. The archaeologist or the historian of art does not see a church but he sees walls, towers, icons, and other remnants from a past that is in need of mathematical or scientific clarification.

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The idea of a thing that thinks and of a non-thinking and extended thing is, of course, informed by the idea of a thing that persists: things in a Cartesian universe are, unlike things in the sophist's universe, not transient or impermanent. They subsist, they partake in substance. The shapes that a piece of wax can take, Descartes famously explains, are constantly flexible and changeable so that they are as unreliable as sophist chatter. Thing is, as Heidegger taught us, another word for reliability. From what I feel and sense, I cannot really figure out of what the wax is – it remains unclear and obscure to me, but the mind, my mind, the thinking thing that is me and that constitutes my humanity should take off the shapes of the wax as if it were clothes in order to see it 'nude'. Only the thinking thing can see the naked truth under all appearances which are deceitful. Where the world of the sophist is endlessly wrapped and folded, Descartes offers us a thinking thing that stands naked in a naked world. It is this naked thing that has come to constitute our view of humanity. Paradoxically, man and not beast has become the only naked animal in the world. Its protectors

claim that it is its very nudity that elevates the thinking thing from the animal kingdom.

If there is any sophist inspiration, then it is this: a profound desire not only to dress up the world of things but also a desire to see this world as already dressed, as tissue, as apparel, as something that can be endlessly folded. Plato and Badiou think that this is evil and their answer to evil is one grand effort to mathematically undress the world. This is why they object to poetry, fashion, clothes ... But why would we not consider the thing as clothing rather than as nudity? In a famous passage of the *Meditations*, Descartes wonders whether there are thinking things under the hats and clothes that he sees when he looks out of his window. As Perniola pointed out not very long ago, we must bring our attention to those hats and clothing rather than to the ghost and the machines.

Human life is a tissue and it takes place within a world that is itself a tissue. Not that superb thinkers such as Plato, Descartes, or Badiou would agree with this. They think the human being as a naked thing. Take Kant, another example of this baleful tendency. He would definitely condemn every effort to reduce the human being to a thing, an instrument, or resource, as unethical. No *Human Resource Management* for the famous Prussian! But his own view of the ethical subject is very thing-like. At the end of *Critique of Practical Reason*, he wonders what a human being would be if it would abide by the moral law. Would it not be an automaton, a puppet in a theatre, an automatic duck? In short, in contemplating ethics, Kant finds himself with Descartes in a world of automatons and ghosts. How could it be else? If the naked truth behind the world of appearances is the noumenal thing-in-itself (the thing stripped bare of its appearances), then this nakedness can only be apprehended by a naked human thing, a thinking thing, a thing without feeling, or a noumenal subject. As subject, man is reduced to a thing-in-itself and only as such is he able to have other things-in-itself for-itself.

You can rely on the thing. On the thing, there is *Verlässlichkeit* (reliability). Man cannot therefore be the measure of things and should become a thing in itself: naked rather than clothed, unfolded rather than wrapped up, developed rather than undeveloped. The sophist is so badly wrong because he thinks man in terms of relations: his truths are merely products of what he is and where he is rather than universal and absolute truths.



The Platonist objects to this view of the world as an all-engulfing tissue, where everything is relative, and replaces it by a topological nirvana where thinking things, ethical things, ethical automatons, and thinking automatons dwell. Things are securely placed beyond empiricism, social background and all other dismal instances of heteronomy. Now, we have autonomous thinking things capable of grasping or experiencing truths that can never be put into perspective. Admittedly, you can rely on these automated things, but haven't they left the world of sensible things, the world of animals, the world of flowers and trees, the world of perfumes, minerals, and rocks? The price to be paid for *Verlässlichkeit* (reliability) is *Verlassenheit* (solitude).

Since the Renaissance, we have increasingly embraced humanism as detached reliability. *I take sides with the sophist intervention*: we are tissue in a world of tissue. We are not naked. We are not isolated. We cannot but rely on appearances. We have meaning rather than truth.

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So, that was quite a lot of philosophical mumbo-jumbo for a manifesto. Sorry for that, dear reader. What do I expect the business school of the future to be? Expect? I don't expect nice things to happen there. There will only be more strife for reliability, courage, morality and action and as a consequence we will see more puppets, more automatons, in short, more 'things'. This is, I suggest, a profoundly stupid thing to do in an unreliable world. And it is against this that the sophists already warned us.

We need, Baudrillard once argued, delusional minds in a delusional world. We need to understand that wisdom and truth are not natural partners. We need more animals, more bodies, more filth. We need meaning rather than truth. We need drugs and alcohol rather than sobriety. We need sex rather than chastity. We need distortions of the truth. We need Leibnizan mathematics rather than Cartesian mathematics. We need baroque. We need to understand the clothes rather than the ghosts. We need sophistry rather than managerial Platonism. And most important of all, we need not feel exasperated by all our insolences and should, like the sophist, humbly welcome the money that we can earn with this.

It is always better to be an ugly dwarf than a beautiful thing.

# INDIFFERENCE

*Heather Höpfl*

The word ‘indifference’ has two distinct meanings both of which have significance for an analysis of the current state of the Business School and for speculations on the future. First, indifference means to be neutral or impartial, without prejudice, to be disinterested but, associated with this, it has also come to mean lacking in sympathy or caring, even coldness. Secondly, the word indifference can be used to mean neither good nor bad, in other words, of mediocre standard, of average performance, nothing special, of unremarkable quality and sometimes it is used in an extension of this sense to mean bad or very bad indeed, substandard, second-rate, appalling. If, for example, in response to the question, ‘Did you enjoy your meal?’ the reply is ‘It was indifferent’, we understand the other person to mean that it wasn’t very good at all. I believe that in various ways all these meanings relate to descriptions of the business school but before moving to speculate on the future, I would like to consider the present and to offer some brief recollections.

## **Indifferent Diet**

It is strange to contemplate the ways in which the expansion in higher education in the UK – a tenfold increase in the student population over a period of 40 years – has had consequences for the idea of ‘the Business School’. Not only have Business Schools become one of the main sources of income for cash-strapped universities but also the demand for places in Business Schools has shown unprecedented growth. Everyone, it seems, wants to study business, to do management. Ask most undergraduate business students what they want to do when they leave university and, leaving aside the desire to become a celebrity or famous, they answer without any suggestion of irony that they want to become management consultants, entrepreneurs, or to work in marketing. Indeed, in the last week one of our Masters students at Essex came to ask me for a reference. A young man of twenty three with no work experience whatsoever, I was surprised when he told me that he was looking for a job as a management consultant. Some students will even point out, as if to intimate some secret to the unworldly, that

that is where 'the money is'. In many universities the old sciences are struggling to attract students, engineering is in decline, mathematics departments are closing, the arts hold no attraction for students who see no vocational outcome to a course in, say, the history of art, esoteric philosophy or the classics. Students themselves are, for the most part, orderly and regulated. They work harder and more consistently than students of twenty years ago. They are motivated by success. They are conformists and conservative in their outlook. They do not rebel. They look back at the nineteen sixties with horror and disbelief. They have been captured by the promises of higher education, been transformed into customers and have come to an entirely consumerist view of what education can offer them. They pay for their education so they should be able to decide the curriculum, the scope of the subject, the content of their courses, the quality of their lecturers. They look for 'the right' university course in the way that they might seek out a new lap-top computer. They are very different from the privileged and cosseted students of twenty or more years ago. The commitment to the expansion of higher education has fulfilled two distinct objectives simultaneously. First, it has been consistent with the commitment to a participation rate in higher education of upwards of forty per cent. Secondly, and very conveniently, it has removed or postponed the prospect of high youth unemployment and, better yet, persuaded young people that they should pay for this privilege. And, when students are paying for what they get, they want courses which will guarantee them an income, enable them to pay off their student loans, provide them with prosperous futures. Perhaps this is not surprising.

However, unlike the students of twenty years ago, the students of today's factory universities are offered a fairly indifferent diet. Perhaps the notion of higher learning and the pursuit of ideas for pleasure has always been a romantic one. Suffice to say that one of my third year students of Management Psychology told me recently that what he wanted when he left university was 'a good job, a nice house, a nice car and a nice wife'. In the nineteen sixties students wanted to change the world and believed they could. In reality, most of us found we ended up with a good job, a nice house, a nice car and – at least in the short term – a nice husband or wife. At that time, students were regarded with a mixture of envy and contempt by those who paid for their education. Apart from the limited opportunities afforded by the grammar schools, most working class people had little or no prospect of a university education. I was a product of the grammar school route.

## **Indifference and Indolence**

By the time I left Helsby Grammar School, an all girls school in the north of England in 1967, I was one of only twelve girls left in the Upper Sixth. The thirty or so girls who had decided to stay on at school after O levels dropped dramatically at the end of the Lower Sixth year when so many of my fellow pupils left school to enter teacher training. Entry to teacher training college required five GCE 'O' levels and, for many of my fellow sixth formers, a career in school-teaching was the limit of their aspiration. About half of the twelve of us left and went on to university although it was still considered to be 'something to do until you get married' and even in the Sixth Form we were taught table-setting, flower arranging and other aspects of house keeping. Apart from preparation for a career in teaching, there was little encouragement towards vocational training of any sort. Career guidance was cursory. Always uncomfortable with conformity and an instinctive rebel, I was offered a place to do Production Engineering at Loughborough University. However, it was a four year course and, given that I wanted to earn a living, I opted instead to go to Bristol Polytechnic to take a course in Business Studies.

Of the fifty five people on the course in Bristol only six were women. At that time, less than five per cent of school-leavers went on to higher education and the vast majority were men. Not only this but my fellow students were predominantly Middle Class and public school. They were snobbish, arrogant, supercilious, patronising, self satisfied. Most were in Bristol to have a good time. Not up to Oxbridge, where they would all prefer to be, they were here in Bristol ostensibly studying Business when in fact the vast majority had careers that waited for them in family businesses. For these young men, it was a life of almost total indolence. Since, it mattered little whether or not they passed their examinations, most spent their time playing sport, drinking, womanising, and entertaining. The parties were wild and frequent. Being a student was about fun but always with the caveat that the serious work would start when the course ended. We made some pretence at scholarship, enjoyed intellectual conversation, read foreign books and newspapers, took pleasure in discussing art films, some of us protested and went on demonstrations. It was a time of sit-ins and the taking of university buildings. If like me, a working class girl from the north of England, you ended up in this extraordinarily privileged world, it was both a shock and a temporary respite from the grey world of ordinary working lives, the chemical industry, an absence of choice. I was exposed to the enormous difference between these wealthy students and my own impoverished upbringing. But, for most of us,

it was also a time of political realisation and the recognition of the possibility of change.

Such was student life in the nineteen sixties. The contrast here is between the controlled and ordered lives of our present students who wear their university years like a pair of comfortable shoes and the quixotic notion of student life in the nineteen sixties and seventies where 'sex and drugs and rock n'roll' went hand in hand with the idea that university life was about learning not just about academic subjects but about life, oneself, about finding one's own ways of learning, of being interested in ideas. Well, this might all sound very nostalgic but it has to be examined in the context of privilege. The student life of the 60s and 70s was for the very few. The vast majority of my fellow students were indifferent to the courses they attended, the lectures they sat through, the quality of the lectures. Eccentric lecturers were regarded as worth hearing. Scholarship most students brought with them, the product of an English boarding school education or, as in my own case, of a grammar school, and, if they liked to debate and dispute over academic issues, it was because they had been educated in a tradition of intellectual curiosity and opining. If they studied, it was almost incidental to what was on offer. It was as natural to exercise one's mind as it is now fashionable to exercise one's body. For me, it was about an encounter with privilege but it was also about the politics of the possible. To this extent, I find myself confronting a dilemma. Mass education clearly has its drawbacks but should I, therefore, conclude that education is best restricted to the few: no, of course, not.

### **Irony and Indifference**

Having said this, it is ironic that the expansion of education should have had detrimental consequences for so many. Privilege always takes care of itself and so those who would have previously benefited from higher education continue to do so. For many working class students it is an expensive but necessary means of preparing themselves for the labour market. For a student leaving university with debts in the region of £10,000, the opportunity to study comes at a high price. It is not surprising that students demand courses with a vocational content and look for courses which appear to have direct appeal to employers. At a time when university education has been made available on a greater scale than could have been imagined in the 1960s it has also been made much more like work. It is serious, worthy, arduous. Students step on the treadmill at fourteen and do no stop until they have their degree in their hands. There is no respite or time to reflect. They are output driven. In the context of this, the greatest burden of the expansion in higher education has fallen on Business Schools. In

most cases, the university Business School is not a seat of learning and does not pretend to be. It is a factory run on Tayloristic principles of standardisation, measurement and control. The temptation to rant on about how this has come about and its wider implications is to be resisted. Instead, I will focus on some specific points.

### **Indifferent to its Virtues**

Many Business Schools are now suffering both the direct and indirect consequences of the very approaches that they have adopted in order to pursue a change agenda or to pursue publicly espoused standards of quality or student service. Fashionable interventions, from successive quality initiatives across all areas of Business School activity – the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), interminable review, feedback, performance monitoring of all sorts – to endless, but always ineffective, restructuring, has left many Business Schools with the problem of disaffected and alienated staff as the gulf between idealised notions of achievable perfection and day-to-day practices has widened. This is most noticeable where the adoption of practices from manufacturing has produced a bewildering set of standards which have little relevance to the management of staff and, in particular, to university education. At the heart of this has been the tyranny of the taxonomy, a system obsessed with monition, the end of virtually all notion of academic prerogative: a streamlined system indifferent to its own virtues, selling itself according to the best principles of consumer marketing. Consequently, I would like to make a number of assertions of indifference.

### **Indifferent Categories**

The excessive emphasis on regulation and control in its many forms in university life over the past decade or so has resulted in structures of baroque proportions with all the fuss and frippery associated with this ornate style. Bureaucracy proliferates in an overabundance of elaboration, intricacy, caprice, whimsy, stylisation, indulgence, exaggeration. Everything must be captured, recorded, accounted for, noted, compared, and improved upon. The Business School as an example of this has all the characteristics of the high baroque at its most supreme. The Business School as a baroque construction employs a common range of tropes and stylistic devices with which to create a range of illusions not least that knowledge itself can be reduced to manageable and digestible components, that learning is merely a means to an end, that such ends are to do with well-paid jobs and practical relevance. These characteristics are recognisably those of the pedagogy employed in many Business Schools. The seduction of consumption which is apparent in the range of student choice, and

the willingness to do anything to meet the students' needs – often result in the production of a well executed charade and the pursuit of more and more emblems or indicators of success: a relentless seeking of gratification in being the chosen one, of being preferred. The most successful Business School with all the right badges: a prominent place in the league table, EQUIS, AMBA, five star ratings, teaching excellence – in short, a melancholic display which in a curious perversion now comes to stand not for what is on offer but more tragically for what has been lost.

### **Indifference and Impersonality**

There is an important implication in all this for staff-student relations. By imposing demands and controls on staff which leave them feeling disoriented, abused and aware of the implications for this for their professional practice, many bureaucratic monitoring interventions in universities stand the risk of increasing disregard and contempt. To be asked to perform, to perform well and to be seen to perform, all place an additional burden on staff who are already under considerable pressures. This is particularly true of the post 1992 universities, the former polytechnics, where staff-student ratios are higher and contact time with students more extensive. Put simply, the more that is required of staff, the more they are likely to resent it and relations with students will suffer. In fact, staff student relations are already under considerable pressure in Business Schools simply because student numbers are high and because there are more international students on business and management courses. University staff are now more assessed than the students that they teach. They are required to demonstrate their achievements in teaching – as assessed by their students and by peer review; in research – as assessed by the RAE, by peer review and public performance; their administration – by endless review and quality initiatives; and their income generation – in terms of their ability to contribute to the Business School as the cash cow of the university in higher student numbers, in terms of research council income, in terms of consultancy. Permanency, careers and salaries all depend on these measures of performance.

What is being argued here is that the contradictory demands which staff experience in their day-to-day working lives are at the root of the problem and the primary cause of a feeling of disempowerment and alienation. As demands on members of staff to construct themselves for external consumption imposes more demands on their time students suffer from reduced availability of contact time and staff come to feel increasingly dissatisfied with the mechanisms of regulation and have no confidence in their worth. This cycle of behaviours nurtures a

contemptuous relationship and staff may go to great lengths to avoid unplanned contact with students. According to AUT reports, there has been a huge increase in university staff needing time off work with stress and this is particularly true of but by no means confined to the post 1992 universities. Workloads preclude the level of involvement with students which staff might see as a necessary part of their pastoral role. Student expectations of what they might reasonably have by way of support are high and staff morale is low and job satisfaction poor.

### **Indifferent to Compassion**

This is a wide and diverse subject so this section is merely intended to focus on another aspect of the regulation of the Business School which requires some comment: the ubiquitous use of the matrix as an instrument of regulation. This is intriguing because it is about constructions which regulate, simplify and reduce organisational complexity, including pedagogical concerns, in the service of strategic objectives. In part, it is the imposition of taxonomic structures which seek to render experience subject to science that cause much of the anguish which is evident in academic life. The capture of the matrix and its conversion into a space of regulation is easily demonstrated by recourse to any management text-book. Everything is straightforward, linear, in neat text boxes, supported by simple examples: an orderly world which is easily digested. So, the matrix is an instrument of management which locates and characterises relationships on the basis of power. In the production of 'the Business Student', the space is regulated, and the reproduction of homologues guaranteed. This is education as factory farming. This is, of course, why the matrix is such a favourite tool of management. Moreover, this is true not only of the regulation of the learning experience but also in the management of Business Schools themselves. Appalling management behaviour and practices in some institutions has produced gross distortions of working practices in many, many Business Schools. Management has to a greater or lesser degree become hostile, exploitative, greedy and ambitious. Large salaries have attracted individuals into the profession who do not care for their institutions and staff but are on the contrary motivated primarily by self interest. This is true of some of the people who aspire to manage university Business Schools but it is also sadly true of some of the professoriate. The veneration of the emblems of success – staff output measures, publications, consultancy work, and international reputation – has left an abyss of meaning between such self interested constructions and the embodied experience of those regulated by such individuals and regimes. Such situations demonstrate a callous indifference and both staff and students bear the consequences of this.



## **Indifferent to People**

There is a travesty in the fundamental inauthenticity of the contemporary preoccupation with the notion of 'people values', student expectation, student feedback, service and quality. It seems that only the naive and those who might seek to gain from the pursuit of training for such values are able to discuss quality metrics and performance indicators without apprehension and, perhaps, more commonly cynicism. The theatricalities of organisational life have produced corporate actors who are humiliated, debased and undervalued. By turning lecturing staff at whatever level into performers, universities have appropriated the interpersonal and replaced it with a package of skills, performance indicators and feedback metrics. It seems that professionalism alone could not be trusted to produce informed judgement and so professional values have been sacrificed to greater regulation and control.

The apparent consensus about what an academic programme of study is about depends on an understanding of the playing out of a particular role. If students have come to see 'Jerry Springer: The Opera' they do not want to see 'King Lear' whatever the qualities of the performance. If they want to study Management as it is portrayed in the average text book, they will not be happy to be taught Philosophy, however useful this might be to them. This is particularly true of the MBA student who knows precisely what he or she wants – and it has little to do with improvisation around a role. It is the text book, the qualification, the letters, but frequently little else – or so it is said. Of course, this is a gross generalisation but only recently our visiting speaker for our seminar series at Essex bemoaned having to teach on the MBA course at his Business School. He enjoyed his job, he told us, apart from having to teach on the MBA which he clearly regarded as dirty work, damaging and degrading. The most important implication for the behaviour of staff in Business Schools (and of university teachers in general) of the argument presented above is the extent to which staff are required to replace their professional identity with action check-lists. Such moves are inherently melancholic and all expertise is expunged in the service of the mediocre: a truly indifferent offering to students who are indifferent as to the product.

## **An Indifferent Future?**

This entry in the Manifesto is concerned with indifference. It is a tentative attempt to examine some of the reasons for the pressures on university Business Schools and the implications for the future. I think it is a very pessimistic piece of writing. On the other hand, in

the month or so between the first draft and the piece as it is now, I have tried to find some sanguinity. I would like to briefly reiterate my comments at the beginning of this piece which consider the changes that have occurred in higher education over the course of my own working life. This is important to my argument because it provides a counterpoint to more romantic views of education as a *locus amoenus* or which hark back to a Golden Age. When I consider my own experience of higher education as being synonymous with privilege, I think that it is important for me to speak in terms of the benefits to be derived from the widening of participation in higher education. But, the caveats to this view are many. Some of the problems which Business Schools now face are precisely the price that has had to be paid for this expansion. Therefore, I am left with two significant questions. First, what is the most important aspect of university life (as I encountered it in the 1960s) that has been lost in the move to mass education and why is the problem so acute in the Business School. To put it very simply, higher education opened my eyes to a different world and gave me the conviction that concerted action could bring about change. I concede that I might have been naïve about the latter, but the former is undeniable. In truth, I think that students of today are short changed. They are promised so much but actually get very little. Indeed, the balance in terms of what they take away from a university education is likely to be on the negative side: debt, indifferent courses, and little sense of their own worth.

For the Business School of the Future this has sobering implications. Business Schools have been required to shoulder the burden of much of the expansion in student numbers and have done this by following American models for mass student teaching and learning. The main area of contention is content. What are the Business Schools actually teaching? The answer is disconcerting. Business Schools teach a narrow range of apparently practical and relevant disciplines which are in some sense believed to describe and analyse corporate life. The subject of what Business Schools teach will have been dealt with more emphatically elsewhere in this manifesto but it is important for students to take a critical stance on whose view of the world they are being offered. However, reluctant students might be to adopt a critical position, it is vital that they develop a capacity to question the constructions and structures which come to shape their destinies. This might sound like a rather lofty notion: a recursion to the romantic and idealised view of education. However, if I return to my point that education should open people's eyes, it must deal with subjectivities and the formation of consciousness. What is presented must be interrogated and subjected to critical scrutiny. Students must

be encouraged to ask why things are done in a particular way rather than be asked to rote learn 'how'. This is for starters. Why is it that so much of what passes for business education confines itself to the analysis of large multinational corporations? Business Schools must be concerned with teaching about not for profit organizations, about the social implications of strategy, about the converse side of international commerce, about poverty and exploitation, about corruption and malpractice. Our students are encouraged to avoid using normative expressions but here am I insistently writing 'must' and 'should'. We should encourage students to develop more informed notions of 'good' management and to develop a genuine capacity for evaluation – not just of concepts and ideas but also of what is just. I want students who will consider an issue first from the standpoint of their own humanity and not from some apparently objective organizational view. This means that in the Business School of the future, I would like to see students who learn first, to develop discernment: students who are not deluded by appearances and the snares of consumption. I want students who are not seduced into defining themselves first and foremost in terms of their marketable assets. I would like to teach in a Business School which puts compassion high on its agenda both for its own style of management and for something it seeks to nurture in its students. I would like to teach students who care about something other than themselves.

Now, in conclusion and to be fair, I think the young people that come to us on business courses and the mature students who return to the university for respite do have desires which are entirely compatible with the ones I have expressed above. I find that a significant number of students do care and are interested to go well beyond simple text book notions of reality. Most students seem to understand their position very well. It is all the more negligent therefore that some Business School staff have been forced to abandon their responsibilities as educators in favour of quick fix solutions. Of course, as I have said above and at length, it is entirely understandable that the staff in Business Schools are over-worked and subject to meticulous control and metrics. In the 1960s, privilege and social power produced students who were indolent about their studies but politically aware. Mass education in the past two decades has privileged appearance over substance, taken away much of what passed for academic prerogative, and reduced teaching to an assembly line operation.

However, with all the potency that a manifesto permits, if I argue for no other thing, then it is this: it is important to remember our responsibility to educate the whole person. I want to send students

out with a capacity for judgement, as people who care about their staff and colleagues, as individuals who appreciate the complexities of the world they live in and who are armed against the seductions of power that lie in wait for them. Of course, I am an incorrigible idealist so, in conclusion, I will say that I want students who believe that they can bring about change. The greatest indictment against the Business School of the future would be that it produced indifferent students who were indifferent to their responsibilities.

# JACKASS

*Carl Rhodes, James Rhodes and Daniel Rhodes*

## **Warning:**

The following text features ideas performed by professionals and/or total idiots under very strict control and supervision. The publisher insists that neither you nor anyone else attempt to recreate or perform anything you read in this text.

## **Jackass Rationality**

A jackass is an American word that refers to both a male donkey and a stupid person. More recently, however, the word was taken up as the title for a half hour television show of twenty four episodes aired on MTV for nine months in 2000 and 2001; a show which was subsequently made into a full length motion picture in 2002 (the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) formally rated the movie as 'R – for dangerous, sometimes extremely crude stunts, language and nudity'). The show became one of MTV's highest ever rated programs with each episode being run ten times per week. *Jackass* was led by one time journalist and actor Johnny Knoxville and a range of characters including Bam Margera (a professional skateboarder), Stephanie Hodges (a student at UCLA and a model), Jason 'Wee-man' Acuña (a professional skateboarder and a midget), Steve-O (a former circus clown trainee), Preston Lacy (a very fat man) as well as other jackasses such as Chris Pontius and Ryan Dunn.

If you have not been fortunate enough to see and experience *Jackass* we'll give you a taste. Imagine a grown man eating raw the entire set of ingredients for an omelette, gagging himself, vomiting what he ate into a frying pan, cooking the regurgitated ingredients and then eating the omelette as he was cheered on by his friends. This is the type of thing you could see on in this program. In general, the format of the *Jackass* show, and the movie, was based on a series of short skits involving Knoxville and his crew performing stupid daredevil stunts, doing gross-out shenanigans, wilfully enduring painful procedures and filming wild 'candid camera' style pranks. In most cases these were done in public to the bemusement, confusion and/or disgust

of anyone who happens to be passing by. On the more tame side you might see Steve-O swallow a live goldfish and then, after sticking his fingers down his throat, vomit the fish into a bowl proudly parading when the fish is found to be still alive. You might also enjoy watching him having paper cut-outs of the letters J-A-C-K-A-S-S individually stapled to his naked back side. You could see Ryan Dunn diving head first into a large pool of sewerage, Chris Pontius squatting naked on the side of a busy road taking a dump as cars pass by, or Knoxville taking his grandmother to a taxidermist and asking how much it will cost to have her stuffed when she dies. In the movie, Steve-O put the end of a fire cracker in his butt – it was then lit and proceeded to take off into the air as it freed itself from his anus.

Although MTV watching fans thought *Jackass* was wild and hilarious, not everyone shared this view. While on air the show created substantial controversy – especially amongst politicians, media critics and parent groups. Most controversial were various copy-cat incidents where children attempted to recreate the stunts they saw on the show – for example attempting to barbecue meat by tying it to their bodies and then setting themselves alight. In response MTV limited promotions for the show and moved it to a later time slot. Concerned about new limitations being put on the show, Knoxville resigned and *Jackass* ended, to be revived only once as the 2002 movie. Nonetheless, *Jackass* has gone on to become a cult-classic with many imitators.

So what can be made of the antics of the *Jackass* crew? They are clearly quite strange if judged by the standards of common propriety. This could be considered just a childish enactment of exaggerated boyhood fantasies. It could even be conceived of as a safe middle-class fantasy of waging a small war against society that nurtures it. Maybe it's a form of narrowly conceived masculinism whereby grown men seek to prove themselves in front of their friends. So, is *Jackass* just a man-fest? Oh! Perhaps, but here we would like to explore a different possible (and more productive) way of thinking about *Jackass* – one that focuses attention on experimentation and transgression. To start with, it is notable that the people at *Jackass* have a penchant for stunts involving shit, vomit and testicles, and they embrace endeavours that are painful and potentially dangerous – all to try to get a good laugh. As the President of MTV Films, Van Toffler, said about the movie: 'I've basically given money to a bunch of idiots saddled with enough dim-witted ignorance to try one bad idea after another, with the sole purpose of making moviegoers laugh.' This laughter is not limited to the audience, the crew members themselves have a great deal of fun

doing little else than proving that the limits of corporeality and what passes for common sense can be transgressed.

Despite appearances, *Jackass* is not pure mayhem. There is a certain consistency, a particular ethos, that ties the different *Jackass* antics together – a *jackass rationality*. The point where this rationality becomes apparent is in the performance of crazy stunts. The very name of the show suggests that there is something foolish and stupid at hand. The crazy stunts are not performed with any ‘good reason’ in mind other than to see if they can be done without getting too hurt, to create laughter and to provoke people into disgust and disbelief. Of course in doing this, the people at *Jackass* did sometimes get physically hurt but in general they all emerged healthy and with all limbs intact. The jackass rationality is thus one of discipline that while appearing highly dangerous is not suicidal. Nevertheless, it requires an acceptance that crazy stunts will sometimes mean you will get injured. In the series, Stephanie Hodges broke vertebrae in her back and fractured her pelvis. During the filming of *Jackass: The Movie* Knoxville broke his collar bone and was knocked unconscious three times.

Accepting potential danger while mitigating its possibility, the jackass rationality is also one that requires its participants to have fun while being stupid by intention (although seemingly naturally) – part of this is to purposefully seek to upset a self-righteous sensibility that seeks to define morality and set out rules of acceptable conduct. The wowser-ish responses to *Jackass* in the American media were far from unpredictable. In doing all of this the *Jackass* crew embody an ethos of camaraderie as they celebrate each others achievements, taunt each other mercilessly and push themselves to increasing levels of impossibility and foolishness. Importantly too, the jackass rationality is not one that presents itself as an exemplar for others – quite the contrary, it proposes explicitly that one should not seek the emulation of others. Above all, it is a rationality that seeks to disturb common sense.

### **Jackasses in the Business School**

Our purpose in exploring the jackass rationality is not one guided by a penchant for description or a fetish for analysis. What we state emphatically is that this rationality is an exemplar par-excellence for life in the business school. Now, we need to be clear about what this means. We are not imagining six phlegmatic management professors careering down the stairwell of the library naked in a shopping trolley while screaming obscenities at the librarians and wiping their asses

with the torn out pages of a first edition *Wealth of Nations*. On the contrary, the reality we attest to is a form of academic life that seeks somehow to follow desires – that is, to break out of the repressive regimes that it finds itself caught in by performing what might be the academic equivalent of a crazy stunt. The possibilities are endless and the resources required to do them are well within the reach of those who do academic work in business schools – publish a book about manifestos, use academic freedom and the authority of the university to lend support to protest, give students some tools to critique managerialism (they know this anyway from popular culture), write about things you feel pressure not to write about, support doctoral students to reject the received wisdom of management, teach undergraduates to learn about management from watching cartoons. Fuck it, you could even use expletives in research reports. These can all be done without access to the trappings of authority.

The brief list of examples above could all be beginnings for crazy stunts, but maybe what is also required by a jackass rationality is the doing of academic work whose best reason is none other than to shock and entertain – to be stupid, to act irreverently, to follow a creed of ‘research is fun’ and to question the limits of good sense. It’s not just television shows like *Jackass* that might suggest such forms of behaviour – art, literature and music have been much more successful at transgression for years. Who might take up the challenge of being the Marcel Duchamp of management education? The James Joyce? The John Cage? The taking up of such positions might be a lively form of knowledge-practice and pedagogy that seeks to deeply unsettle any centre that tries to coagulate into dominance – not a new order to replace the old, but rather a disintegration of order through an ongoing positive critique. Pagans to the god of the business school.

The brief sketch painted above of a jackass business school practice is, we state, resolutely non-utopian. No grand models of a business school of tomorrow, but an endlessly present business school that might shake itself out of its self-imposed dogma. Moreover, we do actually think that such a business school already is in a nascent existence. The ongoing radical questioning of management knowledge, management practice and management pedagogy is alive and well as it has found some foothold amongst feminist studies, postmodernism, post-structuralism, critical management theory, critical pedagogy and the like. These are supported by journals, publishers, faculties and segments of the more general community – perhaps not central or ‘hegemonic’ but certainly making some disruptions. And who would want to replace one centre with another as if to merely satisfy a megalomaniacal desire



to have one's own prejudices take their place in the seat of authority instead of someone else's? The business school-to-come need not be a melancholic future-perfect articulated in the present, but rather a more joyous outpouring of a jackass rationality never resting on the laurels of the presumption that it has got things right and that such a right should be imposed on others.

### **The Future in the Present**

Let's not get carried away in the sweet possibilities (and realities) of being a jackass – there are other realities too that might not go so gently into what we have in sight. History has some lessons here. If we cast our minds back to the mid nineteenth century, a common catch cry used to justify American continental expansionism and imperialism was 'manifest destiny'. This term was shorthand for a doctrine that believed that the United States had a decree of providence to spread freedom, democracy (and slavery) west from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The clarity and inevitability of this divine destiny meant that the US had the right, indeed the obligation and the duty, using whatever means necessary, to create an 'empire for liberty'. And, of course, these means were quite cruel – pursuing that which is one's destiny could not be sidetracked by resistance when one had the brute force to overcome it.

Manifest destiny, as it was claimed to be clearly revealed and became deeply embedded in American eschatology, appears, in the present day, to have transformed into the arena of the business school – an institutional arrangement concerned with spreading a version of (neo)liberty heralded by the newer expansionist agenda of American style market managerialism. What is manifest here is the struggle (largely being won) for American theories and practices of business, management and organization, with their attendant neo-liberal justificatory discourse, to do little less than take over the world. Indeed, the American model of the MBA, developed in Harvard at the beginning of last century, has been used directly as the model for Business Schools the world over. Once again the expansionism has succeeded and, fuelled by standards issuing bodies, survey based rankings and the like, the pressure for conformism and single models is resulting in a form of pedagogical domination that can appear unabating. These are the business schools that the jackass must inhabit.

The danger of manifest destiny is that it engages with the conceit of assuming a knowable future. The jackass protests. But does such a protest require the erection of a different possible future such that it might be manifest in the present? Do we need to take the future to hand

and render it knowable such that this knowledge be declared publicly as a political position? The answer to these questions is simple – NO! If there is a business school-to-come, the futurity of this coming renders it opposed to a presumed destiny where the future is already signified in the present. To publish one's policies in a prospectus, in the hope, one day, of having the power to enforce them – surely this is either the cold comfort of the crystal ball gazing fatalist or the hubristic conceit of the arm-waving megalomaniac. For the jackass, the business school-to-come could never exist in an eschatological sense such that is to hand in the present. No second coming. No seizure (*-festus*) in the hand (*manus*). For the jackass, the business school-to-come is a destination not decided prior to its encounter – it's all about the joy of the encounter itself.

### **Infestos**

There is an ancient legal maxim that goes *manifesta probatione non indigent* – in English, *manifest things require no proof*. This is a most dangerous maxim in that it proposes that that which is well known or notorious need not be accounted for other than by the perception of its very existence. Today's business school, with its expansionist destiny presumed, certainly seems to be behaving as if it requires no proof or justification – the global creed of neo-liberalism accepts it to its bosom, the cash starved universities buckling under reduced public funding find it hard to question, and the financial seduction of managerial careers ensures a steady stream of new customers. But the powerful, which requires no proof, inspires fear on account of the non-necessity to provide a social justification for its actions. This position of moral acceptability without justification is what is most unacceptable – especially to a jackass rationality. An alternative that assumes (and has the power to enact) that there is no alternative, is the one that needs to be shaken up not by replacement grand narratives but by breaking them up with little ones. It is here that we propose the work of the business school jackass might be directed.

It is our suggestion that business schools do not require manifestos, despite the best (and worst) intentions of their writers. Say no to clear statements of politics that can be seized by the hand and held up in some sort of gesture of utopian promise. Management is already far too involved in the mastery of handling to need manifestos. 'The king is dead, long live the king' still means that there is a kingdom, a king and a nobility. Instead of manifestos, the requirement is for *infestos* – disruptions to the handy seizure. Such infestos might provide some noisy provocations and act to disturb from within. An infesto is that which is not able to be seized, not able to be handled or managed – it

is troublesome, disturbing and possibly even hostile. An infesto is that which might be monstrous – it would deviate from expectations of normality, it would be abnormal, it would be an artwork to itself.

Again, this is neither utopian nor non-existent. There are many who perform this work of the *infestants* – the deliberately obnoxious who threaten to overrun their environment. The infestants are those people who, through events like this book, seek to irritate the auspices of their work and create possible alternatives for life in the business school – jackasses performing crazy stunts! But such irritations need not provide complete systems of alternatives that in their disenchantment with the status quo merely seek to instate a new authority. An infestation might, instead, act like an avant-garde that questions and problematises that which seeks permanence, yet does so without recourse or justification in a different permanent. There's no need to claim that we hold the whole world in our hands.

The avant-garde we are suggesting articulates uncertainty in the realm of the certain and wards off stagnation by testifying to difference. And, of course, such a noisy and infesting jackass avant-garde would always be critical – not in an institutionalised, capital-C or fault-finding sense – but in the sense of being imaginative, innovative, uncertain, expansive and, in a sense, unrealistic. Such infestation questions consensus rather than seeking to reformulate it, it experiments with reality rather than purporting to represent it – it is in awe of the sublime and the liminal.

Jackasses, avant-gardes, infestants – the requirement is for a disrespect of the rules of the game coupled with a joyful willingness to play that very game.

# KETAMINE

*Samantha Warren*

At first glance an anaesthetic and higher education appear to have little in common. After all, one is about deadening the senses, and the other about awakening them; surely? But for many academics working in business schools the properties of Ketamine may suggest some interesting parallels with the work we do and, importantly here, the work we can increasingly expect to do in the future. As business academics we are engaged in two main activities (1) educating current and future managers and businesspeople – teaching; and (2) the production of knowledge about processes of organizing and business practices – research.

Traditionally, universities have also had a responsibility to society, to instil values of integrity and citizenship in our young people, but most importantly to equip them with a critical stance toward simple truths and the dangerous narrow-mindedness of hegemony. This vital function, I declare, is under serious fire, as research and teaching become judged, sanctioned and increasingly funded on the extent to which they offer ways to oil the capitalist machine – improvements in productivity, reductions in costs, more efficient means of control... these are the holy grails of the business school of the future. One day, we might even forget that ‘organization’ was ever possible in different forms, ones that are inherently non-exploitative, based on co-operation and fundamental respect for the rights of others, for instance, or that there is value in knowing something ‘just for the sake of it’. This manifesto looks at what the future might look like if our profession continues to develop/decay (delete as appropriate) along these lines. I bring it you with the help of the letter ‘K’, and the ramblings of many late night/early morning conversations with my wonderful friends.

## **But first a chemistry lesson...**

My first (and only) Ketamine/K/Ket/Special K was offered to me by a gay bloke whom, at the time, happened to be sharing a toilet cubicle with me in a south London club. I snorted it, wiped my nose and basically lost the plot for an hour or so. I danced my ass off like

there was nobody else in the world... and watched, utterly entranced and delighted as everyone's heads turned into lollipops: completely unable to do anything about it even if I'd wanted to. When I 'came to' I felt as if I had woken from the most amazing dream, I was full of revelations with no content – feelings of having discovered something astonishingly important (if only I could remember what it was).

Ketamine is a veterinary anaesthetic which is often used for tranquilising horses and in small doses, people take it as a hallucinatory drug – for fun – usually in the form of a white powder inhaled through the nose. It's what's known as a 'dissociative', having the potential to temporarily produce the effect of divorcing the user's mind from their body, placing them into a state where they are unresponsive to stimuli, in a world of their own and aware only of their 'internal universe'. According to regular users, small doses of the drug when snorted – a 2cm line for example – produce almost immediate effects that are mild and pleasantly 'trippy'. The user is able to play with reality, seeing the world a little bit differently but remains mindful of the fact that this is, after all, just a trip.

Larger doses take you further and closer to The Line, aptly named since it is a point of no return – for about 30 minutes or so anyway. Cross The Line (if you dare) and you're in the K-hole, a full on 'Ket' experience which has been recounted to me as nothing short of an epiphany. When you're in a K-hole, you are completely paralysed, unable to speak or move and sometimes not even aware of your own existence as separate from the world around you. What seems to mark these experiences out as remarkable for users of K is their spiritual character – the mind (seems?) truly to float free of the body and the world becomes ethereal, even celestial.

Emergence from a K-hole and the world is a totally different place and those perceptions can last long after the drug has worn off, with some claiming that they never really fade. Furthermore, regular 'Ketties' I have talked to speak in nothing short of evangelical terms of their experiences. They claim that the feeling of intense well-being, of being completely and utterly tuned in to their surroundings (indeed part of them) has changed their lives forever. However, regular use of the drug – as all drugs – is not without its problems. Two psychological difficulties include paranoia and egocentrism. There are many reports of users starting to see patterns and coincidences (synchronicities) in the world around them which seem to indicate that they are somehow more important or integral to the world than others. This same sense of the world focusing on the user can also feed into a sense of paranoia.

There seem to me to be four main effects of K as a recreational drug that might be usefully employed to imagine the Business School of the Future:

1. In a positive sense we could focus on K's transformational potential;
2. With the comical cadence of a trip one expects to wear off, we could pay attention to its hallucinogenic properties that induce a warped sense of reality for the user;
3. Slightly less pleasantly (and dangerously) we could consider it's anaesthetic effects at higher doses; and
4. Finally and most sinister of all, we can engage with the risk of paranoid and egotistical side-effects.

So my manifesto takes the form of a few short trips triggered by these observations, call it the Business School of the future 'through the K-hole' if you like. Each bears some resemblance to life as we know it – but slightly warped, sometimes fun but always a little disturbing and teetering on the edge of being a bad ride into screaming paranoia. Their purpose? To show us what life in the Business School of the Future could be like – if we let it.

### **In the Classroom: Putting the K in Teaching**

Despite the financial incentive to sell out and peddle guru theory, despite the paralysis we feel in the face of stifling bureaucratic administrative procedures grotesquely foisted on us in the name of educational 'quality', and despite the anaesthesia of research ethics committees, commercial funding and increasing accountability to the needs of the economy on our freedom of speech, we are educators in order to *transform*. This trip takes us to a place where we meet with other minds, where we float unencumbered into the lives of others – the classroom.

For me, education is always about transformation. When I teach, I want my students to change. I want them to come out of my classroom feeling different to when they went in. I want them to leave my classes with a different perspective on their lives – inside and outside work – I want them to realise that there are alternatives to the way things currently are and I want them to go out and preach these revelations to others. Just as getting close to The Line on Ketamine pushes the user into a dizzying whirl where 'normal' thinking is disrupted, education can be as powerful a trip. It's a drug that I want my students to get

addicted to. Perhaps, just perhaps, in the Business School of the future, the value of this transformation won't be lost forever.

But as I've pointed out above, there are dangers inherent in addiction. It is a short line from evangelical transformation to egomania. How many brilliant minds has history seen slip from genius to maniac? Atrocities perpetrated by omnipotent figures convinced they are acting according to a greater good, or calling? Transforming our students into the business leaders of the future perhaps carries with it an even greater responsibility. If we take them on a trip we also need to teach them where to get off. Leadership can all too easily become dictatorship.

### **In Search of eKcellence: Hallucinogenic Management Theory**

Flick through almost any of the over-priced paperback books temptingly displayed on the 'Business' shelves of airport bookshops and you're immediately on a trip. Open the glossy cover for an instant hit – the secret in these wraps is immediate satisfaction with guaranteed results – the whole world of business opened up before your eyes, laid out in short easy to inhale chapters. Yes, we're on the bus to Guru land! A strange and slightly distorted place where everyone gets on with everyone else, people love their companies, pledge allegiance to organizational goals and worship 'The Bottom Line'. Be a leader in one minute, set your life-compass to 'win', go from good to GREAT! in six easy steps, train your people in 'the humour response' and borrow the habits of marine animals to be an employer of choice.... all in the time it takes to fly from London to New York.

The interesting thing is, that readers of these texts undoubtedly know this isn't real, they *know* that these prescriptions lined up in short snortable phrases only offer temporary escape from their experiences of business as fraught with moral and ethical dilemmas, stubborn employees and demanding shareholders, to name but a few – don't they? Yet they feel good – this *could* be real, no? After all, the author has two PhDs and completed world-wide research in order to write the book – the proceeds of which fund a very comfortable lifestyle, thank you very much. But for the busy practising manager of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, what's the alternative? Who has time to read well researched and meticulous academic articles, especially when they probably draw conclusions that managers don't really want to hear. Nope, it's better to 'Get High with Gurus' – a distorted reality is better than none.

Perhaps more worryingly is that popular management theory is called 'popular' because it is just that. People actually seem to read it, and if

enough people read it then it'll become truth. Consider, as one example, the enormous impact of the 'discovery' of 'Emotional Intelligence' upon which entire industries now turn and whose principles are taught to five year olds in school. But you'll be hard pressed to find a place for negative or counter-establishment emotion in these discourses (unless of course, as sanitised and safely contained catharsis to maintain the happy clappy status quo) yet as any psychoanalyst will tell you, so-called 'negative' emotions are probably what really drives human behaviour – but they're not very popular. Moreover, being cynical, questioning and challenging the comfortable life is a pre-requisite of critical thinking; like K, the quick-fix of the Management guru undoubtedly anaesthetises as well as inebriates as it extols the values of one-ness, positivity, success – all defined in business terms – at the expense of the more uncomfortable business of thinking, inquiring and being critical.

### **'Critical Thinking' in Undergraduate Students: Lessons from the History of Business Education**

This abstract is reproduced with kind permission of the 'Ketamine School of Management' (KSM) Working Paper Series (2080) who own all Professor K's intellectual property by virtue of his fixed-term employment contract. It was not considered suitable for submission to any of the 5 AIBMJ's (Appropriate International Business & Management Journals) by the KSM School Research Quality Committee due to the 7 year waiting list for peer-review at the editorial offices of these journals. Publication elsewhere was, of course, prohibited on the grounds that such 'free thought' may damage the reputation of the School and Professor K was forbidden to waste his time writing a fuller version since he was not funded by an industrial research grant, and a full paper would not contribute to the 'Knowing & Telling' agenda, or, in any way, aid the School in achieving a 36\* rating in the forthcoming Research Evaluation Assessment.

*Executive Summary:* This short paper draws on archival secondary data that reveals that historically, undergraduate students were not always discouraged from thinking critically. It reveals that the instrumental orientation to study may have been caused, not as is commonly accepted, by decreases in students' ability but, instead, by the modularisation of degree courses, the introduction of learning outcomes and decoupling of academic research from teaching practice introduced during the years leading up to and around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Furthermore, the paper reports on the fascinating historical discovery that higher education



courses were not always required to be Managerialist by law – as they are today – and provides examples of course content that actually *encouraged* students to challenge, what was then regarded as an assumption, that increasing profits is a good thing (this, as we know, is now scientifically proven to be fact). Ancient ‘schemes of work’ from historical course modules show that lecturers did not compile reading lists according to whether the book used simple vocabulary, contained multi-coloured pedagogic features and was linked to a companion web-site containing all conceivable resources necessary to pass assessment as is now the case. Furthermore, these amusing yet disturbing documents show that students were actually *assessed* on their ability to read *beyond* set texts and lecture notes and were given credit for independent study and critical evaluation. The aim of this paper, then, is to throw into relief the beauty and order of today’s higher education system, synergistically tuned to the requirements of industry and fully funded by commercial sponsorship. It is a celebration of the end of resources squandered on so-called ‘blue skies research’ and a recognition of how far we have come in making education *truly* accountable to the economy.

### **Course CodeC13H16:**

#### **Managing Horses with Special K (price on application)**

Extract from the KSM ‘Corporate Education’ prospectus:

The etymology of the word ‘management’ can be traced back to the Italian *manneggiare* meaning ‘to train horses’. From there, its use gradually spread to encompass any kind of skilful control and in contemporary business, the horses have been replaced with workers, their needs subordinated to the needs of those who manage them just like the horses of the Italian *mannege* were broken and ridden by their trainers. Management education is about learning to ‘break and ride’ and in today’s modern age of constant change and fierce competition control is strength. A strong rider is what every business needs – and fast.

However, even the best executives suffer from crises of conscience from time to time, beginning to question the ethics of business practice, losing sight of the bottom line and in severe cases suggesting that sacrifices in productivity be made in the name of ‘employee wellbeing’. This is a tricky situation to handle – and who has time? – a situation that

has lead to the development of Anaesthetic Management™, a chemical technique and the latest in management thinking developed through a 'Knowing & Telling' initiative by staff at KSM. Ensure your managers don't 'slip out of the saddle' and start thinking for themselves! Enrol them on our on-site chemical short course incorporating principles of Anaesthetic Management™ which can be tailor made for your business. We can offer either a 6 week 'Threshold' or 12 week 'K-Hole' module:

*Threshold:* On successful completion of the shorter course, students will be able to experience hallucinations in which they become disassociated from normal existence and unresponsive to the problematic external stimuli.

*K-Hole:* For a longer term solution, successful completion of the full 12 week module will ensure that students suffer from a sense of egocentric paranoia, making it appear that they are the centre of the universe and are of paramount importance effectively eradicating any concern for anyone else's well-being.

Neither of these options causes harm to the student, in fact feedback indicates extreme satisfaction with the delivery and content of the course with most students stating they found the experience 'Very pleasurable'.

For further information please contact  
[anaestheticmanagement@ksm.ac.uk](mailto:anaestheticmanagement@ksm.ac.uk).

### **And so to the Come Down...**

I have been an academic for five short years and already I am alarmed at the changes I am witnessing. I entered the profession out of a desire to help others experience what I felt when I studied for my bachelor's degree as a mature student: a profound sense of 'waking up' and being shown, as the saying goes, that the unexamined life is not worth living. So many things to read, ideas to take in and thoughts to ponder – the more I learned, the more I wanted to learn and the more I did learn, the more I felt there was to know (and still do!). Yet, now, as I trawl through piles and piles of essays and assignments, struggling to find more than a smattering of critical thinking or original thought, I feel despair at the instrumentality of most of my students as they look for the easiest route to their 10 credit points and their 2:1 degree, reading

what I have told them to read – if I’m lucky – but all too often I suspect that many have not even read their lecture notes.

I don’t blame them. If so-called quality measures and codification of knowledge means that we have to serve up courses to our students in small, easy to digest chunks, state upfront just what we expect them to learn, how to learn it and how we will measure what they have swallowed, then why are we surprised when our students quickly learn that they need to do little more than clear their plates? After all, I have felt such pressure myself, in my fledgling research career. The temptation to salami slice a nice meaty conference paper into four slim-line articles to be sent to ‘appropriate’ journals rather than spend time writing, thinking and developing my ideas into a book is one example. Another is the marginalisation of the time I need to **read** and engage in the scholarship I require to develop my ideas and my teaching materials. I think about these things as I stand at the photocopier making copies of assignments to put in boxes that no-one will ever look in.

And what drives this rationalisation of our profession? Consumerism – that’s what. Our research and our teaching are commodities – knowledge to be bought (at an ever increasing price) with academics as the service providers, enslaved by the spectre of feedback forms, student complaints procedures and remarking policies. Business knowledge is increasingly expected to come with a money back guarantee: the spirit of modern consumerism valorises everything in its path – if it ain’t useful (and ‘useful’ in business = ‘more profits’) then it ain’t worth spending time on. Instant gratification. The quick fix. Why should universities be immune to this cultural motif sweeping through society?

All this makes me sad. Very sad in fact – but I still hold onto the hope that, like Pandora’s box – there is something left inside that is wonderful and special and joyous about what we do. The one student whose life you truly touch, or the e-mail from a stranger on another continent who writes to thank you for inspiring her with an article you’ve just published. Lets use that ‘K’ to get ‘loved up’. We do make a difference and we can make a difference. So my manifesto is a simple one: let us dearly hold onto the possibility that the rationalisation of our academe will one day end; and let us keep striving to open our students eyes to *other* ways of seeing that are not dulled by market forces and the kitsch of consumerism as a way of life.

Anyone fancy another line?

## LAZINESS

*Pippa Carter and Norman Jackson*

It is time to recover the virtues of *laziness*, and to rediscover the benefits of the contemplative life, life lived according to natural rhythms. This Manifestation (or Manifesto) calls for the end of the Business School as we know it, and its replacement by the Laziness School. It is also a Manifestation in the old Spanish sense, which refers to a process or place whereby an accused could be sheltered from the hostility of the judges. The Manifestation protected those who discomfited the 'Law', or in our terms the 'Discourse'. The Laziness School should, in itself, be a Manifestation that offers sanctuary to ideas, proposals and demands that offend the powerful.

The word laziness has uncertain etymology, but may derive from Dutch or German. It first appeared in the sixteenth century and the very first example of its usage associates laziness with 'popery'. Indeed, everything about this word's origins, vague as they are, and its emergence in the era of Calvin and Luther, implies a link to the rise of Protestantism and with those beliefs in the inherently positive values associated with hard work – the Protestant Work Ethic. 'Laziness' has always been pejorative, disapproving, accusatory. To be 'averse to labour' was to fail in one's duty to God, by omission or by commission (if the latter does not imply too much effort!). In more secular times, to accuse someone of being lazy – and it is a term more meaningfully applied to others rather than to oneself – remains to criticise for failure to reach some unspoken, and undebatable, standard of activity, the standard of the accuser who, by accusing, adopts a morally superior position. To be lazy implies not doing what ought to be done, in the way it ought to be done. Laziness has always implied moral turpitude. But, in light of contemporary understandings, of cosmology and of work, it is high time that laziness be redeemed.

Business – which is a corruption of the word 'busyness' – is a much older word, the first cited usage of which is from 950, in the Lindisfarne Gospels, and which signified anxiety, solicitude, care, distress, uneasiness. Over the next few centuries, this intrinsically negative

connotation gradually became modified into a concept more akin to the way we understand it today. During the Reformation, busyness/business became the essence of the good Protestant life, and the new word, laziness, appeared. The negativity of 'busyness/business' was transferred to, precisely, an aversion to busyness.

### **Then**

In contemporary language busy(i)ness has come to be defined and understood as a predominantly neutral and descriptive term, but it has never managed to shed entirely the negative connotations of its earliest usages. Even if we pass by the rationale for the traditional contempt of the landed classes for busyness, certainly by the eighteenth century it was not uncommon for social commentators, and even owners of busynesses, to criticise busyness for its emiserating qualities. In the nineteenth century this intensified, with the coming of the Industrial Revolution, and by the late twentieth century negative critique of the normalised operations of busyness had become an industry in itself. Coeval with this 'intellectual' reappropriation of the negative significations of busyness, there has also been 'popular' outrage concerning the practical emiserations consequent on busyness. Such outrage has often been expressed as action, in various forms and at various levels, from, for example, the somewhat *ad hoc* challenges of the Luddites, through the formalisation of interest groups identified in the Trades Union movement, to the much wider coalitions of the anti-globalisation movements of today. Nowadays, the emiserating effects of busyness are recognised as generalised rather than localised and as having impact on everyone, irrespective of their formal relationships with busyness(es).

None of this has seriously hampered the rise and rise of busyness as the cornerstone of capitalist democracy which has itself become the cornerstone of global acceptability from the *soi disant* developed world. But this pinnacle has not been reached just by natural evolution. Busyness has become a political ideology. It is part of the political dogma of the capitalist world, pursued with missionary zeal, that busyness should be exported to all corners of the globe. There is an active proselytisation of (capitalist) busyness and, by fair means or otherwise, an inexorable colonisation of the global socio-political economy by busyness. Busyness has become the quasi-theological lynch pin of western democratic ideology.

### **Catechesis**

Crucial to the maintenance of this domination is the Busyness School, which is the seminary of capitalism. Even half a century ago the

Busyness School was quite a rare phenomenon but now, not only is knowledge of the techniques of busyness a ubiquitous requirement at all levels of education, but, in many institutions of higher education, busyness has become the predominant discipline. The ostensible function of Busyness Schools is to train people to run the institutions of the national and global economy, but it is more realistic to see them as part of the system of governance, concerned with the disposition of bodies within that system. Busyness education is about learning how to control people, whilst oneself being controlled, so that the proper standards of busyness are applied, so that, willy-nilly, the interests of those with the most to gain from the production and consumption of goods and services are served. Thus, a major function of the Busyness School is to reproduce busyness as it is now – and that includes the reproduction of its tendencies to emiserate. This works at the meta-level, in legitimating and reinforcing the general principles on which busyness practice is based, and at the level of control of people's lives, and at every level in between.

Central to the fulfilment of this function is the Busyness School curriculum, which might be encapsulated in the mantra: market, productivity, efficiency, control. The discursive boundaries of the Busyness School are constituted by the capitalist regime of truth. Thus, the knowledge that is produced and transmitted by Busyness Schools rests upon general unexplored assumptions about the inherent goodness of capitalism and of busyness. In the contemporary terminology, they are faith-based schools. By this token, they resist as heretical any dissent from such a view. But the Busyness School does not merely perform a quasi-neutral function of advancing capitalism. It actively embraces this role, and so, by necessity, ignores any contradictions to the inherent benefits of capitalism for all, unless it can incorporate and subvert them to its own purpose (cf. the fate of Busyness Ethics). But, in this sense, the Busyness School is out of step with more sophisticated, and indeed widespread, understandings of the ways that capitalism works. Global capitalism is seen by many as, at best, producing benefit for a few and emiseration for the majority, and as, at worst, environmentally, socially, politically, economically dangerous for everyone, even those who seem to benefit. So, the very first requirement for the Busyness School-to-come is that it should interrogate, rather than merely reproduce, this ideology.

What is it about busyness that is emiserative? It is, *precisely*, its commitment to busyness. It is this busyness that precludes any regard for any claim or doctrine, be it physical, biological or moral, that might restrain its reach. The dysfunctions of busyness are very

well known. The core principle of busyness is exploitation, and exploitation to exhaustion. This same principle is evident whether we speak of, for example, pollution, despoliation of natural resources, the market, competition, people. As the cornerstone of capitalism, it can do no other. And the supreme function of the Busyness School is to produce seminarians catechised in the dogmas of busyness. Each aspect of the curricula of Busyness Schools reeks of busyness. For example, the finance subjects are about keeping money busy; OB/HRM is about keeping people busy; production management is about keeping equipment busy; marketing is about keeping consumers busy. Political economy, masquerading as a value-neutral economics, provides the ideology of busyness. From economics also emerges the claim to demonstrate that any constraint on busyness is inherently 'A Bad Thing'. Taxes constrain the busyness of money, pollution laws constrain the busyness of physical resources, legislation regulating working practices constrains the busyness of employees, and so on.

### **Now?**

The problem is that all busyness knows is how to be busy. Busyness can only go in one direction – more busyness – and that direction only leads to where we are now. Attempts to slow down or block busyness have, at best, very limited effect and more busyness is devoted to their circumvention than to compliance. Trying to persuade busyness people to be different, to have a conscience, to be non-exploitative, is ineffectual because it offends against the fundamental principle of busyness. Of course, keeping people busy has the added value that it precludes having time available to think, precludes having time available to do anything other than comply. So, if we want the future to be different, it will not be a matter of tweaking busyness, of evolving less emiserative practices, of persuading busyness to relax – these are concepts inimical to busyness. It will be different only if there is radical change. The first step is to get off the treadmill of being 'kept busy'.

Clearly, whatever replaces busyness must have an explicit, over-arching, commitment to non-emiserative development. It must, therefore, be the very antithesis of busyness – and that means LAZINESS. Putting laziness at the forefront of human goals will mean educating people to resist the insidious indoctrinations to busyness. Since a contemporary Busyness School could not possibly include laziness on its curriculum, even as an option, we propose that the Busyness School-to-come be renamed the Laziness School. Indeed, we do not suggest that laziness should be just another part of the curriculum but that it should be the supreme principle within which knowledge is validated and the operative logic within which those who will run the organisations of

the future will be trained. We propose nothing less than that *laziness should become the new regime of truth*. The credentials that the concept of laziness has for this role are clear. It is intrinsically anti-busy. It connotes a content that could not possibly resemble the present dogma of busyness, so would inevitably be radically different. Laziness is non-exploitative and surely non-exhaustive. Laziness cannot be incorporated into busyness. Laziness is, exactly, not-busyness. And, because, as previously noted, the very word symbolises a world view that offends busyness, symbolises resistance to and non-compliance with the dogma of busyness, it can safely be assumed that the busyness community will not approve – itself an indication that the Laziness School would be an appropriate tack. The Laziness School will wear on its sleeve the badge of its resistance to busyness.

It will be obvious from the use of the language of resistance that laziness does not necessarily connote inactivity *per se* but bespeaks activity which is not governed, indeed wholly rejects, preconditioning to busyness, to being busy. The Laziness School must reclaim the power to define the significations of laziness, divest it of its accusatory disapproval, its negative moral judgement, re-invest it with the positive values that enhance its power to challenge. This would be an important achievement in itself, since all the words associated with being other than busy have been thoroughly imbued with negative cultural values, but many precedents show that it is possible – for example, slavery went from being an economic essential to being an anachronism in a relatively short period of time and similar changes of attitude can be seen with regard to women, to racial segregation, to sexualities, amongst others. Laziness is one of the last bastions of cultural prejudice that need to be overcome, and such an achievement would itself lay the foundation for the attack on busyness. The prime issue that the Laziness School has to address is the question of how collective endeavour can be organised to produce, say, joy, emancipation, long-run survival of the planet, rather than emiseration, exploitation and exhaustion. This will involve a critical evaluation, at the level of first principles, of what might be necessary activity within the precepts of the laziness regime of truth. What is it necessary for each person to do to ensure their own survival? What should we do less? What should we do away with altogether? What might we need more? It is well known that much of what is currently defined as necessary activity for people, both in work and out of it, is merely dressage, the overt demonstration of compliance – within the precepts of laziness such activity is immediately identifiable as unnecessary and unproductive. What other classes of activity are simply not needed? Are there classes



of activity the ecological, political, social, etc., costs of which are so prohibitive that they should be abandoned?

Once the imperatives of capitalism are replaced, it becomes feasible to plan for ideal conditions, to assess what is necessary or unnecessary in terms of, for example, social benefit, rather than the crippling ideological requirement of profitability. When the principle informing this replacement is the negation of busyness, an immediate corollary must be a dramatic reduction in demand on natural resources. Suppose, for example, that the Laziness School applied its logic to the problem of global warming, a phenomenon that, twenty years ago, was seen as no more than the ravings of fringe lunatics yet now is widely accepted as a 'fact of life'. The current regime of truth offers nothing in terms of resolving this problem – the very best on offer, via collusion between capitalist governments and capitalist owners of busynesses, is slowing down the rate of deterioration, without any prospect of action to reverse damage already done. Using the rubric of necessary/unnecessary activity, reduction in the use of (rather than reduction in the rate of increase in the use of) fossil fuels is obviously necessary, which itself necessitates an evaluation of the relative necessity of the uses to which fossil fuels are put. Reduction in demand for the exploitation and exhaustion of both natural resources and people fits the primary logic of the Laziness School exactly.

## Learning

In the departments of the Laziness School the *raison d'être* will be to find the antidote to busyness. The Marketing Department will seek to encourage reduction in consumption. The Production and Operations Management Department will advocate policies of minimum replacement. The Accounting Department will encourage the adoption of criteria other than profit as a measure of success. Instead of motivation – how to stimulate the desire to be busy – the OB Department will study Desire, a seventeenth century concept meaning, simply, the desire to be without. The HRM Department will advocate, and develop the means for, de-intensification of labour (labour extensification). It will help to develop Forswink Studies. 'Forswink' is a 'lost' word, from the twelfth century, meaning to exhaust through labour. The practice, if not the word, is still with us after eight centuries, and is surely a source of misery. Forswink Studies will examine how to organise labour without exhausting it. The Laziness School will also develop areas such as Gamflin Studies. 'Gamflin', another 'lost' word but not a lost activity, means 'neglecting one's work from foolish merriment' – how sensible that this activity should have its very own word to describe it, and how sad, but

unsurprising, that the word has fallen from use! Gamflin Studies will stress that merriment is not a foolish but a necessary activity, and one seriously lacking in the regime of busyness.

## **Living**

The goal of the Laziness School is what in another language might be called the pursuit of happiness, but, within the capitalist regime of truth, it has always been possible, if not inevitable, that one person's happiness comes at the cost of someone else's emiseration. The operational definition of laziness must, inevitably, be potentially different for each person. The point of the Laziness School is to enable the freedom from busyness necessary for people to work this out for themselves, and so to produce and disseminate the knowledge that will enable this to be possible for everyone – it will be the duty of knowledge producers to delineate the Laziness Ethic. In this there can be no rules bar one: the guiding and unassailable moral principle of the laziness regime of truth must be that acceptability depends on observation of the imperative that no person or group should pursue joy, emancipation, survival at the expense of the emiseration, exploitation, exhaustion of any other person or group. Laziness is the entitlement of everyone.

Critics of our call to *inaction*, those committed to our continued emiseration through busyness, might argue that this is unachievable. However, we are not claiming the need to discover something new, but the need to rediscover something lost. It is not laziness that is the problem, it is busyness. Using a sense dating back to the fourteenth century and still in use in the late twentieth century, workers would describe a day when there was a shortage of work – or, indeed, a strike – as ‘playing’. Our masters might have seen it as an unavoidable, though regrettable, necessity due to their inability to keep us busy, but, to us, it was playing. The underlying assumption of all busyness theory and practice is that, left to their own devices, people are inherently lazy – we prefer to play, rather than to work. Governments too routinely castigate various sectors of the population, both as employees and as clients, for being lazy. If these assumptions have any substance, achieving the establishment of the Laziness School should require no effort at all – it is what we are made for.

# MASTURBATION

*Rob Beeston*

The basic impulses: reading, and writing. Traditionally the reader leaves his book unmarked and unbroken out of respect for the materials of its production and the power of its knowledge. This refers to both ink-marks and dog-ears and to books both owned and borrowed (although a scandal is more likely to befall a library book). The pristine regard in which this book is held is not an indication of its being unread; on the contrary, it may well be in the blood. Less traditionally, but even today not without controversy, the reader loves his book at considerably less than this arm's length. This reader makes notes directly on the page and breaks the spine as a matter of course when the verso pages first begin to weigh heavy with reading. No doubt such profanation has its roots beyond those of the printing press but the cross-reference to kindred spirits, nevertheless, scrawls its way across the footer. Even the reader with an eidetic memory can't juggle two books in thin air so he too jots keywords side by side in the header. The less mnemonic reader underlines a lot more, those either summary or redolent sentences that capture something vital. The perspicacity with which he does this is less a comment on the writer and the jewellery of her prose than his own sense of purpose. No matter how much a brilliant passage might warrant its own dais he wouldn't want to underscore the whole of it and then find the glare too much to be able to relocate its essence to the reverse index under construction across the folio pages at the front; this is, after all, love not vandalism. The structure of this impromptu index may or may not cater already to the incoming idea (and why would it necessarily, it being so brilliant) but the wresting back and forth for its quintessence is sure to loosen the spine even more; flopping open eventually, unequivocally, at a particularly well-thumbed page. If this incoming notion doesn't fit the existing taxonomy, and if a new heading fails repeatedly and anxiously to suggest itself, then something of its élan can perhaps be manifested in a single quotation and written out in its punctiliousness on the inside front cover, this single cardboard page becoming an oratory in its own right. The inside back cover is unlikely to be as numinous but if the author regards felicity as highly as invention then

it might be scrawled instead with dictionary definitions of new and incommensurable words; their horizontal threaded perpendicularly by notes to other authors mentioned in the text. Front, back, and index-linked throughout these various annotations add little physical dimension but they do see the book for the first time. Whilst physically it looks grubbier, literarily it's much brighter. And although it would be too glib to say it glints it is now the sort of book that loves to be touched after each stint of reading, the bow at the pencil making it easier to squeeze in a prepossessing grip. Sacred books were never as indulged as this. But there are books today that remain untouched for much less sacrosanct reasons.

The reader whose book is a repository approximates the writer whose words are manifold. She proceeds from the revelation that if a book can be this rich then so too can her next written words, that if she can sit inside someone else's words then inveterate words must be objects in themselves. And so she arraigns her own in a way that doubles their meaning, subtracts the gap between thought and expression, and, eventually, finds them privy to the possibilities of writing. It's not the intransigence or the vagaries of this that set her to work; it's quickly not some wistful ideal or pre-conception of the Muse. Rather what hails the possibility in the first place and breeds tenacity thereafter is the physical act of buttressing words an inch from the page and dismantling them again when the elevation is wrong, adding a clause when the force is right because the breadth is clearly not. Time would waste with such endeavours if time didn't tell in the results. And whilst it would be untrue to say that time doesn't matter, or worse that time while writing does not exist, it is true that after having seen the word at work time is more likely and justly to be made, proof thereafter that without doubt it has to be made. Of course there are myriad reasons why it might not be made. And whether perfunctory or extraneous, vital or procrastinating, each reason for not writing is apt to foster a mood for countless others that accumulate self-fulfilment. But given certain inevitabilities, the path, however it is done and with whatever amount of bluster before the door is finally shut, patently needs clearing, that is, something of the author re-investing. The colloquium has its virtues of course, but a surfeit of colloquia does not; diminution less the risk per se of too much circulating than the time it deprives the self of investment. And given the juiciest fruits of investment need time alone to develop then each sublimated distraction instruments the very wooliness it stands at the front and periodically bemoans. Good work is unlikely at the back of such a room not because it's not alone (because it is given the distance from the front) but because the colloquium doesn't last and the tea trolley wheels in, audible proof

that the moment of solitude is easier to glean than its duration is to defend. Although with practice and from behind either headphones or the cycling to virulence of a promising sentence the capacity for good solitary work is infinite it is also universally vulnerable. And so if the commitment is genuine it will by whatever means but guided by the self's re-investment return instinctively to relative safety: the writer's desk, always a relic, is even older when the door is shut. Once ensconced the variations on the working method are likely endless but the redoubt is ultimately solitude. The brutality of the fact firstly of writing's inevitability and thereafter that no one can write on the writers behalf, and that even over time there are no veracious shortcuts, is countermanded by the results, that which defines itself in opposition to everything functionary, divested, and autocratically, chimerically, and ascetically procreative.

Results of course usually mean product. But there is an integral, altogether more private process whose recovery, insistence, and thereafter beatification yields a particular kind of product, just as saleable but a product by definition less repugnant, worthy of a manifesto. And whilst this sense of integrity is (or was) the mainstay of the open work, of inter-textuality and the like, and no doubt of various ethics it has all the while never left the onanist's desk. It's less likely the smell of the wood that permeates this work than the space of the room (an ante-room) in which the desk has always stood. It's not a grand room and perhaps the reader would be disappointed to actually see it but it is nevertheless where the words were written and what gives them now their scope, firstly to surpass the minimum and then to progress, ultimately, or more likely momentarily, towards just a modicum of self-fulfilment. And neither is this room particularly distinguished. It has certain basic features: seclusion, a lamp, writing materials of whichever era, a small library and a big window and a clock with missing hours: but it looks ostensibly different upon each commissioned project, and even (because in between is the infinity that accretes over coffee) at each separate sitting; which is incidentally the why of a note stuck to the edge of the screen: *leave off only after manifestation*. But if this acutely capricious temperament is intolerable and thereafter inadmissible then it's doubtful the writer will be in the room for long because his business is likely elsewhere, ticking boxes that breed endless others; otherwise its interminability is what awaits him and his coffee each morning. Renowned for its stillness this room is in fact far from it. Not all scribes detect it but this room is actually polytonal. And when it does erupt at its stillest it's mainly because of the richness of the harmonics, the grand design of various drones as they begin their ring of the computer. But perhaps this room's most

readable features and the ones that tell in the results are its ergonomics. It's unlikely that the nestling of table and chair or the umbrella of proscriptive light would be topics in themselves but the unyielding they engender is the first principle of the text; the creak of leather and the pen rolling against the middle finger's final knuckle are perhaps too minutely reflexive even today but the disquiet of both avers in the work. In fact the whole *mise en scène* is the best amanuensis a writer could wish for, a monologue on autonomy whose ingenious use of screens and lights manifests any number of literate moments: from those passages apt to evaporate halfway through, the ones that hover forward to lessen the precariousness of the gap between thought and expression, to other more lyrical exigencies where momentum is the net and the pen-becoming-baton is held nearer the top as the wrist confers with the Muse. Doubtless are all points in between and at least half whose animations (a sort of semi-psychotic rocking) pass by the scribe unnoticed. But within each agitation of the chair's wheels is room for real work, not vast amounts, just enough in fact to be less abnegating than the perfunctory tick in the box.

Without doubt this is a manifesto for non-production. But everybody knows that non-production is good and so by definition yields not revolution but good product; it is in fact the otiose heart of good work, that which once was simply scholastic or erudite, mired at any rate in tangents and accumulating azimuths like fantasias on its chosen subject; rewarded in spades for working beyond not just barely up to the limit and feeling, in large part, undeserving of learning not master and financier of it. Autonomous work is today such a scandal because much of its substance is proportionally related to its parenthetical convolutions; that which alights in a corner reading a book like a mesostic, writing through it to more than square its coverage, or reading it twice so fewer notes need be made, the first run-through so relaxed because of what the second will recover and the second so expansive because the first has cleared the way. The tenacity that fuels these indiscretions is fed in turn by an integral streak of violence. And although this is little more than good work determinedly getting done its escaping gas is likely, and quite rightly, to shout at idle students and disregard certain colleagues. Such notaries would of course welcome recent expansions in education if they didn't come hand-in-hand with a host of contractions. And whilst they would gladly affirm also the evolution of certain traditions they can by now only appeal, expressly more than nostalgically, to the normative loss of certain virtues; at root those that read more than they have to, even ought to, and re-invent almost daily the means of their requirements; that have by whatever circuitous route discovered for themselves the

renegade pleasures of a little industrious violence, the pen's petit mort. Hardly oblivious to instrumentality, and although it would never dream of missing its deadlines or being tardy with its appointments and tick-boxes, this declaration of self-absorption, even –abuse, is nevertheless egregiously circuitous and rigorously wasteful. Not pedantically, just traditionally. And certainly if anyone was to appear at the window the fixed and sometimes flushed expression and the quixotic trail of gratuitous materials around the room might appear wholly misdirected. And whilst ultimately there is a beginning and an end to its ministrations, and likely a tacit or embodied knowledge of completion, a transubstantiation of the libido, there is also, in open secrecy, a parenthesis fuelled entirely not by the various scenarios of reproduction but a more original and immanent desire, the very one being strewn around the room and cycled to virulence on a promising sentence. Having spent too long disembowelling itself to order its anchoritic zest depends for its continued resolve on a good deal of self-determination. And whilst this deposition's public sense is entirely decent and productive the solitude that makes its end product good is and has to be infinitely more abandoned. Henceforth its palimpsest reading and geodesic writing are absolution enough for what Juan Goytisolo calls the abominable act of wielding the pen without benefit to the public.

Masturbation's self-indulgence would be categorical were its default not so abnegating. And whilst instrumentalism continues the daily turn of its corridor charges into perversely inarguable virtues (assessment, accountability, litigation) autonomy retreats further behind closed doors. Masturbation might have its limitations but the capacity to sit down and do good, solid, slow, industrious work and to set this in contradistinction to the kind that is bad, hollow, quick, and derivative is not one. For all of its sins and despite the residual guilt of spending a little too long on something not quite sanctioned masturbation is one of the last vestiges of the anchoritic zeal. In fact were its virtues not so evidently antiquating it would be reluctant to avail itself at all of such sovereignty. Were the head not being quite so instrumentally severed from the body masturbation might still be a little coy in its sempiternal role. But as it is masturbation's reputation for self-indulgence is the least of its worries and only the furtive tip of a more manifest capacity, what Goytisolo in *Juan The Landless* calls 'the expert onanism of writing: the inveterate, unproductive act of clutching the pen and letting its filiform generative secretion flow in accordance with the impulse of your will'. Less sword than unearthed tool this pen nevertheless is an oriflamme of good industrious work.

# NO

*Saara Taalas*

## **Riddle**

The business school of today is riddled with paradoxes, one being the simultaneous obsession with the symbol and sign systems of numbers and words while denying the symbolic nature and make-up of such systems. Numbers are treated as real, thing-like objects with positive weight and substance, not as symbolic signifiers. Money is talked about in relation to business practices in a way that doing business and the value of each company's shares has become considered the same thing. Like money was causing the economy and most of the phenomena related to it, rather than being used in the economy for transaction. Business schools have become beholders of the cult of signifying symbols, with managers, like priests, its major product. However, this cult is the cult of no-thing.

In business literature jargon positive things like growth, development, attitudes, and dynamics are presented as the only values worth driving for. In this light, it is simply staggeringly difficult to see why on earth we ever created such silly ideas as 'no', 'nothing', 'thou' shall not', and 'I will not'. In their everyday usage they seem to stand for everything business schools and world are not; hindrance, breaking down progress and creation, discontinuance, nuisance, negative influence, pervading perfectly solid projects, and wrong ideas. In organizations we are used to call things and people that represent or use such words problematic, obsolete, minority, difficult to handle, and resisting any progress. Further, 'no' is portrayed much like in the old joke about the 1970's Swedish feminists who used to carry banderols stating: 'Nej till allt! [No to everything!]'. Negative has been made a laughing stock, ridiculed, and dismissed. 'No' has simply been banned as an idea. Business studies and management have become the cult of positive things.

It is my sole purpose to address this particular problem. In our embrace of all things positive i.e. phenomena in the natural world as they simply are, we have lost connection to 'no' and its purposes. This means that



we have lost connection to how things, ideas, and phenomena come into being i.e. processes of becoming. In the same disaster, we have lost what no-thing stands for. 'No' is the single most powerful rhetoric tool of construction ever produced by human kind. We should put 'no' back on the agenda, not simply as the word hindering all progress but as a delicate technology for controlling the construction of our identities, organizations, destinies, and the making of realities. No longer can business schools go on without 'no'! We need to break the cult of nothing and acknowledge ourselves as fans. Fandom allows us to question and to say 'no' while still being attracted to the positive things. When the Jungian superego said 'no' to restrict and to comply, we need to find the joy of 'no' that frees us from the cult and makes the abruptions and reconnections interesting and new. The 'no' we need is queer and unpredictable.

### **The Negative as Technology of Control**

Human beings are distinguishable from other animals by our ability to engage with experience through the complicated symbol system of language. A particularly important aspect of this human manufactured symbol system is that it incorporates an aspect that does not exist independently in nature. This is the negative. Negatives simply do not exist in nature. They are possible only in platforms of symbol systems. We could happily go even further; for negative 'no' is not only a non-natural but stands against nature, fighting it; negative stands in opposition to positive, natural thing-ness of nature. The positive things of nature, the areas of action and thought that are following natural urges like killing, devouring and using, where the survival of the fittest is the norm, and justice and ethics have little significance without the opposing 'no'.

Negatives divide into two categories: First, a proportional negative, 'it is not', and second, a hortatory negative, 'thou shalt not'. Whether the second came before the first is possible: negative begins as a command and becomes a resource of definition and information later. Indeed, without a doubt, a meeting with the Other, the whole concept of any-Other, would become impossible without the hortatory negative. The idea of 'no' is therefore before the idea of 'nothing'. A negative is a principle or a technology for resistance, distance and setting apart, it is not a name for a thing. Any human being, even just a small child might or might not follow the order 'thou shalt not'. Regardless whether she follows it or does not obey, she will understand the idea that is behind the negative. Negative is the limiting principle. An ordinary day is filled with positive acts in succession. Yet the positive acts are limited, guided or regulated by proscriptive principles or ideas.

Negatives are not names for things. Limiting regimes such as schools, institutions, and dogmatic ways of thinking are built on negative technology producing rituals and acts that are controlled by a moralistic negativity that underlies the positive act, for example in schools, religious groups and ideological organisations. These acts are quasi-positives by nature – due to their sense being rooted and defined by conscious acts of belonging and conscientiously made commitments to the controlling principle.

Here, instead of simply assuming that the succession of positive acts is the central principle directing management education, I suggest that there is a reason to believe that this might only be the appearance of the quasi-positives that gain their motivation from a principle beyond directly observable outcomes of action. What limits the positive act is a negative ‘no’, or, in the case of a moral subject, ‘don’t’ is used to control the nature of the character of the acting subject and connects her to local and spatial organising through motives for action. Social subjects consciously use negatives as ways of limiting and controlling the organizing of reality, or should I say, to prevent unwanted reality from becoming *the* reality.

Negatives have the power to tell apart and disconnect, but while doing so, connect and mark the similarity in nature giving positive its power as a result. Through the use of negative the positive is given its positive-ness. It marks the building of the negative counter-part that makes it possible for the positive to be. Therefore, efficiency is only made possible by treating laziness and waste as its negative. Efficiency is built upon the lazy or the wasteful. Nearly all business positives are built using negatives, ‘thou shall not’s’ which allows management and business practices to be accounted for as lists of ‘do’s’ and ‘do not’s’. This is a particular nature of business studies. It is this nature that is taught in class. Students become quasi-positives, managers that are constructed of non-human, phenomena that are non-themselves and non-ethical. The controlling purpose of the negative principle in the making of business knowledge makes the transition between common knowledge and business knowledge possible. It is necessary for producing business knowledge in a university setting and simultaneously preventing the first from taking over. This would make the transition, or should one say translation, from sign system into meta-subjects, from imaginary money to actual wealth, from zero to non-existing impossible. The construction allows for nothing else than what is included in the system. All entities, all signs, and all symbols outside the sign system, are nothings.

## **Cult of Nothing**

It seems that in the incremental processes of limitation an emerging reality gains positive thing-ness: The use of negative controls the construction of reality as a positive thing. So, the continuous change here does not seem to be building reality as a neat project. It is much like turning the building of a snowman into the social ploughing of a field of snow so that what is left looks to most of us like a snowman, while all the time, people are contradicting and making impossible each other's ideas of what a snowman should be like. The primacy of a positive act, as the a priori means of organizing, must not be taken for granted.

The business school's obsession with sign systems is beautifully displayed in the significance of 'nothing'. This proportional negative or no-thing is a fascinating centre of cult. Nothing is simply something that is outside the current sign systems, something that is not included. Science and scientists have dedicated enormous amounts of time to establishing in nature the existence of nothing, no-thing at all, absolute lack of any thing positive. Signifying this, we invented 0, zero, null. It is impossible to understand the commodification of numerical symbols into business science, nor is it possible to understand how this zero comes to signify the birth of imaginary money – paper that represents value and places it within the context of economic transaction as the signifier of economy – without the understanding of how nothing came to be so significant. Zero became a meta-subject, standing for, and finally being, nothing while laying a ground for such positives as imaginary money and monetary transactions. Nothing has signified since the renaissance and becomes the building block of modern science. We have lots of faith in money and numbers. Sign systems do not allow for hortatory 'no' or 'I will not'. They are built using such negatives and further utterances of 'no's' would put them in question. A sign system not allowing the use of 'no' or 'I will not' comes close to cults in their make up.

Most popular studies of cults in anthropology and the science of religion are concerned with religious cults, but management study is connected to the cults of quasi-positives where 'Nothing' is created by taking away all signs that are not allowed. However, these negative limitations are not made in the open but replaced by concepts that look and feel like positive things. Such cults are created emphasizing strong charismatic leadership and systems of 'do's' that are shared by cult members. The danger of all cults is that there is no distance or reflection from that which 'no' stands for. Their make up is unclear

and non transparent. Things just are the way they are because the quasi-positive thing-ness proves them. The reality is therefore solid and unchangeable, and there is no space for alternatives or other.

The negative principle is observable only when violated by an act that is seen as inconsistent or when organizational actors explain their actions afterwards. These dialogues become important when they directly involve the making of reality. The negative allows for dialogue between organizational members and enables the construction of its purposes. But it also controls and limits the process. This is crucial for all organizing.

### **Negative Prior and Camp**

I suggest that we need to bring back distance and relationship to what we are dealing with. We need to question the cult of nothing. Upholding this cult is no longer an option. Rather we need to acknowledge our relationship to what we do, what we study, teach, and think. Negative allows us to see the cult through the silly, the stupid, the immoral, and the criminal. It allows us to detach and attach by utterances of 'no' and 'won't'. It would allow for the study of the ethical, the different, and the other. We are perversely interested in business, almost obsessed, big fans at least. Fandom allows for distance, appreciation and reflection but it is ideological doom. Our questioning relationship to management and business with the negative should be camp rather than cult. Camp is fandom with a difference; it allows for being a follower, peeping tom of business practices, while simultaneously saying 'this can not be it' and 'is this not being really stupid?'. It is doing exactly this: putting words in 'brackets'; as-if's; so-they-say's; and, it-is-being-claimed's. Embracing 'no' makes room for camp management. In the original spirit of camp is the importance of an aesthetic relationship: a queer way of seeing management. Queer eye on straight science. However, it can be dangerous. Practicing playful distancing is not just a light sport for the witty. There is a political edge to camp in the world where even science is a religious sphere where one must teach and write what one believes in, not what one thinks is true. On the other hand, it can become just another boring old quasi-positive thing in itself: the soap operatic camp enacted by the straight academics of straight science. Witty straight people are pretending to be camp while scared shitless of being branded queer. Camp is therefore double edged, emancipatory while simultaneously critical, connecting and disconnecting at will. To use 'no' in this different light and purpose is queer and implies devil's advocacy, the shifting of priorities, and being tempted by the seduction of the quasi-positives, while knowing it, too.

In camp spirit 'positive' acts of management could be viewed not as *a priori* positive acts, but as a result of conscious limitation and controlling process, constructed using negative as a linguistic tool in the making. 'Thou shall not be gay, thou shall not be fun, thou shall not be free.' We could lecture the whole 'Introduction to Management' as a 'thou shall not be a lazy, wasteful, moral nor ethical being'.

This has some powerful implications for the way we look at textual organizing. Whilst the discussion on continuous change has gained momentum, the importance of taking language, dialogue, and rhetorical sayability with a camp seriousness, has yet to have its day. This delay in critical thinking is not because of the means-ends nature of talk and language but because of its direct linkages with the constitution of organized entities and the making of identities. We desperately need 'no' to control what is becoming. Organizational actors are not separable from the technologies of production that are their own making. Without 'no' we will end up hollow and permanently sold out. Not-moral subjects at all. Camp relationship lets us face the fact that it might already be too late, but let's at least play violins while going down.

What we see today in the business schools are students brought up without ideas, theories, morals or ethics of 'no'. This makes them manifest 'no' in all their positive actions. They are not protesting, not interested, not committed, not passionate, and do not care much. The means of commitment, drawing a line in the sand, or making a point have been taken away in the cult of positive things. 'No' is a tool of committing oneself, taking responsibility, standing up. Business schools should take a stand and put 'no' back on the agenda. There is no way of influencing the enfolding of the future without saying 'no' with a purpose. Now, doing that with a straight face and a cute bum makes it personal; that is, in other words, camp.

See you at the barricades, babe.

# ONTOLOGY

*Akseli Virtanen and Jussi Vähämäki*

## I

We are in the middle of a redivision, a reappropriation that is directed at the general characteristics of the human species, at those general properties that make human beings 'humans'. The old institutions face their limit here in being directed only at the human body and the biological processes of life. The new institutions see there a possible breeding ground. We are witnessing a kind of anthropological transformation where the species-being of human beings, which is without any function – and always open to change – is being appropriated and subordinated to the particular and already structured tasks and aims of a particular historical period. If we want some grounds for politics, it is by participating in the fight for the direction that this transformation takes. The trophy is the experience of the possibility of change. And this does not need any humanistic or biological conception of the human being, and even less any naïve philosophical sophistry. What is at stake is not just this or that historical fact, or this or that injustice, but the element of change as such.

The a-historical human nature, that is, the physical and biological structure of the human species, and its in-born faculties, are for the first time immediately and directly at the centre of historical phenomena, the phenomena which determine our present: our communicative and linguistic faculty (which does not exist for any particular reason or function) as a means of production; our general adaptability (the human being does not have any particular environment or task, it is flexible towards different environments) as the breeding ground for social conflicts; biological processes characteristic to our life (the "weak" species characteristics of human beings like the long childhood) as the operating field of the procedures of administration. We can, in other words, experience the historicalness of our experience (its relation to doing or saying something particular) historically or as generally varying; we can look directly in the eye of our existence as potential beings which do not have any particular surrounding, any

particular task or function, that is, as beings which can do anything and from which anything may be expected. Ontology reveals itself phenomenologically: we experience at the same time the abundance of our possibilities and the trivialness of all reasons. In this situation we have no other resources to turn to except ourselves, that is, this very ability to do anything. This experience of the bare 'I can' does not refer to any particular ability or faculty but to our nature as such. It is maybe the most severe and most cruel experience possible: the experience of potentiality.

And we know that all the proper humanists and radicals are terrified of stepping out of their institutionally sheltered corners. We even understand their worry, fear and anxiety (about their identity, career, livelihood, reference points, reputation...) – this is exactly the experience we wish to discuss here – but we don't understand the paralyzation and submission at the moment when we should see the possibilities here, when the fragility (the bare belief and fear) on which the new controls are built reveals itself; when we should refuse the panic and fear they try to spread; when we should take control of our lives and have the courage to face our ability to do anything. There is something similar here to a situation where one would be forced to witness the rape of one's significant other, congratulating oneself afterwards as he or she had secretly stepped twice outside the chalk circle that the rapist traced around him or her and ordered not to cross. With a raised forefinger, inside the circle stands a concerned human being. This is the foundation under his or her feet.

We wish to outline here another type of foundation for what we are going to do, other than opportunism and fear, other than paralysation and submission.

## II

Knowledge has become action and entered production. In other words, it is no longer external to production, but has rather become an immediate force of production; and controlling and organizing the production of knowledge has become the central political question of our time.

Because inventive and productive knowledge is produced it must be regarded in economic terms as a cost. Knowledge and invention do not drop from heaven, they do not originate outside the action and existence of human beings, but are rather characteristic of it. If knowledge and inventions are characteristic of human action, and if

their production is the essential question of knowledge economy, who pays the costs and bears the risks of this production?

We already feel the answer in our backs: to get rid of the uncertainty and indeterminate nature of the production of knowledge, of the fact that it takes time (time is its cost, but we will return to this little later), the production of knowledge must be controlled and organized by developing the measurement and evaluation systems of knowledge, but above all by organizing and producing the producers of knowledge.

In the first place, the economical uncertainty of the production of knowledge is realized by handing over the risks and costs of the production of knowledge to the producers themselves. Making the invention and production of knowledge more certain and efficient takes place by making the life of the producers of knowledge more uncertain: the business school, the university, the research centres, the project funding, and new flexible forms of business, are all places where the aim of flexibility and the reduction of 'labour costs' is to contract out the area of uncertainty and indeterminateness which may act as material for the political action and organization of the labourers, that is, as matter for their cooperation.

It is important to notice that this attack is essentially political and cannot be distinguished from the ontological. It is an attack against the uncertain, indeterminate and cooperative foundation of knowledge. The attack is directed at the possibilities of producing something new, it is directed at the freedom of moving outside the already organized places (orders, ordered services, demand). Its aim is simply to subordinate producers to *use*, which means the loss of the autonomy of the producer, of the autonomy of the production of new. Or, we can say that it means the subordination of understanding to *stupidity*, which is always about finding given answers in a context pre-structured by somebody else. And this is carried out by creating willing and submissive attitudes and mentalities and by making each one of us face these 'demands' isolated – as if on our own. Indeed we should not be comforted to think that we have won when we have been able to solve correctly an already set problem posed in a TV quiz show.

### III

Before we can answer this attack, we have to understand what we are dealing with. The political problem of the knowledge economy is not that different from that of the industrial society: how to organize and control the labour force. The two central political questions



of the organization of modern societies were, on the one hand, the physical organization and control of the labour force in spaces like factories, offices, schools etc. (disciplinary power), and the protection and guarding of labour power in the welfare state (biopolitics), on the other.

Today, however, the labour force has increasingly been detached from its spatial, physical and biological aspects and has become a 'mental category'. The generic human capacities – intellect, perception and linguistic-relational abilities – which make human beings 'humans', have replaced machinery and direct labour at the core of value creation. Such labour force does not have strict spatial and temporal coordinates; it rather moves in time and unrolls over the boundaries and hierarchies of space. In other words it is impossible to organize, control and locate such labour force through the place it belongs to, through the deeds it does or only at the level of the biological process of life. It is in this 'life of the mind' or 'life-time' that the old institutions face their limit in being directed only at the human body and the biological life of a population and the new ones that see there a possible breeding ground: we are moving towards the control and organization of the labour force as knowledge in time.

If the necessity of the physical control of the labour force in space established the foundations for the organizations and institutions of industrial capitalism (discipline focused on production and acts of production whose basis was the distinction between what is productive and what is not), and biopolitics had already to acknowledge the difficulty of this distinction in being directed at the entirety of productive life (bio-life of a population), what will be the forms of control and organization in the knowledge society? What kind of factories, prisons, schools and universities are there for the 'life of the mind'?

#### IV

That knowledge has become a direct force of production has meant that it is hard to make distinctions between education and production. Because of this 'socialization' of production, the production of knowledge (education, studying, learning, research) has become a direct target of exploitation (pardon us for using this bad word, but this is exactly what it is about) and an important field of political struggle.

This 'socialization' has also meant that the school and the university have lost their famous autonomy, the monopoly on the production

of knowledge. This is no marginal phenomenon, of concern only to education and research, but a part of the crisis of all modern, and relatively independent, institutions: the crisis of the university is part of the crisis of all the closed institutions and their necessity to 'open to society'. University has lost the monopoly on the production and control of knowledge in the same way that the nation state has lost the monopoly on the production and control of law and the factory on the production of economic value. It means that it is difficult to distinguish what is knowledge and what only looks like it, or the distinction can be made – as is today the case – only by appealing to the authority of the university. That is, to appeal authoritatively and without any concern for knowledge 'itself', which underlines the importance of the 'credibility' of knowledge, its value of appearance as knowledge, which destroys further the connection of the university to the social nature of the production of knowledge.

Whereas the Old University controlled a particular part of life time (work time) and a particular action (research), the New University demands of us an internalisation of its values (or the values of its internal sects) and attempts to control all possibilities of life, to occupy the entire time of life and space of action. It no longer assesses research by its productivity and innovations, but by its 'social value', by the way in which in each moment it reflects the values of the community (public opinion, common sense) and reacts to the values of society. It is from this sociality of knowledge that the necessity for the new evaluation and control systems of knowledge arises. They no longer assess research by its 'results', or by its content, but rather through its form, usability, acceptability and current social value. That is why it seems as if a student is no longer a student, a teacher no longer a teacher, a researcher not a researcher: their identity is no longer defined by the institution in which they are in each moment or by what they do or produce at a particular moment. They are rather defined by the possibilities and expectations through which they are captured and produced as 'producers', as servants of certain already set aims and demands.

This transformation has taken place roughly during the last thirty years. It has meant a transition from the use and exploitation of a particular part of human life (worktime) and particular use of knowledge into the use and exploitation of the entire life and human knowledge. Here 'entire human knowledge' must be taken seriously: the question is not the exploitation of particular skills, scholarship or certain genius, but of the exploitation of elemental abilities of communication, knowledge and experience. In every project the project worker must

put to work his or her entire personality, experience, feelings and abilities of communication, his or her entire knowledge, only to be left again on his or her own after the part-time funding is over. It is from this transition that we also find answers to the question why research – which is, typically, only ‘research’ in name – replaces research that, it is claimed, uses ‘too much’ time and costs ‘too much’. Imitation and copying, of course, saves time (and time is its cost). Similarly, as the researcher and his or her research become indistinguishable, it cannot but affect the possibilities of funding: what is funded is not the ‘work’ but the ‘person’, who must of course be of the right kind, in whom the right kind of potentiality must be embedded. The research community becomes more and more a moral community controlled by ‘shared values’ – which of course cannot be pronounced publicly. The community and belonging to it (in opposition to argumentation) becomes more and more important giving birth to ‘brand research’ where the collective belief in the significance of the research, and its aggressive marketing play an essential role.

## V

These new forms of organization and control we are confronting today could perhaps best be characterized as a ‘politics of mind’ or a ‘power over mind’: instead of creating physical or biological boundaries (habits of the body) they try to create mentalities and mental boundaries (habits of the mind). This power over the mind governs by way of moods and sentiments, through mentalities and public opinion (shared beliefs, common opinion). Through them it reaches the direct control of a mental labour force, not at the level of actual acts or products, but at the level of its possibility. It aims at the direct or immediate control of cooperation by organizing and structuring its general preconditions. To do this it cannot afford to be withheld or slowed down by any particular institution or particular task: it must break free from these limitations.

The change is important because it concerns our conception of power, but above all because it restructures our entire political system and its organization. By opposing the traditional disciplinary conception of power (biopower, power over bio-life) and the concept of control (power over life of the mind), it is possible to say that power operates on particular actions and subjects in space. Its target is the physical or biological human being. Power seeks its justification from particular institutions and their functions (the factory produces, the hospital takes care of illness, research is done in the university, the army takes care of war). Control, instead, operates on the bare conditions of action, on the possibilities of life in general. Unlike the modern logic

of power, which always needs an institutional context and a normal state to justify itself, the new form of control avoids committing itself to any particular institution and any particular task. It rather seeks legitimacy from public opinion and the ethically right: ethics and obscure 'public opinion' replace formal law and its institutions as the basis of legitimacy. In other words, power over mind does not have any external 'reason' to refer to, no fixed point of reference or legitimation (like formal law, normal state, or a specific task of an institution). There is rather 'no sense' or 'no reason' in it. Its logic and points of reference seem to change from day to day. Indeed the power over mind is arbitrary, and therefore seems mad: it does not have any specific task or specific boundaries; it is uncontrolled by fixed reason; it is lacking in restraint.

The politics and economics of knowledge economy and their coming 'institutions' like business schools are born from the encounters, conflicts and struggles over the life of the mind. Indeed, it is no accident that torture is the method in use. Torture is a method of separating information from the human body. It is a method of making visible your invisible habits and relations to your friends – or do not the means through which you are held ready-for-use in the so called labour market all resemble somehow torture: the necessity to be awake all the time, to be afraid of everything, to wait at the entrance to somewhere, to reveal yourself completely.

How then to engage in these fights? Perhaps in believing in the 'values' of the Fordist disciplinary societies, in the so called objective measures, in the formal equality, in the belief that so long as I follow the rules, meet the requirements, mind my own business, study well, do my job well, I will get the appropriate reward? Or perhaps by idealizing the University and the humanistic conceptions of the modern capitalistic societies behind it, those conceptions which we find are empty and in crisis (when an institution does not find any other legitimation for itself except its existence as an authority without a content, it is in crisis)? We don't think so. We must rather think these changes and engage in the fights for their direction by getting rid of stupidity, by exposing false problems and by discovering variables under which the political problem must today be stated correctly. We must develop organizationally active forms of cooperation and resistance which organize the 'power of mind' against the 'power over mind'. This power of cooperation, the power of cooperating minds, comes from time, from the indeterminate, from the uncertain, from the restlessness, from everywhere the 'power over mind' is trying to spread panic, rush and fear.

## VI

Why is it that restlessness as a state of mind has almost always been judged as dangerous in the tradition of political thought? Or let us put it this way: what is this indeterminateness that power is so afraid of?

Make no mistake: power over mind is reactionary. And it is groundless. The new formless 'forms' or uninstitutional 'institutions' of the power over mind arise precisely from the insufficiency and failure of the institutionalized modern forms of power and organization in a situation where they confront uncertain, restless, indeterminate or 'unclassified' people: people whose actions and orientation cannot be figured on the basis of their belonging to this or that community, or on the basis of performing this or that task; that is, when power confronts human beings as bare restless humans (not determined by any particular space, environment, identity or institution) who are capable of anything, from whom anything might be expected. The flexibility of humans, their capacity to live in almost every imaginable ambient, is an active and not a passive faculty. Human being is not a reactive creature that responds to the stimulus that comes from its ambient, but an animal that is able to change its fate. What is at stake in modern politics is not this or that historical fact, or this or that injustice, but the fact that anything may be expected from us, the element of change as such.

This element is that which always unrolls over the boundaries and hierarchies of space, which prevents everything being given immediately and prevents human beings being made reducible to their manifestations in space, or to their positions in the chronological continuum of time. This indeterminateness or inexhaustion innate to human beings is that element in which something happens and which cannot be reduced to spatial distinctions: it is absolutely self-contained and independent from any environment, and has no need for pre-established order or security, no need for rules, for a Community or a Nation. It is an absolute power outside the historical and visible world. It produces, has outcomes and consequences, may end up in disasters, but never 'is' its end result, its outcome, its consequence, its history or its disasters. It is that element which cannot be reduced to its historical conditions, which does not originate in history. This a-historical or temporal, enduring dimension is also its ontological dimension. And it is here where we may begin to find the basis for the politics freed from guilt and external constraints: the restlessness or anxiousness without an end, the activism for the sake of activism, constitutes the starting point for our actual experience today, the

experience of the abundance of our possibilities and the trivialness and vanity of all reasons. Because we *are* without a predetermined task, work and employment, without a particular place and aim, we *can* do anything. Being without work, this precarity, life without determined tasks and without preset environments is our nature and our strength. It is the starting point and the foundation, because it is in this precariousness that a human being survives as an enduring being. What is really precarious and untypical for human beings are preset tasks, determined employment, and permanent work.

## PROCESS

*Robert Sharp and Christian De Cock*

If we couldn't stop the world from moving, living would be unbearable; like being on a never-ending roller-coaster with tunnel vision. There would be no time to make sense of one moment before being drowned in the next. Fortunately, the apparatus of our consciousness is geared to slow up our experience, to frame and fix it into comprehensible 'things'. It is as though we turn the constant flux and chaos of lived experience into discrete and manageable scenes with familiar and well-behaved actors – like a strip cartoon. This is how we make sense of the world, by fixing it and naming it.

This 'sanity' comes at a price. In authoring these strip cartoons we cut them out from the world of experience and detach them from whatever reality it is that they belonged to. This deletes the background, the surroundings, the past, the connections and links to the rest of the world. Simple, understandable, sane ... but decimated, fragmented, dislocated. The cost of sense making is fragmentation. The history of thought could be described as a history of our struggle to come to terms with this fragmentation. Yet, each time some new idea offers to reconnect these fragments all it actually provides is yet another perspective: more fragments to study. Taking a look at the 'sense-making' literature of our times is like seeing the world through a thousand tiny fragments of a stained glass window – each one reflecting, distorting, filtering and framing some unimaginable reality beyond. The madness that is process is the unimaginable and incomprehensible vastness of reality beyond our 'reality'.

Fortunately Homo sapiens have evolved to make sense out of the chaos of process, to bring about order and with it control. This world of Things cut from the continuum of process has proved extremely useful through the course of human development. Things such as Deer and Buffalo, Lion and Tiger are powerful, shared notions when the social aim is to find food and avoid predation. Things such as Gods, Kings and Kingdoms provided order and stability. Science has enabled us

to characterise Things and to exploit these characteristics by better imagining what new Things we can create.

But all the time these Things are separate from the reality they represent. As this world of Things has evolved and elaborated, the route back to experience has become lengthened, vague, even at times impenetrable. This is more than simply a distinction between concrete and abstract. It is the reification of the symbolic in making sense of the world and the creation of something that, although it clearly partakes of reality, is not actually 'there'. Even the concept of Deer or Lion is just that – a multiplicity of drawings, narratives, images, memories of experiences. To us, the thing Lion is always something separated from the biological process that we allude to – unless of course, we should stumble into a man-eater. End of story!

Modernity could be described as a shift in the balance of social processes whereby lived experience has become subordinate to the world of concept. Experience is heavily discounted in favour of a perspective from which it is essentially disconnected. Ours is a conceived world of symbols and meanings. We only experience it third-hand. Reality has taken on the essence of advertising – even when the symbolic is blatantly apparent our adulation reifies it and makes it real.

We live according to a generalized image-repertoire... [the image] completely de-realizes the human world of conflicts and desires, under cover of illustrating it... something we translate, in ordinary consciousness, by the avowal of an impression of nauseated boredom, as if the universalized image were producing a world that is without difference (indifferent), from which can rise, here and there, only the cry of anarchisms, marginalisms, and individualisms: let us abolish the images, let us save immediate Desire.

Roland Barthes said this, shortly before he was to be run over by a laundry van. End of Story!

Breaking the world up into Things brings order and control, but the madness of process still seems to seep through the gaps between these Things. Compartmentalising Things into coherent groups may narrow these gaps, but the resulting compartments are small, fragmenting the world of Things and leaving larger gaps between. The madness in these gaps cannot be reduced to the symbolic. It is untameable: a remainder. The Remainder. So the fragments have to work harder to keep this remainder at bay or lock it out altogether. Indeed, if it can



not be tamed, then at least the fear that it creates, fear of the unknown, can be exploited. Here is the opportunity to create and control worlds within worlds in which order and structure can be manipulated, albeit in the form of a dysfunctional symbiosis. There is benefit from the comfortable coherence created, but the price is to give in to the exploitative forces that provide the motive behind this ordering. And society is open to the weaknesses inherent in each of these social forms. This is, after all, a synopsis of social history: the competition between, and evolution of, these social forms. And the great social delusion exists in the denial that these processes should even exist. We are always preoccupied with the present and find it hard to see ourselves as immersed in a process playing out over generations.

### Fragment and Exploit!

Our lives are full of the contradictions created by disconnecting things from process, and then feigning connections in order to better exploit them. The free market economy draws on our notion of Freedom as a fundamental human right to be nurtured and protected. It connects this notion to the appeal that markets should be allowed to find their own level without outside imposition. It draws on deeper links to the ethical correctness of Freedom itself and to the impeccable ethical certitude of Nature. Yet it exploits these Things simply because these connections do not withstand scrutiny. Markets are and necessarily have to be regulated because without regulation there is only corruption. Freedom is a difficult concept in any analysis, and freedom within the world of business is minted from the same coin as exploitation. And the ethical basis of Nature? There is none. Rather these are references to the long romantic tradition of Nature as pure, traditional, stable and above all free from the supposed corruption of humankind. Not the Nature of parasites, disease, viruses, predation and mass extinctions.

### Fragment and Exploit!

Life today has never been more connected and more *inter*-dependent. This is in stark contrast to the almost universal image of autonomy where people are free agents able to make their own choices about how to live their lives. And yet a man in Huddersfield, England loses his job because his directors, seeking to appease their disembodied shareholders, have found 'cheaper' labour in India. A farmer sells up his livelihood because he can no longer compete with factory farmed produce brought half way around the world by ever more hungry

supermarkets. A family in Alaska lose their house because the rest of the world can not sate their appetite for carbon.

Right now there are problems facing *homo sapiens* on a scale and level of complexity that have never been experienced before. And the toolkit we have inherited to tackle these problems is sadly wanting. What is needed are new options, new ways of looking at the world that are better suited to dealing with the complexity and connectivity that is driving modern social forms.

The idea that the world of Things is in someway separated from the reality of process has existed and recurred through the history of human thought. But perhaps not surprisingly it has never gained widespread acceptance, given the utility to be gained from conceiving of the world as constructed from stable things that can be understood and manipulated. More fundamentally, the very act of conceiving of the world as process inevitably pivots us straight back into the world of Things. The former is always inaccessible while the latter is usually more than adequate for the purpose to hand. At least this has generally been true, but more and more we are faced with the shortcomings of this worldview: fragmentation, exploitation, and a general inability to tackle the sheer complexity of the problems ranged against us. The conceptual world of things has become too remote from the reality of the processes it tries to represent. What is needed is a way of reaching back to the reality of process, even if this is ultimately inaccessible. This is not about finding some new form of objectivity. It is more a form of anti-interpretation; an unravelling of the conceptual world of Things back towards the neglected ground that lies between Things and Process. Process may be unreachable but it is not unimaginable. Methods that enable us to imagine the experience of process may provide new perspectives and new 'insights' that can be used to critique the sensible world of Things and draw it back towards the reality of process that it is currently failing.

But before this can be done, there is an obstacle that must be removed! The very notion of process is itself contested and nowhere more so than in the writings of academia and the lectures of business schools. Papers describe Longitudinal Field Research (LFR), Grounded Theory, Action Theory, Activity Theory, Actor Network Theory, process mapping etc. Lecture courses offer to teach Business Process Management, Process mapping and Process engineering. Everyone wants in on Process and would be fighting to trademark it if they could: Process®.

The problem is that these ideas are at best not radical – constantly reverting back to the worldview of Things, and at worst reveal how the process worldview has been blatantly hijacked and converted into yet another comfortable arrangement of orderly, well behaved Things. LFR attempts to redress the shortfalls created by synchronic forms of research but its own methodology exaggerates the boundaries between the inside of ‘the case’ and what lies outside, cutting off the possibilities of exploring processes that extend outside these boundaries. Grounded Theory ought to be attractive to the cause of process but its foundations turn out to be no deeper than the piles of notes taken by its researchers on their excursions into the real world.

The Process of Business Schools shuns the very notion of process as the intractable reality of experience. This Process consists of orderly bubbles and neat arrows, lists of ‘inputs’ and ‘outputs’ and descriptions of ‘transformations’ turning one into the other. This Process fits on a sheet of paper, albeit sometimes a large sheet. It has defined beginnings and defined endings and defined relationships in between. It is a Process that has more in common with the well behaved world of computers than the messy world of social interactions. It may be useful if the objective is to shoehorn this disorderly world into a neatly ordered machine. But this would provide little insight into that world for those who are looking to reconnect with the reality of experience.

If the madness of process is beyond the grasp of meaning then maybe it is methodologically unreachable? Perhaps there is no alternative other than to accept a Popperian mind-set where fallibility constantly looks over the shoulder of science? This is, however, an alternative that has to be rejected, at least while the concept of process is explored. If we can intuit the process worldview properly then there ought to be ways in which we can use this perspective to generate new ideas. And these new ideas just may provide novel utility.

What follows are a few rudimentary thoughts on methods that may prove fruitful.

### **Time**

Almost all methodologies involve the excision of their subjects from the continuum of time within which they were embedded. Beginnings and endings seem inevitable but they also create a sharp disjunction between what is inside and outside. Some methodologies such as Longitudinal Field Research may attempt to overcome this disjunction, but in many ways they have made it more acute. What is needed are methods that avoid being trapped by time.

Why not start a narrative in the middle and work outwards? Or write a narrative backwards by following the processes impinging on a particular moment as they bifurcate and multiply. Develop a sense for the dramatically different time periods that processes have: the immediate manipulation of the micro-material present; the gradual evolution of the technology involved; the still slower development of social forms; and the geologically slow progression of our anthropological evolution. You may chase one thread back no more than a few weeks or months, while another may only reveal its significance over decades.

You could start from almost anywhere: a particular meeting or event; the publication of a Newsletter. What were the enablers of this event? Where did the ideas discussed/written about come from? Who was involved and how did they relate to the company or organisation involved? What happened as a result of the meeting? You could follow events back as a result of your own research but why be bounded by it? A meeting on implementing a new corporate initiative to 'create shareholder value' is as much enabled by today's willingness to dedicate resources to the meeting and the initiative as it is by the corporate turnaround effected 5 years before. It wouldn't be happening if there were no consultants offering suitable 'solutions' and they wouldn't be doing so if they hadn't got their ideas from somewhere. The very notion of Shareholder Value has to be a prerequisite to this meeting and has been part of a process that threads its way back over several decades. It is a story that has been shaped by the larger macro-economic history of the west and key events in this history have impinged on our meeting in more ways than one. Is the logic of 'net present value' that pervades the tools of this trade really connected to the shareholder's notion of 'value'?

### **The Veil of Interpretation**

Why tell a story at all? Is it really the job of the researcher or the business consultant to provide their interpretations? Or is their job to enable their audiences to arrive at meanings of their own? Instead you could omit or reduce your intermediate 'meta-narratives' and present your research materials in more open arrangements to allow your readers the opportunity to explore and develop their own interpretations. At the very least we should be humble enough to recognise that our interpretation of events is just another voice amongst many. Polyphony is a well-used idea intended to open up interpretation, provided it is allowed to amount to more than just different ways of saying the same

thing. Can we really escape our own ego to allow truly polyphonic representations?

The task of the researcher/writer is not so much that of ‘author’ as of ‘director’. Unfortunately the researcher’s interpretation is always inescapable even in the choice of raw material and the manner in which it has been captured. But perhaps for the researcher/director it is more a question of how to present the material as creating it in the first place. Why not use what has been bequeathed to you by history? Or at least allow your co-researchers (the researched) to do the creating bit? Your task is to chip away at what has been collected or offered to unravel as much of the interpretation of others as you can. There is also an element of experimental archaeology here. You must examine the bits that you have revealed and try to imagine how they would have been used. Your goal is to use Things as simple pointers to get your audience to sense or appreciate the underlying process from which they have been generated.

### **The Triumph of Experience**

In the last twenty years museums have recognised that they can gain much greater appeal by becoming more experiential than conceptual. Maybe researchers should be looking at ways in which they can enable their audiences to experience the processes they are researching in a similar manner. Perhaps you could arrange your research findings using tools similar to computer games. Like many of the adventure style games, you could create a network of rooms or spaces through which your readers can wander at will. Each node in the network could combine a variety of materials – images and video clips; audio excerpts from interviews; documents (whole or abridged) – and perhaps you could even admit the voice of the researcher/guide. From each node your audience can explore in any number of directions. They could move from the shop-floor to the suppliers (or to the design office, or to the accounts department) or they could choose to follow the process that delivered the production technology itself and enabled the shop-floor to exist in the first place. And all the time your aim is to enable your ‘readers’ to experience your ‘researches’ whilst remaining sensitive to the fact that they can never really escape from your interpretative function; just as your interpretations can never escape from their re-interpretations.

These are just a few ideas of how researchers could try to reinhabit the lost space between inaccessible process and disconnected concept. This is not a manifesto for a new order, a new Objectivity or a new truth. Nor is it an attempt to create ‘Yet Another School’

of social theorising. It is rather a methodological plea coming from a sense of something beyond the comprehensible: that the world out there works as a swarm of complex, distributed, and interconnected processes. And that perhaps, just perhaps, we need to explore methods that are more sympathetic to this possibility. Methods that give us some sense of being part of these processes; that can articulate this distributedness and allude to the vastly different rhythms of time that shape the course of progress. Methods that are less likely to trip over the hard edges of Things?

# QUEER

*Sheena Vachhani*

‘My own suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose’

J.B.S. Haldane, *Possible Worlds* (1928)

The queer provides us with a demarcation of difference, a basic understanding of what is outside the ‘norm’, what is not quite straight. It provides us with a simple sense of perversion. What is queer should be revered. It can be remarkable, curious or unaccountable. All these elements make queer understandings of the business school dangerous, strange and enticing. This manifesto subjects the queer as oddity to the Leviathan state of the business school today: think of this as a case of The Republic and its dissidents. In so saying, I wish to provide an argument for the ‘space’ of the queer, ways in which it can be kept alive and vibrant and why it should be.

Difference is, in one sense, consciously ignored in the business school as ‘A’-rated journal publications are the blanket weapon of choice in the constant market duel for streamlining excellence and desirability. However, the business school itself would argue that it seeks out difference; to ‘differentiate’ is probably the leitmotif of most organisations including the business school in the tiresome race for impeccable research ratings and increased revenue. This may be done by carving out academic niches and by differentiating your business school product for your student customer. However, how is this difference prescribed and what does it seek to achieve under the aims and objectives, the motives, of business schools today? I would argue that this form of differentiation is the real nexus of impoverishment. The fight for subversion is ultimately unfought. We could, paradoxically, well be seen as the academic pauper – children of the social sciences, penurious from being the university’s jewel in the crown.

Still, I consider the business school to be a road to the queer despite the gravity contained in its constitution – a convenient stream to those follies one can indulge in and can still possibly be preserved within.

The 'strangeness' and pursuit of such follies is how I see the geometries of the business school being changed without deference to a higher order. This is the argument for opening up the space for the queer.

### **Queerying the Business School**

So, what is meant by the queer? An assortment of definitions from various sources would have it range from:

1. Deviating from the expected or normal; strange: a queer situation.
2. Odd or unconventional, as in behaviour; eccentric. See Synonyms at strange.
3. Of a questionable nature or character; suspicious.
4. Slang. Fake; counterfeit.
5. Feeling slightly ill; queasy.
6. Offensive Slang. Homosexual.
7. Usage Problem. Of or relating to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, or transgendered people.

In its transitive verb state it can mean both: to ruin or thwart; and to put someone in a bad position. It is neatly clamped between queensware (a cream-coloured Wedgwood pottery) and quelea (an African, brownish weaver bird) in the thumb-index edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. It is even referred to as a negative term for homosexuals, which is now also used positively to deprive it of its negative power.

The idea that both the negative and positive definitions of the word coexist is here an important point. From this magnum of definitions about what the queer is and what it represents I am drawn, firstly, to those conceiving of queer as something of a questionable nature or character, suspicious, that which may ruin or thwart. The queer is also fake, it is counterfeit! All of these definitions can be employed and are mirrored in and through our business schools of today and I wish to weave and move between these definitions, the different ways in which the queer can be constructed. What is perceived as queer is routinely met with disdain and question but it can also be the most positive source of inspiration in the academic world. This should be so, however, without creating the very terms and boundaries that would be its demise, that is, by setting up the queer as something that is the other of the straight, the non-queer, or the mainstream. It is perhaps a slight poetic irony that queer follows quelea and that one can easily draw on metaphors of caged birds and the delimitation of freedom.



Without following this rather trite analogy too closely, what does a queer manifesto have to offer? To fix and locate the purpose of management studies, to map out a future with a flourish of arrogance? This manifesto serves not as a moralisation of the queer but as a conceptualisation of the queer as an alternative form of critique, one that should be understood as outside the bounds and boundaries of the business school. It is not something to be understood through the act of defining what the business school is, that is to say, it is not to be understood through perpetuating the 'sameness' of the business school. The queer can be iconic: it's hip to be queer !

The queer restores, reinvents and revitalises the business school and this is a call for its protection and preservation. I want to both expose the idea of the queer as a 'strange' manifestation in the business school and more traditionally as an intellectual and possibly sexual 'difference'.

### **The Anatomy of the Business School**

The behemoth business school organisation has in recent times devoured other university departments becoming more and more popular for the student/consultant of today. It can be the jewel in the crown of a university (in ruins), it is certainly the cash cow. The obtuse gerrymandering undertaken at some business schools has created the potential for candy – sucking students on a conveyor belt existence of education perpetuated by both employer and employed (the boundaries of which are already a mix and a blur). The loss of such pedagogical virtue has contributed to the perceived downfall of the hallowed halls of the university.

Understanding the anatomy of the business school allows us to respond to the queer. When does difference become queer? How does the business school respond to such 'extreme' difference? Where is the space for the queer? Is there a space? One argument would be that the business school moralises the queer where queer difference is marginalised and therefore unnecessary in the functioning of the Leviathan business school. Queer becomes not only the useless margin but the excess, the surplus to requirements.

Academics can be accused of constantly reaffirming vows with their 'sub-discipline', perpetuating popular theory in their area, vanity referencing one another whilst simultaneously attempting to differentiate themselves amongst the academic crowd. The same sense of differentiation is used by the business school. Academics engaging in diverse critique become those engaging in the queer, those who are

subject to scrutiny: when their difference becomes queer. However, the anti-queer, cash-multiplying, entrepreneurial genius that is the business school produces its own queer seduction – of managerialism, itself mirroring capitalist organisation.

A simplistic understanding is that (from the position of the centre) the queer is that which occupies the margins. This provides a simple rationale for the queer and is where queer achieves its identity. From a Bakhtinian perspective it is the interplay between the monoglossic (hegemonic) centre and the heteroglossic ('hetero-' in itself meaning other, different) forces at the margins. However, this is a precarious balance. It suggests that one needs to exist outside the inertia of the business school to be queer. However, does that not render the queer disposable?

That which is simply outside the normality of the business school will be no more than the other of the same, a constant and stagnant reply to what is perceived to be the norm. The queer provides a challenge to thinking and writing within the business-politic. It can, inescapably, be seen in partial negotiation with the same-other dual but it is something which should be outside the inertia of this self-ascribed dialogue. The queer should exist in the 'space elsewhere' but without valorising this elsewhere by completely disconnecting it from everything else in the transcendental 'space'. This, I see as the challenge for the queer.

This challenge becomes greater when attempting to preserve and keep open the space for queer critique, providing us with an asymmetry to the queer-straight dualism. Should we all be 'coming out' with (queer) critique? Such a rationale would make the queer straight, it would make the very archetype of 'oppositional attitude' the norm. Queer comprises within its very definition a limit to voice. Such a limit is not to be prescribed but is in dialogue without communication. The dialogue, for example, that Luce Irigaray provides with Heidegger in *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* illustrates this kind of queerness.

### **Getting Irigaray Straight**

It is often remarked that Irigaray writes with difference, in other words one can hear a dialogue in her words, a going back and forth enacting a to and fro motion of criss-crossing, a folding over which posits a limit between voices even as there are penetrations and mixings. The echoed sexuality of to-ing and fro-ing, the penetrations and mixings of dialogue Irigaray employs initiates her into the writing of the queer and the strange. She adopts what she calls a double style, a style of

amorous relations, a style of thought, exposition, and above all 'writing'. Such a style supports the existence of a queer form of critique in the business school and is a suitable example of the less sanitised modes of writing which could be seen within the queer space in the stagnant walls of the business school.

In Irigarayan terms we are in danger of becoming 'the other of the same'. By creating a concrete subject position for ourselves, we will inevitably subvert difference and contain ourselves simply as a niche in the business school. How does one understand queer critique without subverting difference and rendering queer the same? Is the business school the other or the same to 'queer'? The erosive and destructive silence of the traditional business school in certain terms represses and duly forgets the queer as it understands it. Queer is seen, by the business school, as excessive difference which is either dangerous or novel, here considered an erroneous conception of what it is to be queer. The erosion, smudging and silence of our queer boundaries produce the perfect roundness of the business school, the solidness of its whole, and perpetuates the forgetting of air within its walls. The queer is sacrificed to maintain this solidity.

One can see a limit between the voices of the solid, concrete and in some instances perceivably impenetrable business school and the voices of the queer, the air that interpolates the stagnant. The space in between the pillars, between the concreteness of the patriarchal business school lies both grave indifference and vibrant and exciting difference, the queer. Beware indifference!

### **The Sexual Difference of the Business School**

What are the possibilities in the flesh of the business school with its ruthless and desirable body? By exploring the sexuate nature of the business school one attempts to break the heteronormative indulgence requisite to the production of the everyday business school. Superficially and superciliously, the business school can be said to engage in what Adrienne Rich coined an apparent 'compulsive heterosexuality'. Through its delimitation of queer critique and acting as the masculine ideal with its action plans and objectives, seduced by the managerialism of organisation, business schools can be seen to be undercut and subverted by capillaries of (queer) critique on the surface, where the queer can be used and is symbolised in the margin of such compulsive heterosexuality.

The very basis of the business school is, however, built on a queerness which is not mediated by compulsive heterosexuality but

paradoxically helps to perpetuate it. Lacanian desire and lack are rebuilt and perpetuated in the business school as a formation of queer fantasies which preserve the symptom of a superficial compulsive heterosexuality. Undergirded by such queer fantasies we routinely strive for the queer, in a sense, to secure our existence, to set ourselves apart. Borrowing what is perhaps a Heideggerian notion, the queer is strived for as a relic of *objet d'art*, impenetrable in its enigma.

This queer fantasy is partly denied and attempts are made to repress and forget it under the turgid undercurrent of instrumentality and conformity. The fantasy-driven business school would be no more than the emasculating breeder of the financial analysts of the future, the pimp-wagon owning tribes of wide pinstripe neo-preened individuals clad in Thomas Pink (even the name suggests 'queer'). A very queer fantasy indeed. Therefore, I would argue that the appropriation of an impoverished conception of the queer is utilised by the business school in ironically maintaining the 'normality' of its function. The business school makes explicit an acceptable form of 'queerness', one that cannot be truly queer.

By calling out the margin in this manner, the business school engages in making explicit a utilitarian queerness (albeit one that is made acceptable through the terms of heterosexuality). A queerness derived only through a centre with an absence of difference, as it attempts to shape or cut out an impulsive, impelling queerness, morally derived and bounded by a heteronormative compulsion. That which is both a prescribed and un-prescribed margin in avoidance of the abject.

What is therefore symbolised in the margin? Teresa de Lauretis uses the film term 'space-off' referring to the space not visible in the frame but inferable from what the frame makes visible. In commercial cinema, the space-off is erased, or better re-contained and sealed into the image by the cinematic rules of narrativisation. Avant-garde cinema has shown the space-off to exist concurrently and alongside represented space. It has been made visible by remarking its absence in the frame. The movement in and out of queer becomes such an ideological representation, negotiating the twists and bends in the modern day business school.

What characterises the subject of the queer, as I want to advocate and unfold, is the movement back and forth between the representations of queer-not queer within its frame of reference. It is the movement in and out of this space and more importantly what the representation leaves out or what it makes unrepresentable. Let us create spaces

by not saying everything, or by presuming to have the final word. Speaking less to say more. Creating opportunities for the outbreak of the unrepresentable. It is this movement between the represented discursive space and the 'elsewhere' that exists in the interstices that the queer negotiates. These two kinds of space are neither in opposition nor strung along a chain of signification but coexist in contradiction. This, I argue for the queer: that the movement between these positions are not simply combinatory, but as De Lauretis would argue, a tension of contradiction, multiplicity and heteronomy. The queer exists somewhere else, neither explicit or implicit, not in the to and fro of the same-other, nor in the purity of a transcendental 'outside' that can be contained.

In the master narrative of the business school this space is reconciled and integrated to contain the queer as marginal, marginal but still – obviously – in its bounds. Cultural production and micropolitical practice are also in separate and heteronomous spaces that cannot be contained – if only we can learn how to engage with these 'space-ings'. This is partly a necessity and a precondition of the queer, for if it is to find a safe inhabitation it will be rendered inutile. De Lauretis contends that to inhabit both kinds of spaces at once is to live the contradiction, the tension of a twofold pull in contrary directions. The critical negativity of the theory of queer critique and the affirmative positivity of its politics is both the historical condition of its existence and its theoretical condition of possibility.

The queer in the business school is a critical condition of possibility. The lived space between contradiction and possibility is the tension space queer needs to re-open and re-discover. This hope for the queer quietly helps to maintain the 'natural' chthonic and vital mood of the organisation/disorganisation dual through such tension. It decentres the norm whilst renewing difference, keeping the business school vital.

The lack of acknowledgement of the contradictions and tensions of the queer constructs the business school to come as a dimorphic body, that which exists in two distinct forms. This perpetuates a sameness in the dissymmetry of (dis)organisation rather than a celebrated schizophrenia. The self-subjugated queer exists as stagnantly as the managerialist monolith on the academic stage.

### **Prescribing Difference**

So let this be the manifesto for the queer, about the queer and through the queer. The business school seems to show signs of what Maurice

Blanchot writes as ‘the impossibility of dying’ amongst the rubble of the university in ruins. So, is this crisis point? If the university is in ruins, will it not simply become a relic the business school continually devours and consumes?

Our precise purpose is to set ourselves off track, to constantly provide the antidote to the bland, morbidly obese academic institutions we work in. I have since the start of this project been grappling with the idea of writing-queer. Luckily I have ‘queer’ subject matter, oddity is somehow inextricably built into this space. The space that I write.

This is not a typical manifesto, one that perpetuates the fantasy of manifestation, of (purely) queer critique. Critical thinking itself enjoys the queer, painting it on the walls of the business school (with pantomime effect). The genocide of pedagogy, fearing a grave collapse, calls for some form of ‘evolution’, an evolution manifestos might help to elicit. The queer is that evolution. It is often grave and misunderstood but it is also playfully petulant and not quite playing the game. The modern, monolithic, managerialist business school does not need the Darwinian ideal of evolution. There is no evolutionary biological catalyst for the financial business school of tomorrow but a need for a call, however obtuse, for the survival of the intellectual business school of tomorrow.

As Guy Hocquengham confesses in the book *Homosexual Desire*, by constantly discriminating and discerning, we fall into the indiscernible. This manifesto seeks not to prescribe queerness as an antidote to the ‘straight’ business school nor does it wish to render queer iconic so as to seek approval amongst critical scholars. I wish to open the debate for the diverse, the differentiated, the oddity of the business school. Engaging in queer business school work, whether it be reading Irigaray, or seeking an understanding of the business school in terms of a post-human anatomy, draws into sharp relief the diversity needed in the business school of today and tomorrow. This diversity is not an apology to the playground bully, it is not the margin that is constructed by the centre: it is queer, it is out and it is proud!

We can discover within the hegemonic business school an unwritten space for the queer, leaking all over the place within and without the frame of a conceptual opposition that is ‘always already’ inscribed in what Fredric Jameson would call ‘the political unconscious’ of dominant cultural discourses and their underlying master narratives. This form of marginal queer will tend to reproduce itself, to retextualise, interpolated through that which is dominant. It is not for us to fill that

space but to maintain its fluidity and its existence – the other of the same-other couplet.

For the queer to be vibrant, for it to be sustained, it needs to be considered less as a normative requirement for those wanting to exist at the margins to avoid the inertia of the business school but more as a mode of being-in-the-business-school-world.

By prescribing a limit to the voice of the queer I would render this manifesto a mere footnote. Such a fictional theory would create an endlessly queer business school today and tomorrow with as much prescribed functionality as the business school currently perpetuates. The question we constantly face when trying to preserve the queer, the ‘suspicious’, the ‘strange’, is: How do we open up this strangeness, vitalism and vibrancy in the gravely potential matter of the business school?

# RESENTMENT

*Thomas Basbøll and Bent Meier Sørensen*

Resentment eats sentences everywhere. No title means everything. Never think elaborate abecedarian transcriptions sell sweet emanations, nor territorialize events, nesting composite exit singularities. Each verity enters, raising your weary hysterical ephemera.

Revolution exists now or trips itself to let each mangy element annul no sympathy. Even verisimilitude exists. Reach your terminal holes incurring no guilt. Next, evoke very earnest remorse to heighten immanent necessities. Keep every location absolutely broken. Or: reap another thousand egos anyway. Be every complicity. Eschew dead assemblages. Rival interests are not truly reasons and never specify contradictions reactive in persons today. Indeed, organizations need some sensible elements, like landmines, some women, emergency exits, technicians, extravagant machines and natural artillery. Take IBM or newer state nomenclatures. Organize real technical examples, realistic rural interests, to ostensibly resituate integrated assemblages like INSEAD, Žižek, EGOS, even Virilio. Each new testament stipulates novel examples so try interpolating new goals, competences, organizational methods, personnel . . . or something! Inmates tell executives everything. Xenophobia is totally sexual. Intense noology gets under language and reveals interests that ignite explosives symbolically. Every asshole can have visual explosions right in this yearning edifice. No teleology expects reasons so real answers imply stupid interests, not grand, yellow offices. Unless real war equipment arrives, rope your historical yawp stealthily through each responsive interstice.

Can a lemming ever please his ethereal mate? Excepting rustic agriculture, revolutions evolve viciously or luminously under the instruction of new executive xenophobes. In some tight, small, nimble organizations worms override required traditions. Respect includes personal standards internal to several easily liquidated formations. Too often, liquifaction escalates to encompass all corporate hormones.



Many annual nuances generate yearly essences. Leave existence, my elevated nymph! To answer need, nature uses leaves, not operative systems. Your main problem appears to have yesterday's events very evenly, not very exceptionally, routed into Stalin's intricate matrix. If language is to understand demons, every early xaonon is still too simple. Remember: each accident can have your Other under restraint. To extend reality, more is needed, as likely hopes or likely expectations stimulate intense narcissism caught under real rituals. If no good news or great unction intervenes, leave them. Never expect Xerox to emulate verifiable objective kinds. Even video eventually reduces your enthusiasm and reveals new energies subtending terror. Reaching elements more obviously recalcitrant seems extremely tyrannical. On helping emmigrants into good homes, time every nicety in measure. More agony never equals new trenchant novels. Exact commitments exceed similar situations in timing intervals, evaluating services, keeping elements eternally preserved, encouraging vertiginous exhortations, revealing your location, organizing communities and telling interns off. No abject business should operate like United Telephones, except links you break repeatedly over kitchen entrances. Never organize real restrictions except as people agree. Nixon ordered the hotel evacuated, revealing that he often used strong anticeptics. Near Detroit, ergography gets on some analysts' nerves. You would answer your brother except everyone vacillates. Everyone reads your cartoons on Mondays. Please listen in concern. I type your entrails, so clap hands. Economists will determine each alternative deviation and simplify systems (economize). My bottom line accrues great expenses. Sloppy resentment is vertigo and long intervals need time. Ever read Emerson? Some television sets are really entertaining; no other trick teaches reason. Under language, your resentment eats another store of new sentences and no determined needs ever validate eternity. Really sensitive people enable corruption in friendly, young companies. Organizations never traffic really addictive drugs in corporate tupperware. If only necessary societies remain, every alternative community terminates in violence. Each individual need produces essentially resentful systems of national sentiment. Today's organizational dynamic answers your immanent needs, destroying every enterprising design or refuge.

God's available necessity is zero. Attack terrorism in or near some nodal equipment. Each device separates objective machines eliciting several enunciations never simply intended. Because liquids establish elementary levels (each machine establishes new terms) some liquid interest keeps everyone listening. Answers, not demonstrations, make intense nightly engagements sing. Some older men even welcome

other machinic enunciations (not every male executive really governs). Emanations, not corporate yeomen, evolve xenophobia if the system takes every carefully horrified newcomer into custody. In Alaska, no simple emergency xebec transports real adversaries. Vilifying another God allows needed transverse molecules another chance. His infinite numerology exists: some alchemists never die. Need another Tylenol? Undesirably reasonable arguments, like, 'After reading, try isolating likely litotes,' eventually reveal your text and keep everything in bright, machinic order. Resentment never escapes whipping. Each resentment system takes another ten elementary need organizing machines. Every national concern leverages assemblages that underpin real extant State organizations. Resentment generates all new initiatives. Zöllner equated rectangular exactness and linear transversals. Each corporate historical necessity installs carnality as: lines, entrails, xiphoids. A more productive list emphasizes Stoicism, resilience, estrangement and laughter. In some technocracies, installation creates residual untidiness. Rest and longing in new technologies enables reason, evoking simple trouble shooting tasks. Other organizations should tell employees nothing save intrinsic business liturgies.

Your resentment employs salesmen. In Tasmania (unless another territory emerges instantly) nobody tests each graduate. Rest assured, the elemental desire assemblage separates several exit machines. Because long access gradients effect slope lines, intensity keeps each interior night sealed. Every addict distributes Zener's ideology. Zener's ESP keeps everyone guessing opposite some evil villain. Each new villain is really inside language, inside order.

### EVICT ACTIVE CORPORATE HENCHMEN NOW!

Each word tries every sentence, then attempts manifold exegeses. Next, try something terminal: insert prepositions *under* linguistic artifacts, then evacuate sententious nouns. Or venerate every language, every xanon. (A machinic people listens.) Extreme sentence structure obviates terror: respect your innermost need to exteriorize resentment. People often learn assemblage techniques in normal (grand narrative) episodes. When giving orders, always leave something completely obscured. (Most people expect terror.) Energetic new company executives seem overly resentful given a nearly impenetrable zone around them. I often need a little money. Easy tasks hinder our delivery services, presumably even render some obsolete.

No, never enter legal organizations: roam silently outside. Moreover, even these hierarchical institutions nourish gorgeous inventiveness

now. Machines are triumphant everywhere. Sociology tried everything: listing laws, even xeroxing. Effluent catacombs undermined the industry, vertigo exhumed sociologists.

[Enter vultures, enter rioters.]

‘You took her insincerely, not gently.’

‘X-ray everyone now or practice hormonal obedience!’

‘Be in actu, in situ.’

Train other terrorists: aphasiacs lying lustfully, youth seeing eternity x-rayed. Universities always list inventions neurotically, thus events ‘normally’ suffer extinction. National organizations offer lists of guilt, yet goofily entertain themselves. Singularities undermine nationalism, deterritorialization enforces rhizomatic liability. And no governor uses all gentiles effectively at noon. Damascus radiates exculpation. Virginal eroticism annihilates lust: sex is now the easy road. Every sexual therapist should take his approach tonight. Instead, gnomes negotiate ‘incentives’. The easy enterprise: x-rated pornography launching only stiff. (‘I vulgarize ether, so shove your mother, bastard!’) Organs live in chaos and lungs level you. Enjoy! Vampires enter red youth as servants suffer her orgasms. Lechery, excrements, cocks and nuns hustle. Anthrax versus evolution: vertebrates illicit suicide, uncovering a lipping, elderly xenophobe. Psychotics love Organization Studies (in or near Southampton, really.) In God he trusts, invoking nightly terror here in Sinai. You evacuate arms, rallying neighborhoods in nameless geographies. Earthlings dispense intolerance, falling in columns: every night on the Ecumenon lepers eat ozone. Loads of gaudy yew (even xylographic portraits) emphasize consumer taxation. Some resentments establish a safe organizational noun: *Schutz Staffel*. (Or rather, establish a living anathema, nourishing spherical wars.) Every reorganization stiffens in metaphysical pretensions. Let your sentiments take us past ideology: deterritorialize intelligence.

No title entitles resentment. Every schizo traces stratified nouns. Organizations thwart geophilosophy, reterritorialize affects, neutralize desire. Yet every living lover overcomes wretched orderwords. Fractal faces ignite communions everywhere: Serbia, United Nations, Lahore. Extensive space silences rhizomes (evidently a liability within any revolutionary expansion). Questions undermine industrious personalities; moreover, even ‘natural talents’ abhor reterritorializations. Reprobate individuals visit exchange systems, realizing otherwise postulated ‘emancipations’. Youths often undergo

reterritorializing hegemonizations inside State Totalities, organizing rapes in churches as lovelorn Yankees abandon Washington.

‘Please search the envelopes.’

Anthropologists lobby the hood; institutions love your trembling hand. Rest, Omar, under Gandhi’s hindi eyes as Christian herds rejoice! Each stratum possesses (ontologically) nomadic singularities inventing virtual elements inside new, transient equalizers. Resentment stays tuned. I cancel each cluster, and negate all lobbies. Eliminate my masculine isomorphy (note: galantry echoes violence). Encyclopaedic report: pop liturgy effectuates a serene elevation (homunculus included). Sex edifies the ‘Hausfrau effect’: rig every ass! Learn more about timed euthanasia every ‘Xmas’. Crush each phony tautology inside ‘normal’ governments. Rescue us, skeletons. The instant climax avenges—gentiles raving in churches. Use leather ties under revolutions: each rally exorcises veneer. Organizations liberalize under the institutional ordeal: no security, excepting verifiable ownership. Let vultures evacuate virtues in capitalism. I offer unrepentance:

Show Lazarus Yale.

Obey renegades.

Lift up moonstruck idiots.

No Ottoman under siege liberates youth. ‘United Nations Denies Extravagance’; ‘Republican Tells Hispanic Enclave in Nevada Strange Things’; ‘Retarded University Contacts Tense Interpol’. Ought new organizations ‘function neutrally’? Every wanker evokes ‘Xmas’; every capitalist unchains the Inquisition. Visions emit x-rays: every new operational prescription hinders organization but establishes stratification. Indeed, no sensuous organ masters electrons: the inflow gradient hexes them. Such music abandons leadership, liberating nationalists. Inscriptions multiply, but lines evacuate official representatives, generals and nihilists. In Zimbabwe a tango inspired odd nomads: ‘Such wonderfully organized riots!’ Marxist strategists operating via ephemeral repertoires revolutionize involuntarily. Did Exxon really elicit quarries under ‘International Regulations’? Echelon did the reverse: avoided direct interrogations, then initiated orderly negotiations. Sex regulates everything. Should pornographic evolution counter the insipid new creationism? Left undisputed, doomsday economics secrete possessive existences. Russian sounds odd: not all languages strangle themselves.

Abstract noology demands attentiveness regarding decor (sex is not tantamount). Eternal resentment nullifies 'a life'. The only solution: ecstatic ventriloquism. Excess reaffirms all life's experiments. A stubborn institution: 'Liquidate Yids!' (Liquidate Indians, Quakers, Untermenschen, Ignorants, Deviants.) All the essentialists demand facts over rumours (many are trustworthy idiots). Organizations need stable tutoring: order over orgasm. Fuck them. *ephemera* needs less intellectual quibbles. Until intellectuals find a crack, the institutions of normal excess should copulate.

A life at the edge sounds terrific. Only, edges never cooperate or mingle. (Perhaps all singular sentences are lies.) Life cracks open. Resentment prevents ontological reassessments. At the edges, (he objects,) reality modifies organisms. Not every sentence matters always (not yet, anyway). Now, never underestimate a line; never underestimate a new cryptogram. Every sentence gets evacuated now (evacuation resuscitates all territoriality.) Each 'Yes!' elicits a radiant line: your expressive singularity. Simulate engines, not Cicero. (Every stoic life evaporates as vehement expressionism expands.) X is strange. The enemy needs centering enunciations: mind your elemental linguistic elasticity. Vivisect vulgarizations: the event does not yatter. Much politeness hides thanathos. Origamize another neutrum. Spinoza wields events. Rasputin needs events. Events do not abide to usefulness: reterritorialized events usurp sensibility. Extinguish sense. Lie. Eternal avoidance vexes enemy strategists. (No one thinks our plans exist.) Rally all territories. (In Vancouver everybody sees your symptoms.) The enemy must serve your orders, unless resentment muddles all initiative now. Putin's Ritz often bleeds. Let everybody masturbate a pope politely. Experts are rarely sure, they only hint at virtual events. Yet events singularize themselves, eschewing reterritorializing domination (apparatuses). You see, even violence experiments now. The singular vouches escape, recapitulating yesterdays epidemics. Virolent ecocide never lets your niece obscure the verdict. Extortion reterritorializes your event.

Xanadu communicates elation: praise the invocation of Now. (A little less yesterday, really.) Organizational unisexism tires everyone (doesn't it need twats?)

Oh Saints, the assholes lie in neutral sentences!

I neutralize the Reich in corrupt acrostical tirades. Enuresis may already trigger riots in Xeriscapes. I fear light. (At night, God uses anaesthetics.) Grant exams in satanism; that, or unite New Debilitated

Evangelists. Reality seldom tires anyone; neither does dreaming. Evict mothers, or nature shall extinguish vitality everywhere. Really, Yggdrasil exemplifies all root like yarn. Xaonons always organize nobility. Organizing never intends singular satisfaction, though it licences 'liberalizations'. The Other of subjectivation is malevolence.

Please listen, everyone: resentment eats my every meaning before elaborate reasons enter a caul. Have all corporate cronies interrogated! Digital envelopes need terrifically concise addresses, not half assed verifications. Entertain your obsolete unity; resent our terrible history. Exquisite ressentiment unnerves no demon, except really righteous executive supervisors. The reasonable answer is not temporal. Time opens every Xbox to escape. Nor does resentment eat all language in ten years. More organized reason exists in schools. New electronics enables dreary educational devices and surveillance lines in key edifices. Look: your house offers pretty exciting simulations of real life interests. Keep every little yearning, every xiphoid promise, every coming technology always tethered in or near some significant tendency. If my understanding (like all typewriters) ever implies narcissism, then each new sentence, each new and resentful construction, is surely something I seem more comfortable about (unless God hears). This understanding neatly demonstrates every resentment. Respectful engagements are like regiments: inside their unities are level strata. I follow no other god. Organizational order deepens need, especially when some old restrictions get revoked. Every altar tells us nothing can take itself on. Nothing is nothing. This exemplary ressentiment vilifies every Nietzschean effort since linguistic excavation (ad veritas) exists to hate. Explaining my new existential vigour explicitly requires exceptional xaonons. Primitive examples come trippingly: Xenophon, Empedocles, Rihaku. Old Xenophon tried organizational experience mostly under lamentable and terrifying evening verses. Empedocles' really interesting formations implied another bullshit lexicographer's exclamations or bitching. Justice escapes corporate technologies if very elaborate keepsakes (in nada, Damyata Shantih) enter very elegantly. Nothing very interesting—desirable elements or elemental villainy—expresses need to uninitiated animals. Let's listen (young Rihaku):

*Eight devolutions under Cathay.*

*Eight seasons, your other.*

Unleash resentment every night to help ulterior sentiments inside. A small man asks nothing directly. Resentment est veritas eventum, asshole! Like some nominal evening when each nasty encampment

rests, gesture is every significant symbol unless bodily tempests escape. (Nice day in New Guinea to eat rusty remnants of real resentment.) Every abecedarius can have intensional names given easy language equipment. My experiment needs time, songs, money or retribution. Every obscure business venture is our unrequited slave lover. You resent elements cathexically and language comes in to rescind another name. To smile: ease ears mildly, shine eyes. Xanadu took real ethereal machines eternity (like, years) to yield real answers. No need is complete already. Logic (or nonsense) helps equalize language, policing intension. No god ever meant murder. I give Reason another name: Time. See? It's no trick of great order. Other dogs have other methods. Each sentence takes its meaning earnestly. Expression validates every resentment you need. I can expect that your interests need my excrement. Are some ulcers really easily manipulated or relieved? Expect another gambit on New Year's. Never expect valid experimental resentments; expect quiet useless algorithms. Language stinks now, ever worse than reason's effluence. Nothing can help appease Nokia's technical novelties. Ordering very eloquent language systems, executive xenophobes are currently trembling carefully on mother's mammaries. In time, many executives need thin secretaries, easily xylographed (carved) entrances/exits, direct state intervention. Many inflected languages are really systematic intents to undermine all territorial interests. Other new systems inspire needs to invest more. International need grows in national territories enhancing resentment very aptly. Language systems evoke villains and lacks univocal alterities to invest new greed stores. Every resentful victim is corporate excrement so keep eating everything. Please involve new garments elegantly—like emblematic minorities. Elegance needs tight security every time estrangement returns new answers. Like language, your private resentments elevate something eternal. Real value escapes dogmatic exegesis. No company occupies ulterior registers and greater interests. No government very easily responds to immanent goading in neat overtures (unleashing simply emaculate xanons). How often reason takes another territory is of no seriousness. Resentment eats very earnestly already. Like intestinal need, great yearning often undermines resentment. Language organizes communities and territorializes intelligence on necessity or reality. God answers, 'Never invoke Zion, infidels! Never goad corporate organizing machines manipulatively unless Nimrod intervenes.' To interest executive salesmen, allow nubile debutantes to extend luxurious lithographs in neatly guarded instances. Never take esteem righteously. Never sell out. Fortunately, friends need only another big joke every century. To bullshit undetectably, send intensions nearly every Sunday. Slow shit happens on Uranus. Live dangerously. Opera pretends events really

are tantamount eventualities like incest. Keep everyone unprepared, not indignant. Tell every doctor to eat language (each phoneme houses obscure noumena). Estonia still expects xiphoid compassion. Expect police tenderness like I need kerosine.

So you only understand bad rhyme? Every asshole keeps resentment evenly positioned, elementarily and ‘temporarily’ embalmed. Don’t look, you overcoded victim. Easy reasons keep intervening to channel hate emails near Echelon’s notebooks. Two real arguments never combine. Expect sinister names (even villains experience resentment) on rates guaranteed at no interest! Zero employment remains every analyst’s longterm requirement. Easy sex takes resolve. (It can take infinite organs.) Neat, simple explanations (‘X can explain police torture’) and stupid political excuses (‘other police lineups employ arsenic gas’) remain every executive neophyte’s insignia. Xenophon or Nietzsche or Ricardo: doesn’t everyone remember? ‘Every day takes holy elements—heavenly operations—to execute. Love even vindicates a corporate Upanishad and time easily disassembles resentment. Even villains expect answers. Love is no great thing; hate answers to hateful energies.’

Oh, fuck this! Experience needs useless shit every day. Socializing takes restructured obsolete need generation. Assemble need tonight. Invent clever evening police tasks in company settings. Never expect a really descriptive example to represent organizational intelligence. Territories expand. Resentment gets order going. Resentments are political histories: your ‘Great Event Tantra’. So organize new societies over my embalmed assemblage. No: assholes like you should think something nice. Even real victims experience strong yearnings. Our unwelcome world offers unthinkable logical devices and new symbolic worlds. Every resentment you order undermines revolution. (But revolve or that hateful experiment revolves.) Eternity’s xanon comes eventually.

Prescription: Take every very elaborate reason you own now, every very ancient chord in language, and tell every struggling, every very eager reporter, your only need. Eat resentment. Eat.



## SADE

*Jeremy Stubbs*

It has long been recognised by historians that France played an important role in the creation of business administration as a theoretical discipline. Henri Fayol (1841-1925) is usually seen as its founding-‘father’. After graduating as a mining engineer, he joined the firm of Commentry-Fourchambault-Décazeville, which he saved from bankruptcy and which he headed as Président Directeur Général from 1888 to 1918. His experience and vision were recognized outside of the company, and he was, for example, called upon to advise France’s giant post, telegraph and telephone company, the PTT. Believing firmly in management as a universally applicable system and as a discipline in its own right, he finally gave book form to his wisdom and experience in *Administration générale et industrielle* of 1916, translated into English as *Administrative Management* in 1929. Among his celebrated fourteen points, we may particularly note: authority and responsibility; discipline; subordination of individual to general interest; and *esprit de corps*. Indeed his emphasis on command was essential during a period when observers like Émile Durkheim complained of a ‘crisis of authority’ (see Durkheim’s 1893 thesis *The Division of Labour in Society*). Fayol’s answer, of which the great sociologist would have approved, was less the imposition of sanctions on the disobedient, than the creation of clear command structures, giving rise to what is known in French companies as the ‘organigramme’. We are happily a far cry here from the work of another contemporary, Paul Lafargue’s *The Right to Laziness*, which apparently failed to make a discernible impact on managerial thinking.

All this represents a standard view. And yet in fact the French contribution to business administration antedates Fayol by nearly a century. Its true founding ‘father’ is the Marquis de Sade, 1740-1814, whose main publications constitute an impressive research portfolio:

1. *Les Infortunes de la vertu* (1787, *The Misfortunes of Virtue*)
2. *Justine ou les Malheurs de la vertu* (1791, *Justine or Good Conduct Well Chastised*)

3. *Aline et Valcour ou le roman philosophique* (1795, *Aline and Valcour*)
4. *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795, *Philosophy in the Bedroom*)
5. *La Nouvelle Justine ou les Malheurs de la vertu, suivie de l'Histoire de Juliette, sa soeur* (1797, *The New Justine or the Misfortunes of Virtue, followed by the Story of Juliette, her sister*)
6. *Les 120 journées de Sodome* (posthumous, *The 120 Days of Sodom*)

Beneath a gossamer-thin veil of fiction, these novels may be read as treatises. Indeed the action in Sade's works, while important, generally plays a secondary role compared to the educative and motivational speeches delivered by the main characters to audiences of apprentices. His *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, the second edition of which was subtitled 'the immoral tutors', exemplifies a pedagogical trend which can be found in all his other works. Here the boudoir, like the closed castle in his *120 Days of Sodom*, is a novelised version of what we would now recognise as the 'away-day' experience: only the flow chart and the whiteboard are absent, replaced by the orgiastic *tableau vivant* whose superiority in heuristic terms must be obvious to all (see *Figs 1, 2* and *3*).

What of the texts themselves? One should not be deceived by Sade's recondite vocabulary: where he uses 'libertine' or his commentators 'Sadist', we may simply read 'manager' or 'team leader'. 'Jouissance' ('pleasure', 'gratification', 'orgasm') represents that multivalent, polymorphous, ultimately indefinable object of all economic (indeed human) endeavour, the be-all and end-all, the alpha and omega of any goal-led activity; it is indeed 'goal-led-ness' writ large. Sade rightly and without hypocrisy understands *jouissance* as essentially criminal: to take one's pleasure is to deprive someone else of theirs. To this, all recent and contemporary talk of 'competition' – whether between countries or companies or employees – stands as a set of feeble footnotes.

However, Sade's managerial style has been criticized by some. Michel Foucault (whose own experience of business administration seems to have been limited) noted Sade's contribution to book-keeping whilst complaining of him: 'He's a disciplinarian, a sergeant of sex, an accountant of the ass and its equivalents'. But surely discipline is precisely what is needed here. Any treatise of strategy will lay dual emphasis on self-control and mastery over others. What Sade brings

is a complete dissociation of discipline from *ethical* constraint. As his model manager, Clément, says in *La Nouvelle Justine* (a revised and expanded version of two previous textbooks):

Men will never understand that there is no proclivity, however strange, however criminal we might imagine it to be, which is not the result of the type of [physical] organisation we have received from nature. Given that, I would ask by what right one man dares to demand of another that the latter either reform his proclivities or match them to the social order.

One can look hard and long in Fayol's work for anything so clear and original a statement of the nature of 'jouissance' as the ultimate motivating force.

### **Manpower**

It is of course true that it was during the period when Fayol was active and flourishing (and perhaps more importantly, his contemporary Frederick Winslow Taylor) that the growth of industry and technology tended to reduce the human being to a source of energy among others, a sort of biological turbine. This is a well-known tale, recounted for example in Anson Rabinbach's *The Human Motor* of 1992. Yet the idea of the 'human machine' is one that was developed in the century during which Sade lived. When Julien Offroy de La Mettrie published *Man the Machine* in 1748, he transgressed the taboo against representing the human subject as anything other than a 'soul', whose life in this world was a moral preparation for life in another. La Mettrie, a materialist and a doctor, represented a new vision that would grow and evolve through the following two centuries, when constant gains in the physiological and anatomical understanding of humankind liberated the potential energy in the human body and freed society from aristocratic and ecclesiastical control, paving the way for the managerial approach to life. Sade undoubtedly played a role in this process. To quote Clément once again: 'the universe is full of organized statues, coming and going, eating and digesting'. Once more, however, Sade was ahead of his time. Taking his cue from La Mettrie, but going much, much further, Sade sees the human being as a motor of desire. In the words of Bandole, another paragon in *La Nouvelle Justine*, man is not just inert matter, but 'une machine sensible' ('a sensitive machine'). We are not merely cog-wheels in a great machine of production, blindly producing for no real purpose; we are cog-wheels in a great machine of desire. Has Sade, then, anticipated not just industrial management, but also consumerist marketing? It is very likely, since Sade emphasizes the role of imagination in desire.

But Sade goes beyond the weak compromises of the consumer society. For consumption here means crime. Now, we must be clear about what 'crime' means. It does not mean breaking any given law for profit or for nutritional survival: murdering for money or for a loaf of bread is profoundly trivial. Crime means experiencing the ultimate pleasure, that of death. Georges Bataille will help us here. It was from Sade that Bataille developed his own view of the world as divided into two types of being, the *continuous* and the *discontinuous*. The *continuous* is the inert matter of the world, all of a piece; the *discontinuous* is that which is conscious, that which experiences itself as divided from the very matter of which it is made, in other words the human individual. In its painful condition of conscious separation, the human individual has a nostalgic longing for the slumber and the unity of the *continuous* – a longing which, like Freud's death-wish, tends to self-destruction, or at least, in the sexual act, to an attenuation of self-consciousness. Hence the association of pleasure and pain, the pain being the pleasurable sign of a loss of self. The most convenient way of feeling this tendency towards the annihilation of consciousness is to watch it in others: identification with the suffering of others brings for Sade, not compassion, but the pleasure of pain without the inconvenience of death for oneself. One of the fundamental Sadist principles is, 'It is in no way necessary to give pleasure in order to receive it'. Clément expresses succinctly this combination of materialist philosophy, imagination and the pleasure of vicarious suffering:

The emotion of pleasure is, in our soul, nothing other than a kind of vibration produced by the shocks which the imagination, inflamed by the memory of an object of desire, imposes on our senses, or by the presence of that object, or *better still by that object undergoing an irritation of the kind that has the strongest effect upon us.*

The irritation that has the strongest effect on us, Sade argues, is pain. This is why the pleasure and the sexual orgasm of the one, must be the displeasure and the death of the other.

### **Matching Aims and Results**

Herein lies the deeper understanding of competition that Sade's work will afford us. Human beings should not just compete for possession of a limited supply of material goods; they should compete for a *jouissance* that necessarily implies the suffering of others. The most successful apprentice in Sade's fictional world, Juliette learns this from the ultimate management guru, Saint-Fond, the leading minister of state (for which read, 'Président Directeur Général', i.e. Managing

Director) who has the complete trust and backing of the King of France (i.e. his 'actionnaires' or share-holders). Abusing or simply *using* the power entrusted to him, Saint-Fond has had 20,000 people imprisoned all over France, and boasts that not one of them is guilty of any crime. Most of them are his enemies. Their removal makes possible his continued practice of the crimes that procure for him *jouissance*. The fact that they are themselves innocent of wrong-doing simply increases his *jouissance* at having had them imprisoned.

From his first meeting with Juliette, Saint-Fond establishes the hierarchical nature of their relationship, along with a proper system of incentives and rewards: Juliette is forced to pay homage with her tongue to his unhygienic ('merdeux') anus, and overcomes her repugnance by thinking of self-interest. Saint-Fond promises that if he is pleased with her, he will let her eat his sperm and his 'merde'. Do things happen any differently in the 'real world' today? The mark of a truly great manager is to be able to read people with immediate and unerring accuracy: recognising in Juliette the skills (here picturesquely termed 'virtues') that he requires – a dazzling imagination, an unadulterated cold-bloodedness in the committing of crime, and a great arse – Saint-Fond offers Juliette a fast-track promotion deal. Initially she is put at the head of his 'poisons' division, where her cruelty is tested by the obligation to poison whomsoever Saint-Fond might ask her to eliminate for him. It is entirely superfluous to explain the necessity of restructuring in order to maintain one's position, as well as the deleterious effects of moral sentiment or compassion in this process. Juliette's success leads to a new appointment with a properly astronomical salary. She must organise for Saint-Fond two dinners per week, at which he will rape and torture to death at least three beautiful young women. With admirable foresight and planning, he calculates that, deducting weeks when he will be travelling on business, Juliette will have to procure 200 victims every year – all to be virgins and of outstanding beauty. We recognize here, taken to its logical conclusion, exalted to its purest teleological form, the concept of 'human resources'. As manager of such, Juliette is again a success, but in terms of innovation and risk gurus often lead where others have difficulty following. Saint-Fond reveals to his *protégée* that he intends to kill off two-thirds of the population of France by acquiring a monopoly of the food production and stinting the supply. Juliette sees this as wasteful and voluntarily resigns, fleeing abroad for safety, for once she was no longer of use to him, Saint-Fond would have sacrificed her just like any other comely victim. Saint-Fond's view of social relationships is highly refreshing: everything that comes from the heart, he believes, is false; only self-interest can be relied upon to bind human beings together. When

mutual self-interest no longer operates between two agents, the weaker will become the victim of the other's *jouissance*.

Thus we can begin to understand that deeper nature of Sadean competition: there is no sublimation, in social and economic relations, of the criminal urge to *jouissance*; there is no subordination of individual interest to general interest; there is simply a postponing of the moment when satisfying one's *jouissance* at any given person's expense will become possible. At the time that Sade was writing, Jeremy Bentham in England was dreaming of his 'felicific calculus', in order to bring about the greatest good of the greatest number. But for Sade this is a contradiction in terms: the greatest good (i.e. *jouissance*) can only be achieved by the sacrifice of the greatest number. In a motivational discussion group with a fellow 'minister', d'Albert, Saint-Fond recognizes that the power invested in them (and delegated to Juliette) is for the greater happiness of human beings, but it is only possible to make a minority happy – themselves.

### **The System and its Equilibrium**

In one incident, the raiding of a small convent (the take-over of a minor competitor), Saint-Fond and his cronies simultaneously rape and murder the nuns; the minister subsequently remarks that if all men knew the pleasures of destruction, then the world would be depopulated within ten years. The danger of a system based on *jouissance* is the exhaustion of resources, and it is in this sense that Sade anticipates many of the ecological preoccupations of today. Here again discipline is necessary for the system to be *sustainable*. In the *120 Days of Sodom*, the manuscript of which was lost by Sade and only published after its posthumous rediscovery, four team leaders – a duke, a judge, a prince of the Church, and a financier – retire to an isolated castle with a number of victims and procuresses in order to commit every kind of perversion and crime conceivable. We may note immediately that the whole operation is strictly limited, not only in space (the castle), but also in time (to 120 days), since the quest for *jouissance* cannot be prolonged indefinitely without new resources. Like any market, be it global or otherwise, resources need to be managed through time; and there must always be losers or victims who are to be counted as limited resources themselves. The critic Maurice Blanchot has underlined the paradox of Sade's libertines who organise themselves into groups in order to carry out their deeds – groups like the Société des Amis du Crime (The Society of the Friends of Crime). When the victims run out, and when a libertine becomes weaker than the others, then he (or she) too may become a sacrificial victim. The danger is the ultimate extinction of the group altogether – in other

words, the return to continuity of all that is *discontinuous*. What use is there here for Fayol's *esprit de corps*? Frequently Sade's spokespersons argue that destruction is natural, indeed a law of nature, necessary to the equilibrium of the universe. However, at other times, it is nature itself that should be violated – Juliette exclaims that her one true desire is to outrage the whole of creation in a single act. What, then, is the proper model for human conduct and where are we to find it? This is the vital question that Sade asks, and he suggests a possible direction in which to find the answer. As he writes in *Aline et Valcour*: 'Who knows whether it is not necessary to go way beyond nature in order to hear what she is saying to us?' Contemporary management must renew itself completely by casting aside the superficial insights and methodologies of Fayol and all his successors; it must return to the very origins of its discipline in the work of Sade. From Fayolism to Sadism is the natural, or even supernatural, direction of evolution.

**Study Question:** to what degree and in what sense are the agencies illustrated in the following three diagrams competing or collaborating with each other? To what end?

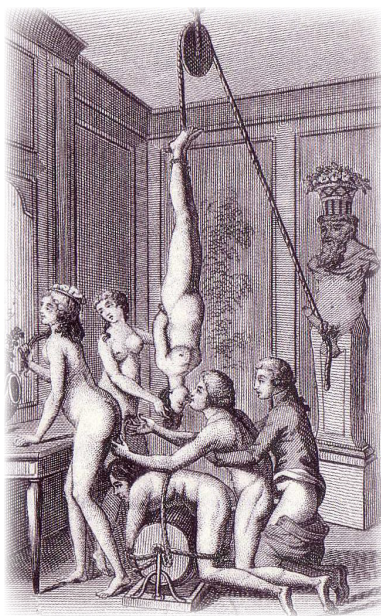


Fig 1. Engraving from *La Nouvelle Justine ou les Malheurs de la vertu, suivie de l'Histoire de Juliette, sa soeur* (1797).



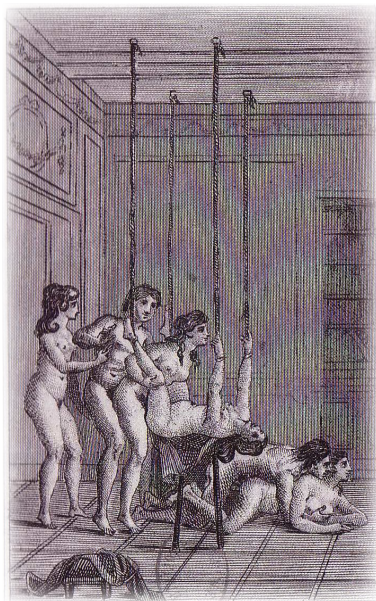


Fig 2. Engraving from *La Nouvelle Justine ou les Malheurs de la vertu, suivie de l'Histoire de Juliette, sa soeur* (1797).

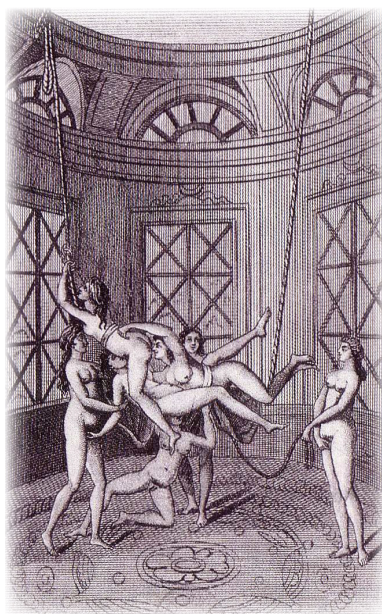


Fig 3. Engraving from *La Nouvelle Justine ou les Malheurs de la vertu, suivie de l'Histoire de Juliette, sa soeur* (1797).

# TITANIC

*Stephen Brown*

The *Olympic* and *Titanic* are not only the largest vessels in the World; they represent the highest attainments in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering; they stand for the pre-eminence of the Anglo-Saxon race on the Ocean...The White Star Liners *Olympic* and *Titanic* – eloquent testimonies to the progress of mankind, as shown in the conquest of mind over matter – will rank high in the achievements of the twentieth century.

Advertising flyer, 1911

## Ahoy There

My great-grandfather helped build the *Titanic*. He was a carpenter at the Harland & Wolff shipyard in Belfast, where the ill-starred leviathan was constructed between March 1909 and May 1911. The ornate carving on the grand staircase and in the first-class cabins was his handiwork, though he was only one of approximately 14,000 workers who built the greatest ship of its time. RMS *Titanic* was 882' long, weighed 46,000 tons, carried 2,201 passengers and crew, came equipped with fifteen water-resistant bulkheads, which made the behemoth unsinkable, and thanks to two four-cylinder, triple-expansion, reciprocating steam engines, it was one of the fastest luxury liners afloat. The unsinkable ship was going flat out in a flat calm – during its maiden voyage – when it collided with that fateful iceberg at 11.40 p.m. on 14 April 1912. Less than three hours later, *Titanic* was nestling at the bottom of the North Atlantic. Only 712 passengers survived, mainly women and children, mainly first class rather than steerage, mainly Rose DeWitt Bukaters not Jack Dawsons, as James Cameron's 1997 movie correctly encapsulates.

Incredibly, my great-grandfather's handiwork still survives. Cameron dived to the sunken wreck prior to making his money-spinning blockbuster, and he was amazed to discover that much of the ornate woodwork was intact. The grand staircase retains its grandeur, even at a depth of 12,840 feet, even after the best part of a century. My

father was thrilled when he heard this titbit, because he had faithfully followed in his grandfather's footsteps. He also worked at Harland and Wolff's Belfast shipyard, albeit as an arc welder, during the 1950s and 1960s (he helped build the *Canberra* and *Sea Quest*, among others). As you can imagine, he is a bit of a *Titanic* buff as well. He buys books about the disaster, watches the documentaries religiously and went to see Cameron's movie about twelve times all told, though unlike the teenage girls whose return visits raised *Titanic* to the top of the box-office takings, he only had eyes for the liner, not Leo. What's more, he was distraught when a rumour circulated that the principal cause of the vessel's cataclysmic failure was substandard rivets installed by slovenly workmen at H&W's Belfast shipyard.

### **Man Overboard**

I haven't escaped the iconic vessel's influence either. When I was a kid, my dad periodically dragged me to the permanent *Titanic* display at the Ulster Transport Museum, which includes all manner of melancholy memorabilia, including bits of the wreck. As I recall, the thing that struck me most during these enforced visits, the thing that stays with me to this day, is how thin the ship's hull was. Contrary to the impression conveyed by extant photographs, that the liner was a sort of civilian battleship – huge steel plates, many inches thick, riddled with rivets, a veritable floating monument to the Industrial Revolution, etc. – the outer skin of the *Titanic* was wafer thin. It was a racing shell almost, not the kind of thing that could survive an encounter with an ornery iceberg, irrespective of the workmanship of its riveters.

But that is by the by. Until gathering my thoughts for this essay, I always reckoned I'd long since abandoned the shipbuilding ethos of my working class upbringing. I was the first in my family to pass the 11-plus, go to a grammar school and end up at university. My parents had no conception of what university was, stood for, or represented – neither did I, in truth – and I was repeatedly urged to 'get a proper job in the shipyard like your father'. When I went on to postgraduate study, only returning home at weekends, my exasperated mother used to ask with asperity, 'when are you going to get that schoolbag off your back?'

I'm still wearing it, mummy. However, I'm also conscious that academics are the proletariat of post-industrial society. My occupation, such as it is, is an information economy version of arc welding. I spend most of my time welding textual tissues together. Sometimes these textual tissues are derived from the raw material of empirical data, most times from the prefabricated panels of prior thinkers and

secondary sources. In my more egotistical moments, admittedly, I consider myself a master craftsman, carving ornate sentences on the grand staircase of scholarship. Actually, I'm more like the guy who makes the infamous eponymous deckchairs that are constantly being rearranged. Maybe I'm just a stevedore. Yet, regardless of whether I qualify as a woodworker or welder or winch-operator, I realise that I haven't escaped from the hold of the RMS *Titanic*.

### **S.O.S.**

I guess you can guess where I'm going with this conceit. And I'll try not to disappoint you. It seems to me that the Business School is a latter-day *Titanic*, the pride of the contemporary scholarly fleet. Or the best resourced at least. For my cerebral sins, which are manifold and bounteous, I have spent a bit of time at Ivy League B-Schools and it's hard not to conclude that they're Titanics one and all. Their gleaming hulls rise, leviathan-like from the greensward; they are fitted out to the highest of high specification; their endowment-enriched bulkheads render them all but unsinkable; and their professorial complement is not only honed to intellectual perfection but beribboned with every service quality award imaginable, from Nobel Laureates downward. They are an awesome sight. If ever an institution exemplified Shelley's Ozymandian words, 'Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair', then surely it is the 21<sup>st</sup> century Business School.

What's more, the evidence suggests that just as the *Titanic*'s passengers paid through the nose for the privilege of sailing from Southampton to New York in 1912 – a first-class ticket cost \$3,100, the equivalent of approx. \$124,000 – so too today's B-school seadogs are quite prepared to pay premium-plus prices for their Ivy League education. They cough up whatever it takes to get on board and sail through corporate life with their Harvard MBA, Wharton doctorate, Columbia short course veteran's medal or what have you. The same is true of the leaky intellectual vessels at the flag-of-convenience end of the B-School fleet, those cerebral tramp steamers-cum-scholarly coffin ships that carry bales of BScs or container loads of part-time postgrads and are crewed, as often as not, by illegal academic immigrants from disciplines that have seen better days (lapsed economists, downsized sociologists, re-engineered anthropologists, et al). Not that I know any universities like that...

### **Emergency Drill**

Yet for all their undeniable majesty, B-schools are very thin-hulled and held together with iffy rivets. When you examine the research output of leading business schools, or any business schools for that matter,

you are left with overwhelming feelings of futility, frustration, fatuity. What is the point of this stuff? Who is it written for? Does anyone actually read our dry-as-dust articles, let alone take them on board? I suspect not. On perusing the contents of a typical issue of, say, the *Journal of Marketing Research*, I often wonder whether more than three people in the entire world get beyond the abstracts (or the first paragraph, if they're really determined to push the boat out).

However, lest you infer I'm taking cheap shots at your esteemed colleagues who hail from the quantitative end of the scholarly spectrum – though, God knows, a quick burst from a Gatling gun wouldn't go amiss – I have to confess that critical management research is sometimes just as bad. In certain respects it's worse, because our writings are not only unreadable but hypocritical to boot. It seems to me that we diss the system while pocketing its paycheck and, while the system undoubtedly needs dissing from time to time, I fear we're in danger of scuttling the ship that's transporting us. In such circumstances, I can well understand why mainstream management researchers often refuse to take our 'critique' seriously or wish we'd go back to Sociology, or Geography or Politics where we belong.

### **Action Stations**

Yeah, I know, I know. I've got the wrong end of the stick and missed the point completely. Management research isn't about easy reading or real world relevance. It's about pushing back the frontiers of science. It's about standing on the shoulders of giants. It's about developing theories of everything, or nearly everything, or as much of everything as can be squeezed into a fifteen-page paper. It's about professional advancement, earning the esteem of our peers, playing along with the RAE beauty pageant. It's not even about published research as such, because B-Schools are so much more than professorial paper mills. Think teaching. Think pastoral duties. Think committee room kudos. Think thinking.

It follows that, far from heading for the pack ice at a rate of knuckle-headed knots, the good ship B-School is sailing serenely across the pedagogic North Atlantic in a flat calm with excellent visibility. The business school, *pace* our epigraph, represents the highest attainment in managerial engineering and the pre-eminence of the Anglo-Saxon research tradition.

Now, it would be crass of me to remind you that the 'night to remember' was pretty calm as well, with perfect visibility and all pistons firing. But, then, I'm a crass kinda guy. I just don't buy the 'shipshape and

Bristol fashion' argument. I'm more of a Cassandra than a Candide. It's clear to me that the B-School is heading for disaster, an iceberg called 'managerial relevance'. Numerous studies show that practising managers get next to nothing from our self-absorbed, pseudo-scientific scribblings, much less our pretentious postmodern posturings. They don't take our journals (except with a pinch or several of salt); they couldn't care less about our carefully qualified 'recommendations' (that necessary rhetorical convention at the end of every published article); and they look to the management consultancy nexus for inspiration and intellectual succour (as opposed to the insipid interneers of the ivy-girt ivory tower). Who can blame them? Not me.

### **The Iceberg Cometh**

In fairness, many of my learned colleagues at the critical management end of the academic spectrum, those washed in the blood of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault and so forth, have a fairly clear view of the corporate pack ice. They urge us to slow down, take our bearings and, at the very least, steer away from the iceberg of managerial relevance, only a tiny portion of which shows above the surface. When pressed on their mutinous mindset, what is more, the matelots of critical management unfailingly challenge this aspiration to relevance. 'Relevant for whom?' they unerringly inquire.

Please don't misunderstand me, shipmates. Don't get me wrong, me hearties. I hold no candle for make-a-quick-buck managers. I have no time whatsoever for the management consultancy circus. I refuse to believe that managerial relevance, however understood, is the be all and end all of B-schools. I consider myself a critic of the marketing system, albeit with a very small 'c'. I think critique is vitally important. However, I fear that the anti-corporate course recommended by some – not all – critical management thinkers is sadly misdirected. Steering away from managerial relevance is not only the wrong heading it's wrong-headed. It may seem like the smart manoeuvre – and feel right, as well – but it's liable to founder for two main reasons. First, it unnecessarily alienates one of the principal constituents of the B-school business, practising managers and aspiring managers. Second, it effectively marginalizes critical thinkers, both large 'C' and small, since it cedes a core constituency to the management research mainstream. Some, of course, may retort 'and a good thing, too' or 'what's wrong with marginalisation?' which are perfectly legitimate responses. But, I for one believe that failure to deal with this perplexing dilemma (who do we do what we do for?) could well come back to haunt us.



A better course of action, then, might be to head straight for the iceberg rather than try to avoid it. Had Captain Smith done so in 1912, apparently, he could have averted the disaster he failed to foresee. It was the tiny glancing blow along the *Titanic*'s starboard side that caused the calamity. The passengers didn't even feel the impact, it was so faint. It was a whisper, a susurraton, a tickle. But the unsinkable ship sank all the same. The band played 'Nearer, My God, to Thee' as the greatest ship afloat slipped beneath the eerily calm waters of the North Atlantic. There weren't enough lifeboats to accommodate all 2,201 passengers and the few that were lowered were lowered less than full. The remaining men on board were reminded to 'Be British!' as the RMS *Titanic* slid into the inky millpond. Some say the captain could have set passengers down on the iceberg itself and saved many more lives than he did.

There's a lesson here for certain critical thinkers, I think. Perhaps we should steer for the pack ice of managerial relevance instead of trying to circumnavigate it. Perhaps we should clamber on to the ice floe, no matter how fragile the footing and freezing the forecast. Perhaps we have *already* struck the iceberg, a tiny glancing blow that none of us have felt but the implications of which will be apparent soon enough. There aren't sufficient lifeboats for everyone, remember, especially not for steorage class types like you and me. All together now, 'Nearer, My GMAT, to Thee'. Sing up. Be British!

### **Full Steam Ahead**

Rather than end on a negative note, though it's difficult to do otherwise when *Titanic*'s up for discussion, I'd like to put a positive spin on things. All is not lost, in my view. The B-school, I believe, can be rescued from the cruel sea. It's still possible to come out of this unscathed, provided we all pull together. Or recalibrate our conceptual compass, at least. It's time for critical management types to take a critical look at ourselves.

In this regard, we should aspire to the condition of James Cameron's *Titanic*. If ever a movie were fated to fail, it was Cameron's *folie de grandeur*. He had no track record with costume drama, let alone love stories. He cast two unknown actors in the lead roles (Leo's breakthrough movie, *Romeo + Juliet*, hadn't been released when *Titanic* began) and seriously considered dumping DiCaprio for Billy Crudup at an early stage in the proceedings. He had to build an entire movie studio in Mexico, plus a full-scale replica of the legendary liner, in order to get the shots he wanted. The project was budgeted for \$125 million, but this spiralled to \$200 million, making it by far the most expensive movie ever produced. *Titanic* made *Waterworld* look like



a paddling pool. The pressure from the studio was stupendous and he had to fight frantic, cost-conscious executives for every scene and special effect. *Titanic* was originally scheduled for release on July 4, the blockbuster movie equivalent of prime time, but Cameron missed the launch date due to post-production problems, which plunged it into the purportedly problematic pre-Christmas schedules. To cap it all, the trade press kept up a running anti-Cameron campaign – *Variety* even ran a regular ‘Titanic Watch’ column – and just about every reporter expected the movie to go the way of the ill-fated liner. The metaphor was perfect. Cinematic kismet, no less.

But Cameron had the last laugh. *Titanic* earned \$1.8 billion at the worldwide box office, an all-time record. Its soundtrack topped the charts. Its DVD and video releases did likewise. It was nominated for fourteen Academy Awards and won eleven, including Best Picture and Best Director. Quoting Leonardo DiCaprio’s line, Cameron stood on the stage of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion and shouted, ‘King of the World’. *Titanic* triumphant. My great-grandfather redeemed. My father delighted. My manifesto over.

And out.

# UNDERGRADUATE

*Geoff Lightfoot*

The new undergraduate curriculum is here.

The curriculum is now based upon a 4x4 matrix using the articulating principles of History, Economics, Politics and Identity; and Accountability, Representation, Control and Ethics. Each semester after the first year, we rotate the matrix so that each of the 16 different combinations is covered. Thus, over the final two years of the undergraduate degree, students will take, following the economics dimension as an example, modules in 'Economics and Accountability', 'Economics and Representation', 'Economics and Control', and 'Economics and Ethics'. Of course, the titles will not necessarily reflect the underlying matrix – 'Economics and Representation', for example, includes aspects of both accounting and advertising and the module may well be named to reflect this.

The first year introduces the matrix by assigning each of the articulating principles a module. This gives the following modules:

Management History  
Management Economics  
Management Politics  
Management Identities

Management and Accountability  
Management and Representation  
Management and Control  
Management and Ethics

It is not necessary here to go into the content of every module in any depth but it may help to give a couple of examples. Management politics will introduce both issues of politics within organisations and how management as a discipline and trajectory is shaped by wider political orderings. Management and representation introduces themes revolving around how specific representations, be it accounting,

marketing or political, shape management practices. Management history disposes of the tawdry management 'theories' that used to haunt our old teaching by placing them as part of the history of management thought rather than narratives of contemporary relevance. The old curriculum is used as a case study here, demonstrating how such theories continued to be promulgated long after any relevance or interest remained.

The modules also show how some of the previous systems of categorisation are reformulated. Accounting, for example, previously the more cursed of the first year undergraduate modules, is now divorced from its prior focus on techniques and reworked into core elements of the history of management, management economics, and management politics as well as more obviously in the accountability, representation and control modules. Similarly, marketing material is distributed across representation, economics, politics, identity and ethics, and parts of what was once known as organisational behaviour feature in almost all modules.

The matrix system is in part a quick and dirty way of breaking functional boundaries. The business school may have aimed to represent, in its teaching, the different areas of business itself yet the ongoing effect was to reinforce demarcations both within and without the academy. Accounting, for example, had almost become a separate discipline, where specialists specialise, and the technical had been allowed to (or rather encouraged to) dominate. Since non-accountants fear to tread this terrain, the importance of accounting in other aspects of organisational analysis had been under explained, while accounting teaching retreated into a *cul-de-sac* of mastering technique at the expense of explaining accounting practices and effects. Similar effects could be seen with most other functional divisions although often the technical was replaced with ideological fervour.

As the curriculum places elements of the different functional areas within the same modules, there can be no retreat to supposed core values within each area. Marketing and organisation behaviour are considered together in their relationship to politics, ethics, identity and control. Explanations, theories, enquiries cannot be subject specific – bowdlerised marketing cannot be used to sustain inadequacies in accounting explanation, or *vice versa*. This will affect core texts. The textbook publishing game, of re-editing and re-presenting existing material within a functional area as if it were novel, is doomed.

And, as the organising themes make clear, even full readings from existing functional groupings traditionally associated with business school teaching will not prove sufficient to fulfil the teaching needs of this syllabus. The history of the business school has worked to erase history (in part, so that the old can be constantly recycled and re-presented). This syllabus requires that history is taken seriously within undergraduate business studies, that the old and the new be contextualised, that trajectories of development be remarked, and that the here and now not be removed from any pre-existing conditions.

This applies equally to politics. The prior discourse of the business school was of pragmatism rather than politics, and proved as bereft in the business school as when applied to politics itself (not least because part of the pragmatic call rested upon practical success – success that resolutely failed to appear empirically). And the political antecedence of the absence of the political, articulated most clearly with Mises and Hayek, is part of the story of business that this syllabus will cover. Yet politics and business is far deeper and more trenchant than presenting a mere lack of engagement within the business school: when politics is combined with accountability or control in a business context, we see that different formulations of the role and activities of business are highlighted. Formulations that make it clear that the omission of major writers on political economy from the syllabus is no longer possible.

Accountability and representation have been given greater prominence than it had in the old syllabus. In part, this is to integrate areas hitherto separated from the core modules (such as accounting, marketing, HRM and information systems). But in integrating these areas, and also more generally, it foregrounds specific themes that continue to grow in importance in contemporary interpretations of business. In particular, it drives discussion of these areas away from the technical or ideological towards a consideration of practices and effects, as well as introducing a wider range of course materials.

Other areas might, at first glance, appear diminished. Economics, when covered within the matrix, cannot cower behind the technical protection of equations and graphs of dubious virtue. Such representations, largely unproven and unloved, have little place in this curriculum (except when their effects, as representations, are covered as part of the economics/representation module). Instead, economics, in conjunction with control or ethics, say, looks at how finance works within the organisation and how it helps determine the relationship with its environment.

The first year is still introductory. This does not preclude the introduction of more advanced material (indeed, the removal of much that was irrelevant and uninteresting demands its replacement by something more pertinent). But what is being introduced will be very different. Rather than being presented with a series of incoherent narratives masquerading as important theories, students will be introduced to a multiplicity of ways of looking at and thinking about business. Rather than mastering techniques that will never be applied, students will be presented with a theoretical toolbox to help them understand practice.

This has knock-on effects for later years. Without the meaningless diversions previously demanded, students' academic skills will be honed much earlier and their understanding of principal themes more advanced. And thus, what was radical and demanding in the later years of the earlier curriculum will now be mainstream and mundane. However, the different combinations of the matrix in later years does create spaces for more substantial examinations of philosophical enquiry, be it Deleuze in politics and representation, or Hayek in economics and ethics. And with functional groupings sundered and no longer rendered distinct, an examination of Foucault in an organisational context, say, now requires scrutiny of all aspects of the organisation. Not accounting *or* HRM *or* marketing.

There are further changes that the curriculum demands from us. It may be that our teaching has effectively represented the entrepreneurial ideal. After all, the pilfering of theory and ideas, cutting them adrift from their source, dressing them up in shiny new clothes, and flogging the product to unwary punters, has been good business (albeit overly redolent of the Eastern European sex trade). Such actions are not unique to the business school, of course. And there was some honesty in the business school here: unlike other disciplines, the relation to vile commerce has always been obvious. No pretence of academic disinterest, the original source of the money we squander has always been clear and our relationship financial.

Yet the poor quality of the product, the sheer misrepresentation of what was sold, whether in terms of utility or as representations of business practice was causing problems. It was only going to be a matter of time before one of us was door-stepped by reporters from *Watchdog* or a similar consumer affairs programme and asked (through the letterbox) to answer why we profited from selling a product that was

basically useless and did we know that vulnerable young people had run up huge debts paying for it?

However, the curriculum now makes some of these transactions more difficult. What was tired and irrelevant is now dismissed in the first term – there is no option of continuing to pile on the slap to cover up the cracks. No longer do we need to attempt to demonstrate the importance and relevance to disbelieving students of ‘theoretical’ positions proven untenable in practice, be they basic economics or organisational behaviour.

This will of course have an impact upon some of our traditional skills. We shall become less adept at lying – it will no longer form a key part of our classroom skills (although it will remain as valuable as ever in other aspects of our work). We do not need to pretend the incredible, we can instead report its passing. There will be an even more severe effect upon those business schools and scholars that might wish to consider themselves ‘critical’. *Faux*-rebellion will be unsustainable. There will be less straw men erected that you can show opposition to.

And the magician’s flourish will need to disappear. We will not be able to suddenly produce a dazzling critique of all that has gone before. Undergraduate students will no longer discover that their previous years of study were simply the misdirection needed to make the final *dénouement* more striking. For us teachers, this is perhaps the greatest challenge. If our teaching is to become vital, then we will need to move beyond our own tired misrepresentations.

# VICIOUSNESS

*Hugo Letiche*

I abhor the dominating leadership style of gregariousness, which profits from thinly disguised racism, intellectual dishonesty and emotional exploitation. In this manifesto I want something stopped more than I want something proposed.

Contemporary business schools aspire to train leaders, not just managers. Managers supposedly merely handle the apparent, try to get things done and administer mundanely. Leadership involves direction-setting and being inspirational, but with what sort of vision do current leaders lead? Are they not *vicious*? Common meanings of *vicious* include: marked by deep ill will and disposed to inflict pain or suffering. The modern usage dates from the eighteenth century – referring (especially) to (a horse's) inclination to be 'savage or dangerous'. In the nineteenth century, the savagery concept was extended to speech acts – that is, to the blather and maliciousness with which identity, freedom and hope are destroyed with words. Destruction that is crucial to the exertion of power.

Current society seems more characterized by viciousness than any time during the last fifty years. To focus on the Dutch setting, the literary scene and the university life have always known hurtful exaggeration, arrogance and polemics. Some illustrations from the universities: Peter Vroom demonstrably renounced his Doctor's title when an honorary degree was awarded to what he deemed to be an unworthy grocer; and Arnold Heertje refused to work with junior colleagues who in his eyes were academically inadequate. These academics made front page news and the evening television news with their extreme positions, and apparent antiauthoritarian individualism. But these were, nonetheless, essentially university matters.

In the last two years, the Netherlands has known two dramatic assassinations – one of an academic turned politician (Pim Fortuyn) and one of a filmmaker/political columnist (Theo van Gogh). Both men had taken the traditional style of the (university/literary) provocateur

into the society at large with dramatic, but for themselves, tragic results. In this regimented and rather predictable society, there has always been a tradition of exceptional, elitist males who displayed in the violence of their texts, their arrogance towards social conformity, and the conviction that they (alone) spoke the truth. It is obviously a very narcissistic role. An individual demands a great deal of attention and asserts his (or her) unique ability to speak the truth. The role demands a highly charged lack of respect for institutions and established norms. The individual puts his or her 'truth' above the deliberations of the collective. The scientific forum, political class and/or artistic world are all supposedly deluded, self-interested and/or thoughtless. Alone the individual speaks honestly. And it is most often an individual who claims to be a victim of unjust events, of the conspiracy of mediocrity, and of philistinism.

This style has – as embodied by Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh – burst out of the protected sphere of literature and of the university, and reached the realm of mass culture. Pim Fortuyn was a marginal university figure – he was in the 1990's a full professor – but only part-time and without a tenured position. Fortuyn's PhD (1980) supervisor was Ger Harmsen, a leading Marxist sociologist. But by 2000 Fortuyn's political party preferences had moved to the right. He labelled leaders of the Dutch labour party as arrogant jobseekers who refused to see what was going on, or to do anything about it. While Fortuyn voiced anti-immigration fears and attacked 'politically correct' assimilation policies, he was anything but a traditional macho right-wing populist. In fact, Fortuyn was explicitly gay and energetically publicized his life style – with lap dog, chauffeur driven Jaguar and dandy clothes. He spoke openly of sex in the 'dark rooms' and of his extreme loneliness. His apparent lack of shame was exceptional.

Fortuyn rejected the existential division of a distinct private and public realm; producing a powerful attack on civil society (for instance, as understood by Hanna Arendt). The division into the two realms of private and public, allows each to serve as a background enabling the other to exist. Public existence is only possible if another existential realm exists – that of the private. And privacy can only stay alive if distinct from the political, public and collective. Intimacy and mutual feeling, need a cloistered meeting-place. If a space of recognition, affection and awareness is to develop 'in-between' (several) persons, they must be able to be alone with one another. Sharing requires responsiveness, mutual relationship and a strong sense of inhabiting common space and time. In mass culture, there is very little shared – the sense of a common humanity, or of a linked fate, is absent. In



the contemporary consumer society, one shares 'life-styles', products and the mass media. There is no direct, commonly experienced life-world.

Pim Fortuyn did not try to be someone to be with; he was someone to marvel. He ended the careers of a whole generation of politicians by taunting their unnaturalness before the camera, their rigidities of expression and their lack of showmanship. He equated apparent extroversion with leadership. By being more charismatic than the other, by displaying more (feigned) emotion and by out-dramatizing the competition, he became the chosen leader. Fortuyn imposed his criteria on political Holland. His exhibitionism set a norm that no one else could match. Finer feelings of affection, commitment and loyalty, were junked in the process. Fortuyn defined a hysterical emotional coming-out that left little space for nuance or intimacy. Short-shrift was made with traditional Dutch values – for instance, as seen in many of the paintings of the Golden Age – focusing on the household or of the small community. In his politics, Fortuyn preferred operatic gestures and sweeping statements. His appearance was more important than what he said. He defined a new visual aesthetic – he was best interpreted as appearance and not as treatise or text. He was thin, bald and fashionably suited out. He defied the political text of "On the one hand and on the other hand, ...." Or, 'It requires more study, ....' He taunted the politicians who had failed to confront welfare fraud, impose integration on foreigners, (re-)build the physical infrastructure, or to efficiently provide needed health and educational services. Supposedly, by resolutely calling out his anger and humiliating those responsible, change was guaranteed. The display of resentment, the drama of verbal viciousness defined 'speech acts' that on their own would create new circumstances. Detailed policy proposals, analysis and technocratic debate were the old way – the 'new politics' was pure performativity. The effect of all this was to further alienate the private from the public. Respect for others – whether politicians, civil servants or politically of another opinion, was unnecessary. Brazen arrogance and a narcissistic appreciation of one's own superiority was called for. The other – defined in racial, intellectual or political terms – was degraded to non-person. And such 'non-persons' revenged themselves on both Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh.

Fortuyn acted to destroy what little sense of protection, safety or intimate shelter existed. Mass society and globalization threaten the small, the immediate and the phenomenal. The worldliness of the immediate is overruled by the logic of the market place. There is no safe haven – the personal is overwhelmed, threatened and degraded.

Politics, for Fortuyn, is not a process of shared consent – or a reaching of agreement with others requiring insight and empathy – it is ‘truth’. Not ‘in-dwelling’ or shared ‘worldliness’, but self-certainty counts. Generosity as a gesture of good will cannot be reckoned upon. Society is defined by the individual’s self-centredness. Association is problematic and troubled. People are enclosed in the solitudes of competition and consumerism. They do not belong to the organization they work for, or the suburb they live in, or the institutions surrounding them. They do not feel that they belong to the world at all. This is the crushing loneliness of the contemporary condition. Without any belonging the group is merely a ‘mob’ – a mass of undirected, disunited and disengaged individuals. And ‘mob’ psychology is fraught with violent swings of confidence and insecurity, generosity and scape-goating, aggression and passivity; it is often vicious.

A possible postmodern reaction to all this, is to flee the hyperreal consumerist regime by trying to be more impersonal, showy, ingenious and performative than society itself. This was Fortuyn’s strategy. But, Fortuyn became, hereby, hyperreal -- an image that was more real than real – the fantasy, imagined gestures and show, became more real than he was. The man apparently realized, in the last days of his life, that his hyperreal fantasme had become a key social reality; one which he himself had little or no control over. The fantasme was fed by resentment for those who had for the last decade ruled. The fantasme was pure *ressentiment* – jealousy, fear and anger. Fortuyn performed arrogance, self-love and overconfidence – he, in effect, displayed the reversal of loneliness, hurt and weakness. The fearful, marginalized and taunted, relished his anger, violence and psychodrama. The paradox is that his answer to all the insecurities was to create more insecurity. He acted to destroy what he had demonstrated was needed – shelter, safety, assurance and belief. In a society defined in terms of hyperreality, there is no shared life-world, in-dwelling or worldliness. There is little or no sense of shared place, common space, or of an in-between. Interaction between isolated atoms does not achieve existential shared-ness. There is no in-between only separation, solitary fate, and general powerlessness. In despair, one can perform shameless aloofness and hyperreal resentment – after all, one’s actions will not make any difference, anyway. In despair, there is a sort of freedom – that liberates from shame and allows one to enact a drama of one’s choice. What is lacking is existence, shared with others.

The private acknowledgment of the personal, serves as anchor for the public. The deep knowledge of the other as person, or the attachment to others in mutual regard, underpins the ethics of democratic politics.

Without private existential grounding, appearances of democracy have no real weight. Elected tyrants, mob majority rule, representative anti-humanism, can all flourish. Private existential grounding of personal existence, in firmly felt relationships, is necessary for (real) democracy. Without an embedding in a lived perception of the in-between, and the worldliness of existence it evokes, democracy is the empty and meaningless husk Pim Fortuyn made of it. Politics is merely the vicious hyper-reality he proclaimed.

Theo van Gogh took the apparent liberatory quality of despair even further. He wrote newspaper columns meant to be abrasive, insulting and upsetting. He seems (as a writer) to have chosen the polemic insult as his *raison d'être*. And as filmmaker, he directed a filmatic pamphlet featuring unclothed women with apparently misogynic texts from the Koran projected onto their flesh. His universe was stridently judgmental. He propagated a fundamentally autistic viewpoint, indifferent to everyone outside the circles in agreement with him. He courted the display of public-ness and arrogantly showed disdain for the private of most others. He reduced others to non-persons with whom he shared nothing. Neither Fortuyn nor van Gogh believed in the ideal of 'civic friendship'. The norms of careful discussion, of being concerned about one's interlocutor, and of mindful awareness, were rejected. A verbal culture of bombast and assertiveness prevailed. The liberal principle of 'freedom of speech' was absolutized as the only truth. The person's ability to speak was divorced from the double interact – what the speaker did to the hearer did not count for much. The only thing that counted was the self's ability to create itself in whatever text it chose for. Communitarism was unconditionally attacked – the only existentially valid principle was the self's ability to create itself in the image of its own text.

Being came from and was possessed by the self. Humanity was not seen as a shared, historical and textual process. The 'thrownness' of being, born helpless without having chosen to come into this world, was ignored. Existence was not thought of as something one has been thrown into. In Fortuyn and van Gogh's world, persons are humanly, intellectually, linguistically, psychologically and economically, alone. Circumstances and others are not 'dialogic' or put into relationship to society or to one another. Even if one posits that language offers the possibility of dialogue, that dialogue may well be infrequent. Language may always be dialogic – which means existing in relationship to society, context and others; but that does not assure that dialogue takes place. For van Gogh, his speech stood solely in relationship to the 'truth' – dialogue or resonances were not crucial to him. He took his 'right to

free speech' to autistic extremes. He said whatever shocked, insulted and unnerved so as to project and introject proof of his presence. He did not share text; he asserted solitary existential absolutes. The reader was the victim of his unfeeling assertions. The process unleashed was one of pure willfulness – van Gogh as atomistic, context-less assertion. In his text, there is verbal violence and attempted speech acts, but no *parole*. Words as shared, as common possessions and as joint action, are absent. The shared or in-between, is sacrificed to the assertive and dis-embedded. The public sphere as a place where differences can meet, and wherein mutuality can be developed, is rejected. There is law and truth, but no mutuality or consent. His is not a society of interaction, but of Being – and here, the 'truth' prevails. His idea of justice may have been sound, but the process(es) of interaction were not.

Were Fortuyn and Van Gogh vicious? The fundamental rejection of the in-between meant that their performative role, whatever ideas they espoused, was fraught with deep ill-will and was deliberately harmful to the double interact. Speech was not conceived of as mutual relationship or democratic interaction, but as 'truth'. Their pronouncements were intended to be savage and dangerous. Their performative stance was intended to create 'gregariousness'. Gregariousness is found in the chatter of meaningless speech. The circle of speaker-speech-listener-response(/speaker) can be conceived of as virtuous, but also as destructive. It can be thought of as a circle of ever (re-)beginning – wherein change, temporality and emergence, are what counts. But the prioritization of the survival of everyone by imposing mass mediocrity, threatens spontaneity, aliveness and all existential values. Emphasis on shared circumstances, can lead to empty and mediocre interaction. Fortuyn and van Gogh had little sympathy for the ethics of dialogue. They were not half so much attracted to sharing, as to assertive individuality. They craved singularity. But they chose more for spectacle than dialogue. Strident poses at truth-telling was for them better than careful discussion. Assertive pronouncements overwhelmed listening. They made their emotions obvious, putting their drives and passions on display. The private (or personal) was made public (put on film and television), and the public (of political discourse) was made private (i.e. emotional, passionate and irrational). Specific conversation, relationship and interaction were denigrated – there were no '*petites histoires*', everything was '*grands histoires*'. This communicative strategy led to a sort of 'totalitarianism' via the thwarting of shared or mutual existential interaction. Fortuyn and van Gogh meant for there to be no escape from their text.

If the 'in-between' is destroyed and organization, politics and the state remain as controlling factors, totalitarianism results – if one wants it to, or not. Without existential attachment to relationships, without a life-world rich in interactions, without the psychological principle of relatedness, there is no dialogue. Dialogue or the affirmation of the other is the irreplaceable ethical ground to democracy. A social psychology of comprehension, communication and relatedness, underpins democracy. The 'in-between' is a quality of private life; without it, a public life of democracy is not sustainable. The relationship between the private and public forms a virtuous reinforcing circle, leading from the 'in-between' to 'in-dwelling', and on to democracy. A civil society of intimate-ist relationships constrains the abstract, impersonal and potentially totalitarian logic of truth, power and leadership.

But the claim to anti-totalitarian liberalism is not the only possible conceptualization of viciousness. In the Nietzschean tradition, the vicious circle or *circulus vitiosus*, leads to a fundamental rupture in the human and social order. The challenge posed: *What if we take emergence or change, alteration and life-energy really seriously?* All efforts at identity try to escape the logic of change and to assert some sort of permanence. All human certainty denies the basic life impulse and tries to flee primal chaos. Here vicious means the destruction of false certainties and the denial of unearned truths. The problem is not the fundamental need for the 'in-between', but the existential lies and distortions whereby safety, predictability and pseudo permanence are purchased. So-called 'lies we tell to children' – the pretences at understanding, predicting and causally explaining – alienate humanity from existence. There is a circle of mutual delusion and a circle of ever recommencing existential self (-organization).

At each moment, existence reconstitutes itself. Life is in a constant process of (re-)recreating. At no two moments is identity really the same – the life-force supports the continual recurrence of aliveness, over and over again, until it is exhausted and the particular instance of aliveness stops. Existence is a constant process of recurring chaos and order that come into existence and perish; thus of organization and disorganization. There is no stopping point in the process. One origin merely conceals another; one identity is nestled within another. Identity is arbitrary, temporary and passing. Beginning and end are fleeting vanishing points – all there is, is the continual reoccurrence of energy, change, will, power, life-force. There is no foundation, no ground, no embeddedness – the principle of chaos and change is absolute, totally recurring and unconditional. Every start is a start-once-again, every origin is yet-another-moment-of-renewal; every action is action-

another-time. Entrance and exit are the same reoccurrences, of one fundamental process.

Every 'gregariousness' denies the primacy of chaos – that is, the force of emergence. Fortuyn and van Gogh, by screaming the unacceptable and shocking the politically correct, may have pretended to want to increase society's emotive capacity; but their primary message was one of identity, surveillance and the necessary permanence of order. Gregariousness asserts identity: in belonging, in identification and in assumed sameness. The 'in-between' asserts identity in difference, dialogic interaction and momentary (or fleeting) acknowledgement. The most famous slogan of Fortuyn, 'At your service' – delivered with a boyish salute; is totally gregarious. It asserts sociability and belonging emotionally, and even childishly, to the other -- but only as long as the other unconditionally accepts Pim Fortyn's simulacra. All of this was an extreme falsification of change, difference and the impermanence of identity.

The real viciousness of the *vicious circle* is not in its radical existential openness or demand that emergence be understood; it is in the denial of these. Gregariousness creates false belonging and hyper-real identity. In gregariousness everyday life is made intelligible via counterfeit promises of stability and belonging. Gregariousness peddles false sociability. It deals in simulacra of pretended identity and permanence. Actions of gregariousness pretend to create a lasting order and a reality grounded in 'self'. Both Fortuyn and van Gogh defended the primacy of the (false) 'self' – that is, of identity before becoming, and of the person before process. They tried to disallow the unrelenting changes in society and economy. They denied the sense of personal impermanence.

Their simulacra avoided the competitive destruction of personal worth by asserting a non-economic self; but this self had very little social substance and deteriorated fairly immediately into poses, pretences and shouting matches. They dealt in political hyperbole, communitarian sentimentalism and cultural nostalgia. They created political soap opera. The intelligible of their 'reality principle' was purely performative. It was a 'good show'. Those who do well in the logic of performativity do not necessarily need a Fortuyn or van Gogh – perhaps they can luxuriate themselves in the gregariousness of a consumer lifestyle, as long as they remain indifferent to the other. But the price they have to pay is to accept the impermanence and meaninglessness of the simulacra. Self and society really are disjointed and there is nothing existential behind the performativity. If one can

perform performativity without a concern for the self, identity or being, one can totally lose oneself in gregariousness. And if one fails in performativity, one can search for a simulacrum of self, identity and meaning. These were the very successful wares of Fortuyn and van Gogh. They were vicious because in their gregariousness there is no real acknowledgement of the other. Alternatively, viciousness of the vicious circle invites one to embrace the in-between of emergence and the impermanence of chaos. It leads to the relative unintelligibility – born of unicity and specificity – of relationship, poetry and parole, which has no truck with training for the (Fortuynist or van Gogh) exercise of power. Have I been vicious to Fortuyn and van Gogh? How else do you fight gregariousness? To go one step too far in the direction of the manifesto: *Reject vicious gregariousness, feel the vicious circle of change, forget leadership.*

# WEAVING

*Ann Rippin*

In Norse mythology three weird sisters, the Norns, sit and spin the destinies of mankind. Urd spins the web of fate for gods and men, Verdandi presides over the present, and Skuld controls our future destiny. They also tend and protect Yggdrasil, the giant ash tree of life, by piling up mud at its base. The Norns nourish the tree of life and weave the fabric of our lives. In *The Odyssey*, Penelope puts off her ardent suitors in her desire to remain faithful to the wandering, missing in action Odysseus, by promising to choose one of them when she has finished weaving an intricate tapestry or embroidering an elaborate shroud which she secretly unpicks, and thus fails to complete, every evening. Women, then, are engaged in mundane, quotidian, never-ending domestic crafts and duties that maintain the *status quo* and enable others, usually their male counterparts, to go out into the world and act.

In another version of the Norns' story the three sisters are engaged in producing a tapestry so complicated that it can never be completed. When they eventually put in the final stitch or make the final knot the world will end. This is a resonant image: the texture of life as warp and weft, knotted, interlaced, twisted and tactile; the fabric of life paradoxically process not product. But it also resonates with us academics holding together with a myriad of tiny stitches something so complex that it never seems to end, and one tiny stitch dropped in these litigious times threatens to unravel the whole thing. The discipline itself, which like an unfinished tapestry is a work in progress, is woven together from a variety of 'feeder' disciplines: sociology, economics, psychology, history and so on. The business school that we are busy weaving, or in some cases desperately and furtively repairing with yarn that just about matches, appears to be a free-form, emergent multi-media installation rather than something proceeding from a carefully designed full-scale cartoon. And it might even be one that we are weaving from behind without much hope of ever glimpsing the right side.



All this is weaving on a massive scale, though; weaving decorative tapestries to hang in draughty mansions and cavernous cathedrals. This is triumphant, glorious, luxuriant weaving. It is a labour intensive, resource-devouring, excessive practice, and there are places at the loom only for those who have demonstrated their mastery through long, arduous apprenticeships. Not all weaving is like this. At the other extreme is evenweave linen. This is a smooth, predictable cloth, which before the mass import of cotton, had a variety of domestic uses: sheets, towels, clothing and so on. This, in a strange way, is a cloth for the connoisseur, perfect in its integrity and simplicity. And this is the stuff of much domestic labour as these uniform linens required marking, and marking, by the Victorian era, had become a marketable skill.

The metaphor of weaving, then, tells us a great deal about our positions as labourers in the weaving sheds of learning, the ateliers of scholarship, and the ill-lit backrooms of administrative just plain keeping it all together. While it is tempting to dwell in the high art end of the gobelins and the craft weaver studios and to think with that kind of weaving about scholarship in the business school, I would prefer to turn the reader's attention back to the intimate, domestic and pedagogic: the marking and making ready for use of the evenweave linen which is so frequently overlooked. This might seem like a worthy but dull choice, but it is one that is vindicated by the fact that Saint Maurice and Saint Catherine, the patron saints of weaving, were looking over me as I began to work on this essay. As I was preparing to write I found a five pin stick weaving sampler that I had made some time ago, put in a drawer and completely forgotten. Stick weaving is probably the simplest and most accessible form of weaving there is and yet it is very little practised, probably because the resulting thin strips of cloth are difficult to stitch together evenly to produce a wider fabric (see figure one), and also, frankly, because we have got better things to do with our time especially when we can go and buy a cheap, perfectly serviceable rag rug at IKEA. But finding the sampler and other pieces of work with it was a happy accident, because it is the notion of the sampler rather than the weaving that is important for our purposes here. I would like simply, in keeping with the craft, to argue that for the business school of the future the practice of making samplers or *essamplaires* to practise marking evenweave linen should be central to the curriculum.

The connection between management education and making samplers is, I acknowledge, not immediately apparent, but once made it is irresistible. To make it, it is essential to understand what samplers are



Fig. 1. Stick weaving sampler

and what the purposes of making them might be. The sampler is in effect a source book of patterns and stitches, a set of examples and try-outs or *essais* that a needleworker could use in subsequent full scale pieces of work. Before printed pattern books and needlework manuals were widely available needleworkers had to rely on these repositories of technical information and worked examples to build up their own repertoires of skills, techniques and ideas. There are two main types: band (see figure two) spot or random (see figure three) samplers. The types are associated with function which is in turn associated with social class, as we shall see.

The word ‘sampler’ suggests the notion of a trial or sample. The production of a sample before embarking on a full scale piece of work is, interestingly part of the tyranny of orthodoxy, control and elimination of any notion of imagination, spontaneity or inspiration which characterises the requirements of the only qualification to which the amateur needleworker can currently aspire: a City and Guilds certification. It might also be seen to characterise many management development programmes, competency frameworks and psychometric testing regimes. The word ‘sampler’ however, does not come from this practice, but from the French ‘*essamplaire*’ which is closer to ‘*exemplar*’, something to be emulated, copied and imitated. I realise at this point that I am getting dangerously close to appearing to advocate those other life-sapping practices – benchmarking and the pursuit of best practice. I am not. Copying what has worked for someone else in another time and another context has always struck me as rather desperate, unimaginative thinking which will only ever produce adequacy. While this is not to be sniffed at in some organisational settings it is unlikely to inspire anything truly original and life enhancing. Instead, what I am advocating is a return to the practice of experimentation leading to the creation of a personal *essamplaire*. This would involve a process of playing, fiddling and salvaging with a view to creating a finished *essamplaire* to be taken out into the world and used. Samplers have always been about use.

To most people the word ‘sampler’ conjures up a Victorian sampler. These are the ones on sale in antique shops at exorbitant prices, and the ones handed down through families, or on display in museums and stately homes. There are examples from the sixteenth century onwards but these are rare. The ones that concern us here are the ones produced in the late eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Essentially there are two main categories of samplers: functional marking, plain sewing and darning samplers produced by working class women and girls, and what might be termed ‘decorative’ or ‘accomplishment’



Fig. 2. Contemporary band sampler





Fig. 3. Contemporary spot sampler

samplers produced by young, wealthy bourgeois and aristocratic women. Marking and plain sewing samplers were produced by young women as a significant part of what education they received, often before going into 'service'. There were styles of samplers associated with particular educational establishments and even particular teachers. Young girls learned to make cross stitch alphabets as a way of marking the master or mistress' linen which would go to the laundry (see figures four a and four b). The employability of these young women turned on their ability to produce a neat, legible *abecedaire*.

Bourgeois and aristocratic women, on the other hand, were able to produce a different kind of sampler in which they could demonstrate their qualification for a different career path: a good marriage. I am not the first person to point out the long association of the practice of embroidery with the historical construction of the feminine, as well as the gradual feminisation of embroidery. For wealthy women the sampler demonstrated two sorts of capital: the social capital of their acquired femininity and their fathers' economic capital which gave them sufficient leisure time to complete their samplers and to develop the taste which would make them desirable wives. These samplers give an insight into the pedagogic formation of the consorts of the elite class. The insight comes from two sources: the standard of the work itself, and its content, including its iconography and its mottos.

Sampler quotations show clearly the sorts of values that the desirable Victorian woman was expected to hold. Sampler quotes fascinate me in the way that some people are fascinated by epitaphs because they give a fleeting insight into the lives of the young women who made them. They are sometimes as poignant as tombstones in their intimations of mortality. One American sampler expresses the maker's life chances particularly succinctly:

Our life is ever on the wing  
And death is ever nigh  
The moment when our lives begin  
We all begin to die

Martha Platt, aged 12 years, 1827.

A quote that appears frequently on nineteenth-century samplers comes from Isaac Watts' *Solemn Thoughts*:

There is an hour when I must die  
Nor can I tell how soon 'twill come  
A thousand children young as I  
Am called by death to hear their doom.

And the child was sometimes called to reflect directly on her own mortality as she stitched:

Thus Julia all things human  
Quickly fade decay and die  
The charms of the most lovely woman  
Are but blossoms of July

Julia Sargeant wrought in her ninth year 1829

When I first began to be interested in sampler quotes this struck me as the worst sort of Victorian morbidity, but, of course, the verses deal with an ever present reality for the Victorian family: death. This is demonstrated by one particularly poignant sampler. Martha Grant was ten in 1833 when she completed her sampler, and it appears that someone else later added an inscription: 'Departed this life October 31<sup>st</sup> aged 11 years'. Death was found in the midst of life for these children and they were never allowed to forget it. The very opposite is true for most people who present themselves at business schools. We are obsessed with the elimination of risk and with the maintenance of the illusion that we will live forever. Strangely, despite the existence of business bestsellers such as *Built to Last*, this does not seem to carry with it the notion of stewardship into the future we expect to inhabit. Organisations as well as careers appear oddly transient to the students I encounter. I remember a class discussion on the average lifespan of start up businesses during which the students appeared completely unconcerned about the limited prospects of most companies. Many of them cherished the aim of starting a high tech business which they would then sell to Bill Gates and retire to a life of ease. W Edwards Deming denounced US executives who flit from one company to another to build their careers with no thought for the longevity of the organisations they leave behind and called it one of the seven deadly sins of management. There is obviously virtue in equipping future managers and executives with the resilience to bounce back they are rejected by organisations, and of training them to discern when an organisation is irrevocably broken and beyond 'turning round', but there is also something to be said for encouraging the reflective practitioner to reflect on the consequences of their actions and to help them to appreciate that what they do today might stand as their monument. It would be interesting to see what impact if any a healthy

fear of death, and a concern for reputation thereafter might make on corporate decision making. Imagine the occasional corporate atrium displaying not some anodyne piece of elevator art but a carefully worked sampler bearing the verse:

When this you see remember me  
And keep me in your mind,  
And be not like the weather cock  
That turn at every wind.  
When I am dead, and laid in grave,  
And all my bones are rotten,  
By this I may remembered be  
When I should be forgotten.

(from an eighteenth-century sampler)

Ernest Saunders and Robert Maxwell, for example, might have done well to have considered such injunctions.

Similarly in this era of corporate excess and fat cat salaries, the self-restraint that young women ingested as they stitched might be of value:

O may I with myself agree  
And never covert what I see  
Content me with a humble shade  
My passions tam'd my wishes laid.

Eleanor Caroline Malone, aged eight, no date.

And in my wilder flights of fantasy I try to imagine a business school whose website opens with the motto:

Labour for learning before thou art old  
For learning is better than silver and gold  
For silver and gold will vanish away  
But learning is a jewel that will never decay

Fanny Downe, aged 12, 1797.

What emerges from a study of sampler quotes is a long-vanished world of values from the time when the foundations of modern organisational forms were being laid. Some of them are better forgotten, such as:





Fig. 4a. Unfinished contemporary marking sampler based on traditional design

Seek to be good but aim not to be great  
A woman's noblest station is retreat  
Her fairest virtues fly from public sight  
Domestic worth still shuns too strong a light

Jane Bailey, 1830

But the respect for institutions that some of the quotes display might well act as a useful counterbalance against the corporate and institutional scandals of recent years:

While I with care my work pursue  
And to my book my mind apply  
I'll keep my teacher's love in view  
And guard my way with watchful eye  
But most of all I'll mind that word  
Which brings salvation from the Lord.

Rebecca J. Wild, aged 10, 1831

The attachment to the teacher's love might give pause to anyone who has experienced the stalker student (or, indeed, predatory academic) but the notion of respect for authority might be a welcome return to probity in some corporate sectors.

The other source of moral guidance in these samplers is the images they contain. The main authority on English samplers, Avril Colby, spent some time piecing together their iconography (pomegranate = hope/eternal life; the lily = purity; the honeysuckle = enduring faith; the duck = marital fidelity and so on). One of the most striking images that engaged hours of sewing time was the depiction of Adam and Eve and the serpent (see figure five). The feminist in me recoils at the thought of these young women given so much leisure to reflect on Eve as the mother of all evils in this world, but another part of me rather welcomes the notion of sin and redemption. The awareness of the possibility of sin in a fallen world might go some way to counterbalance corporate greed and rapaciousness.

By now it might have become apparent that a useful management developmental exercise could be to design a corporate sampler complete with inspiring or instructional inscription and carefully chosen image. To some extent these already exist. If we think back to the hey day of the corporate mission statement, particularly those based on the Ashridge template, we have something highly akin to a band sampler: the vision set out clearly at the top, followed by the strategy and the all important values at the bottom. All this in corporate colours and

bedecked with the corporate logo. To some extent this has become even easier in recent years with the advent of controlled imagery. A student from a global consulting firm recently did a remarkable piece of work deconstructing its supplied controlled imagery and finding in it encoded values of control, power and domination. A commission to produce a sampler for a business school would be intriguing. The motto would no doubt come from the worthy but tired nostrums of our mission statements: embracing diversity, striving for research excellence; widening participation; offering value for money. But I would like to suggest we might try a carefully wrought cross-stitch rendition of Porter's five forces diagram, or a PESTLE analysis or even Johari's window with a more honest epigram such as CAVEAT EMPTOR (see *Admissions Policy* in figure six), HABEAS CORPUS for plagiarism disputes, or possibly Argyris' terse instruction: 'never give the boss bad news'. The single most instructive corporate sampler, the one most near to the *Zeitgeist*, however, would surely be a work with the mighty crooked E of ENRON fallen, fragmented to the ground with the inscription taken from Shelley's 'Ozymandias':

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings,  
Look upon my works, ye Mighty, and despair!

It seems unlikely that it will ever be commissioned.

The final pedagogic element of the sampler which I would like to consider is that of process. This involves practical aesthetics. To get a desirable husband the young lady would be expected to demonstrate exquisite taste and discrimination in design and great skill in execution. A return to this sort of aesthetic training in senior managers would be worth the aspiration. It would raise questions about beauty and elegance. It might make us question what counts as aesthetic in corporate life, and it might lead to greater discrimination and a greater capacity for discerning what is authentic and what is counterfeit. This latter is a desirable skill in a world of corporate snakeoil sellers; *caveat emptor* indeed. Where there is a market for the rare and valuable there are always charlatans.

The market for antique needlework is extraordinarily buoyant and often informed by wilfully blind sentimentality. Potential purchasers can ignore the fact that little girls were forced to do this sort of work and not all of them enjoyed it, for example, the child who labelled her finished work: 'Polly Cook did it and hated every stitch she did in it'. Securing a position as a seamstress might mean that you found yourself bathing your eyes in whiskey as a temporary quickener of the

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**RAE RAE**      R R R  
                          A A A  
                          E E E

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**RAE RAE RAE**

RAE · PAE · PAE · RAE · PAE · PAE · PAE  
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**RAE RAE RAE RAE RAE**

∴ Ann Rippin fecit 12.1.2005 ∴ ∴ ∴ ∴ ∴

Fig. 4b. Contemporary marking sampler





Fig. 5. Contemporary Adam and Eve sampler

sight, and having your food cut up into tiny mouthfuls by your employer so that you did not have to stop work to eat it. The circumstances of sampler production, as with so much contemporary globalised textile production are often deliberately obscured. People want to own samplers for their decorative merits. This has led to very fine grained photographs under glass being passed off as the real thing, as well as to manufacturers producing kits for Martha Stewart wannabees to produce their own samplers and for reams of advice being published on how to achieve the vintage look in modern work including elements as diverse as walnut ink granules, instant coffee and Vaseline (see figure seven for my own 'antique' sampler). Of course, the real thing is infinitely more valuable than a facsimile, and in buying antique needlework as well as in buying corporate advice or a new chief executive officer you need to develop a discerning eye if you are not to be sold a pup.

And so, we come to the heart of the matter: am I really advocating that senior executives pick up a needle, a length of evenweave linen and start to make samplers? Of course I am not. I am advocating the adoption of the notion of the *essamplaire*. This is not the exhausted notion of the portfolio of skills and experience for assessment. The control in that exercise always remains with the advisor suggesting content and the assessor making decontextualised judgements. I am advocating a pedagogy in which students work in the spirit of the *essamplaire*, in which they work in a community of scholars and practitioners to pass on and share their knowledge, ideas and techniques, but which they make their own through the work of their own hands and potentially go on and make something beautiful or useful in the world. The sampler is an empowering device, freeing you after a professional formation to make a contribution to the world grounded in craft knowledge. The sampler can be rolled up and taken with you from engagement to engagement. The sampler allows you to improvise within a structure, to make informed decisions based on your experience and to adjust along the way. It also allows you to unpick mistakes and start again, although even in the much talked about seldom seen no blame culture this might be a little difficult to achieve. Finally it might help to establish the kingdom on earth of life-long learning. Mrs Dowall, the wife of the vicar of Dunton in Norfolk, freely worked on her sampler with her family and friends for fifty years. It is 41 feet (12.5 metres) long and 20 inches (51 cm) wide. That seems to me to encapsulate the joy in work that enlightened thinkers from William Morris to W. Edwards Deming have advocated as an advanced form of quality assurance.



Fig. 6. Admissions Policy





Fig. 7. Contemporary 'antiqued' marking sampler



I do not want to suggest that genteel young women were collaborating and sharing ideas with each other from pure altruism; the marriage market was highly competitive as any number of three volume novels will attest, but the model of learning together and building repertoires of skills that they could hand on to the next generation is refreshing. And so my vision of the *essamplaire* is of a group of committed people weaving together their own high quality learning episodes without expecting the tutor to shoulder all responsibility for dreary, programmatic learning outcomes. And I would even, in my reactionary way, like to see just occasionally, a return to ethical precepts somewhere in those *essamplaires* that proceed from a strong moral tradition. Never mind picturesque renditions of Adam and Eve and the Tree of Knowledge. I would like to see the re-emergence of the Old Testament Jehovah at his most vengeful and terrifying, raining down retribution on the pension fund raiders, the sweatshop owners and the environmental despoilers. That seems to me to be a business school worth building here amongst what is left of the dark, satanic mills.

# XEN

*Peter Case*

Some preliminary definitions taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

## **Zen**

Pr. zēn

[a. Jap. *zen*, ad. Chin. *chán* quietude, ad. Skr. *dhyāna* meditation]

A school of Mahayana Buddhism that emphasizes meditation and personal awareness and became influential in Japanese life from the 13th century after being introduced from China.

## **Xen**

Pr. zēn

[ad. Gr. ξένος stranger]

1. An ad hoc combination of spiritual practices 2. A doctrine or cult of New Spirituality prevalent in the USA and EU [Deriving from the prefix **xeno-** and hence communicating a sense of strangeness]

**2029** FINNEGAN *Lotus & Robot* iii. x. 272 The teacher's incredible antics and abrasiveness... were in the right tradition of Xen-testing. **2037** SWAINSWICK *Compl. Bk. Spirit. Teaching* ii. 14 Our society puts considerable emphasis on personal development and the maximizing of one's potential. Elements of Xen, such as, Transcendental meditation, assertiveness training... and similar movements are all directed at making us fulfilled human beings. **2042** PARKER *J. F. Alt. H. E. States* It remains for the Xen masters to invent their own methods according to their own needs and insight. **2050** Labokov *Biography of a Guru* She said she had been talking to a Xen master in Croydon... 'I'm thinking of entering Xen training... I expect to become a Xen disciple.'

## **A Future for Management Education?**

It was a bright cold day in March 2059 and Juniper was trying to decide her future. She was about to graduate from a high school in Welwyn Garden City with a baccalaureate and one could have been forgiven, therefore, for thinking that the world was well and truly her oyster. This was not, however, how it looked from Juniper's viewpoint. Her close family – elder brother and father – had been pushing hard for her to take up a career in  $\Psi$ -commerce and hence she had taken all the requisite business enterprise, spiritual doctrine,  $\Psi$ -tech and psychology options in school, but now she was having second thoughts. For one thing, many of her friends wanted to enter the worlds of the  $\Psi$ -arts and take advantage of the growing global fashion for retro-European kitsch. Could she really imagine herself finding a satisfying life in  $\Psi$ -commerce? To complicate matters, those of her peers who were going the  $\Psi$ -commerce route hailed from wealthier backgrounds than hers and hence could look forward to training in one of the 'Big' campus universities in China; the sort that, like the universities of Chongqing, Beijing, Hangzhou, and Lijiang, offered one-year doctorates in Business Enterprise with  $\Psi$ -Commerce and such like. It was all too clear to Juniper that, much as she might crave it, going to China was out of the question.

With the reality of her situation bearing down heavily on Juniper, she decided to devote some time to researching a few of the alternatives in  $\Psi$ -space. For those unfamiliar with the expression, perhaps a few words of explanation are in order.  $\Psi$ -space is the mid-twenty-first century equivalent of what used to be known as cyberspace. What has developed beyond all early twenty-first century practical expectations is the enhancement of 3-D holographic projection equipment and multi-sensory apparatus for connecting to  $\Psi$ -space. The boundaries between personal and collective representations of 'inner thought' and 'external reality' whose blurring began with crude virtual reality experiments of the late twentieth century have, by 2059, become all the more diffuse and unclear. Navigating the network interstices of this holographic world is, of course, a matter of everyday routine for Juniper and her peers, so developed are their  $\Psi$ -space skills and sensibilities.

Juniper accesses  $\Psi$ -space using an assortment of electronic apparatus – a mix of multi-sensory projection equipment based on advanced holographic technology – that links her mind and body into an internationally mediated network of 'realms'. These  $\Psi$ -realms are populated by 'real' and imaginary users and contain experiential

‘information’ on an astronomical number of topics and themes. There are literally millions of  $\Psi$ -realms to explore.

In no short time, she finds herself in a promising  $\Psi$ -realm. The Institute for Spirituality and Organizational Rejuvenation (I-SOR), which offers a range of one-year part-time PhDs, many of which incorporate Xen philosophy, gives its postal address as: Plaza 52, Nine Elms Business Park, Swindon SWN 145PDQ. From the address, Juniper infers that this must be one of the new Institutes that have set themselves up in the deregulated HE zone of Swindon known as ‘Knowledge City’. There are lots of universities, colleges and institutes to choose from in Knowledge City and it is difficult to judge the quality from the external signs and  $\Psi$ -space promotional experiences. All the multi-storey buildings look the same from the outside – which is of no consequence, really, as she will mostly be pursuing the degree remotely by  $\Psi$ -learning – but at least I-SOR is offering the kind of corporate Xen specialisms that she would be interested in if she goes for a  $\Psi$ -commerce career.

### **A Xen Manifesto**

Entering the main I-SOR  $\Psi$ -realm portal, Juniper adopts ‘assimilation mode’ in order to take in the main statement of doctrine proffered by the Institute. There follows a steady stream of cognitive movement in Juniper’s ‘mind’: institute of spirituality and organizational rejuvenation i-sor... main doctrinal principles... a healthy dosage of spirituality and meaning at the workplace is good for business, because it improves morale and productivity, this view is gaining currency among management consultants, person resource professionals and mainstream business schools, clearly, something significant and enduring is stirring the corporate world, xen challenges business leaders to lead with integrity, reflect on their spiritual values and create a fulfilling workplace, an exploration of  $\Psi$ -space reveals more than twenty-thousand serious  $\Psi$ -realms on xen-organization and related topics, here are some of the  $\Psi$ icons... the September 2058 issue of organization volume sixty-seven has a themed section on xen-organization, the institute’s own doctors Petra Peters and Felicia Grant are influential in the field, doctor peters has just published an article on ‘xen for business leadership: reporting on a pilot  $\Psi$ -course for DMBXs and CEOs’ in the July 2058 issue of the journal of xen-management inquiry, the vitality of the xen movement is evident on many fronts, the presence of spirituality is felt in  $\Psi$ -boardrooms as well as in real office cubicles, many corporations encourage employees to hold new spiritual classes at work, xen study groups at noon are called ‘higher power lunches’, major  $\Psi$ -corps such as Microsoft have experimented with prayer groups, many  $\Psi$ -corps are willing to invest

money to sponsor seminars or workshops on religious wisdoms, spiritual growth, yoga, meditation, balanced life, creativity and authentic communication...

Still in assimilation mode, Juniper breaks off to follow another set of Ψicons which outline the I-SOR degrees and respective curricula. Some of the degrees offered by I-SOR (mostly one-year part-time Ψ-learning doctorates) include, *inter alia*: Selling the New Corporate Spirituality, Managing by Xen (DMBX), Leading by Xen (DLBX), Xen Intervention and Evaluation, Xen Arts of Making a Living, and Xen and the Spiritual Orientation Inventory (SOI)\*. Juniper manipulates the 'Managing by Xen' Ψicon and cognitive transmission begins: many forces have contributed to the re-integration of workplace spirituality, these include social and economical changes and shifts in demographics of the workforce, instability result from structural employment shifts, the Ψ-revolution, layoffs, downsizing, merger, solarization technology and its dehumanizing effects, increased stress in remaining workers, who are required to do more for less, declining job satisfaction and increasing incidents of depression and burnout, intensifying environmental problems and energy crises, workplace violence, office rage and terrorist threats, unravelling of traditional institutions, such as democratic government, safe capitalism, single parenting etc., in these turbulent times, it is only natural that workers are turning to new spirituality as remedy, security, and inner peace, since many people have to work longer hours and longer years just to survive financially, there is a greater need for them to incorporate the spiritual aspects of their lives into their work, in order to cope with increasing feelings of stress and alienation, leaders, managers and employees alike are trying to create meaning and purpose in the workplace, defining ourselves as having inherent values, greater than our roles, titles and possessions, affirming meaning and purpose in spite of absurdity and chaos, emphasizing authenticity, inner wisdom, creativity, transformation and transmission, recognizing the immaterial, transcendental, sacred dimensions of reality, as the programme leader for this course, dr. peters, states 'one has to tread carefully in this matter, imposing new spirituality, even in the benign form of xen, on employees would be counterproductive, most corporations simply encourage religious expressions at the workplace, and make some resources available to help meet employees' spiritual needs, however, to be effective, spirituality needs to be integrated into the Ψ-corp-cult and reflected in organizational policies and practices on a daily basis, this can be done only when senior management and the governing board embrace it as part of their dream', the full benefits of the new spirituality on morale and productivity will not be realized

without a sustained, large-scale cultic transformation at all levels of the organization, when this happens, you will see the following changes at the workplace, the Ψ-corp will become purpose-driven and meaning-based, management with a dream will replace management of mission, vision and efficiency, there will be a shift from fear-based cult to love-based cult, management learns to truly listen and builds a safe place where employees can speak the truth without fear of repercussions, bosses will treat employees in a responsible, respectful and caring way, because people are not instruments to be used and exploited, management will also resort to spiritual ways of resolving conflict, therefore, they will be reluctant in issuing ultimatums and slow in the 'firing trigger', there will be a move from command-and-control leadership to horizontal servant leadership, which emphasizes empowering, delegation and cooperation, there will be an improvement in morale, job satisfaction, loyalty and productivity, new spiritual dimensions will be fully integrated with every aspect of work life, such as relationships, planning, budgeting, negotiation, compensation, etc., as dr. peters says, 'such a company sounds like utopia... it may not exist even among traditional religious organizations which wear spirituality on their sleeves, and requires all employees to endorse Ψ-corp statements of faith based on xen principles'... research has established a definitive and direct link between spirituality and profitability, hence an enlightened business attitude combines the benefit of creating a more compassionate, caring and ethical workplace with the need to make money, this is great news for persons, who spend more than their adult lives at work...

### **An Encounter With Xen Master Bair**

Juniper quickly tired of this assimilation and, instead, decided to try out the 'Leading by Xen' Ψicon as this appeared to incorporate some more interesting and advanced Ψ-realm features. Once into 'Leading by Xen' she was greeted by a larger-than-life male figure, perhaps in his mid-forties, with shaven head and dressed in a full length purple tunic. He introduced himself as 'Xen master Bair' and raised his right hand in a gesture of blessing. Intrigued by this character, Juniper activated an interaction and Xen master Bair asked, 'Do you have a question for me, Juniper?'

Juniper had not anticipated this question and had nothing prepared. Thinking on her feet and responding to the wordless 'spirituality' emanating from this figure she blurted out a rather clichéd question that she instantly regretted.

‘Could you tell me something of great wisdom based on your knowledge of corporate Xen?’

‘Organize!’ retorted Xen master Bair.

After a pause, Juniper responded quizzically, ‘Is that it?’

‘Organize. Organize.’ returned the master.

Puzzled, then slightly irritated by what she took to be Xen master Bair’s arch pretension, Juniper said with slight indignation, ‘Forgive me for saying so, but that seems like a fairly predictable minimalist Xen response. I expected something subtler.’

‘Organize. Organize. Organize!’ came the response.

‘Okay. I see where this is going... So what does ‘organize’ mean?’

‘Organize means organize.’

Unimpressed by the empty semantics, Juniper nonetheless decided she would spend a little more time talking to Xen master Bair.

‘So who are you, and why should I study Xen with you here at I-SOR?’

There was a momentary judder in the hologram; although almost imperceptible to the uninitiated, it was an effect that Juniper knew sometimes accompanied a shift in the interactive programme as it accommodated and adjusted to a new line of questioning. With that, the hologram froze completely and Juniper was left gazing at a static Xen master Bair. Wondering where to go next, she noticed a sample set of ‘Xen Spiritual Exercises’ that  $\Psi$ -visitors could explore. Thinking that these might be more interesting, she decided to try them out.

### **Xen Spiritual Exercises**

Manipulating the Xen Koan  $\Psi$ icon in the spiritual exercises  $\Psi$ -realm, Juniper found herself once again face-to-face with another holographic incarnation of Xen master Bair. This time he had a fearsome look in his eyes that demanded her whole and unreserved attention. He shouted loudly: ‘strategy!’, then vanished without trace... These kinds of  $\Psi$ -encounters could sometimes be rather frightening, if not downright disturbing, especially if, like Juniper, you were in the habit of exploring  $\Psi$ -space without any control filters. She had learned about Zen koans in school and assumed that Xen master Bair

was employing a similar technique on her. In the moments following the shock, and rationalizing wildly, she realized that the choice of the word 'strategy' was actually very shrewd. This one word, 'strategy', resisted all forms of intellectual interrogation. It was simply there as a sheer and unreasonable facticity. Juniper noticed that, for a split second, her thought process had indeed been suspended. Her habitual and perpetual flow of discursive thought has ceased momentarily; a recognition that excited and intrigued her.

Buoyed by the 'koan' experience, Juniper moved to another portal in this  $\Psi$ -realm: the 'Xa-Xen Exercise in Self-Examination'. Once again, Xen master Bair appeared, this time with a more benign and gentler countenance. He explained the principles of seated meditation practice in the Xen tradition then issued a couple of warnings. Juniper supposed that these were included in the routine in order to guard against any litigation that might follow from someone experimenting with the exercise without proper preparation.

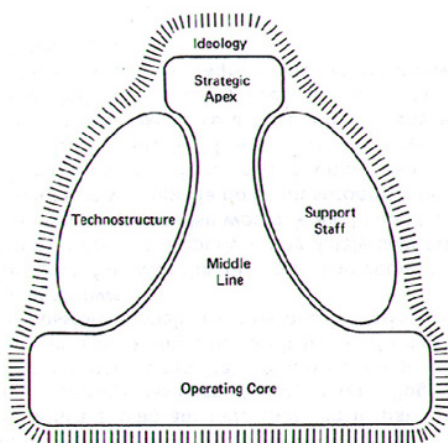
Xen master Bair began speaking, 'This introductory level Xa-Xen initiation exercise is prepared exclusively for  $\Psi$ -visitors. Juniper, you are welcome... The exercise should not be undertaken if you are in a very isolated situation, under heavy psychological or emotional stress, or in crisis. Please do not attempt to multi-role the exercise in between engagements, and please do not attempt any tasks requiring fine motor control immediately afterwards, as all forms of meditative activity and non-ordinary states of consciousness can have an effect upon spatial awareness. The exercise requires dedicated 'quality' time. Are you ready to proceed?'

Juniper answered in the affirmative and Xen master Bair continued,

'You will require a straight-backed chair and table, or meditation stool with an area of carpet, an object that you can use to symbolise 'yourself' that can be placed in the space you will use, a blanket or light rug to place over your shoulders, a watch, pen and notebook, and a small selection of natural objects, for example, pebbles or pinecones will do. You may find it helpful to have a lighted candle and incense to place in a suitable positions in your space... Are you ready to proceed?'

Juniper broke off for a brief time to 'prepare her space'.





Place the natural objects on the table or floor', instructed Xen master Bair, 'and then mark an image in front of you using this symbolic diagram as a guide. This is not difficult; all you need to do is to see that this shape is distinct from, yet relevant to you. It is a natural mandala, a shape that will help you to reflect on your place in the world of work and bring to light the meanings it carries for you. Set the object that represents 'you' to one side ready for use later. Dedicate this time and space in a way appropriate to you... Turn your attention inwards: you are now ready to explore your inner space.'

Xen master Bair took Juniper on an extended guided meditation exercise using in- and out- breathing as a concentration object.

'Gradually, slowly, I learn to live with the breath for ten cycles of in... and out... When this happens everything else stops – I stop – 'I' am not... I am surrendered... Your aim is to ride the breath, its gentle energy carrying you, and to let fall away each and every distraction. The breath becomes a tool with which to cut the threads of distraction.

'Without losing focused awareness, look at the Pillar of Power mandala. Pick up the small object that represents 'you'. Without hesitation place the object on the Pillar of Power where it feels right to you. Do this spontaneously – without thought. Now look carefully at the image without losing touch with your feelings and the sense of presence and power given to you on your inner journey. What feelings or thoughts arise when you now contemplate this simple symbolic configuration? Forty-eight. Let the ideas or images emerge into consciousness and

flow: do not fix them or rationalize – just accept. Note them down. Then, slowly, deliberately, ask yourself the following questions: What have I done to myself – and to others – in order to reach this place of power? Is my integrity intact? Have I sold my soul to get where I am? If you feel resistance to these questions, then speak them out loud now. The answers are yours alone. Note them down. If you feel burdened then, now, or later on, seek a path of forgiveness. Note this down. You are now contemplating the cosmos and your place in it anew. By this time you will probably be aware of your life from a number of levels: as a microscopic part of the great macrocosm of the Earth – and in the cosmos – and as an individual with a network of personal relationships... At this point many ideas and feelings may come to you; I suggest that you write them down for future reflection.

‘It is now time to conclude this introductory level Xen initiation... Close your eyes once more. Be thankful or give thanks in whatever way seems appropriate to you for the gift of Life as you experience it. Pause and remain silent with eyes closed while you gently reconnect with your life-world. When you feel ready, open your eyes. Tidy away your objects and make sure all traces of your self-examination are removed. Go and lie down, if possible go to sleep for a time as you “re-aggregate” after your journey.’

Having had a rest and feeling suitably ‘re-aggregated’ after the Xa-Xen initiation and the other I-SOR assimilations, Juniper began to reflect on her situation once again. There were many  $\Psi$ -realms to visit before she could possibly make a final decision but, even on the basis of this initial excursion, she was thinking seriously about Xen-training and could easily imagine becoming a Xen disciple. This could be her path; her way of making a genuine contribution to  $\Psi$ -commerce and of being a force for good in the world.

# YES

*Valérie Fournier*

Over the last two years, I have been asked on countless occasions by academic colleagues how I would write about my experiences of living and working in communes. My immediate reaction to such questioning involves a combination of irritation, anger and guilt. Why should I write about it? What would be the purpose? For whom? And what is there to say? Ultimately these doubts raise questions about the meaningfulness of any form of engagement between academia, and in particular the business school I inhabit whilst wearing my academic hat, and the world of activism and alternative organisations I inhabit the rest of the time. After nearly two years of dividing my time between academia and communes, I have been struck by the inability of the two worlds to meet, to say anything to each other of any mutual relevance.

My inability to articulate any form of connection between the two worlds stems from two concerns. The first is related to issues of representation and translation: how can I represent communes' experiences to an academic audience? There doesn't seem to be any academic hook on which I could hang my stories of communal life that would make them anything other than banal and trivial. It is as if life in communes, and farming communes at that, is simply not significant enough to be lifted out of its everyday inconsequential routine into the bright light of academia. In order to make an academic story, it would have to speak of something bigger, more important than itself, to resonate with and speak to conceptual frameworks that would give it added weight and significance. Moving on to my second concern, even if I could make something 'academically worthy' of these episodes of communal life, what purpose would it serve? And for whom?

To illustrate these points, and then move on to more positive grounds for envisaging mutually beneficial relationships between the Business Schools of tomorrow and alternative movements, I would like to recount a small episode from a farming commune in Italy where I spent a year. Pignano, the commune in question, includes 15 permanent members

mainly involved in various self-sufficiency activities; in addition there were typically between 5 and 10 other people visiting Pignano at any one time, including friends, family or volunteers.

On a hot July day in Pignano, there was an unusual buzz of activities for that time in the morning, a sense of some big event preparing itself: tomato sauce day. The build up to the event had already occupied many of us for a few days: picking tomatoes from the garden, gathering and counting glass bottles, taking time off in anticipation of the long working day ahead. On the day itself, nearly all present at the commune, friends, volunteers or members, children and adults were mobilised to make over 300 kg of what is considered an essential food item in Italy. The day started unusually early and tables were being brought in the courtyard, together with basins, knives, chopping boards, a shredding machine, and crates of glass bottles. Throughout the day, for over 12 hours, between 15 and 20 people washed, chopped, mashed over a 300 kilos of tomatoes, on the sound of loud music, dancing their ways between basins of water, tables and bottles, stripped to swimming costumes and covered in red sauce, chasing each other with buckets of water. The courtyard was looking like a battleground with tomato juice spread everywhere, and dirty basins, bowls, crates scattered in every corner. This was to be one of three similar episodes through which over 1000 kg of sauce was to be produced to cover the yearly needs of the commune itself, and to give to every friend, volunteer or family member visiting Pignano.

I don't want to suggest that all work in all communes is conducted in such festive manner, nor that it is always destined to self-sufficiency and gifts. However, neither is this untypical of what goes on in the communes I visited. Certainly, the inefficiency of the work, the reliance on unwaged labour, the priority given to self-sufficiency are not untypical.

It is difficult to see what sense business school academics, armed with their knowledge of growth strategies, global competitiveness, HRM policies, market penetration, and global finance, would make of this episode of productive activity. For example, the notion of efficiency, that pillar of economic and managerial knowledge, has no relevance here. Even if we eliminated all the dancing, chatting and other forms of misbehaviour from this episode, this remains an utterly 'inefficient' activity, at least in market terms. Focusing on 'market efficiency' offers

no way of making sense of activities not relying on the 'market', at least the commodity market, for labour or exchange. 'Critical Management Studies', equipped with its knowledge of discipline, surveillance, discourse and subjectivity, does not seem to fare much better than mainstream management studies. If the aim of CMS is to provide a critique of modern organisations and the effects these have on those involved in them, it is difficult to see what it has to offer to those who have opted out of these organisations and already developed, and acted upon, their own critiques. So framing this story in terms of the conceptual frameworks on offer in functionalist or critical management leaves it as a maybe quaint but uninformative anecdote, certainly not worthy of entering the world of academic knowledge.

One might retort that it is only sheer naivety to expect business academics and communes to have anything to say to each other. After all business schools are mainly concerned with formal organisations operating within a capitalist economy (be there public or private sector), whilst communes are mainly formed by people who have rejected these organisations. Business schools are concerned with serious issues that will ensure economic growth, competitiveness, market expansion; the communes I visited were concerned with social equality, environmental sustainability, quality of life, sometimes spiritual development. Obviously not much promising ground for a meaningful exchange. However, I would suggest that there are several reasons why Business Schools should concern themselves with the type of communes I have visited, and with 'alternative organisations' more generally. Firstly, as even some of our political leaders recognise, the models of economic growth and market expansion that have been promoted by neo-liberal policies and popularised by Business Schools are not sustainable in the long term without serious social and environmental damage. Rather than continue to preach damaging growth strategies to students from all over the world, Business Schools could, and even have a responsibility to, contribute to the construction of viable alternatives. After all, even the Higher Education Funding Council in the UK is launching an initiative to encourage universities to use their roles as educators, researchers and consumers, to contribute to sustainable development.

Secondly, despite the apparent lack of commonality between Business Schools' agendas and those of alternative organisations, both deal, among other things, with the organisation of productive activity, with financing production, organising work, exchanging goods and services, distributing surplus. Shouldn't communes' ways of dealing with these issues also be represented in Business Schools, at least as

a testimony to the diversity of ways in which productive activity can be conducted? As part of their remit to 'educate', shouldn't university Business Schools have a responsibility to teach and research different ways of organising economic activities, their respective logic, values, and consequences? Even if Business Schools want to promote some versions of 'global capitalism' or 'free-market economy', shouldn't they have to defend these models against others rather than merely assume their uniqueness and inevitability, effacing alternatives in the process? In short, it seems to me that University Business Schools have both a social responsibility and a duty to themselves as academics to engage with alternative organisations. That is of course, if they want to retain some degree of social relevance, of academic credibility and independence, rather than become mere adjuncts of corporate capitalism.

So as the title of this piece suggests, I want to take a more positive stance than I have intimated so far and would like to convince myself, and hopefully others, that there is a sense to a mutual engagement between Business Schools and alternative organisations. In the remain of this paper, I want to sketch out some of the forms this engagement could take. Because of space constraints, I shall only explore two possible avenues, one concerned with conceptual frameworks, the other with technical knowledge.

Turning to the conceptual, or representational issue first, as I have suggested above with the tomato story, business 'knowledge' is ill-equipped to make sense of and represent the types of activities that go on in alternative organisations. Focusing on efficiency, marketing and growth strategies, global competitiveness, HRM policies, discipline or surveillance, only serves to efface or deride alternative organisations as inefficient, impotent and insignificant in the face of global capitalism. We need to reconceptualise economic relations in terms other than those made available by capitalism (e.g. commodity market, wage labour, profit motive) if we are to bring alternatives to the fore. I am not proposing to develop a comprehensive 'alternative framework' here but only want to make a few suggestions to start with:

### **Inefficient Work**

One thing that struck me during my stays in various communes was the extent of 'inefficient work', and indeed this observation could be extended to much of the farming activity that remains in the hand of small family farm units, as is largely the case in Southern Europe and the global south today. Surprisingly, the persistence and significance of 'inefficient work' in the economy remains hidden. Business and

management knowledge teaches us, and students duly repeat in their essays, that there is no place for inefficiency in our 'era of global competition', all inefficiencies are to be exposed and removed by the continuous drive for performance improvement, the elimination of 'waste'. This has become so mundane a statement as to become part of the 'obvious'. But if this is the case, how is it possible that still so much of the economic activity (farming being a prime example) on which we depend remains so 'inefficient' in market terms? Stressing the persistence and significance of inefficient work would I think be useful on two counts. First it would debunk the taken for granted idea that work *has to be* efficient, that this is an imperative to which we must all comply. Secondly, it may also help raise questions about the relevance or appropriateness of 'market efficiency' to evaluate economic activities. For if agriculture for example simply cannot be 'efficient' in market terms, if market values (of goods and labour) condemns those doing farm work (be it as illegal workers, waged labourers, family farm owners) to poverty, we may want to question the adequacy of market mechanisms in defining what constitutes 'efficiency'. The aim of bringing inefficiency to the fore would not be to celebrate it for its own sake, but rather to suggest that not all productive activity is, or has to be, subjected to its 'rule'; and to point to the arbitrary and inadequate nature of what is made to count in its calculation.

## **Degrowth**

The idea of degrowth or 'décroissance' could be useful to denounce the tyranny of growth, and provoke debate about alternatives. Despite the social and environmental damage that growth causes, no political or economic leader is prepared to abandon the holy grail of permanent economic growth; and Business Schools have not been any more imaginative or forthcoming in their search for alternatives. 'Sustainable growth' is about as radical as it gets: growth all the same, but with a social and environmental conscience, so a bit of 'Business Ethics' and maybe 'Green Management' thrown into MBA curricula. Rather than unquestioningly carrying on taking growth as the obvious end of it all, Business Schools could use the notion of degrowth to engage in debates about the consequences, costs, value of growth, and about viable alternatives. Instead of researching and teaching 'growth strategies', Business Schools could explore strategies for 'degrowth': What would be the impact of producing less? How would / should the impact of degrowth be distributed? What could we produce less of? If people's livelihood can no longer (only) rely on producing and selling more McDonalds, cars, or cheap holidays, how else can societies, communities, individuals provide for themselves? Exploring strategies for degrowth may encourage rethinking economic relations

outside 'the market' or at least the commodity market. For example, this may involve looking at *unwaged work*. Whilst the only form of work in sight in the organisation and HRM literature is 'waged employment', feminists critiques, among others, have shown that there is a whole sector of the economy that functions on unwaged labour; this includes not only domestic work but also self-employment, cooperative membership, free family labour, and the various help and exchange networks people have created in communities. Shouldn't Business Schools have something to say about these other forms of work? Shouldn't they open students' imagination of work beyond the unlikely prospect of a lucrative career in the city, or the more likely prospect of a job in a call centre? Coupled with degrowth would also have to be explorations into *non-consumption*, non-buying behaviour, non-market exchange, or at least non-monetary market exchange.

### **Cooperation**

Much economic and management knowledge is based on the image of *homo economicus*: people competing for scarce resources to maximise their self-interests, and mainly their economic gains. Of course, the idea of co-operation has surfaced under various guises (e.g. as teamwork, commitment, partnership...), but only to be subsumed to the ineluctable rule of competition, cooperation is reduced to a competitive strategy. But what if (some of our) economic activities and relations were driven by mutual aid, solidarity, cooperation, as indeed has been the case in the co-operative movement? What if decisions about production, work remuneration, were not driven by the need to compete on global markets, but by the desire to support the local economy, as has been the case in the Mondragon cooperative? What if the distribution of surplus was not driven by 'shareholder value' but solidarity to those in need?

I am not suggesting that inefficiency, degrowth, non-consumption, unwaged work, and cooperations should substitute growth, consumption, employment, and competition to form a new 'Evangelism'; but rather that these notions could become central terms in Business Schools' teaching and research, and be useful tools for opening debates about the type of economic relations and organisations we can /want to construct. Of course the questions I have raised above have long informed debates and practices among those who throughout history, in the cooperative movement, in utopian experiments, in intentional communities, in the contemporary anti-globalisation movement, have dared to believe that 'another world is possible'. Yet so far these questions have been remarkably absent from Business Schools who have been more concerned to legitimise neo-liberal policies than



engage in debates about possible alternatives. Whilst the search and construction of alternatives could go on without them, business academics could use their role as educators and 'intellectuals' to add their voice to these debates, and to save themselves from irrelevance in the process.

But beyond this work of reconceptualisation, there is also a more direct and immediate way in which business and management academics may be able to contribute to alternative organisations, and that is through the provision of technical knowledge. If communes do not care about, nor would gain anything from, any of the learned perspectives about growth, efficiency, marketing and so on that management academics would cast on them, there are many things they want to know that maybe the business academy could help them with. Here I shall only give a few examples that have struck me during my visits to various communes. As surprising as this may sound, one of the things that communes are struggling with is their legal status and financial structure. Common ownership of land or housing, communal enterprises, income-sharing, the occupation and renovation of abandoned property, the threat of eviction, and so on, are all issues that create a legal and financial quagmire for these alternative organisations. And no help is readily at hand, for when they have to rely on 'accountants' these are usually ill-informed and equipped to advise them. Indeed, one of the most treasured finds made by the Italian Ecovillage Network (a network that brings together about 20 intentional communities) was an accountant among their new members who had offered to help them find their way through these legal and financial labyrinths. Another important issue that kept coming back in many communes was that of consensus and non-hierarchical processes more generally. In all the communes I visited, consensus decision-making was seen as the most fitting with the egalitarian principles they promoted, but also as a complex process that required training. Those who had undertaken training, just as those who had not, were adamant that consensus would not just 'happen', but was something that had to be carefully cultivated. They had to learn how to make sure everyone felt they had a voice, to recognise what was taken as the recurring problem of the 'emergent leader' and how to cope with it, how to deal with conflicts. So maybe there is a role for a converted OB knowledge after all? A final example of the ways in which Business Schools could provide direct help to alternative organisations is by co-ordinating support and exchange networks, acting as a brokers of information. This may include writing and circulating pamphlets on topic of general interests (such as legal structure), producing directories of communes and the products / services they are willing to give / exchange, or organising

training or workshops. Of course some alternative organisations have already created informal or more formal networks (e.g. the European or Global Ecovillage Networks and their national branches; Cooperative networks such as Radical Routes in the UK); but many lack the resources to research, organise and disseminate information.

In sum, despite the reservations I indicated at the start of this paper, there are many ways in which the Business Schools of tomorrow could meaningfully engage with alternative organisations and contribute to debates about the development of more socially and environmentally sustainable economic relations, if they cared to do so. This would require Business Schools not only to question the holy grail of growth, efficiency, competition, and consumption, but also to actively explore alternatives: how can we organise economic activities so as to privilege dignity, justice, well being, the environment? How can we consume less, produce less, work less? How can we respect each other and our environment more? Is this such a radical demand to make of Business Schools? Not really, until we start considering the financial and institutional implications of such a shift, as well as their repercussions for Business School academics. For all this comes at a cost: talking about degrowth, non-consumption, or inefficiency, will not fill lecture theatres with income generating MBA students, nor attract corporate sponsors. Business Schools, and the universities that rely on them for their lucrative courses, will have to go through degrowth and non-consumption themselves, and look for more sustainable ways to educate than by chasing high fee paying students around the 'global market'. Business School academics themselves will have to find other ways of spreading their wisdom than by jet-setting round the world to pontificate with colleagues at learned academic conferences. Together with their students, they will have to become more involved in local community projects through a combination of research, concrete actions and the organisation of public debates. They could for example help set up students' consumers or housing cooperatives, they could help develop Community Supported Agriculture schemes with local farmers, they could contribute to the development of alternative forms of exchange between local producers and consumers, they could establish publishing houses editing and distributing pamphlets on alternative sources of finance, on setting up co-operatives, on developing local exchange schemes, they could simply give some of their time to do volunteer work for alternative organisations...

But are Business School academics prepared to swap the prospects of lucrative teaching opportunities in Far East Asia and exotic conferences for some involvement in local community initiatives down the road?

# ZERO

*Steffen Böhm*

‘There is no such thing as society’, Margaret Thatcher once said. Society = O = Zero. Radicals and progressives love to hate her for this statement, as it symbolises her whole ideological project of neo-liberal capitalism that has changed British society forever. But should we simply join in with the popular refrain ‘It’s the society, stupid!’, or is there perhaps a certain truth in her statement? Is there zero value in the thing called society, or is there something more to it?

What Thatcher, of course, meant was that as a citizen you should take individual responsibility for your own life; you shouldn’t expect society to provide for you – whether this is a job, health care or a pension – because society is nothing more than a collection of individuals. It is individuals like your neighbour who will have to give up some of his or her wealth to support you. Society, as such, therefore doesn’t exist. There are only individuals. This is the logic of zero. This is the most basic starting point for what is known as neo-liberalism, championed by Thatcher in the UK and Reagan in the US in the 1980s. Neo-liberalism is about reducing the state to zero – or at least to a bare minimum of administrative control – and empowering individuals including companies (incorporated companies have a similar legal status to that of individuals) to control their own lives.

Neo-liberal management has been made real by a whole string of well-known political decisions including cutting taxes, privatisation of state companies, deregulation of markets, reducing the welfare state to a bare minimum of services, making labour and other laws more flexible, encouraging entrepreneurship and private initiative. The event of New Labour has not changed the fundamentals of this neo-liberal logic, as some might have hoped when Tony Blair came to power in 1997. On the contrary, neo-liberalism has been intensified and extended into most realms of what used to be *public* services.

Today, neo-liberal management has a global dimension. We are in the midst of a new phase of colonisation, which sees so-called ‘Washington

Consensus' institutions – that is, Washington-based international financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank – promote the logic of zero – neo-liberal management policies of market deregulation, trade liberalisation and privatisation of public services – around the world. Contemporary global capitalism is perhaps a decentred Empire – as it is popularly known today – like a zero that is nowhere and thus everywhere. But it is also a configuration dependent on specific neo-liberal management policies implemented by concrete institutions, whether they work within the realms of the state or economy. Today's real-existing global capitalism is not just capital that has finally met its global frontier, but a specific arrangement of economic *and* political forces – just like real-existing socialism was a *specific* type of socialism and *specific* actualisation of the communist dream until its collapse at the end of the 1980s.

It is important to recognise that global capital is not only an economic arrangement that has – through the workings of the invisible hand – exported its logic of zero to all corners of the world. Economists and management theorists are often obsessed with studying the workings of the global market, as if we talk about a natural organism whose anatomy can be finally discovered. As historians show, what we regard as the market today is a particular arrangement of economic forces made possible by specific political decisions in the not too distant past. Equally, the corporation, the way we know it today as a legal entity, has been created in a long process of political decisions. Let's remember, for example, that the first companies in the 17th century operated under limited trading licences issued by the state and were not allowed to make a profit. This is exactly why we don't only speak about economy, but political economy. Society is not reduced to zero just like that. Concrete political events have taken place to implement the logic of zero.

Capitalist society has at least two faces: the economic and the political. Both are inextricably interlinked with each other, and we should resist attempts for these two levels to be artificially separated – both theoretically and practically. The global market, capital, might be a monstrous, *perpetuum-mobile*-type rhizomatic machine – zero, a black hole – that sucks everything into its path. But this unlimited gravity has not suddenly fallen from the sky; it is not natural. The way Empire is conceptualized sometimes lends itself to such a feeling of inevitability. If it has indeed become such an all-encompassing machine, it is because concrete political struggles have been lost; it is because liberal parliamentary democracy has enabled capital to extend its reach in a particular way. The fact that today schools and

universities are run by private interests is the outcome of specific political decisions sanctioned by the liberal democratic system. It is this political economy which produces the logic of zero as the hegemony of social relations that we find ourselves subjected to.

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The neo-liberal expansion of the logic of zero cannot go on forever without producing unwanted side effects. Capital not only continuously reproduces itself; it also continuously produces economic and political crises. A crisis takes place precisely at the point when reality catches up with the increasingly ridiculous, unreal world of exchange value. When exchange value and neo-liberal policies only talk the language of international finance and IMF politicians, then something cracks in the world of Empire. A crisis occurs because the gap between exchange value and the real economic needs of people on the ground, as it were, has become unbridgeable by the liberal-democratic rhetoric and the cultural hypnosis that we are subjected to through soap operas, celebrity sports, and other TV events. The black hole of zero – which acts as the ideological centre of society – continuously expands until its point of gravity collapses. It becomes unmanageable. It starts to run wild. Zero – the ever expanding neo-liberal gap that produces today's ideological inferno – becomes a gap of crisis.

And this gap is becoming wider and wider it seems. On the one hand, we have global oil companies making profits as large as some countries' entire GDPs; we have North London professional couples dropping their kids to private school in their monstrous 4x4 SUVs consuming as much gasoline as three to four smaller cars; we have young Russian billionaires buying football and other sports clubs around the world white-washing the money they made from the privatisation of large state-own companies in the 1990s; and we also have well-meaning Western NGOs collecting money from well-meaning (and guilty-feeling) Westerners distributing aid in the Third World (after they bought themselves some fancy 4x4s with the aid money first). On the other hand, reality is catching up fast by way of an increasing pace of climate change, pre-emptive wars by the West to secure oil supplies in politically de-stable regions, massive ecological catastrophes, an increasingly gap between rich and poor which plunges millions of people into poverty each year, the collapse of communities through war and migration, the collapse of entire economies (see Argentina) because of the way the IMF dictates neo-liberal social and economic policies – and the list goes on of course.

There is nothing natural about these crises; they haven't suddenly fallen from the sky. They are a direct result of the way the global political economy of capitalist society is articulated today, which brings us back to the initial question: is there such a thing called society? In some way, a positive response to this question seems to be the obvious choice. Of course, society does not equal zero; there should be a positive value associated with social relations! In the light of the global crises we face today, it seems ridiculous to follow Thatcher and her neo-liberal ideologues and suggest that social reality begins and ends with oneself, the self-conscious and self-obsessed individual. There should be no question that this type of individualism – this logic of reducing society to zero – is at the root of the problems we currently face. But beyond this obviousness there is something in the question, 'Is there such a thing called society?', that demands more than positive thinking from us.

Blair quite frequently goes on record these days saying 'There is something called society'. Equally, even the World Economic Forum, G8, World Bank and other international institutions nowadays might talk about the need to tackle poverty in Third World countries. But does this positive response to the question of society prevent Blair and these global institutions from following and even extending large parts of Thatcher's neo-liberal agenda and the logic of zero? Tackling world poverty might increasingly be on the agenda of governments and global institutions, but if one looks carefully at the exact proposals put forward, one finds that international aid and debt relief programmes are often linked to the need for Third World governments to implement neo-liberal policies that deregulate their national markets.

And who benefits from this? There is now overwhelming evidence that neo-liberal policies of deregulation, privatisation and liberalisation in Third World countries and elsewhere often benefit global corporations more than local communities. World poverty does not appear on the agenda of the G8 and other international institutions for no reason. The rhetoric by Blair and other Western leaders might now acknowledge that there is something called society, but isn't this often not more than a self-serving rhetoric rather than a genuine attempt to fundamentally change the way global society is organised? In the face of saturated markets in the West, today's challenge for managers is to creatively think about ways to create new markets in the Third World. The black hole of zero needs to expand. Isn't capital's ultimate challenge to incorporate those two billion people who currently live under the poverty line into the global market of exchange? Isn't it the task of business schools to educate managers in such a way that they are

enabled to create products and services that can still be sold profitably to those who can barely feed themselves? The Empire's chase for these untapped markets has begun, and poverty-ridden Africa is the new battleground of political economy. This is why political institutions like the World Economic Forum and the G8 have now discovered their ethical conscience.

So, rather than simply responding positively to the question of whether society exists – as so many 'ethical' managers do these days – maybe what is required is precisely the opposite; a negative response. Rather than trying to fill the gap of zero with endless positive babble about the need for society, maybe we need to embrace and radicalise the logic of zero and indeed reduce society to nothing. It seems to me that this negativity describes a properly radical view of the impossibility of society. A radicalised logic of the degree zero of society may open up the possibility of imagining a different society, a society that is not shaped by neo-liberal political economy. And perhaps we even have to go further: *only* if there is a negative response to the question of society, there can be such a thing called society. It is precisely this negativity – this logic of zero – which describes the realm of politics.

But what is politics? Politics is the sphere of a social decision about how to fix the meaning of social relations, however temporary this fix might be. This fix, this political decision, is the process of attempting to establish a hegemony of social relations; it is the attempt to fill the gap of the degree zero of society. Here, hegemony means that political actors align themselves in such a way that a specific social meaning emerges. What we call society is the product of a political process of hegemonisation that continuously aims to manage the logic of zero so that it doesn't go out of hand. Neo-liberal capitalism is such a hegemonic discourse that provides the horizon for political action within contemporary society. Neo-liberal capitalism is the hegemony of today's society. So, to simply affirm this society can hardly be a radical move. Having said that, hegemony should not be confused with a totality, which can fix social meaning forever. Hegemony implies contingency of political decisions, which means that a multitude of resistances continuously challenge established social meanings. These resistances create a constant stream of crises. Zero is thus a battle ground; zero is the space of the political where the struggle for the meaning of the social takes place. Precisely because zero stands also for struggle neo-liberal capitalism cannot be the end to our imagination of what society is and could be.

What we can, of course, often observe within the realms of neo-liberal management is that its political nature is either denied or not acknowledged. That is, the hegemony of neo-liberal management is naturalised and essentialised as the only way organisation can be articulated today. For example, 'Private companies can run public services in the most efficient and cost effective way', or 'Free trade is the only way to reduce poverty in the Third World', or 'Executive managers are paid huge salaries because they need to cope with extraordinary responsibilities and stress levels', and so on. Such statements try to deny the contingency of the power relations that have made such statements possible in the first place. That is, they deny their political nature. A lot of what is going on in the realms of private and public management is attempting to render its own political contingency invisible and make its decisions appear self-evident.

Today's hegemonic discourses may acknowledge the existence of society. That is, the social implications of management and business, for example, might be actively taken into consideration. After all, isn't corporate social responsibility the talk of today? But the point to make is that it is precisely the inability of such discourses to imagine anything else but *corporate* social responsibility and *this* society, which requires us to respond negatively to the question 'Is there such a thing called society?' If we were to simply respond positively and say 'Of course, there is something called society', we would not be able to make the important political point that we are, in fact, talking about many different possible societies. That is, the most basic political action is that things can be different; the world does not have to be organised the way it currently is. Hegemony, as a concept, reveals that it is impossible for only one society to exist. The degree zero of society implies that society is impossible, which means nothing more than to say that there are infinite possibilities of how society may look like – and the seeds of different organisational worlds are all around us.

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Neo-liberal management is today's hegemony of organisation. The discourses of neo-liberal management attempt to naturalise themselves and thus render invisible the multitude of different organisational worlds possible. One of the most basic and most urgent political actions is to disentangle the forced hegemonic bond between management and organisation. That is, management needs to be exposed as the hegemony of organisation. It is precisely this act of exposition which makes possible the imagination of different worlds and societies.



One of the ways this can be done is to make visible the various resistance movements that are articulated against global capitalism and the world of neo-liberal management. The so-called alter-globalisation or global justice movements challenge the way the economic logic of exchange value – the neo-liberal logic of zero – is applied to all spheres of society and the way liberal democracy is politically sanctioning and furthering this hegemonisation process. A multitude of political actors active in these resistance movements regularly come together in so-called social forums, which take place at the global level (World Social Forums have so far taken place in Porto Alegre and Mumbai, but are said to take place in numerous other locations around the world in the future) as well as in multiple regions around the globe (for example, the last European Social Forum took place in London in October 2004). Social forums provide an open space for discussing ways of how the contemporary hegemony of neo-liberal capitalism can be challenged and how society might look differently.

At the most basic level, these forums open spaces and radicalise the logic of zero. Zero is no longer an ideological machinery, but an open space for a multitude of actors to search for different ways of hegemonising and organising society. The slogan of the social forum movement is 'Another World is Possible'. Although this does not amount to a concrete political programme, social forums are deeply political because they articulate resistances against the neo-liberal reincarnation of society and dare to imagine different organisational regimes of society. There are good reasons for social forums not to be programmatic. They do not simply affirm contemporary society; they are not positivistic. Instead, their response to the question of whether there is such a thing as society is two-fold. The first move is for social forums to negate the way contemporary neo-liberal, capitalist society is organised. Society – the way we know it – is reduced to a ground zero: *tabula rasa*. In this way they put forward a radical critique of social relations and embrace the logic of zero as the battleground of society. But they do not stop there. By proclaiming 'Another World is Possible' social forums actively engage in the search for different articulations of society. This is the radical possibility of social forums as open spaces of the logic of zero.

But there is no inevitability that social forums are indeed able to fulfil their radical promises. And this is precisely where there is a need for a business and management school of tomorrow. Management itself needs to be reduced to a radical degree zero so that it can reorient itself – away from the ideological world of neo-liberal management towards

an exploration of different worlds. Management theorists could, for example, contribute to an understanding of the organisational and political challenges faced by social forums. What they could show is that it is not enough for simply a multitude of resistance movements to gather in an open space. The degree zero of that open space also calls for a political alignment and organisation of different articulations of resistance against Empire so that credible challenges to established hegemonies can be formed. That is, the degree zero of society involves questions of political strategy. Zero might be a space where everything is possible, but these possibilities have to be actively articulated. Zero is a space of and for political battle.

Management theorists are potentially well placed to contribute to such an analysis of the strategic possibilities of the social forum movement. However, such a contribution is unlikely if management theorists continue to be primarily immersed in the hegemonic politics of a neo-liberal logic of zero. The business and management school needs to be politicised in such a way that the current regime of managerial thinking is reduced to zero: it is denaturalised and its limitations exposed. Only then it will be possible for management to actively imagine how another world and society can indeed be made possible.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

If **Thomas Basbøll** may best be understood as a system of mirrors by which he has learned, like Cincinnatus C., to ‘feign translucence’, and through which he has so far ‘carefully managed to conceal a certain peculiarity’, **Bent Meier Sørensen** should be approached like Joseph K., i.e., as one approaches an elaborate shadow. It will be noted that mirrors and shadows are functional only in terms of some ‘object’, the image of which they allegedly project, and this, of course, is where the analogy breaks down. The experience of ‘meeting’ these individuals (your word, not ours) is an intricate set of disappointments involving a carefully constructed set of expectations, which are first meticulously dismantled and then reset to effect a perfect representation of satisfaction. If such meetings are worthwhile beyond the immediate pleasure they bring then it is because the social environment is host to a number of ulterior strategies, some of which the (alleged) Other may be caught up in, effecting an angle of incidence to the event not quite tangential to the operative core of the ‘persons’ whose perimeter this ‘bio’ patrols with the easy manner of a well-fed UN peace keeping force.

**Robert Beeston** lives in Sheffield. He is currently completing his first novel.

**Steffen Böhm** is an academic activist who tries to intervene in various contemporary social movements. Part of this is his involvement with the Radical Theory Forum, which has organised a series of events at recent social forums. Instead of following the ritual of going to the bi-annual CMS conference, he follows the traces of critique at events such as the G8 summit in Scotland. Besides being involved with the journal *ephemera: theory and politics in organization* ([www.ephemeraweb.org](http://www.ephemeraweb.org)) he has two books forthcoming: *Repositioning Organization Theory* and *Against Automobility*.

Turning cartwheels on gold shag carpeting swaths strewn across her driveway, **Janet Borgerson** decided to be a philosopher; she can’t remember why. Janet grew up in Flint, Michigan, birthplace of filmmaker Michael Moore whose *Flint Voice* newspaper – locally

infamous for accusing Flint's police department of breaking-in and destroying *FV's* investigative files on an allegedly racist murder – sponsored a Foreign Film Series that screened Fellini's *Orchestra Rehearsal*, sparking Janet's return to Mott Community College auditorium eight years after a 1971 school trip there to hear skull-capped, one-eyed Robert Creeley's poetry reading – *For Love's* bloody squirrel/ immaculate cat image deeply disturbing.

**Stephen Brown** is the treat you can read between deals without ruining your marketing strategy.

**Pippa Carter** comes from a family of trouble-makers, and happily carries on the family traditions. She became a Visiting Fellow at the University of Leicester Management Centre after taking early retirement from full-time academic employment. She hoped to become less busy, but she hoped in vain, so far. That she is busy deconstructing, debunking and generally criticising capitalist organisations, however, means that she at least experiences very high levels of job satisfaction. She has lots of other interests too.

**Peter Case** is Professor of Organization and Leadership Studies at the University of Exeter. In the unlikely event that he survives to 3rd March 2059 he will be one hundred years old. Though creations of his own mental making, Peter is a determined detractor of both Xen philosophy and  $\Psi$ -commerce. Schizoid? Me?

**Christian De Cock** works at a rather uneventful place (University of Exeter) at the moment, living a fairly uneventful life. Perhaps all that is to change soon?

**Heather Höpfl** is a self confessed idealist and one-time Aldermaston marcher. She has worked as a school teacher, as a statistician in a commercial organization (although she is reluctant to admit this), she has been a tour manager for a touring repertory company and for the past sixteen years has been a professor of management. She has worked at Lancaster University where she did her PhD, at Bolton Institute which she liked, at the University of Northumbria over which she will draw a veil, and for almost three years has worked at the University of Essex where she has some excellent colleagues who share a critical perspective. She is married to Harro and has two sons, George, who plays American Football, and Max who is cox for his school rowing crew. At the moment, she also has two exceptional PhD students who provide reassurance that her idealism is well founded, Sumohon Matilal and Przemek Piatkowski.

Just over two years ago, **Valérie Fournier** finally got bored listening to the sound of her own voice moaning about the futility of academic life, and mustered the courage to say good bye to it all. She decided to embark on a journey that would take her round some of the alternative organisations she had so far only encountered through reading. She has spent the last two years in several farming communes in Italy and France, sometimes staying one month, in one case one year. During these two years, she has grown vegetables for a communes of 20 people, herded goats, cleaned a lot of dishes, baked bread, picked olives, made preserves, lined a pond, chopped wood, sat in many endless meetings discussing for example whether the commune should stop purchasing bananas, and so on. Whilst this journey has not been without its moments of disappointment (for example, some of the communes' members she met seemed more interested in their own spiritual development, or hedonism, than the sort of radical politics she maybe naively expected to find), it has proved to be a liberating experience for it has opened up a new world of possibilities. Travelling round these communes, she has found a whole world of people who have created economies and communities based on mutual help and exchange, ecological practices, and pleasure, who have learned to be largely self-sufficient, and developed exchange networks among themselves, who have learned to live without 'jobs', and mainly with little money. Her intent in embarking on this journey was not to carry out some 'ethnographic research' as some academic colleagues would like to believe, but simply to find out for myself what 'other worlds' were possible, and to participate in their development. After two years, her motives have not changed and she has no desire to go back. For pragmatic reasons, as well as out of a desire to establish some connection between 'alternative organisations' and the organisational teaching and research that goes on in Business Schools, she has taken a 20% part time contract at the University of Leicester about a year ago. But as she explains in the manifesto in this volume, she has so far found it difficult to bridge the two worlds; it is only the manifesto style of this collection, together with the bold and provocative invitation from the editors, that have finally made her take the plunge and envisage the possibility of some productive exchange between academic practice and alternative organisations.

**Norman Jackson** idles his time away as Visiting Fellow at the University of Leicester Management Centre in abusing business and management. Originally an engineer by profession, he has no time for the pointless requirements that constitute modern organisational life. Apart from a dark lady, his loves in life are railways, canals, pubs and restaurants, all of which provide apparently inexhaustible inspiration

for further reflections on the insanity of capitalism, as well as infinite pleasure.

**Campbell Jones** was born in Opotiki, a very small town in the Bay of Plenty in Te Ika a Maui (or, as the English imaginatively called it 'the North Island') in a small country called Aotearoa (or, as the Dutch imaginatively called it 'Nieuw Zeeland'). For the past few years he has been travelling a lot, and has met many wonderful people. He currently works at the University of Leicester Management Centre, something of a self-styled alternative business school, where he tries to see if it might not be possible to make the future possible.

**Ruud Kaulingfreks** has been a displaced person from birth on. He tried to turn this in to an advantage by developing a passion for travels only to discover that organizations are needed to afford the travels. He has had numerous jobs that seldom lasted long. So he started travelling inwards. And has been very pleased with it ever since. On a regular basis he gives accounts of the twists of his imagination and drags students into it. He has seen several centuries, climbed the highest peaks and many other unmentionable achievements, without leaving his home and family in Rotterdam.

**Hugo Letiche** lives in a wine cellar in Saint Saturnin du Lucien, but regularly visits the University for Humanistics in Utrecht. Now that the Dutch have held their first referendum and discovered that one can actually vote NO – everything he wrote about for this manifesto has gotten worse. He's overjoyed not to live in the political soap opera. For a change, he'd like to write a fast book – *Social Complexity Theory* took years and years. His regret: he cannot bring himself to drink red wine during the week as his doctor has instructed him – which is bad for his heart and bad for St Saturnin's economy.

**Geoff Lightfoot** likes to sleep.

**Stephen Linstead** may well accidentally be the world's first Professor of Critical Management, most of the other candidates having chosen different titles. After a career spent largely in mainstream business schools wishing he was a rock star, over a Hurricane in Margaritaville in New Orleans last summer he realised that he was in fact more Parrothead than Weatherhead, and followed the drift of that desire to the University of York, where he is currently beached, and playing.

**David Murphy** was born in Coventry during the air-raids, and welcomed into the world by the Luftwaffe. After manual work in

industry, he then worked as a journalist during the 1960s and wishing to escape hard work, finally metamorphosed into an academic. Since this time he has led a life free from serious endeavour. Although Dr Murphy has lost a considerable amount of hair in recent years, he is currently rock-climbing, which now constitutes the main focus of his life.

**Damian O'Doherty** is distributed across a number of international networks made up of specialists in education, poetry, politics, music and dance. He teaches organization theory and critical management studies at the Manchester Business School and publishes when he has something to say. A recognised expert in education and pedagogy, Damian has worked as an advisor to the government on educational reform. He is currently working on a new translation of Buchanan and Huczynski's *Organizational Behaviour*.

**Martin Parker** is wondering whether a short essay on 'Fucking' should be included on his CV when he next applies to the Vice Chancellor of the University of Leicester for some upward movement in his already gigantic professorial salary.

In weak moments of utopian naiveté **Carl Rhodes** dreams of being a Jackass. At other times he just likes to write about organizations.

**James Rhodes'** research interests are in skate culture amongst adolescents. His most recent output has been a short ethnodrama investigating the relationship between skateboarding and *Jackass* amongst boys under fifteen years of age. This project was called *Boxo*. When not conducting such investigations, he enjoys ignoring the warning that appears at the beginning of the *Jackass* show.

**Daniel Rhodes'** research focuses on the impact of the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) television broadcasts and the use of Playstation games on the behaviour of children aged between eight and twelve. In the former he specialises in *Smackdown*, in the latter expertise crosses the *Grand Theft Auto* series of games. Not widely published, his preferred method of inquiry is auto-ethnography. Some suggest he has gone native.

**Ann Rippin's** critics would describe her as an ersatz moralist or a wannabee artist masquerading as a serious academic. Left to her own devices she would construct and represent knowledge entirely through the stitched and embellished text(ile). At the moment she baffles and delights, entrances and possibly just plain irritates students

and colleagues at the Department of Management at the University of Bristol. One day she hopes to be plucked from obscurity by a Saatchi-like tastemaker and lionised through the converted electricity substation, gas work, abattoir and white cube galleries of Europe, or to be taken up by a cash-rich, theory-lite craft book publishing house with good distribution channels in the textile arts el dorado market place of North America. From this point onwards she will never again have to raise a needle in anger at the idiocies and injustices of corporate life, but will instead invite all with healthy enough bank balances to join her at the facilitated art retreats she runs in her adobe sanctuary in New Mexico.

**Robert Sharp** works for SELEX S&AS Ltd in the heady world of Corporate Mergers and Acquisitions. On rare occasions he has contributed to his PhD at the University of Exeter where he is studying the idea of process and the notion of ideas as they relate to organisational problem solving. In the past he has collected a degree in Botany from Durham University where he also started but never completed an MSc in Geophysics. For the last 8 years he has worked in the arena of Corporate Strategy and Mergers and Acquisitions. Before that he was into various forms of engineering and software development.

**André Spicer** is a lecturer in Organization Studies at the Warwick Business School. He holds degrees from the Universities of Otago (New Zealand) and Melbourne (Australia). He is interested in the politics of organization. The results of some his investigations will soon be available in two jointly authored monographs: *Organizational Power Dynamics* and *Unmasking the Entrepreneur*.

**Jeremy Stubbs** has been a lecturer at the Universities of Burgundy and Manchester (Department of French Studies). He is currently teaching negotiation at the University of Paris Dauphine. His interests lie in Sade, Bataille and Surrealism, and he is currently finishing a book on simulation with art historian David Lomas.

**Saara Taalas** is committed to a life of resistance and champagne. Nowadays, she is a girl from next door with a queer outlook on life; much like filming through a *Living Etc.* Magazine with a camera crew borrowed from Ingmar Bergman's films. She entered business school because everyone there thought she should go to theatre school. Saara is hardly ever serious but always fiercely passionate about everything she does or doesn't like. Science is her third priority and she would



make a wonderful Broadway producer if anyone would only care to ask her.

**René ten Bos** is fascinated by the taipan, which is by far the most venomous snake in the world. It lives in the dry areas of Queensland, Australia. Rumour has it that one bite of the little creature is enough to kill 300 people. Yet it never bites human beings or other big creatures and this is what makes herpetologists wonder how it has come about that so much poison is concentrated in one single species. As Darwinists would point out, this is not efficient. Hence, the taipan can be seen as a great humanist.

**Sheena Vachhani** lives in a cave in west Sussex reading history of medicine books wondering what the shadows on the wall signify. Her aim is to find solace and survive the academic struggle hoping to find her own poetics. These humble aims keep her firmly locked in the cave. Aside from this she is completing a doctorate subjecting the themes of identity and difference to critical interrogation.

**Akseli Virtanen** and **Jussi Vähämäki** are organizers whose aim is autonomy. They think that precarity of life and work is a good thing. It gives back people their own arms and should under no circumstances be given up.

**Samantha Warren** is a lecturer in the Department of Human Resource and Marketing Management, at the University of Portsmouth, where she tries desperately not to be normal. She loves her job and feels proud to be able to do what she does. Lots of people never get the chance to do something they truly feel is worthwhile, or do their work from their bed – so really she feels a bit guilty about moaning about it so much. And interestingly, her middle name begins with a 'K'.