

# Tune in, Breakdown, and Reboot

## On the Production of the Stress-Fit Self-Managing Employee

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Michael Pedersen

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self-managing employee

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# TUNE IN, BREAKDOWN, and REBOOT: on the production of the stress-fit self-managing employee

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## Abstract

Routine work-process, lack of self-management, and long work-hours have traditionally been the main topics of discussion within the occupational stress literature, constituting the primary factors that make people breakdown and burn out. But within the last couple of years, this discussion has expanded its focus from issues concerning the disciplinary work-space. Increasing attention is now being placed on the problems related to the burgeoning interest in employee empowerment and self-management in contemporary work-life. *In short, how stress relates to self-management.* These working conditions, which put a great deal of emphasis on the subjectivity of the employee and the ability of the employee to self-manage in a pursuit of an organization's goals, are thus no longer regarded as something that decreases stress, but rather as something that *evokes* it. However, as this thesis argues, one can regard stress as more than a crisis we are faced with in our work-life. It is also an element that co-produces what it is to be a efficient employee-subject within this work-life.

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of flows and machines, this sketches out how stress among self-managing employees, and in particular the manner in which stress is reduced to a matter of individual *coping*, can be viewed as an organising process that separates, joins and codes the ontological fabric of our lives. In this regard, certain *modes of existence* centred on stress issues and the coping strategies of individuals are themselves produced as an individual responsibility for maximizing one's own productivity as a self-managing and committed employee. As I will argue, the production of this mode of existence of the employee-subject revolves around the assumption of an employee subject that is able to *tune* its feelings, desires and thoughts *in* to a life of productivity without breaking-down their body and soul. In fact, the potential *break-down* of stress should act as an internal limit for personal productivity, as a way of *rebooting* to an ever more efficient self-management. All in all, we can therefore talk of a production-process revolving around the presumption of an always fitter, happier, more productive employee.

The questions raised in the investigation of this particular form of production of subjectivity are: what notions of subjectivity as a productive resource are we presented with when not only self-management but also the management of the stress this self-management might entail becomes an underlying foundation for a flexible and efficient organization? What can an employee think, do and hope for under such circumstances? What are the dynamics that drive such a notion of subjectivity? And with what necessity does this notion set itself forth?

All in all, the claim made in the thesis is that for this fitter, happier, and more productive employee, dealing with oneself and stress are primarily matters of individual responsibility and personal development. But by turning stress into



matters of individual responsibility, happiness and productivity, one thereby misses some of the underlying ontological processes working within self-management theories and practices. These processes are pre-personal or pre-individual in the sense that they outline ways we can be produced as individual subjects. These not only produce stress as a possibility for any particular individual to assume, they also convert stress-issues amongst employees into matters of being unable to adequately contribute towards the organization, leading in turn towards an understanding of these issues as something best handled if employees can improve their own coping abilities. If they can better their own self. We can hence talk of a *commitment machine* that produces a zone of indiscernability between the subjectivity of the employee and the efficiency of the organization connecting up with a *coping machine* that frames problems within this zone as a matter of personal problems regarding one's subjectivity.

The coping machine serves to reinforce the production of the self-managing employee by making the employees themselves each responsible for learning to take control of their own passion for working in the organization. The employee has to be passionate and committed, of course; but they now also have to distance themselves from this passion and commitment in order to perform well at their tasks. These passions are simultaneously considered both essential *and* problematic: the employee is both part of an ideal state *and* a pathological condition. The coping machine makes this pathological condition into a problem of personal commitment rather than making it a task for questioning how the production of the pre-individual zone of indiscernability between the work and the employees' subjectivity is itself set up by the commitment machine. In other words, the coping machine produces a mode of existence wherein stress results from an overemphasis, on the part of the employees, upon the commitment towards their work and from a failure to deploy the most appropriate self-management technologies.

The thesis can thus be said to be guided by three ambitions in its unfolding of this *tune in, break-down and reboot* motion. First of all, to give an account of the inherent modes of existence produced within the contemporary organizational ideal of the committed self-managing employee. This is done through a reading of various discussions about the management of employee subjectivity ranging from the self-leadership literature focusing on self-management as intrinsically motivating and enjoyable through to discussions of incitements to self-manage and commit as a subtle ways to encroach and exploit the employee's personal subjectivity to contemporary discussions of the new nature of capitalism and its focus on the active living forms of knowledge as the key to value-production.

The second ambition is to address a prevalent paradigm within the occupational stress and stress-management literature, namely that of coping, as a reinforcement of this demand for a committed and self managing employee. This

is done through a reading of some of the most influential scholars within stress and coping and best-sellers on stress-management.

The third and final ambition is to describe this movement of reinforcement, or *tune in, break-down and reboot movement*, through the Deleuzian notion of machines that in various dynamic ways produce and regulate ways of being or modes of existence. Consequently, it will be suggested that the nuts and bolts making up the relation between self-management and stress is part of a mode of existence that sets up certain expectations about the problem of stress and the enterprise of dealing with stress as an individual productivity and enjoyment issue: being fitter, happier, and more productive rather than being regarded as part of the pre-individual collective endeavor that constitutes us as these very subjects.

Today in self-management these machines of commitment and coping might produce us as a fitter, happier, and more productive subject. But this very machinic production that unleashes and confines our subjectivity as employees depends on an extremely unstable pre-individual force. Tapping into this force always means that the foundation of these machines are themselves vulnerable and fragile, or as Deleuze might put it: we do not know yet what we are capable of as this fitter, happier, more productive employee, we do not know were the pre-individual forces that animates the machines of commitment and coping might bring us, so we must tune in, breakdown, and reboot to find out.

Besides a short introduction and a first chapter that highlight some of the most important notions in the thesis, such as self-management, stress, subjectivity, modes of existence, pre-individual forces and social machines, the thesis consists of three parts. The first part running from chapter two through five, is called *Machines and Maps*. Here I discuss the concept of machines as it is developed by Deleuze and Guattari. Of particular interest is their notion of a social machine. Also crucial is what a machinic approach in general implies when analyzing an object of research and how this approach is utilized to understand the production of subjectivity in contemporary work-life. The second part *Self-management and the Commitment-machine* runs from chapter six to eleven. Here I outline two machinic indices of a self-management, namely the 'subjectivity' and 'commitment' and the machinery that drives them; the commitment machine. In the third and last part *Stress and the Coping-machine*, which runs from chapter twelve to fifteen, I shift my focus towards the two machinic indices of stress: 'the somatic subject' and 'the coping processes'. I end up with a description of the coping machinery that drives these indices and how this machinery connects up with the commitment machine resulting in the production of the stress-fit self-managing employee.

## INTRODUCTION

Fitter, happier, more productive (Radiohead 1996)

The airports stands, bookshop shelves, and newspapers stalls burst with bestsellers with telling names such as *Stress for Success; The Power of Full Engagement – managing energy, not time, is the key to high performance and personal renewal; Getting Things Done – how to reach stress-free productivity; Managing workplace stress – a best practice blueprint* and *Conquer your Stress*. These books explore the nature of stress from a mix of management perspectives, psychological angles and physiological research explores the nature of stress. They inform us that stress is a modern day fact ‘and sooner or latter, it will almost certainly affect everyone’ (Williams & Cooper 2002: xi) with considerable consequences for individual health and economic prosperity. Indeed, stress not only wastes the lives of individuals, it also lowers productivity, reduces performance, results in poor flexibility and a failure to innovate (e.g. Cooper & Palmer 2000, Williams & Cooper 2002,). Furthermore the books inform us that stress itself is more than a matter of dealing with external pressures ‘such as reaching deadlines’ (Cooper & Palmer 2000: 6). The causes of stress are also about ‘whether you believe that you can cope with a situation that you perceive as important or threatening’ (2000: 6). In other words, stress is something that grows on the inside of the individual when something from the outside is perceived as taxing. Stress, then, only ‘occurs when pressure exceeds your perceived ability to cope’ (2000: 6). All in all the phenomenon of work-place stress is a crisis that seems to pervade and undermine the social order of contemporary work. It is a topic that is becoming harder and harder to avoid.

However, as this thesis argues, one can regard stress as more than a crisis we are faced with in our work-life, it is also an element that co-produces what it is to be a efficient employee-subject within this work-life.

In this thesis I focus on one particular feature in this debate on occupational stress in contemporary work-life. How stress, and coping with stress, relates to the burgeoning interest in employees' ability to activate and manage their subjectivity in ways that result in productive cooperation. *In short, how stress relates to self-management.* This self-management-stress encounter is particularly interesting as it presents a change in many discussions of occupational stress.

In general the etiology of stress is often given in discussions on occupational stress: when the body's and mind's perceived resources are overstrained or taxed by the demands of the environment over a longer period of time, stress is a likely outcome (e.g. Lazarus 1999, Williams and Cooper 2002). As a recent report prepared for the British Work Foundation puts it:

Modern definitions of stress all recognize that it is a personal experience caused by pressure or demands on an individual, and impacts upon the individual's ability to cope or rather his/her perception of that ability. Work-related stress occurs when there is a mismatch between the demands of the job and the resources and capabilities of the individual worker to meet those demands. (Blaug et al 2007: 4)

Occupational stress, then, is a physiological and psychological response to a mismatch between the resources of the individual and the demands of the job-environment. However, as stress is a personal experience linked with appraisals of one's own ability to cope, what causes this mismatch or imbalance is always difficult to delimit. As the report makes clear 'a situation that one person regards as a stimulating challenge causes another to experience a damaging degree of stress' (Blaug et al 2007: 16). Nonetheless, for a long time occupational stress has primarily been discussed as the result of monotonous and repetitive tasks, miserable working-hours, no task rotation, lack of control over work-tasks, too rigid production standards and a general lack of intrinsic motivation from work (e.g. Karasek & Theorell 1990, Levi 2001). Conversely the solution to occupational stress has among other things been a call for more flexibility in work, a demand on managers to be better at explaining to the employee the purpose of the task at hand, insisting that employees should have more control over their working-task,

and emphasising that if employees got enjoyment from doing their working-task the result was healthier and happier employees. All these solutions can, following Rose, be seen as part of the emergence in the 1970's of the 'Quality of Working Life movement'. A movement ranging from what the English called 'a humanization of work' to what the Scandinavians called *arbejdsmiljø* (Rose 1999: 104). While focusing on end-results such as democracy at work, better quality of life and health, increased productivity and social solidarity (Rose 1999: 105) this movement also emphasized self-management as all-important in reaching this goal. Self-management here referring to both the image of 'the employee as a unique individual seeking personal meaning and purpose in the activity of work' (Rose 1999: 105) and the idea of individuation of work which

would respect individuals through redesigning work to maximize autonomy, to allow scope for craftsmanship, and to provide meaning by allowing workers control over their work (Rose 1999: 105).

Indeed as Wilson (Rose 1999: 107) wrote in his 'Quality of working life. An introductory overview' the workplace must:

Take in to account the rising proportion of employees who are seeking, in their own work, a decrease in stress and boredom and an increased satisfaction of such natural needs as a continuing opportunity to make fuller use of their capacities – and to develop them

The discussions by the Quality of Working Life movement thus point to how self-management as a self-actualizing and self-determining project is considered a necessary aspect in the quest for a fitter, happier, and more productive workforce. However, these solutions and ideas put forth by the Quality of Working Life movement, primarily reflects the general transformation of the production process in the first half of the twentieth century. The assumption being that in the worldwide spread of Ford's assembly line, Taylors' time and motion studies and the iron cage of Weber's bureaucracy reduced employees to nothing more than 'a cog in the production machine, as Chaplin graphically portrayed in his film *Modern Times*' (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 51). In short, the general assumptions were that the working conditions of the factory and bureaucracy reduced the

employees and their potential to a cog in a machine resulting in dehumanization, demotivation and in the end stress (2002: 51).

Still, within the last couple of years, this discussion has expanded its focus from issues concerning the industrial work-space (e.g. Kristensen & Nielsen 2007: 19). Discussions of occupational stress have become increasingly concerned with the many adverse consequences that are to be derived from the increased focus upon contemporary management practices. New potential stressors range from management practices focusing on the market as more turbulent than ever before, the heart of production as flexible rather than stable, and the demand on the employees as subjects capable of change, development, activation, and even enjoyment from a collective learning process that supports a flexible production (e.g. Kristensen & Hermann 2005, Gudiksen 2007, Prætorius 2007, Sørensen et al 2007, Bottrup et al 2008).

In other words, the psychic discomfort and somatic pressure called stress are seemingly not disappearing under the regime of work characterized by *self-management*. This term refers to a general orientation within management practice and theory towards the assumption of the efficient, flexible and happy employee as an active subject who is both given room to self-actualize at work whilst also expected to manage their feelings, thoughts, actions and desires in productive ways. In fact, to be self-managing is both to find one self in the work one is doing while also finding new productive ways of conducting this work. That is self-management demands an involvement of subjectivity in the coordination of current production-processes as well as the discovery of better and more efficient ways to perform these very processes.

Nevertheless, what the stress-discussions surrounding self-management seem to focus on is that the attention towards the employee's personal needs, especially the sense of coherence in, purpose with, enjoyment from and control over work,

that for such a long time were considered a solution to stress have not eradicated stress as a problem. Therefore we are faced with a paradox, as Gudiksen (2007: 73) points out, in the sense that the general development of new modes of organizing, which target the importance of employees personal touch and ability to self-manage, are countered by an increase of absence due to illness, severe stress-symptoms, and irreversible mental and somatic break-downs.

I am, however, not interested in what causes stress in self-management, i.e. the distresses, frustrations, uneasiness, break-downs and burn-outs that some are with no doubt experiencing in certain contexts of self-management. My focus here is rather on how stress and the assumption of coping with this stress act as a co-producer of a certain notion of the self-managing employee-subject. Indeed, my interest is in a certain social production of subjectivity taking place in the stress-self-management encounter.

As already indicated, popular stress-management books emphasize one important aspect of this employee-subject: that both the cause of stress and the solution to stress is a matter of individual coping strategies. Indeed, the books comfort us with advice on how we as employers and employees together can become stress – fit if we just monitor our own personal stress levels, learn to deal with the chemistry of our bodies and brains by analyzing and bettering our coping strategies, and in general start to use a range of stress management techniques designed to make our working day easier, more joyful and even more productive. Techniques proposed by the very books that diagnose stress-problems.

As I will argue, the production of the stress-coping and self-managing employee revolves around the assumption of an employee subject that is able to *tune* its feelings, desires and thoughts *in* to a life of productivity without breaking-down their body and soul. In fact, the potential *break-down* of stress should act as an internal limit for personal productivity, as a way of *rebooting* to an ever more

efficient self-management. All in all, we can therefore talk of a production-process revolving around the presumption of an always fitter, happier, more productive employee. Or as the bestseller *Stress for Success* aptly puts it:

The foundation of *Stress for Success* is balance. Health, happiness, and performance are all part of the same mosaic of life. Going to the next level of performance means going to the next level of health and happiness as well (Loehr 1997: 5)

This mosaic of life is always a dynamic never-ending process. It is not a matter of reaching a fit, happy, and productive state but to desire to always be fitter, happier, and more productive.

The questions raised in the investigation of this particular form of production of subjectivity are: what notions of subjectivity as a productive resource are we presented with when not only self-management but also the management of the stress this self-management might entail becomes an underlying foundation for a flexible and efficient organization? What can an employee think, do and hope for under such circumstances? What are the dynamics that drives such a notion of subjectivity? And with what necessity does this notion set itself forth?

All in all, the claim made in the thesis is that for this fitter, happier, and more productive employee, dealing with oneself and stress are primarily matters of individual responsibility and personal development. But by turning stress into a matter of individual responsibility, happiness and productivity, one thereby misses some of the underlying ontological processes working within self-management theories and practices. These processes are pre-personal or pre-individual in the sense that they outline ways we can be produced as individual subjects. These not only produce stress as a possibility for any particular employee to assume, they also convert stress-issues amongst employees as a matter of being unable to adequately contribute towards the organization, leading in turn towards an understanding of these issues as something best handle if employees can improve their own coping abilities. If they can better their own self.



This thesis is interested in how the notion of stress functions as a mode of problematization of self-management as well as an expansion of self-management. And even more importantly to outline the dynamics in this double process.

The object of interest is therefore not the *validity* of claims of stress in relation to self-management, but in what way the relation between stress and self-management *asserts* its claims, in what way it construes employee subjectivity as a productive self-managing resource. More specifically the thesis conceives the production of the stress-fit self-managing employee as born in the intersection between two social machines: a commitment machine and a coping machine.

But before I move into the nuts and bolts of this social machinery I will use the next chapter to dwell on some general features of what my conception of the production of subjectivity through machines implies. What do I mean by subjectivity, how can subjectivity be produced and what are these machines that enact such production? And how does the assumption about production of subjectivity impact upon the notion of stress and self-management investigated in the thesis? In understanding this production I draw heavily on the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and his collaboration with the psychiatrist Felix Guattari.

## CHAPTER 1

### SOME NOTIONS REGARDING THE PRODUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITY

Given a certain effect, what machine is capable of producing it? (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 5)

In the effort to understand the production of subjectivity in a social context this is the question Deleuze and Guattari raise in their book *Anti-Oedipus*. In this chapter I will focus on two aspects of this question or statement as a way of situating the claim about a production of the stress-fit self-managing employee-subject posed in thesis: first I will look at what an 'effect' is in regards to the stress and self-management encounter before moving on to what the notion of a 'machine' implies in understanding this encounter.

#### What is an EFFECT?

The central effect investigated in the thesis is the production of a certain employee-subject in the encounter between self-management and stress. This implies a number of things 1) a certain notion of self-management and stress, 2) a certain notion of the subject and subjectivity 3) a certain notion of modes of existence that constitutes the subject.

#### **On the notion of self-management and stress**

Self-management refers to a general orientation towards the assumption of an active employee subject that manages their feelings, thoughts, actions, and desires in productive ways. Self-management in this way should not be confused with specific self-management programs e.g. self-leadership training with its emphasis on positive thinking, visualization techniques etc. In effect, processes of refusing, criticising, mimicking, or avoiding these techniques to better oneself and one's work-performance are more in line with the notion of self-management.

Self-management, then, combines management with subjectivity. It has to do with managing something by yourself, but also managing your *self* i.e. managing the actualization of your feelings, desires, and thoughts. In short, self-management is about managing one's own subjectivity. Within the context of an organization this entails the idea of moving control process as well as the task of coordinating and finding new ways of production from management to employees. Employees' thoughts and emotions now feed production and become the object of organizational and managerial interventions. Moreover this intervention is done from the employees own subjectivity i.e. employees are asked and expected to work on their subjectivity as a 'part and parcel of their jobs' (Tracey & Trerthewey 2005: 172). Subjectivity can in this way be said to be regulated through self-management.

A central argument in the thesis is that stress is more than an unfortunate pathology of these new working conditions with their orientation towards subjectivity as a value-producing resource and employee self-management as the way to control and regulate this resource. In fact, the thesis is not interested in seeking out any cause and effect relationships between certain aspects of self-management and stress. Neither does it ask if more or less self-management is a good solution to stress. In other words, in this thesis I do not posit to know and do not investigate why we get stressed. Here I instead outline how a certain subject is produced in this encounter between stress and self-management.

So the object of interest is not the causes of and solutions to stress, nor the discussions on how stress-management can become part of an organisational effort rather than be reduced to an individual responsibility. Rather the object of interest is at the social level. The interest is in the subjectivity producing components and forces that arrange the employee as a stress-fit self-managing subject, including their relation to their self and their organizations, and their self-relating value-judgment such as to be productive, to enjoy, to commit, to cope and to be stressed. For the time being I will, however, leave the details of these

manifestations to the side and for now concentrate on the notions of subject and subjectivity.

### **On the notion of subject and subjectivity**

In this thesis both the subject (e.g. the stress-fit self-managing employee) and subjectivity (e.g. the feelings, thoughts, actions and desire the employee becomes responsible for managing in productive ways) are considered elements that are produced through forces of a pre-individual nature or what I, following Deleuze and Guattari, call machines.

Normally the term subject is used in the sense of 'underlying'. A subject is thus a unity behind a multiplicity of expressions and changes. When connected to human existence the term subject refers to the subject of actions, passions, sensations, thoughts, perceptions etc (E.g. Hyldgaard 2006: 258). The question of that which lies beneath become as Hyldgaard (2006: 26 my translation) puts it:

an anthropological question i.e. a question of the being of the human. Subject becomes the same as the human, self or I... The human is subject for knowledge, for choices, for strategically and suitable actions, subject for the will and intensions, for interpretation of a situation with regards for future options. The human is the subject for a conscious and reflective relationship to itself, others and the world.

As the subject becomes something adhering to the human being, the question of the subject as something underlying becomes a question of subjectivity. The subject is also the self or personality (Hyldgaard 2006: 26). For an employee, then, self-management is to invest, register and regulate subjectivity in the effort to achieve productive actions and passions. This is, as we will see, expected to be done by way of this subjectivity and with the aid of management technologies, conversations with managers and colleagues, participating in self-development courses.

Again it has to be emphasized that the overall assumption in my approach is to consider any employee-subject as something that is constituted in an array of

processes. Or put otherwise, the unity of subjectivity is already a myriad of something else, it is foreign to itself. Indeed, from a machinic perspective the subjects' desire, feelings, thoughts, and actions belong to it and yet are foreign to it at the same time.

So subjectivity might be all important in self-management but the object of the thesis is to outline and explore the myriad of different forces that produce the employee-subject who are expected to invest and regulate its subjectivity in the production of organizational value. We can thus talk of a certain employee-subject as the output of various social forces or machines at work in work. But what is specific about the machinic production-process I am interested in, is, that it produces subjectivity as an all important input in the effort for better organizational performance. It is exactly the feelings, actions, thoughts, and desires proper to the employees that become the object of management. In this sense, subjectivity is an input formed at work in an effort to make employees perform better. But, as I will show, this input is not something that belongs to the employee alone. By investigating a machinic production of subjectivity I will rather claim that it is the pre-individual components of the subjectivity proper to an employee that become the input and the object of management in *self-management*. These pre-individual components that compose the subjectivity of the employee are thus ascribed to the employee as something the employee should be able to tap into, mold and manage for the sake of its own self-realization and the realization of a better performance. So making subjectivity an input in the quest for better organizational performance is a way of producing a certain social subject responsible for regulating these components in ways that enhance task-performance and profit-making. In this way efficient self-management relies on and tries to regulate the very pre-individual components that constitute the employee's feelings, thoughts, and desires.

As I will go on to demonstrate from a machinic perspective this is done in two stages. First of all, certain machines inscribe and code these components into a series of semi-conscious capabilities and pre-conscious processes (such as tacit knowledge, passion, intrinsic motivation, social competency, ability to begin anew, tendency to appraise something in positive and negative ways, coping-abilities, nature of and impact of hormonal processes working in the body etc.) all working inside the employee. Secondly, the employee is held responsible for and expected to manage these processes through the aid of management technologies of visualization and training.

### **On the notion of mode of existence**

So, by drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of machines the thesis sketches out how the management of subjectivity and stress among self-managing employees can be viewed as part of an organizing process that separates, joins, and codes the ontological fabric of our lives. In this regard, what Deleuze (1983: x) calls *mode of existence* become important. This term refers to the way a subject is constituted with certain presuppositions about what it is to live, desire, talk, and act.

The concept of mode of existence, then, refers to the particular way we are constituted and individualized as subjects through pre-individual machinic processes. This, among other things, implies that the self-managing employee is not considered an already constituted subject that can make his or her subjectivity (in the case of self-management) or stress (in the case of coping) into a object to be managed. Indeed, both the self-managing subject and the self-managed object (e.g. my stress or my subjectivity) are born together in the mode of existence. Whilst subjectivity and stress have to be managed they are also elements which co-produce the self-managing employee as the subject supposed to conduct this management.

I therefore ask what kinds of actions and passions does the mode of existence of the stress-fit self-managing or the always fitter, happier, and more productive employee involve. Moreover following Deleuze and Guattari I ask which *machines* (1983) is able of producing and regulating this mode of existence?

## What is a MACHINE?

In its very crude definition a machine designates a dynamic force producing itself and the environment it works in. In fact, machines produce reality itself. Moreover, as machines always drive and are driven by other machines they are always defined by their connections. They are, in this way, not reducible to one identity.

### **On the notion of pre-individual machines**

For my understanding of the production of subjectivity Deleuze and Guattari's notion of machines is important because it offers an ontological mobility that allows me to do two things.

First of all, it makes it possible to posit a starting point that is not confined to a specific level of reality. In fact, a machine should be understood as a certain mode of organization that connects

all kinds of attractions and repulsions. Sympathies, and antipathies, alterations, amalgamations, penetrations, and expressions that affect bodies of all kinds in their relations to one another (Deleuze & Guattari 1999: 90).

Furthermore, these pre-individual 'bodies' or flows, as Deleuze and Guattari also call them, are themselves the product of a machine to the degree that

every machine functions as a break in the flow in relation to the machine to which it is connected, but at the same time is also a flow itself, or the production of a flow, in relation to the machine connected to it (1983: 36).

In this way a machine and a flow is nothing more than the connections it establishes: machines have no identity, no telos and no constituting form.

Machines are what perform a synthesis of connections and a synthesis itself. The mobility of the concept of machine in this way pushes how we normally understand ontology. As an ontological concept, the machine presents a notion of reality as dynamic, multiple, and in a state of becoming. But by postulating such a reality it also makes any insight into the structure of reality a context-dependent test that demands an experimental and perpetual effort by thought.

Secondly, this concept of machine is aimed at bypassing a discussion on how the inner realm of the subject (desires, dreams, thoughts, and feelings) can be related to the realm of the social without the intermediary of the subject as a unity or an illusion. The concept allows them to posit a relationship between the subjectivity and the social that is neither a question of the subject being encroached by the social nor of the subject being a mere product of society.

In fact, both the desires, thoughts, sensations, or the psyche of the subject and the social itself should be considered as part of pre-individual and impersonal forces that 'resonate with one another, that interact in ways that produce effects upon one another, that enter into combinations with one another' (Colwell 1997: 18). Indeed, they are part of different machineries. The concept of machine, then, dissolves the subject as a logical starting point. Instead the subject should be understood on the level of these machinic interactions that both constitute and dissolve it.

This means that the subject's psyche or mental reality is not solely its own. Its desire, feelings, and thoughts are not something it has but an array of relations or forces that produces it. Moreover, as Colwell suggests (1997: 19), the subject is not only born from these machines, it never comes 'to contain these forces within its borders, does not come to possess them in any manner. The pre-personal remains *impersonal*'.



## **On the notion of social machines**

But pre-individual machines are not only machines of the 'psyche' they are also *social* machines i.e. imply discourses, e.g. about stress, and social technologies, e.g. stress-management techniques:

The linguistic and institutional structures that Michel Foucault analyzes, e.g. the discursive formations of psychiatry and medicine, panopticism and confessional strategies, are also part of the prepersonal field. They are the "machines of subjectivation" that enter into relations with and organize the ways in which the other pre-personal components of the subject actualize themselves. What is important to see here is that these structures are not entirely or solely external to the subject but are in fact part of the subject itself. The Panopticon is not simply an external piece of architecture in which the body is trapped; it is a constituent component of the subject itself. (Colwell 1997: 20)

Related to the subject of the thesis this means the following: a normative injunction such as 'enjoy your work', or 'cope with your stress' are injunctions taking place on a pre-individual level. The social machinery, which I look for in the stress/self-management encounter, does not work by imposing a demand on an already constituted subject: a demand that this subject can either comply with or not. Rather the injunction takes place in the process of producing the subject. It is in the very interweaving of the process of production and the produced subject that the social machinery performs its dispositions of actions and passions.

This is always what makes the social machinery into something more than the Althusserian inspired concepts of interpellation i.e. the claim that the subject becomes a subject when it is called upon as a specific subject (Althusser 1971: 174-75). Like Althusserian interpellation the social machine constitutes the subject through language, communications, and signs in a way where 'your words are folded over statements which are imposed on you and expected of you' (Lazzarato 2006a: 2). That is to say the supposed subject of enunciation is categorized by a discursive regime turning it into a subject of a statement instead. When we express our feelings, dreams, and thoughts, i.e. our mental reality this reality is always folded over by a dominant reality of social meaning turning us into certain

social subjects with recognizable and fixed predicates: your role, your function, your interests (Lazzarato 2006a 1). Which within a work-setting can also be put in the following way: a corporate self is construed that is folded over the subject of enunciation, which is supposed to be more authentic.

However, the social machine likewise taps into the very perceptual and affective relations that are not yet assigned to a subject. Or, to put it differently, it regulates the very pre-individual components that come to compose our mental reality or authentic self. Indeed, I argue that the machinery that works in self-management sets up these social subjects with assignable fixed predicates, for example this is what is expected of you in this work-task or this is your role as an employee, only to break them down again as it is always the fact that the employee-subject is 'more than' the predicates it is assigned that constitute the source of value in self-management. It is the pre-individual components of subjectivity, both corporate and authentic, that is of real economic value here and the self-managing employee is an employee that, through the aid of management technologies such as performance-management and stress-management programs, continuously and in always new ways molds these components into something that both belongs to the employees as well as the organization. Even if, as we will see, this something, this mental reality or subjectivity, is inscribed as a matter of semi-conscious processes such as personal tacit knowledge, ability to begin a new, coping abilities, and social competences, or pre-conscious processes such as the way the body reacts to strains. Again to be an employee subject, then, is to always be a fitter, happier, and more productive employee. Understanding this mode of existence is to understand its presuppositions and it is always a social machine that regulates these presuppositions. So, in the end understanding the mode of existence of the fitter, happier, more productive employee is to outline the social machinery at work.

The subject of the thesis is, therefore, to scrutinize a certain social ideal or normative injunction of what it is to be an employee. But this ideal is not an already explicated norm that we can comply with or not. Rather it is something dynamic that works in a very smooth way regulating thoughts, actions, and passions on a pre-individual level. In any social setting we are constituted as a subject through a mode of existence governed by *social* machines. The ideal of being fitter, happier, and more productive is not something we are forced to embody and certainly not something that can easily be undermined by demonstrating its contradictions. It is something directly interwoven with our desires, actions, thoughts, and aspirations. When we speak of a mode of existence, then, both the ideal and the attempt to embody it should always be understood from a machinic level. E.g. when trying to embody an ideal of self-management specific self-management concepts and programs must not live up to this ideal, or to introduce new aspects to it. But it is a social machine that distributes the tension between the ideal and its embodiment.

This is of course also what makes the whole situation precarious. To be a fitter, happier, and more productive employee might be an ideal and we might fail in our attempt to embody it, but even in our failure it shapes our subjectivity. Why? For at least two reasons. First of all, the ideal of being an efficient self-manager demands a personal and individual touch. To embody the ideal is, therefore, to a certain degree already to transgress whatever fixed social categories currently prescribed. Secondly, because this ideal always connects with a pre-individual and highly unstable economy of desire. It does its work before we are produced as a subject that might struggle to embody the ideal or refuse it, i.e. before the ideal is expressed in certain recognizable norms or an ideology. Hence, when we talk of the modes of existence of a fitter, happier, and more productive employee as an ideal we always talk of it in direct relations to a *social* machine that defines a certain series or set of pre-conscious presuppositions we 'utilise to compose our

thoughts and feelings without them ever being intelligible to us' (Buchanan 2006: 137). This will be discussed in more depth in Part One *Maps and Machines*.

The important thing for now is to understand that the machines I scrutinize in this thesis are machines which connect stress with self-management to produce a mode of existence centered on stress issues as a problem the individual must take responsibility for in the effort to maximize its own productivity as a self-managing employee. That is, becoming better at achieving better and more results within a given time-frame and with a minimum of energy discharge. What we are dealing with here, then, is the production of a certain presupposition about the employee-subject as a subject that has to increase happiness, well-being, and productivity at the same time. As I will show through out the thesis this subject, as it emerges in the self-management and stress encounter, is produced through two social machines.

### **On the social machines of commitment and coping**

I argue that there exist a *commitment machine* that produces a *zone of indiscernability* between the subjectivity of the employee and the work-efficiency of the employee. In other words a zone where the existence and subjectivity of the employee enters into a relationship with work-performance and task-productivity in a way that lets the two sides remain distinct, whilst maintaining there is something unsettled between them that form a zone of indiscernability. A zone that belongs neither to the subjectivity of the worker nor the work-task. This zone makes the subject and the work-task exchange features in ways that make it hard to discern where one ends and another begins. This zone, then, works in ways that incite, tap into, and regulate the pre-individual aspects of subjectivity in order to directly access feelings, desire, and sensations of enjoyment, as well as frustrations and stress, and direct them into a matter of value-production and productivity. To become a self-managing employee is to become a subject that expresses and maintains this zone of indiscernability.

To be self-managing, then, is to embody one's:

own desires – for health, performance, well-being, career – at the same time as it embodies the organization's desires – for productivity, performance, cost and risk minimization (Kelly et al 2007: 269).

However, as we will see, the content of this productivity and risk minimization (e.g. of stress) is always unsettled in so far as subjectivity is the resource. Put otherwise, the particular content of a good performance and what causes stress depends on the subjectivity of the employee. In fact, when connected to the *coping machine* problems within the first zone are framed as matters of personal problems regarding one's subjectivity, rather than being framed as organizational difficulties in settling the nature and content of productivity.

The coping machine thus serves to reinforce the production of the self-managing employee by making the employees themselves each responsible for learning to take control of their own passion for working in the organization. The employee has to be passionate and committed, of course; but they now also have to distance themselves from this passion and commitment in order to perform well at their tasks. These passions are simultaneously considered both essential *and* problematic: the employee is both part of an ideal state *and* a pathological condition. The coping machine makes this pathological condition into a problem of personal commitment rather than making it a task for questioning how the production of the zone of indiscernability between the organization's productivity and the employees' subjectivity is itself set up by the commitment machine. In other words, the coping machine produces a mode of existence wherein stress results from an overemphasis, on the part of the employees, upon the commitment towards their work and from a failure to deploy appropriate self-management. Consequently, it will be suggested that the nuts and bolts making up the relation between self-management and stress is part of a mode of existence that sets up certain expectations about the problem of stress and the enterprise of

dealing with stress as an individual productivity and enjoyment issue: being fitter, happier, and more productive rather than being regarded as part of the pre-individual collective endeavor that constitutes us as these very subjects.

## The ambition of the thesis

On the backdrop of these assumptions about the 'effect' and the 'machine' we can summarize the rest of the thesis as guided by three ambitions.

First of all, to give an account of the inherent modes of existence produced within the contemporary organizational ideal of the committed self-managing employee (see Part Two *Self-management and the Commitment Machine*). This is done through a reading of various discussions about the management of employee subjectivity ranging from self-leadership literature focusing on self-management as intrinsic motivating and enjoyable (e.g. McGregor 1957a, Thomas 2000, Neck & Houghton 2006) through discussions on incitements to self-manage and commit as a subtle way to encroach and exploit the employee's personal subjectivity (e.g. Kunda 1992, Willmott 1993, Fleming and Sturdy 2007, Contu 2008) to contemporary discussions of the new nature of capitalism and its focus on the active living forms of knowledge as the key to value-production (e.g. Moulier Boutang 2001, Lazzarato 2004, Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, Vercellone 2005).

The second ambition is to address a prevalent paradigm within the occupational stress and stress-management literature, namely that of coping, as a reinforcement of this demand for a committed and self managing employee (see Part Three *Stress and the Coping Machine*). This is done through a reading of some of the most influential scholars within stress and coping (e.g. Lazarus 1999) and best-sellers on stress-management (e.g. Loehr 1997, Williams and Cooper 2002).

The third and final ambition is to describe this movement of reinforcement, or *tune in, break-down, and reboot movement*, through the Deleuzian notion of

machines that in various dynamic ways produce and regulate ways of being or modes of existence (see Part One *Maps and Machines*).

## The outline of the thesis

The rest of the thesis consists of three parts. The first part runs from chapter two through five is called *Machines and Maps*. Here I discuss the concept of machines as it is developed by Deleuze and Guattari more in depth. Of particular interest is the notion of social machine and what a machinic approach in general implies when analyzing an object of research and how this approach is utilized to understand the production of subjectivity in contemporary work-life. The second part *Self-management and the Commitment-machine* runs from chapter six to eleven. Here I outline two machinic indices of a self-management, namely the 'subjectivity' and 'commitment' and the machinery that drives them; the commitment machine. In the third and last part *Stress and the Coping-machine*, which runs from chapter twelve to fifteen I shift my focus towards the two machinic indices of stress: 'the somatic subject' and 'the coping processes'. I end up with a description of the coping machinery that drives these indices and how this machinery connects up with the commitment machine resulting in the production of the stress-fit self-managing employee.

These three parts in many ways implicate one another. In the first part the focus is on the notion of machines and the ontology behind them. Here I always discuss self-management and stress by using these two subjects as illustrations. In Part Two, the focus is shifted onto self-management and the commitment machinery working within it. However, aspects of the Third Part on stress and the coping-machine is already discussed here. This implication of what is to come in the individual parts thus imply a composition that is not animated by a logic that gradually digs out a clear core step-by-step. Rather everything is already at work everywhere, but with a varied degree of clarity. Something is intensified in some chapters and just an obscure background in other chapters. Nonetheless, every

individual explication is also a complication, in so far as the different zones of clarity are meant to provide the sense of a dynamic movement. Indeed, the machinery of commitment and coping outlined in the thesis should be understood as a vibrant force, grinding with fits and sparks.



## ***Part one: Machines and Maps***

## CHAPTER 2

### INTERNALIZATION, CYNICISM, AND THE ONTOLOGY OF MACHINES

The alternatives of contentment (*I have arrived*) or hopelessness (*There is nowhere to go*) are two sides of the same misguided thought: that what is presented to us is what there is. There is more, always more (May 2005: 172)

Interest in the implication of making human subjectivity an inherent organizational resource is nothing new (Peters & Waterman 1984, Roberts 2005). As Whittle points out the interest in the realm of 'thoughts, feelings, beliefs and desires that comprise our self-understanding or self-identity' has over the last thirty years increasingly been placed in 'the heart of the debates within management and organization studies' (Whittle 2005: 1301-2). According to Whittle (2005: 1301)

The appeal of subjectivity, for managers at least, lies in the goal of controlling human behaviour (what workers do) by colonizing employee subjectivity (who workers are).

Moreover, in new management strategies, concepts, and programs the 'new equation between corporate performance and the total involvement of the person in work' has come to be regarded as one of the underlying principles of a successful form of organization (Costea et al 2007: 153). In short, the advent of managerial technologies such as performance management, coaching, 360 appraisal interviews etc. has to a large and large degree 'focused upon the self as a preferred site for intervention' (2007: 153). However, the implication of this focus has been understood as everything ranging from a humanization of the work-place finally making work the site of enjoyment and self-determination, to a discussion of the identity control or indeed the colonization of subjectivity performed by these managerial technologies and concepts.

By looking at subjectivity production in self-management this thesis follows a long tradition that investigates the aforementioned technologies as tools that perform

a certain regulation of personal subjectivity. This tradition runs from Whyte's seminal work on *Organization Man*, through discussions of corporate culture programs (e.g. Kunda 1992, Willmott 1993) as forms of normative control onto recent discussion on authentic selves and cynicism (Fleming & Spicer 2003, 2007 and Contu 2008). But in the thesis I also displace these discussions by way of applying a machinic perspective. We will get into more detail about Whyte's, Willmott and Kunda work in the chapter nine, still some preliminary remarks about this tradition and its recent manifestation in discussions of cynicism are necessary as a means of setting the scene for the ontology of machines that forms the horizon for the thesis discussion of the production of subjectivity in the self-management/stress relationship.

### Control through the internalization of corporate selves

In his *Engineering Culture*, Kunda (1992) shows how the designed corporate culture programs of the 80s and 90s, with their emphasis on de-bureaucratization and empowerment, performed a form of normative control of the employee's subjectivity.

In his study of the company *Tech* Kunda (1992: 7) claims that corporate culture program consisted of a collection of concrete techniques 'designed to induce others to accept – indeed to become – what the company would like them to be': active, participating, and self-managing employees. The implicit assumption behind these programs is that if only employees enjoy themselves at work and are given room for self-determination they would perform their work-tasks better and become emotionally committed to their place of work. For Kunda, however, this culture is not just a collection of techniques and rules designed to win the hearts and minds of the employees. It is also the 'vehicle through which' employees 'influence the behaviour and experiences of others' (1992: 7). The culture program was both an instrument that produced 'what appears to be a well-defined...member role' (1992: 7) and a control-mechanism of how well this role of

a corporate self was performed, i.e. it performed an indirect normative control of what to believe, think, and feel.

In this way, the employees were expected to embrace the corporate self that had been designed for them. In spite of this, the injunction to embrace also provoked cynicism and distancing of self in the effort 'to maintain a private reserve that was truly theirs and beyond the corporate collective' (Fleming & Sturdy 2007: 5). The result of this cynicism was that 'the emotions experienced as part of the organizational self are presented as distinct from other aspects of emotional life and at some remove from one's 'authentic sense of self' (Kunda 1992: 183). Authentic here implying the idea of a genuine, unspoiled, and original core behind the many actions and manifestations of the subject (Svejenova 2005: 950-51). In Kunda's study, then, cynicism was a way for workers to see through the corporate culture program and to protect what they considered their authentic self or inner core. Drawing on Goffmann's dramaturgical theory of front-stage and back-stage selves, Kunda posited cynicism as the employee's way of protecting a back-stage self from the injunction made by the corporate culture programs.

Subsequently cynicism is a way for workers to see through the culture program and to protect what they considered their 'authentic self'. In other words, cynicism is seen as an act of dis-identification from culture management and other management practices, which target the subjectivities of employees through a normative injunction of enjoying one's work and actualizing your-self through work.

## Control through a discernment between corporate and authentic selves<sup>1</sup>

Recently, it has been argued that cynicism is much more than a way of creating narratives about personhood outside the organizational injunction i.e. much more than dealing with the discomfort the role as an active and participating employee sometimes entail (Fleming & Spicer 2007: 74). In other words, cynicism is more than a psychic safety valve protecting the self against the sometimes emotionally overwhelming ideal of being a corporate self. Moreover, some have argued that employee cynicism provides a form of resistance against the normative control performed by culture program and its likes (e.g. Casey 1995; Fleming & Spicer 2003). Others, with direct inspiration from Žižek, have argued the exact opposite. Cynicism serves as a conservative force (Fleming & Spicer 2007: 73) and rather than presenting a resistance to the normative gestures in contemporary work-settings, it in fact sustains these gestures (Contu 2008).

Drawing on Žižek's notion of ideology, Fleming and Spicer seem to understand the normative gestures in contemporary management programs in two interrelated ways. First of all, that the ideological dictum of post-Taylorist management programs is not characterized with what Žižek (e.g. 1997: 114) would call the prescription to "do as you are told, like it or not", but rather distinguished by the paradoxical injunction "like it or not, enjoy yourself at work". Secondly, that this injunction to enjoy is not something that primarily takes place at a conscious level rather it is embedded in the practices of our everyday life and habits. According to Žižek the classic idea depicts ideology as a misjudgment about our presuppositions of the world. It thus claims that there is a contradiction between the real nature of our actions and what we think about these actions (Žižek 1989: 28-30). In fact, we

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this section called 'Control through discernment between corporate and authentic selves' is forthcoming in *Journal of Organisational Change Management* in the article 'The Frantic Gesture of Interpassivity – maintaining the separation between corporate and authentic selves' co-authored by Sara Louise Muhr and Rasmus Johnsen. In the article a similar text to the one in these two sections are found in the sections 'Cynicism as a way of distinguishing between corporate and authentic selves' and 'The fantasy of the authentic self'. I've been the main author of these sections.

are prisoners of ideology in so far as our thoughts are distorted by other interests e.g. to enjoy your work to be profitable for the organization. However, for Žižek (1989: 30-33) ideology does not work on the level of thinking but of actions. Indeed, we might know that the injunction to enjoy is both insatiable and a mere tool in the hands of profit-makers, but we still act as we did not know it.

Following Žižek, Fleming and Spicer (2007: 72) go as far as to claim that conscious awareness of the injunction of these culture programs might be what sustains the normative control of these programs all the better. By not believing too much in them employees not only give the impression that they are essentially authentic selves irreducible to the corporate culture, they also paradoxically consolidate this corporate self. What Fleming and Spicer argue, then, is that cynicism is conservative as it gives the impression that employees are 'autonomous agents' but nevertheless they 'still practise the corporate rituals' (Fleming & Spicer 2003: 160). So even if employees are aware of the ideological production of a corporate self taking place in the corporate culture programs, it does not change the fact that these "enlightened" employees still play the role of the corporate self they do not believe in. Furthermore, as both Fleming and Spicer and Contu suggest, the right to disagree with the corporate culture might even make the employees perform corporate cultural practices as well as their job even better (Fleming & Spicer 2007: 73, Contu 2008: 368).

In fact, according to Contu, the enlightened nature of cynicism is the very force that in the end sustains the normative gesture in something like culture management. Essentially cynicism and other acts of cognitive transgressions of the corporate self (irony, mimicking, playing a role, dis-identifying) guarantees the ideology of contemporary work settings.

What is important to observe is that these transgressive actions in liberal workplaces (call centres, automobile factories, insurance companies, etc.) do not seriously challenge the economic reproduction of both producers and consumers. These actions are even less of a challenge to the liberal

democratic logic where the “I” is constituted as the liberal free subject who has, among other things, the right to disagree (Contu 2008: 368)

Indeed, following Contu’s analysis of cynicism, ‘liberal workplaces’ come to rely on a fantasy of something authentic outside the workplace’s grip of power (2008: 369). A fantasy of being an authentic human being made of flesh and blood with ‘wishes, desires, and aspirations that are proper, specific to me’ (2008: 372). For Contu, it is exactly this fantasy of an inner domain of integrity and truth that serves as the ‘trans-ideological kernel’ (Žižek 1997: 21) that makes the ideology of liberal workplaces workable.

Cynicism and other acts of cognitive transgressions, then, involve a split between the corporate self – tainted by ideology – and the fantasy of an authentic self untouched by the normative gestures of the workplace. But as Žižek makes clear, such a split in the subject between an authentic and fake self is not a mere sign of the imperfection of the normative gesture of an ideology, indeed ‘this splitting is necessary for its exercise’ (Žižek 2005: 287). So rather than actually disturbing and subverting organizational practices that target and regulate employee subjectivity, the fantasy of authenticity supports it. Or, as Contu (2008: 372) suggests, the fantasy of something “more” – something authentic beyond the different ways the employee is subjectified as a corporate self – is, in the end, what guarantees this subjectification. For Contu (2008: 374), then, cynicism is nothing but ‘decaf resistance’. Decaf, because it – just like decaf coffee – can be enjoyed without the risk and cost involved. In cynicism, employees do not run the risk of changing the subjects they are and the way they live their lives and perform their jobs. However, sustaining this decaf resistance – and its split between corporate and authentic parts – is an act that prolongs the injunction to enjoy one’s work.

Even though authentic subjectivity, in the sense of something full and essential detached from the experiences and feelings of the corporate self, might be a mere fantasy supporting the injunction of liberal workplaces to enjoy one’s work, this Žižekian understanding still operates with an idea of encroachment. One that is,

however, very different from Kunda's description. First of all, because the ideology of the liberal workplace are said to implicitly reproduce the very power-structures we say we don't believe in (Fleming & Spicer 2003: 160, 2007: 74). E.g. cynicism is regarded as another tool in the hands of power. It is yet another way of nourishing the 'duty to enjoy work and be self-actualized to the fullest through work'. Secondly, the idea of an authentic and untainted self covers up the fact that we can never be full subjects through fantasies and ideologies. There is, as Contu puts it, no "Big Other that can justify, support, and sustain the beliefs that animate our acts" (Contu 2008: 376). Any idea or belief, that behind the organizational practices, values and poor management there lies something repressed, is a fantasy. Yet this fantasy still belongs to a subject and still veils something. For Žižek it seems that every form of organizing in an organization is ideology, and every ideology is a cover up. Something is hidden, repressed and concealed, even if it this something is not solid and positive. Rather what is covered up is the traumatic experience that there is nothing behind the veil: no security, no well-being, no 'real' autonomy, no justification that can support our acts. So while the assumption of an authentic subject might be an ideological illusion, we can still talk of a self in terms of an always fractured and traumatized subject.

What is controlled and repressed, then, is not who we really are, but the tragedy that what we really are is a split and empty subject. That in reality there is nothing behind the various veils of the symbolic and imaginary. We are an open wound until the day we die. We are, therefore, not born free and full subjects and then alienated in the encounter with the organizational order of liberal workplaces. Rather we are born alienated and the liberal workplaces hide this traumatic and tragic experience.

### Twisting selves towards machinic production

Through the concept of machine we can, however, twist these reading of subjectivity. I share Kunda's, Fleming and Spicer's and Contu's interest in



contemporary work-places or liberal workplace, as a place where subjectivity is both produced and controlled. The common thread in these readings is that the social consists of a number of constraining aspects that make the unfolding of forms of self-realization problematic by eroding the autonomy of the individual, even if this constraint consists in covering up the fact that we are eroded from the beginning. That is to say that Kunda's, and to some degree, Fleming and Spicer's and Contu's work seem to discuss the 'human' developments in corporations as a form of corporate control over some kind of more-or-less essential subjectivity, with the split and empty subject as a complicated variant hereof.

The vocabulary of machines, however, allows us to understand this production and regulation of subjectivity without proceeding from control (organizational encroachment) or from something more or less essential (authentic and 'empty' subjectivity), but from a set of the pre-subjective and pre-organizational machinic processes that work before and between the forces of corporate control and 'authentic' selves. The desires, thoughts, and actions we relate to the authentic subject with are therefore not part of a spontaneity or naturalness that the social reality of organizations represses. Rather the desires etc. ascribed to the authentic subject are flows produced by various machines and inscribed and manifested through a certain social machine.

So, according to the generalized theory or ontology of machines, the basic categories in understanding social phenomena such as self-management and the management of subjectivity are indeed not a matter of starting with a free-standing individual that, through organizational promises of empowerment, self-actualization and personal development becomes indirectly forced to internalize and believe in a organizational culture of performance. Nor is it a matter of looking at organizational rituals and cultures as purely normative instances of power and control. Instances so subtle that they work in ways where not believing in them

only reproduces them, subsequently, covering up the fact that the self is fractured and empty.

Rather the basic starting point is a network of machines that produces different flows of matter, words, thoughts, affects, value, of stressed bodies, of coping employees. To be more exact, individuals and so-called technologies of control, such as corporate culture programs, are the effects of a primary process of social machines inscribing sense and function that relates various flows to one another. This means that any level of control of personal subjectivity must be understood from a pre-individual production-process. It is exactly this level of production that we will flesh out in the discussion of machines of self-management and stress.

In fact, what such a generalized ontology of machines allows us to do is, among other things, investigate how the inscription of the distinction between corporate self and authentic self becomes a way of producing and reproducing a presupposition of a zone of indiscernibility between employee's subjectivity and employee's productivity that are best handled through self-management. And to do this investigation *without* claiming that the one is colonizing the other, or even that these selves are mere instances of an ideology covering up our fractured being. This ontology also allows us to understand stress as a sign or a set of signs that mark the employees in certain ways setting up certain presuppositions as to how a potential breakdown might be solved through more and better self-management.

I will discuss the particularities in these issues in further detail in Part Two and Three. For now, I will take a step back and outline how a machinic point of departure shapes any ontological questioning of and critical response to the contemporary work-practices of self-management. So before going further into the machinery at work in the mode of existence of the stress-fit self-managing employee, I will spend some time in this first part of the thesis fleshing out this

machinic vocabulary and describing how we might understand the notion of inscriptions of sense and purpose in relation to this notion of machine. In short, this first part of the thesis goes further into the question already touched upon in chapter one: what is a machine, what does it imply, and what kind of insights does it produce?

To answer these questions we must understand the concept of machine as it is used in Deleuze and Guattari's book *Anti-Oedipus*. This book is central not only because of its elaborated use of the concept machine but also because it explicitly uses this concept to understand the relationship between a social infrastructure and subjectivity. The third chapter *Introducing Machines*, therefore, describes how the concept of machine is used to interweave the notions of desire and the social. Indeed, the concept of machine is used to bypass the idea of desire as something adhering to the individual's internal sphere and the social order as something external that either prolongs this desire of the individual subject or represses it. Instead desire is something productive that is directly invested in the social, making the individual subject a process emerging from this interweaving. The notion of desire as productive is investigated further in the following chapter *Desiring-machines and social machines* that takes a close look at how Deleuze and Guattari understand the machine in terms of three passive syntheses. These syntheses are explored so as to better understand how a social machine is both an effect of these three syntheses and something that acts upon them, inscribing them with meaning and purpose. They thus converge desire into individual and collective interests and pave the way for a reproduction and regulation of desire. Chapter five *Mapping Machines* sums up some of the implications of studying a social machinery, and ends up with an outline for what this means for the study of the machinery of stress and self-management.

## CHAPTER 3

### INTRODUCING MACHINES INTO DESIRE AND THE SOCIAL

It is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, and other times it fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, it eats. It shits and fucks. What a mistake to have ever said the id. Everywhere it is machines – real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections. An organ-machine is plugged into an energy-source machine: the one produces a flow that the other interrupts. The breast is a machine that produces milk, and the mouth is a machine coupled to it...Something is produced: the effects of machines, not mere metaphors (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 1-2).

In the famous opening of *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of a machine for the first time. In all its obscurity this passage pinpoints something crucial about machines, namely, that neither machines nor their effects be understood as metaphorical. Rather, machines designate a dynamic force producing itself and the environment it works in. In fact, they produce reality itself. Moreover, a machine only exists in its connections that either takes the form of a production of flow, e.g. the breast that produces milk, or the cut of a flow, e.g. that mouth that cuts the flow of milk,.

As discussed in chapter one the concept of machine allows us to posit a relationship between subjectivity and the social that is neither a question of the subject being encroached upon by the social or of the subject being a mere product of society. In a way the critical aim of *Anti-Oedipus* can be understood as starting with the assumption that ‘nothing ever starts in an individual subject’ (Due 2007: 87). However, the desires, thoughts, feelings, and actions we usually ascribe to this subject can neither be understood as a product of a social-linguistic structure such as ideology or discourses. Actually, both the desire of the subject and the social itself should be considered as pre-individual and impersonal forces.

The subject should be understood on the level of machinic interactions that both constitute and dissolves it.

In *Anti-Oedipus* this discussion of machines as a way of understanding the relationship between the social and the realm of thoughts, feelings, desires, and actions without positing the individual subject as the point of beginning is raised through a theoretical linkage between psychoanalysis and its interest in desire and Marxism and its interest in the effects of social infrastructure. However, as Buchanan (2008: 39) points out, achieving this goal demands two accomplishments. First of all, to introduce a concept of desire into our understanding of what constitutes social order. As we will see this means desire is not 'an undifferentiated instinctual energy, but itself results from a highly developed, engineered setup rich in interactions' (Deleuze & Guattari 1999: 215). Secondly, to introduce the concept of production into desire, which means that desire produces something as a something or as Surin puts it: 'it is desire, which is always social and collective, that makes the gun into a weapon of war, or sport, or hunting' (Surin 2005a: 26).

## Interests and desire

If we start with this later insistence on desire as something productive, this, according to Deleuze and Guattari, entails a concept of desire as something positive and creative, a stimulus that does not need an exogenous force to activate it (Buchanan 2008: 48). In this way Deleuze and Guattari (1983: 25) break with the common notion of what desire is. In fact, they go as far as to argue that:

the traditional logic of desire is all wrong from the outset: from the very first step that the Platonic logic of desire forces us to take, making us choose between *production* and *acquisition*. From the moment we place desire on the side of the acquisition, we make desire an idealistic (dialectical, nihilistic) conception, which causes us to look upon it primarily as a lack: a lack of an object, a lack of the real object.

Desire is a production process that creates the needs we lack rather than the process of trying to acquire or meet these needs. Desire is something pre-

individual and impersonal that produces the subject that comes to have individual and personal needs. But needs are only something that emerge in so far as desire is a direct investment in the social. It is in this investment that desire acquires meaning and it is here that needs themselves emerge. Essentially needs are derived from desire, making them a result of a certain production in the social. However, needs themselves are also injected back into desire by a social order that is itself animated by this desire. We come to need something, e.g. food or self-actualization at work, or have an interest in something, e.g. more milk or more motivating work-task, as an effect of particular productions of desire.

Because of this relationship between desire and social order Deleuze and Guattari (1983: 25-35) thus distinguish between desire and interest. Desire as it is invested in the social and interest is desire as it is mediated through social representations of individuals with a definite and particular social identity (Due 2007: 96). Interest on its part is always a coded form of desire: they can be the interests of a collective e.g. in appropriating the means of production. Or the interest of an individual e.g. a employee has an interest in getting enjoyment from its work.

Nonetheless, desire is neither a free undifferentiated force nor something that adheres solely the individual, they are as Smith makes clear: 'always arranged and assembled by the social formation in which we find ourselves' (1983: 71). We always invest our desire in the social, but in this investment desire becomes inscribed with different signs and regulated along different paths that make this we and its particular interests possible: be it personal interest, group interest, organizational interest etc. For example we become interested in actualizing ourselves, coping with our stress or colonizing the employee's subjectivity for the sake of more flexible production. In this way, desire is always arranged in a social manner that allows a subject to have this or that particular interest (Smith 2007: 74). The idea of lack and needs are therefore something that first emerges when desire turns into interest. It is the desire in the particular social formation that

makes the interest possible, but this interest itself turns back on desire framing it in terms of a lack.

### **Thinking beyond individual needs and social demands**

This notion of desire and interest, then, is possible because Deleuze and Guattari do not delimit desire to be a mere production of fantasies, but understand it as the production of the real as such. This means that the social field is directly invested by desire and that in the end 'there is only desire and the social, and nothing else' (1983: 29).

As Buchanan points out this claim should be understood in two ways that goes against both orthodoxies in psychoanalysis and Marxism (2008: 48). Because desire is a direct investment in the social it does not need the mediation of say the fantasy of the prohibiting father. Neither does desire need to be mediated by ideology in order for it to become a part of the social. For Deleuze and Guattari (1983: 28) this implies that:

There is no such thing as the social production of reality on the one hand, and a desiring-production that is mere fantasy on the other. The only connections that could be established between these two productions would be the secondary ones of introjection and projection, as though all social practices had their precise counterpart in introjected or internal mental practices, or as though mental practices were projected upon social systems, without either of the two sets of practices ever having any real or concrete effect upon other

When trying to understand the relationship between the sphere of the psychic and the social there are, according to Deleuze and Guattari, normally two ways to understand this relation: projection and introjections or in broader terms externalization and internalization. Self-management with its inherent focus on subjectivity as a productive resource, might serve as an example here.

Self-management can be formulated as both a demand on the employee and a demand from the employee. The latter would be to formulate the relation between the psychic and the social as a matter of projection. Self-management is

nothing more than the projection of the desires of those who do self-management. Empowerment and the chance to self-actualize through work is a demand put forward by the employees themselves and what organizations do is simply give the employees what they want. In fact, empowerment of the employee becomes a requirement for organizational survival. In this way the job of management is to converge the interests in profit, productivity, and flexibility with the employee's personal ambitions, expectations, and aspirations of self-actualization. Conversely, others would understand self-management as a norm or social demand that has to be internalized. The employee is expected to internalize the various interests of the organization (e.g. corporate values and cultural norms or ideas of constant change and flexibility) resulting in the regulation of not only the behavior of the employees but also their hopes, ambitions, and aspirations.

To this Deleuze and Guattari might claim that the social production of self-management as a demand, serving primarily either the individual's or organization's interests and the production of desire are in fact part of the same process. A process that do not need any mediating psychic operations such as internalization and externalization to account for the power of social norms and individual expectations (Smith 2003: 319). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1983: 63) the only means of bypassing what is essentially a 'sterile parallelism where we flounder between Freud and Marx' is, exactly, by discovering 'how the affects or drives form part of the infrastructure itself'. This is not to say that self-management is not an organizational demand or a personal aspiration, however, these demands and aspirations exist precisely at the level of interest. Demands and norms are social interests and ambitions and aspirations are personal interests, but both have to be understood and explained from the level of this investment and inscription of flows of desire. Interests do not explain anything themselves, but have to be explained.



This means that outlining the mechanics of self-management is not, first and foremost, raised as a question of self-management's ability to satisfy certain personal needs or to reduce it to a social expectation demanded of us. As Deleuze and Guattari would have it, questions regarding the dynamic and order of self-management must be raised on a level prior to needs and expectations. Put another way, if we want to understand how self-management might impact upon subjectivity, such a question cannot be raised in terms of whether or not organizational self-management initiatives control or sets the subject free. Rather these initiatives should be understood as components of a social order that works even prior to the point where the question is raised. Indeed, following Deleuze and Guattari, the power of a social order, or a social machinery as they would put it, lies in its ability to construe a problematic and distribute potential contours of different solutions, not in its ability to dictate these solutions. I will return to this crucial point later on. However, before going into more depth about how the mechanics of this social form of organizing works, let's pause for a moment, to make a few issues clear.

### Why desire is more than desire?

It is not as much the meaning of these concepts of desire, desire-production and interest themselves as it is the strategic function they play which is important here. The thesis is informed by the way the present a certain image of thought and a certain way of posing questions. Which is to say the main interest in these concepts is not as analytical concepts I can use to categorize the findings of the thesis through. What is interesting about 'desire production' is that it serves a particular function performed by other concepts in Deleuze's work such as will to power, life, and difference and not the fact that it is named desire production i.e. that it has to do with desire as a power of production. Stated differently, it is the fact that 'desire is a term for that untranscendable force, which renders everything else immanent to it' (Buchanan 2000: 15) that is of interest here not that it is named desire. In fact, it is solely in the effort to understand the

mechanics of the concept of machine that this concept of desire and other related concepts such as body without organs and connective syntheses are elaborated.

It must, therefore, be emphasized that we will at no point in this thesis try and locate and designate certain aspects, phenomena, or entities as desire production, body without organs or connective synthesis. The primary interest is to understand the movements and lines these concepts orchestrate in the effort to understand what kind of ontological dynamism the notion of a machine is part of. As Buchanan (2000: 70) makes clear the concept of desire is first and foremost interesting because 'it enables a certain phenomenon to be thought, but does not claim to be adequate to it'. In point of fact, even the concept of machines used in the thesis does not so much represent something as it tries to create a zone of touch with a certain dynamic form of production and regulation in social life. To get a better grasp of this ontological dynamic we will now turn to how a machine in fact works in the interplay between desire and the social.

## CHAPTER 4

### DESIRING MACHINES AND SOCIAL MACHINES

Social machines make a habit of feeding on the contradictions they give rise to, on the crises they provoke, on the anxieties they *engender*, and on the infernal operations they regenerate. (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 151)

In *Anti-Oedipus* a distinction is made between two kinds of machines: desiring machines and social machines. But here we have to be careful. These two machines are not so much different entities as they are different ways of referring to the 'same' machinic production (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 33). To better understand these two modes of machinic production we must, however, start with another distinction, namely, one Deleuze and Guattari make between desiring-production and desiring machine.

As we have already discussed, desire-production refers to a continuous immanent production process of reality itself. Yet a desiring-machine can be said to refer to a certain synthesis and circulation of this production. In fact, desiring-production is 'the set of passive syntheses that engineer partial objects, flows, and bodies, and that function as units of production' (1983: 26). Desiring-production thus produce something: flows of different bodies through a set of passive synthesis. In so far as desiring-production posits the idea of reality as one big production-process the overall idea of passive synthesis is a way of solving the problem of 'constructing a genuine philosophy of immanence without at the same time losing his [Deleuze] grip on the "real" world' (Buchanan 2008: 52). It is the working of passive synthesis, then, that becomes all important for understanding how the immanent production of reality takes place.

## What is a passive synthesis?

Even though the concept of passive synthesis is only mentioned a couple of times in *Anti-Oedipus*, several commentators have pointed to it as crucial in understanding the machinic function of desire (Buchanan 2008: 50, Colebrook 2002: 115, Smith 2005: 641). However, the term passive synthesis is discussed explicitly across Deleuze's work. Primarily in his conceptualization of the three syntheses of time (habit, memory, and death) in chapter two of *Difference and Repetition* (1994: 70-128).

Here Deleuze uses habits as an example of a passive synthesis. A habit is for Deleuze not something that is carried out by a mind, but something that constitutes a mind (1994: 71). A habit must therefore be understood in a pre-subjective sense. It is not the habit of already constituted subject, like drinking alcohol every night or doing yoga every morning, rather it is something that contracts and produces the subject (Buchanan 2008: 52). It is the process that makes the habit of saying I, its elements and its unity possible. A habit, then, is the name for the process that contracts, selects, and puts together certain elements in ways that create a certain way of not only perceiving the world, but also of what is perceived (object) and perceiving (subject).

### **The world of a tick**

Deleuze often uses von Uexküll's celebrated analysis of the tick as a good example of this operation of a habit (Buchanan 2008: 53). Both in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Spinoza Practical Philosophy* Deleuze explores the nature of a tick, an animal that sucks the blood of mammals, through its affects, i.e. what it is capable of. The term affect here refers to the contraction of the sense-data into the perceived as well as the constitution of the perceiving subject, i.e., the tick. The three affects of the tick have to do with light, smell, and warmth. The tick climbs to the top of a branch; smells the mammal that passes under the branch and lets itself fall onto it; seeks the area with the warmest spot and digests into it. The tick's interaction with the world is limited to 'just three affects: the rest of the time the tick sleeps,

sometimes for years on end, indifferent to all that goes on' (Deleuze & Guattari 1999: 257). The tick is in this way part of an assemblage of different active and passive affects that both constitute what the tick is and how it's world looks in 'the midst of all that goes on in the immense forest' (Deleuze 1988: 124-125). The affects of the tick contracts flows of a visual, olfactive, and thermal nature and is constituted as an active subject in the process. In this way, the tick 'in its receptive and perceptual elements, but also in its viscera, is a sum of contractions, of retentions and expectations' (Deleuze 1994: 73).

What this example tells us, then, is the following: if the world consists of ordered synthesis these synthesis are not synthesized by an active subject or agent. As is for example the case with Kant that posits the mind as a higher category capable of contracting elements into synthesis (Buchanan 2008: 51). Rather a passive synthesis accounts for the possibility of an active synthesis. For Deleuze passive syntheses are acts without goals, they are exactly machines (Buchanan 2008: 52) that produce everything including themselves. They are contractions, that produce an effect such as the self. A passive synthesis, then, is not just a capacity to receive sensation, as Kant would have it (Buchanan 2008: 52), it is a synthesis that constitute the sensing subject before it constitutes what is experienced. So as Deleuze and Guattari (1983: 26) conclude

the real is the end product of, the result of passive syntheses of desire... Desire does not lack any. ... desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it.

A machine is a passive synthesis that produces the real, however, as Buchanan (2008: 51) points out, in *Anti-Oedipus* the notion of passive synthesis combines three kind of operations, which 'together comprise the three modes of desire understood as a machine: (i) the synthesis of connection, (ii) the synthesis of disjunction, and (iii) the synthesis of conjunction'.

## The three passive synthesis of Desire

All the three synthesis produce something, but their production is not of the same kind, even though they always overlap and interact. The synthesis of connection is a production of productions, of actions and passion, the synthesis of disjunction is a production of recording processes, a distribution and inscription of sense and purpose that serves as co-ordinates of the actions and passions, and finally the synthesis of conjunction is a production of consumption, taking place between the two other productions (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 4). In the interaction of the two first synthesis a detachment of sense and meaning becomes possible, that makes the subject emerge as a residue that contracts different aspects of the interaction in the third synthesis.

In so far as all three synthesis contract and produce something they also perform a cut in the flow of desire. In fact, flows only become manifest and apparent when they are the object of a machine that interrupts them. A synthesis is contraction of flows, but this contraction is simultaneously an interruption of a flow. The three synthesis, then, are not only different types of production, but also different types of interruptions. It is the order of these three productions and interruptions we turn to now.

### **Connect and cut**

The primary function of the first synthesis is to connect and break flows. The image of the breast and mouth we introduced earlier serves as Deleuze and Guattari's standard example of this (Buchanan 2008: 57). The mouth can be described as a cutting of a flow of milk produced by another machine. The mouth-cutting-milk-machine in this way forms a certain circuit between breast and mouth, however, this circuit is already connected to another machines. The mouth is e.g. coupled to various machines such as the stomach and the anus that process the flow of milk into

various energy circuits of collateral desiring-machines (circulatory, neural, hormonal, etc) within the infant's body, emerging eventually as flows of excretions (Bogue 2003: 60-61).

On its side the breast-machine producing milk is connected to another mouth-machine that connect to flows of bread, butter, ham, cheese, which are input in a circuit of machines that convert them into proteins, carbon, and fats. This means that when we refer to for example the body of the employee both in the sense of a body suffering from stress or being inscribed with the sign of stress, this body is not an entity, but a flow in a machine connected up in a network of different circulations: for example production of hormones and production of coping-processes (I will return to this in Part Three).

Anyhow, because the infant's mouth-machine is also capable of other things than eating, e.g. breathing, crying, and so forth every machine is always inscribed with a certain code that determines the implicit rule of a certain practice or function. Put otherwise, the machine is inscribed with a sign that denotes its purpose and sense. This means that we can talk of various kinds of machine (eating, spiting, crying, talking), but because this differentiation becomes possible we can also talk of a certain process of ordering in a certain grid. In other words, something can now be intensified as more important then something else. This constitutes the second form of production, namely that of recording or inscription.

### **Inscribe and detach**

Deleuze and Guattari calls this form of production the body without organs (BwO), 'a single map of coexisting circuits (in our example, alimentary, ocular, olfactory and tactile circuits), and alternating, disjunctive circuits (alimentary, breathing, crying circuits)' (Bogue 2003: 61). This BwO performs what Freud called a primal repression which is a form of a counter – force or moment of *anti*-production to the first form of production which it both organizes and disorganizes. It prevent the machinic organization already in play from becoming permanently fixed at the same time as it distributes new dispositions for acting, thinking, and feeling

(Holland 1999: 27-33). As such the body without organs is, as Bogue (2003: 62) puts it:

a machine of anti-production that constantly breaks down, stutters, freezes and collapses, thereby disconnecting and disrupting circuits of desiring machines, and yet at the same time a machine that puts various desiring machines in relation with one another in multiple, transversally connected circuits.

Given this ability to distribute or expand the machinic cuts and breaks, the repression of this anti-production machine does not primarily refer to the holding back of something else, e.g. the way ideologies are sometimes considered a social force that represses subjects (Colebrook 2002: 91). It is rather something that performs an act of detachment in the immense network of machines. For example, the infant's eating-machine is part of a whole network of other machinic circuits: the milk of the mother, the touch of the fingers, the light of a lamp, the walls of the room. However, what the repression does is detach this circuit from other circuits, making the mouth capable of spitting or talking etc. The body without organs in this way produces both a disorganization and an organization, a disjunction and a synthesis, a repulsion and an attraction.

It is in the midst of this oscillation between repulsion and attraction that the mouth is inscribed with function. In fact, it is this inscription that makes it possible to detach different circuits from one another. The assemblage of eating and producing milk turns into a relationship between an infant and a mother. This can in turn become recorded as a symbolic relationship that has more to do with love and care than hunger etc. All in all the BwO parcels out various combinations of circuits with different codes that detach them from one another as specific input-output combinations. The mouth-breast assemblage is a relationship that has milk as an input and the satisfaction of hunger as an output or it is a relationship that has intimacy as an input and love as an output.



## **Break and residuum**

The last form of production or synthesis is where the subject emerges. The subject is a contraction along the surface of body without organs and machinic circuits. It is a point that passes through different interactions of the BwO and the machines constituting a certain mode of existence.

This third form of synthesis 'suffers from the tension... produced by the synthesis of connection and disjunction and unconsciously tries to reconcile this tension' (Buchanan 2008: 64). The subject that is part of this mode of existence is in this way not the agent that selects to be a part of the two other synthesis, it is rather an after-effect of the two other synthesis. We are here dealing with a suffering subject in the sense that it is chosen by the desires that run through it rather than being the case that the agent chooses between these. As Holland (1999: 34) argues the subject's

recognition of "its" desire, indeed even of itself as subject, is thus crucially retrospective; hence the syntax of the conjunctive synthesis, with its use of the past tense "So that's what that was!"; "So that's what felt so intense!"; or "Oh! that was *me!*"

The subject emerges along side the two other synthesis as an instance that consumes the states inscribed on the BwO. The subject is, in consequence, a way of being that is internal to the desiring-production, but also a mode of existence that can misrecognize itself as that which produces instead of a product internal to the production. This misrecognition is made possible by the inscription of input-output combination made by the second synthesis. The inscriptions record and register certain flows and machines and in this process constitute a surface of inscription that on it's part appears to be the source of what gets recognized in the constitution of the subject in the third synthesis. In fact, as Holland (1999: 34-35) continues

the subject in turn claims mastery or ownership of the body-without-organs – or of its products: consummate experience, intensities – when it is in fact merely derivative of them. The subject as product claims as its own the very process that constitutes it as subject.

Desire, thoughts, feelings, and words, then, are not the activity of a self, not even the fractured self, as psychoanalytic theory might have it, but of three passive syntheses that are expressed in a mode of existence that can be mistaken and misrecognises as a unity of a self. Indeed, as Deleuze makes clear elsewhere, 'there's no subject but a production of subjectivity' (1995: 113). As such subjectivity is in an endless becoming but nothing at all like a temporal unfolding or realization of a predetermined potential. In the end, the subject is a multiplicity of the interactions between the connections of desiring machines and bodies with other organs. Individuality with its particular attributes, characteristics, and interests must always be understood in light of these pre-individual forces that produce it. But it can never be utterly reduced to them. The intertwining of these individual interests and pre-individual forces means at least two things.

It means, first, that we as subjects are part of an ongoing process of individuation (Deleuze 2004). This process does not happen *in contrast* to pre-individual forces, but rather *through* them. The modes of existence of the subject are not simply a result of a social process of individuation; rather, they emerge within an environment for further processes of individuation. The subject emerges as its interests and characteristics as it passes through them as 'a part made of parts' (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 41). However, if the subject has its own form of synthesis it is because it not only expresses or unfolds the implicated pre-individual forces of the two other forms of synthesis. The unfolding brings its own level of reality. Indeed, it is a mode of existence that expresses these forces. Understood from the level of modes of existence the subject is only a protection or a shelter from these forces in so far as it mistakes itself as a unity. Understood from the level of production of subjectivity, the subject is a way of confronting, living or giving new forms to these forces. Which brings us to another important feature.

The principle of the production of subjectivity, or what we here call the machine, is always contemporaneous with production. It neither comes before, nor after. It is something generic that outlines certain tendencies (Deleuze 2004: 86). Machinic productions must be understood as a matter of outlining certain vectors or dispositions for individuation and not as a question of finding a rigorous logic that produces determinate effects. Machines cut and connect pre-individual flows of actions, thoughts, and affects, inscribe them with signs, record, and distribute them in networks and regulate them by making them circulate along more and less smooth channels. In fact, it is here that the notion of social machine becomes important.

### Social machines producing presuppositions

In the process of repression that the BwO performs an instance of reproduction of certain machinic productions becomes possible. This is what Deleuze and Guattari call a social repression (1983: 30). This form of anti-production not only detaches certain circuits from one another, but also reproduces them in a certain order. For example love and care come to precede the milk and hunger relationship. However, this reproduction or social repression, does not consist in a direct determination of what to think, feel, desire, and do rather it sets up the set of presuppositions we activate to think, feel, and do something (Buchanan 2006: 137). Put roughly, its power is not its ability to set up the solution as such but its ability to, first of all, construe how a problem is raised, what kind of problem it is, and finally what kinds of solutions it might have.

As Buchanan (2008: 147) makes clear, the fact that the BwO performs this organizing and even reproductive function might come as a surprise for some readers of Deleuze and Guattari. For example, the BwO has been discussed in organization studies as a primarily positive concept highlighting experimentation (Thamen 2004: 211) or creation (Linstead 2000: 45). Yet the prime function of the BwO is to inscribe something, and in this way distribute an array of alternatives

(mouth is spitting, eating, etc), the BwO is also where something is intensified on behalf of something else. As such intensification is the condition for experimentation and creation altogether (Buchanan 2008: 147). Which is another way of saying that experimentation demands or at least implies a social order. Especially considering that desire is always invested in the social.

As Buchanan points out (2006: 136), if we want to understand what the BwO means for Deleuze and Guattari, and what kind of forces it exerts we must understand the parallel between desiring and social production. Any form of investment in the social involves, 'an unengendered non-productive attitude (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 10), which functions as a socius. This surface acts as a 'natural or divine presupposition' (1983: 10) of the machines which is inscribed upon it. The socius is an 'active form of presupposition that inserts itself into a given context and in so doing smothers its origins so that it always appears as naturally occurring' (Buchanan 2006: 137). Deleuze and Guattari (1983: 10) use Marx's notion of Capital to describe such an active form of presupposition.

This is the body that Marx is referring to when he says that it is not the product of labor, but rather appears as its natural or divine presupposition. In fact, it does not restrict itself merely to opposing productive forces in and of themselves. It falls back on (*il se rabat sur*) all production, constituting a surface over which the forces and agents of production are distributed, thereby appropriating for itself all surplus production and arrogating to itself both the whole and the parts of the process, which now seem to emanate from it as a quasi cause.

The second form of repression can thus be described as an instance where something falls back on the production in a certain context, constituting a surface of distribution and inscription and, in the end, makes something emerge as the quasi-cause of the elements that constituted it. The social machine at work here is, therefore, not a pre-fixed model, but itself a process that constitutes a surface in the more or less constant movement of machinic variations and let this surface fall back on these machines as their presupposition. The order the social machine constitutes is as a result not a static order, but a dynamic regulation. In fact, the

social machine's criteria of success is its ability to break down and begin its reproduction again by connecting with other machines.

It is in order to function that a social machine must not function well...The social machine's limit is not attrition, but rather its misfirings; it can operate only by fits and starts, by grinding and breaking down, in spasms of minor explosions[...] social machines make a habit of feeding on the contradictions they give rise to, on the crises they provoke, on the anxieties they *engender*, and on the infernal operations they regenerate. (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 151)

A social machine is never something stable, but an active dynamic organizing force that feeds on its on crises, interruptions, and break-downs.

### The inscription of social machines: follow, enroll, and fall back

To better understand this dynamic fall back performed by the social machine, it is important that we stress that the social is not regarded as some kind of substance or material. The social repression is not the force exercised by some kind of entity or material on another kind of entity. In his *Reassembling the social*, Bruno Latour (2005) makes a distinction between the social as a material and as a force of organizing that might help us to clarify this. The first refers to the social as some kind of state of affair that can be ordered in different ways. Here a social order is an ordering of the material referred to as the social. The second refers to the social as an act of ordering or a trailing of associations between heterogeneous elements. In this understanding the term order is redundant. The social is itself an ordering process. According to Latour (2005: 6) we find this second understanding of the social in the Latin root of the word *Socius*, which

denotes a companion, an associate... the word social is construed first as following someone, then enrolling and allying and, lastly, having something in common.

It is exactly in this sense that we should understand Deleuze and Guattari's use of the term *socius*. The *socius* is a surface of inscription that follows desiring production, inscribing it with codes which subsequently makes it possible to discern and distribute alternative modes of function of say the infant's mouth. This

inscription is a mode of organization that gives the flows a purpose and a function. As already discussed, such inscriptions detach the machines from one another, which in a social context means segmenting the flows in ways that delimit an affective field for possible actions and passions. The inscription is in this way both of a material and immaterial character. It is an active intervention into the network of flows that 'anticipate them or move them back, slow them down or speed them up, separate or combine them, delimit them in a different way' (Deleuze & Guattari 1999: 86). But it also has an immaterial side to it as a social level of sense arises, that indicates what has been inscribed from this intervention.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari (1999: 80) use the judge's sentences as an example of such an inscription. In sentencing the body of the accused is transformed into the body of the convict outlining two different fields of actions and passions. The socius outlines what kind of actions and passion that are possible to attribute to a body and how these actions and passions could be combined. This example could seem to suggest that it is an already constituted body that becomes the object of a certain juridical machine, however, this intervention always takes place in the midst of an array of machinic processes.

A more apt example, perhaps, would be one related to the subject of the thesis. A normative injunction such as 'enjoy your work', or 'cope with your stress' are inscriptions taking place on a pre-individual level. The social machinery does not work by imposing a demand on an already constituted subject: a demand that this subject can either comply with or not. Rather the injunction takes place in the process of producing the subject. It is in the very interweaving of the process of production and the constituted characterizes of a subject that the social machinery perform it dispositions of actions and passions.

The inscription, therefore, does more than just follow. It also enrolls or appropriates the cuts and flows it inscribes with a code. In other words, it outlines

a particular hierarchy in the distribution by interacting. Some circuits of desire become elements of others, some become something that is of more interest. Enrolling, consequently also means regulating desire along certain channels. The social machine does not only detach or distribute circuits of desire through their inscriptions. They reproduce them in a certain way. Moreover, it does this by both creating the categories and modes of expression that are expected of us *and* by tapping into and molding the pre-individual habits that are the components in this “us”.

Which, finally, makes it possible to claim that what is followed and enrolled have something in common. An element or presupposition that everything is seen as a consequence of. A presupposition emerged in the enrolment that posits itself as the condition (e.g. Capital) of the set of interests (working, investing, making a profit) we in fact should desire as part of this or that social context. The social machine in this way posits a quasi-cause as the transcendental principal that constitutes social order. In other words that which is required to make certain claims about thoughts, actions, and feelings possible. It is also along these lines that we should understand the notion of socius as a quasi-cause. Here, quasi-cause refers to a form of causality that should not be understood in linear efficient terms. Rather in its enrolment of flows; the social machine abstracts a transcendental surface of inscription by making the various machinic productions that it follows resonant. It subsequently folds this surface back onto the flows in order for them to circulate along the route of distributions of inscriptions lay out for them: black or white, man or woman, mouth or breast. Essentially, the power of the social machine is in its ability to distribute the presuppositions of thought, feelings, and actions and make them circulate along more or less smooth channels.

## Delimiting the social machines

In chapter three 'Savages, Barbarians, Civilized Men' of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari makes a historical account for three such social distributions: territorial, despotic and capitalist. These machines inscribe desiring-production within the field of social production and reproduction, so subjects can emerge and 'be prepared for their social roles and functions' (Surin 2005b: 255). This inscription parcels out segments of social functions and purposes that make it possible to understand and organize interactions and links between different kinds of flows. 'Flows of women and children, flows of herds and of seed, sperm flows, flows of shit, menstrual flows, nothing must escape coding' (1983: 142) and as coded the flows are given a symbolic value and transformed into a social function. E.g. the breast – mouth machine becomes a symbol of collective strength. The milk that flows from the breast represents the growth of child as he prepares for his future role as chief of the tribe.

However, we cannot delimit social machines to three instances. In fact, the whole of *A thousand Plateaus* can as Buchanan posits, be considered a rewrite of the chapter on social machines in *Anti-Oedipus*. Two aspects seem to support this claim that social machines have more than three modes. The first has to do with the particular analysis conducted in *Anti-Oedipus* and the second with the ontological status of social machines as a ubiquitous and dynamic force

First of all, the three social machines accounted for in *Anti-Oedipus*, must be seen in the light of what the book partly tries to achieve, namely to account for 1) the coming into being of capitalism, and 2) the genealogy of the structure of desire under capitalism. The term *Anti-Oedipus* refers to the fact that desire cannot be reduced to the daddy, mammy, child triangle. Desire is directly invested and impacted by the social and is not a function of Oedipus. In spite of this, Oedipus does play a function. It is not the dirty little secret of desire. Oedipus, however,



serves the purpose of regulating desire in a way that reproduces the presuppositions of capitalism (Buchanan 2009: 116).

In fact, Oedipus' role in this reproduction is quite important. The capitalist machine is characterized by a change in the way inscriptions work. Flows are no longer categorized and organized as concrete or symbolic flows, but as abstract flows. For capitalism's exchange mechanism to work flows have to be intersubstitutable and quantifiable. Everything must have its price. However, to compensate for the 'massive collective disinvestment that takes place in the social as a result of the inexorable growth of the processes of abstraction' (Surin 2005b: 256) a privatization of the social must take place. And as Surin (2005b: 256) continues, 'the vehicles of this privatization are ruled by the Oedipus principle, which functions as a kind of transcendental regime for the investment of social desire'. The subject produced in this process is a subject that constantly fears the imaginary crime of the mother as an object of desire. Which in effect means that this subject is produced as a subject inclined to control itself (Due 2007: 82). The function served by the Oedipus process is thus to produce a form of self-control that keeps the eruption of social codes that capitalism demands in check. As will be shown in Part Three coping with stress comes to present a similar role in self-management. It ensures that the passionate parts of self-management do not overdo themselves.

All in all, the three social machines in *Anti-Oedipus* form the particular genealogy of the personalization of desire performed by Oedipus. A genealogy showing that if desire revolves around the Oedipus-complex it is not because the complex is a point of origin, in fact, it is rather a consequence of a certain social machine called Capital.

Secondly, social machines need not be understood as something grand such as Capitalism. It is possible to find other social machines in other contexts. Social

machines working at a more minor scale so to speak as the various analysis in *A Thousand Plateaus* also seems to suggest so. But here we have to be careful. Posing the question of social machines in terms of size is to misunderstand the way they work. It is correct to say that a social machine is combined with the other machines it falls back onto and forces to change and adapt through various inscriptions. But we still have to understand social machines as a certain system reference. The machine that is forced to reproduce certain interests can under other circumstances be what itself forces. Indeed, desiring-production and social production have the same elements and processes, they differ only in their mode of function. In other words, it is never just a matter of size and scale. Understood as a system reference, the term social machine is primarily interesting as a term designating social life as defined by a series of interlocking, overlapping, discrete systems of regulations. By constituting a surface of presuppositions a social machine is what in a particular context inscribes flows of thoughts, actions, words and affects with a specific usage, extension, and comprehension (Deleuze & Guattari 1999: 398).

### Social machine produce problems not solutions

Following Buchanan (2008: 61) we might therefore understand the inscription of the social machine as the functionally equivalent of what Althusser called interpellation, with the socius standing in place of ideology. For Althusser interpellation describes a process where the individual is turned into a subject through ideology. Althusser describes this process in the following way:

It follows that, for you and for me, the category of the subject is a primary 'obviousness (obviousnesses are always primary): it is clear that you and I are subjects (free, ethical etc...)... the obviousness that you and I are subjects – and that that does not cause any problems – is an ideological effect, the elementary ideological effect. It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since there are 'obviousnesses') obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot fail to recognise and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the 'still, small voice of conscience'): 'That's obvious! That's right! That's true!' (Althusser in Buchanan 2008: 62).

According to Buchanan it is this effect of the creation of the plane of obviousness, that is interesting, when trying to understand the inscription of usage, extension and comprehension.

### **Distributing both the repression and the repressed**

First of all, because it points to the distributive and reproductive power of the social machine. 'For what do the ideological state apparatuses (i.e. social-machines) do but call on us to *reproduce the relations of production*' (Buchanan 2008: 61). However, contrary to Althusser Deleuze and Guattari do not consider these social machines in ideological terms. Nonetheless, the socius or surface of inscription can be considered as a plane of obviousness of on which the inscription or interpellation takes place: man, woman, child, milk as flow of nutrition or a sign of intimacy. And the power of this surface is its ability to present itself as the presupposition of the problems and solutions that arise from this inscription. The call to reproduce is not a direct and specific order, but a cry that outlines the conditions of the question it itself poses, e.g. either you are a man or a woman, your either understand the flows of milk as primarily a sign of feeding or a sign of intimacy etc. In short, it outlines the grid of combinations and selections that are possible.

The discussion of interest and self-management in chapter four serves well to illustrate this point. The social machine is not solely what performs the role of controlling and internalizing certain demands on the employee. It is rather what sets up the conflict between demands of internalization of a certain ideal of self-management and the employee's reluctance not to. The social machine determines what interests are in play. E.g. the employees' real authentic need to self-actualize are institutionalized and controlled by the subtle power of contemporary ideologies of self-management and their interest in profit. Here the social machine not only performs a repressive role (ideology of self-management) it also distributes what is to be considered repressed (authentic self). It is,

therefore, in the very dialectics between two such instances of repression and repressed that a social machine operates.

When a machine is said to work at the level of problems, then, it is exactly because it outlines the problems at hand and feeds of the different solutions to this problem. Truly the social machines ultimate power does not consist in dictating an answer but in posing both the question and the possible answer. In fact, it is this power to pose the problem that guarantees it dynamic character: when one horizon of solutions breaks down, it poses the problem anew to such a degree that social machines feed 'on the crises they provoke, on the anxieties they engender' (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 151).

### **Misrecognitions and mode of existence**

Secondly, according to Althusser, when we forget that the subject is just an effect of interpellation, a product of society, we can talk about an instance of misrecognition (Buchanan 2008: 64). The obviousness ideology imposes makes us forget that this obviousness is an effect of an interpellation (2008: 62). For Deleuze and Guattari a similar misrecognition also happens and what is misrecognized is also the fact that the subject is what is produced and not what produces. In spite of this, misrecognition can not be conflated with ideology or even with the presupposition produced by the social machine. The subject is never the sole product of the social machine. Rather the subject that emerges in the 'call to reproduce the relations of productions' emerges from an interaction between the social machine as a surface of inscription and the desiring machines that inhabit it. The subject is a part of the third passive synthesis, i.e. a mode of existence, that tries to resolve a tension between the inscription of a social machinery *and* the desiring machines that conditions and breaks-down this social machinery. Misrecognition in this way consists in mistaking what I think, hope for, and do as acts of free choice instead of as synthesis of a mode of existence. And as argued, this term always points to the fact that our lives are fabricated through social machines and desiring machines.

However, exactly because we are constituted as subjects in the interweaving between social and desiring production, it is never enough just to declare that we are not the subject we believe we are. We must also understand what fabricated this belief. How are we constituted as selves with this and that interest? We must therefore show how this misrecognitization is made possible by the inscription of various social machines. A part of a machinic investigation, then, is showing which social machinery fabricated this self. But it is just as important to understand that the fuel of this machinery is desire. That is to recognize the degree to which the mode of existence we (mis)recognize as ourselves is a reflection of desire. As Deleuze himself puts it: 'we always have the beliefs, feelings and thoughts that we deserve given our way of being or our style of life' (1983: 1).

The way desire fuels its own repression must as a result always be understood in the dynamic between pre-individual machines and the mode of existence that expresses and unfolds them. So in the case of understanding the production of a zone of indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity in self-management, it implies that our starting point is never a meeting between a constituted subject and its social environment (e.g. Kunda). But nor is it a matter of evoking a split and empty subject in the line of Žižekian thought (e.g. Contu and Fleming and Spicer). For at least two reasons,

Firstly, subjectivity must be understood as a process constituted in a pre-individual machinery. A Žižek informed psychoanalytic perspective like Contu's may critique the subject, but to some degree it still maintains the idea of the perspective of a more 'real', yet empty subject. In the case of Fleming and Spicer's and Contu analysis of cynicism in organizations they point to the discernment between the corporate self complaining with the normative injunction of contemporary management technologies and the authentic self as something untainted as a moment in the play of power. Understood through their psychoanalytic lens the

latter is not a more whole self. There is no inner side to the subject. In fact, this whole discernment just covers out the fact that the subject is a split between the symbolic register (e.g. be a corporate self) and the imaginary fantasy (e.g. being an authentic self). For Deleuze and Guattari this split would be a secondary after-effect of the production of the symbolic and imaginary register. So while the subjectivity constituted might be split, this split subject must always be understood from the pre-individual synthesis or machines that produce it.

Secondly, as a process subjectivity is for Deleuze and Guattari, something positive yet never something whole or finished. They reject the assumption of the self as an integrated whole and propose any talk of an active self as a synthesis of 'thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us' (Deleuze 1994: 75), indeed, the 'world of passive synthesis constitute the system of the self' (Deleuze 1994: 78). This multiplicity is as Buchanan (2008: 53) points out 'neither the bereft fragments of a shattered unity nor the scattered pieces of an as yet unassembled puzzle'. For Deleuze and Guattari this means that the state of becoming fuelled and activated by passive synthesis is only a tragic event from the perspective of a constituted self that misrecognizes itself as either a subject that is losing its unity (e.g. being colonized by managements formalization of self-actualization) or as a fractured subject that has never had its unity, but nonetheless fantasizes about it (e.g. the notion of the authentic subject as an ideological cover-up). As Carnera (2008: unpagged my translation) has recently argued it is this continuous interest in the tragedy that is not only all important for psychoanalytic teachings, but

One of the reason why Žižek can keep writing so many books: Žižek must incessantly start over. A new Hollywood film, a new political conflict, everything new can become a part of Žižek's grinder and no one is any wiser since the last time, nobody has changed...There is no creative qualitative difference with the subjects own movement. Again and again Žižek returns to the subject as his starting point, it might be empty, but it is still a logical starting point.

From the perspective of the process itself subjectivity is, however, an explication or unfolding of forces working in the interaction between desire and social

machines. Stated otherwise, subjectivity is something emerging through a mode of existence. Furthermore, this explication in the mode of existence of something implicated (desire and social machine) presents a level of complication. Something new emerges in the process that prolongs the process along new lines, namely an open-ended and multiple subjectivity. As a result Deleuze and Guattari affirm desire's power to change and transform the present state of affairs. The subject itself might be constituted and dissolved by pre-individual forces but these processes also allow the subject to interact with reality by affirming its finite nature, affirming the forces that constitute it as sources of development and transformation. Put another way, Deleuze and Guattari have an eye for the subject's movements and changes through pre-individual forces, while Žižek seems to experience this production-process as an always tragic experience. His psychoanalytic lens always focuses on the traumatic, the break-down, the lack, and the deferral because he does not take into account these pre-individual forces that transverse both the individual and the collective as something that moves and changes the subject.

### Analytical insights from the ontology of machines<sup>2</sup>

What is important in this rather long unfolding of machines is not as much the particular combination of Marxism and psychoanalysis which *Anti-Oedipus* introduced, or the particularity of the three kinds of social machines the book unfolds. Rather as already explained, what is important is the introduction of production into desire and desire into the social through the term machine. The term machine and especially social machine as they are introduced in *Anti-Oedipus* allows us to pose the question of subjectivity as interwoven with the social order without it being reducible to the social or a kind of authentic individual. And as argued the notion of mode of existence designates the particular

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<sup>2</sup> An earlier version of this section has been published in *Culture and Organization* in my article 'Tune in, Break Down, and Reboot – new machines for coping with the stress of commitment' from 2008. See the section 'Modes of existence and their ontological machines'

manifestation of this interweaving whereas the machine designates the way this interweaving works.

So to sum up, the mode of existence is what allows a subject to be constituted in a flow of feelings, thoughts, words, and actions. This means that subjectivity is not something inherent, but something that is actively produced in social machines. Neither our desires nor our interests are our own but already part of the social. These machines co-produce the way we can act, think, speak, and feel by distributing a set of presuppositions. In other words, every time I act, think, speak, and feel, these flows of actions, thoughts, words, and affects become inputs in a social machine. However, this 'I' is not a psychic unity that becomes encroached by the machine. In fact, the subject as a self first emerges in these machines as it passes through them as a part made of parts (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 41). Social machines cut and connect these flows of actions, thoughts, and affects, inscribe them with signs, distribute them in networks and regulate them by making them circulate along more and less smooth channels, thus co-producing a mode of existence the subject passes through, lives, and indeed becomes a subject in. Another way of saying this is that through the social machine desire not only converges into certain interests, these interests also set them selves up as what desire has to desire. Inscription is in other words not enough in itself for a social machine to endure. Inscriptions expand and manifest desire-production, but a social machine is born in the moment, where these inscriptions set up a set of presupposition that reproduces desire. What the social machinery reproduces is a certain circuit of desire. As the social machine in this way is interwoven with our desire we can therefore understand the social infrastructure as something that intervenes directly into the ontological fabric of our life. What we think is most personal about ourselves, namely our desires, are always something assembled with the social.



Nevertheless, it must be stressed that this does not imply that subjectivity in the meaning of thoughts, feelings, and desires is a mere product of society. Even though the flows are always a part of a particular *social* machine they are not fully determined by this machine but always related to other machines always fuelled with what they assemblage, namely desire. For it is desire that both enables the emergence of modes of existences and makes it possible to fashion and reproduce certain kinds of mode of existence best suited for the collective functioning of the social order (Surin 2005a: 27).

What is of particular interest for us is exactly how this fashioning and reproduction is enabled by a social machine. It is so to speak the syntheses done by the social machinery that is the main interest in this thesis not the ontological forces that enable it and breaks it down, nor the way these modes of existences are lived and transgressed by employees in a specific corporation. What is outlined in the rest of the thesis is the social machinery that runs through the two machines claimed to constitute the stress-fit self-managing employee; self-management and commitment on the one hand and stress as a somatic and psychological mechanism on the other hand.

The critical potential of outlining these fits and sparks of the social machinery is not to ask how these machines control subjectivity as the question might be posed in the normative control tradition, nor is it to ask the classical ethical question of how we as individuals and organizations should act and live. When the subject is only a component in a machinery 'there is no general prescription' (Deleuze & Parnet 2005: 144) there are only questions such as 'what machinic connections are we part of within a certain mode of existence?' and 'how can we experiment with these machines that are us and not us at the same time'? Following May, we might phrase it this way: 'It is not a question of how we should live; it is a question of how we might live' (2005: 133). Keeping in mind that this 'we' is never a given 'we'. It is 'not the stability of an identity. It is the participation in the formation of

connections' (2005: 133). It is always a matter of lodging ourselves onto the machines we are part of and to experiment with them by exposing them.

From an analytical point of view describing these modes of existence and their inherent machinic processes becomes a matter of trying to grasp the organization of desire and its constitution of subjectivity. This, in turn, has at least four consequences.

First of all, as mentioned many times, the individual subject is not the privileged point of departure in understanding the way stress, coping, and the aforementioned *zones of indiscernability* interact. Rather it is this system of production, distribution, and regulation in the interaction itself that becomes the object of analysis: the machinic and essentially pre-individual encounter between what we call coping and commitment.

Secondly, any system of tendencies or machinic order is not a delimited and hierarchal unity, but a network of relations between various machines. As Deleuze and Guattari make clear in *Anti-Oedipus*, machines are always plugged into other machines that break down and interrupt each other. A machine is a system of such interruptions and breaks (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 36). In fact, a machine's criteria of success is its ability to break down and begin its production again by connecting with other machines. For example we will see how the machine that produces commitment by invoking a zone of indiscernability between the subjectivity of the employee and the organization breaks down and is kick-started when confronted with the coping machine.

Thirdly, to say that the location of a blueprint of such a *social machinery* is a matter of following a certain way of interrupting and regulating flows of desire, language, thought and actions that *other social machines produce within the social*. The insight is crucial because it means that the social does not repress

something more real as is for example the case in the tradition of social-philosophy from Rousseau through Durkheim to Horkheimer, Adorno, and Honneth. The common thread in this tradition is that the social consists of a number of constraining aspects that makes the unfolding of forms of self-realization problematic by eroding the autonomy of the individual, in turn resulting in various social pathologies such as stress, depression, unhappiness. (Ferrara 2002: 427). For Deleuze and Guattari the flows of desires, thoughts, and actions we relate to this disturbed self-realization and eroded autonomy are not part of a spontaneity or naturalness that social reality represses. Social pathologies do not derive from a separation of the individual from its pre-individual productive forces through the intervention of a social machine, in the way that a scholar of the Frankfurt School might maintain (Virno 2004: 79). Rather than 'imagining an individual, confined to a cold and damp niche, while, far way from this individual, there gleams forth the anonymous power of society' (Virno 2004: 79) unhappiness results from a specific interweaving between the individual and these forces: unhappiness, anxiety, stress in short sad affects is itself the consequence of a certain machinic encounter. A machinic effect that itself is the input in another machinery e.g. sad affects becomes inscribed as a matter of stress and coping.

Finally, order is never something static that excludes change, diversity, and desire when stratifying flows. It is a dynamic intervention that regulates it. Any order is full of cracks, breaks, and interruptions. In this way, what a specific machinery 'represses' when producing a mode of existence is, as Smith (2005: 646) makes clear, not the natural flow of things but their ability to turn into something completely new. And even here we have to be careful. Machines intervening in other machines may repress transformation to a certain extent but it also makes transformation possible. In any social machinery there is a counter-force or moment of anti-production that both organizes and disorganizes. It prevents the machinic organization already in play from becoming permanently fixed at the same time as it distributes new dispositions for acting, thinking, and feeling. With

machines we do not start with something ordered and try to seek out the gaps that mark an irruption, as is the case with Levinas when he speaks of the ethical moment as an irruption in common sense (Muhr 2007) or with Žižek when he makes psychoanalysis a matter of finding the irruption of an impossible real in the gaps of the symbolic (Smith 2005: 645-46). Rather the starting point is the organization and transformation of a continuous interruption of flows itself. Invoking the concept of a machine in order to chart the way in which stress is expected to be handled among self-managing employees demands that we understand a production, distribution, and regulation of possible feelings, actions, and thoughts. In other words, the two machines of commitment and coping grinding against one another in ways that on one level create contractions, disharmony and breakdown, and another level feeds off these dysfunctionalities as elements that make them start a new, reproducing themselves in new forms.

So the question is always what kind of machinery is desire part of in its production of reality. Or given a certain effect, which is in our case a certain mode of existence, what kind of machine is able to produce it.

## CHAPTER 5

### MAPPING MACHINES

Everything has its...cartography, its diagram... we can't be sure in advance how things will go. We can define different kinds of line, but that won't tell us one's good and another bad...Cartography can only map out pathways and moves, along with their coefficients of probability and danger (Deleuze 1995: 53-54).

Following this machinic understanding the thesis is a reading of both theoretical literature on organization studies, e.g. discussions on normative control and cynicism, and best practice hand-books, e.g. on stress-management and performance management. The 'stress-fit self-managing subject' is expressed through these texts. The 'data' are therefore contemporary discussions of self-management and stress in an effort to conceptualize certain dispositions or presuppositions of thoughts, actions, and feelings stretching across these discussions. And here we have to be careful. The effort is not to represent a common essence or general interest in these discussions but to capture and express something passing through them by creating different concepts such as 'zone of indiscernability', 'commitment machine' 'the subjectivity of the employee' and 'coping machine', and indeed to some degree the concept of stress and self-management themselves. Finding a given machinic effect such as the stress-fit self-managing subject is a matter of locating indices of machines and outlining the way these indices interact in a certain machinic logic

Lodging on to a machine, then, first of all demands that we understand how to grasp its indices. A machinic index is an individual piece of a machine, or a component we don't know how to work yet. In the thesis I located four such machinic indices. The first two belong to the commitment machine: an index of the *subjectivity* of the employee as a production-resource and an index of *commitment* towards the organization through task-enjoyment and the ability to

change. The last two indices termed the *somatic subject* and the *coping-processes* are features of the coping-machine. Still grasping these indices is more a matter of an experiment and creation than an effort to represent an empirical fact. Building on the ontology discussed in the last couple of chapters this chapter will look at some of the general rules, tasks and implications which mapping these indices involves.

## Rules

We can talk of two general rules when experimenting with machines. First of all, a rule with a negative twist. We must always destroy entities. We cannot start with either the individual, organizational culture, or occupational stress as a point of origin. They are instead mere social representations that manifest or express certain indices of a machine. Which brings us to the second and more positive rule, namely, outlining the kind of social machine capable of producing these expressions. That is to say it is never enough just to deconstruct ontological assumptions about stabilities and entities. Not even enough to show that it is the pre-individual flows that are assembled in these assumptions. For example, to merely posit that stress and subjectivity are not the characteristics of the individual employee but what constitutes or produce it. The particular workings of these machinic processes must be outlined.

To explicate these machines demands a certain conceptual creation. In fact, not only the *commitment* and *coping* machine but also the notions of self-management and stress are themselves conceptual constructs, drawing upon certain contours rather than representing an empirical fact. In this way the literature discussed in the thesis is not picked because they necessarily confront valid, well-tested, or even clear-cut definitions of stress and self-management. Especially in the case of self-management the concept itself is construed on the backdrop of discussions that rarely use the term. This has to do with the fact that it is the contours and features of a machinic logic that is of interest and not

necessarily the way the texts and discussions present themselves. Such a logic is, as we have seen and will see further, manifested quite potently in the seminal discussions by Kunda (1992) and Willmott (1993) on corporate culturism as well as Fleming and Spicer (2007), Fleming and Sturdy (2008) and Contu (2008) important work on cynicism and authenticity. The literature review in chapter eight to ten and thirteen and fourteen are therefore an internal element in the very effort to outline the mode of existence of the stress-fit self-managing employee. They function as indicators of the argument made in the thesis but is also put in a certain light by this argument.

However, in an ontological world of machines, such an outline of indices is not a matter of representing a machine through different concepts. Actually, any effort to represent something is to cut into a machinic production. Outlining the cuts and breaks of social machinery, its production of presuppositions, and its regulation of these presuppositions, is, then, perhaps better understood as an act of conceptually *palpating* a movement. This is at least what May (2005) seems to suggest in his discussion on the nature of concepts in the works of Deleuze. A discussion we now turn to, to better understand how to approach a social machinery when immersed in an ontology of mobility, machines, and differences prescribed by Deleuze.

According to May (2005), for us, to at all know from where we raise a question such as outlining a social machinery first of all entails that we understand that Deleuze himself challenges two assumptions that we usually make when we pose a question of ontology. The first has to do with the idea that ontology involves discovery rather than creation. The second with the assumption that ontology has to do with identity and not difference.

Posing an ontological question is, as May rightly posits, often assumed to be a matter of trying to discover the structure or nature of the world's building blocks.

Conversely, Deleuze pose the ontological question as a matter of creation, or better yet, as a question that bypasses the distinction between discovering and creating. Following this line of thought ontology is not a matter of grasping the essential character of being through concepts but of construing conceptual frameworks or maps, that belong neither to the realm of exact representations or fictional fabrications.

Such an approach not only inverts or bypasses the relationship between creation and discovery. It also understands ontology as a realm of differences and not identities (May 2005: 17). In order for something to be discovered it has to be identified and an identification demands conceptual stability. Or put otherwise, the concept's job is to grasp and identify what is discovered. Conversely, Deleuze understands ontology in terms of difference. In fact, for Deleuze (1994: 57) 'difference is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing'. Being itself is difference and as such cannot be approached in terms of identities and discoveries (May 2005: 19). Indeed, grasping being as difference must be understood as an act of creation.

By how can we conceptually grasp and capture something that is not an identity? May (2005: 20) suggests that one way is to understand concepts as acts of thought that palpate rather than identify:

Concepts do not identify difference, they *palpate* it. When doctors seek to understand a lesion they cannot see, they palpate the body. They create a zone of touch where the sense of the lesion can emerge without its being directly experienced. They use their fingers to create an understanding where direct identification is impossible

So in much the same way that doctors use their hands to palpate a lesion that they cannot see directly, concepts give voice to this lesion: 'it allows the lesion to speak: not in its own words, for it has none, but in a voice that will at least not be confused with something it is not' (May 2005: 20). Concepts, then, create a zone of touch that gives voice or manifests something that cannot be directly experienced or identified. This means that thought is always irritated, shocked, or



moved by something, however, what this something is always first emerged when thought tries to grasp it, manifest it, and assign it a place.

This approach or “method” builds on the assumption that the concepts activated to explain something are born together with what is explained. As Deleuze and Guattari insist (1994: 7)

Concepts are not waiting for us ready-made, like heavenly bodies. There is no heaven for concepts. They must be invented, fabricated, or rather created and would be nothing without their creator’s signature. Nietzsche laid down the task of philosophy when he wrote, ‘[Philosophers] must no longer accept concepts as a gift, nor merely purify and polish them, but first *make* and *create* them, present them and make them convincing’... For according to the Nietzschean verdict, you will know nothing through concepts unless you have first created them

Subsequently, concepts are themselves construed according to the problem they are faced with the problem is, however, only expressed through the concepts themselves.

This thesis, then, is not empirical in a classical sense in that it looks for a valid and reliable representation. But it is not theoretical in the sense that it discusses the ability of other theories to represent something properly. Instead it is characterized by an approach that sketches out something in the flows of discussions of subjectivity within organizations but relies on a conceptual creation to conduct the outline. This outline is achieved by creating *anexact* concepts. The term *anexact* highlights the assumption that conceptual indirectness is not an approximation, but, as Deleuze and Guattari will have it, a way of grasping ‘the exact passage of that which is under way’ (1999: 20). In effect, to delineate and analyze the self-management-stress encounter becomes a perpetual experimental effort.

## Tasks

If we transposed this claim of grasping something through a creation of concepts to the thesis interest in a social machinery, the effort is never to represent a social machine but to draw a conceptual map or a cartography of the working of the machinery.

But why a map? Because a map is not a direct representation of something, rather it highlights certain indexes or points of interests (such as a river, a tourist attraction, a curving road, or an elevated point). However, this neither implies that the map is inexact (lacking something) or exact (grasping something fully). Rather it is anexact (1999: 20). And again it has to be stressed that anexact does not imply that we are dealing with a necessary step in the movement toward the real exactitude.

The conceptual map depicts 'a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again' (Deleuze & Guattari 1999: 20). So while the conceptual map might be termed indirect, it is this indirectness or better still anexactitude which touches the dynamic machinic process with its breakdowns, connections and detachments.

This should not lead to the conclusion that creating concepts is a wild manic endeavor promulgating into endless new creations in the effort to manifest differences, nor to the assumption that Deleuze's philosophy is a vulgar vitalism celebrating difference and multiplicity as something inherently good and true. Deleuze's concepts have a certain scholastic to them and his thought never celebrates change and creation as good in itself. For Deleuze there must always be sobriety in the conceptual palpating of something. The Deluzian 'method', then, is always a systematic unfolding of how multiplicity and difference are organized and regulated. This is all important in understanding the approach in the thesis. So

before moving on with the way this approach is actualized, a few more comments on the ontological and normative conditions of this method would be in order.

In *Negotiations* Deleuze (1995: 141) proclaims what seems to be a clear normative gesture to the aim of his work: 'One's always writing to bring something to life, to free life from where it's trapped, to trace lines of flight'. There is certainly an element of vitalism, to this claim: To bring to life, to set life free, to trace lines of flight. In this quote, line of flight, seems to refer to that more, that vitalistic impulse, that always escapes a certain entity, identity, or form of organization. There thus seems to be a clear affirmation of novelty, renewal and energetic impulse at work here. And indeed, there is. However, life and lines of flights, should not be understood as something outside or transcendent to the forms of organization they escape from. Or as something that can be invoked and engendered. As May (2005: 128) makes clear

What escapes is of the same order as that which it escapes. There is only immanence. What Deleuze calls a *line of flight* is not a leap into another realm; it is the production within the realm of that from which it takes flight

It is a matter of *tracing* lines of flight, then, of finding something already at work, by intensifying, blocking, prolonging, or accelerating it. And not a question of outlining the features of a form of organization and then asking the question of how we might best resist or get away from it. In fact, outlining this realm or form of organization is also to outline its lines of flights. In short, the question of setting life free is not to engender or create a line of flight, but to show how life is organized and transformed.

But what is life then? As Colebrook (2006: 121-122) explains for Deleuze life is not 'a transcendental ground that expresses itself in man's finite empirical being' rather 'life is composed of different styles or combinations, an 'unlimited finity' – finitudes or distinct combinations that are not united by a single vital current'.

Essentially, it is a matter of multiple and sometimes divergent machines interacting with other machines.

If the effort for Deleuze is to release life and prolong lines of flight, this effort is always bound to a certain order then. And the question of freeing life is always a matter of tracing and intensifying what machines are at work. In this way, it is less a matter of mobilizing an attack on an established order than of outlining this order through an intensification of its features. To outline is here to exhaust the order's possibilities, or to take the order to some of its furthest consequences. As Valentin (2006: 198) suggests the subverted side to setting life free thus 'always includes a hidden element of perversity'. It demands that we engage with and intensify the wheels and cogs of a social machine.

In short, to free life where it is trapped is not to represent the social order and then to discard it. Rather, it is to displace this order by creating concepts that palpate it. In a certain sense creation is therefore a creation of nothing as it outlines and problematizes the machinery of a social order 'without ever articulating a plan in view of a *telos*' (Valentin 2006: 82). Put another way, to trace lines of flight demands a sobriety that renounce needs, goals and interests (Valentin 2006: 194).

As Deleuze (1990: 33-4) himself puts it, we can therefore never 'be sure in advance how things will go. We can't assume that lines of flight are necessarily creative'. That is to say that what we locate and construe as breaks, cracks, and destabilization of forms and entities are necessarily something that sets life free. In fact, as Deleuze (1990: 34), continues we must move systematically, through a 'Cartography' which 'can only map out pathways and moves, along their coefficients of probability and danger'.

Following this line of thought the positive task of mapping involves outlining the indices of a certain encounter or relation, e.g. between self-management and stress. But the elements or indices of this encountered are themselves always the object of a conceptual creation and intervention that tries to explain its machinic working. This machinery is moreover what intensifies something as a point of interest or an index. In the outline of nuts and bolts of the social machinery of the so-called stress-fit self-managing employee, my strategy of mapping thus takes the following form.

It draws this cartography by pinpointing certain indexes put forth in contemporary debates on the nature of stress, stress-management, and work-life issues surrounding the focus on self-management. Of course these indices which are labeled subjectivity (chapter 8), commitment (chapter 9 and 10) somatic subject (chapter 13) and coping processes (chapter 14) are limited to texts they are expressed through. These texts are the 'empirical' data in the thesis in so far as they manifest certain social representations of these machinic indexes. A common feature of these texts are, as already mentioned, that they are often cited in discussions on stress and the increased interest on employee subjectivity. The interesting aspects are, however, not primarily that they are popular or state of the art. The exemplary status lies in the fact that they are already considered actualizations of the social machinery that is the object of the thesis. In other words, they present exemplary instances of two machines: the commitment machine and the coping machine. These texts present certain social representations of work at the start of the 21st century (e.g. Boltanski & Chiapello 2005, Fleming & Sturdy 2007, Contu 2008), of stress (Lazarus 1999, Wainwright & Calnan 2002), and of managing stress (Loehr 1997, Williams & Cooper 2002) but the representations themselves are already detached from their context and connected to the thesis description of certain machines.

To manifest the machines at work, in this way demands a certain re-contextualization or recreation of texts. To read the texts as exemplary demands the explication of something implicated in the texts. Nonetheless, this implication is in itself not a pre-given something but indeed something on its way. Or to phrase it another way: the implicated in the social representations or signs are not identities but differences. To some extent then to grasp and unfold what is implicated is also to construct the implicated. It is in the repetition that difference manifests itself. But as the repetition takes place through the construction of an exact concepts these concepts are themselves activated by the way differences irritates thought and forces it to unfold the differences. Moreover the step by step explication or unfolding always brings about a new level of complication. In this way new twists or even breaks with what came before adds new levels to the implicated movement.

The thesis, therefore, does not create something out of nothing but adds something by repeating something already there (e.g. texts on normative control, coping, cognitive capitalism etc) in a new context. Furthermore, by repeating something and not representing something, this construct works on the level of singularities rather than on the level of the general and the particular. By repeating and subtracting something from the texts the effort is not to find a more general level of reality in them, nor is it to take certain particularities and make them general. It is to produce something interesting. Which is to construe something singular in time and space, that is to construe a map of the machines, and make it work across time and space. To rethink the exemplary in the different text is to create congruence and incongruence, relations and breaks, cuts, and connections, all in the effort to sketch out a movement of thought.

The exemplary status is in this way created by the mapping itself. Actually, even these texts and the indexes subtracted from them are constructs. But, nonetheless, they are not constructs of a thinking subject. The act of creation,

which the manifestation of the enfolded differences entails, is not to be understood in terms of the creative genius or as a celebration of everything that is new. To unfold the enfolded is a matter of working with something already at hand. To repeat this something, e.g. the texts, in a new way that creates a difference. As a result it is always interesting or remarkable points that irritates thought but these points are only formed and molded as interesting through a repetition performed by thought itself. As a machine in itself thought in this way composes a conceptual map that works in fits and sparks.

All in all, mapping indexes through exemplary texts is therefore a question of a learning-process for thought itself. The object of thought (machines) is construed in this process of mapping. And this is exactly the strength and weakness of a machinic reading. Indeed, to outline and analyze the self-management-stress encounter becomes a perpetual experimental effort as any insight into the structure of this encounter become a context-dependent test.

Another way to frame this strategy for mapping is to understand that the question 'what do these discussion and text mean' is only raised to answer the question 'how do they work as part of a social machinery'. What's more the interest in the texts is not what they really said without saying it but how they are elements in a certain production of reality. Or put it the other way around while we should not raise the metaphysical question 'what does it mean' to the operations of machines themselves (as they only work), we must inquire into meaning as it emerges in the texts, but in a functional way. That is to say we decipher the various representations in the texts into machinic indexes only to understand these as parts of a social machinery producing a specific social purpose and form of subjectivity. This has certain implications.

## Implications

First of all, as already mentioned the outline of the machinic indexes takes the form of a displacement of the discussion they are found within. That is to say, that the texts are not read primarily in the line of thought they themselves claim to be part of e.g. state of the art, widely popular, or most cited. They are read in the light of outlining the machines out of which they are derived.

Secondly, such a displacement entails that any contribution to the discussions in the texts, or the school of thought they belong to is always the production of what Deleuze calls a 'bastard child' or monstrous offspring. This term refers to an approach where affirmative and experimental readings are important. Affirmative because, much in the line of how Deleuze himself reads other philosophers, the idea is not to represent the work and comment on it but to draw out certain aspects of it. In this sense it is indeed the offspring of the texts, because they have to say something that entails these so-called machinic indexes, e.g. say something on commitment. But on the other hand they are monstrous as they are displaced, deferred, and detached from their context. Which implies an experiment in the line of what we just discussed; a cartography outlining indexes by modulating certain perspectives and elements of the texts in ways that redirect the lines of thought in the texts and inflects the topology of the texts, or as Toscano puts it that 'spur the labour of new repetitions, new habitations of the text giving rise to novel connections and redistributions of its singular points' (2004: xiv).

Thirdly, to produce these offspring is a break with any idea of a father figure. Essentially, the whole of Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of machines in *Anti-Oedipus* can be read as such a break. The problem with the Oedipal structure is that it forms how any idea of critique can take place e.g. the father as what has to be first represented then transgressed. Rather for Deleuze and Guattari the father must be displaced by presenting him in a new form. This is exactly what Deleuze and Guattari do in their book on Kafka. In the short analysis of Kafka's *Letter to his*



*Father* (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 10-15) they show how Kafka is not caught up in an Oedipal structure but transgresses it by amplifying aspects of Oedipal structure thus showing that the father-mommy-me triangle is always connected to other machineries. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 11-12) puts it:

Thus, the too well-formed family triangle is really only a conduit for investments of an entirely different sort that the child endlessly discovers underneath his father, inside the mother, in himself. The judges, commissioners, bureaucrats, and so, are not substitutes for the father; rather, it is the father who is a condensation of all these forces that he submits to and that he tries to get his son to submit to. The family opens onto doors, on which from the beginning there knock "*diabolical powers that rejoice from the fact that they will arrive soon*". What Kafka immediately anguishes or rejoices in is not the father or the superego or some sort of signifier but the America technocratic apparatus or the Russian bureaucracy or the machinery of Fascism.

As a consequence of this the strategy Deleuze and Guattari take from Kafka is not a direct critique of something e.g. the Father as this 'would be grotesque, since it would turn criticism into a dimension of representation' (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 47). For Deleuze and Guattari's Kafka the objective is always to extract social machines from social representations thereby posing an immanent critique. This involves a displacement of the representations, which is to say an effort to draw up contours of the machines. Which on its part demands that certain aspects are intensified. Not in an attempt to escape from these representations but as Deleuze and Guattari put it to make the representations and the world they imply take flight themselves (1986: 47). Critique, then, is never a matter of finding a way out by engendering a line of flight. It is a matter of unfolding all the lines of flights that are already at work; intensifying some, decelerating others, and exposing blockage points. In short, critique is cartography and cartography is always an experiment with the machines that are both of us and not of us and exposing or outlining how this machine always takes place through an act of creation.

Fourthly, this is not just another form of metaphysical thinking exposing a deeper level of reality. It outlines a social machinery and in that way shows that something might work in other ways than we think it does. Nonetheless, this

exposure of a truth is always a production of truth. Like so much metaphysical thinking, then, the philosophical approach of cartography also moves along dualism, but it does so in the effort to 'arrive at the magical formula we all seek – Pluralism=Monism via all the dualisms that are the enemy, an entirely necessary enemy, the furniture we are forever rearranging' (Deleuze and Guattari 1999: 20-21). So while this Deleuzian approach might agree with Žižek in that behind the veils of the imaginary and the symbolic there lies a vacuum of emptiness in the sense of that there is no deeper level of reality, Deleuze would disagree with Žižek when he describes this as a traumatic experience. Where Žižek sees nothingness Deleuze see a myriad of multiplicities. As Deleuze writes in his book with Parnet (2002: 90): 'who has you believe that by losing the co-ordinates of object and subject you lack something?'

Finally, it must be made clear that even though this Deleuzian approach entails a conceptual creation from the social representations of 'empirical texts' this is never a matter of just reproducing Deleuze's concepts but of giving them new components or inventing new concepts. Indeed, performing a cartography of social machines is less about reproducing Deleuzian concepts of becoming, desire and nomads, and about (re)producing the immaculate conceptions they express.

If this is the case, Deleuze's thought always demands that we create or recreate concepts within systems that 'relate to circumstances rather than essences' (Deleuze 1995: 32). It must be stressed that the system Deleuze talks about is a system that is only exposed through meticulous conceptual developments. Outlining through a creation of concepts is to investigate and unfold a social order and its implications, not in an effort to represent the 'real' ontological structure of the order, but in the effort to make the order become something else as an effect of these investigations: to make it take flight. Such a becoming is, therefore, not as much a matter of departing from the assumption that becoming or desire are primary flows of life every social order tries to inhibit. Instead it is a matter of

producing lines of becoming as an effect of the scholastic investigation of the social order's regulation of such flows. The issue of such a conceptual activism and its cartography of texts is thereby more a matter of doing Deleuze when one encounters a social fabric, than of being Deleuzian. The endeavor must be to make our own bastards and not just raise Deleuze's to be like their father.

The object for the thesis, then, is to trace the social machineries of the stress-fit self-managing employee by way of this strategy of mapping. Through a conceptual creation and intensification it tries to show how the interaction between stress and self-management not only threatens the presuppositions of self-management also reposes these presuppositions in new ways which are perhaps even more subtle.

The thesis's contribution should therefore not be evaluated on its ability to represent something more or less true. Rather it should be judge on whether the recontextualisation of the debates and texts on self-management and stress produces something interesting or remarkable. In point of fact, the question is does the thesis create a new order of thought and does this order work?

With all this in mind, lets' tune in to the machinery of commitment and coping.

## *Part Two: Self-management and the Commitment-machine*

## CHAPTER 6

### **FITTER, HAPPIER, MORE PRODUCTIVE, OR ON THE MODE OF EXISTENCE OF THE STRESS-FIT SELF- MANAGING EMPLOYEE.**

It is possible to be effectively doing while you are delightfully being, in your ordinary workaday world (Allen 2001).

In this chapter a number of features on self-management, stress, and the encounter of two will be outlined. These remarks are condensed in the sense that they lay out what will be discussed and fleshed out in greater details in the two parts *Self-management and the commitment machine* and *Stress and the coping-machine*. The chapter tries to encircle the concepts of self-management and stress one the one hand and on the other hand it tries to encapsulate the overall argument made in the rest of the thesis. The chapter starts of with a discussion on what self-management as a general orientation towards employee subjectivity as a resource entails. What kind of discussion does this imply? And most importantly it will be discussed how self-management refers to the production, regulation, and indeed management of what is called a zone of indiscernability between the subjectivity of the employee and its ability to perform work-tasks and create value. After this some general remarks on the concept of stress is investigated. The section charts some of the discussion occupational stress in general gives rise to and what recent discussions on stress and work-setting that has elements of self-management focuses on. This outline serve as the back-drop for a more general question on how stress works as a certain form of problematization of work and even more importantly how this problematization co-produces what a employee-subject is. It is exactly this production that is the center of attention of the two last parts of the thesis. The chapter ends up with a brief outline of the machines at work in this production. But first some remarks on self-management.

## The self-managing employee

Within an organizational setting self-management primarily is about employees taking on responsibilities management use to have. This on its part requires initiative, commitment, and self-monitoring from the employees.

In a wider context the organizational necessities of self-management have been connected to various aspects: some have focuses on self-management as a way to motivate and increase satisfaction and passion among employees (e.g. Manz and Sims 1989), others have focuses on self-management as a key in achieving flexibility and lower costs of co-ordination through bureaucratic systems (e.g. Thomas 2000), others still have focuses on self-management as a important factor for surviving in an economy with increased focus on intangible assets such as knowledge, experience, and affects (e.g. Lazzarato 1996)

In fact, the targeting of subjectivity and the (self)-management there off as a condition for increase productivity, flexibility, and commitment in workplaces highlights a tendency found in literature ranging from recent publications of management gurus such as Tom Peters to the works of neo-Marxists such as Hardt and Negri.

In *Empire* (2000) Hardt & Negri describes the emerging post-fordist regime of production as one that is no longer capable of operating with a measurable form of surplus-value. It is no longer the sweat, the entropic energy, and the time put into the production process that is regarded as value-creating but instead the reproduction and production of social life itself (Hardt & Negri 2000: 280-303). The abilities of the employee-subject to communicate, begin anew, change, create, feel, and think becomes new inputs that are harvested in such a way as to become productive.

In his *Re-imagine* (2003) Tom Peters also focuses on these human generic qualities and their singular expressions when he criticizes management tools and ideologies, which prescribe common values and identities. Both bureaucratic procedures and corporate culture programs are according to Peters unproductive in the long run for the employee, the manager and the organization. Actually a strong corporate culture might present itself as a problem in a business context of change and flexibility. Instead Peters maintains a view on treating and celebrating employees as uniquely productive and potentially creative individuals. As Fleming and Sturdy point out, for Peters employee creativity does not simply derive 'from job autonomy, but [from] the freedom to be themselves and express their most private 'off the wall' desires". (2007: 11). The key to success is attained by making room for the singular human being with its specific wishes, aspirations, and interests.

A common feature of both Peters and Hardt and Negri are that they claim the site of production and organization is changing. The source of energy in today's business world is the specific human being and its ability to interact with others. In fact, organizational success depends on the ability to harvest this singular being in ways that increases performance, self-determination and personal growth.

Following the work of Lazzarato, we might describe this change through the concept of immaterial labor (Lazzarato 1996), a concept that involves two developments (Harney 2005: 583). Firstly, the commodity itself becomes more cultural and affective in content as the mode of production incorporates cultural and artistic norms, fashions, tastes, consumer standard, and public opinion (Lazzarato 1996: 133). Secondly, all work tends to require the management of more and more information, which in turn requires more and more analysis, judgment calls, and decision-making, itself grounded in employees' tacit skills and ability to management these.

In this way work becomes more personalized and individualized at the same time as it requires 'bottom-up' collective coordination. Employees should be able to activate and manage themselves *and* engage in productive cooperation with their co-workers (Lazzarato 1996: 135). In short, a flexible and efficient production process comes to rely on self-management, which in turn demands both an involvement of subjectivity and the use of this subjectivity to coordinate and look for new functions of production. Organizing the employee accordingly becomes a matter of modulating self-actualization and self-transformation rather than controlling the accomplishment of particular tasks in a particular time and place. Personal judgment calls, self-development and individual desire are the driving forces in the production apparatuses, not hierarchies, protocols or unitary values. In fact, being 'your-self' is regarded as a source for a higher level of productivity and involvement in the job (Fleming & Sturdy 2007). The employee subjectivity as the 'input' into the self-management process in this way encapsulates

- The ability to use formalized forms of knowledge e.g. expert knowledge.
- The ability to activate living forms of knowledge e.g. intuition.
- The ability to communicate and interact with other e.g. feeling empathy.
- The ability to invest emotional commitment in and get enjoyment from work e.g. being intrinsic motivated.
- The ability to begin a new e.g. move on to new tasks and develop new competences.
- The ability to manage all these abilities.

Self-management in here seen as key to solve the demand for an involvement of all these aspects of subjectivity and to answer the question of how subjectivity is best used in the coordination and development of functions of production (Lazzarato 1996: 134-5). Indeed, employees are partners to top management and must be able to 'make adjustments, coordinate with other organizational players, innovate, and initiate changes' (Thomas 2000: 4).



## **The extent and range of the concept of self-management**

This development is mirrored not only in an increased flexibility of wages, work and employment conditions, but also in the emergence of new forms of organizing that replace the classical hierarchies with project-organization, flexible work-hours, workstations at home, appraisal interviews, coaching, etc. (Kristensen & Hermann 2005). This trend should not be over-emphasized and is always mixed up with other forms of organizing, e.g. bureaucracy, and it is perhaps most common in industries that rely on an explicitly immaterial production such as research, advertisement, consultancy etc. (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott 2002, Tracy & Trethewey 2005). However, the focus on self-management still diffuses itself into other branches of production.

As some have argued this is due to the fact that management-technologies such as performance management, project-work, coaching etc. are slowly diffusing into spheres beyond knowledge work, i.e., the shop floor, the hospital, the retirement home, etc (Levi 2001).

And as Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) have argued the focus on the need for employees to be active subjects that use and manage the subjectivity in the work-process is a common feature of a lot of management handbooks and discussions within the last 30 years. Thus making self-management a solution too many of the problems organizations are faced with in contemporary capitalism.

More over others such as the Matisse-group have recently argued that what makes these activities and their diffusion particularly interesting is that they not only add new aspects to economic production they also change the concept of labor that the mode of production revolves around (e.g. Vercellone 2005: 10, Moulier Boutang 2007: 13, Kristensen 2008: 100). The interest in subjectivity as a production-force and the organization of this force through self-management in this way indirectly influences other branches of industry. The Matisse-group (Moulier Boutang et al 2001: 1, Kristensen 2008: 107), is headed by Bernard Paulré

and consists of sociologists, philosophers and economists such as Carlo Vercellone, Yann Moulier Boutang, and Maurizio Lazzarato. They argue that all labor and production might not necessarily be of an immaterial nature, but creativity, meaning etc. are becoming more and more important in understanding how labor is conceived and capital is accumulated (e.g. Lazzarato 2004: 192-3, Vercellone 2005: 2-3, Moulier-Boutang 2007: 12, Kristensen 2008: 95-96). This focus makes interest in employee subjectivity important. They therefore talk about a general shift in the economy towards cognitive capitalism (e.g. Vercellone 2005, Moulier Boutang 2007). This notion refers to a social as well as material transformation in the way capital accumulates, comprises, and organizes labor and produces value (e.g. Moulier Boutang 2007: 12).

Such a shift implies that the substance and productivity of work can no longer be solely understood through the classical concept of the labor theory of value which we have inherited from political economy and organizational theory (e.g. Moulier Boutang 2001: 33, Vercellone 2007: 14). In most of these classical writings (e.g. Ricardo, Smith, Marx) the employees were regarded as replaceable variables of production. As such the quality they brought to the production was their ability to charge physical energy and the amount of time the employees invested in the labor-process.

Instead the knowledge production that is of such economic interest today should be understood as

a product of the living labour's cognitive and social cooperation, and it is exactly the fruits thereof that the current cognitive capitalism tries to capture, exploit and accumulate economic value of (Kristensen 2008: 100 my translation)

The term cognitive is in this way a term to encapsulate what constitutes the source of value in a certain capitalistic regime of accumulation and the term cognitive refers more to more than just the capitalization of formalized knowledge and professional and technical skills (Vercellone 2005: 10). It also embraces all

*'living* and active forms of knowledge, information, experience, judgments, learning abilities, innovative, and creative competences' (Kristensen & Larsen 2008: 4). In effect these active forms of knowledge is by far the most important to such a degree that chains of association, proximity, providence, and other intuitive forms of thoughts becomes resources.

Thus according the Matisse-group, Boltanski and Chiapello and Levi the general orientation towards subjectivity as a resource can not be pinpointed to one sector even though it might be more or less accentuated in some sectors (e.g. Moulier Boutang 2007: 12-13, Kristensen 2008: 97-99,). Following this line of argument self-management should be considered a concept that has a wide range in so far as subjectivity and management there off becomes important in the production and organization of work.

All this said, what is of most interest in the thesis is not the empirical range of this concept of self-management, but how we can find a relationship between self-management and stress constituting a certain employee-subject. In various contexts this subject might be governed and interacting with other forces constituting it in different ways. Indeed, we are looking for a certain social machinery, and since any machine always interacts with other machines, in another context we might find that the machine we look at works in another way. However, the argument made here is that the machinery outline in the thesis is still a machinery, we find features of it every time we talk about the general orientation towards the management of personal subjectivity in the work-process, and in particular every time we talk of stress as an effect of this process of management.

So with the immaterialization of work, the claim is that, the primary production-factor becomes the employees' personal, social, and professional experiences, thoughts, feelings, and desires: in short their subjectivity. Or to be more exact, the

potential of the subject to invest its singular subjectivity in the coordination of production. And of course to self-manage this coordination in ways that both increase productivity and enjoyment.

### **Task-empowerment and existential empowerment**

If subjectivity is the resource or input it nonetheless demands that the employee adheres to the organization. Self-management demands a level of employee autonomy, but it also demands that the employees manage their autonomy in ways that enhance organizational performance. Employees must commit to their own autonomy while simultaneously committing to a life of productivity. The question is then how is this achieved? For starters we can talk of two aspects of self-management that try to interconnect employee autonomy with a commitment towards organizational performance. Self-management involves a certain level of self-determination in the task-performance and a self-fulfilling enjoyment from doing this task.

The first aspect pinpoints the capacity among employees to manage their own job-tasks, to coordinate these tasks with co-workers and to take responsibility for the success of these tasks. Here self-management primarily concentrates on the employee as a subject capable of and willing to take responsibility for finding the best way to solve the task. Moreover these powers of judgment, decision-making, and self-control are considered more efficient if they are unburdened by supervision and the meticulous outlining of task-prescriptions (e.g. Manz & Sims 1989, Willmott 1993). As Thomas puts it: 'instead of complying with detailed rules, workers are now asked to be proactive problem solvers' (2001: 4). Put otherwise, self-determination can be exploited for organizational purpose if it is simultaneously respected. To be a self-managing employee is thus, from an organizational perspective, to be *taskempowered*. However, in so far as this task empowerment relies on self-determination, self-management also involves an investment of the subjectivity that characterizes the individual employee. This in at least two ways: first of all subjectivity is formed actualized through work, i.e.

work is considered self-fulfilling when the employee is given responsibility for work. Secondly, it is the specific subjectivity proper to the individual employee that is considered the resource in the task-performance. Actually to be self-managing includes an investment of *my* desires, feeling, cognitive capacity, aspirations, and creativity into work-process. This is especially important if working with intangible assets such as knowledge, relationships, experiences, and reputation (Thrift 2008: 119). Here not only my cognitive skills, but all manner of tacit skills of a largely intuitive kind are necessary to perform the complex interactions task-performance entail. Efficient task empowerment in self-management therefore also includes a level of *existential* empowerment.

If self-management requires initiative, commitment, and self-control, then the assumption often goes that self-determination is best achieved if employees enjoy what they are doing; if they find a sense of purpose and progress in work; and in general are given the opportunity to actualize themselves (e.g. McGregor 1957a, Kunda 1992, Thomas 2000, Fleming & Sturdy 2007). Employees must see the purpose in, get enjoyment from, and be committed to what they do (Thomas 2000: 7).

To be existential empowered consequently implies that the employees are given space to but are also expected to look for themselves in the task that they are performing. The assumption being that it is only when you enjoy and find purpose in what you do that you truly deliver the commitment necessary for a high-level of performance. Employees can only truly activate their specific capacities and abilities in the task-performances if it is done in ways that bring personal delight. The passion for the job is what makes the management of tasks possible this, however, also demands that the employee develops an ability to regulate and organize this passion in order to manage the task at hand. Self-management is as a result of this more than a matter of increased influence over and responsibility for task-performance. It also implies finding passion and enjoyment from the task-

performance, and most important of all, the ability of the employees to manage this relationship between their subjectivity and work.

### **A zone of indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity**

In line with these aspects of self-management we can as a consequence talk of a certain relationship between the subjectivity and the productivity of the employee. In other words, between personal well-being and autonomy and the quest for heightened productivity. David Allen's bestselling personal productivity program *Getting Things Done* (GTD) might serve as a good illustration of this (Allen 2001).

According to Allen the idea of getting enjoyment from what you do while still doing it efficiently 'doesn't have to be an either –or proposition. It is possible to be effectively doing while you are delightfully being, in you ordinary workaday world' (Allen 2001: xi). GTD here essentially speaks of a relationship of both-and between effectively doing or productivity, and delightfully being, or an enjoyable existence.

This relationship between two spheres of life might be describes as what I in chapter one refer to as a 'zone of indiscernability'. This notion refers to a zone where two aspects e.g. A and B, enter into a relationship where they remain distinct but there is something unsettle between them that forms a zone of AB, that neither belong to A or B. This zone makes A and B exchange features in way that makes it hard to discern where one end and another begins.

Employee self-management is always a matter of producing and maintaining this zone of indiscernability. On one level this indiscernability imply that that subjectivity is a product of work in so far as identity is produced in relation to task-performance: one has to enjoy work and even actualize oneself through it. We can thus talk of a certain employee-subject as the output of a social process. But subjectivity is also a production-force in this task-performance as it is exactly the spectrum of emotions, desire, will, commitment, and creativity proper to the

employees' subjectivity that becomes the object of management. Subjectivity is in this sense an input in a social process. Or to be more exact the pre-individual components of the subjectivity proper to an employee become the input and the object of management.

On another level indiscernability implies that subjectivity is only a resource in so far as it is never fully actualized i.e. the subject is always more than the identity produced in work-setting and the spectrum of desires, sensations, and thoughts invested in the task at hand. The zone of indiscernability is never the collapse of its two elements into one another or in themselves for that matter: essentially it is always this 'more' between the invested existence and the task-performance that constitutes the productive part. In spite of this subjectivity is measured and evaluated in productivity terms but the nature of this measurement poses an always unsettle and negotiable character. Indeed, it is how these two levels interact that forms one of the overall questions in the following, or to be more precise the question about the production of the fitter, happier, and more productive employee is also the question of how this zone of indiscernability produced and reproduced when confronted with stress-issues. However, before discussing this further some remarks on stress might be in order.

## New forms of stress

It is no longer a matter of 'motivating employees', which we discussed a lot in the past. Today motivation's 'victory is so big that we go to Hell'. We see this among the many competent, committed, loyal and conscientious managers and employees with a heightened sense of responsibility, which is broken down by stress. Today we should rather discuss, how to control our motivation, so it will not drive us to the point of break-down. (Kørner 2006: 9-10 my translation)

The changing working conditions encapsulated in the concept of self-management - which as just discussed put a great deal of emphasis on subjectivity, enjoyment and self-determination among employees as the main components in a pursuit of organizational goals - also invokes its own kind of stress. This is exactly what Chief

Psychiatrist at the Danish Company Danfoss Kurt Kørner seems to point out, when he connects a stress-related collapse among one of Danfoss employees with too much motivation and self-investment. It is as he explains the loyal, committed, and responsible employees, in short the self-managing employees that present a new stress-risk. What is interesting about Kørner's claim is that in many ways it summarizes recent discussions on stress among self-managing employees while highlighting some general aspects and depictions about the concept of stress itself. The former has to do with a focus on positive phenomena such as control over work, commitment, and self-actualization as sources of stress. The solution to this kind of stress is according to Kørner not just to incite further motivation, responsibility, and enjoyment, but to control the hazards of passion. To learn how to cope with our passion for work. As for the depictions of stress Kørner pinpoints some general assumptions about the supposed cause and effect relationship between the physical breakdown, the conditions of work and the individual make-up of the employees.

### **Depictions of stress**

As with Kørner a lot of stress-management books along with popular media tell this story of the dangers of stress and how we as employees must cope with it or else fail trying to. In these books we are informed that stress might be triggered by a multiplicity of external factors in our everyday life but the stress-response is something that comes as much from within as without.

National and international health-board publications complicate matters even further by highlighting despite its severe individual and economic effects, stress is not an illness we are struck with (e.g. Levi 2001, Kristensen & Nielsen 2007). In fact, the stress-response is a natural hormonal process important for our brain and body to function. This process is important as it among other things sets the body and mind in a state of alertness and prepares it for extra-ordinary action (e.g. Kristensen & Nielsen 2007).



This state is often referred to as the 'fight or flight mechanism' as the body mobilizes all its energy to prepare for one of these two activities (Levi 2001: 3). The brain starts releasing hormones, concentration is focused and the muscles are flexed. (Kristensen & Nielsen 2007: 14). However, the experts also warn us about the devastating consequences of being in this state for too long. If overdone the body as well as the mind can be worn down, even broken down, resulting in diseases such as depression and heart attacks (Kristensen & Nielsen 2007: 21-23). As the European Commission *Guidance of Work-Related Stress* puts it stress is both 'the Spice of Life and the Kiss of Death' (Levi 2001: 1). Stress will not only affect us all, sooner or later (Williams & Cooper 2002: xi), it will do so in both positive and negative ways. What complicates this shift from stress as an acute response to stress as potentially lethal state even further is the assumption that stress in this health-board publications and in the scientific stress-literature as such is often presented as a –bio-psycho-social - phenomenon (e.g. Zacharia 2002: 170).

Stress is a matter of *social* circumstances as the bodily responses that creates the state of stress is an indirect effect of the amount, intensity, and extensity of outer threats (Holmes and Rahe 1967). Events on the job such as firing-rounds, insecurities on how and why to perform the task at hand and bad management are potentially stressful events that tax the resources of individual (Kristensen & Nielsen 2007: 14). However, these events are mediated by the individual's *psychological* make up. The amount and intensity of the stress-response relies on the perceptions and interpretations of the circumstances (e.g. Lazarus 1999). Whether or not these perceived events are stressful is also a question of the individual way people cope emotionally and mentally with these threats (Lazarus 1999). Last, but not least, the degree to which individual bodies are strained by these emotional and cognitive coping-reactions varies with their general level of health and *somatic* hardiness of the stressed individual (Zacharia 2002: 171).

It is exactly around this bio-psycho-social transformation from stress as positive natural response to stress as a negative state that much of the debate in media, stress-management books and even scientific publications on stress and work is centered.

### **Three sources of stress in self-management**

According to Kørner this form of stress are in some cases triggered among stress-managing employees. Different commentators have focused on different reasons for why this might be. We can at least talk about three forms of explanations: One that focuses on self-management as tainted by institutionalized and inauthentic forms of self-management; one that focuses on self-management as burden with too much change and opportunity; and one that focuses on self-management as an inherently insoluble demand.

First of all, some commentators points to the fact that self-management leads to stress because it is still infected by the alienating traits of bureaucracy making any self-management inauthentic. The argument here is that stress among self-managing employees mainly has to do with the fact that ideas of existential empowerment is always institutionalized and inauthentic (e.g. Prætorius 2007). The reality surrounding self-management programs in organizations are still govern by bureaucratic management-technologies e.g. forms of evaluation that register the subjectivity of the employee in pre-fixed categories ranging from type of personality to number of tasks performed in a given time-span (Prætorius 2007: 108-158). Or even that the problem with stress within self-management jobs is due to the fact that while employees might have some control in work, they didn't posses control over work (Sørensen et al 2007). Implying that when responsibility is given to employees this is often done without giving them either full control over the work-task or a clear frame for what parts of the task they are responsible for (Groth & Rosbjerg 2006: 193). A common feature in these debates is the assumption that there is nothing wrong with self-management at such. In so far as self-management deals with what is considered to be ahistorical humanistic values

such as autonomy, self-actualization, enjoyment, and commitment self-management is, in fact, inherently good. When employees suffers from stress, then, it is due to different sorts of institutionalized and insufficient forms of self-management, i.e. various 'fake' kinds of self-management.

Secondly, some commentators point to stress not as a consequence of too much external control and too little genuine self-management, but as the effect of the overwhelming range of opportunity and instability self-management brings about. It is the never-ending organizational and individual expectation to self-actualize, enjoy, and self-develop that invokes stress (Bottrup et al 2008: 5). Stress is here seen as consequence of the inability among a growing amount of employees to cope with the flexibility presented by new IT-technologies and the opportunity to work 24/7 (Kristensen & Nielsen 2007: 19). Or stress is seen as a consequence of over-commitment to the job combined with the wrong level of recognition by managers (Siegrist 1996: 27-41) Others puts the blame on the pressure of constant change the self-managing employee is supposed to cope with (Byrnit 2006: 120-2).

Thirdly, some commentators consider self-management a new mode of identity management (Kristensen & Hermann 2005) or 'normative control' (Kunda 1992) produced through the demand to internalize corporate values and beliefs. Employees are expected to be autonomist and self-actualizing on one level while they on another level are supposed to be part of the organizational culture (Gudiksen 2007: 78). What is considered precarious about this internalization is that 'employees identify with the culture of an 'organization' which subsequently offers the employee the narcissistic pleasure of 'competence and accomplishment in the service of corporate greatness' (Roberts 2005: 624). However, this also implies the potential for different gaps existing between the individual and the organization. From an organizational perspective there is always the danger of a gap between an actual and ideal performance (Roberts 2005 624) while the potential gap between 'authentic' and formalized self-actualization becomes a

pressing issue from an individual perspective (Gudiksen 2007: 71). Both gaps are said to pave the way for guilt and bad conscience as it becomes a continuous individual effort for employees to close these gaps. In other words, stress is considered a symptom of a constant ambiguity, namely the inability of employees to either fully internalize the ideal enjoyable task performance presented in the values or fully reject them as they speak to the narcissistic pleasures of enjoyment and self-actualization (Casey 1999: 166-171).

Whatever is considered the source of stress in self-management, these different studies point to the same conclusion; that self-management in itself is not a clear-cut solution to stress issues. Indeed, it has its own darker side paving the way for breakdowns and burnouts.

Whether or not Kørner is right in his assumption that self-management under certain conditions might lead to stress and if this is connected to remains of too much bureaucracy, change as an indisputable condition or new ways of managing the identity of workers is *not* the concern here. As important as these debates are, the interest in this thesis is rather on the dynamics that makes self-management both a potential stress-problem and a solution to stress.

In fact, what is interesting for me is how stress is much more than innocent word to describe how 'particular working and domestic arrangement can induce distress' (Brown 2005: 233). Rather stress can be regarded as a promise of gaining an insight in to the existential and professional problem surrounding self-management. But this is a promise with a double catch to it.

### **The inherent plasticity in the concept of stress**

First of all the peculiar thing with this promise is that even though stress is used to understand everyday distresses it does not necessarily make us wiser to what the problem raised through the discourse of the stress problem is in fact about.

Essentially stress is a very plastic concept. It is as Brown (2005: 233) had pointed out, in no way self-evident why

varied life-experiences and circumstances ought to be described in terms of Stress...since there are numerous kind of concepts drawn from different sorts of discourse (for example, oppression, injustice, hopelessness, neurosis, frustration) that might equally well be applied in each case, there is something to be understood in the apparent 'naturalness' and ease with which stress is typically invoked.

The promise stress makes, then, is that it can explain the everyday distresses of work-life. Yet this concept is invoked instead of other concepts such as frustration or injustice is actually quite surprising if one considers the very broad use stress has. This plasticity is not only mirrored in the considerable adverse laymen's use of it as a description of almost every hurly burly part of life and work (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 33), it is also expressed in more scientific discussion. In other words, the layman discussions about what kind of concrete problems in the flow of social life which might be termed stress-related are not easily solved by appealing to science as a more objective authority (Brown 1996: 174).

A recently published status report called *Stress in Denmark – what do we know* points to different kind of paradigms within stress such as physiological paradigm, coping paradigm and strain paradigm, which confronts stress from very different angles (Kristensen & Nielsen 2007: 10). Thus indicating that within the field of science the concept is not as clear-cut as some might think. In fact, some have questioned the usability of stress as a scientific concept (e.g. Hinkle 1973, 1990) and others have gone as far as to argue that stress is a myth (e.g. Pollock 1988, Doublet 2000) or even an ideological term (e.g. Young 1980).

Even within the more narrow field of occupational stress it is not even clear what kind of strains or 'stressors' can be explained as particularly dangerous. As Brown (2005: 233) argues even in what many consider as self-evident stressful jobs it cannot be proven that they are inherently more stressful than other jobs. It is so to speak hard to say what makes them more stressful.

For instance, one would expect a study of stress and burnout amongst nurses to come up with a fairly straightforward account of just what is difficult about the job nurses do. But a typical study, such as Anderson's (1991), involves measures of 13 separate variables (ranging from "training" to "role conflict" to "depersonalization"), which are interrelated in a complex statistical pattern. What is more, it is rarely the case these relationships can be disentangled in any satisfying way. One case in point is 'social support'. For over 30 years, stress researchers have studied the apparently self-evident fact that having other people around helps when one is stressed, without arriving at a clear sense of how and why this should be so (Brown 2005: 233-4).

A direct consequence of this plasticity is that stress acquires a considerable contextual and individual aspect. Making room for these individual contextual factors seems to have created a growing technical discussion on methods, measurement and methodological in the stress journals (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 45-59).

As Wainwright and Calnan (2002: 51-59) suggest the discussions surrounding two of the most well-known theory within work-stress namely Karasek and Theorell (1990) and their Demands-Control-Support model (DCS) and Siegrist (1996) Effort-Reward Imbalance model (ERI) might illustrate this move towards contextual and individual aspects.

The Demand, Control and Social Support model (DCS) (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 51) consists of two main dimensions: the level of demands set on the employee (primarily the quantity and tempo) and control (level of influence and potential for development in the job). The overall argument in the model is that under conditions with low control over the planning and execution of work and no potential for the application and development of skills will, over time, result in a demotivation of the employee with consequences for their health (2002: 51). The ERI-model has a similar claim when there is an imbalance between effort (e.g. time and commitment) and reward (e.g. career-promotion, payment, or recognition) the result is demotivation and stress (2002: 51). A common feature of both is nonetheless that they mirror the germ theory of infectious disease thus

promoting an epidemiological approach which claim that there is a clear cause and effect pathway between certain work-characteristics and illness (2002: 50-51).

However, both theoretical criticism and contradictory empirical evidence has made it harder to sustain the epidemiological approach (2002: 52). Wainwright and Calnan (2002: 54-56) list some of the following problems as the most debated: When using questionnaires what about those respondents that find the questionnaire irrelevant, or are too busy to complete it? How do you ask a simple question such as 'how stressful do you find your job?' when the scientific category is vague and the respondents have their own take on what stress is? For example when the DCS is tested in different studies it includes self-reported assessments made by workers. How does the researcher ensure that negative assessments of work characteristics and stress are the cause of poor health and not the result? An important aspect in these methodological discussions is the theme of how to broaden the epidemiological approach to include aspects of the individual's perceptions and meanings (Wainwright & Calnan: 2002: 55). The reason: the model has to make room for the fact that when it comes to stress the pathogenic agents e.g. job characteristics is not as absolutely separated from the characteristics of the host as it is in the case of infectious diseases (2002: 56).

In this way the DCS-model can be said to fail in two ways that both revolve around the perceptions and appraisals of the stressed individual (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 58).. The model fails on methodological grounds because it relies on self-reported data, but it also fails because it does not take into account the role of the cognitive appraisals made by the individual (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 58). This failure becomes even clearer in the ERI – model's focus on meaning and rewards.

Both Siegrist and Karasek have claimed that the ERI and DSC models are complementary (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 57). Yet the ERI adds an aspect of cognitive appraisal between the job characteristics and distress in the body.

Furthermore the model has been argued by some to better describe the distinctive stressful aspects of knowledge work and other kinds of jobs that demand an involvement of individual subjectivity in the task-performance (Kristensen & Nielsen 2007). The ERI-model suggest that mental and somatic distress is an effect of an imbalance between the amount of effort invested by the worker in its tasks and rewards ranging from material rewards, to status to general recognition (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 58). This interplay between the effort - reward balance and the way it's interpreted as in or out of balance becomes important when evaluating the level of stress in a specific job. Following Wainwright and Calnan (2002: 45) we might conclude then that the effort of the DCS and ERI model to make room for job –or worker-specific stressors is essentially a trajectory out of the epidemiological approach. Any inclusion of either individual appraisals or a biographical understanding of illness as a mediating factor is a move away for the pursuit of external objective pathogenic agents.

This inclusion of the individual biography as important for understanding work-related stress has paved the way for especially Lazarus theory about coping (Lazarus 1999: 28-30). Stress might be a question of chemistry in the body and brain but to what degree this chemistry is set of has to do with the psychological make-up and coping strategies of individuals. As we will see in part three this is indeed a very wide-held and popular understanding especially when it comes to stress-management.

### **The production of subjectivity in stress**

Which brings us to the second and more important catch that the promise of stress imply. Problematizing something as stress-related brings about a certain unspecific complexity but it also has very specific effects. Stress is not an empty signifier in the sense that it can be attributed with any random meaning and serve any ideological cause. When the different symptoms felt by employees are construed as signs of stress, stress itself becomes a sign inscribed on the body of



these employees. This inscription not only mark the distressed employee as a sufferer of stress it also intervenes in the different actions and passions the employee is capable of. On the one hand this inscription posits stress as a natural element inside the body of every employee, an element that not only causes suffering, but also becomes the condition for a personal growth and a good performance. On the other hand it makes problems with handling this element into a matter of an imbalance in the somatic and mental make-up of the stressed subject and the solution to this problem into an object of coping and further self-development. As Newton (1995: 9) puts it:

Whilst stress is ubiquitous, *individual* "make-up" determined whether one "succumbed" to it, depending on innate differences, as well as whether one had learnt, the right "attitude of mind" and self-control.

Actually the ideas, concepts, and practices that are part of the occupational stress-discussion produce certain presuppositions about being an employee-subject. In their plasticity the ideas and practices of stress and stress-management influences, distributes, and regulates way of desiring, thinking, and acting. Uttering the word stress within a context of self-management activates, and involves a certain *mode of existence*. A way of living and being we will call the *stress-fit self-managing employee*. Following this stress is considered a organizing as well as problematizing force. Stress points towards certain problems in self-management, but already distributes how these problems should be conceived and even acted upon. This mode of existence stress is a necessary element in understanding what productivity in self-management in fact entail.

### The two machines of the stress-fit self-managing employee.

The overall subject of the rest of the thesis, then, can be said to be an investigation into the presuppositions surrounding the mode of existence called *the stress-fit self-managing employee*. The focus here is primarily on how stress becomes such a compelling notion in understanding the problematic of the self-managing employee at the same times as it becomes an intensifier of expanded

self-management. The task at hand therefore is to map and evaluate what kind of mode of existence we are part of when stress and self-management enter into a relationship with one another. This is at we will see is done through two machines

*Commitment machine:* The stress-fit self-managing employee is an aspect of a wider change in the vision of work itself. As discussions - ranging from shift in the *mode of production* such as the thesis of cognitive Capitalism or a new spirit of capitalism (see chapter 8), over discussions on the way employee are best *motivated* to do their job today such as growing literature on self-leadership (see chapter 9), to discussions on the way subjectivity is regulated and *controlled* in contemporary work-life perhaps best expressed in the accounts of normative control and cynicism (see chapter 10) - have in different ways argued work is now imagined, explained, and intervened upon as a question of maintaining a sustainable relationship between employee subjectivity and organizational performance. A consequence of this is that the organization is folded in to the employee. It is on the inside that the problematic surrounding work and life are actualized and solutions are to be found. Here being a productive and committed employee demands that employees actualize and develop themselves, while coordinating this activation with the quest for productivity. They have to *tune in* to this world of productivity. In spite of this productivity is not measured and set in pre-fixed protocols, but regulated through always-unsettled demands. As we will see this unsettlement has complex and seemly contradictory features that might result in a devastating despair.

*Coping Machine:* when this despair is understood as a stress-issue a certain line of thinking about the individual body and mind is activated. To frame the experience of despair as a stress-question is already to entangle it as a matter of a failure of a somatic subject and some semi-conscious coping processes working within the individual. The somatic subject refers to a personal chemistry that dictates the individual body's response to different strains and stress-exposes, and accordingly

has an impact on both the productivity and well-being of the employee (see chapter 13). However, this response is not only mediated by the individual's somatic biography but also by its emotional and cognitive make-up (see chapter 14). The ability to cope therefore becomes important in understanding the effects of certain strains. Emphasizing these coping processes are a dominant feature of the self-help books and the stress-management courses that employees are sent off to on a regular basis (e.g. Elkin 1999, Loehr & Schwartz 2003). The *breakdown* in self-management we call stress is always a play between this cognitive coping ability, the body's stress-response, and the emotions that mediate these two. Employee must learn to 'deepen their capacity to tolerate stress of all kinds and increase their ability to respond to stress in ways that bring full performance potential within reach' (Loehr 1997: 5). Employees have to *reboot* their minds and body continuously (see chapter 15). Fitter, happier, more productive

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of machines outlined in chapter one to five what remains of this thesis will sketch out this mosaic of the fitter, happier and more productive employee: or the stress-fit self-managing employee. The rest of thesis, then, consists of two parts outlining the social machinery at work before wrapping everything up in a concluding chapter. The first part outlines two machinic indexes by reading different texts on the nature of the employee in contemporary work. In chapter eight the focus is on texts that discuss the importance of the subjectivity of the employees in the productions-process from a societal level i.e. as part of a certain stage in the mode of production know as capitalism. Chapter nine and ten likewise focuses on the importance of employee subjectivity but from an managerial level focusing on motivation and identity management. Chapter nine focus on how employee subjectivity is argued as important for not only a more efficient production but for a happier and more motivated work-force. Identity management, discussed in chapter ten, regards attempts to create such a motivated work-force as part of an effort to regulate the manifestation of employee subjectivity. In both chapters the notion of 'commitment' towards the organization becomes all important. In fact, the texts in

chapter nine primarily consider this commitment as something that self-actualize the employees while the texts discussed in chapter ten primarily posits both commitment and self-actualization as components of an identity management. Chapter eleven outlines the social machine called the commitment machines that combines these two indexes of subjectivity and commitment located in discussions on recent changes in capitalism (chapter 8), new attempts to motivate the work-force (chapter 9), and new ways of managing of the identity of the employee (chapter 10). The focus in chapter eleven, then, is on how the social machine of commitment produces and regulates a certain mode of existence.

## **CHAPTER 7**

# **SELF-MANAGEMENT, SUBJECTIVITY AND COMMITMENT**

The Danfoss Group is a leader in development and production of mechanical and electronic products and controls. Their slogan is making modern living possible. This slogan is also important for the way they view employee, at least according to their recruitment campaign. Since around 2006 Danfoss has ran a recruitment campaign with the headline *A career is nothing without a personal life*. Each description of every job Danfoss is hiring for starts up with the headline followed by the paragraph

At Danfoss we have known for a long time that the experiences you have gained in your lifetime are a benefit to our company and your career. The whole person is at the top of the agenda. The life you lead while not at the work can help provide you with the strength needed to create results

This recruitment campaign is interesting when it comes to understanding the implications of self-management for a number of reasons. First of all, the ad starts of by separating the sphere of life and work but only in so far as this discernment it is a potential strength in performance. To be a complete person is to have a life outside work but it is exactly this 'outside' or 'more than work' that present itself as the resource for good results. Indeed, it is the person's lived life, the individual biography and the employee's personal experiences that are beneficial for both the organization and the employee. A career at Dansfoss is only a career if it its built on a personal life. And in fact this life seems both to indicate what you do outside of work, and also your lived life so far: the experiences you accumulated, the interests your have, the developments you have undergone. Everything that makes you as a specific human being with you own singular subjectivity. Essentially to be a resource at Danfoss implies a certain indiscernability between a life in productivity (a career and employability) and personal existence (comprising both the life lived outside of work and at the lived life so far).

The Danfoss add teaches that the management of self becomes a basis for being this whole person. When the life lived outside of work and the employee's biography or life experiences is a part of what creates results, managing life is already managing a life in productivity. Self-management might depend on the whole person, but the whole person presupposes an indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity.

In this second part of the thesis I will outline the commitment-machine of self-management and especially highlight how the zone of indiscernability between employee subjectivity and productivity are produced; and how this zone is regulated through always negotiable performance criteria, perpetual development and, of course, the capacity to manage the self at work and outside of work.

The following investigation into this machinic process is done in two stages. Before outlining the machinic logic of a commitment machine we first locate two machinic indices that points towards this logic. In the following three chapters, then, the machinic indices of the subjectivity and commitment are pinpointed. These indices are part of recent discussions on management practices that target and incites the subjectivity of employees. The first index has to do with the focus of the singular subjectivity as important in the productions-process. The second with discussions on commitment as the very social bond which organizes this coordination. As we will see this commitment do not entail a direct repression of employees subjectivity, but a implicit order that this subjectivity is activated to the degree where showing commitment becomes a matter of transgressing how work is expected to be done. Indeed, as recent discussion of enjoyment from, passion for, and commitment towards work has indicated, transgressions - whether this takes the form of a cynical distance towards the organizational culture (e.g. Contu 2008), or a use of the company as a vessel for self-development and employability (e.g. Fleming & Spicer 2007) - are becoming a necessary feature for managing the

singular subjectivity of the employee. Real and lasting commitment means transgressing the way things are currently done for the sake of one's self and the organization.

The machinic indices are positioned along two axes. In a broader economic axis self-management is positioned as a part of the general orientation in the value-producing process towards employees' subjectivity. Within the last decade two seminal research theses namely that of *Cognitive Capitalism* and *The New Spirit of Capitalism* has among other things pinpointed this orientation. What is particularly interesting in the discussion of cognitive capitalism and the new spirit are that they present a potent manifestation of an increased focus upon the individual existence or *subjectivity* of the employees as a production-factor.

Likewise, recent discussions on *commitment* in organizations has changed from questions of giving up the singularity of the employee's individual existence in the effort to commit to the hierarchy or culture of organizations to discussions affirming enjoyment, authenticity and even as Danfoss suggests of praising the necessity of a life outside the career. Indeed, an indiscernability between a life in productivity and personal existence feeds on the failure of work to fully co-opt life. In fact, self-management of the part of the employee is never and should never to settle for one over the other. This latter shift is perhaps distilled most potently in the self-leadership literature emerging out of McGregor's Theory Y (1957a), but perhaps even more in the important discussions from the 90's onwards on cultures of commitment as a form of identity management. It is thus along these discussions of self-leadership as motivating and productive *and* the ideal of affective commitment towards yourself and the organization as an instance of identity management that we find the second axis.

Chapter eight, then, will take a closer look at subjectivity of the employee as a new form of resource by looking at the contemporary discussion on the new regime of

the mode of production known as capitalism. Chapter nine and ten will likewise focus on this new form of resource particular how it demands a certain kinds of commitment towards oneself and the organization one works for. The last chapter in this part will connect these indices of the subjectivity of the employee and commitment in the effort to outline the sparks and fits of their machinery.

It is essential to understand that these indices, then, are located and reconstructed in a reading of different kinds of discussions around contemporary work today. And perhaps even more important that some of these discussions are not privileges over or considered more essential than others. They are exactly read in regards to symptoms or indices, which means that, say, the work of Boltanski and Chiapello in chapter eight is not considered anymore important, precise or true than the texts on commitment by McGregor in chapter nine or Flemings and Sturdy discussions on identity management. So Boltanski and Chiapello thesis on a new spirit is not to be read as on the same level of the idea of social machines. The thesis of a new spirit and a cognitive capitalism is read in the effort to extract a machinic index. As is also the case with the discussions by McGregor and the Self-leadership school as well as the discussions of identity management ranging from Kunda to Fleming and Sturdy.



## CHAPTER 8

### ON SUBJECTIVITY AS A PRODUCTION RESOURCE IN 'COGNITIVE CAPITALISM' AND 'THE NEW SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM'

We are, in other words, faced with a form of capitalist accumulation that is no longer only based on the exploitation of labour in the industrial sense, but also on that of knowledge, life, health, leisure, culture etc....The globalisation that we are currently living is not only extensive (delocalisation, global market) but also intensive: it involves cognitive, cultural, affective and communicative resources (the life of individuals)...It is about putting life to work (Lazzarato 2004: 205)

Within the last decade there has been an increasing interest in changes toward a 'knowledge economy', 'globalized economy', 'network society', 'post-fordic form of production' etc. as not only a general transformation in the economy but a general shift in the mechanic of our contemporary mode of production. In short, a transformation in capitalism itself (Vercellone 2007: 13).

In this chapter I will focus on what Kristensen (2008) has described as perhaps the two seminal hypotheses when it comes to understanding and explaining these recent changes in capitalism. On the one hand Boltanski and Chiapello hypothesis of a *New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005) claiming that we are in the midst of a change in the ideological forms surrounding capitalism. In their book it is argued that we since the 1980's have been witnessing a new and third manifestation of regime of justification they called a spirit of capitalism (Boltanski & Chiapello 2005: 86). On the other hand I look at the research thesis put forward by the Matisse-group asserting that we are witnessing a crisis in industrial capitalism and the emergence of a *Cognitive Capitalism*. Members of the group such as Moulier Boutang, Lazzarato, Vercellone and Paulré (Moulier Boutang et al 2001), all in different ways, posit that the changes in the economy within the last 30 years must be regarded not as a change in the 'spirit' but as a material revolution in the very way

capital accumulates, comprises, and organizes labor and produces value (Moulier Boutang 2001). However, I only investigate these two forms of explanation of the supposed new face of capitalism in the effort to understand how they depict a new employee subject and its characteristics.

In reading these two theses I am deeply indebted to and inspired by Kristensen's (2008) comparison of these two attempts to describe the changes in recent capitalism. Kristensen compares the two theses' arguments of what the underlying dynamics in the recent change of capitalism consists of in the effort to discuss what kind of forms of exploitation this entails. My focus is, however, on sketching out how the two theses in different ways point to a certain focus and emphasis on employee subjectivity in the work-process. In particular, how contemporary capitalism entails the whole existence of the employee as a potential resource that must both be respected in the organization of work at the same time as the benefits from the employee authenticity (Boltanski & Chiapello 2005: 326) and invention-force (Moulier Boutang 2007: 14) must be regulated and encaptured. Put otherwise, the two theses on the third stage of capitalism are read in the attempt to qualify what the general orientations towards subjectivity in self-management imply and to flesh out subjectivity as a certain machinic index of the machinery at work in this orientation. I therefore follow Kristensen's analysis and comparison of the thesis of *A New Spirit* and the thesis of the rise of a *Cognitive Capitalism*, but I do it in the effort to extract the machinic index of subjectivity as a resource from these two research theses. Even though the comparison of these two theses is the same here and in Kristensen we can, thus, talk about a difference in the level of analysis. Kristensen looks at the two works in the effort to show that while they are similar on the level of pinpointing a change in capitalism, they show different explanations as to what constitute the dynamics in this change. I am primarily interested in a similarity when it comes to the idea of the employee subjectivity as a production-resource. Furthermore, there is also a level of difference when it comes to a more critical attitude. Kristensen ends up with

describing the forms of exploitation in the new spirit and cognitive capitalism, while I am interesting in locking on to a machinic index in the effort to describe a specific social machinery. The level of critic is thus different and more focused at the machinic logic and the way it entails a certain mode of existence (for more see chapter 5). However, what is essential for this endeavor is to understand that any mode of production entails a certain kind of subject. So before we move on to the workings of the two dynamics and the employee-subject it prescribes let us step back a bit to our Deleuzian framework.

For Deleuze and Guattari any mode of production must be understood in light of the concepts of machines. Or to be more exact understanding a certain social formation is only achieved by focusing on machines not the modes of production. Or in the words of Deleuze and Guattari themselves (1999: 435):

We define social formations by *machinic processes* and not by modes of production (these on the contrary depends on the processes)

Furthermore any mode of production (as part of a machinic relationship) entails a mode of subjection (Deleuze & Guattari 1999: 458). As Read (2008: 141) points out for Deleuze and Guattari

Every *mode of production* is inseparable from a *mode of subjection*, which is not added on as a supplement or a simple effect, but is immanent and necessary to its existence.

It is this mode of subjection that is of particular interest when we try to carve out the machinic index of subjectivity in the two aforementioned theses. As we will see both seem to entail a mode of subjection that centres on the employees as subjects that actively use their subjectivity in productive networks. In fact, both theses seem to imply that capitalism in its current and still emerging third stage thrives on an employee-subject that invests his or her human existence, their 'whole life' so to speak, in the production-process. But that do it in ways that never fully and once and for all exhaust this life. As the Danfoss adds described in the last chapter this third stage in capitalism needs 'whole persons', or rather the

whole living life of that person. But before investigating the particularities of this mode of subjection further, let us first have a further look into what the two theses respectably considered the dynamics in the change in the mode of production of capitalism towards what they both consider the third stage in capitalism.

### ‘Spirit of capitalism’ as the dynamic

As Kristensen (2008: 88-89) makes clear in his comparative analysis, what is common to both research theses is that they highlight the so-called humanization of work-processes often referred to as post-fordism, the interest in knowledge in the production-process, and the emphasis of immaterial aspects of products as intrinsic parts of a capitalistic economy. That is they both shared the common presupposition that we are witnessing,

not a phasing out, but a deep transformation, some even claim an internal revolution, of capitalism as a mode of production and economical form of accumulation (Kristensen 2008: 89 my translation).

However, as already touched upon they also differ in understanding what constitutes the dynamics of this transformation.

Boltanski and Chiapello primarily understand the crisis in the industrial form of capitalism and the emergence of a new form of capitalism as a change in the ideology that justify capitalism (Kristensen 2007: 88, see also Boltanski & Chiapello 2005: 4). According to Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 8) *‘the ideology that justifies engagement in capitalism’* is called a *‘spirit of capitalism’*. The term spirit, then, refers to a certain regime of moral and ideological justification (Kristensen 2008: 92). Such a regime is necessary as capitalism is primarily *‘an imperative to unlimited accumulation of capital by formally peaceful means’* (Boltanski & Chiapello 2005: 4). This elementary system is, however, an absurd one as it thrives on greed and entails that workers lose ownership over the product they produce (2005: 7). This makes external forms of justification necessary for capitalism to

function. Put otherwise, for people to invest their time, energy, and life in work and stay committed to it, a sense of purpose is demanded that transcends mere questions of profit and salaries (Kristensen 2008: 92).

The dynamics in capitalism must for Boltanski and Chiapello, then, always be understood in the regimes of justification surrounding it. It is the ideological framework that guarantees that people commit and aspire to maintain and sustain the capitalistic system. In fact, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 3) start their book by stating: ‘the subject of this book is the *ideological changes that have accompanied recent transformations in capitalism*’. Ideology, however should according to Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 3) not be reduced in a:

Marxist vulgar [sense] – that is to say, a moralizing discourse, intended to conceal material interests, which is constantly contradicted by practice – but as developed, for example, in the work of Louis Dumont: a set of shared beliefs, inscribed in institutions, bound up with actions, and hence anchored in reality.

What is more the motor in the formation of particular ideological regimes is always something external to capitalism itself. The working hypothesis, then, is that capitalism forms its justification, its spirit, through these different critiques posed towards its current spirit of capitalism i.e. the current justification of the capitalist system (Kristensen 2008: 92-3). Any spirit of capitalism is in this manner dialectical in its nature. Capitalism needs critique in order to pose its moral foundation and in the end legitimize the engagement in capitalism itself (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 4). As the authors put it themselves (2005: 20):

To maintain its powers of attraction, capitalism therefore has to draw upon resources external to it, beliefs which, at a given moment in time, possess considerable powers of persuasion, striking ideologies, even when they are hostile to it, inscribed in the cultural context in which it is developing [...] Faced with a demand for justification, capitalism mobilizes ‘already-existing’ things whose legitimacy is guaranteed, to which it is going to give a new twist by combining them with the exigency of capital accumulation

According to Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 57-103) recent changes in the discussions of management explicate the most potent expression of a

transformation of the spirit of capitalism. This transformation is fuelled by the absorption of two forms of critique: a social and artistic critique. That is for Boltanski and Chiapello these critiques raised in the aftermath of 1968 have contributed in various ways to the formation of a spirit in capitalism emphasizing creativity, self-organization, and collaboration through flexible smooth networks etc as important features of the capitalistic mode of production. Especially the artistic critique with its demand for autonomy, creativity and authenticity was according to Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 38) important for the formation of this new spirit (2005: 326). As they put it (2005: 38):

This critique foregrounds the loss of meaning and, in particular, the loss of the sense of what is beautiful and valuable, which derives from standardization and generalized commodification, affecting not only everyday objects but also artworks (the cultural mercantilism of the bourgeoisie) and human beings.

An important assumption in this critique, then, is that the human being possesses a potential for self-development, self-initiative, self-transgression, creativity etc. that was repressed in the structure of production characterizing the fordistic and tayloristic form of organization in the 1950's and 60's (2005: 38). The artistic critique's demands was essentially incorporated in organizations during the 1970's resulting in a form of organization highlighting autonomy, self-actualization and flat hierarchies (Kristensen 2008: 93): enter the new spirit of capitalism.

Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 17) talk of three phases in the development of this new spirit. In spite of the different manifestations of a spirit in each phase a common feature of all is their ability to answer three main questions:

How is committed engagement in the processes of accumulation a source of enthusiasm, even for those who will not necessarily be the main beneficiaries of the profits that are made? To what extent can those involved in the capitalist universe be assured of a minimum of security for themselves and their children? How can participation in capitalist firms be justified in terms of the common good, and how, confronted with accusations of injustice, can the way that it is conducted and managed be defended? (2005: 16)

The first spirit culminating in the end of the nineteenth century ‘focused on the person of the bourgeois entrepreneur’ (2005: 17). That is to say it was the captains of industry that possessed the ability and had the autonomy to create a life through the accumulation of capital (2005: 17). In a broader scale this ideal of captains of industries made the everyday workingman commit to the capitalist regime. Especially because this ideal relied on the development of wage-labor, which on its part allowed the young to leave the geographical territory, cultural community, and family in the effort to engage in their own personal business project (2005: 17). If commitment was legitimized through the desire to engage in one’s own personal adventure or the desire to become a captain of industry security on its part was created through a bourgeois morality:

Combining novel economic propensities (avarice or parsimony, the spirit of saving, a tendency to rationalize daily life in all its aspects, development of capacities for book-keeping, calculation, prediction) with traditional domestic predispositions: the importance attached to the family, lineage, inheritance, the chastity of daughters in order to avoid misalliances and the squandering of capital (2005: 17)

Justification for the common good on its part was afforded through a belief in technology, progress, science, and utilitarianism (2005: 17).

The second manifestation of the spirit of capitalism was fully developed between the 1930s and the 1960s (2005: 18). Instead of captains of industry, the organization and its managers now took the centre stage. The focus was on the large forms of organization, indeed Fordistic organization developed at the start of the twentieth century (2005: 18). Commitment was here driven by a desire to grow, expand, and become bigger. As Boltanski and Chiapello writes:

Particularly “exciting” for young graduates were the opportunities offered by organizations for attaining positions of power from which one could change the world and, for a large majority, liberation from need, the fulfilment of desires thanks to mass productions and its corollary: mass consumption (2005: 18).

Security on its part was found in the belief in rationality, life-long servitude to one organization and large welfare communities (2005: 18). And justification aspiring

to a greater generality was provided by an even stronger belief in progress and science, but also in 'institutional solidarity, the socialization of production, distribution and consumption, and collaboration between large firms and the state in the pursuit of social justice (2005: 18).

In the third and current manifestation of capitalism commitment became guarantees by making subjectivity and the emphasis on creativity, autonomy, and personal desires the values to be aspired to (2005: 96-99), i.e. to ensure commitment through the desire of just being oneself (Fleming & Sturdy 2007). Security also became a more fluid and dynamic term. To be secure is now to be responsible, mobile and able to change (2005: 122). And to ensure this security one must always get new competences, attain help to self-help, attend new courses, work with new forms of task. In short, to be secure is to be employable and to be employable is to be able to shift commitment from one task to the next (2005: 122). Finally all of this is legitimized by a kind of meritocracy that awards employability (2005: 95).

These features are particular interesting when it comes to the machinic index of subjectivity as a production resource. With the assimilation of the artistic critique and the emergence of these new ways of attaining commitment, security and legitimization employees were no longer expected to follow orders, repeat protocol and perform the role assigned to them. Rather 'combining autonomy and a sense of responsibility' (2005: 326) reduces 'supervision costs' (2005: 326) making the production-process more flexible towards changing 'customer demands or tight deadlines' (2005: 326). Being an active responsible employee subject thus became a necessity. Likewise the demand for creativity put forward by the artistic critique became a part of the production itself as 'the exploitation of inventiveness, imagination and innovation' (2005: 326) became of growing interest 'especially in the rapidly expanding sectors, of services and cultural productions' (2005: 326). And finally 1968's critique of the standardization and



homogenization of not only commodities (2005: 326) but also employees themselves was incorporated as the demand for authenticity became a key factor in being a responsible and innovative employee. Being oneself in the different projects one takes part of became important for being a good and efficient employee.

## Regimes of accumulation as the dynamic

The idea of the employee-subject as a responsible, authentic and creative labor-force is also a feature we find in the thesis of cognitive capitalism. Here the person, warts and all, is regarded as the labor-force itself as the production-force becomes an invention-force created in networks between employees.

The Matisse-group, then, agrees with Boltanski and Chiapello on the fact that we are entering a third stage in capitalism characterized by network, focus on self-actualization and self-determination at work, creativity and innovation, employability etc. Nonetheless, as Kristensen (2008: 89) points out, this new stage has less:

to do with it's new spirit and ideological-moral justifications of it as has more to do with the fact that it strives to capitalize the immaterial and enrol areas that so far were considers external to economy, so-called "positive externalities", in the economical valorisation-process (my translation).

In this way the Matisse-group follow Boltanski and Chiapello thesis that recent changes in economy and management are a symptom of a change in capitalism itself but they understand this change as a change in the inner-workings of capitalism, i.e. as a change in property-rights; forms of exploitation, the labor of division and the determination, calculation, and registration of value (Kristensen 2008: 90).

The notion of cognitive capitalism, then, consist of a term of capitalism to underline

the permanence of the structural invariants of the Capitalist mode of production: in particular, the driving role of profit and the wage relation (Vercellone 2005: 2).

While the term cognitive is

used to signal the epochal new about capitalism and is derived from the word 'connaissance' in its broad French meaning: know how, acquaintance with, knowledge, information, discernment, reason, consciousness (Kristensen and Larsen 2008: 4 my translation).

The 'key role played by knowledge' in this new form of capitalism is, however, 'not a historical novelty' (Vercellone 2005: 1). Rather the novel feature of cognitive capitalism is that the cognitive refers to *living* forms of knowledge, and this has more to do with tacit skills, knowledge created in networks, individual judgment, and affective intelligence than with information and data hardwired into technologies (Moulier Boutang 2007: 14). The latter representing what Vercellone (2005: 7) also refers to as dead forms of knowledge. The kind of knowledge characterized by Taylor's scientific management and Ford's assembly line and their fixation of knowledge in the effort to forecast, calculate and plan the behavior of customers and employees (Rullani 2000: upaged).

The idea of cognitive capitalism can thus be described as the attempt to create:

a unified concept of immaterial accumulation of knowledge as living activity of the brain connected in digital networks [to] explain global productivity and the development of new profitable activities, that is to say, fill up the rather vague or tautological concept of opportunity of a content that matches the conjuncture and the *ZeitGeist* of now a day capitalism (Moulier Boutang 2007: 19)

Important here is especially the terms *accumulation, living activity, brain and network*. The two former are essential for understanding the dynamics of this new form of capitalism while the two latter are important to understand what constitutes the important features of the employee-subject in this capitalism, namely employees actively utilizing brain capacities such as memory and attention in collaboration with others.

## Accumulation

The Matisse-group's historical starting point is that we since around the 1970's have witness a third stage in capitalism. According to the group, the two previous stages where mercantile capitalism and industrial capitalism (Vercellone 2005: 5). These stages in capitalism are, however, not different modes of production or regimes of justification but rather comprise different regimes of accumulation within the mode of production called capitalism. In the words of Kristensen and Larsen (2008: 12 my translation):

The category *accumulation* is used here in a broad sense as a society's collective private and public investments in its future production and reproduction. This accumulation can change content as well as goal and direction

According to the Matisse-group, then, we are witnessing such an internal change in the direction of a *production* and *organization* of labor now focusing on the accumulation of innovation and living knowledge, a change in the *distribution* and *circulation* towards more digital networks, and a change in *consumptions-patterns* as knowledge itself becomes a product which are not destroyed in the act of consumption but prolonged (see also Kristensen 2008: 98).

For the Matisse-group this, then, marks a change from the two previous forms of accumulations, which focused on other aspects in the processes of production, distribution and consumptions. The first form of capitalistic accumulation, emerged in the 16th and 17th century, and was based on accumulation of trade-capital assembled through international trade (Kristensen 2008: 96). Furthermore the mode of production was at that time 'marked by the hegemony of craftsmen and skilled factory workers knowledge' and 'based upon the so-called *putting out system* and centralized manufacture' (Vercellone 2005: 5).

The second form of capitalism, emerged in the early 18th century, accumulated material capital through the material manipulation of material resources (Kristensen 2008: 96) and found 'its historical fulfillment in the Fordist model'

(Vercellone 2005: 5) with its emphasis on a 'theory of value based on the time of labour' (2005: 5) and the organization of 'labour in terms of prescribed tasks in a given time frame' (2005: 6).

The last and current stage, that of cognitive capitalism, can therefore also be described as a crisis in the value-labor relationship as the managerial separation of conceptual and executive tasks no longer is able to incorporate labor into capital. And labor for its part can no longer be 'separated from the subjectivity of the worker' (Vercellone 2005: 5). In fact, what comes to characterize this stage is that 'inventive force instead of the labor force ... is the main characteristic of cognitive capitalism' (Moulier Boutang 2007: 13).

### **Living activity**

If inventive force is what constitutes the substance of the production of value then the 'positive human externalities' becomes important in the production process (Moulier Boutang 2001: 32-33). That is, capital itself comes to rely on what under industrial capitalism were regarded as elements external to production (Moulier Boutang 2001: 32). In particular aspects such as the employee's thoughts, empathy, language, fantasy and desire (Larsen 2008: 14) becomes essential for the organization of the production-process.

As Vercellone (2005: 10) makes clear one has to make a distinction between living knowledge and dead knowledge to understand the importance of these human positive externalities. The dead knowledge refers to the fixation of knowledge in machines and technology known from the tayloristic division of labor while the living knowledge refers to the living activity of contextualizing 'knowledge and provide answers to new questions that had not been previously codified in software' (Moulier Boutang 2007: 13). Indeed, it is the capability to 'produce repetition with difference' that is important here not 'the mere repetition that has been absorbed into data, hardware and different kinds of software' (2007: 13). When labor-force in this way becomes inventive-force (Moulier Boutang 2007: 13)

the source of economic value and the production-means to reach it (Kristensen & Larsen 2008: 13) can be said to be found within the subjectivity of the employee, or what Moulier Boutang (2001: 32, 2007: 12) refers to as the wetware and netware of the employee-subject.

### **Brain (wetware) and netware**

According to Moulier Boutang (2007:12):

Each good (material or immaterial) is produced with four components that cannot be separated: the hardware, the software, the wetware (activity of the living brain) and netware.

Moulier Boutang thus makes a distinction between four kinds of knowledge in the innovation-process. The first hardware (e.g. machines) and software (e.g. computer programs) roughly corresponding to what Vercellone (2005: 10) calls dead knowledge the latter to what he calls living knowledge. The wetware can be said to refer to these particular brain activities carried out by the individual employee i.e. their biological-cognitive processes (Moulier Boutang 2001: 33). Especially, the ability to remember, shift attention from one task to the other and find new solutions to emerging problems is important here. But these individual aspects are far from sufficient to be innovative. As Moulier Boutang (2001: 34) makes clear, it is the netware of the employees that is all important, i.e. the ability to form networks of social and productive cooperation.

However, if the network between brains constitutes the innovative force in cognitive capitalism a least three distinctions that characterized the employee under industrial capitalism becomes indiscernable.

First of all, if continuous innovation is all important, regular form of understanding of production in clear-cut input/output model becomes difficult. In fact, determining the content and limit of these is becoming harder and harder (Moulier Boutang 2001: 33, Larsen 2008: 14). Moulier Boutang (2007: 15) uses the work of bees to characterize this shift *from* management as a matter of finding

and controlling input and output to management as a matter of capturing positive externalities. In input/output terms the work of bees can be considered the 'production of marketable honey' by 'building up the alveoli, and transformation of pollen into honey' (Moulier Boutang 2007: 15). However, the work of bees might also be understood as 'pollination'. Here the output of honey is considerable 'negligible if we compared it to their production of positive externalities. 80% of the vegetables and fruits on our planet need the pollination of bees'(2007: 16). Transposed to the sphere of labor the

exploitation of the activities of the human bees is not to market their production of honey but the by outcome of their activity (social pollination) and, if possible, to commodify it (2007: 16).

From a managerial perspective the fordist and taylorstic division of labor with its focus on clear-cut input-output models hinders rather than boosts innovation and social pollination (Moulier Boutang 2007: 13). The new managerial problem, then, becomes how to *both* make room for and initiate these positive externalities *and* integrate them in to production (Moulier Boutang 2001: 32).

Likewise the managerial distinction between planning and execution of work tasks becomes difficult when input and output is not clear-cut and work is no longer a regime of repetition. When the cognitive in its broad sense becomes a source of value and social pollination the output, work comes to require a form of management that does not limit and withhold the subjectivity of the employee in prescribed plans for the execution of work. It in fact becomes to incite this subjectivity. After all the 'input' necessary for permanent innovation and social pollination are not found in the sphere of coded tasks, but in the domain of the potential and actual capabilities that makes up the employee. Which on its part entails a certain notion of the employees as subjects that actively uses their subjectivity (judgments, ability to reason, intuition, ability to begin anew) in cooperative networks that has a productive benefit for the company they work for.

Such a focus on subjectivity, however, means that the distinction between the labor-force and the subject that works becomes hard to maintain. As Moulier Boutang puts it (2001: my translation):

In the cognitive or third capitalism the well-known separation between labour-force and the workers personality is still harder to maintain. The distinction between labour-force and the juridical free (and non-evolved) person becomes precarious. It is first and foremost unproductive and become a restraining factor for innovations.

The employees no longer possess their labor-force in the form of technical skills, physical force or just plain old time as a property that can be sold; rather the employees *are* the labor-force (Kristensen 2008: 102).

Cognitive Capitalism can as a result be said to imply what Virno calls a reversal of Arendt's classic study of labor, work and (political) action in *The Human Condition*. According to Virno labor as 'the production of new objects' through a 'repetitive and foreseeable process' has been informed with what Arendt called the realm of action. It is along these lines not 'politics that conform to labor; it is rather that labor has acquired the traditional features of political action' (Virno 2004: 51). In contemporary work human generic capacities such as

being in the presence of others, the relationship with the presence of others, the beginning of new processes, and the constitutive familiarity with contingency, the unforeseen and the possible (2004: 51)

has become a decisive part of the production process. These living human, perhaps all too human, capacities are in fact the premise for the release of a productive inventive-force. It is here that the notion of self-management becomes important.

## Subjectivity and Self-management

If value production is directly related to an inventive force and indirectly to the generic qualities of judgment, desire and belief, the object of management becomes the employees' subjectivity *and* the world or environment in which this

subjectivity lives and produces. As Moulier Boutang points out (2007: 13) production in this new stage of capitalism makes permanent innovation the substance of value, which on its parts demands that employees' subjectivity, i.e. employees wetware and netware must be enforced and captured at the same time. So rather than subjectivity being a disturbing element to be disciplined in a rigid way, this subjectivity constitutes the initial drive upon which organizational flexibility and the ability to innovate is based. The capture of subjectivity, then, comes to partly rely on the specific self-activation and self-control by the employees of their human generic qualities such as the ability to communicate, to cope with contingency, to begin a new, to network, develop new strengths and to enjoy. These qualities are construed as the building blocks of a flexible production, and the individual employee is considered the cement that holds these blocks together. It is in this sense that cognitive capitalism implies a notion of the employee-subject as more than just an individual resource. The employee is always also a steward of the organization's collective resources. Following Lazzarato (1996: 135) we can thus talk of employees that 'are expected to become "active subjects" in the coordination of the various function of production, instead of being subjected to a simple command'. This does not mean that subjectivity should just be left to itself and not be coordinated. But the coordination can be said to be carried out in a way that actively enforces the subjectivity of the employee.

To sum up: when the subjectivity of the employee *is* the labor-force, or rather the inventive force, work becomes more personalized and individualized, but at the same time it requires 'bottom-up' collective coordination. Any employee should be able to activate and manage their generic qualities *and* engage in productive cooperation with their co-workers (Lazzarato 1996: 135). This last part is all important as it is not the individual abilities alone or the wetware, but the collective coordination, or netware, that guarantees a productive inventive-force (e.g. Moulier Boutang 2001: 35).



Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 94) also describe something similar when they stress the project or network as all important in the present third state of capitalism. To be productive demands active employees, which engage with and commit to the short-term project within the organization. Indeed, it is the employees' *employability* or ability to pass from one project to the next that becomes the driving motor (Boltanski & Chiapello 2005: 94-95). Or as Boltanski and Chiapello puts it: 'employability – that is to say, their capacity, once one project is finished to integrate themselves into another' (2005: 121). The employee should not only commit his or her blood, heart, and soul to one kind of task, but posses the ability to move on to new tasks. The employee-subject must 'engage with' and show 'enthusiasm' for the project (2005: 112), but also be versatile and engage in new projects:

He is mobile. Nothing must hamper his movements. He is a "nomad". In this sense, all the sacrifices that are made have the effect of enhancing the streamlined character of entities – of persons, but also of things – in order to favour their reorganization when the next project comes along (2005: 122).

The employee must be nomadic because this is what ensures a lasting way for employees to incite and manage the coordination in projects via the use of their own capacities. Managing subjectivity does in this way not only involve personal desires and beliefs, personal abilities to think, create and innovate but following Arendt, it also demands the ability to communicate, be in the presence of others and last but not least to begin anew. It is, in fact, these later social abilities that intensify and give the personal abilities a productive outlet.

However, organizing the employee must imply a certain level of moderation of the employees' subjectivity to make sure that a collective cooperation is achieved. But again the moderation cannot be done by controlling the accomplishment of particular tasks in a particular time and place. This is in truth not an option when personal judgment calls, self-development, and individual desire are the driving

forces in the production apparatuses. Or when 'the separation of the labor force from the individual and personal affects [becomes] less and less effective' (Moulier Boutang 2007: 14). Indeed, being 'your-self' must be regarded as a source for a higher level of productivity and involvement in the job. What is important here, then, is that in line with the concepts of cognitive capitalism and the new spirit of capitalism we can speak of self-management as an emerging guiding principle for an efficient organization of the production. There must be room for the employee as an existing being for it to be a productive resource. And a way to guarantee this space is to make the individual employee the site of organization as well as production. In organizational settings it is through the subject ability to self-manage that the subjectivity is made 'compatible with the conditions of production for productions sake' (Lazzarato 1996: 135). That is, employee self-management is a way to turn the generic human qualities of their subjectivity into an inventive-force. We can as a consequence talk of a machinic index indicating that a flexible and efficient production process – whether it be driven by a new spirit or a new regime of accumulation - comes to rely on the living knowledge of the employee. This in turn demands both an involvement of subjectivity in the productions-process and the use of this subjectivity to coordinate, register, and look for new and better functions of production.

This is exactly what brings us to the next machinic index: discussions of assuring employee commitment towards production and how this relates to employee self-determination and enjoyment.

## **CHAPTER 9: COMMITMENT THROUGH SELF-DETERMINATION AND ENJOYMENT**

Human beings aspire to be part of a cause worthy of commitment (Douglas McGregor cited in Heil et al 2000: 107))

As Roberts (2005: 622) among others has made clear Walton Harvard Business Review article *From control to commitment in the workplace* from 1985 perhaps most sharply announced a significant change underway in the approach to the management of work). By comparing two plants, Walton sketched out two strategies for management (Roberts 2005: 622): an strategy of imposing control and a strategy of eliciting commitment. Walton (1985: 78) pointed to the latter strategy as the more successful one.

In the first strategy command, compliance and control were the keywords. Management was a question of rulebooks, hierarchies, detailed outlines of work-tasks, and surveillance (Thomas 2000: 3). As Walton (1985: 79) pointed out this was build on an assumption on a stable environment, standardized products, and simplified low paid jobs. The 'standards of excellence' set by competitors has, however, changed: the name of the game was now turbulent markets, customized products, and more complex work-tasks (Roberts 2005: 622). And the way to meet these standards was the elicitation of employees' capacities for 'continuous improvement', self-management, and self-development rather than through detailed organizational protocols for task-performance and control of employee behavior (Walton 1985). Rather than compliant workers, employees should be committed problem-solvers. The key for making it in a fast-paced, dynamic and competitive environment, such as the emerging cognitive capitalism, was a focused attention on commitment attained through a variety of participatory management concepts eliciting employee empowerment. Further more this elicitation of commitment through empowerment should be rooted in the

employees' abilities, desires, and beliefs and not be induced through sticks and carrots methods alone (McGregor 1957a, Uhl-Bien & Graen 1998).

As a mirror of thinking about the organization of the workplace, Walton's article can be read as a revolution in managerial thinking (Roberts 2005: 622). Sustainable organizational competitiveness now requires a deep commitment from the employees' not mere obedience. This commitment involved as De Cotiis and Summers' point out, that the employee 'accepts and internalizes the goals and values of an organization and views his or her organizational role in terms of its contribution to those goals and values' (1987: 448).

### **Douglas McGregor, self-actualization and organizational commitment**

As in the case with the discourse on cognitive capitalism and the new spirit of capitalism, the starting point for this shift in focus grounds itself in changes at a more societal level. Whether changes are due to changes in technologies, globalization or the accumulation-regime, the common feature seems to be that organizations now operate in an environment of change, unpredictability, and turbulence (Du Gay 2008: 101).

This shift puts an emphasis on bureaucratic forms of organization as controlling and even repressing cultures, not only because they stifle the employees' subjectivity, but also because they constrain the organizations' ability to succeed and be innovative by stifling subjectivity. Cultures of commitment are on its part seen as something embracing personal development with organizational efficiency. The first step to reach this committed culture is thus to get rid of the disciplinary practices of the bureaucracies. A successful corporation offers happiness, prosperity, autonomy, and a sense of belonging for its employees (Du Gay 2008: 102). It is a site where employees are more than employees. They are humans realizing their aspirations, self-control, responsibility, and even freedom.

As Rose (1999: 104) has argued this 'new psychological picture of the employee as self-actualizing ego whose personal strivings could be articulated into the organization of the enterprise'.

This means that, instead of controlling behavior through orders and coercion the idea with these cultures of commitment is that the employee in exchange for personal interests and narcissistic pleasures would internalize the organizations interest. The internalization, however, should not be imposed but rather stem from what McGregor called theory Y behavior. It should emerged through the employees' own interests. This Y behavior entailed, that

Motivation, the potential for development, the capacity for assuming responsibility, the readiness to direct behaviour towards organizational goals are all present in people. Management does not put them there. It is a responsibility of management to make it possible for people to recognize and develop these human characteristics for themselves (McGregor 1957a:15).

McGregor's work was triggered by the fact that people in their daily work were monitored and confined to specific positions of responsibilities, while in their spare time they committed themselves to a range of tasks (i.e., political organizations, unions, hobbies) without any specific economical motivation other than the desire to break the current situation, to bring something new into the world or to actualize themselves (Skårup 2005: 85). McGregor concluded that the reason for the lack of commitment within the organization is that there is no room for personal expression. But if the employees were given the right conditions in the workplace, so the slogan went, they would actualize the immense source of energy that transverse them with the same level of innovation and intensity as could be seen outside the workplace (Skårup 2005: 85). This conversely demands that managerial regulation becomes something new altogether, as McGregor puts it:

The real task of management is to create conditions that result in genuine collaboration throughout the organization. To create such conditions is to create a way of life (McGregor cited in Heil et al 2000: 140).

In this way, McGregor would like work to become a way of life, not a restriction of life. This principle is also implicit in McGregor's statement that

the essential task of management is to arrange organizational conditions and methods so that people can achieve their own goals *best* by directing their own effort toward organizational objectives (McGregor 1957a: 15).

The role of management in cultures of commitment, then, is to construct conditions that made the employees own self-actualization interest converge with organizational objectives. Identification with the organization is something that should come from the inside, not from above. This for its part demands that

work were reshaped according to a knowledge of the subjectivity of the worker, not only would the psychological needs and strivings of individuals be met, but efficiency, productivity, quality, and innovation would be improved (Rose 1999: 104)

Organizational success, as well as sustainable commitment, is something that builds on knowing the employees' inner most drives. Commitment, then, is here more than a simple behavioral compliance towards objectives, a matter of being driven by a financial need or something done out of a feeling of obligation. Real commitment is of an affective kind which is, according to Houghton and Yoho (2005: 74), is best

described as a deeper relationship in which followers identify with and are involved in an organization to the extent that they are willing to give of themselves in interest of the organization's well being.

Furthermore this affective commitment should be seen as an 'active relationship with an organization rather than a passive loyalty' (Bligh et al 2005: 305). Indeed, commitment is more than the desire of a certain purpose, it is as Thomas, stresses also to take 'personal responsibility' for making that purpose happen (2001: 29). So as Bligh et al (2005: 304) puts it commitment must be 'seen as a deep attachment to an organization that is not affected by day-to-day events'.

Since, the 1980s, when Walton wrote his short article, management ideas and practices turned decisively toward exactly this McGregorian idea of human subjectivity as an inherent resource and the eliciting of commitment as the way to

realize this resource (e.g. Roberts 2005, see also Willmott 1993).

These managerial concepts and technologies advanced the ideal of an employee as an active and committed self - the subject of thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires –as the base upon which sustainable organizational competitiveness is achieved. However, this increased focus on the empowered self-determining and self-actualizing employee has both been received in positive and negative ways. The former focus on the idea of a consensus of interest between the organization and the individual that had become empowered, self-leading, even free, through these technologies, while the latter focuses on these technologies as part of a new way of controlling the employee through an organizational encroachment of their personal lives. Consensus here is only due to a prior colonization. But common for both is that they point to employee commitment and self-expression as important features in an efficient form of organization.

## Commitment and Self-leadership

What characterizes the more positive take on commitment was the idea that human growth and betterment serve as the foundation of an effective organization. An idea drawing directly on McGregor's theory Y that is particularly well represented in what Manz and Sims calls self-leadership (1989). This notion combines commitment towards the organization with an idea of the employee as a psychological being in need of self-expression and with capacities for self-control.

The characteristics of self-leading employees, then, are that they are their own boss, take decisions for themselves, know how best to perform their job and possess skills such as 'self-problem assessment, self-goal setting, self-rehearsal, self-observation and evaluation, and self-reinforcement and/or punishment' (Uhr-Bien & Gren 1998: 340). The employee is encouraged to this kind of self-leadership on the assumption that if the employees are recruited correctly, given opportunity

to realize their personal and professional competences and committed to their jobs, they are better qualified than management to make decisions about how their jobs are performed. Essentially self-leadership is seen as the very guarantee for mutual individual- and organizational development.

For Manz and Sims the self-leading employee is therefore not only an employee capable of and responsible for determining approaches to task executions (1984, 1989,) he or she also controls and regulates these approaches, in ways that emphasize 'the importance of intrinsic motivation resulting from the inherent rewards of completing a task' (Bligh et al 2006: 299). This means that the self-leading employee is not just self-regulating according to a pre-given standard such as an organizational goal or value, but is

excited, involved, committed and energized by the work. At its heart intrinsic motivation is about passion and positive feelings that people get from their work. These feelings reinforce and energize employees' self-management efforts and make work personally fulfilling. Building intrinsic motivation, then, helps to create an upward spiral of positive feelings and experiences (Quigley & Tymon 2006: 527).

In fact, what distinguishes self-leadership from mere influence over the task-execution is whether or not the employee is committed and energized by the sense of meaning and purpose inherent in performing the task. Or put otherwise, if the employee is existential empowered and not just task empowered the employee is self-leading. The assumption being that if the work is inherent motivating, the employee is committed and feels passionate about it. Indeed, as Thomas argues (2001: 13) inherent motivation '*are those things that feel good-that generate positive emotions*'. This enjoyment then should not only make the employee better at managing their task, but makes this management self-actualizing.

Following this the promising role ascribed to self-leadership as a mode of organization is the accomplishment of successful organizational effectiveness and flexibility through the unique, irreplaceable and inimitable skills, competences,



and not least emotional commitment of the employee (Uhl-Bien & Graen 1998). Self-leadership is not only seen as tool in achieving higher levels of performance and effectiveness, then, it is at the same time seen as the very mechanism for facilitating lasting personal empowerment and commitment (Manz & Neck 2004, Houghton & Yoho 2005). So self-leadership is seen as the *process of cognitive and behavior strategies* that may result in personal empowerment and organizational commitment as a long-term *state* and not a short-term event (Houghton & Yoho 2005: 68).

Self-leadership, then, is viewed as the very set of strategies relying upon self-determination, autonomy, and purpose, that enhance empowerment and commitment. And the first step in this process is with clear reminiscence to McGregor to give the employee enhanced task autonomy, a sense of purpose in the task at hand and an increased level of self-determination. Indeed, it is the chance to express and actualize one-self that makes it possible to direct the unique human powers of development, judgment, and self-control towards organizational objectives.

In this way commitment towards the organization is achieved through empowerment, which relies on self-leadership, that again demands a form of intrinsic motivation (from the task, from the feeling of purpose and the feeling of autonomy) to function well. So in this self-leadership sequence organizational commitment begins with a commitment to a meaningful purpose and task. Or as Quigley and Tymon (2006: 523) put it:

intrinsic motivation is the key 'motivational/psychological component of employee empowerment... intrinsic motivation enables employees to become ... self-leading

which in turn makes organizational commitment possible in the long run. Indeed, if the task and work is intrinsic rewarding, self-leadership is increased and with it so is long-lasting commitment towards the organization.

## Creating conditions for Self-leadership

We are here back to McGregor's initial idea about theory Y and the job of management to create conditions where self-actualization converge with organizational objectives. As McGregor makes clear in *The Human Side of Enterprise* the insistence of understanding employees as self-actualizing human beings did not amount to saying that self-management is the same as 'everyone' is permitted 'to decide everything' (McGregor in Rose 1999: 97). Nor to just remove any form of control and management altogether as 'abdication is not a workable alternative to authoritarianism' (McGregor in Rose 1999: 97). Indeed, management was important as McGregor insisted because there is no 'direct correlation between employee satisfaction and productivity' (McGregor in Rose 1999: 97). Rather this correlation has to be produced and managed.

Management of self-leadership or management, that facilitates self-leadership, thus becomes a matter of building intrinsic motivation into the employees job in a way that starts a positive spiral movement of self-leadership and commitment possible (Quigley & Tymon 2006: 531). It is through these self-leadership processes with the emphasis on self-determination that the subjectivity of the employee becomes intertwined with the working task and organizational goals of the organization.

For McGregor extrinsic rewards and threats could not build a lasting and high level of commitment. The whole mechanic idea of the employee as a body set in motion by an application of an external force such as a reward or punishment did not grasp the reality of human nature according to McGregor (Heil et al 2000: 92). The idea not only confused compliance with commitment it also produced resentment through this confusion (Heil et al 2000: 92). Commitment couldn't be produced from the outside and in, but must be developed from the inside and out. Repercussions and behavior modifications inhibits commitment no matter if these are produced through direct punishments or by dangling a desired object in front

of the employee. Commitment can only be produced indirectly when the reward no longer rest outside the activity itself, but is part of the activity itself (Heil et al 2000: 95).

According to McGregor, if used properly performance management technologies were a way of achieving a kind of intrinsic motivation. But only in so far as the objectives and goals set in the performance management process were considered dynamic and if the individual employee was given a chance to set 'the objectives for himself and in a self-evaluation of performance semiannually or annually' (McGregor 1957a: 19). This underlying assumption being that task empowerment leads to organizational commitment and personal growth.

Other technologies such as coaching, appraisal interviews and value management have later pick up this thread of ensuring organizational commitment by giving the employee the opportunity to gain self-awareness about their inner life, what triggers them, are given insight into how they can be better at what they do and still find enjoyment through it all. The function of these technologies are, so to speak, to make sure that they employee are doing something that motivate them and are constantly leading themselves in ways that they find purposeful and self-affirming. The purpose of these management technologies thus becomes to ensure organizational commitment as the social bond that combine the individual and the organization in a win – win situation. As Kunda & Van Maanen (1999: 65) summarize it: 'loyalty in return for a career, commitment in return for identity, dedicated performance in return for meaningful work'.

Commitment and self-leadership present the company with a more efficient way of harnessing the effort and initiative that the burgeoning cognitive capitalism demands while presenting a 'benign and supportive work environment that offers the opportunity for individual self-actualization' (Kunda 1992: 10). However, the

question is if this is all these technologies do when they tap into the subjectivity of the employee. This is the question raised in the next chapters.

## CHAPTER 10

### COMMITMENT AND THE ENROACHMENT OF PERSONAL SUBJECTIVITY

People that are happy and have the freedom to be themselves, are more productive and give more of themselves (Bains et al. 2007: 241).

According to a long tradition the strategies of commitment Walton talked about did not only attempt to attempt to win the hearts and minds of employees. They also manage how employees should act, think, and feel. From Whyte's *Organization Man*, over Willmott's discussion on corporate culturalism and Kunda's analysis of normative control, to Fleming and Sturdy's studies in neo-normative control the question has not been how contemporary management technologies enhanced motivation, self-leadership, and empowerment but how it regulated and in fact encroached subjectivity. It is these discussions we turn to now as it can help understand the machinic indices of both subjectivity and commitment even better, and it can start to give us a glimpse into the fits and sparks of the commitment machine that constitute the self-managing employee.

#### Whyte's Organization Man

In his classic study, Whyte illustrated how personal subjectivity was being stifled under the demands of bureaucracy. Whyte drew a picture of the ideal employee 'who had left home, spiritually as well as physically, to take the vows of organization life' (Whyte 1956: 8) and now employed his abilities exactly the way the organizational protocol demanded.

Through an analysis of, among other things, organizational motivation techniques and theory, and the growing use of personality tests in recruitment, Whyte (1956: 8-9) draws a picture of the ideal '*organization man*' as one who employs his abilities exactly the way the organization demanded it of him. He follows protocol,

he never questions his boss, he has good home conditions and moulds his aspirations, thoughts, and values to fit and converge with that of the corporation.

What interested Whyte about this ideal organization man was that the company wanted more than just his sweat and his time. It wanted his soul (Whyte 1956: 8). It relied on his unlimited commitment towards the organization. And, in Whyte's description (1956: 160), this level of commitment was achieved by the organization through technologies like personality testing, socialization, and rewards systems. Indeed, commitment was achieved through the use of supervision, external motivation, and the feeling of being together.

### Corporate culturism

As illustrated by Walton in the 80's a severe critique was directed against attempts to create commitment through protocols and methods of sticks and carrots. The focus was now on debureaucratization, employee empowerment, and self-determination as a key to success. However, to achieve a flexible and productive organization such efforts demanded a primarily affective commitment from the employee. One of the key instruments in achieving this commitment was giving up protocol and rewards, for what Willmott labels 'corporate culturism' programs (1993: 516). This term referred to the assumption that it was possible to win the hearts and minds of the employee, by designing a purpose that preserved room for self-determination and expression on the one hand while creating clearly enunciated corporate values and a common system of belief on the other. Leading authorities on these programs such as Peters and Waterman (1982) thus argued for the 'strengthening of corporate culture' in an effort to enhance 'organizational performance by securing greater commitment and flexibility from the employees' (Willmott 1993: 515). Of course such programs, like the ideas and practices prescribed by self-leadership literature may be patchy and half-baked when it comes to their practical implementation. Still, as Willmott point out:

Like other panaceas, it may slide into disrepute and disuse as raised expectations are unfulfilled or as the costs of implementation are unmatched by the promised return. Nonetheless, the core ideas of corporate culturism seem to have flowed remarkably quickly into the vessel of management thought. Ideas about 'strengthening the culture' now infuse diverse corporate change programmes, including those introduced primarily as a means of improving quality, flexibility and/or responsiveness to customer needs. In the variety of guises, corporate culturism has been endorsed by a sufficient number of leading management gurus, corporate executives and state mandarins to ensure a more than passing influence upon management theory and practice (Willmott 1993: 516)

So while the applications of corporate culture were often partial, the general idea behind these programs was quite a success. One reason for this was the fact that the ideal of these programs shared what Willmott calls an 'implicit understanding' with Post-Taylorist management theories and practices, namely that

the distinctive quality of human action, and of labour power, resides in the capacity for self-determination. This insight informs the understanding that corporate performance can be maximized only if this capacity is simultaneously respected and exploited (Willmott 1993: 525)

Culture programs, then, also shared the self-leadership traditions emphasis on the importance of self-determination and intrinsic motivation. However, in contrast to this tradition that talk of a self-emerging win-win situation whenever employees were given expanded autonomy, corporate culturism explicitly try to manage the autonomy by 'colonizing the affective domain' (Willmott 1993: 517) e.g. by managing commitment through values and purpose.

Corporate culturism in this sense both built on McGregor's idea of theory Y, and went beyond it. As Willmott (1993: 525) point out, Theory Y, and one might add the self-leadership philosophy, built upon an assumption of a consensus between individual needs and organizational objectives. Especially in McGregor's work the way to gain this consensus was primarily to get rid of the constraints of Theory X i.e. that people should be controlled and motivated by sticks and carrots. Self-leadership literature in some ways keeps this assumption. If only work was intrinsic motivating an almost spontaneous consensus would emerge creating a

win-win situation that served both the individual's and the organization's interests. However, as Willmott (1993:524), points out in direct contrast to this underlying assumption of a potential consensus in organizations;

that is distorted by incompetent forms of management control ... corporate culturism seeks to *construct* this consensus by managing the culture through which employee values are acquired (Willmott 1993: 524)

Instead of assuming a consensus corporate culturism aspired to create a consensus by managing the 'content and valency of employee values' (Willmott 1993: 525). Management efforts in this manner widen its scope. Management is not just the manipulation of behavior but also of the very thoughts and feelings of employees. Indeed, as Willmott (1993: 525) stresses theory Y's

concern with designing organizations and jobs that fulfil 'higher order' needs is harnessed to the task of managing *the design of people* who willingly perform jobs because their sense of purpose and identity is tightly coupled to the core values of the corporation.

## Designing corporate selves

Kunda (1992) illustrated this design of corporate selves in his analysis of the culture programs in the fortune 500 company *Tech*. Here Kunda showed how the designed corporate culture programs created their own form of normative incentive. They implicitly demanded that employees should embrace the new corporate self designed for them. All employees were expected to internalize the ideal of themselves as a self-actualizing and self-managing self that uses his or her inner aspirations, desires and values as a vessel for the organization. Whereas Whyte described a form of control inciting commitment through organizational protocols, clear-cut hierarchies and reward systems, Kunda indicated a softer form of control working through the combination of empowerment technologies and corporate culture programs. However, what was common to these different sorts of management technologies was that the end product was the same. Both Whyte's and Kunda's organization man is the character who has internalized the demands of the organization and will continue to follow them faithfully even in



the face of the demise of organizational power. They are men who have taken on the corporate values as their own and who strives completely to follow organizational protocol or culture. In other words – organization man is married to the organization.

Both Whyte's and Kunda's organization man can in this way be read as instances of what Etzioni referred to as *normative control* (Kunda 1992: 11). Rather than a form of control working only through compliance with direct rules of actions, normative control attempts to control the thoughts and feelings. It is 'the employee's *self* – that ineffable source of subjective experience – that is claimed in the name of corporate interest' (Kunda 1992: 11). The organization man is thus the man who has taken on the corporate values as part of his self. But as, Whyte already pointed out this alignment of employee subjectivity and corporate culture is more than a matter of mere conformity. It is a moral imperative followed not to fit in, but because it is believed to be more fulfilling for the employee as well as the organization (Whyte: 1956).

It was the same kind of normative control that Kunda found in his study of cultural engineering in the high-tech company Tech. But the means to attain it was not the same as in Whyte study from the 1950's. The soul of the employee was no longer recruited through primary external forms of control such as sticks and carrots or organizational protocols, but through a more subtle molding of attitudes, beliefs and values (Kunda 1992: 11).

This new form of control in this manner went way beyond the compliance expected of the organization man, instead it demanded an emotional commitment to what Peters and Waterman (1982) in their best-selling *In Search of Excellence* called the 'clearly enunciated company values'. A set of mission and visions statements and culture programs that could replace the formal structures and protocols of the bureaucratic organization as well as stick and carrot methods.

This organization man was no longer the object of external control as he or she had internalize these values enabling self-control, self-punishment, and task-empowerment. All in all it was the very concept of 'corporate culture' that was considered the best instrument way to manage the hearts and minds of the employee in ways that combined task freedom and emotional commitment with the 'bottom line'. Peters and Waterman (Kunda 1992: 10) asserted that it offered employee autonomy instead of bureaucratic tyranny the benefit for the organization would be increasing creativity and adaptability to the market. Peters and Waterman in this way called for a passionate and visible hate towards bureaucracy (Du Gay 2008: 98) in the quest to get rid of the disease Whyte pointed to. An illness where conformity created compliance in the shape of fear of initiative, creativity and individualism (Whyte 1956: 17). In fact, these strong cultures should 'provide the opportunity to stick out, yet combine with a philosophy and system of beliefs' (Peters & Waterman 1982: 81 see also Kunda 1992: 10). The system of beliefs performing the role of a collective meaningful purpose governing the employees actions.

It was exactly this kind of strong corporate culture that Kunda found in his study of *Tech*. Here, as one manager put it, the job of management was 'to marry them [employees] to the company' (Kunda 1992: 7). The way to achieve such a long lasting commitment was according to another employee to first of all to realize, that

Power plays don't work. You can't *make 'em do anything*. They have to *want* to. So you have to work trough the culture. The idea is to educate people without them knowing it. Have the religion and not know how they ever got it. (Kunda 1992: 5).

As a consequence of this management through the cultivation of beliefs, the new tools of management were no longer orders and surveillance, but culture programs, manuals, and presentations such as a culture operating manual, official company materials, an in-house newsletter, academic text on corporate culture, internal corporate terms, and culture exercises that according to one manager:

Covers it all. What is a Techie, Getting ahead. Networking. Being a Self-Starter. Taking charge. How to Identify Burnout. The subcultures. Presentations. Managing Your Boss... You can't just do the old nine-to-five thing. You have to have the right mindset. It's a gut thing. You have to get the religion. You can push at the system, you drive yourself... And I tell them the first rule: "Do What's Right". It's the company slogan, almost a cliché, but it captures the whole idea. "Do What's Right". If they internalize that, I've done my job (Kunda 1992: 6).

This culture program in other words consists of a collection of concrete techniques 'designed to induce others to accept – indeed to become – what the company would like them to be' (Kunda 1992: 7). The culture program can, according to Kunda, therefore be said to work at a double level. On the one hand it offers a set of explicit rules of behavior such as 'initiative', 'lack of structure' 'hard work' pushing against the system, going off, taking risks, and making things happen'. On the other hand the metaphors of 'marriage' and 'religion' suggest rules which run at a deeper level (Kunda 1992: 7). Rules about emotional and cognitive commitment, mindsets, identification with company goals and values, having fun at work etc. The culture, then, is not just a collection of rules that shape the employees experience of work. It is also a 'vehicle through which' employees 'influence the behaviour and experiences of others' (Kunda 1992: 7). These two levels of rules is not only what produce 'what appears to be a well-defined...member role' (Kunda 1992: 7) they also perform a control of how well this role or corporate self is performed.

## Self-management in corporate cultures

So although this shaping of thought, feelings, and experiences are 'not concrete' it is still attained and regulated through presentations, operating manuals etc.. All presenting employees with a way of being a member of the organization that can only be filled if the employee makes it a willing part of themselves. As

Productive work is the result of a combination of self-direction, initiative, and emotional attachment, and ultimately combines the organizational interest in productivity with the employees' personal interest in growth and maturity (Kunda 1992: 10).

The corporate self or organization man is no longer produced directly through discipline. Rather it emerges through incitement of the corporate culture combined with promises of autonomy and self-actualization. However, as Kunda points out, if this is still a form of control it is because the opportunity to stick out became imprisoned in these cultural norms of being a Techie. It gives autonomy in terms of task empowerment and even self-actualization, but counters this with unitary cultures and values giving the clear message: 'you either buy into their norms or you get out' (Peters & Waterman 1982: 77). Successful self-management is accordingly a matter of how well an employee integrates the designed corporate self with their inner life.

### Neo-normative control

Recently Fleming and Sturdy (2007) have pointed to a development emerging in the late 1990s that sets the term 'normative control' in a new light. This third shift in the way strategies of commitment encroach subjectivity builds on two debates.

### **The perks of Cynicism in self-management**

The first discussion highlights that normative control in the sense of corporate culture programs and common values incites cynicism among the employee. The result was that 'the emotions experienced as part of the organizational self are presented as distinct from other aspects of emotional life and at some remove from one's "authentic" sense of self' (Kunda 1992: 183). Cynicism was thus regarded as one way to cope with the burden of identifying too much with the corporate culture as well as the inability to internalize the values of the corporations such as being a 'Techie'. The problem with over identification and under identification was Kunda claimed that both could result in ambiguity, lack of and even burn-out (Kunda 1992: 2002). A tendency Casey also found in her study of the transnational company she called Hephaestus, where the deliberate attempt to mobilize practices associated with metaphors of 'team' and 'family' (Casey 1999) involved a psychic accommodation to designed culture potentially resulting in discomfort and anxiety (Roberts 2005: 624) because the so-called

'authentic self' might not converge with the corporate self. Indeed, cynicism could work as a safety valve against these dangers. The ability to discern between the authentic self and the corporate self could under right circumstances make the potential failure in the effort to internalize the values more tolerable, and hold the danger of burning out due to over-identification at bay. In fact, cynicism might even prove to have organizational perks to it as well. Not only because cynicism could tighten the hold of corporate culture even more as suggested by Fleming and Spicer and Contu (see chapter 2), but also because the ability to be cynical could prove all important 'in an economic and business context characterized by flexibility and change' were organizations might 'need to "realign their core values" at a moment's notice' (Poulter & Land 2008: 74).

### **The move toward market rationalities within corporations**

The second discussion regarded the surge towards a new period of market rationality (Barley & Kunda 2004) within corporations challenging the idea of a strong corporate culture. The wave of downsizing, outsourcing, and increased global competition of the 90's demanded enhanced flexibility and rapid innovation not only challenging the control mechanism in bureaucracy that Whyte described, but also the mechanism based on loyalty and commitment through identification with corporate cultures. Within this 'market' rationality the main driving force is still considered self-management in the sense of continued task empowerment and commitment, but now it became combined with the idea that it is in fact the employees personal marketability or employability that is the facilitator needed to survive in the rising cognitive economy and a context of flexibility and change (Fleming & Sturdy 2007: 2). The term employability here suggests that:

in return for hard work in one firm, employees learn skills and gain experience useful to other firms and thus gain some advantage in external job markets (Kunda & Van Maanen 1999: 65)

In this way commitment as a matter of loyalty towards a common culture was displaced by a rhetoric focusing on individualism, risk-taking, and entrepreneurship. Actually to be employable becomes, as we saw in chapter eight,

to be able to be nomadic. It is to move commitment from one task to the other, thus not only gaining new experiences but first and foremost ensuring a form of security by building the ability to begin anew and self-transgress.

Rather than understanding these new developments away from homogeneous designed corporate cultures as a decline in normative control Fleming and Sturdy understands this development as a new form of control (2007: 4). The normative part now no longer focuses on how corporate cultures might involve a certain homogenization of the subjectivity of the employee, but on the more subtle demand that employees should 'just be themselves' with all the idiosyncrasies this entails. It is only by leaving room for the 'authentic' self with its personal quirks that the organization can achieve successful outcomes.

Fleming and Sturdy (2007: 10) locate this demand to 'be yourself' primarily among the ranks of management gurus such as Tom Peters. What distinguished this demand from Peters former work is that:

In addition to task empowerment, recruits should be 'existentially empowered' in that they should not share the organization's value, and should even oppose them[...]In short, employees are encouraged and even legislated to be themselves rather than normatively conform to an externally engineered, homogeneous and organizationally based identity (Fleming & Sturdy 2007: 2-3).

Peters in this way attacked his own work with Waterman from the 80's since organizational success in the global market could no longer be achieved by constructing a strong organizational identity at employees should internalize. The key to success is rather to 'liberate' the diversity already present in the employees. Actually, directly opposing the organizational way might enhance performance as self-expression and genuine enjoyment is considered more productive than doing what is expected of you.

## **Self-management as a matter of combining cynicism, authenticity and employability**

In terms of self-management we can accordingly talk of a change in the scope of the concept. To manage oneself is no longer a matter of a task empowerment or self-determination countered by the norm to adapt the self to a community of values. Rather it is about existential empowerment: of 'being and managing yourself' in a productive way. In fact we can say that this tightened zone of indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity adheres to the idea of 'employable authenticity' (Fleming 2006: 18).

Showing commitment and along these lines one's sense of belonging toward the organization is in Fleming and Sturdy's neo-normative reading not a matter of sharing values or loving the company, but of using the company as a setting for being your-self adapting to the parts in the organization that suited own interests, while distancing oneself from other interests. This could seem all well and good. It even resonates with the newest trend within the tradition of self-leadership about being a 'whole person' driven by a positive spiral of intrinsic motivation and with Danfoss idea (see chapter 7) of whole person living a well-balance way of life both within and outside the organization. Instead of self-management as a matter of control thoughts, feeling, and experiences in the light of the external norm of the 'corporate culture', the focus is on finding purpose and passion in the task itself.

It is exactly this new norm that becomes important in the new form of organizational encroachment or identity management called neo-normative control. Here passion is no longer expected to be directed towards the company and community of values, but to the task itself and the self-development it entails. Commitment thus becomes a matter of loving being in the company rather than loving the company (Fleming & Sturdy 2008: 13). Furthermore this shift in passion means that cynicism towards some parts of the culture and the re-shaping of

other parts by the employee becomes incorporated as potentially productive. To be employable means letting go, find new passions, and moving on.

With a reference to Goffman, Kunda (1992: 21) pointed out that the normative demands set forth in management technologies of corporate culture always meet a kind of resistance. Members are

‘never passive objects of control’...‘they are active participants... that may accept, deny, react, reshape, rethink, acquiesce, rebel, conform, and define and redefine the demands and their responses. In other words they create themselves within the constrains imposed on them’ (Kunda 1992: 21).

What Fleming and Sturdy (2007: 5) suggest is that it is exactly this kind of active reforming, cynicism and resistance that is expected of the employee in neo-normative control.

In this way the claim from Fleming and Sturdy resonates with the discussion on cognitive capitalism (see chapter 8). If subjectivity is the condition of a inventive-force then a self-actualization of the ‘authentic self’ is the condition of the corporate self. But this still demands that the expression of the ‘authentic self’ converges with an organizational world even though this world is no longer a shared culture-community. Productivity and authenticity must go hand in hand without the former eradicating the other as that would mean that productivity would lessen. At the same time, however, authenticity should be guided toward value-creation. But never in a direct sense. In fact, it is the very idea of being something irreducible and authentic that becomes the resource. Indeed, as Contu (2008: 372), suggests it is the liberal fantasy of being a free autonomous subject, that becomes the motor. Neo-normative control comes to rely on the assumption that there is always more to the employee, more than meets the eye, that:

beyond, and even prior to, the different ways in which I [aka the employee] am subjectified – before I am a teamworker (or not), a mother (or not), a manager (or not), a seller of labor (or not) – I am an autonomous human being with a pulsating heart and mind with wishes, desires, and aspirations, that are proper, specific to me (Contu 2008: 372).



For Fleming and Sturdy (2007: 5-8) it is this combination of a kind of existential empowerment with marked rationalism that perform a normative act that regulate and control the identity of employees. A normative act that works exactly by leaving room for their disagreements, cynicism and other idiosyncrasies. Fleming and Sturdy do therefore not understand this 'be yourself ethos' as part of a 'freer work environment' or an 'emancipatory initiative' making room for the authentic self, but as a 'form of identity regulation that is difficult to recognize given the vocabulary of freedom it utilizes' (Fleming & Sturdy 2007: 4).

Indeed, by being what Peters (1999) refers to as 'the brand call you', this implicit norm of an employable authenticity demands that the employee themselves become a small organization working within the company. Commitment in this way becomes a matter of behaving like an organization rather than just feeling for the organization (Kunda & Aio-Sounday 2005). This in turn according to Fleming and Sturdy (2007: 8-10) makes the distinction between work-force and person even more indiscernible resulting in an identity management that encroach the subjectivity more and more as even the cynical and reflective distance towards the goals and culture that under normative control was considered unproductive now become a production factor.

### Machinic indexes of the subjectivity and commitment

All in all, this change from imposing control to eliciting commitment suggested by Walton constitutes a change in the relationship between employee and organization. In fact, rather than the organization controlling, how the employee should act and behave, through either protocols or values, the subjectivity of the employee becomes the vessel of the organization. Indeed, with terms such as self-leadership and employable authenticity we might even talk of a diffusion or multiplication of organizations. When tasks become what brings enjoyment and when enjoyment must be shifted from task to task subjectivity becomes a vessel of various organizational worlds rather than one homogeneous world. As Fleming and Sturdy (2007: 9) put it the organization becomes 'a marketplace for the

alternative articulations of self'. In this way we can talk of self-management as entailing what Lazzarato calls a 'double edged sword' (Lazzarato 2004: 194). On the one hand, to successfully carry out work, the employees' autonomy and individual substance must be affirmed, while on the other hand it is required that employees belong to the organizational world (Lazzarato 2004: 194). This means that under self-management the stakes might be set by the organization e.g. be innovative, increase productivity, and lower cost but they are not mediated through clear-cut hierarchies and protocols, nor even a strong corporate culture. Rather they are reabsorbed, reformed, and restated by each employee, in their own unique way (Lazzarato 2004: 194). In fact, it is only through this singular expression that these 'stakes acquire meaning and makes their impact' (Zarifian cited in Lazzarato 2004: 194). However, if the organization depends on the subjectivity of the employee as its vessel then the employees must *internalize* organizational stakes within them. But the success of this internalization demands that the employees *externalize* these stakes in their work. They must display and express their belonging or commitment to the organizational stakes but do so by way of self-activating and managing the specific texture of human qualities, which constitute them as subjects. That is by following the path they find that best realizes themselves as human and organizational resources.

Within these cultures of commitment, then, it is the subjectivity of the employee, their unique lived life, which is construed as the productive resource. However, at the same time the work-task is considered a way to actualize this subjectivity. And self-management is the clue that holds subjectivity and productivity together. But if this is more than a subtle encroachment of subjectivity it is because what value and productivity are itself becomes difficult to delimit when subjectivity becomes a production-resource. Indeed productivity itself becomes harder to measure. As the discussion on cognitive capitalism and neo-normative control illustrated, when flexibility, innovation and authenticity become important economic terms the

measurement of value through clear standards such as rigid organizational protocols or even corporate values becomes unproductive.

The indiscernability between productivity and subjectivity that self-management produces and re-produces might be read as a colonization of the subjectivity of the employee (as suggested by Kunda 1992, Willmott 1993, and Fleming & Sturdy 2007) but it is simultaneous also what Harney (2003: 587). calls a 'kind of desperate prospecting' In other words, a failure to record the productive part of the subjectivity that it feeds on. Furthermore subjectivity must here be seen as both an input and output in a social machinery that produces this indiscernability.

So we have to discern between the forces working inside any particular employee's subjectivity (the desire-production) and the subjectivity as a set of individual interests (need to self-actualize, what kind of task motivates you, what kinds of dreams do you have etc.) Subjectivity is part of the social machinery as a product while the forces animating this subjectivity is an input in the social machine i.e. desire-production. This means that individual interests are already coded representative of the pre-individual forces working in the employee's subjectivity, while the injunction to use this interest in the service of productivity is considered a repressing element (e.g. corporate culturism and normative control), that has to be transgressed through a deferral of injunction (e.g. cynicism, the search for authenticity or having a life outside of work).

However, here the very idea of a pre-existing subjectivity as a set of determinable interests prohibited by managerial effort and the promise of cynicism or authenticity as a way of transgressing the prohibition is a part of the social machinery called the commitment machine. Stated otherwise, the prohibited, the prohibition and the transgression in the above discussion about self-management are an effect of enrolment and fall back of this commitment machine. It produces

the very presupposition of what it is to think, act and feel (the prohibited e.g. subjectivity), including what gets in the way of these thoughts, actions, and feelings (the prohibition e.g. management technologies) and how we can overcome this problem (transgressions e.g. cynicism, being a nomad, being your-self).

So harvesting the inventive-force in the subjectivity of employees might result in a crisis in the direct registration of what is value-creating is and what costs are. In fact, when Harney talks of a desperate prospecting in the registration of value it has to do with the problem of coding and organizing the singular forces or desire-production working within the subjectivity. Nonetheless, the production of a zone of indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity and self-management as the regulator of this zone is exactly what sets itself up as a solution to this problem. Or more importantly, the commitment machine that sets up this zone frames what the problem is, namely a question of self-management. Here subjectivity might sometimes be encroached at work but through different acts of transgressions (such as cynicism, doing what you really want, developing in new ways) this prohibition can be countered resulting in better self-management. Moreover, as we will see in the next chapter, registrations assemblages such as performance management tools do not work by directly enclosing subjectivity in pre-set categories and demands but by always posing new ways of registering value. Thus we can talk of a machinic process there works by breaking down the current demands posed towards the employee in an effort to unleash subjectivity only to recapture this subjectivity again by making the subject itself the centre and supervisor of the registrations of value. In short, we can talk of a certain kind of machinery that enroll and fall back on the employee's subjectivity by making self-management the agent of registration and regulation. It is this machinery we will turn to now.

So what is interesting about reading indexes in the above discussions is in consequence not first and foremost to answer the question of whether self-

management sets forth a harmonic interplay of common interest or a form of (neo) normative control repressing interest. Management technologies, programs and initiatives in such understandings are here reduced to either tools of empowerment of the self or as ways of controlling not only the actions of the employee but their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The question at hand is rather how these technologies work in and around this zone between subjectivity and productivity. How they are part of the social machinery of *commitment* combining the two machinic indexes of self-management, i.e. the unbound always transgressive subjectivity and the injunction to commit towards a life in productivity. This machine intertwines the prospecting for productivity with the emphasis of the subjectivity of the employee. A perpetual intertwining or folding that makes the employee-subject itself the agent of regulation of value-creation.

## CHAPTER 11

### THE COMMITMENT MACHINE AND THE PRODUCTION AND REGULATION OF ZONES OF INDISCERNABILITY<sup>3</sup>

To work within a contemporary organization means to belong, to adhere to its world, to its desires and beliefs... And this is a double edged sword: one the one hand, it affirms workers' autonomy, independence and singularity (individual substance), on the other hand, it requires workers to belong to the organizational world (Lazzarato 2004: 194).

As discussed so far the notion of self-management in organizations indicates that work is becoming essential for the unfolding of subjectivity and subjectivity becomes essential for the execution of work. 'Subjectivity' has a double-edged meaning within this machinery. On the one hand, it refers to the way in which identity is produced in relation to work. On the other, it refers to the spectrum of emotions, desire, will, commitment, and creativity that becomes the object of management, namely, the pre-individual capabilities that run through the subject. In this chapter we will look into this machinery revolving round the production of a zone of indiscernability. In other words, a zone where worker subjectivity and the work they do remains distinct but where there is something undetermined in between them, an unsettled relationship that belongs as much to the worker-subject as it does to the work. This in turn makes it harder and harder to determine where one begins and the other ends. As the sociologist Zarifian expresses it, the relationship between the working subject and the activities of work develop *monadic traits* (Zarifian in Lazzarato 2004: 192) at the very moment where subjectivity becomes the factor of production *par excellence*. However, monadic traits, in the sense of encapsulated and expressing the organizational world through one singular being, are not the only important features developed in this production. *Nomadic traits* in the sense of transgressing former expressions are also important. Actually change and transgressions are inevitable within the

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<sup>3</sup> A shorter and earlier version of this chapter has been published in my article in *Culture and Organization* Tune in, Break Down, and Reboot – new machines for coping with the stress of commitment. 2008 14(2). See page 176-184

production of this zone between subjectivity and productivity. This to such a degree that discernment itself - both in the form of discerning between one life in side and outside of work, and in the form of discerning between an authentic self and a corporate self through cognitive transgressions such as cynicism - becomes a way of reproducing this indiscernability. Letting life become absorbed in work and feeling repressed as a self-managing employee stands in the way of a proper indiscernability. Furthermore, as we will see in the end of this chapter divergences and contradictions within this machinery might manifest as a personal despair causing distress or stress. But before all this let's start with the production of this zone of indiscernability focusing in particular on how the presupposition of the employees' ability and responsibility to manage this zone becomes a way of distributing and circulating it.

## On employee-monads and organizational worlds

Monadology according to Lazzarato makes it possible to articulate this paradoxical thesis:

Activity becomes jointly more deeply individual and more deeply collective...Leibniz allows us to escape from the dilemmas involved in the relationships between the individual and the collective, and thus both from individualism and holism, since the collective and the social (the world in Leibniz's language) are included in the individuality of the monad'. (2004:193)

As monad, the employee is not a functionally determined fragment of the production-sphere, but the production-sphere in all its totality (Lazzarato 2004: 193). The employee is where value is produced and where the product is displayed. For Leibniz, the world only existed in the expressions of the monad; its individual thoughts, perceptions, actions, and feelings (1991). The same might be said about self-management. With self-management the organization only exist through the individual expressions of the employees. The organization and the production process are only actualized or unfolded through the employees. When employees can be said to exist for the organization, it is no longer possible to organize them through pre-defined work-tasks. If the main production factor is the capabilities of

the employee, then the employee must also be responsible for finding the most efficient way to actualize the end product. Hence the production and management of subjectivity becomes the condition of any production of surplus value.

Following Lazzarato we can speak of a machinery within self-management where the 'enterprise does not create its subject (workers and consumers) but the world within which the subject exists' (2004: 188). Rather than giving direct orders and constructing detailed organizational protocols, the management of self-management has taken on the task of producing and organizing a com-possible world wherein the potentiality of employees are unfolded. The term 'compossible world' comes from Leibniz who conceived the world as a pure emission of events and individuals, or monads, as constituted by the convergence and actualization of a certain number of these events (Deleuze 1993: 59-63). In this way events constitute the pre-individual foundation of the world. They are the building blocks from which monads are built. Reading Leibniz, Deleuze describes the relationship between pre-individual flows of events and the individual monad with recourse to the example of Adam.

### **Leibniz and the sin of Adam**

Adam is constituted by four events, namely, 'to be the first man', 'to live in a garden of paradise', 'to have a woman emerge from one's rib' and 'to sin'. Adam expresses these four events when they become the actual predicates of him, but before being actual predicates of Adam they are virtual events or affective capabilities that can connect in a flow within the neighborhood of which the monad, Adam, will be actualized. What marks the difference between actual and virtual, as Smith (1998: xxv) points out, is that the latter are 'like indeterminate infinitives that are not yet actualized in determinate modes, tenses, persons, and voices'. In this way the monad, Adam, is constituted by these infinitives but infinitives are, for their own part, only expressed through what they constitute: the monad. They are, as Smith explains, given an individual tone, intensity and voice through the monad. The event 'to sin' becomes the predicate to be a sinner



when actualized by Adam. In this way one can, as Deleuze does, speak of a folding of the predicates into the subject. This fold is never stable or the same, which means that Adam expresses the event 'living in a garden' in a different way than Eve. They are different points of view on the same virtual event. In this Deleuzian reading, the monads are in this manner closed off from one another but open towards the pre-individual.

But, and this is all important, this does not only imply that the flows of events constitute the predicates of 'Adam is sinning' and 'Eve is thrown out the garden of Eden' but that they also constitute the world wherein they are actualized as these very predicates. The pre-individual flows that constitute Adam must converge with the events of Eve for them to exist in the compossible world. This means that the world wherein Adam sins is compossible with the world where Eve is thrown out of the garden of Eden. But it also means that compossibility consists of more than just relating to the same event. The crucial point to compossibility is whether or not events converge or diverge in their relating to one another. The world where Adam sins is converging with the world where Jesus is crucified for his sins, but if we add another event to the world of Adam, that of 'resisting temptation', the world wherein Jesus is crucified and Adam does not sin collides. They cannot exist simultaneously. This means that for Adam temptation is possible as an event but impossible with the world wherein Adam sins and Jesus is crucified. The flows of two worlds do not converge, they diverge. Adam cannot sin and not sin in the same world. For Leibniz this divergence was not an option. There must be one best world. A world with the maximum number of converging flows of events. This world was the one God chose from a multitude of other worlds.

### **The creation of worlds**

Contemporary-management technologies create such compossible worlds so as to make the organization's flow of value production converge with the flows of capabilities which transverse the individual employee. In this regard management technologies such as corporate culture programs, appraisal interviews or

performance management work through a social machine called a *commitment machine* that controls the folding between the capabilities and the employee-monad, but never the individual way in which these capabilities are unfolded or expressed as predicates. Or to be exact management technologies are given a certain purpose and function through these machine, it is the machine that determines how they are used and understood.

The commitment machine organizes the virtual pre-individual flows of desire that, in specific but not immediately determinable ways, produce and change our subjectivity by attracting certain flows and repulsing others. This convergence of diverging flows is done by focusing on the employee's ability to express or unfold the very real but unsettled world of the organization, its ability to commit to this world. Stated otherwise, the world of the organization, with its network of different events, becomes a problem predicated within every employee and as such, has to be resolved therein. However, as Thrift (2008: 131) has recently argued such worlds are not enclosed fully constructed constellations, rather they are unsettled in themselves, 'temporary constellations, brief realizations which contain enough relevant signs to direct affect in particular ways', i.e. to regulate the desire flowing through the employee. To be an employee-subject is thus a continuous effort to open oneself up to these unsettle and unsettling possible worlds that make up the world of the organization to express and unfold them in ways that both bring enjoyment and productivity. Accordingly one could say about the world of the organization what Deleuze (1993: 79) says about our contemporary world, namely, that

the best of all worlds is not the one that reproduces the eternal, but the one in which new creations are produced, the one endowed with a capacity for innovation or creativity

Creativity is all important, but nonetheless controlled through the temporal constellation of signs and demands. Indeed, they are controlled in a very flexible way.

### **Management technologies as distributors and regulators of worlds**

Within this machinery management technologies are not comprehended and used to exclude or reduce the pre-individual flows that make us individual employees by distributing them into predefined functional arrangements. As self-managing employees are much more flexible than say Whyte's and Kunda's organization men. Instead management technologies job is to capture and include these pre-individual flows through the construction of possible worlds. Management technologies such as appraisal interviews, value management, performance management and the like do not function through the actualization of a standard-model but through a continuous modulation. In other words, through a never-ending harmonization of different worlds within the same world. In this way one might say that the employee-monad is also a employee-nomad connecting up to and changing along with the ever-moving world of business. Contrary to Leibniz, the employee-monad is never fully closed on one compossible world chosen by God, but is folded into a ramification of different worlds.

Indeed, to stay in the vocabulary of Leibniz we can talk of the Whyte' and Kunda's organization men as part of only one world. Strong corporate values and cultures only allow one world to pass into existence. The monad-employees variations, differences and self-expressions are blocked and regulated by this common ground. However, in the commitment machinery, the monads are allowed to flee this one world by, as Lazzarato (2006: 177) puts it,: 'inventing impossible worlds which are actualized within the same world': a world of self-management, where bifurcations and divergences become potentially productive elements. As long as the form part of a zone of indiscernability regulated through employee self-management and the management technologies that sustain this self-management.

## Enrolments through folds and regulation through contracts

We can say that these management technologies fold the possible worlds of the organization into the identity-production of the employees. Actually the very fold is a way of enrolling the bodies, thoughts, actions, and feelings into the social machinery making self-management itself the quasi-cause that falls back on this fold. Converging this fold into an individual problem with an individual solution. Making it a matter of individual interests (enjoyment, self-actualization, self-determination) and disinterests (despair, stress, inability to cope).

The fold itself between the individual employee and the organization is a fold in so far as there is a relation between the two, where the overall purpose of the organization is always condensed, nuanced, reformed, differentiated and reinterpreted within the unique expressions of the employee (Lazzarato 2004:1994). This means first of all, that the employee is never folded in the same way. The world of the organization is a world that has lost its overall structure or centre; its 'God' is only set in motion by the complex and various folds of pre-individual flows of desires, thoughts, and beliefs and the unfolding of these flows through the employees.

In this way the employee can be said to be *for* the organization as it is only through the expressions of the employee that the value producing capabilities of the organization are actualized. This also implies that these capabilities only exist *in* the employee and are thereby actualized through singular and unique expressions. The world of the organization must be unfolded in the employee so that the employee can be for the world. As Lazzarato puts it in the opening quote of this chapter:

To work within a contemporary organization means to belong, to adhere to its world, to its desires and beliefs... And this is a double edged sword: on the one hand, it affirms workers' autonomy, independence and singularity (individual substance), on the other hand, it requires workers to belong to the organizational world (2004: 194).

It is the torsion of individual singularity and organization world that constitutes the zone of indiscernability; and the torsion is the fold that enrolls into the various flows in to the commitment machine. Indeed, to be committed is to be folded. The world of the organization is enveloped within and developed by the employee. The fold of commitment is thus not about reducing the employees' personal expression, but of actively inciting expressions by creating a world wherein these very expressions could be situated.

The commitment machine thereby works by produces a zone of indiscernability through these folds. This zone becomes an active presupposition for how to act, think, and feel as an employee. Still for this presupposition to become active it needs to be circulated and regulated. This is exactly where self-management as an individual endeavor becomes important. Indeed, while self-management is an effect of the production of the zone of indiscernability it acquires a status of a quasi-cause. I.e. self-management becomes the first and last of everything done in and around the zone of indiscernability. Self-management penetrates the body of the employee and once assumed, the employees acts in its name. The employee becomes responsible for assuring the reproduction of the zone of indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity. And it is exactly through the enrolling feature of the fold that these penetrations are regulated.

Put otherwise, self-management acts as the element which makes it possible to claim that what is followed and enrolled has something in common. Self-management emerges in the enrolment or folds producing indiscernability, making itself the condition of the set of interests (working, enjoyment, passion, making a profit) we as committed and self-actualizing employees should desire. The commitment machine in this way posits self-management as the transcendental principal that constitutes the social order at large. Through the folding of flows the commitment machine abstracts self-management as the surface of inscription. It then folds this surface back onto the flows in order for

them to circulate the route of distributions of inscriptions laid out for them: enjoyable, self-actualizing etc. Essentially, the power of the commitment machine is its ability to distribute the presuppositions of thoughts, feelings, and actions as a question of a zone of indiscernability between subjectivity and work, best handled and managed by the employees themselves. However, we still need to explore how the production of these torsions as matters of achieving efficient self-management is regulated. Here a particular feature about management technologies as they function in the commitment machine becomes important. Namely, the idea of drawing out various temporal and open-ended *contracts* suppose to aid the employee in visualizing their zone of indiscernability and become better at reproducing it.

These contracts are made between the employee and management concerning differing standards, criteria and concrete goals. Rather than focusing solely on drafting out what to do and when to do it, what is essential in these contracts is to access the capacity to innovate and surpass the definite performance of definite tasks. Its criteria and goals do not act as clear-cut ways to measure a performance, but as directions for further self-actualization and development. They are different ways of drawing out the virtual capabilities of the organization and the employee, of not determining employee capabilities as unmistakably this or that. In this way, the folding of the world of the organization and the employee is achieved by organizing the unique expressions of employees not according to a concrete and determined way of performing, but according to exchangeable and negotiable criteria. The commitment machine thus distributes a network of criteria and evaluations. But since the well performing employee is self-managing, neither the organization nor the employees can set unambiguous standards or unitary values they can measure themselves against and use to compare themselves to each other. Instead the organization and the employee must balance their appraisals against the multitude of hard and soft interests or criteria that have been set up, e.g., performance goals, social competences, personal ambition, potential for

further development, time spent at the computer, state of health, and shared values. All this is done in the effort to find out whether the employee is committed and in this fashion productive. A good performance is a performance that cuts through and balances all these criteria, transgressing them if necessary.

Since the appraisal is never finalized in a predefined one best way, it can always be negotiated. This does not mean that the series of expectations that management technologies set out are not very concrete expectations. What it means is that they have a temporal and negotiable character. They are neither settled once and for all nor undefined, but unsettled. They are part of a process. In other words the norm for being a good employee might be something virtually immanent to these criteria. It is not installed through organizational protocols for executions or a designed corporate culture but through the interplay of diverging expectations that all fold back upon the question of commitment through self-management and self-development. It is virtual exactly because the employee is not given actual predicates but a flow of events that might be actualized in different ways, depending on the events that already transverse the individual employee. This play of flows is visible not just in the relationship between the technologies, but also within the technologies themselves. In the case of the appraisal interview, for example, when the self-development goals the employee sets are evaluated, the questions of whether the goals were reached and the employee acquired the expected competences are, of course, important. But just as important is the question of whether these goals and acquired competencies are still the right ones. Did something happen between then and now that made it possible, even necessary, to diverge from these goals and to develop in another direction? What this all comes down to is whether or not the employee can express commitment. It is a matter of whether or not the employee thinks, feels, and acts with the organizations interests at heart. However, this alignment must never become a dissolution of subjectivity. In fact, every time such a dissolution is registered it must be resolved by a transgression of this organizational self. In the following section we will have a look at how performance management as a management

technology might illustrate this inherent transgression as part of the regulation performed by the commitment machine.

### **The case of Performance Management**

Performance Management is often defined as a strategic and integrated approach to delivering sustained success to organizations by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capabilities of team and individual contributors (Armstrong & Baron 1998: 7). The system of management works by setting *performance* goals for the employee, integrating the behaviour and development of the organization and the employee. This integration is especially potent during the performance appraisal when the employee and the manager evaluate and appraise the employee's past performance and discuss the future implications of these performances.

The appraisal, in the Performance Management interview, is used to rate the performances of the employee since the last meeting or conversation. In this appraisal, we often find a division and distribution of responsibility taking place. Perhaps most visible is the fact that in Performance Management, the employee once (at the last interview) is assigned to a specific area of contribution to the organization's overall strategic goals and it is now time to determine whether or not the employee has done what he or she was responsible for. This determination is done via rating-systems and other methods of determination, evaluating not just the success of performances, but also the potential of performances in the future: 'Did you live up to your responsibility and what are the potential future responsibilities that you can express?' are the logic at work here. In this sense, the employee is burdened with his or her performances past and future. The employee is held responsible for what he has done and must be held accountable for his or her actions. But what on one level seems like a very standard tool focusing on measurement turns out to be an element in a more important feature, namely development and incitement of motivation.



## **Performance measurement and the confinement of the outside**

Evaluations of past performances are not seen solely as something that has to be determined in relation to other performances, rated in a system and monitored in predetermined goals, but also as something that points towards the future. Past performances are in this logic not a valid indicator for future performances, as the particular situation of the employee's job or the overall situation of the organization can change on a daily basis (Heil et al 2000: 54). Indeed, as Milmore et al (2007: 317) argues self-development is a much more important feature of an effective performance management system than measurement. As Milmore et al (2007: 318) continue:

The difference between performance measurement and performance management is that performance measurement includes measure based on key success factors, which may include: measure of deviation from the 'norm'; measures to track past achievements; measures of output and input; whereas performance management involves such issues as training, teamwork, management style, attitudes, shared vision, employee involvement and rewards, etc.

In fact, performance management to some degree considers measurement both unproductive and potentially alienating for the employee. This has to do with the fact that the validity of measurement is always an issue under conditions of self-management, i.e. 'are we measuring the right things', 'are we indeed measuring productivity'. Furthermore if these measurements become ends in themselves do they not block the subjectivity of the employee, their enjoyment, passion, and commitment? Are they not counterproductive? Performance management instead focus on 'following up on results and promoting actions' (Milmore et all 2007: 320). Performance measurement is never and can never be an end in itself. As a matter of fact flaws in performance management are aspects such as preoccupation with control, demand on employees to comply and no sense of the context (Milmore et all. 2007: 346).

As an element in the commitment-machine's production of indiscernability performance management in this way also becomes a way of handling a number

of uncertainties. As argued self-management becomes necessary because subjectivity becomes a resource and one of the reasons subjectivity is a resource is because ideas of turbulence, changes, customization of products etc has become truism in contemporary work-life. Performance measurement implies standardized solutions to these uncertainties. However, in a world of turbulence, so the argument goes, one must make room for the new to sustain productivity. As Lazzarato argues, in the world of work we are witnessing, an attempt to treat events, change, and variation as potential value-creating, making the new something that has to be included into the productions-process and not excluded. Indeed, the new cannot be regarded as 'an exception, but must instead be seen as what needs to be periodically regulated and captured' (Lazzarato 2006b: 178).

Performance measurement would here be considered, as what Foucault and Deleuze calls, a disciplinary arrangement. In such arrangements standards for measurement absorb uncertainties and the new by preventing certain kinds of divergences from the norm. Predictability, eradication of variation and a minimum of bifurcation are all ways of confining the outside as Deleuze (1986: 43) would put it. The outside referring to the power of change, difference, and multiplicity (Lazzarato 2006b: 178). Yet, it is exactly this realm of pre-individual bifurcations, variation, and bifurcation - and their multiple expressions through employee subjectivity - that is directly incited, but also regulated through performance management. At least as it works in the social machinery of commitment.

In this machinery performance management serves as a way of empowering employees to take active responsibility for uncertainties in their task-performance. Furthermore, for employees to uses their judgment to the best of their ability performance management have to incite and insure commitment. Performance management here serves a double role as both a tool for motivation and guidance. That is, it both carves out contours of a possible world and regulates the actualization of it. The criteria or performance goals inscribed are thus less signs of

something concrete as they are invitation to a way of life; a world of belief and interests to share, diverge from or even dispute (Lazzarato 2004: 189). However, this incitement is also a moment of regulation, but never one that works by clear inclusions and exclusions. Rather its power to regulate consists in setting up a world open to discussion, while simultaneously inscribing the presupposition that all problems and solutions can be understood a matter of self-management, i.e. as a matter for employee to attain and individually sustain a zone of indiscernability between subjectivity of the employee and its productivity. In this way performance management and the contracts it produces works by modulating something dynamic (enjoy your work) instead of modeling something static (do as you are told). Performance management becomes a way of ensuring self-management as it is through a regulation and reproduction of the indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity that invention, variation, and bifurcation can 'periodically regulated and captured' (Lazzarato 2006b:178).

### **Outlining the performance management contract**

A common course in the actual performance appraisal goes as follows (Milsted et al 2007: 318-322). First, the employee states their view on their personal performance. This is countered by the manager that starts a dialogue about which future developments for the employee might be negotiated.

What is interesting here is that the performances of the employee are in this way inscribed as an event, which can neither be reduced to a standard nor grasped by means of standardisation. Viewed as an event, the performance of the employee arises as a certain element between the employee and the manager. A common yet undetermined point of interest. Indeed, it is something undecided that must be discussed and analyzed in the effort to find the potential for a development within the world of the organisation. Not an adaptation to something determinative, but to a possible new world where the possible development of the employee and organisation can commit to one another. A world where the two of them can become part of the same thing but in very different ways.

This commitment towards something undetermined manifests itself when the employee or manager posits a performance as something important, an event, and thereby indicates a possible world wherein the other part can find its expression (Raffnsøe & Olesen 2005). The world the manager expresses when he or she posits a performance as an event, thereby creating a horizon for the employee's possible expressions. In the effort to reflect on and judge the potential of the performance, a bifurcation thereby takes place where two worlds collide. The world of the manager and the employee. These worlds must be brought together. They must commit to one another, not by excluding one of the worlds but by correlating them in such a way that they create new possibilities for one another going beyond both worlds. Not in an effort to reconcile the world as something held in common, but in an effort to become something else. To develop the life of the employee and organisation in new ways.

In this way it is not something in common, which the employee and organisation try to find in the performances, rather they look for an opportunity to express, develop, expand and transgress the possible worlds, which might be found within the expressions of performance (Raffnsøe & Olesen 2005).

This perpetual negotiation sustains and reproduces a fold between the employees' subjectivity and productivity by creating and recreating what Costea et al (2008: 668) calls a context that distributes a 'platform for self-expression' but also for 'continuous monitoring'. However, the negotiation is not as much a way to achieve a level of surveillance by managers as it is a way of assuring self-monitoring, or constant evaluation. What the performance management 'contract' regulates in the commitment machine is the effort of employees themselves to always modulate and evaluate one's life in ways that are both self-actualizing and value-creating. In other words it is the employee itself that are expected to register and regulate one's own actions, thoughts and emotions in a prospecting for a happier and more productive life.

## Regulation as a matter of subjectivation and desubjectivation

The regulation of the zone of indiscernability in the commitment-machine can therefore be said to work on a double level: one that subjectifieds the employee as a certain kind of social subject that is itself while adhering to the organization (a monad-subject) and one that regulates the pre-individual by desubjectivating and reposing this subjectivation (a nomade subject).

By outlining contracts, a technology such as performance management allocates certain roles, goals, and expectations, in short, it sets up an array of interests that provide the employee with a subjectivity and assigns the employee to a certain process of becoming this subject. Via personal goals and organisational goals these interests are distributed and assigned to the employee-subject. Here the performance management process still works by attaching categories that are to a certain degree fixed and clear: this is your expectations or interest as an employee and this is the organisations expectations. This flows of statements and feedbacks are of a discursive and communicative nature and split the subject into what Deleuze and Guattari call a subject of enuciations and a subject of statements (1999:129). If we referred this discussion back to earlier discussions on cynism, the subject of enuciation is the authentic self whereas the subject of statement is the corporate self. Anyways in these flows the employee is constituted as what Lazzarato (2006:2) calls 'the absolut and individual cause and orgin of its expressions, its words, its affects' i.e. as subject of enuciation or an authentic self. Moreover, the performance management appraisal also works by establishing a series of codified statements (for example the task-goals or the vision and mission). These statements are part of a 'dominated reality' (Lazzarato 2006a: 4) or the world of the organisation as it is currently actualized. In this world the employee is corporate self or a subject:

a subject bound to statements in conformity with a dominant reality (of which the mental reality just mentioned is a part, even when it seems to oppose it)...*The subject of enuciation recoils into the subject of the*

*statement, to the point that the subject of the statement resupplies subject of enunciation for another proceeding (Deleuze & Guattari 1999: 129).*

Performance management works as a machine of subjectivation as it encourages the employee 'to be itself': a subject of enunciation that sets and evaluates its own goals and the goals of the organisation. But this subject is only the endpoint of a process in so far as the words and goals of the employee-subject is folded over statements that are expected of them e.g. the world or horizon of meaning and purpose that is currently assigned to the employee subject. The employee's interests, then, its feelings, dreams and thoughts, or indeed mental reality is always folded over by a dominant reality of social meaning turning the employees into certain corporate selves with recognizable and fixed predicates: that is our dreams, aspirations, passions, thoughts as they are categorized by the in the performance management contract.

But this process of overlapping a dominant reality (corporate self) on the employee mental reality (authentic self) i.e. of making the employee into a subject of statement by outlining the statements possible for the subject of enunciation must have a dynamic nature. The dynamic part of performance management in this way it works as a machine tapping into the pre-individual. This form of regulation no longer refers to the process of assigning the predicates of the employee-subject but of

*mobilizing and modulating the pre-individual, pre-cognitive and pre-verbal components of subjectivity, causing affects, perceptions and sensations as yet unindividuated or unassigned to a subject, etc. to function like the cogs and components in a machine (Lazzarato 2006a: 3).*

This other level of regulation connects elements of the pre-individual dimension composing subjectivity itself by both appealing and breaking down the individuated dimension of subjectivity (i.e. the subject of statement-subject of enunciation relationship).

Essentially it is this pre-individual realm that is considered the 'more' or surplus between subjectivity and productivity. The encapsulation of the subject of enunciation as a subject of statement is thus always broken down in the performance management appraisal itself, all in the the effort to tap into and regulate this pre-individual realm itself. The employee-subject must always move beyond its present enunciations or else it becomes caught up in a dominant reality i.e. the individual expressions are limited to the possible world currently actualized. Or stated otherwise the corporate self (subject of statement) and authentic self (subject of enunciation) are considered a dynamic relationship here that has to be posed and reposed again and again for the machines of commitment to tap into the pre-individual desire that transverse the employee. There are two important consequences to this

First, that the way the management-technologies works are not solely a way of carving out the world the employee is expected to enfold. Indeed, here the employee are not subject to the technology forming its interests. The employee must to a certain extent always deal with and distance itself from the subject of statement or corporate self produces by the technology. The management technology instead regulates by both making the employee and itself into elements interacting on the pre-individual level of desire. In the commitment machine the management technology and the employee are sets of affects, thoughts, functions, all of which operate on the same level i.e. the affects of the employee and the function of the technology work together to constitute a zone of indiscernability. Which brings us to the second aspect. The zone of indiscernability must posses a unstable component for this interaction to work and the pre-individual flow to be channeled in a direct way. The employee-subject must therefore posses both monadic features (expression the world of the organisation in a individual way) and nomadic features (breakdown and find new expressions) if this zone is to work. The monadic features thus designates the attraction of subjectivity and productivity, while the nomadic features designates

the necessity that these terms never colonize one another completely. Indeed, indiscernability demands an exchange not a collapse. So let's have a closer look at these features.

## Monadic traits of the employee

Through something like performance management the organization commits itself to the production of a world where the employees' subjective expressions of the flows of human-energy can be actualized—the development of the employees' lives—but it cannot force and determine these expressions. Instead, the organization is committed to making sure that these expressions are the expressions of the life of the organization. On the other hand, the 'personal goals' can intervene in what could constitute an 'organization goal', thereby creating new possible productive worlds for the organization.

The fold of different flows that these contracts inscribe with signs (e.g. personal and organizational goals) and regulate is accordingly never a stable form but a connection that consists of playing diverging expressions of virtual events off against one another in the effort to find out which are the most productive and favorable. This implies that the fold is not about reducing the employees' personal expressions, but of actively inciting these expressions by creating a world wherein the expressions could be situated. In the commitment-machine management technologies such as performance management create a world where the different expressions of the employees can be connected and prolonged by the virtual flows of the organization. These flows have to be redistributed in such a way that the employee can express itself in the organization not because they have to, but because they want to and are given the opportunity to do so. The technologies therefore present criteria such as 'express the organization values' and 'you need to show more commitment' and 'develop these new competences'. These criteria are virtual in the sense that they are not specific codings of values or segments of protocols that express specific relations between already actualized



predicates i.e. the fixed and clear interests assigned to the subject. The criteria are rather open to change to such a level that the employee might disagree with them (Fleming & Sturdy 2007: 2). It is the potential connection of the flows that these criteria distribute and circulate, not the actualized segments as particular interests that is the object of regulation here. In short it is the pre-individual that contracts sensations, affects and perceptions that is targeted here not it's categorizes form. This means that these organizational criteria are themselves unstable and emergent.

They must be able to be segmented in very diverse, heterogeneous, and diverging expressions, while remaining part of an undetermined social bond that drives the different expressions towards compossible goals. It is in this way a way of distributing and regulating flows without the introduction of a totalizing unity such as an organizational protocol or corporate culture. The different contracts produce criteria that are added and withdrawn in a complex process of social regulation where the employee and the organization continuously respond to one another's changing circumstances. Such a contract is not closed, distributed, and wholly organized, but a world that is able to expand itself so as to establish room for the different inventive and unpredictable expressions of the employee. These can always arrive as innovative and enjoyable ways of being productive and what productivity and enjoyment are can always be renegotiated. The organization must expand and transgress itself in order to incorporate different ways of doing work and so the organization is a cloud of gas, as Deleuze points out (1995: 179) that seeps into the heart and brain of every employee.

The effect of this seems to be that the more you invest of your self in the world of the organization the better the result. The more you let the organization seep into the flows that constitute you, the more productive you will become. In a strange way, a quality performance becomes a matter of high commitment. This is not all. In the network of diverging demands and expectations that the contract sets up

for the employee, the employee must self-actualize at work while at the same time not dissolving itself within the activities of the organization – this is the last thing the organization wants of its employees. A good employee lives for something other than work; a good employee ‘has a life’ and is ‘more’ than it’s corporate self; it is this having of a life outside of work that makes the good employee a good employee in the first place. This ‘life’ can be something that revitalizes the employee; it can also be something that develops him or her in ways that might at some point in time become productive for the organization. The employee-monad is in this regard also a employee-nomad.

### Nomadic traits of the employee

It is the indiscernability between subjectivity and professional tasks, not the dissolution of either, that makes the life of the employee a possible vessel for the organization. So the employee has to be committed to be a good and productive employee, but always in the right amount, for a good and productive employee is an employee that does not let work constitute the whole of life. Rather than letting work constitute life, life should constitute work. Work should not become life. Life and work should rather become indiscernible. To ensure real commitment in the job the employees must always be more than their job. Besides being a monad expressing the world of the organization in a singular way the employee is a nomad in at least three senses; a temporal, spatial, and cognitive.

First of all, like the nomad the employee must change with the seasons. The employee must be on the move, change itself over time with the challenges it meets. When one way of doing things no longer provides passion and profit, new expressions must be explored. The employee must be able to move the level of commitment and involvement from one task or project to the next. In fact, for the employee to be him or herself in this process, i.e. be truly committed, they must always be able not only to perform, but indeed enjoy this act of transgression. As the bestseller *Who stole my Cheese? – an a-mazing way to deal with change in*

*your work and in your life*, aptly puts it: enjoy change! To be authentic and employable at the same time is consequently not a matter of looking inwards, but a question of testing and expanding the current borders of one self.

Secondly, the employee like the nomad inhabit many different spheres. To be an efficient employee demands that you are more than an employee. Having a life outside work becomes a resource when doing work. Not only because of the revitalizing function of having a family, a hobby, or during sport but because having these non-work activities develop competences and experiences that might help create results. The Danfoss-ad 'a career is nothing without a personal life' discussed in chapter seven illustrates this aptly: it is the lived life of the employee including its different spheres that is of importance in the production of surplus value.

Thirdly, the employee must not only as the nomad change over time and space. They must also be able to travel on the spot. As the discussions of cynicism by Contu and Fleming and Spicer points to discerning between a corporate self and an authentic self whether this be in a cynical way (I don't enjoy my work but I do it anyway) or in a more strategic way (I don't enjoy my work, but can use to further myself and my career), result in a reflective transgression that might make the employee perform better. Actually to defer and disengage from the commitments machine injunction to commit by being oneself, might secure a more long run commitment. Any deferral of enjoyment by discerning between one's real self and one's working self in this way paradoxically tightens the indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity. It because a way of not only living with the indiscernability, but also of reproducing in new forms.

Indeed, all three features operate with an assumption about discernment (current self/new self, working self/family self, authentic self/corporate self), but all these forms of discernment work as mechanisms to make indiscernability to endure. Any indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity is of an instable and

dynamic nature it needs to find new expressions and manifestations in order to sustain the tension between its elements. In the end, the productive and profitable part is making subjectivity and productivity intertwine without the one colonizing the other.

However, the discernability working within the zone of indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity is governed by another form of indiscernability, namely that between passion and suffering. All three discernment are not just ways of deferring enjoyment they are also ways of making sure that enjoyment does not break-down altogether paving the way for despair, pain, and somatic and mental break-downs. But as we will see in chapter fifteen the zone of indiscernability between passion or pain, or commitment and suffering is primarily construed as a matter of individual's ability to cope with their own commitment.

As a result any conflict in this combination of monadic features (express the organizations worlds, become indiscernible with your work-tasks) and nomadic features (always find new expressions, be more that the current indiscernability) always becomes a matter of how the employees themselves *cope* i.e. whether or not they are able to ensure that their commitment to different spheres of working and non-working life does not becomes a cause of suffering. At this limit were passion become pain the commitment machinery simultaneously breaks down and expands its production. An impossibility might arises between a world where one has a life other than the present work-life *and* a world where the management-technologies capture as much as possible of the pre-individual flows enfolded with the employee.

## Despair and stress

So even though one might think that these internal contradictions, ruptures, and paradoxes would make the machinery that produces possible worlds, and the contracts that regulate their distribution and circulation break down. In fact, it

does; but the machinery also reconstitutes itself in this breakdown. Both the world that insists upon full commitment and the world that differentiates commitment between work and life can exist; both are productive within the machinery. This impossibility feeds the machine, making it possible for it to expand once more, to multiply itself by introducing new management-technologies such as work-life balance interviews and stress policies that produce the employee in new ways. It is the employee that must reflect upon how these diverging worlds are actualized within the same world: the employee's world. In short, you must show commitment; but you must divide and sometimes disengage from your commitments.

This paradox about various expectations of commitment towards work, combined with the fact that it has become hard to discern whether 'expectation' is that of the employee or the organization creates confusion, frustration, and even feelings of shame for each individual employee. The contracts and the unsettled demands and expectations produced can lead to anxiety and despair within the employee.

The reason we might experience such a despair is the human generic quality of the zone of indiscernability; what is at play in the self-management of this zone are human, all to human qualities, the ability to communicate, to love, to mourn, to act without losing control of oneself. The boundlessness of such human qualities must be managed by modulation and this committed modulation is at all times in danger of failure at severe personal expense. When this happens commitment becomes suffering.

But it has to be remembered that this despair becomes rooted in personal qualities and failures because the very contracts the machine of commitment uses to regulate the zone of indiscernability does not work by presenting actual demands or concrete injunctions but by presenting virtual ones that the employees must actualize in their own way. On a virtual level, these injunctions

might diverge, as in the case of Danfoss injunction to have work-life balance while also committing fully to the world of the organization; but on an actual level they must be handled so as to converge. The alternative could well be a pink slip or a mental break-down. What the contract regulates is the folding of the organization and the employee; this is done by turning the employee into a site where different worlds are played off against each other. Furthermore, as the employee is the point of convergence, he or she is thus expected to cope with this impossibility through additional technologies presented by the organization. As a Human Resource Director puts it:

The employees find it very difficult to set a limit for their work. We do not interfere in that. It is the individual human being's responsibility to decide and organise the existence that is right for him or her. The organization should create a frame that allows for free choice, and it should contribute tools that make it possible for the individual worker to handle both work and family (Bason et al 2003: 176).

This demand of further self-management of diverging worlds through new contracts and new worlds can produce additional pressure on the individual to such a degree that it becomes even more frustrated and burned-out, ultimately, that it breaks down completely.

However, this organizational play between worlds in the individual employees does not mean that emerging problems are treated as an effect of the pre-individual organizing processes that produce zones of indiscernability between the organization and the employees; rather, it is treated exactly as something the employee must learn to cope with. It is a personal problem that the autonomous self-managing individual is presented with. This is the reproductive repetition of the machine and is made possible by the fact that the production of indiscernabilities entails that the employees are the site of positive and negative production. As a result problems must be dealt with on this site, we might call such problems *stress-problems*. From a machinic perspective this means that stress is in fact a part of the production-process that yields indiscernability: stress acts as the mode wherein the problems and solutions are articulated. When

problems at the work-place are articulated in this language, the problems, paradoxes and anxieties in contemporary work-life are shaped and coded into problems of individuals' coping with themselves, their work, their body, indeed their very existence. The coping-machine acts as a medium through which the problems of commitment are posed. When the flows of adverse affects referred to as stress are connected with this machine, stress becomes a way of intensifying the individualization process at work within the different management technologies and not something that tempers the underlying dynamics of these processes. Just as the possible worlds are regulated by contracts, coping with stress regulates the dysfunctions that the commitment machine's production, distribution and regulated circulation of possible worlds bring about. The machinery is kick-started once again by this coping machine we now turn our attention to.

## ***Part Three: Stress and the Coping-machine***



## CHAPTER 12

### STRESS, THE SOMATIC SUBJECT AND COPING

Getting control of our personal chemistry, getting control of emotion, and getting control of stress are all one and the same (Loehr 1997: 149)

In his article *In the Wake of disaster: stress, hysteria and the event* Brown (1997) gives an example of how we can speak of a coping-machine distributing and composing flows of signs and bodies. In short, how something is construed as a stress-reaction and how both the cause of this reaction and dealing with it comes to revolve around the psychological coping abilities and the somatic biography of the employee subject. Brown (1997: 65) writes:

In 1994 six casualty workers at a California hospital collapsed whilst attempting to review a thirty-one year old woman dying of cervical cancer. The patient was admitted complaining of chest and stomach pains. Shortly after admittance, she vomited in the emergency room. A blood sample was taken. Several staff members in attendance promptly fainted. They later complained of 'ammonia-like' fumes. The patient entered cardiac arrest and thereafter died. Measures were taken to avoid further contamination; the emergency room was sealed with suspicions of poisoning by unknown chemical agent. Surgeons in protective suits laboriously performed an autopsy. No significant source of contamination could be located. Tests on the recovering staff likewise found no obvious abnormality. The State Department of Health conducted their own investigation. They concluded that the medical staff had actually not been the victims of poisoning, but had instead suffered from a "psychological stress reaction" brought about by the "smell of death". The reaction occurred on a collective level, engendered by the intensity of the situation, with the severe physical condition of the dying patient acting as a final 'trigger' of the mass fainting.

What is interesting here is that this mass fainting in the emergency room was not considered a matter of a cause and effect relationship between certain chemical agents and the body of the employees. Rather the incident was construed as a question of a straining work-environment and a certain psychological experience that activated a somatic stress-response. This stress-explanation seems very plausible as there were no traces of the chemical toxin and no straightforward 'account for the puzzle that over thirty other staff present in the emergency room

at that time remained unaffected'. (Brown 1997: 66). This lack of any traces of toxin shifted focus from an external chemical agent towards an internal one: stress. Indeed, the fainted employees possess a lot of the signs normally assigned to stress. For example it is a well documented experience that working in an emergency room is straining due to the nature of the job's unchangeable sense of urgency. Furthermore it could perhaps even be anticipated that working with torn and damaged bodies puts strains on '*any individual's ability to cope*' (Brown 1997: 66). In this way the apparent absence of a chemical agent did not activate procedures for say the implementation of better ventilation in the emergency room rather it activated procedures designed to make the individual coping abilities of the afflicted employees better, i.e. the subject of intervention became the individual and personal features of the employees such as their needs, feelings, problem-solving abilities, tendency to appraise something as a threat etc.

What I find interesting about this story is not whether stress was really the cause. In fact, the employees sued the hospital as they didn't themselves think the collapse was stress-related. Rather the interesting part is how this collective collapse can be said to be inscribed in what I call a certain *coping-machinery*. This machine refers to the certain pre-individual yet social machinery, that not only combined and organized the bodies' meetings that day in the emergency room, but also produced what kind of bodies that were connected. Indeed, the coping-machinery here encapsulates the play of various forces that produced the incident as a certain incident, i.e. with a certain meaning, function, and purpose, namely that of understanding the incident as a consequence of a somatic stress-response caused by a combination of a straining experiences, a general high level of urgency at the emergency room, the individual's appraisal of the event and the nature of the coping abilities used to get through the incident. And what is perhaps even more interesting how this inscription of the incident as stress-related distributed a whole field of possibilities for further actions and passions.

Through the coping-machine the bodies in the emergency room, including the context of the room itself were produced, organized, and manifested as a question of stress inducing and stress responding bodies. The incident as a stress-incident, then, cuts through the bodies in the emergency room resulting in a certain dispersion of action and passions. In fact, this machinic cut construed the bodies as marked by a certain affective state that not only construed a certain notion of what it is to be an employee-subject in this body, it also distributes the discursive and material fields for further affectivity. E.g. in the hospital the collapsed employees were expected to participate in coaching secessions with a professional therapist and enrolled in a long term training program in stress-management techniques (Brown 1997, 66). In this way the subject of intervention was primarily considered on the level of employee rather than the organization or incident as such. So even though the incident had a collective feature – six employees fainted - the solution was to improve and better the stress-management skills of each inflicted employee.

In this third part of the thesis I will focus on some more general features of this coping-machine. The primary focus will be on what kind of somatic and mental body this transformation brings about and how this stressed body interacts with self-management. I will start by outlining how work-related stress includes a certain construction of the stress-afflicted body as a question of the individual biography of the employee and especially how this feature comes to revolve around two important elements, or machinic indices called the somatic subject and coping processes. These indices I locate in both the scientific and popular literature on stress. As Johnsen (2008) has recently argued the *somatic subject* refers to a personal chemistry that dictates the body's response to different strains and stress-exposes, and as a consequence has an impact on both the productivity and well being of the employee. When a person is stressed a certain somatic chemistry is activated that governs the body's response.

However, this stress-response is both mediated by the individual's biography and its emotional and cognitive make-up. The ability to *cope* therefore becomes important in understanding the effects of certain strains. The concept of coping emerged from a particular theoretical tradition concerned with the confrontation and resolution of stress. Coping concentrates upon the importance of *individual* motivational, emotional, and cognitive differences to the ways in which we respond to events (Lazarus 1993: 3).

The third part of the thesis is construed as follows. It sets up with some general comments on where we can locate the somatic subject and cope within scientific and popular depictions of stress. Chapter thirteen focuses on the machinic index of the somatic subject as it is found in popular and scientific discussions about the 'founders' of stress-research Cannon and Selye. In chapter fourteen I look at the coping-mechanism as it is outlined in the seminal works of Lazarus. Through a reading of the contemporary stress-management books *Managing Work-place Stress*, *Stress for Success*, and *The Power of Full Engagement* the closing chapter of this part will outline how these two indices interact with the zone of indiscernability discussed in the previous part. In short how the coping machine reinforces and redirects the commitment machine.

## CHAPTER 13

### THE SOMATIC SUBJECT

Complete freedom from stress is death (Selye 1974: 32)

The first index I will look at is the stress-response as animated by a somatic subject. This term, referring to something pre-conscious working inside the body of the individual human being, indicates how stress can be considered both a trigger of great achievement and great suffering (see also Johnsen 2008). The somatic subject thus has to do with the assumptions: that stress is a physiological and biological phenomenon, that stress is a response to certain straining situations and that stress is both something positive and negative. In fact, understanding stress in physiological and biological terms as a response that can work as both a catalyst for achievements and suffering is where discussions of stress emerged. In both scientific literature (e.g. Cooper & Dewe 2004) and popular stress management books (e.g. Elkin 1999) the two names Walter S. Cannon and Hans Selye pop up as the founders of this physiological understanding of stress.

Cannon's writing on 'emotional stress' dates back to 1914. According to many Cannon was the first to use the concept of stress as a scientific category (e.g. Hinkle 1973), but as Wainwright and Calnan (2002: 33) points out stress had little to do with the primarily bio-psycho-social category we employed today.

This notion of stress refers to stress as a matter of *social* circumstances e.g. stress as an indirect effect of the amount, intensity, and extensity of outer threats. However, these events are mediated by the individual's *psychological* make up. The amount and intensity of the stress-response relies on the conscious and unconscious appraisal of the circumstances (e.g. Lazarus 1999). Whether or not these perceived events are stressful is also a question of the way people cope emotionally and mentally with these threats (Lazarus 1999). Last but not least the

degree to which individual bodies are strained by these emotional and cognitive coping-reactions varies with their general level of health and *somatic* hardiness of the stressed individual (Zacharia 2002: 171). Or the particular characteristics of stressed individual's somatic subject.

However, according to Cannon, and to some degree Selye, stress had little or no social and psychological aspects (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 34). Actually, the combination of the biological, psychological and social aspects of stress was not accepted into the scientific lexicon until after the Second World War with the emergence of the coping tradition (2002: 34). Nonetheless, textbook accounts often start with Cannon research into the 'fight or flight' response and with Selye's work on stress as both a positive and negative force working inside the body (e.g. Elkin 1999, Quick et al 2003). According to these books there is something inside all of us that to a certain degree animates our actions and passions. Indeed, we can talk of stress as tightly interwoven with a somatic subject that as *Stress-Management for Dummies* points out not only makes stress 'an unavoidable consequence of life', but also prepares our body for great achievements (Elkin 1999: xxv). Indeed, in the right amount of stress 'sets a beautiful tone' (xxv). Or as Williams and Cooper (2002: 39) in *Managing Workplace Stress* put it:

the chemical changes that occur during the first phase of the stress reaction act to sharpen the mind and focus all our attention on the problem at hand. We move into a zone where the ideas flow and the barrier that has held us paralysed and unable to act is blown away. That is the positive link between pressure and stress – a short term stimulus that releases our creative energy

But this subject of achievement can become a subject of suffering.

Unfortunately there is another, much more damaging reaction. This occurs when pressure leads to stress, when the demands placed upon us exceed our ability to cope. This is the phase where our bodies and minds are no longer thriving on pressure but are starting to shut down... There is no creativity or innovation, no room for original thought' (Williams & Cooper 2002: 39).

Positive stress turns into negative stress when the somatic subject is no longer able to transform pressure into achievement, creativity, and indeed enjoyment. Thus according to Williams and Cooper (2002: 39) achieving 'the kinds of stresses that add to the enjoyment and satisfaction of our lives' demands a certain stress-management, or better ways of coping, but it first and foremost demands an understanding of stress as mediated by this internal somatic subject that can cause great suffering but is also what enables a life outside the ordinary (Johnsen 2008: 33). In fact, by knowing the way this pre-conscious somatic subject animates our emotional responses we can learn to use this subject to achieve 'better health, a longer life, more fun and more energy' (Johnsen 2008: 33). When connected to this somatic subject stress is not solely something destructive, but indeed acts as both an internal limit for what the body and the mind of the individual employee is capable of and as a necessary element for high performance. Being a high performer and gaining enjoyment from it is in other words connected to an assumption about something somatic working inside the employee. Stress is directly related to instincts and hormonal forces that prepares the employee for great achievement, but also makes it suffer.

I will return to how this index of the somatic subject connects with the commitment machine in chapter fifteen. Which we will see is especially well illustrated in contemporary stress-managements books assumptions about stress as all important for performance, personal renewal, and limits before break-down. In these books stress is deeply interwoven with the assumptions about a somatic subject that can turn stress into fuel for both achievements and suffering. What the machinic index expressed in these books manifest is in fact that the impact of stress is related to one's individual somatic subject, and dealing with this subject is always a dynamic enterprise. Thus the somatic subject in many ways reinforces the assumption of the monadic and nomadic features of the employee-subject. For now I will, however, concentrate on how this somatic subject of achievement and suffering manifests itself in physiological and biological discussions on stress.

## Cannon and the fight or flight response

As mentioned the idea of stress as a question of a somatic subject first emerged with Cannon's research into what he called the fight or flight response (1939). That Cannon in many historical accounts of stress is regarded as the founding father is as Newton (1995: 19) points out 'a strange choice... as he hardly refers to stress at all'. But that he is still considered important for stress research and stress-management today must be because of his notion of the fight or flight response. It is hard to pick up a popular book on stress management without this response being mentioned within the first chapters (e.g. Elkin 1999: 25, Quick et al 2003: 6). This idea of fight or flight is, in a more or less adopted form, still an important and necessary element in explaining stress.

This response itself refers to a primordial instinct (Newton 1995: 21) that was activated when bodily changes took place in 'great emotional excitement' (Cannon 1939). According to Cannon these instincts were developed over a long period of evolution. Following in a Darwinist tradition Cannon in this way enrolled emotions such as fear and rage into a wider discussion on emotions as instincts that had adaptive value in the struggle for the survival of man (Wainwright and Calnan 2002: 35). These instincts were characterized by a certain established association between particular feelings and reactions (Cooper & Dewe 2004: 16). Fear and anger especially served as the most intense preparation for action:

Fear has been associated with the instinct to run, to escape; and anger or aggressive feeling, with the instinct to attack. These are fundamental emotions and instincts which have resulted from the experience of multitudes of generations in the fierce struggle for existence and which have their value in this struggle (Cannon cited in Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 35))

Working from this highly Darwinian point of departure Cannon labeled the regulating aspects in these instincts the fight or flight response (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 35). This response was perceived as a general reaction to any kind of stressful event within a physical and social environment. In this sense the



assumption was that stress was an emotional response to strains in the environment making the individual more capable of handling a potential enemy or threat as the energy mobilized in fight or flight response sharpened the senses and prepared the body for action. This state, later referred to as the catabolic situation (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 35), increases the sugar and fat in the blood, raises the pulse, lets the blood flow towards the muscles, dilates the pupils and makes the person breathe more rapidly.

What interested Cannon was not the easily observed physiological changes (cold sweat, dry mouth, rapid heartbeat) but what happens in the depth of the body. The primary interest was the response of the adrenal system (e.g. the increase of sugar and fat in the blood) when confronted with environmental threats (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 35). The fight or flight response in this way outlined stress as not only suitable in acute situations, but also as necessary for the survival of the human species (e.g. Sapolsky 2004).

In contemporary stress-management books this response is often reactualized when trying to explain why stress emerges. The response is used to simultaneously point to the pre-conscious forms of reaction that we as living and working individuals are subjected to when strained, as well as making the management of these reactions the responsibility of the individual. Thus the response is construed as a pre-cognitive instinct. However, at the same time the response is considered a personal attribute the individual must learn to cope with and manage. We can thus talk of a set –up in stress-management books and programs that simultaneously points to a pre-conscious primordial instinct as the trigger of the stress-response and makes this instinct into an object of management. Often this set-up is described in a three step procedure. As in the case of the book *Stress – management for dummies* (Elkin 1999: 23-30).

The first step involves a story of a cave – man. For example Elkin asks us to picture ourselves as cavemen roaming the jungle when suddenly we're confronted with a saber toothed tiger. The sight of this tiger activates the fight or flight response. Do you fight or flee the tiger (Elkin 1999: 25). Either way 'your physiological system kicks into high gear' (Elkin 1999: 25).

This step is followed by the *next step* that puts the fight or flight response into the context of contemporary life. As Elkin put it:

You've probably noticed that you don't live in a cave. And your chances of running into a sabre-toothed tiger are very slim, especially considering the fact that they're extinct. Yet this incredibly important, life-preserving stress reaction is hard-wire into your system. (Elkin 1999, 27)

Elkin in this way presents us with a popular and widespread image of the modern individual whose cave-man instincts are frustrated by, and inappropriate for, modern life. The instincts wired into the body might be suitable for a cave man but not always to the businessmen of modern society. As Newton notes:

the message is that a stressful work environment is not necessarily "bad", but that the primitive psychosocial nature of human beings hasn't caught up with the modern technological world we have build (Newton 1999: 245).

In fact, it is this hard-wired reaction mechanism more than the evolution of society as such that becomes the problem. It might be that the

physical dangers have been replaced by social and psychological stresses, not worthy of a full flight or fight response. Your body, however, does not know this and reacts the way it did when your ancestors were facing danger' (Elkin 1999: 27).

The real danger is the response itself. It might have been a wise mechanism once as Cannon indeed suggested in the *Wisdom of the body*, but today it has been outsmarted by society and presented itself as a potential threat. Besides today we are faced with far less threatening stresses such as overwork, trouble with the wife, a controlling and unpredictable manager etc. However, these non-lethal

dangers 'trigger the same intense stress response. It's overkill. Your body is now not just reacting; is *overreacting*' (Elkin 1999: 27).

This lead to the *third step*: the dangers of the natural state. The argument is that being in the hands of this response over a too long period of time can overload the body causing sickness and fatigue (Elkin 1999: 27-30). The response mechanism, or somatic subject, that governs your emotional response might wire you up for great achievement but it is also self-destructive.

However, this third step between stress and the fight or flight response mentioned by Elkin was not understood in terms of sickness and fatigue before the work of the other founding father of stress Hans Selye. In Cannon fight or flight response was a discussion about a primordial instinct that made the human race survive. The primary component of which was the Darwinian model of evolutionary adaptation to environmental changes (Wainwright and Calnan 2002: 34-35). For Cannon the stressed body was therefore not something primarily bad. Indeed, stress as a response prepares the body for action and great achievement. In fact, Cannon's description of the stressed body as animated by a primordial response that shifts resources away from maintenance toward immediate action (fight or flight) left little or no room for the possibility that the stress response might be harmful. This primarily had to do with the way Cannon connected the response to the process of homeostasis (2002: 37). That is a process in the nerve system 'that reverses the physiological changes that comprise the stress response and return the body to a steady state' (2002: 37). It was exactly this trust in the body to maintain homeostasis when stressed the physiologist Selye found evidence against. But for Cannon the problem was not the potential danger of flight or fight overloads. Rather the only danger was according to Cannon the potential moral and physical degeneration the failure to exorcist the fighting spirit could result in. The fight or flight response were thus not something that should be suppressed, but rather something that should be controlled through sublimation into creative

acts (Pollock 1988: 388). For Cannon the relationship between stress and the fight or flight response was not first and foremost a question of a potential pathology working in the depth of the body, it was a matter of using this response as an instrument for great achievements. And it is still this assumption about stress as triggered by a pre-conscious somatic subject capable of producing great achievements and suffering that haunts depictions of stress. In fact, this double side was developed further and ontologized as the truth of stress-responses by Selye

### **Hans Selye, positive and negative stress, and the hormones of the fragile body**

With Selye stress and its relation to the fight or flight response became the starting point of a discussion of the inbuilt dangers that a natural somatic response implied (e.g. Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 38, Pollock 1988: 389). In short, with Selye the implications of stress took on a more sinister and threatening aspect. The stressed and wise body, which through its internal fight or flight response, could turn pressure into personal renewal and great achievements, with Selye to evolve into a weak and defective body unable to withstand the ordinary demands and pressures of everyday living (Pollock 1988: 388). With Cannon we got the idea of a response, which regulated stress that made us able to survive great dangers and achieve great and extraordinary things when sublimated into creative acts. With the work of Selye we got the assumption that stress also threatens our life. That the subject of achievement in our body can turn on our body thus becoming a subject of suffering. Following Selye, stress becomes a term working in between the normal and pathological. Accordingly stress and its relation to the fight or flight response is no longer a wholly positive one.

For Selye stress referred to a general non-specific physiological reaction that could be found in all organisms (Sørensen et al 2008: 41; Cooper & Dewe 2004: 21). It is the name for an 'adaptive element of the situation, and the way the individual organism handles this, that is involved in the etiology of disease' (Pollock 1988:

384). Similar to Cannon, Selye thus situated his concept of stress within the Darwinian framework (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 39) calling his theory the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). This theory expanded on the fight or flight theory focusing in particular on what happened if a stressor i.e. strain was not dealt with, but continued to challenge the organism.

The general assumption for Selye was that all organisms develop the same symptoms when continuously challenged regardless of whether the stressor is noise, too much work, threats of violence or warfare (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 39). Stress, whether positive or negative, is positioned as a reaction of the body and not as a property of the environment. However, what triggered this response could be ordinary everyday demands and hassles (Pollock 1988: 384). In this way Selye connected the idea of adapting to the demands of life to the notion of fight or flight thus construing stress as connected to a natural property (fight or flight) that can overload the somatic body resulting in a degeneration of health. Although natural and positive in certain ways Selye in this way suggested that stress should also be regarded as negative. It was necessary for survival, great achievement and potentially dangerous at the same time. He thus suggested that stress had primarily two important basic variations: good stress (eustress) and bad stress (distress) (Cooper & Dewe 2004:28). This primarily implicated two things for the notion of stress: First that stressors, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant, are immaterial. What counts is the 'the intensity on the organism of the demand for readjustment to the stressor' (Pollock 1988: 384). And secondly that stress is not something necessarily bad or good, rather it is integral to all living things (Pollock 1988: 384). Rather than stress being a concept referring to a normal state or a pathological state, the normal and pathological effects of stress become a matter of degrees. Positive or negative stress became a matter of the level of intensity of a certain hormonal production that is activated when the organism adapts to demands in its environment.

Though many of the original descriptions and findings of both Cannon and Seyle have been scrutinized and rejected (e.g. Sørensen et al. 2007, 43, Virner 1999) two assumptions still persist in contemporary discussions on stress: 1) stress is both something positive and negative triggered by extraordinary as well as ordinary demands in the environment, 2) there is connection between negative stress and illness. Today this discussion primarily revolves around the energy produced and exhausted in stressful situations, and the way 'stress' hormones or 'readiness'-hormones, which contain and activate this energy, have both positive and negative effects.

Two physiological systems are important when it comes to understanding these hormonal processes: the sympathetic part of the autonomic nerve system and the Hypothalamic – Pituitary- Adrenal Axis (HPA-axis) that is part of the endocrine system (Quick et al 2003: 44).

The human nervous system is a network comprising the neural fibers that connect the body's organs with the brain. This system consists of the somatic nervous system and the autonomic nervous system. The first controls the skeletal muscles and the latter the visceral organs such as heartbeat, blood pressure, digestion, and breathing (Quick et al 2003: 44). This system is divided into the sympathetic nervous system, 'which is responsible for activating functions such as the stress response, and the parasympathetic nervous system, which stimulates vegetative and reparative activities' (Quick et al 2003: 45).

Following this line of argument both systems impact the bloodstream, organs and the glands, but in different ways. The parasympathetic nervous system lowers the heart rate, and stimulates the digestion (Quick et al 2003: 45), in short makes the body and mind relax. Conversely the sympathetic nervous system makes the body and mind alert (Quick et al 2003: 45). It prepares for fight or flight. When activated it releases the hormones adrenaline and noradrenaline. The

noradrenaline enhances the capacity to use the body's muscle group while adrenaline primarily has to do with mobilization of mental capacities (Quick et al 2003: 45). The effect of this is an alert state of awareness and readiness. The effect of the parasympathetic and the sympathetic nervous system in this way counterbalance one another. The sympathetic system, then, is the agent of what Cannon described as the fight or flight response, while the parasympathetic system brings about what Cannon referred to the homeostasis balancing out the energy burst of the first system. Put differently whereas Cannon primarily conceptualizes the first force as the subject of achievement and the homeostasis as a necessary and automatic counter force balancing out the energy emission of this subject, the contribution of Selye was to show that this balance is not always automatic. The subject of achievement as a result became the potential subject of suffering if it is not managed properly.

The other major system of the hormonal production is called the HPA – axis and primarily functions through the hormone cortisol. The primary function of cortisol is to release energy by breaking down high molecular substances such as sugar into smaller molecules such as glucoses and fat cells (Netterstrøm 2002:27). Furthermore cortisol stimulates the immune system making it more resistant towards acute stress (Netterstrøm 2006: 27). If noradrenaline and adrenaline are activated after a few seconds of strain, cortisol sustains this activation for periods of minutes or hours. So while the nervous system can be said to work through rapid, but short emissions of hormones, the endocrine system transmits slowly, but with long lasting emissions. Moreover the production of cortisol is often highest in the morning. In fact, it is necessary for the body to wake up (Kristensen & Nilsen 2007: 14). The level of cortisol is often decreased during the day but the HPA – axis will keep on release cortisol if the body is strained during the day. As with the fight or flight response, then, a somatic subject is pinpointed as a cause of the stress. But this subject has a good and a bad side to it. And leveling these out is a matter of management of either the response or what triggers the response.

Even though it is tempting to make cortisol the main villain in the negative stress-response, reducing adrenalin/noradrenalin to a mere accomplice (Sørensen et al 2007: 43) and giving the parasympathetic nervous system the part of the saving hero the warning is clear from stress-researchers: the hormonal processes are part of a very complicated interaction. As a Danish report has recently argued:

There are three circumstances one should keep in mind. 1. There is a decisive difference between the physiological reaction during acute and long-term stress. 2. There are very large differences in level and reactions from individual to individual. 3. The physiological system is extremely complex. To focus on one or two of the so-called stress-hormones can lead to grave misunderstandings (Kristensen & Nielsen 2007: 15 my translation).

Whether construed as matter of simple narratives of the good and bad parts of our anatomy or as a complex and very individual question of hormonal interaction what often happens in work-life settings is the same. These hormones and systems are interpreted as both essential for a good work performance and as destructive for the employee if they are not controlled properly (Sørensen et al 2007: 43). Thus with his ideas of stress as both good and bad and his focus on the hormonal processes in the body and brain Selye expanded on the connection between the fight or flight response and stress. He, however, still pertained an idea of stress as interwoven with a somatic subject able to transform pressures and demands into either great achievement or great suffering. Indeed, the somatic subject is, as we will see in chapter fifteen, a very important part of the fitter, happier, and more productive employee. Positive stress is a motor for passion and great achievement, but has to be managed in order not to turn in to pain and suffering.

### The somatic subject of stress

With the mobilization of the fight or flight response and the hormones of adrenalin, noradrenalin and cortisol we see the beginning contours of the very specific effect revolving around the individual body and mind. The flight or fight mechanism might be a natural, pre-conscious response hard-wired into our DNA.



But in the contemporary world of work and life in general this response can produce devastating effects. Our bodies might overreact to non-threatening situations. Still the site of intervention becomes the realm of the individual. In fact, when stress is portrayed as a 'struggle between our "outmoded" biological nature and the complexity of a modern and rapidly changing society' (Newton 1995:19) dealing with this situation on an individual level is often the place we end up. When neither the contemporary hurly burly work-settings (especially if subjectivity is the production-factor) or the pre-conscious hormonal reactions pattern can be easily removed (especially if the intensity of these reactions, as suggested by researchers, varies with the individual biography of employee) the individual becomes the site and agent of intervention. To overcome the potential in-built handicap of the fight or flight reaction the individual must therefore update his or her patterns of behaviors. Indeed, as Newton (1999: 246) argues the message of a stress-management book such as *Stress-management for Dummies* seem to be:

that a stressful work environment is not necessarily "bad", but the "primitive" psychosocial nature of human beings hasn't caught up with the modern technological world we have built. Thus the reason we get frustrated and feel like expressing our grievances is not because our work environment is overly stressful but because our own "in-built technology" is inappropriate, suited to the 'Stone Age' but not the complex modern world. Help is at hand, however, in the form of employee assistance programmes (EAPs) or stress management training which provide the basis to overcome these in-built handicaps so common to everyone, so that rather than getting stressed by the nature of the work organization in which we find ourselves, we are brought "up-to-date". A "new-improved" human being can supplant her "out-moded" "Stone Age" patterns of behaviour with appropriate stress management skills so that what were once seen as job stressors can become the "exciting challenges" of the modern business world.

This individualization of the distress of everyday life becomes especially apparent when the stress reaction is interrelated with the psychological, emotional and cognitive make-up of the individual employee. Nonetheless, as Newton's discussion of the fight or flight instinct touches on, this slide towards the individual as the point of intervention is already visible in the discussions of the hormonal

production of the fight or flight response. These hormones are not inherently bad, their intensity and level can vary from individual to individual, and they are to some degree a premise for great achievements. Therefore, situations that increase their production cannot be labeled pathological stressors in themselves, but only potential stressors. They are potential stressors because they are a result of the complexity of the hormonal system and have to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In this way the notion of stress as a both positive and negative result of a pre-conscious somatic subject is enforced even more with the introduction of the hormonal systems. As explained this system working within the individual body becomes a way of consolidating the somatic subject of great achievement and great suffering as it both prepares the subject for action and are the subject that might destroy the body. This subject, then, is something working within the individual, deeply related to the somatic make-up and biography of the individual. It is what forms the individual at the same time as this somatic subject is asserted as an attribute the individual can learn to deal with. In fact, any individual is characterized and animated by a pre-conscious, natural, and general hormonal balance, but this balance relies on the specific life of the individual (its biography, its level of health, its emotional stability, its tendency to perceive something as positive and negative).

In the terms of Selye what determines whether a stressor, such as a particular level of work intensity, results in eustress or distress depends of the nature of the individual reaction. And even when this reaction is a part of the somatic subject working inside the body, the reaction is both something that the individual can isolate and intervene on in an indirect manner. Indeed, the physiological reaction might be a general trait in every individual forming this individual, but it is also a trait that the individual can intervene in and balance out by working with his or her body, mind and relationship to others. As *Stress management for Dummies* puts it: 'finding your stress balance is one of the best ways to find out if you are overreacting to the stress in your life' (1999, 1). As a pathological effect the

physiological stress-reaction therefore always needs to be understood in light of the psychological profile of the individual. Thoughts and feelings about these strains impact the somatic subject of achievement and suffering. And even more important this somatic subject can be indirectly managed by increasing the individual's ability to cope i.e. the way one responds emotionally to situations, the way one appraises them and the way one acts in them.

## CHAPTER 14

### THE COPING PROCESSES

Coping has to do with the way people manage life conditions that are stressful. To some extent, stress and coping could be said to be reciprocals of each other. When coping is ineffective, the level of stress is high; however, when coping is effective, the level of stress is apt to be low. (Lazarus 1999: 102)

The concept of coping refers to a particular theoretical tradition concerned with the confrontation and resolution of stress. The American scholar Richard Lazarus is the dominating figure within this tradition. This dominance is for example illustrated in the fact that in Cooper and Dewe's *Stress a brief history* Lazarus is the only stress scholar to whom the authors devote a whole chapter (2004). As already mentioned in chapter five and eleven Lazarus contribution to stress research was to concentrate upon the importance of *individual* motivational, emotional and cognitive differences to the ways in which we respond to events. (Lazarus 1993: 3) Hence 'coping' specifically refers to an individual's cognitive, emotional and behavioral efforts to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events (Lazarus 1999).

For Lazarus these coping-efforts are deeply interwoven with emotions. While the physiological factors such as hormonal processes of eustress and distress and the fight or flight response cause certain effects in the body and mind. These factors are according to Lazarus activated by the emotional response to a certain perception or appraisal by the individual. As Lazarus puts (1999: 35) it: 'when there are emotions, even positively toned ones, there is often stress too'. Stress is consequently also a matter of emotional arousals, intensive emotions may result in stress, and coping plays an important part in this process between emotions and stress. In fact, for Lazarus coping is never just an activity following an emotional arousal. Coping is not just to deal with conditions that provoked it, by

an integral part of the emotional arousal itself and thus indirectly how and with what intensity the somatic subject of stress is activated. As Lazarus (1999: 37) puts it:

Judging the significance of what is happening always entails evaluating what might be done about it, which determines whether we react, say, with anxiety or anger... Separating emotions from coping does a disservice to the integrity and complexity of the emotion process, which at every turn considers how we might cope

Indeed, coping can be said to be a part of a semi-conscious process that composed and regulates the level of the stress-response. Coping and stress, then, form a part of a unity with emotions, which means that passion towards something risks becoming painful if the right coping processes are not in place. As we will see in the next chapter this semi-conscious process of coping, then, is a part of a process that makes up the individual. Alongside the somatic subject this process of coping forms part of the pre-verbal and pre-conscious components that make up the fitter, happier, and more productive employee-subject. In other words, they are aspects of the pre-individual flows of desire, thoughts, dreams, and emotions that are connected with the injunction to be productive in a way that optimizes happiness as well. And more importantly they are directly related to the injunction to regulate these elements that composes subjectivity in ways that sustain the first injunction. To optimize personal productivity and happiness is also to optimize health. Or put otherwise, to tune in to an organizational life that folds the passions of the employee with questions of productivity always run the risk of a break-down. A constant effort to reboot is therefore necessary. Yet, the fitter, happier, and more productive employee is not only the subject that must reboot every time a break-down is imminent i.e. every-time passions might turn into pain. Rebooting is as a matter of coping, and coping is a process that runs simultaneously with the effort to tune in. Or put otherwise break-downs are always imminent when tuning in, so reboots are always necessary.

This coping process, then, not only connects with the somatic subject forming a coping-machine. It also interacts with the commitment machine thus producing the mode of existence of the fitter, happier, more productive employee. However, before going into the inter-linkage between the coping-machine and the commitment machine we will have a look of some of the features of this second machinic index called coping.

### The birth of coping

In his last book from 1999 Lazarus describes that it was his work for the military in the 60's that began a life time research into stress and the way stress was influenced by appraisal, emotions, and coping. The military interest in stress was primarily psychological stemming partly from a concern about military moral, partly from the desire to develop offensive techniques, and partly in 'order to aid in the recruitment and training of military personal' (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 40). This recruitment and training in fact constituted the main interest of stress-research (2002: 40, Newton 1995: 30), was a question of how to further task performance by focusing on the coping abilities of the individual soldier.

In his work with soldiers Lazarus discovered that people do not necessarily react to a stressful situation in the same manner (Cooper & Dewe 2004: 68). For Lazarus (1999: 28) terms such as posttraumatic stress disorder and battle fatigue therefore implied a psychological cause, but were all too often explained through an external cause. Very straining conditions might result in emotional problems such as battle fatigue but different contextual and personality factors influenced the vulnerability and coping abilities of soldiers (1999: 29). One, then, had to take account of 'the individual differences in motivational and cognitive variables which intervened between the stressor and the reactions' (Lazarus 1993: 3). Lazarus here pinpointed two important factors for later stress-research. First of all, that there is a psychological aspect of stress deeply intertwined with the physiological response of the hormone system (42-3), thus highlighting what also later has been called

the Mason-principle. This principle illustrated that 'the most potent stimuli for pituitary–adrenocortical activity were psychological factors' (Ursin & Eriksen 2004: 570) i.e. psychological factors impacts the somatic subject of stress. Secondly, stress is something that varies with the individual psychological profile (Lazarus 1999: 37).

By focusing on the cognitive and mental make-up of soldiers a wide range of psychological tests and procedures were developed with the aim 'to bolster performance under stress through effective recruitment and training of staff' (Wainwright & Calnan 2002, 41). The primary concern with this research was how the soldier could maintain 'effective task performance whilst subject to the stresses of war' (Newton 1995: 31). In other words, how performance and productivity was sustained when health and psyche was threatened. The concern with stress and military task performance were considered so important that 'by 1976, over one-third of prominent researchers in the Stress area were based in US military institutions' (Virner 1999: 400).

### **From Military to Industry**

Not only was the research into stress, performance and individual characteristics concentrated in military research, it also came to provide a theoretical, empirical and practical base for the human resource management movements that was burgeoning in 1960's and 1970's (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 41-42). That is in the years Boltanski and Chiapello, the Matisse-group and to some degree Walton pinpointed as the years we started witnessing a change in the way business was conducted. Lazarus' research into the effects on stress on task-performance in this way coincides with general concern in industry to maximize workers productivity by focusing on the individual subjectivity of the employee. As in the military the development of psychological tests, procedures and technologies that aimed at better recruitment and training of staff became part of the HRM discourse and practices (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 41). Trough HRM this research and development of recruitment and management technologies became connected to

general assumptions about a relation between job-satisfaction and performance. Especially classic neo-human-relations works such as McGregor's *The Human side of Enterprise* with its focus on an alliance between organizational productivity and a high level of individual well-being and job-satisfaction among employees seemed to affirm Lazarus claims about stress as a matter of individual coping abilities and well-being (Newton 1995: 33). A bond between health (stress), performance and happiness was forging between industry and military concerns.

The earliest evidence on this forging was perhaps the role stress research did in the 60's and 70's. The focus here were concentrated on how conflicts between and ambiguity in roles were triggers of stress, that is sources of despair and anxiety, if not directly pathological. Centered on the university of Michigan this approach to stress can be 'traced back to 1947, but it was a study published in 1964 that really established role theory (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 41-2). The research was interested in the effect on stress on performance, how stress impacted individual well-being and happiness, and how well-being and performance were interconnected.

Even though the term role stress might bring about associations towards social structures the focus was primarily on individuals. When it came to the amelioration of stress the role stress theory emphasized the personal needs of the worker as the field of intervention rather than the demands of the productions' tasks (time demands, quality demand etc.) The theory's assumption was according to Wainwright and Calnan (2002: 42) inspired by the social psychology of Lewin 'reflected in an emphasis in individual perceptions and expectations rather than the extent to which roles are determined by social structure and other external constrains'. In fact, it was in particular the connection between Lewin's ideas of the role and 'the importance of mental health drawing directly on post-war studies into the mental health of the worker' (Newton 1995: 33) that serves as a basis for the role stress theory. So rather than to cultural and organizational



discrepancies, role conflict and role ambiguity referred to the subjective expectations and perceptions of the person filling the role. I will not go into the validity of this theory, but it should briefly be emphasized that in a setting of self-management the notion of potential role conflict is inherently a part of the enfoldment of the organization into the employee. As I investigated in chapter eleven when the employee is constituted as monadic and nomadic subject, doubt becomes a necessary part of successful self-management. Doubt is connected to something nomadic because determining clear roles and expectations are always transversed by an inherent unsettlement: what works today might not work tomorrow. A doubt connected to something monadic because the work-role itself becomes something that has to be informed and partly created through the employee-subjectivity: in self-management the role only exist in the employees expression of it.

However, the most important aspect about the notion of role stress is that it individualizes the concept of stress, i.e. the despair, anxiety etc that might be an effect of the monadic and nomadic traits. Indeed, role-stress makes stress-issues revolve around the encounter between the objective feature of the role and the subjective expectations and perceptions of it. As Kahn et al puts it: 'We are concerned with role conflict as a fact in the environment of the person and as a fact in his internal, psychological life' (1964: 19). Stress, then, is seen as a pathological consequence of contradictions and ambiguities in the workers' role in the organization. However, this unclear status of a role is in itself not primarily regarded as some objective structural feature, but as effect of the psychological profile of the individual that takes part in this role. It is the psychological, emotional and cognitive make-up of the employee that impacts any ambiguity and contradiction in the role that is performance. It is the employees' coping-abilities that account for the level of stress in the role-performance.

Lazarus (1999: 29) himself highlights two reasons for this diffusion of the connection between stress and coping from the military into industry and everyday life.

First, modern war had become what is referred to total war. Leaders of nations at war came to realize that the way to win was to make it impossible for an enemy to continue to fight, and the civilian population was just as important in this as the military...Everyone had now become potential victims of war, and combat stress was no longer restricted to soldiers. The face of war had changed forever. Second, and even more important, it slowly dawned on us that stress was a problem in peacetime as well as wartime, and this awareness was the primary impetus for the extraordinary growth in the stress industry in the 1960's, 1970's and beyond. Stress takes place at one's job, in one's home, and in school – in effect, anywhere people worked with each other or had close relationship as, for example, co-workers, family members, lovers, friends, students, and teachers.

Within the military and industry, then, this subjective view of human behaviour, performance and stress slowly grew into a belief that cognitive mediation is the core of stress. And how this mediation takes place has to do with the well-being of the soldier or worker.

### **The importance of the Individual biography**

Lazarus' research claimed that to understand stress and especially to understand how stress affected task performance was to understand it psychologically. However, this does mean that outside strains and the physiological processes of the somatic subject did not play an important part. In fact, for Lazarus what coping deals with is this somatic subject and the ability to deal with this well relies to some degree on the social circumstances the individual are in and have been in. Coping should be considered a transaction that takes place between a person and an environment. Which is to say that coping depends on the biography of the individual i.e. the lived life of the individual. So in much the same way as the employee's lived life or personal subjectivity became a production-resource, the stress that might arise from the indiscernability between subjectivity and

productivity should be considered an effect that had to do with the particular lived life of the individual.

According to Lazarus, then, what produces stress is relative to the individual's appraisal of both its own resources and its appraisal of the demands the environment makes (Lazarus 1999: 58-59). For Lazarus stress is not merely a mental construction as the pathogenic value of an individual's interpretative tendencies is relative to both the current situation that individuals find themselves in, the hormonal balance of the particular body and to all the different environments this body have passed through so far (Greco 1993: 360). However, the cognitive appraisal of a situation plays the most important role here, as it is in the psychological mental reality that the cognitive and emotional appraisals of own resources and outside demands are construed.

When the environment's demands tax and exceed the person's resources, stress was the consequence. Yet, whether or not this transaction was taxing is not a matter of objective stressors. Rather the key in understanding this transaction is the appraisal process that links the person with the environment (Cooper & Dewe 2004: 71). Once appraised as stressful, certain coping processes are activated that according to Lazarus (1990:1): 'manage the troubled person – environment relationship and these processes influence the person's subsequent appraisal and hence the kind and intensity of the stress reaction'.

Lazarus understands this management in the line of two different, but interdependent terms: appraisal and coping.

## Appraisals

Appraisal consist of a two-stage transactional process 'in which the magnitude of a threat is assessed in comparison with an assessment of the individual's ability to cope with it' (Wainwright & Calnan 2002 : 61).

The primary appraisal process describes the evaluation of the significance of a transaction between the environment and the person (Cooper & Dewe 2004: 73). According to Lazarus this appraisal has 'to do with whether or not what is happening is *relevant*, to one's values, goal commitment, beliefs about self and world, and situational intensions (Lazarus 1999: 75). This appraisal has to do with the significance of what is happening for the involved individual, i.e. how the person-environment situations is evaluated. For a situation to be stressful, the individual must desire, expect or feel pressured by something.

Indeed, as Lazarus (1999: 60) points out:

A person is under stress only if what happens defeats or endangers important goal commitment and situational intentions, or violates highly valued expectations. The degree of stress is, in part, linked with how strong these goal commitments are, and partly with belief and the expectations they create, which can be realized or violated.

Moreover if the appraisal regard something as endangering the goal commitment a situation arises where the 'transactional alternatives are harm/loss, threat, or challenge.' (Lazarus 1999:76). The harm/loss refers to damage already occurred. For example losing one's job or being attacked (Agervold 2006: 37). Harm and loss has to do with concrete actual strains. Threat consists of the risk that such damage might repeat itself again, Threats can be both physical and psychological, but what alternates them from harms is that the threat is stressful even though it might not be actualized. The threat of being fired is not the same as being fired, but the stress-response might be the same. Finally change 'is somewhat like Selye's eustress in that people who feel challenged enthusiastically pit themselves against obstacles, feel expansive – even joyous – about the struggle that will ensue' (Lazarus 1999: 76).

The secondary appraising refers to 'a cognitive – evaluative process that is focused on what can be done about a stressful person-environment relationship' (Lazarus

1999:76). Such an appraisal evaluates the potential options for actions and can in this way be said to be the cognitive underpinning for coping (Lazarus 1999: 76). In short this is the process of appraising the available coping options and to decide which line of action to take.

### **Emotions and the construction of appraisal**

Through these notions of appraisal Lazarus (e.g. 1999) primarily presents a theory of stress based on cognitive processes. But emotions have a very important role to play in these processes. For Lazarus (1999: 37) emotions are the important bringers of news of the situation. Anger, despair, pain, excitement and joy impact the appraisal vice versa. For Lazarus neither the primary nor secondary appraisals have to be always conscious and most often they are not rational either as appraisals are sometimes made in the spur of the moment. They are as Lazarus (1999: 81) puts it a kind of 'tacit knowledge about ourselves and our environment'

So from a machinic perspective appraisal in many ways functions in most the same way as efficient self-management. It relies on a number of semi-conscious processes that draw on pre-individual register of components that make up the perceptions and emotional responses to certain situation. Indeed, it is this realm of the semi-conscious or tacit knowledge, which appraisal stems from.

Nonetheless, for Lazarus even these subconscious and emotional appraisals help categorizing situations and events as harmful, threatening or challenging. However, for Lazarus the cognitive part still plays the dominant role. It is possible for the individual to tap into these emotionally driven appraisals and mould them in new ways. So even though a division has to be made between appraisals brought about deliberately and consciously or intuitive, automatic, and unconscious (Lazarus 1999: 75) both have a cognitive activity. The meaning and significance given to an encounter by the individual was for Lazarus always fundamental to the type of emotional response (Cooper & Dewe 2004: 76).

Late in his life Lazarus introduced the notion of *core relational meanings* to link appraisal and emotion to show that every emotion was always linked up to a specific pattern of appraisals (Cooper & Dewe 2004: 82). In the end the transaction between person and environment is defined by these always personal meanings that are the source of emotional response and the corresponding coping strategy. The fight or flight response and the hormonal processes, in short the somatic subject in this way becomes heavily impacted by individual cognitive assessment of the environment and of the appraisal of the individual's own capacity to tackle it. In short, with Lazarus the somatic subject becomes mediated by cognition and personal resilience, by coping processes. The relation between the stressor and the stress response was a purely automatic one for Cannon untouched by social and psychological factors (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 36). Emotions such as fear and rage were reactions kick-starting a hormonal production by reactions akin to pain and hunger. They were automatically activated 'like other reflexes such as swallowing, vomiting or coughing' (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 37). Emotions for Lazarus are, however, not pure survival instincts, instead they are part of a cognitive patterns of conscious and subconscious assessments. In this way: 'Passion and reason combine as one in our mind. Only when we are at war with ourselves do we diverge, but this is pathology not a healthy state' (Lazarus 1999: 100).

Emotions in some way govern our appraisal of situations in so far as they become part of an intuitive and automatic response, but should themselves be seen as

the product of reason in that they flow from how we appraise what is happening in our lives. In effect, the way we evaluate an event determines how we act emotionally. This is what is meant to speak of cognitive mediation (Lazarus 1999: 87).

In fact, it is the cognitive mediation that makes it possible to change one's automatic response and deal with potentially stressful situations. To perpetually attain the combination between passion and reason keeping stress at bay. This is

what coping is all about. Managing pathos (passion and pain) through cognitive coping abilities.

## Coping processes

If the conscious and subconscious appraisals lead to stress, coping is considered the way out of stress (Agervold 2006: 38). When confronted with the hassles and events of life people try to cope with the potential problems that might arise. Indeed, coping can be said to have to do with the way life conditions that are stressful are managed in different ways (Lazarus 1999: 102). Lazarus and Folkman (1984: 141) defines coping as 'constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person'.

This definition implies four things for Lazarus and Folkman (1984). First of all, coping is always connected to appraisals understood as a cognitive effort. Coping is not an effect of a situation or a socio-economic structure (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 63). Secondly, stress is not a habitual trait or a personality trait. It is a process that changes over the course of an encounter and a life. Thirdly, coping is not an automatic adjustment. Coping consist of what is thought and done by an individual in the effort to deal with demands that tax resources. Fourthly, coping is about handling – not controlling.

There are two ways of handling or coping. The problem-focused and the emotion-focused. The first is action driven. A person mobilizes social skills with the purpose of changing the person-environment relationship (Lazarus 1999: 114). The object of intervention may be either the person or the environment. The second focus is aimed at regulating 'the emotions tied to the stress situation – for example, by avoiding thinking about the threat or reappraising it – without changing the realities of the stressful situation' (Lazarus 1999: 114). Reappraising a threat is, as Lazarus continues, to alter one's emotions by 'constructing a new relational

meaning of the stressful encounter' (Lazarus 1999: 116). This reappraisal can be done through denial, cynicism and humor. All highlight the fact that little illusion is necessary for mental health (Wainwright & Calnan 2002: 64).

Moreover for Lazarus it is important that the best way to cope with stress is always temporal and dynamic. The best way to cope with depends on the person-environment condition in a certain point in time. This means that while it from an external point of view often is claimed that the best way of coping might be to change the environmental conditions this is not always possible. For example work-conditions that might be stressful for one person are not as taxing for another. Changing the conditions is therefore not always the easiest course of action. Maybe more training will solve the taxing person-environment transaction or maybe reappraising the situation in more positive terms might be an option. Or a cynical distance might reduce the importance of the situation and thus its taxing demands or maybe readjusting one's emotions might be the solution – if you can't get what you loved, you have to love what you get (Agervold 2006: 40). All in all, coping might take different forms, and what is the best solution depends on the situation. However, using the same coping strategy again and again, might worsen the situation (Agervold 2006: 40). To be stress-fit is to cope, and to cope is to get a right balance between passion and reason, but this balance is always of a dynamic nature. It has to be attained again and again and always in new ways. The coping processes in this manner implicates two important features: that coping with stress is a matter of managing pathos i.e. a matter of a balance between emotions that cause passion and emotions that cause pain. This balance cannot be attained once and for all. Different situations merit different ways of coping.



## CHAPTER 15

### THE COPING-MACHINE

STRESS IS THE STIMULUS FOR ALL GROWTH (Loehr 1997: 145)

In this last chapter I will take a look at the interactions of the coping machine and the commitment machine. First I will outline some general features of the coping machine before moving on to describe how it connects with the commitment machine producing 1) the mode of existence of the fitter, happier, more productive employee and 2) the employee itself as responsible for becoming and regulating this mode of existence. This production will be illustrated through three examples. These are the bestsellers *Stress for Success*, *The Power of Full Engagement*, and *Managing Work-place Stress*. These books manifest the mode of existence of the stress-fit self-managing employee while illustrating how this mode of existence is best regulated.

#### The features of the coping machine

A common feature of the two machinic indices of the somatic subject and the coping processes is that they revolve around the individual biography of the stressed subject. Individual subjectivity, in the sense of the biography, interactions, and the somatic inner-workings of the individual, constitutes the primary point in understanding and dealing with stress.

The incident of fainting from chapter twelve might illustrate the importance of the individual biography in the fits and sparks of the coping-machine. One of the implications of invoking stress as the cause of not only daily distresses but also of more severe somatic break-downs and mental burn-outs in a particular context, such as the emergency room, present a certain shift in the way potential distresses are explained. Classic epidemiological explanations within work-settings such as exposure to chemical substance, back-pains from repetitive work or fatigue from

performing the same task without any breaks are often understood in terms of causal explanations. In contrast, stress is a matter of dispositions and risks. Stress is, so to speak, a product of external risks and inner tendencies. Stress is triggered by something external (smell of death and the general sense of urgency) but processed by something internal (appraisal of level of urgency and the threat of the smell). In this sense the pathogenic value of stress is both something that is part of the environment and the individual. In matters of stress there is then what Greco (1993) refers to as a certain co-determined functionality between individual perceptions of the environment (i.e. coping-processes) and the demands imposed by the environment. In such a 'framework it is no longer possible to think in terms of linear causal sequences linking the environment and the individual in concrete space' (1993: 360).

So being stressed breaks with any idea of a linear causal sequence linking a concrete environment and individual. Instead, everything becomes a matter of:

virtual internal and external spaces or dimensions of *risk*. The internal dimension comprises a typology of responses ranging from the purely physiological (hypertension, hormone production), to the psychological (anxiety, depression), to the cognitive (attitudes and interpretive patterns), to the behavioural (cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption). The external dimension, on the other hand, comprises a typology of situations and events thought to affect an individual's general capacity for adaptation. (1993: 360)

Much like the different tendency to appraise and cope, these external risks, however, are never static and objective but rather dynamic variables. As Greco (1993: 360) explains the risk of certain situations and events is:

defined more by the trajectory of an individual within and between social spaces than by the characteristics of the spaces themselves. Once more, it is risk directly associated with biography, meant as the path between the different things that one is and becomes, rather than with the 'objective' circumstances met through life.

In this way it is not the objective circumstances, which the individual experiences, that causes stress but the specific combination of these circumstances and one's

own psychological (coping processes) and physiological (somatic subject) biography. In fact, it is the biography that decides whether or not a situation is evaluated as dangerous, threatening, attractive, or demanding. This means that stress has the power of being never totally knowable from a general point of view, 'whilst being always potentially everywhere'(Newton 1999: 244). As Pollock (1988: 385) points, out the result of this is that defining stress becomes impossible outside its specific and local effects,

which in turn depend on the perceptions and the reactions of the individual actor, the presence of stress can only be inferred back from an outcome which is prejudice to be the result of exposure to stress, the nature of which remains subjective and uncertain.

Stress, then, is an individual truth that has to do with the inherent risk of life. And again, it has to be emphasized that it is not solely because stress is construed as something psychological that it constitutes an individual truth. In fact, it is because stress is not something solely psychological that makes this individualization of stress more efficient. The somatic subject working inside the psychological subject triggers pre-conscious stress-responses, but these responses are habits conditioned through a life course. It is exactly the fact that there is something more than the cognitive appraisal in work in the stressed subject that makes it necessary for the individual to look deeper into itself to know how this other inside it works: how does its somatic subject animates its passion and pain. So, even though stress has to do with somatic subject within the body that is not directly changeable e.g. the hormonal system and the fight or flight response, these mechanisms can be softened. Indeed, stress might relate to bodily forces but these forces always interact with mental ones and the mental forces are considered something partly controllable but nonetheless something individual.

Following this line of thought two important elements are important in understanding the production logic of the stressed body as illustrated by the incident of fainting.

Firstly, it was a certain somatic response that caused the collapse in the emergency room. However, this somatic response is interlinked with a complex interaction between the environment and the individual. Secondly, this interaction is primarily a matter of the individual biography, which has to do with tendencies to certain appraisals of the environment acquired through experience but still capable of change through different coping strategies. As the incident illustrated there might have been a smell of death that day at the emergency room and strained work conditions but, in the end, the pathogenic value of the incident is to be found in the individual's appraisal of the situation and the individual body's general level of health. Still, this does not mean that the environment does not count but, as I have argued, it primarily counts as a matter of risk. What matters most is coping and its relation to the somatic subject. Enter the coping-machine.

### The fits and sparks of the coping machine

The stressed subject, then, is produced around two elements: a somatic subject working in the individual triggering stress, and coping as a way of dealing with stress by controlling emotions.

Understood in the matrix of physiology a stress does not represent the interruption of a normal course, but is rather to be understood as the premise for the ability to adapt to life changes. The stress-reaction is linked to a somatic subject working in the body as both a subject of achievements and suffering. And this subject is paradoxically modified by the individual's personal attributes. Through its emission of hormones a general somatic subject affects the individual psychological profile, but this subject is always specified by a certain hormonal balance that is linked to the individual biography, emotional states and the individual's ability to cope. To understand stress, then, is to understand 'a personal susceptibility which is logically prior to the cause' (Greco 1995: 359).

So, even though stress is not only a function of an appraisal by the stressed subject but also outmoded patterns of behaviour working at a somatic level, such as the 'fight or flight' reaction, these reactions and instincts are objects that the individual can learn to deal with. Control over somatic processes found in the stressed subject is thus achieved by up-dating, developing, and managing the emotional response that links appraisals of potential stress-exposing situations and physiological stress responses. In fact, it is as the New York Bestseller *Stress for Success* puts it: 'emotions that run the show' (Loehr 1997:47) because 'one of the most important functions of emotion is to mobilize the body to respond' (1997: 50). So 'to control emotions is to control physiology, which in turn enables us to control our body's response to the world' (1997: 51).

To control emotions is to cope and to cope is always a dynamic process that deals with, moulds, and reboots the cognitive appraisals and emotional responses. This construal of stress as a coping issue tells us that stress is a product of external risks and inner tendencies (Cooper & Dewe 2004: 67-89). Stress is triggered by something external, but processed by something internal. The pathogenic value of stress is here part of both the environment and the individual. In fact, we are dealing with a certain value co-determined by 'individual interpretations' of the environment and the 'demands made by the environment' (Greco 1993: 360). This makes stress an ever present risk that has to be dealt with before it causes a break-down. However, stress has an individual and biographical orientation to it, as monitoring potential stress-symptoms and intervening primarily takes place in the

sphere of the subjective, of experience and interpretation. This entails an important shift in the techniques of monitoring; these are no longer geared towards eliciting the truth of an objective environment or a body-object, but a subjective truth (1993:361).

Coping is dynamic, then, because coping is a matter of knowing oneself and what one is capable of i.e. knowing one's own individual biography. But for coping to work this knowledge must always result in self-transgressions of who one is, i.e.

how one acts, feels and thinks about a current situation. Coping with stress involves changing pain into passion (emotions control), changing threat into opportunity (appraisals control), and always finding new ways to be one self. Indeed, to cope well is to always be able to change the way we are coping. This is the work of the coping-machine: stress is triggered by a physiological somatic subject that is regulated by psychological forces. But stress itself is, within this machinery, both a force of creation and destruction. Dealing with stress is a matter of finding the differences between its powers of growth and diminishment. Nevertheless, this border always varies with the individual and the context of the individual. Coping, therefore, is always a changing process.

## Coping and commitment

These individual and dynamic features are both enhanced and redistributed when connected to the commitment-machine. Here stress as a subject of pain and passion becomes even more important and the ability to cope with stress becomes not only a tool of survival, it becomes all important in the maximization of health, happiness, and productivity.

When the machines of commitment and coping interact, what causes stress becomes a truth about the individual but also an individual truth the employee must forever deal with in new ways. To deal with stress demands self-transformation and, before that, self-knowledge (Greco 1993: 361). Stress-management programs are, therefore, aids to the individual employee. These aids empower the employee to find its own subjective truth about their pre-conscious (somatic subject) and semi-conscious (coping processes). The programs thus visualize these components and try to empower the employee as a subject able to tap into them and mould them into something manageable. Moreover, when connected to the commitment-machine this focus on the individual employees' subjectivity becomes even more important. In a work setting characterized by self-management how do you find the truth of the objective environment? When task-

performances have to do with semi-conscious forms of thinking, feeling passion for the task at hand, and enjoying oneself, how does one delimit the characteristics of the environment? The organization can neither clarify the role nor the task easily. The task and the person intertwine. All the organization can deliver is aids in this effort to make employees stress-fit. For example, expert counseling or personal improvement programs teaches the employees what they must learn to live with, what they can change, to recognize their stress-symptoms, to stay positive, to plan their work-day, and to say no once in a while. In short, to know their coping-strategies.

In the following, I will illustrate this interaction between commitment and coping, between stress-management and self-management, by looking at three stress-management books, which depict stress in line with the features of the coping-machine (somatic subject - coping processes). Books that illustrate how best to deal with stress in organizational settings through technologies that aid the employee to diagnose their stress-level and to make this stress manageable, resulting in a happier, healthier and more productive life.

### ***Managing Workplace Stress***

According to the back-cover of Williams and Cooper's *Managing Workplace Stress: a best practice blueprint* the book delivers a

proactive template for dealing with stress before issues come to a head, helping to provided you with a happy, healthy, determined work-force ready to take on the challenges of the modern business environment.

The book, then, help managers to support employees in becoming happy, healthy, and productive. In short, to add value both to the employee (in the form of less stress and more enjoyment from work) and the cooperation (more determined work-force). 'There is' as the book states 'then a fundamental relationship to be understood between employee wellbeing, their motivation and their performance' (Williams & Cooper 2002: 36). However, how this value is added is

intertwined with how stress is construed in the book. Here the features of the coping-machine becomes clear

### **The somatic subject and coping processes in *Managing Work-place Stress***

In the book, the somatic subject, as both the subject of achievement and suffering, becomes connected to ideas of task-performance and self-actualization. Williams and Cooper (2002: 8) state:

We need some pressure to simulate personal growth and development – but we don't need too much. Growth occurs when the individual is able to adapt to or overcome the challenges or pressures in their life.

To grow on a personal level demands a certain level of stress, but stress is also the condition of a good long-lasting task-performance. The danger is of course when the somatic subject overdoes itself, turning achievement into suffering. Williams and Cooper (2002: 47) warn us:

in the same way that stress undermines employee's ability to think creatively, make good decisions, deliver quality and so on, so it drastically reduces ability and motivation to perform to a high standard.

Consequently, a good performance relies on finding the exact point where the somatic subject works in a creative and empowering way. Indeed, it must always be remembered that stress 'can be a major stimulus for personal growth and development and therefore increases the chances of people feeling fulfilled in their work' (2002: 37). The convergence between self-fulfillment and performance reaches its peak in what Williams and Cooper call 'the stretch zone' (2002: 48).

In fact, the book works with a continuum arguing that there is an unquestionable relationship between the level of stress and performance (2002: 48). At the start of the continuum there is a 'boredom zone' where a minimum of stress equals a low level of performance. Next there is a 'comfort zone' characterized with average level of stress and average performance. This zone is followed by 'the stretch zone' with the highest level of performance moving just on the border of maximum level of stress. Next is 'the strain zone' where performance starts falling



while stress increases. The continuum ends with a 'panic zone' where a maximum level of stress creates no performance at all. 'The stretch zone', then, is the point before stress turns into suffering and low performance. In other words, it is where the right amount of stress results in the highest level of performance. Moreover, it is also the zone where personal growth is at its maximum. Without pressure or any stress at all there are low performance, boredom and rust-out (2002: 48).

In the first zone of the continuum both self-fulfillment and creativity are low. The normal zone is 'the comfort zone'. This is where 'we're comfortable with our ability to cope with' our stress. The stretch zone is 'where we're being pushed beyond our comfort level', but as the book continues, it is also here in the midst of extended borders and moving limits that we 'find additional resource and meet the challenge, so performance tends to increase'. Beyond this zone, 'we're just about managing but we realise we're really not coping too well. We have moved into the strain zone' (2002: 48). And if, we are caught for too long in this zone, we move into 'the panic zone' and break-down mentally, physically, and economically. 'The stretch zone', then, is where we become fitter, happier, and more productive. Unfortunately, always being in 'the stretch zone' is not an option. In fact, we only become fitter, happier, and more productive if we counterbalance time spent in the stretch zone with time in the comfort zone. This rhythm between comfort and stretch is what makes us able to stay away from situations where energy is depleted. Such situations eventually slow 'productivity and performance – despite attempts by the individual to maintain their output' (2002: 48).

Indeed, it follows from this continuum of stress and performance that stress and coping with stress is not a matter of pure will-power. To cope well with stress demands that the employees know that they have limits. Without this knowledge they become ill, unhappy, and inefficient. In short, good self-management involves

knowing our stress-limits and working to stretch these limits by expanding our ability to cope.

And according to the book coping, indeed, matters a great deal. The difference between achievement (stretching) and suffering (strain) is always mediated by the individual's capacity to cope and this capacity must always be developed.

The better and more varied our coping mechanisms, the larger the counterbalancing force pushing the pointer toward the positive of the scale. Good coping generates an additional benefit; as the better we cope, the more we feel in control and the higher our self-esteem. This, in turn, produces a positive feed-back loop in which better coping leads to raised self-esteem, which is itself another coping skill – a virtuous circle of effective pressure management (2002: 7)

So, good coping means better performance. But to achieve good coping also demands that we broaden our ability to manage pressure and stress. Sustainable coping demands that employees seek out stress because 'the more we do, the more we are capable of doing' (2002: 7). Stress must be sought for us to learn to cope with it. But from an organizational-level this presents a precarious situation because 'we all have different ways of coping', different comfort zones and stretch zones, different breaking points and panic zones (2002: 8). Stress is a matter of individual biography and all employees will have different life experiences.

### **Stress-management tools in *Managing Workplace Stress***

This individual aspect means that managers cannot rely on generic solutions to stress:

organisational stress does not exist in the equipment, plant and the machinery... Stress resides in the people. It therefore follows that you cannot measure organisational stress without getting into the level of individual detail... there are a number of ways that you can do this. But they all distil down into one of two approaches: you can ask them face-to-face or you can give feedback via a questionnaire. (2002: 55)

Stress cannot be solved as a structural problem as 'the stress reaction is too personal and the individual perception of pressure too variable to be able to make assumptions about the nature and extent of the problem' (2002: 55).

Furthermore, it has to be remembered that 'one's personal job autonomy is another person's role ambiguity' (2002: 56).

The tools available to the manager are, therefore, tools that function as technologies of visualization and training. These technologies are designed to help the employees to visualize their unique zones of comfort, stretch, and strain, and to train them to expand these zones. We can consequently talk of an interaction between the commitment and coping machine. These tools work as aids that will make the individual employees better at not only knowing but also managing the forces of their passion (subjectivity and commitment) and pain (somatic subject and coping). These interactions are even more clear in the stress-management books *Stress for Success* and *The Power of Full Engagement*.

### ***Stress for Success***

Loehr's *Stress for Success* (1997) focuses on stress as both a motor of passion and pain. The back-cover promises to teach its reader 'how to get revved up by stress instead of fatigued by and anxious from it'.

#### **The somatic subject and coping processes in *Stress for Success*.**

As in *Managing Workplace Stress*, *Stress for Success* emphasizes stress and the somatic subject of achievement. There is something in our body that makes us grow and diminish. Indeed, stress is not all bad, in fact: 'Stress of all kinds – physical, mental, and emotional – is good for you' (Loehr 1997: 4). However, Loehr cautions us to discern between stress-exposure and stress-response. Stress-exposure is 'the most powerful stimulus for growth in life' it 'expands stress capacity' (1997: 4). The real danger is how you 'response to that exposure' (1997: 4). In short, how do you appraise and cope with stress-exposures. Stress, then, is not only a motor of achievement but also of suffering especially if we respond to or cope with the exposures of stress in the wrong way. Here it is important to remember that 'emotions run the show' and that emotions are influenced by physiology (1997: 50). In other words, the somatic subject determines emotions. But it is possible, according to *Stress for Success*, to learn to manage emotions thus

making 'every cell in your body drive toward the emotional target' (Loehr 1997: 47). The somatic subject can only be controlled through new and better coping abilities. Controlling 'emotion is to control physiology, which in turn enables us to control our body's response to the world' (1997: 51). *Stress for Success* in fact makes clear that stress is not just in your head, not just a psychological phenomenon. Following the tradition from Selye and Cannon, Loehr understands stress as a bodily activity connected to the fight or flight response that makes us perform well but, conversely, this response is what is 'tearing us apart today' (1997: 52). According to Loehr stress is connected to a certain hormonal mechanism in our body. It is a mechanism that impacts our emotional responses. Still this mechanism can be dealt with by mixing stress and recovery in a healthy balance (1997: 52). 'Indeed maximizing productivity, health, and happiness demands that we get control of many of our primitive emotional urges' (1997: 56) By building better stress-capacities we can deal with this subject within us in productive ways. So Loehr also follows the tradition from Lazarus. He explains that these capacities are best achieved by knowing how emotions run the show, which emotional responses you, as a stressed subject, possess, and by learning to redirect these emotions. In short 'your goal is to gain greater insight into your feelings so that you can exert more control over them' (1997: 20).

Stress, then, is both a positive and negative energy that is highly influenced by the way we respond emotionally. In other words, how we appraise and cope with a given situation. The teaching of *Stress for Success* can be summarized in the following way:

Getting control of our personal chemistry, getting control of emotion, and getting control of stress are all one and the same. The hand that's dealt to you daily at the office, and the number and kind of stressors that flow in and out of your corporate life are not the determinants of your stress level. Plain and simple, your body's internal response dictates everything. Your unique biochemical response to the stressors you face day in and day out at the office will ultimately dictate the way in which stress will impact your happiness, health, and productivity ... The good news is that the stress response is highly modifiable ... *Perception dictates chemistry*. Change

perception and the chemistry changes ... As we learned earlier in this book rituals ... can be effectively used to change perception and emotional response. (1997: 149)

Stress is a biochemical process that impacts happiness, health, and productivity. But this process is intertwined with a somatic subject. It can be modified through appraisals and changes in emotional responses. The right forms of coping will help us achieve happiness, health, and productivity. Such coping is best reached through rituals.

### **Stress-management tools in *Stress for Success***

As in *Managing Workplace Stress* the technologies proposed by Loehr allow emotional insight and makes stress manageable. In other words, they are tools of visualization and training. Training is by far the most important according to the Loehr. His book is, in fact, based on a 30-day training program. 30 days because this is 'the amount of time it typically takes to form new habits and to begin to see and feel positive results' (1997: 6) and, as it is emphasized, 'the payoff is dramatic and real; you will reach new frontiers of productivity, health, and happiness' (1997: 9).

Accordingly habits or rituals are what will make it possible to achieve the three most important insights of *Stress for Success*. First of all, rituals help us access the underlying physiology of stress and recovery'. They can help control the somatic subject and coping processes that underlie specific emotional responses (1997: 68). Secondly, 'rituals help us shift gears, to oscillate between stress and recovery, and to alter the rhythm of our day' (1997: 68). They help us to achieve the dynamic balance between stress-exposure and stress-relieve. And finally, 'rituals make it possible to get stress exposure every day by insuring positive habits and pockets of down-time. And it is exposure that makes happiness, productivity and health increase' (1997: 27).

The habits or rituals of success highlight the importance of

repetition of the right physical, mental and emotional habits eventually bring them under automatic control. Conscious awareness and targeted energy expenditure will gradually give way to automatic rituals of eating, sleeping, resting, stretching, exercising, thinking, planning, acting, recovering, and wave making – all of which will keep you in balance... Once you learn how to anchor these rituals, your health, happiness, and performance quotients will rise to new levels (1997:67).

The importance of habits is even more emphasized in Loehr's follow up book with Schwartz, *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal*.

### ***The Power of Full Engagement***

Much like *Stress for Success*, the main assumption in *The Power of Full Engagement* is the importance of a rhythmic oscillation between seeking stress and avoiding stress. Living 'highly linear lives', i.e. lives in the same pace and with the same intensity means

spending far more energy than we recover or recovering more than we spend – the eventual consequence is that we break down, burn out, atrophy, lose our passion, get sick and even die prematurely. Sadly, the need for recovery is often viewed as evidence of weakness rather than as an integral aspect of sustained performance (Loehr & Schwartz 2003: 12).

Therefore, the book continues, it must be maintained that: 'The richest, happiest and most productive lives are characterized by the ability to fully engage in the challenge at hand, but also to disengage periodically and seek renewal' (2003: 12).

### **The somatic subject and coping processes in *The Power of Full Engagement***

Full engagement, then, means getting rid of the old paradigm of self-management and starting a new one. The book highlights the following important features of these paradigms.

## THE POWER OF FULL ENGAGEMENT (2003: 7)

### **Old paradigm**

Manage time  
Avoid stress  
Life is a marathon  
Downtime is wasted time  
Rewards fuel performance  
Self-discipline rules  
The power of positive thinking

### **New Paradigm**

Manage energy  
Seek stress  
Life is a series of sprints  
Downtime is productive time  
Purpose fuels performance  
Rituals rule  
The power of full engagement

In the old paradigm stress is solely considered an internal productivity-limit that should to be known. The key to success is here will-power, self-discipline, and time-management. In the new paradigm, stress intertwines with a somatic subject that must be controlled. Stress is more than an internal limit in this paradigm. It is a condition for great achievement. However, it is only possible to grow from stress if one starts building downtime into one's everyday life, which on its part demands attaining habits and rituals and not just a high level of will-power and self-discipline. The key to lasting success is managing energy. Lasting performance, health, and happiness means oscillating between seeking stress and having breaks. Indeed, success is reached in sprints. However, the breaks between sprints must be built around habits. Put another way, breaks depend on habits. Energy is refueled during such breaks because we do not have to think about what to do in the break but rely upon habits. Thus habits are more important than will-power in this new paradigm.

The key in this new paradigm can accordingly be found in four principles. First of all, that the human being is a creature of energy. Self-management is therefore management of the energy that makes up who we are and what we can do (2003: 9). Secondly, energy diminishes both with over-use and under-use. Energy expenditure must be balanced with energy renewal. Life must be lived in a series

of sprints: 'fully engaging for periods of time, and then fully disengaging and seeking renewal before jumping back into the fray to face whatever challenges confront us' (2003: 12). Thirdly, we must push normal limits of the body, emotions, and the rigor of our cognitive appraisals to build better capacities. We much seek stress as stress 'is not the enemy in our lives...it is the key to growth' (2003: 13). To build capacities we must stress our current ones. Finally, rituals and routines are the 'key to full engagement and sustained high performance'. It is rituals that guarantee recover. They free up energy because they create pockets of downtime. Sustaining high levels of energy 'despite an extremely demanding job' becomes possible if you 'have predictable ways of insuring that you get intermittent recovery' (2003: 15).

### **Stress-management technologies in *The Power of Full Engagement***

It follows from this that building habits are all important to attend the rhythmic balance between stress-exposure and stress-recovery. Yet the balance demands that we perpetually change and widen the limits of our capacities and we need tools to achieve this. The book thus describes a way to build individualized habits in our every day life that will 'provide a level of comfort, continuity and security that frees us to improvise and to take risks... rituals provide a stable framework in which creative breakthroughs often occur (2003: 170). Such rituals might be when to wake up, when to work, when to take a break. They may direct to eat healthy snacks or to do something new. However, to find the right habits demands that we scrutinize how our life looks like right now. What are our passions? What makes us tic? and most importantly, what kind of semi-conscious (appraisal/coping) and even pre-conscious (hormonal production) habits are parts of our current way of life? Because 'we are creatures of habit. Most of what we do is automatic and nonconscious' (2003: 14). Real success in achieving a fitter, happier, and more productive life is thus to be found in these semi-conscious and pre-conscious habits. Visualization of them is the first step but this must be followed by creating new and better habits and rituals.



To summarize, a lasting performance always demands a dynamic balance between engagement and disengagement governed by rituals. However, rituals themselves must nonetheless be scrutinized. Rituals help us 'insure an effective balance between energy expenditure and energy renewal in the service of engagement' and 'the more scheduled and systematic these rituals ... become, the more renewal they provide' (2003: 170). Rituals structure lives in an effort to make these lives more happy, healthy, and productive. Still, these rituals must be kept alive, they must be vibrant, or they can become sources of 'diminished passion and productivity' (2003: 173). Thus habits and rituals must also be open to change.

### Managing pathos: From one to two zones of indiscernability

What is interesting about these programs, rituals and their understanding of stress is that both their function and purpose is to indirectly access and regulate the pre-individual forces that constituted the perceptual, affective and sensible functions of the individual employee. It is the desires, dreams, and aspirations as well as the coping-abilities, somatic reactions-pattern, and non-conscious habits that are the subjects of regulation here. Moreover, these forces are best accessed by making the employee responsible for managing them. Through the aid of technologies of empowerment and training such as feedback mechanism and stress-management programs, which focus on habit, rest, and self-transgression, the employee must learn to mould these forces into semi-conscious and pre-conscious processes that belong to them. They must form them into something they can deal with if not directly through will-power and self-discipline then indirectly through visualizations, habits, and self-transgressions. Thus, to be a fitter, happier, more productive employee is to draw on this reserve of affective, perceptual, somatic and sensual qualities without triggering negative qualities such as letting the subject of suffering take over from the subject of achievement, having poor coping abilities, feeling despair and anxiety, or allowing passion to turn into pain.

Through programs and advice such as the ones outlined in *Managing Workplace Stress*, *Full Engagement* and *Stress for Success* the employee is, in this way, invited and expected to know the truth about its shortcomings and fix them. Knowing and dealing with these shortcoming is a mean to becoming a more productive resource capable of coping with the risks and challenges of its passions and bodily chemistry. Because here, in the very intersection between the coping and commitment machine, the employees' passion that might turn into despair, anxiety, and other forms of distress, taxing the employee and making them stressed. The best way to deal with the imminent risk of this shift is by hand of the employee itself. As stress is a function of individual biography dealing with it demands that the employees themselves take a hold of their emotional and even hormonal life. Following Johnsen (2008) we can thus speak of the somatic subject that is indirectly managed in the coping or the self-management of passion and pain as a prerequisite for another balance between organizational performance and the self-transgressive balance in the individual. Stress is a matter of both self-fulfillment and productivity. Not just because stress serves an internal break-down limit, the very point where passion turn into pain and high performance into low performance, but because stress itself becomes a condition for lasting passion and high performance. As *Stress for Success* aptly puts it: 'the storms of business are always brewing and raging, and what works today may not work tomorrow' (Loehr 1997:25). So

the only way to survive- and thrive – in today's workplace is *not to ret rid of stress but to deepen your capacity to handle stress*. That can only happen by exposing yourself to new levels of stress, developing a new response to stress, and establishing a very special kind of mental, physical, and emotional balance (1997: 17).

When the two machines of commitment and coping are combined, a certain mode of existence emerges that presupposes a balance between enjoyment and commitment and various ways of distancing from commitment. This balance is best achieved if the employee maintains a life outside of work and possesses the ability to create a dynamic equilibrium between seeking stress and recovering

from stress. In fact, we can thus talk about the monadic features and nomadic features of the employee being even more intensified with stress-management. The employees express their own level of stress in the same way that they express their organizational performance through their subjectivity. Put another way, what stresses the individual employees about their performance is already deeply intertwined with who they are. Stress might problematize the zone of indiscernability, discussed in Part Two, but it also reproduces it in so far as dealing with the fold between productivity and subjectivity demands a refolding of this fold. In fact, the nomadic features became all important here. Stress might arise in the zone of indiscernability but dealing with stress is an individual matter that has to be dealt with by reconstruing the zone of indiscernability in new ways. Moreover, stress not only serves as the limit of a current manifestation of such a zone but stress itself is also a motor in the new manifestation. Dealing with stress is itself a monadic enterprise that focuses on the individual biography of the employee (its somatic subject and its coping processes). But it is also a nomadic enterprise because coping with stress focuses on the ability of changing to which ways the somatic subject of achievement is brought forth at the expense of the somatic subject of suffering. Moreover, the subject of achievement is only found by being more than one's currently is. In fact, without being more than you currently are, without being on the move, you will never achieve the abilities to deal with the stress of business life. It is a matter of always developing into something more, something better, more efficient and more passionate. And all this demands different spheres of lives and the ability to connect and disconnect when needed. Indeed, the rhythmic balance between passion and pain is a way to regulate and reproduce the indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity. In the rhythmic balance, stress is the source of passion as well as pain. In fact, stress acts as the stimulus for growth and as an internal limit that should only be transgressed if followed by disengagement and strategic recovery. As *Stress for Success*, *The Power of Full engagement* and *Managing Workplace Stress* all make clear the question is not to avoid stress, but to use it in a productive way.

To use stress in the effort to become fitter, happier, and more productive highlights the importance for the employee to manage what the ancient Greeks called *pathos*, which means both the state of being an object for oneself in the shape of *pain* and to be the object for the world in the shape of a *passionate* experience. When we are passionate or enjoy ourselves, we are in the power of something else, we are inspired, motivated, and driven to the border of what we can do. We transform and develop who we are. It is this passion that becomes the driving force in successful self-management. Without passion, personal subjectivity is not invested into the production-process. Self-fulfillment and organizational performance demand emotional and mental flexibility and urge that limits are crossed. However, this necessity of passion might result in pain. The discomfort and doubt that is also part of the energy expansion and self-transgression might turn into despair and pain. Our capacities are not just at the border of what we can do. They are slowly diminishing. We become too stressed.

What these machines of commitment and coping present us with is thus an employee that must try to find and control its passion in ways that do not cause suffering but the employee must do this with the knowledge that any balance between health, happiness, and productivity is a dynamic balance. They prescribe that going 'to the next level of performance means going to the next level of happiness and health as well' (Loehr 1997: 5). In this way balancing 'the stress in your life with equal doses of recovery' (Loehr 1997: 22) is a matter of rhythmical oscillation that can, in fact, cultivate further personal growth and, consequently, performance (Loehr & Schwartz 2003: 182). Indeed, moving in waves becomes all important for the fitter, happier, and more productive life. As Loehr (1997: 154) puts it:

Get moving. Go. Get after it. Fight on. Hang in. Pump up. Keep smiling. Engage and connect. Be there. Then disconnect. Shut down. Refuel and heal to the next battle.

Attaining this oscillation thus demands that employees manage a zone of indiscernability between passion and pain. Without some pain there is no growth, no next stage, no renewed passion. 'If you didn't experience any discomfort today, chances are that you didn't grow any' (Loehr 1997: 151). You have to be nomadic. Some stress can help you. But too much stress undermines this self-transgression and may result in a break-down. The employees must know their own somatic subject and control it to the degree that it stays on the side of achievement and not suffering. Life itself must become a strategic enterprise. If it is not managed in a dynamic way, we are not only alienated from ourselves and governed by negative emotions, but, we are also considered to be in the risk of falling ill and of being labeled inefficient employees. Stress, in this way, is the promise of an insight into both our subjectivity and our everyday working life. But it is a promise that is always actualized on the inside of the employee. The relationship between stress and self-management not only turns problematics concerning the organization of an indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity into a matter of potential individual stress-problems, it also makes stress itself a vital element in the quest to reactivate this zone. Good self-managing employees are always already stress-managing themselves. And the organization delivers advice and technologies to assist this effort. Indeed, both performance management technologies, as discussed in chapter eleven, and self-management technologies such as full engagement program, discussed in this chapter, focus on the same thing. Companies' employ such management-technologies to make their employees better able to tap into, deal with, or even mould these pre-individual forces of commitment and coping into something that belongs to them. What the coping-machine does, therefore, is, first of all, follow the potential break-downs in the flow of commitment composing the zone of indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity. Secondly, it inscribes and enrolls these pre-individual break-downs into questions of semi-conscious and pre-conscious components that make up the stressed subject. Thirdly, it produces the employee as responsible for managing the semi-conscious processes of passion, appraisal and coping and the

pre-conscious processes of hormones and fight or flight. The stress-fit self-managing employee knows its passions, its somatic subject, its tendencies to appraise, and always expands its ability to cope.

This world of work, which demands self-managing employees, might have stress as an omnipresent threat, but the way to handle this distress 'can be reduced to a series of technical decisions based on the allocation of personal resources' (Brown 2005: 234). In this way stress issues and the coping strategies of individuals are themselves produced as an individual responsibility for maximizing one's own productivity as a stress-fit self-managing employee. But this responsibility is in itself not produced outside any organizational intervention. In other words, it is not because of a conscious choice made by the organization that productivity and stress becomes the employees' responsibility. As showed, it is in fact through the very self-management and stress-management technologies offered by organizations, originally designed to help the employees, that this individual responsibility emerges. Individualizing occupational stress thus happens through collective means, not because there is a lack of them. Or even more precise, the stress-fit self-managing employee is produced through social machines using collective technologies of visualization and training as ways of assuring a regulation of this production. In this machinery, collective responsibility for stress among self-managing employees can only take place by aiding the employees in the effort to become individually responsible for their productivity, health, and happiness. So in the production taking place between the machines of commitment and coping, posing problems of stress in other ways than through the individual, becomes impossible. The pre-individual production of the zone of indiscernability between productivity and subjectivity is regulated by making the employee the subject that deals with its own subjectivity as a matter of productivity, health and happiness. And dealing here includes making the semi-conscious (such as tacit knowledge, passions, appraisal tendencies and coping-mechanism) and pre-conscious processes (fight or flight and hormone production)

that runs through the employee as an object of self-management. Indeed, when production comes to rely on subjectivity and stress is considered a condition of performance and break-down, it is the very production and reproduction of a zone of indiscernability that becomes all important. And this zone implies that the organization is enfolded in the employee thus making the employee itself the site of production and management. In the end, it is through the individual itself organizational problems of productivity and existential problems of passion, pain, and distress are posed.

In this chapter I thus tried to show three things. Firstly, how stress intensifies the production of the employee-subject as a fitter, happier, and more productive employee. Secondly, how the employee-subject becomes responsible for being and attaining itself as this stress-fit self-managing subject. Finally, how this production of individual responsibility must first and foremost be understood from the level of the pre-individual machinic production of coping and commitment. Such machines not only tap into the pre-individual flow of desire to produce a zone of indiscernability between employees' subjectivity and productivity, they also make the employees' themselves responsible for maintaining this zone. This is done by producing the employee as a subject that are composed of semi-conscious processes such as tacit knowledge, passions, appraisal tendencies and coping-mechanism and pre-conscious processes such as hormonal productions. Moreover, the employee-subject is expected to be able to manage these processes by attaining productive habits and by always transgressing current manifestations of their corporate or working self. To tap into the pre-individual flows in a productive way means being yourself in a productive way (monadic) and knowing that being yourself demands that you are always on the limit of yourself (nomadic).

## CONCLUSION

In 1966, Timothy Leary controversially encouraged a whole generation to “turn on, tune in, and drop out”. “Tune in” he said, ‘meant interact harmoniously with the world around you - externalize, materialize, express your new internal perspectives’; while “drop out” meant self-reliance, a discovery of one’s singularity, a commitment to mobility, choice, and change’ (Leary 1983: 2). Today, the coping machine produces a mode of existence grounded in the ever-present anxiety that the production of commitment can bring about.

In this thesis I have showed how contemporary management technologies, such as performance management, work as part of a commitment-machine tapping into the pre-individual economy of desire that constitutes the employees as subjects. In this machinic connection it is the employee-monad and its capacity for change, or being nomadic, that constitutes the production-factor. In other words, for the organization to perform well it must rely on the ability of its employees to express the worlds and stakes of the organization through their subjectivity. Furthermore it must encourage its employees to develop their ability to express these worlds in new ways. In contrast, Whyte’s organization man conceived success and failure as a matter of overlap between personal values and organizational values (Whyte 1956). Employees were expected to adapt their values to those of the organization. With this new employee-monad/nomad the success and failure of employee performance is an ever greater personal problem. Any performance problem is something that must be managed at an existential level and any existential problem is already a performance problem. The organizational imperative is, therefore, no longer to realize oneself through a fixed norm. Rather it is to set your own original norm and be accountable for it on both a professional and a personal level. Thus, the conflicts and problems of the task at hand are always already internalized or folded into the employee subjectivity. The commitment-machine produces a zone of indiscernability between subjectivity and productivity that makes the regulation and maintenance of this zone a



question of self-management. Everything happens and must be handled on the inside when health, happiness, and productivity become intertwined.

So one might think that the internal contradictions, ruptures, and paradoxes that the commitment machine produces would make the machinery, which produces the zone of indiscernability and regulates its distribution and circulation through technologies designed to aid the employees in their self-management, breakdown. In fact, it does. But the machinery also reconstitutes itself in this breakdown. Both the world that insists upon full commitment and the world that differentiates commitment between work and home, self and work, can exist. Both are productive within the machinery. This impossibility between a life fully committed to the world of work and a life that always makes room for more than work feeds the machine, making it possible for it to expand once more, to multiply itself by introducing new management-technologies such as stress-management programs that produce the employee in new ways. According to these technologies it is the employee that must reflect upon how these diverging worlds are actualized within the same world: the employee's world. In short, you must show commitment; but you must divide your commitments between your work-life and home-life. You must be something more than your corporate self. In fact, in the end, it is this *more than* that guarantees a sustainable zone of indiscernability between the employee subjectivity and organizational productivity.

These competing expectations of commitment towards work and non-work, combined with the fact that in the zone of indiscernability it has become hard to discern whether 'expectation' is that of the employee or the organization, can create confusion, frustration, and even feelings of shame for the individual employee. Management-technologies such as Performance Management and the unsettled demands and expectations produced by them can lead to anxiety within the employee. These technologies regulate the employee not by presenting actual predicates but by presenting virtual ones that the employees must actualize in

their own way. On a virtual level, these predicates might diverge, as in the case of having work-life balance while also committing fully to the world of the organization. But on an actual level they must be handled so as to converge. What these technologies encourage and control is this folding of the organization and the employee. This is done by turning the employee into a site where different worlds are played against each other.

However, this organizational play between worlds in the individual employees does not mean that emerging problems are treated as an effect of the pre-individual and social organizing processes that produce zones of indiscernability or folds between the organization and the employees. Rather, it is treated exactly as something the employee must learn to cope with. It is a self-management problem that the autonomous individual is presented with, not an effect of a machinic production and regulation of desire. This is the reproductive repetition of the machine and is made possible by the fact that the production of indiscernabilities entails that the employees are the site of positive and negative production. So problems, especially stress-problems, must be dealt with on this site. From a machinic perspective this means that stress is a part of the production-process that yields indiscernability. Stress acts as the mode wherein the problems and solutions of the production of commitment are articulated. When problems at the work-place are articulated in this language, the problems, paradoxes, and anxieties in contemporary work-life are shaped and coded into problems of individual coping. The coping-machine acts as a medium through which the problems of commitment are posed. When the flows of adverse affects referred to as stress are connected with this machine, stress becomes a way of intensifying the production of the self-managing subject at work within the commitment machine and not something that tempers the underlying dynamics of these processes. Just as the possible worlds produced in the flows of commitment are regulated by making the employee responsible for optimizing its happiness and productivity, coping with stress regulates the dysfunctions that the commitment machine's production, distribution, and regulated circulation of

possible worlds bring about. The machinery is kick-started once again. We can see this intensification of self-management at work as a matter of the stressed employee's ability to cope and deal with the somatic subject working within it. The coping machine produces stress as an individual problem that can only be handled by continuously reworking one's relationship to oneself. The stressed employee must know and reinforce its own power of resistance towards stress, i.e., its coping abilities. The problematizing of stress is sustained by the different stress management technologies used to help the employee know the truth about one's choices, passions and values in life. These tools not only pinpoint and map out potential zones of risk but also the individual's ability to cope with these risks in a positive manner. There is an implicit message in all this that is rarely lost on the employee, namely, that by knowing what we want and lack, we are empowered to act (Harkness et al 2005: 124). Put another way, through the aid of stress-management technologies the employee is expected to access and modulate the pre-conscious and semi-conscious components of its subjectivity as objects of management. These include an employee's tacit knowledge, commitment, enjoyment, cognitive appraisal tendencies, and outdated fight or flight mechanism. All for the sake of its own health and happiness and for the sake of the organizations productivity.

From a machinic perspective, then, the commitment machine turns the pre-individual flows of indiscernability into a matter of employee ability to manage their own subjectivity including the components that makes it up (emotions, tacit knowledge, social competences, ability to begin a new etc.). The coping machine likewise turns problems in sustaining this indiscernability into questions of employees' ability to handle and manage another set of components. Namely, the employee's tendency to appraise, cope and the specific nature of its somatic subject.

The lack of any capacity to cope with the zone of indiscernability that self-management entails is something employees must learn to cope with themselves. In the end, occupational stress is your own responsibility because what you do at work and who you are as a person are enfolded. In fact, stress is both an internal limit to production and a condition for great achievement that the employee must cope with to perform well. After all, the workforce cannot be allowed to burn-out altogether. Indeed, stress, while necessary, natural and even a condition for high performance and personal renewal, must be controlled. In this way 'deal with it', along with 'commit yourself', constitute the overarching slogans of work. They are commands that express and order our bodies, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in specific but not concretely determinable ways. Coping with stress becomes a way of handling dysfunctions within the simultaneous production of productivity and subjectivity. It is a way of not only regulating the overflow of commitment but of intensifying this commitment by kick-starting the injunction to self-manage. The product of this is a mode of existence that organizes the employee's subjectivity as a productive and committed resource alongside the ability of employees to cope with their commitment, managing themselves in the face of the possibility of exhausting themselves.

This mode of existence is, as I have shown, reinforced in the long list of coping technologies that the organization presents for the employee: courses that develop stress-competences, personal stress-coaches, stress-tests every afternoon on your computer, etc. (Cooper & Dewe 2004, Loehr & Schwartz 2003). These tools not only present questionable solutions but also set the standards of being an employee-subject. In fact, they reconnect with the machines of commitment. Not only is the employee expected to cope with impossible worlds as if they were compossible, they also have to cope with the possibility of stress arising from this very coping. Paradoxically, you must commit to the fact that commitment causes stress and, the same time, that a certain level of stress is a sign of commitment. Coping with stress becomes a subtle demand imposed upon the

employee. Be fitter, happier, and more productive. Within this mode of existence options need to be kept open and indeed when personal touch and self-transgression is necessary for profit-making then commitment becomes a risk that may lead to personal as well as organizational failure. Having an opportunistic interest in everything and preparing for everything becomes all important, both for being one's own self and being a good resource for the organization. At the same time the employee needs to establish a distance from issues at work in order not to get too stressed. In the zone of indiscernability between the subjectivity of the employee and the value-production of the organization, coping, then, demands active self-management of *pathos*. Employees must show their passion for both their own personal change as well as organizational change. However, in the passionate relationship they must also actively set a limit for this passion. Otherwise, passion results in unfocused change, no change, lack of control and, in the end, lower productivity.

In short, to cope is to manage your *pathos* for the sake of yourself and your organization. We must 'work' on our personal relationship, 'work' for a better work-life balance and 'work' out what our 'real' values in life are. As *Stress for Success* makes clear working with your emotional responses is not only important for health reasons but also for the sake of your own happiness and performance. In fact, 'maximizing productivity, health, and happiness demands that we get control of many of our primitive emotional urges' (Loehr 1997: 56). And as Loehr's follow-up book *The Power of Full Engagement* makes clear, the key to attaining this marriage between high performance and personal renewal is learning to manage energy, not time, to make downtime productive time and to live life in a series of sprints (Loehr & Schwartz 2003: 6). By promoting coping as a way of solving commitment issues, employees are both demanded to reaffirm the commitment machinery they are part of and to internalize any problems within this machinery as an individual inability and responsibility. The further implication being that any discussion of the legitimacy of the commitment and coping

machinery becomes avoided: for who wouldn't desire to be *fitter, happier, more productive?*

A stressed employee, then, is not regarded an organizational effect of the zones of indiscernability, which are produced through the incitements of personal commitment and regulated through the management technologies, but as a sign of a personal dysfunction within the production of these zones that must be corrected by intensifying these zones. Stress is important for growth and high performance. But too much stress betrays a problem in one's self-management. This is something one has to work on. The solution to the problem is restarting the machine by applying therapeutic and individual solutions to a dysfunctionality taking place at a pre-individual level. This, of course, does not make the problems of frustration and anxiety go away. It only presents new ways of being frustrated. One is now stressed about coping with one's stress alone.

The question, then, is how do we cope with these machines of coping and commitment? When work has folded itself into the very ontological fabric that constitutes our life, how do we turn the problematics of the zone of indiscernability into something more than a matter of personal self-management? One way might be the one just presented. Mapping out the machinery we are immersed in, finding its ontological logic of production and understanding the possibility and limits of this logic. Being better aware of this pre-individual machinery we are connected to when discussing occupational stress within self-management is the first step in any effort to 'cope' with them. The machinery outlined here works well because they work directly in the pre-individual components that compose our subjectivity. They work well because they tap into our pre-verbal desires and fears. They function so smoothly because they thrive on our fantasies of being more than 'what meets the eye', more than we currently express in our actions, words, and thoughts. And they reproduce themselves again and again because the machines at work here both make room for these pre-

individual desires and fears while producing an employee-subject expected to tap into, mould, and manage these desires and fears for the sake of themselves and their organization.

Primarily what is required, then, is, as this thesis has tried to outline, not an 'instruction but invitation, not a directive but an opening...not solutions but problems' (May 2005: 172). Indeed, critique of stress and self-management can only be strengthened by understanding and enhancing the processes we are immersed in when part of these machines instead of just reducing the discussion to questions of individual responsibility or unjust organizational demands. In fact, as Deleuze (1994: 139) puts it 'the conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same'. The critique is not first to outline a machinery and then to show a way out of it. It is the act of amplifying aspects of self-management and stress as they are discussed and presented in different contexts as part of machines, which is the critique.

Criticism, then, is not performed by construing machines as entities we then critique. This would turn criticism into a dimension of representation (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 47). The critique of the social machines of coping and commitment is their extraction from the social representations and effects they produce. It is a matter of intensifying certain aspects of the machines not in an attempt to escape these machines but to make the representations and effects they produce take flight themselves. It is never a matter of finding a way out of the machinery but of unfolding the machines already at work. Exposing and dealing with these machines always takes place through an act of creation that intensifies their fits and sparks. Today in self-management the machines of commitment and coping might produce us as a fitter, happier, and more productive subject. But this machinic production that unleashes and confines our subjectivity depends on an extremely unstable and pre-individual force called desire. Tapping into this force always imply that the foundation of these machine are always vulnerable and

fragile, or as Deleuze might put it: we do not know yet what we are capable of as this fitter, happier, more productive employee, we do not know were the desire that animates the machines of commitment and coping might bring us, so we must tune in, breakdown, and reboot to find out.



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