ephemera

critical dialogues on organization

volume 4, number 1 (february 2004)

editorial

reviews

Handle with Care

Campbell Jones and Steffen Böhm

> Renan's hope for 'the future of science'…is of no consequence because *W*oman [La *femme*] doesn't exist. But the fact that she doesn't ex-sist doesn't stop me from making her the object of one's desire. Quite the opposite, whence the consequences. (Jacques Lacan, *Television*)

> Lacan's notorious proposition 'woman does not exist' has sacrificed its meaning to a certain shock value. The proposition's notoriety has blocked serious efforts to understand what is actually shocking about it: its reliance on a definition of being as plural and partial, as small objects of the drive. (Joan Copjec, *Imagine There's no Woman*)

'Organization Studies Does Not Exist'

Given all that talk of paradigm proliferation, pluralism and other apparent open-mindedness, you might have thought that Lacan had the perfect slogan to explain the fundamental gap that organization theorists continually encounter. The fact that, on one side of the divide, certain managerial writers continually confront a world that is fraught with division, conflict, resistance, and so forth, while on the other side so-called critical writers fail to understand why it is that their managerial enemies are unable to theorise conflict.

Following Lacan, this deadlock is not so much an 'error' as it is the recognition of the nature of the Thing. This experience of rubbing up against the Real is, he suggests, a quite normal experience. And the Real is not something which the managerialists fail to see while the critics see it clearly. Perhaps the Real is the very impasse that holds them at odds with one another, forever unable to communicate with one another. Both deluded by the strange suggestion that they might actually be talking about the same thing.

In this respect Burrell and Morgan (1979), and later Morgan (1986), far from being perspectival or relativistic, as has been suggested (e.g. Thompson, 1993), fail to take their perspectivalism to its logical, that is, radical conclusion. They glimpse something which is undeniable, and which is after all a commonplace today. In brief, *we all see organization differently*. But here they stop and recoil from the horror that there might be a gaping hole staring them in the face – a hole they are unable to theorise. This gaping hole is the point at which they stop, and rush to pile up theory upon theory,

perspective on perspective. But this theoretical gesture hides a deeper fear of actually confronting the thing that is perhaps most in need of theoretical reflection, which is, that the very thing they hope to speak of has reached the point of no return. After Burrell and Morgan, and others, had opened it up, organization studies was burst asunder (with a little whimpering here and there as it gasped for its last breath).

Proliferation: Of Cure, Potions, and Poisons

Resuscitation is therefore the only chance, but then we could always engage in denial and invoke a return from the death that we deny has ever taken place. The publishing industry is to blame, obviously. If the publishing industry was content to bury it, it now has no shame in exhumation. Why would the publishing industry concern itself with something so trifling as the demise of the object of scientific inquiry? After all, they know which side their bread is buttered on. So, in recent years they have set about an increasingly ambitious series of publications that would try to collect, once and for all, the state of knowledge about organization. Handbooks, of organization studies. The main advantage of these collections is said to be the efficiency of fitting a wide raft of pieces in the palms of your hands, and hence the title or subtitle of 'handbook'. As such, these handbooks are designed to be carried, used and situated within arms reach, with little fuss or effort. One of the first of these grand publications was Clegg, Hardy and Nord's *Handbook of Organization Studies* (1996), but since then a wave of handbooks has hit the library shelves of academia; almost every publisher with an invested interest in organization studies has included one of these handbooks in their catalogues.

The purpose of this issue of *ephemera* is to critically investigate this publishing phenomenon. Approaching these handbooks, we asked contributors of this issue to consider three possible explanations: First, these handbooks might be the result of the natural and quite benign development of organization studies as it progresses towards maturity and a more refined paradigmatic status (whether refinement equals unity or heterogeneity, it is the same story). Second, these handbooks might represent an imperialist urge to render transparent the totality of a field – in this case 'organization studies' or 'organization theory' – to provide a clear mapping of the lay of the land, one that will be comprehensive, complete and totalising. Third, the emergence of these collections is symptomatic of the political economy of publishing today in which academic books are mainly commissioned in terms of their rate of return from university library sales.

So, the whole issue is a collection of what might be thought of as 'book reviews', although there is perhaps more going on than this. This issue considers this 'handbook' phenomenon in some detail, as a way of getting a grasp on contemporary developments in organization studies and the publishing apparatuses that mediate the formation and legitimation of knowledge. The tenor of the review essays collected here is not traditional in the sense of clearly and sequentially laying out the contents of the handbook (a reverse totalization). Instead, the contributions are more sporadic and diverse in form, offering critical incisions at unexpected points. Like the mayfly that is

the team mascot of the *ephemera* project, the goal will not be one of building another edifice, but one of dropping little bits of poo at carefully chosen spots.

Although we did not want to limit critical scholarly readings of these books by imposing an interpretive grid, we offered our authors some preliminary ideas as triggers for the project that we had in mind, calling into question the procedures of publication that try to put the house of organization studies back into order. These questions included:

1. The question of the meaning of 'reviewing'. Taking on books of this size and apparent magnitude raises all sorts of procedural questions for a reviewer, and perhaps threatens to disrupt traditional expectations (in terms of length, but also of style) of the 'book review';
2. The politics of the publishing industry. This is a complex issue, bringing together issues relating to academic output, library budgets, publisher profitability and the accumulation process more broadly. Noting that, although there is a lot more to this industrial mechanism than this, the price of these handbooks makes them almost exclusively library collections;
3. There is something poignant about the tool-like nature of these books. The very term 'handbook' points to practicality, accessibility, convenience and authority. The abdication of the reader's responsibility for independent thought? All that a reader needs to do for enlightenment is consult the correct section of the helpfully arranged index (if there is one);
4. The tactile phenomenology of these handbooks. From their physical production to the semiology of design, these handbooks convey weightiness and authority. Oddly enough, very few of these handbooks fit in one's hand;
5. The metaphorics of the relation of the 'hand' to the 'book'. Some might note related wordplays: from Heideggerian jokes about tools and hammers, to themes of handiwork and bricolage; from hand-me-downs and the performative instance in which the violated demands to be 'unhanded', to the underhand and strong-handed tactics of contemporary managerial practice;
6. With these handbooks there is often an explicit claim that the said handbook represents the complete 'body' of knowledge of organization. This capturing of a corpus of work reminds us of an organism that has reached its limit, is no longer growing and on the verge of death. The theme of the moribund, rotting flesh and decay persists;
7. Finally, the institution of 'organization studies' as a thing. Thus, there are questions of legitimacy and power to be explored insofar that an implicit narrative of what constitutes 'organization studies' is assumed in any rendering of the field in this way.

Preview

Let us briefly introduce the review essays collected in this issue. First, André Spicer opens the *Blackwell Companion to Organizations*, edited by Baum (2002). After considering a set of problems with the writing genre of the 'review', he identifies 'dividing' as one of the main purposes and outcomes of the publication of handbooks.

Although handbooks give us the impression of laying out the field of organization studies in its totality, they divide and dissect this area of enquiry along specific lines. Spicer does not condemn the act of dividing as such. Instead, he calls for examining and critiquing the specific ways 'dividing' takes place. He shows how Baum's handbook includes and therefore privileges North American managerialists and excludes more critical, European voices. But Spicer also tries to read the *Companion* affirmatively. By using a set of chapters on institutional theory to advise, and intervene in, the anti-capitalist movement – which, in his view, currently faces a set of important organizational dilemmas – as a companion he translates and radicalises his handbook.

In addition to his affirmative translation, Spicer also offers a 'traditional' review of Baum's Handbook, which appears in a footnote. This gesture is perhaps symptomatic about the way the genre of the 'review' is treated in this issue of *ephemera*. Instead of marginalizing the 'review' – reviews are normally short descriptions and evaluations of the contents and argument of a book that appear in distant corners of academic journals, and that are often not recognised by research assessment bodies as 'proper' academic contributions and research output – the 'review' takes centre stage here. The reviews collected in this issue decentre normal academic practices of 'reviewing' and become important contributions in their own right.

In the second review Mark Tadajewski reviews *The Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory*, in which the editors – Tsoukas and Knudsen (2003) – explicitly aim to collect 'meta-theoretical' views of organization theory. Raising questions about the way that debates from the philosophy of science and the paradigm debate are presented, Tadajewski points to the shortcomings of the way Tsoukas and Knudsen theorise and execute their 'meta-theoretical' approach to looking at organization studies. He discusses a range of authors, such as Ritzer, Feyerabend and Kuhn, whose work – who are neglected (but alluded to, as if they were important) by the editors and many authors in this handbook – is regarded by Tadajewski as being essential when outlining the concept of 'meta-theory'.

The next two reviews offer commentaries on two monumental handbook-type collections that span over altogether twelve volumes. First, Peter Fleming engages with Routledge's *Organizational Studies: Critical Perspectives on Business and Management*, edited by the Warwick Organizational Behaviour Staff (2001), and then Campbell Jones takes on Sage's 8-volume-monster *Central Currents in Organization Studies*, edited by Clegg (2002). As Routledge's collection explicitly aims to offer *critical* perspectives on organization studies, Fleming's review is mainly interested in assessing the understanding of critique and the deep pessimism he detects in their way of seeing, or rather not seeing, possibilities of progress. While he acknowledges the importance of being critical about an unquestioned historical progress, he laments the absence of a translation of this historical pessimism into a meaningful political critique that is able to engage effectively into today's conjuncture and see possibilities of how things may genuinely improve and get better. Jones' review is also concerned to evaluate the editorial and political framing of handbooks. Specifically, he is interested in aspects of the production of Clegg's colossal Archive, *Central Currents*. By identifying a series of shortcomings in Clegg's archival activity, Jones raises questions about the economic and political ends of the production of handbooks.

Roy Jacques considers Sorge and Warner's *The IEBM Handbook of Organizational Behaviour* (2000), asking questions from the viewpoint of a practitioner. Suggesting that much of today's academic output is self-indulgent, esoteric and not intended to be usable by people outside academia, he extends some of Spicer's lines regarding the 'using' of handbooks – although their arguments are of course very different in their theory and practice. He revisits the theory/practice debate, drawing attention to the dangers of what he calls the 'great divorce'.

Cliff Oswick reviews a book that does not aim to provide a totalising view of organization studies – or so it seems at first glance. Westwood and Clegg's (2003) *Debating Organization: Point-Counterpoint in Organization Studies* is not explicitly a 'handbook' that shows off its authority by way of an impressive price-tag. Instead, it tries to provide an overview of key themes in organization studies by engaging in *debate*. Although Oswick appreciates some of the goals of Westwood and Clegg, he points to some serious problems of the way that they have framed the question of 'debate'. Instead of genuinely generating polyphonic insights, Oswick argues that the binaristic set-up of the book's debates builds artificial barricades limiting the possibility of dialogue and complimentary understandings.

In the final review in this issue Damian O'Doherty takes us on a fieldtrip through the *Financial Times Handbook of Management: On the State of the Art*, edited by Crainer and Dearlove (2001). Like most other contributions to this review issue, O'Doherty's text is not a 'review' in the traditional sense of this term. Rather, he literally re-views this Handbook; he repeats its textual and visual fragments in order to produce a delirium of a composition – a bricolage of psychedelic dreams of management. O'Doherty reads across the Handbook; he uses it – in a radical way – to produce a new and different text that hopes to reveal the phantasmagoric nature of this managerialist bible. He uses the 'state of the art' and turns it into a new art form, delivering an uncompromising indictment to the *Financial Times*' view of the state of the art, and in doing so, a way of thinking the state of the art quite differently.

references

Baum, J.A.C. (ed.) (2002) *The Blackwell Companion to Organizations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Burrell, G. and G. Morgan (1979) *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis*. London: Heinemann.

Clegg, S. (ed.) (2002) *Central Currents in Organization Studies I & II*, 8 Vols. London: Sage.

Clegg, S., C. Hardy and W. Nord (eds.) (1996) *Handbook of Organization Studies*. London: Sage.

Copjec, J. (2002) *Imagine There's no Woman: Ethics and Sublimation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Crainer, S. and D. Dearlove (eds.) (2001) *Financial Times Handbook of Management: On the State of the Art*, 2nd ed. London: Pearson.

Lacan, J. (1990) *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, trans. D. Hollier, R. Krauss and A. Michelson. London: Norton.

Morgan, G. (1986) *Images of Organization*. London: Sage.

Sorge, A. and M. Warner (eds.) (2000) *The IEBM Handbook of Organizational Behaviour*. Thomson Learning.

Thompson, P. (1993) 'Postmodernism: Fatal distraction', in J. Hassard and M. Parker (eds.) *Postmodernism and Organizations*. London: Sage.

Tsoukas, H. and C. Knudsen (eds.) (2003) *The Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Warwick Organizational Behaviour Staff (eds.) (2001) *Organizational Studies: Critical Perspectives on Business and* Management, 4 Vols. London: Routledge.

Westwood, R. and S. Clegg (eds.) (2003) *Debating Organization: Point-Counterpoint in Organization Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell.

the editors   Campbell Jones was formerly co-editor and is now a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera: critical dialogues on organization*.
E-mail: c.jones@le.ac.uk

Steffen Böhm is the editor-in-chief of *ephemera: critical dialogues on organization* and co-ordinates the activities of the journal's newly established editorial collective.
E-mail: sgbohm@essex.ac.uk

ephemera
| reviews

critical dialogues on organization
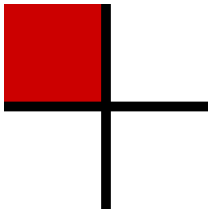
Opening the Companion

André Spicer

Reviewing

Book reviewing is a well-entrenched genre in the social sciences. To review suggests a certain procedure – the reviewer receives a beautiful hard-cover book, they gloat momentarily that they did not have to purchase it themselves, they place it on the shelf for a period of time, they are reminded that you need to finish the review, they read through the book (often taking advantage of points in time where we are not being economically productive such as commuting or spending time with ones partner or family), finally they expound their general understanding of the book in words. If the author feels they have found an ally in an intellectual project, they may enlist the authors help by labelling them 'part of a revolution' in the theory of cola production or an 'intellectual movement' in thinking about genital auto-mutilation. If they feel the work represents part of a cancerous trend in the field, they might attempt to remove the tumour with subtle quips, standard insults, or brutal rhetoric. If they have just been reading *The New York Review of Books*, then they might begin to imagine this book is a launching point for an investigation of issues of great intellectual import (The correlation between military spending and cargo pant consumption, comparative Eastern European pornography). Once they have crafted this nasty piece of work, added a few hooks (for the publishers), and sharp insults (for the authors ego), it is packaged up, posted off, never to consider it again until the off-prints are received.

This practice of distilling the argument of a book does not just happen. It relies on a whole structure of institutions that have negotiated exchange relations based on shared interests in accumulating capital of one kind or another. Publishers provide the latest volume on the evolution of sewerage contracting to ensure it is effectively marketed to the exceedingly tiny niche market of academics and university libraries. The journal accepts and farms it out to a willing author in order to preserve its reputation as being up-to-date with developments in the field. The author accepts the task to contribute to

their collection of books, to force himself to read, perhaps to intervene in a debate about a particular issue, and ultimately score a few RAE points. The printed text becomes a carrier that links these momentarily aligned interests.

The social scientific review has inbuilt assumption about the material. It implies there is a central argument or scheme that can be mined out of the book, dusted off and coherently presented to the audience. It assumes that there is a positive, cohesive content that a reviewer can assess. It also presupposes that the review is in a position to judge statements put forward by the author and rationally arbitrate whether it is a 'critical success' or should be confined to the dust of historical curiosity.

In this peculiar case, the components of a review are out of place. The first misalignment encountered was that the normal practice of reviewing went wrong from the start – it was difficult to sit down in one easy step and swallow Baum's bitter pill. Was this because I was lazy? Had other more pressing projects? Was I suffering from chronic overwork produced by the under-funded English university system? Did I have a personal dislike for the content of the book? All these reasons went through my head, but none were correct. The real reason that my labours had been horribly interrupted was this – I was reviewing a handbook, not a normal monograph. This meant it was a series of loosely connected chapters that are to be read in an un-sequential fashion like a technical manual. If we cast even the most cursory empirical glance over how people actually use handbooks, only in the most deviant cases does it involve a studious and systematically reading the entire text. Instead we bring various chapters to hand as we need them.

The second problem that haunted my reviewing efforts was that interlocking interests seemed to be broken – the informal contact did not require a resounding recommendation of the book to people who might go out and buy it. As the joys of evolutionary theories of the firm unfolded, I became aware of some serious breaks between personal interests (free book, writing an article), the interests of the journal (material to publish) and the interests of the readership (something to read which connects with their interests), the interests of the editor (having the book seen as the standard reference device in Organization Studies, advancing his evolutionary perspective), the interests of the publisher (sell expensive hardbacks to libraries), and the interests of much of the books intended readership (members of the North American Academy of Management).

The final problem that dogged efforts to produce a competent review was not holding the correct position to judge the volume's offering. The small store of intellectual capital I have managed to build up during my career is situated in fields unknown in Baum's encyclopaedia. How was I then to judge the offerings of Organizational Economics, for instance? A reviewer for a professional journal is assumed to be a well-honed expert in the field who can provide incisive assessment about specialist claims. If correct, then the ideal reviewer would have to have a grasp on ten separate debates in Organization Studies, as well as good understanding of particular developments in epistemology and distinct research methods. I suspect that such people are the absolute exception instead of the generalised rule in modern science where one can spend their

whole life using the same theory to study the same object. This seemed to suggest there was no single ideal reviewer for Baum's handbook.

Taking these three devastating problems into account, I began to take heart and recognise what Baum and colleagues had produced was not reviewable, at least in the traditional form. The only honest way to review such a tomb was to follow the practices through which one actually uses a handbook like Baum. For Baum this is "a comprehensive survey that consolidates and evaluates what we know (and what we don't) about organization and to focus attention to the possibilities for epistemological and methodological elaboration" (p.xxx). The practices that Baum points towards involve dividing the world of knowledge up in palatable chunks through 'consolidation and evaluation' which can then be used in relationship to specific problems in practical everyday activity (teaching, research, advising organizations). The *Companion* is resolutely practical as it is envisaged as "a person you spend a lot of time with because you are either friends, or you are travelling together" (p.xxx). Because of the friendly relation the reader is encouraged to develop with the *Companion*, the routine standards of a social scientific book review were actively avoided.[1] By following a typical review

————————

1 If the reader is looking for a routine review of the *Companion*, they will not find it in the body of this paper. I would suggest they consult Lousbury *et al*. (2003). If I was forced to provide such a routine review it may read something like the following:

The book begins with an introduction by Baum (the editor) and Rowley which situates the work firmly in the tradition of American organizational sociology influenced by systems theory [the central touchstone here is Scott's popular textbook and its framework which proposes that the study of organization can be divided into rational, natural and open systems approaches]. The introduction then lays out the levels of analysis that organizational science is based upon – namely intra-organizational, organizational, inter-organizations. The ten central concerns in 'Organization Science' are then laid out in relation to the themes of rational, natural and open systems. These ten concerns are institutions, networks, ecology, evolution, cognition and interpretation, power and dependency, technology, learning, complexity and computation and economics. Finally the issue of research method is picked up. Rejecting the positivism/relativism debate, the option of 'realism' is put forth as an alternative. In order to think through the thorny issue of how different theories relate, the concept of paradigms is rejected in favour of the thought image of 'scales' (as in fish scales). This introduction subsequently sets up the organization for the rest of the book which investigates in turn the ten issues at the intra-organizational level, then the organizational level, and finally the inter-organizational level (thirty chapters in all). The last eight chapters are devoted to 'updating organizational epistemology' by inculcating a realist agenda into current debates about epistemology.

Baum has assembled a group of leading representatives in the field of 'Organization Science' who are able to provide both the neophyte and experienced researcher with genuine insights. The overall organizing framework of the volume makes it easy to negotiate as a whole. Each chapter is clearly structured and provides the reader with a clear description of the classics in a given area of research, current questions, future issues as well as making links with other parts of the volume. A remarkable feature of each chapter is that they are largely discursive and providing clear descriptions of central pieces of research in the field instead of long chains of references. As well as covering many of the major issues in organization studies, the volume addresses contemporary debates about epistemology by providing the sensible alternative of realism (in contrast to relativism and positivism) to orient future developments. Ultimately the book provides a subtle balance between Baum's own vision for organization studies (the analysis or organizational variation, selection and retention through realist analysis of social life), and the unique contributions and expertise of each of the co-authors.

While Baum's vision for organization studies might be compelling for a largely North American audience, it comes as somewhat of a rude shock to those working in other traditions. The European researcher would find most of the central issues that are their bread and butter to be rendered

procedure, issues so central in any attempt to make Organization Studies 'handleable' would have been missed. In particular, shadows would be cast over attempts to divide knowledge and the provision of a resource to be used for specific practical purposes.

Dividing

On opening the *Blackwell Companion to Organization* I could not help thinking that I had come across the Chinese encyclopaedia that Jorge Louis Borges (1962) and Michel Foucault (1970) found so enchanting. In this peculiar oriental manuscript we are confronted with a crazed proliferation of objects that are separated by apparently arbitrary taxonomy. The result of such an affront is thus:

> All the familiar landmarks of my thought – *our* thought, the thought that bear the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the order surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and Other. (Foucault, 1970: xv)

The Chinese encyclopaedia clashes with the well order world of the reader. But in this clash, the reader is made aware of the arbitrariness of the order that she imposes upon the world. Like the Chinese encyclopaedia, the *Companion* made the world of organization I knew tip and sway. Clean lines were drawn in the most arbitrary places. The generic process of organizing was no longer a concern. Rather, there were three separated levels of analysis – the intra-organizational, the organizational, and the inter-organizational. Hadn't these divisions carved into the body of organizing long since healed over? As well as these fundamental incisions into the living, breathing, body of organizing, there were some more arbitrary cross-hatchings. These lines of division were imposed directly by what appears to be a strange mix between bodies of thought and objects of analysis. The arbitrariness of the line between say 'evolution' and 'ecology' made my head swim.

---

outcomes or intervening variables in the grand scheme of variation, selection and retention. Indeed, merely comparing the contents pages of Clegg, Hardy and Nord's *Handbook of Organization Studies* with Baum's offering reveal some massive gaping holes. While Clegg, Hardy and Nord consider most of the fields raised in the *Companion*, Baum does not return the favour. Instead, he concentrates on the 'hard core' or American organization theory, completely writing off topics like language, emotion, philosophy, aesthetics, gender, race, culture, time and space, national differences. This would lead them to suspect Baum's criteria of what counts as important forms of knowledge about organization, and what gets excluded. They might then reflect on the fact that only seven of the fifty-seven contributors work in institutions outside North America. Moreover the bulk of work cited has been produced by North American authors using distinctly North American theories about North American organizations. Indeed the underpinning assumptions about social life (Donald Campbell's evolutionary theory) would be treated as curiosity produced by the remarkable lack of engagement with social theory on the part of Baum and colleagues. Taken together this would lead this review to suggest that Baum's book is a little presumptuous in calling itself a 'companion to organization'. Perhaps if the editor was to follow his own recommendations about the need for a realist science it would be labelled a 'Companion to North American Organization: Social Darwinist Ideology Applied'.

So, why this desire to divide? To sever organization into a bleeding mess of organs without a body? Is the reason purely a practical one of communicating clearly with students who have had the rudiments of schoolmasters logic beaten into them? Is there something slightly more epochal about the swift divisions at work? Are we seeing the typical encyclopaedic drive of modernity to carve objects of analysis into manageable chunks by a director of studies and portioned out to salaried professionals who investigate their assigned chuck of writhing meat with cool rationality? Should we protest at the continued salience of dichotomous thinking and the damage it has wrecked upon our collective efforts of inquiry? Should we turn away in horror from such disastrous linear thinking that severs thought, severs reason, and leads to the slaughterhouse? Should we make a final cut, and portion out Baum and colleagues attempts at carving up the body of organization as yet another instance of modern reason attempting to arrest the process and flow of organizing through placing rational bounds on it?

These are certainly options that a particular brand of thinking about Organization Studies has been rather contented with for over a decade (e.g. Knights, 1997; Burrell, 1997; Chia, 2003). But of course, these attempts at epochal severing do not represent a break, but just another cut. They attempt to sever the body of organization and thought of organization once again, committing the same crime that the evil modernists are so liberally accused of. Instead of dividing around levels of analysis, we have a division in thought – modernist vs. post-modernist. Rather than making such over-generalised, philosophically unsustainable, historically inaccurate divisions that are blind to issues of continuation, perhaps we need to ask more modest questions about the divisions we find in very particular instances. Such a reflection has a clear lineage in Michel Foucault's archaeological work that inquires into the regimes underpinning our process of classifying the empirical world. It is a process of understanding how order arises from and within the blank space of the grids we use to systematise the world. This would lead us to target questions about Baum's gridding practices in a very specific way. We would treat the divisions he makes not as necessary expressions of the actual organizational world, but as moves that create a particular understanding of organization. We would ask how these divisions set up within the text are political acts of asserting one set of truth claims about organization.

The most obvious feature of gridding found in the *Companion* is the strict division between three levels of organization – intra-organizational, organizational, inter-organizational. These categories suggest that neat lines can be drawn between different 'levels of analysis' within organization. Oftentimes these levels of analysis simply go without saying. A typical introductory organizational behaviour textbook will inculcate into students that organizational behaviour is made up of individual, group, organizational and inter-organizational levels. When pressed for an answer as to why these divisions are made, one might retort that they accurately reflect the reality of organizational life. Against this rather foolhardy conjecture we could mobilise the refutation that there are clearly organizational processes which operate at all levels of analysis simultaneously. An example of this might be identity which is experienced at the individual level (my everyday flow of experience as an academic), reinforced through a specific group (self presentation to my colleagues, partner and students), may be bound up with an organizational culture (the identity entrenched at my institution),

and be also tied to a broader industry (the collective identity of what it means to be an academic I might share with someone working in clothing science at the University of Huddersfield). In order to counter my claim, a more wily defender of these levels of analysis might claim that the process of dividing levels of analysis is simply a contingent intellectual move that serves as a useful heuristic. In response to this question we would point out that this useful heuristic becomes rapidly engrained in peoples thinking so that when it might be time to abandon it, in order to pick up more useful tools, it continues to infect our thinking. I might also point out that the continued use of this heuristic led the analyst to assume particular levels naturally given. I might ask, when did these levels become pertinent? What is the history of a strict division between the group and the organization for instance? Similarly, is the division between organizational and inter-organizational meaningful given that so many processes occur across these borders? Does the process of continuing to pose these levels of analysis merely lead to the reconstruction of the assumption that organizations are a totalising entity that can be talked about as a whole? What other levels of analysis might be crafted as an intellectual framing, and indeed a framing for practical action?

The second striking feature which orders the *Companion* is a strict gridding of what constitutes current 'Organization Science'. This map of the terrain appears even more arbitrary than the levels of analysis. Included are institutions, networks, ecology, evolution, cognition and interpretation, power and dependency, technology, learning, complexity and computation and economics. The typical question we would expect to find in most reviews of a handbook would be why these particular divisions and not others? Obviously the act of dividing up the field is based upon an arbitrary act of pushing forward some concerns at the expense of others. For instance, in the *Companion* we find that approaches associated with social evolution are clearly favoured as these are two categories (ecology, evolution) which contain the same basic theories that are influenced by Donald Campbell's (1965) variation-selection-retention model. This strange slippage could easily be explained with reference to the editor's own preferences and heavy investment of intellectual capital in ecological approaches. One political consequences of this attempt to enrol other actors is that many of the editor's own studies are cited throughout the book.

What does this carefully structured grid exclude from organizational science? Starting with the levels of analysis axis, we would have to ask what is it that constitutes a non-organizational action for Baum? Is it the wide spread, but equally well organized practices which occur outside of formal organization such as work in the household, protest movements, informal street trading? What aspects of social life are rendered as 'not our concern' by these three levels of analysis? The political economy which large corporation so systematically attempt to manipulate for their ends? The desires that are systematically produced and destroyed while workers are 'in' organizations? The home life of these workers which serves as a space of habituation and social labour that is the necessary supplement for the organization?

A second set of exclusions is at work in the topics selected by Baum. If we briefly compare the current standard handbook on organizational studies, namely Clegg, Hardy and Nord's *Handbook of Organization Studies*, we notice that there are a significant number of topics that are simply not mentioned in Baum's book. These include issues

such as gender, emotion, language, time and space, race, aesthetics, culture, the natural environment, bureaucracy and identity. It seems strange that so many of these issues in organizational life could simply be done away with. A possible answer to our amazement might be that while each of these issues are important, they are merely applied issues, and hence are not particularly important for developing a central core of organization. Such a response would ask us to reflect back on what Baum claims to be at the core of organizational life.

The third major movement of exclusion we find at work within Baum's grid is the strict slip between what constitutes scientific and non-scientific knowledge of organization. The final section of the book articulates a clear version of what Organization Studies is. Abandoning the positivism vs. relativism debate, it suggests Organization Studies should become a realist enterprise:

> Scientific realists believe that the world exists largely independent of our perceiving it. In contrast to relativism, there is an out there to theorize about. The job of the research is to improve our perception (measurement) process, separating illusion from reality, and generate the most accurate possible description of the world (Hunt, 1990). While believing that our perceptions cannot yield knowledge about the external world, scientific realists do not believe that the resulting knowledge is certain. Our observations (as well as our theories) are fallible – some more accurate and reliable (i.e. closer to the truth) than others, the validity of knowledge claims determined, at least in part, by the way the world *is*. (p.23)

The vision of science articulated here seems to be a naïve and conservative version of the more robust ontological realism and epistemological relativism put forward by critical realists like Roy Bhaskar (1989). It is naïve because there is no reflection on the fact that the yawning gulf between the real world of science and the relative and fallible world of practice requires serious and radical reflexivity about our method, instead of routine application. Baum's vision of realism is also conservative in that it assumes the handful of procedures typically found in the pages of *Administrative Science Quarterly* could be transposed directly into the intellectual terrain set up by realism. If this is so, the realism presented in the *Companion* seems not to have any use as a genuinely philosophical framework that reveals the world. Instead, realism merely legitimates routine practice in organizational sciences. This means practices associated with 'good research' are the usual routine of building and testing models, surveys, archival research, simulations, grounded theory, and field based research. Many of the recent advances in research methodology, such as studies of language, literary methods, and philosophical inquiry, are simply excluded.

The problems with the kind of relativism put forward are amplified in McKelvey's manifesto-like chapter. Here we find a strange switch in the basic formula of realism. Typically, critical realists such as Roy Bhaskar (1977) and his followers would advocate a realist ontology and accept a relativist epistemology.[2] This means they would accept that there is some real world that is not simply exhausted by our ways of knowing. Strangely, McKelvey argues that a realist ontology and relativist epistemology is a

---

2   According to McKelvey, a realist ontology and relativist epistemology is a position no one is advocating (p.755). This is a patently incorrect statement as even the most basic understanding of Roy Bhaskar's work found itself in exactly this position.

position no one is advocating (p.755). Instead, McKelvey advocates a realist epistemology and relativist ontology – there is no real core to the world, but we can develop positive knowledge about this unreal world. McKelvey's real concern seems to be preserving the sanctity of standard methodological procedures in Organization Studies. This downplays any suggestion that there are any significant ontological questions which need to be asked.

The pattern of inclusions and exclusions in Baum's grid reveals a system of distribution, an index, a series of gaps in which a group of practices get rewarded the title of 'Organizational Science'. The ground prepared by Baum seems to be designed to foster an 'Organizational Science' driven by a naïve and conservative realism which places particular importance on an account of organizational selection, variation and retention while marginalizing the host of 'supplementary' questions found, for example, in Clegg, Hardy and Nord's *Handbook*. Ultimately, Baum puts forward a version of Organization Studies that seeks to reproduce the most elementary divisions of intra-organizational, organizational and inter-organizational. This grid creates a ground for 'Organizational Science' that supports the normal business of theory building characterising North American Organization Studies for some time.

Using

> Rather than remaining within the field of a discourse that upholds its privilege by inverting its content…one can try another path: one can analyse the microbe-like, singular plural practices which an urbanistic system was supposed to administer or suppress, but which have outlived its decay; one can follow the swarming activity of these procedures that, far from being regulated or eliminated by panoptic administration, have reinforced themselves in a proliferating illegitimacy, developing and insinuating themselves into the networks of surveillance, and combining in accord with unreliable but stable tactics to the point of constituting everyday regulation and surreptitious creativities that are merely concealed by the frantic mechanisms and discourses of the observational organization. (de Certeau, 1984: 96)

When I was reading the *Blackwell Companion to Organization*, I could not hold back the memory of Michel de Certeau's wonderful description of viewing New York from a skyscraper (the World Trade Centre observation deck actually). From this vantage you could see the strict gridding of the city below. You could clearly see the austere public housing in Alphabet City, the smaller buildings of the Village, the massive buildings around Midtown and the Wall Street. The scheme seemed just as obvious and brutal as the scheme put in place by Baum. It is a scheme clearly designed to keep everyone in their place, and allow universal access to the city. However, when we descend from our vantage point into the hustle, the "chorus of idle footsteps" (de Certeau, 1984: 97), another side of the grid reveals itself. This is the side of practices, tricks, deals. We find the ways which individual walkers use the grid for their own purposes – hustling, dreaming, gazing, escape, leisure and work.

Thinking about these daily practices led me to reflect upon how the strict gridding found in the *Companion* is not the end of the story. Just because we have located strict attempts to grid and carve up the body of organization should not mean we reject the *Companion*. Certainly the strict disciplinary lines define what counts as knowledge

about organizational and what does not. Yes, these lines act as strict boundaries and points of policing. However, just like the streets of New York, we might find many practices in the crevices of Baum's grid. Just because we enter into it at a random point – perhaps part of the way through – does not mean we are suddenly tied down by a system of assumptions and values. Rather, we may enter at a number of points, take which chapters come to hand, and perhaps hide in the crevices we find. It may even be possible to use the studies we find arrayed in Baum's boulevards and do with them what pleases us. We should consider how we can use the various resources found within this grid. How is it possible to take elements from this text, create a line of flight, thereby radicalising them? The question of the practices of knowledge forces us to begin to look at not just the text itself, but the practical, overflowing production writers and readers are engage in. Indeed, such handbooks actually asked to be handled, used, put to work. I could see at least three possible practical uses for this handbook – teaching, research, and organizing.

Texts always come to hand for a reason. They are found and shuffled off our shelves in relation to a particular concern. Probably one of the most important reasons that we press texts into service is as a prosthesis for teaching. The difficult question we are faced with involves creating a working match between a given text on our shelf at the time, the particular class we are working with, and an objective we might have in mind. One possible use which came to hand as I was reviewing this book was teaching Masters levels students about recent advances in philosophy of science, and in particular the approach of realism. As I have mentioned above, the *Companion* positions this approach as the most rational and desirable approach to knowledge production in Organization Studies. This positioning immediately shapes the uses we can make of this book. It means they lack any voice that convincingly argues for the three typical positions we might find in the social sciences – technical, interpretive, and critical knowledge. All we are provided with are two homogenous camps of the 'relativists' and the 'positivists'.

Moldoveanu and Baum's article, however, does provide a wonderfully supple example of a typical argument we could imagine between these two figures. During this exchange the 'positivist' and 'relativist' exchange some of the standard philosophical justifications for each position. Its dynamic form certainly provides students with a sense that these positions are not things which do not change, but constitute an evolving debate which must be attended to. This debate ultimately would herd the student towards a realist position whereby they would ultimately see that the 'positivist' is misrecognising their position and the 'relativist' is acting in bad faith by using realist arguments. The only conceivable option they find at the end is realism. The story does not end there. The reader is herded towards a very specific conception of realism that appears from Donald Campbell's work on evolutionary theory and knowledge. The rapidly developing field of realism in philosophy science called of critical realism is not an option for developing a theory of realism. Rather, it is the musings about perceptive capabilities of the human species and the appealing but ultimately incorrect discussion about knowledge as map-making that stands in for realism. This leaves us with the assumption that everything perceived by science is done so for evolutionary reasons.

A second possible use of the *Companion* would be for research purposes. Obviously the work is published as a guide to 'Organization Science'. Perhaps a more useful title for many researchers is 'A guide to what elite North American researchers currently think about organization'. This may be infuriating at times (given its absolute lack of correspondence with a given field you may know), but it also provides an interesting peek in the door. One of the central practical challenges which European researchers set about negotiating is speaking to the North American audience. Often this is exceedingly difficult due to the wild divergence of some concerns between the two continents. To speak about say power, one must be able to enter into conversations about unrecognizable theorists and 'outdated' concerns in order to be heard. The series of chapters in this book at least provide a starting point for most Europeans to understand what current obsessions in the US are and how our conversations might be practically connected with them. For instance, the avocation of a realist epistemology in this text certainly provides a central point of connection and linkage with current European debates about critical realism. Contrasting the ontological realism and epistemological relativism advocated by Ackroyd and Fleetwood (1999) with McKelvey's ontological relativism and epistemological realism may provide a fruitful point in re-igniting and indeed moving the debate about epistemology. Using this contact point would allow authors to speak to a different audience and accumulate additional social capital. It also brings to the European debate the reminder that not 'everyone is a social constructivist now'. It reminds us that model building and computer simulation continues to be practiced with excessive vigour.

A final use of these texts might be in processes of organizing. A handbook typically has a direct link with research and perhaps graduate teaching. Rarely would we extract such a handbook from the shelf in order to advise action within and upon organization. If, in the rare case we reach for a handbook as a tool for changing organization, it will probably be applied in a relatively conventional way. It will be used to bolster the functioning of large state or capitalist organizations. The spectre of efficiency will always be in the wings. If the promise of a general theory of Baum's is genuine, then might we be able to put unintentional use to some of the concepts we find? To test this assumption, I shall examine how the concepts contained in one set of chapters could be used to advise the anti-globalization movement.

Advising

Following the 1999 protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle, there has been a growing 'anti-globalization' movement. During its first few years of existence, it was largely focused on co-ordinating 'oppositional' protests during meetings of international trade and financial groups. Recent activity has been increasingly channelled into more 'affirmative' actions which co-ordinated around events which aim to articulate alternatives to global neo-liberalism. This is clearly expressed in the World Social Forum movement which aims to providing a point of connection for activists challenging neo-liberalism, war and colonialism. One of the central issues currently

faced by the anti-globalization[3] groups is how they can effectively regulate their activities. This is particularly felt within the European branch of the anti-globalization movement associated with the European Social Forum. Currently they draw on radically decentralised network methods in co-ordinating their action across time and space. One of the major issues this has produced is marginal groups using violent tactics during protests that have alienated the majority of the movement. One possible outcome of this requirement to regulate activity by the anti-globalization movements is building institutions. Instead of treating Baum's book as a handbook for getting published in American management journals, could it be possible to use it as a guide to advising the anti-globalization movements?

To test this point, let's do a short intellectual experiment by asking: what can the three chapters on institutions contained in the *Companion* offer to those attempting to institutionalise the anti-globalization movement through organizations like the World Social Forum and the European Social Forum? Picking up on Elsbach's chapter on inter-organizational institutions, we find that the development of institutions involves "taken-for-granted beliefs that arise within and across organizational groups and delimit acceptable and normative behavior for members of those groups" (p.37). Following Scott's (2001) well-known typology, institutions are understood to be constructed through three modes (p.38-39): rules and standards which give rise to entrenched 'process' institutions, social norms about power of 'structural' institutions, and ideals and normative goals which give rise to 'value' institutions. When these three processes are combined they form a powerful, entrenched institution at the group level. By developing such institutions, anti-globalization movements such as the European Social Forum would be stabilised and give some continuity and stability to their organizations through the development of shared rules and standards that define what can and cannot be done. It also involves the development of shared norms that shape what are the usual and expected ways of undertaking routine procedures such as organizing protests or a mailing campaign. A shared ideology and outlook in organizations would also be recommended.

So, how exactly does this process of building institutions take place at a group level? According to Elsbach, there are at least three points into which those seeking to institute a new social movement may intervene. The first is through developing a shared and institutionalised identity that would develop congruence across 'value institutions'. A working group at the European Social Forum (ESF) may be made up of members from the union movement, the green movement, and the refugee rights movement. In order to develop some co-ordinated process, it is necessary to build a common identity within the workgroup. A second way in which institutions are developed, according to Elsbach, is through building institutionalised routines that act to informally co-ordinate ways in which activities are carried out. At the ESF, this might involve routinized work procedures such as meeting or protest procedure. A third way in which institutions might be developed at the group level is through the structuring and composition of

---

3   The anti-globalization movement is very difficult to define. The movement is made up of a range of very disparate groups with interests including the environment, poverty, third world debt, worker exploitation, warfare, and human rights. It is not explicitly 'anti-globalization', but seeks to challenge the globalization of neo-liberal policy across the globe (Fischer and Ponniah, 2003).

groups. This involves considering the demographic aspects of who gains access to the group, and how diverse these members are. Moreover, these intra-organizational institutions are established and entrenched through the appearance of informal status hierarchies throughout the group. In the case of the ESF, an analysis of these institutions would point out the importance of drawing on already established group status hierarchies.

While Elsbach's chapter gives us a few tricks for developing institutions in groups, a subsequent chapter by Palmer and Biggart investigates how institutions are developed at an organizational level. Like Elsbach, they also point to the importance of rules, norms and cognitive schemas in building institutions. Unlike Elsbach, they ask why particular institutional forms come into existence. They argue that a particular structure exists not due to technical output reasons, but because they are seen to be valuable in and of themselves. This illuminates the fact that the institutionalised forms of anti-globalization movements are not simply there for the needs of co-ordinating action across distance of an ever changing membership. Rather, there is a significant ideology around the need for such organizational forms that are 'non-hierarchical', 'non-stratifying' and 'democratic'. A second point made by Palmer and Biggart is that the founding of organizational institutions are not based on technical criteria, but tend to occur along the lines of already established forms they find in similar organizations. This is largely because these organizational forms are seen to be a 'safe bet' that have succeeded, are seen as legitimate, and may protect the organization from an uncertain environment. In the case of the anti-globalization movement, we could observe, and perhaps even recommend the spread of known and accepted organizational forms. The final point that Palmer and Biggart make in relation to organizational institutions is that they often encourage processes of goal drift. They point out that many organizations are forced to abandon part of their espoused goals when there is a divergence from the legitimate organizational form in a given field. In order to gain legitimacy, these organizations begin to conform to what are seen as acceptable forms. The result is a drift from the originally espoused goals. This is evident in the anti-globalization movement when protest organizations adopt organizational forms which are widely accepted in the protest movement. These forms may result in other organizations accepting them as legitimate players. However these new organizational forms may also lead to significant divergence from espoused goals.

Moving to the inter-organizational level, we can draw certain advice from Strang and Sine's chapter. Looking at the processes through which organizational forms and processes are developed, they argue structures become institutionalised when they are invested with meaning. Instead of focusing on issues of convergence (as institutional theory typically does), they ask how these institutions might change. They explain institutional changes with reference to external factors such as the state (which shapes the control of the organization, employment practices, and organizational forms), professional bodies, marginal actors, institutionalised conflict, and triggering conditions such as performance problems. Using these concepts, it then becomes possible to remind those involved in the ESF that they are indeed developing an institutional form, and making them aware of the processes through which they might go about changing their existing institutional form. They should be aware of the influence of changes to state legislation that might include laws shaping political protest. Professional bodies

may have limited influence on some parts of the movement that depend on expertise (such as environmental protests which depend on environmental expertise). Marginal actors such as new protest groups addressing new fields such as genomics may serve as important agents of change in terms of what is acceptable action amongst anti-globalization protestors. Finally, change may be driven by internal dialectics where there is struggle between existing, relatively institutional factions. For instance, there was reflection on the need for more governance following the protests in Prague during September 2000 during a meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. This was driven by conflict over tactics between groups who advocated more peaceful strategies and the 'black block' who advocated more direct and at times violent protest strategies.

The chapters on institutions in Baum certainly provide the anti-globalization movement with a few pointers. Perhaps this gestures to the fact that the surface of conservative texts like the *Companion* cannot only act as a panoptical point of theoretical lock-down. Maybe it is a series of lines, which we only need to open up, add to, take seriously. By radicalising the largely conservative evolutionary science we find within Baum, might it be possible to develop a different organization that we could be companions of? I began to ask these questions in my small experiment of using institutional theory to inform the anti-globalization movement. There are certainly some lines for politicising institutional theory as well as institutionalising anti-globalization politics.

We should ask what the political implications are of mechanically applying institutional theory to the anti-globalization movement. While there is some radical potential in institutional theory, it does remain under-pinned by a certain proclivity for regulation. By systematically applying institutional theory to the study of organization, a series of recommendations appear about how to regulate the savage multiplicity that has erupted from the anti-globalization movement. Perhaps this kind of regulation and consolidation reduces the de-territorializing force that lends the anti-globalization movement such dynamism. By attempting to apply what is essentially knowledge of regulation we might sap this swarm of social practice of its own dynamic.

The dangers of attempting to radicalise a science of regulation like institutional theory alerts us to the dynamic between the possibilities such knowledge contains, and the limits this subsequently places on what is possible. Perhaps it is within this bind between maliciously working through existing theories, and opening up radical new routes that a radical theory of organization might dwell. Perhaps it is precisely in this *aporia* that we could locate the radical reading of a handbook.

references   Ackroyd, S. and S. Fleetwood (1999) *Realist Perspectives on Organization and Management*. London: Routledge.

Bhaskar, R. (1989) *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences*, 2nd ed. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Borges, J.L. (1962) *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, ed. D.A. Yates and J.E. Irby. New York: New Directions.

Burrell, G. (1997) *Pandemonium: Towards a Retro-Organization Theory*. London: Sage.

Campbell, D.T. (1965) 'Variation and selection retention in socio-cultural evolution', in H.R. Barringer, G.I. Blanksten and R. W. Mack (eds.) *Social Change in Developing Areas: A Re-Interpretation of Evolutionary Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman.

Chia, R. (2003) 'Organization Theory as Postmodern Science', in C. Knudsen & H. Tsoukas (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Clegg, S., C. Hardy and W. Nord (eds.) (1996) *Handbook of Organization Studies*. London: Sage.

De Certeau. M. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendell. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Fischer, W.F. and T. Ponniah (eds.) (2003) *Other World is Possible: Popular Alternatives to Globalization at the World Social Forum*. London: Zed.

Foucault, M. (1970) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage.

Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno (1969) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. J. Cummings. New York: Continuum.

Knights, D. (1997) 'Organization Theory in the Age of Deconstruction: Dualism, Gender and Postmodernism Revisited', *Organization Studies*, 18(1): 1-19.

Lounsbury M., M. Haas, B. Lee, and N.X. Zhang (2003) 'Review of: The Blackwell Companion to Organization, by Baum, JAC', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 48(2): 318-323.

Scott, W.R. (2001) *Institutions and Organizations*, 2nd ed. London: Sage.

the author   André Spicer is a Lecturer of Organization Studies at the University of Warwick. He is currently working on issues related to organizational geo-politics.
Address: IROB, Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, United Kingdom.
E-mail: Andre.Spicer@wbs.ac.uk
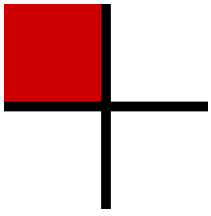
HOT on the Discursive Limits of Organization Theory[*]

Mark Tadajewski

review of: **H. Tsoukas and C. Knudsen (eds.) (2003)** *The Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory*. **Oxford University Press.** (HB: pp.664, £70, ISBN 0199258325)

> Never give an academic a bad review, they'll never forget it. (Ingrid Black, *The Dead*)

Introduction

The Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory (HOT, for short) is the focus of this review. On initial inspection the material form of this text with its hardcover, embossed with gold lettering, communicating to the potential reader that this is *The* handbook of organization theory seems to testify to the importance of the material contained in the five thematic sections of this handbook. These cover: organization theory as science, the construction of organization theory, meta-theoretical controversies in organization theory, organization theory as a policy science and, finally, the future of organization theory. The scope of the material contained in this handbook draws from a variety of paradigmatic positions and charts issues such as the paradigm debate in organization studies, the production of actionable knowledge and the development of institutional forms that can effectively tackle global problems such as famine. Of course, there is a great deal of ground between these debates, but even this preview indicates the breadth of the material contained in the handbook and for which the editors, along with their contributors, must be congratulated for bringing together.

Rather than adhere to the conventional narrative format associated with a book review, my goal is to bracket a large portion of these chapters and consider a very limited, but provocative sample. This will not be a point-by-point discussion of the contents of the papers, but rather, a selective and tentative excavation of points of interest that serve to problematise the function of texts such as this handbook. In structuring my review there are a number of issues that I want to interweave throughout and these coagulate around the consumption of theory, amnesia and the reproduction of the organization studies canon within the HOT. In conclusion I want to offer some tentative thoughts on the implication of these factors for the transgression, or not, of discursive boundaries in organization studies.

I will exert pressure on the assertion made by the editors that: "This handbook provides a forum for leading scholars in Organization Theory (OT) to engage in meta-theoretical reflection on the historical development, present state, and future prospects of OT…Notice that this is a *meta-theoretical* question: the object of analysis an debate in this volume…is OT itself." (Tsoukas and Knudsen, HOT: 1). In doing so, I hope to offer an affirmation of the present status of organization theory by drawing attention to the limits and transgressive potential of selected chapters within the HOT.

As the volume prides itself on containing "meta-theoretical reflection on the epistemological status of OT" (Tsoukas and Knudsen, HOT: 3) I intend to utilize examples drawn from the history and philosophy of science and disciplines such as marketing and sociology to illustrate the argument that elements of the HOT are epistemologically fragile and thereby undermine the status of this text as a form of "meta-theoretical reflection on the status of OT by taking stock, on the one hand, of related debates in the past and, on the other hand, of new developments in OT and in the philosophy, sociology, and history of science" (Tsoukas and Knudsen, HOT: 3). My approach will be geared towards problematisation of the HOT and will, unavoidably, be partial in its analytic coverage. This is derived, in the most part, from my identity as a critical marketing researcher and the limited exposure I have had to the literature referred to in the HOT. This said, I start from the assumption that the HOT is produced, like other text, through the inclusion and exclusion of material, with the published textual construction achieved through the "violence of the body [which] reaches the written page only through absence…from which a presence has since been washed away, and through a murmur that lets us hear…that unknown immensity that seduces and menaces our knowledge" (de Certeau, 1988: 3).

It Begins…

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962, 1970a, 1996), Kuhn provides an interesting examination of scientific inquiry and the role that the textbook plays in the perpetuation of specific forms of scientific discourse and practice via the use of the, now notorious, concept of paradigm (Masterman, 1970; cf. Kuhn, 2000: 299-300). In his treatment of this concept Kuhn stresses that paradigm refers to the beliefs, norms

and values shared by members of a research 'speciality'.[1] What is important for the present discussion is the role of the textbook (and academic paper) in the transmission of appropriate standards of scientific education to those who wish to be initiated into a scientific community (Kuhn, 1996: 178).

The astute reader has already noticed that the status of the discussion has switched from being about the function of *handbooks* to that of *textbooks*. This is a deliberate move and one made following the remonstration by Jones (2003) that theory from various disciplines has a tendency to be invoked in a pedestrian fashion, often "imitative of the past rather than radically different" (Jones, 2003: 516). In equal measure it is necessary to avoid the use of theorists in ways that are "downright strange" (Letiche, 2004: 79). While not unproblematic, Kuhn's discussion of the textbook as one medium for the transmission of the "rules and standards for scientific practice" (Kuhn, 1996: 11) provides a useful tool for prising open the HOT, particularly in relation to the construction of the identity and boundaries of organization theory. Throughout *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* Kuhn argues that scientific education is taught via textbooks used as "pedagogic vehicles for the perpetuation of normal science [which]…have to be rewritten in whole or part whenever the language, problem-structure, or standards of normal science change" (Kuhn, 1996: 137). These changes occur within and adhere to the dictates of the dominant social or moral formations and the presuppositions held by scientists regarding epistemology, ontology, and so on, which direct their own academic work and the legitimising function scientists themselves play in evaluating the output of others.

Kuhn (1996: 167) links the rewriting of textbooks with the activities of the Ministry of Truth in Orwell's *1984* and the Orwellian notion that whoever controls the present controls the past and those who control the past control the future. History represents "a palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary…Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every statute and street building has been renamed, every date has been altered…History has stopped. Nothing else exists except an endless present" (Orwell, 1964: 128). Naturally it is a cause for concern that the Ministry of Truth rewrites history in order to suit present requirements. More relevant for the present discussion is that palimpsests retain traces of the truth, since they are comprised of the "myriad of events...they were formed" (Foucault, 1984: 81). Perhaps such revisionism is visible outside of fiction as well.

In a different context, Parker has written of the historical elision and amnesia endemic within the organizational culture and symbolism literature – "I do think that there was an increasing ignorance or marginalisation of much of this writing" (Parker, 2000: 139) and "It seems evident that much earlier work is being written out of the canon" (Parker, 2002: 46). Parker is not optimistic and believes that "this is a revisionist project likely to continue" (*ibid.*) because "where disciplines are concerned, stories about the past allow for legitimacy to demonstrated through deciding what counts as proper – a tactic which both constructs and reinforces the discipline of discipline" (*ibid.*: 47). The production of

---

1   This definition is problematic but spatial limitations preclude any extended discussion of the paradigm concept. Needless to say, Kuhn does specify the 'right' inflection of this concept (see Kuhn, 2000).

textbooks and the inclusion and exclusion of content is similarly dictated by disciplinary, political, economic and cultural factors established via academic debate and "published within the political and economic constraints of markets, resources and power" (Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991: 2). It is important to acknowledge that a text whose marketing blurb professes to represent "a major new initiative in publishing…Each volume offer[ing] an authoritative and state-of-the-art survey of current thinking and research in a subject area" (HOT: back inside jacket), is similarly constructed via processes of inclusion and exclusion and consequently this review should focus on the material contained within the text itself and also what is excluded. This is because absence, along with making the heart grow fonder, "can really signify more profound political, economic and cultural relations and histories" (Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991: 3). As Thompson recognises, "a given piece of research reveals as much about a research community as it does about the phenomena under study" (2002: 142).

Absence is made manifest within the HOT via the assertion made by Tsoukas and Knudsen that this volume contains the 'leading' scholars in organization studies. Being aware that the "long march from research fellowship to full chair is a nightmare for many, containing the pitfalls of academic politics and fear of offending the powerful" (Burrell, HOT: 532) it is worth tempering the criticism I intend to make here. Nonetheless, it is very strange that a book that professes to contain leading minds, fails to acknowledge that the cognitive input into this text is all derived from a particular generation (if I am permitted to generalise a little) and that this selection is, possibly, emblematic of "the paraphernalia of power" (Burrell, HOT: 523) within the discursive structure of organization studies than it is of the extent to which the included authors are the leading minds of the academic community. Indeed, in view of the explicit meta-theoretical reflection that this title desires to stimulate, an obvious question to be posed to the editors is why they neglected to draw from younger members of the academic fraternity? Is it not the case that academic controversy is usually initiated by someone "new to the field" (Kuhn, 1996: 166). Maybe this is true, but I prefer to regard the young scientist thesis as an immodest reflection of Kuhn's perception of his own self-importance at the time of writing *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (e.g. Kuhn, 2000: 255-323).

There are, however, numerous younger members of the organization studies community whose commentary frequently graces the pages of august organization journals and who could have been worthy contributors to this text, but who remain strangely in the shadows. Perhaps, I am being unfair to the editors, who may have contacted such people. But it would be interesting to see what impact the inclusion of such voices would have "had on the inventiveness, quality, and impact of the material published. Would it improve?" (Burrell, HOT: 533). These are issues that concern Gibson Burrell and who, in his chapter, explicitly acknowledges the inflection of power throughout the academy and the techniques of dressage and constraint that envelop the discipline. Stressing gerontological control of the 'organs of publication' Burrell proposes that "it is feasible to see editorial teams of Ph.D.s editing leading journals (on at least an occasional basis, if you so wish)" (HOT: 533). I, for one, look forward to seeing this policy implemented at *Organization*.

This said I appreciate that this text attempts to provide a summation of the current status of organization studies and will contain chapters that recycle previous research. Even so, a number of the chapters are minor extensions of previously published papers, with McKinley and Mone's chapter the primary example (as I shall discuss below). This makes the act of publication in such an expensive binding seemingly redundant, as those interested can obtain a selection of similar journal articles for a fraction of the price. In addition, this type of discursive re-jigging raises the question of how accurately this text can be described as representing the current state-of-the-art, as the marketing of this product would have us believe, rather than an exercise in the conservativism of intellectual capital among the contributors.

This phenomenon is not wholly unexpected if we share Fuller's view that the professional consciousness of the knowledge worker remains captive to an industrial mindset where "an expression as innocuous-sounding as 'knowledge production'…freely tumbles from academic lips, immediately calls to mind the manufacture of products -specifically books and articles- the more, the faster, the better" (Fuller, 2000: 82). The quest for uniqueness and career advancement necessitates that

> Each of us in our careers invests considerable effort, energy, and work in building up a store of intellectual capital from which we hope to get good returns. These are the forms of investment that we make as scholars, and as investors we like to see these investments earn a good return. (Clegg in Boje, 1993: 192).

The desire to maximise the return from these investments is manifested in the offerings of a number of HOT contributors. For example, Joanne Martin (HOT: 392) acknowledges that her "chapter is a revised version of chapter two, in J. Martin, *Organizational Culture: Mapping the Terrain*". Willmott (HOT: 88) draws upon two previous publications and likewise, Clegg (HOT: 536) declares that "Elements of this argument were developed from earlier joint work". In a similar vein, McKinley and Mone's chapter traverses familiar territory revisiting the issues of construct ambiguity, incommensurability and their ideal of a consensually organized dictionary for organization studies. 'Revised edition' are two words equally applicable to Gibson Burrell who raids his back catalogue for content, with the themes he indicates as prospects and limitations for organization theory remarkably similar to a recent *Organization* editorial (2003) and bearing the hallmarks of his early work on radical organization theory. I am sure that there are numerous arguments that can be made in defence of this policy, "especially if it reaps reasonable benefits for those pursuing it" (Fuller, 2000: 79) and the editors have dutifully provided a sample of these. Then again, what this signals about the intellectual craftsmanship of 'leading scholars in Organization Theory', I have gnome idea (Linstead, 2002).

Consuming Meta-theory

A turn to Foucault in organization studies and other disciplines has encouraged greater interest in understanding the production, maintenance and ordering of particular discourses and how knowledge claims are legitimated. It is in this spirit that the editors of the HOT see themselves and their contributors playing a role – "We keep learning by

keeping conversing, and reflecting upon how we do so. The present handbook is a modest contribution to the on-going meta-theoretical conversation in our field" (Tsoukas and Knudsen, HOT: 31). Demarcating the contribution of their volume from the extant literature in organization studies, they position the HOT as removed from early meta-theoretical analyses which sought to typologize the field of organization theory (e.g. Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Tsoukas and Knudsen propose an alternative meta-theoretical strategy that warrants application and entails the philosophical, historical, and sociological examination of "key categories implicated in organizational research" (Tsoukas and Knudsen, HOT: 2). Given this, the strategy for the invited contributors was to "engage in meta-theoretical reflection on the epistemological status of OT by taking stock, on the one hand, of related debates in the past and, on the other, of new developments in OT and the philosophy, sociology and history of science" (Tsoukas and Knudsen, HOT: 3). Maybe I shouldn't dwell on the implicit view of theory development in organization studies that the editors hold, i.e. that those likely to read this text are so lax in their research practices that they have neglect to survey the interdisciplinary literature which may have some bearing upon their work. This is something that I initially found hard to believe, although, as I discuss below, the editors may have a valid point but possibly not in the way they were expecting.

In view of their espoused willingness to encourage an engagement with new developments in alternative disciplinary arenas I expected that the editors, in their co-authored chapter, would provide a detailed description of meta-theorization, drawing from available sources and outlining the benefits and drawbacks associated with such a pursuit. Alas, such description is not forthcoming, and in the interests of clarity it is appropriate that I briefly examine the relevant literature.

Practicing meta-theory involves extensive scrutiny of the presuppositions that underpin research (Morrow, 1994: 46). A meta-theoretical question being, as Calás and Smircich (1999) have pointed out: How can we think about and do theory differently? Drawing a parallel between meta-theorising and reflexivity, the editors of the HOT recommend that this involves "taking a step back from ordinary theoretical activity to reflect on what the latter should be aiming at and how it ought to be conducted – it is for this reason that such reflection is called '*meta*-theoretical'" (Tsoukas and Knudsen, HOT: 5; emphasis in original). Meta-theoretical reflection is undertaken "not to generate theory about particular organizational topics but to make the generation of theory itself an object" (Tsoukas and Knudsen, HOT: 5). The ontological, epistemological, methodological and view of human nature presupposed in any given social-scientific theory are delineated by the meta-theorist to ensure that any inconsistent assumptions which underpin organization analysis are avoided (Morrow, 1994: 47). Alongside this ameliorative role Burrell and Morgan (1979: ix, 398) have proposed that meta-theoretical awareness encourages the *negotiation* of social theory and diverse frames of reference in order to question paradigmatic orthodoxy and provide legitimacy for alternative forms of organizational inquiry.

No doubt, 'publish or perish' pressures can militate against meta-theoretical review[2], but the pressures the editors must have been under for them to ignore the extant meta-theorization literature must have been tremendous (e.g. Lewis and Grimes, 1999). This omission is unsatisfactory since their chapter is positioned as an introduction and overview of meta-theoretical reflection in organization studies. In addition, if the definition of meta-theorization provided by Tsoukas and Knudsen is recalled, then what is most disappointing is that the editors have studiously avoided citing and it can be supposed, neglected to examine meta-theoretical work produced by, for example, a sociologist such as George Ritzer whose meta-theoretical works include *Metatheorizing in Sociology* (1991) and *Explorations in Social Theory: From Metatheorizing to Rationalization* (2001).

In *Explorations in Social Theory: From Metatheorizing to Rationalization* (2001), Ritzer provides an extensive, critical review of extant meta-theoretical literature, drawing primarily, but not exclusively, from sociology. Defining meta-theorizing in a similar fashion to Morrow (1994), Ritzer asserts that meta-theorizing only takes place after initial theory development and proposes four broad types of meta-theorizing. The first, 'Mu', involves the study of extant theory. This immersion is used by the meta-theorist to develop "a more profound understanding of extant theory" (2001: 18). By 'profound understanding', Ritzer means the examination of similarities, differences, strengths and limitations that affect different theories and theorists. This, Ritzer proposes, is beneficial as the researcher gains a solid understanding of the theories or theorists involved. The second type of meta-theorizing, Ritzer explicitly positions as a preclude to theory development 'Mp'. Extant theory is examined in order to produce new theory. The third type holds that meta-theorizing should be conceived as a source of overarching theoretical perspectives 'Mo' in order to produce a meta-theory that overarches some aspect of, for example, organization theory (e.g. Tsoukas, 1994). Finally Ritzer identifies 'Om', as overarching meta-theory. This he distinguishes from 'Mo' since meta-theorization takes place *prior* to initial theory development. Where 'Mo' is derived from the extant theory, 'Om' is imposed on the theory and does not involve the study of theory, but instead is a set of principles imposed prior to and presupposed by, the theorist or discipline (Ritzer, 2001: 15).

On my reading, the practice of meta-theorization has much to recommend it and I am greatly attracted to the idea(l) of encouraging people to immerse themselves in a broad spectrum of literature. This is not to suggest that the various meta-theoretical strategies enunciated and practiced by Ritzer are unproblematic, far from it. Ritzer's argument that meta-theorists can effectively scrutinise theory because "they identify with no single theory…are able to distance themselves from all of them and render more impartial analyses of them" (1991: 302) is frankly implausible. Involvement with theory is never disinterested since it constitutes a form of political involvement in the discursive landscape. As a form of participation, the theorist cannot dispassionately preside outside of the field in which they seek to intervene, "so its failure to achieve the neutrality of fully knowing, fully objective gaze is one of its essential characteristics" (Davis, 2004: 4). Equally Ritzer's desire for theoretical synthesis is improbable given the frequent

---

2   These will, no doubt, be somewhat tempered by recent calls in the *Academy of Management Review* for authors to challenge conventional wisdom via a 'return to theory' (Mannix, 2003: 543).

assertion that organization studies is characterised by "instability, fragmentation and heterogeneity" (Hassard and Kelemen, 2002: 333) and by the same token, I, like Ritzer, find 'Om' meta-theorization akin to wearing cognitive blinkers. This said, Ritzer's contribution to the meta-theoretical debate is valuable, particularly his discussion of the role that poststructural and postmodern perspectives can play in the meta-theoretical destabilization and refiguring of a discursive formation and the methodological guidelines he provides for those intent on pursuing this strategy. At the same time, Ritzer does caution those interested in the production of meta-theory to be aware of the violence that the pruning and ordering of a field can cause, although such textual victimization is undoubtedly an inescapable element of academic life. It is the extent that victimization is performed that is, to some extent, within the control of the individual (Case, 2004).

Given the breadth and insight available in Ritzer's contribution to meta-theoretical debates it is strange that the HOT editors chose to disregard this literature. This failure to acknowledge Ritzer raises questions about the violence performed in the name of symbolic boundary maintenance. Perhaps the ignorance of prior literature and re-packaging of ideas in this case "serves to demonstrate intellectual progress" (Parker, 2000: 139) and functions to define the nature of organization studies as distinct from progenitors such as sociology: "it is precisely by neglecting its prehistory that organization studies can come into being, as a contemporary management discipline which is *not* organizational sociology, or industrial relations and so on" (Parker, 2000: 140; emphasis in original). Organization studies, Parker says, "is made through the ramified micro-politics of citations, of whose ideas count and whose are left to molder unread – until they are resurrected by someone else under a new name, with, or without citation" (Parker, 2002: 48).

No doubt, there are benefits to be derived from boundary creation (Hernes, 2002: 103) but likewise, the ethnocentrism inherent in boundary maintenance fosters cognitive peripheral vision and can lead to the re-invention of the intellectual wheels. It would appear that the marketing of meta-theorising by Tsoukas and Knudsen is itself predicated upon epistemological amnesia or, at the very minimum, a highly tendentious reading of the history of meta-theorisation. The editors have on this score, served to provide an exemplar of the worst kind of academic practice, where the arbitrary specialization of academic boundaries closes off rich repositories of ideas and methods (Mills, 1959).

This epistemological amnesia is troubling, especially given that the market in which this text finds itself (and no doubt is offering itself as a palliative) is characterised by the time compression of PhD programmes and administrative responsibility curtails the length of time researchers can spend in the library (Hinings and Greenwood, 2002). These trends render such amnesia problematic since the marginalisation of historical antecedents can lead to the perpetuation of ignorance if material, such as Tsoukas and Knudsen's chapter, is uncritically re-produced by students and academics alike. Although this would not be the sole responsibility of the authors. It does, however, reflect negatively on their scholarship when the shards of the discourse they elide are so easily recovered.

Despite the unwillingness of Tsoukas and Knudsen to review the various forms of meta-theoretical analysis, one aspect of their chapter that does warrant attention (in a positive sense) is their considered examination of the role of paradigms in organization analysis. They suggest that research should be seen as "a practical social activity [which] makes us see more clearly than before that researchers rarely are idealistic paradigm warriors but, more realistically…remain open to borrowing from other paradigms and perspectives as they see fit and are subjected to normative institutional criteria regarding the evaluation of their work" (Tsoukas and Knudsen, HOT: 11). This is a refreshing acknowledgement and contributes to the destabilization of the anthropomorphism often attributed to paradigms within the literature (e.g. Kelemen and Hassard, 2003: 74). It also reiterates the point made by March (1996) regarding the intellectual malleability of organization scholars; something the paradigm literature so often seems to elide.

Notwithstanding this intellectual malleability, Tsoukas and Knudsen do emphasise that there will be disciplinary and institutional factors that impinge upon research practice. However I still wonder about the extent to which the theoretical consumerism implied in the assertion that there is "inevitable osmosis between paradigms" (Tsoukas and Knudsen, HOT: 12) will not be subject to censorship since even if there is public valorisation of alternative approaches such as multi-paradigm research, this material may fail to navigate the publication process because reviewers may fear "yet another round of paradigm battles" (Gioia, personal communication). As Marianne Lewis (1996) has remarked, there are explicit tensions in the production of research that seeks to operationalize interaction between different paradigms. The interested reader only has to turn to the remarks made by Weaver and Gioia (1994) concerning the issue of paradigm incommensurability to understand the degree to which the affirmation of an alternative perspective is a politically dangerous move and it may be expedient to remain 'in the closet' where such osmosis is concerned (Sutton, 1997).

Remaining with this theme of historical elision and the amnesia upon which the production of a discipline is predicated, Shenhav (2003) provides a stimulating excursion into the archives of organization theory. Drawing upon a similar approach to that of Roy Jacques in his book *Manufacturing the Employee: Management Knowledge from 19th to the 21st Centuries* (1996). In his chapter Shenhav attempts, in prophylactic fashion, to "provide an alternative historiography of the field of OT" (HOT: 184) and manages to mediate between the Scylla and Charybdis of authorised organization theory and postmodern historical accounts to produce a meta-theoretical analysis that traces two discourses, engineering and sociological, "in order to historicize the epistemological assumptions of contemporary OT directly back to the professional project of social engineering around the beginning of the twentieth century" (Shenhav, HOT: 186).

Immediately obvious from Shenhav's chapter are the benefits to be derived from a poststructural approach to organizational research. Diverging from a traditional meta-theoretical emphasis where the focus is traditionally on the identification of central textual currents that exemplify the thought of invisible colleges or individuals, Shenhav's chapter embodies the wealth of insight that can be sourced from the ossuary of university (and other) archives and the important yet neglected insight "that would not be new but would, however, have remained invisible" (Foucault, 2000: 309).

In reading Shenhav's chapter and his scouring of periodicals such as *American Machinist, Engineering Magazine* around 1900, it is hard not to appreciate the validity of Canguilhem's comments that "just as a layer of dust on furniture is a measure of the housekeeper's negligence, so a layer of dust is a measure of the carelessness of their custodians" (1994: 82). If I am to draw a parallel with the criticism I made of Tsoukas and Knudsen earlier, it can only be a positive reversal, in that, Shenhav attempts to reconstruct the historical fusion of engineering and sociological discourses rather than elide such antecedents. The archaeo-genealogical focus of Shenhav's chapter reveals the extent to which discourses of organization theory are constructed 'from below' and highlights the extent to which "People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does" (Foucault in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983: 187). Thus, Shenhav regales his audience with Parson's unintentional distortion of Weber's concept of rationality and ideal type of bureaucracy "as a prescription for formal organizations and a recipe for corporate managers" (HOT: 196) concerned with "value consensus and effective functioning than with the role of conflicting material interests in domination" (HOT: 195). This 'peculiar translation' of Weber's theory of rationality, i.e. minus critical elements, has had a "tremendous influence on the emergence of American OT [and] should be understood in this ideological and epistemological context" (Shenhav, HOT: 191).

This dismantling and construction of an alternative account of the emergence of organization theory and important concepts within this canon reiterates the extent to which a thorough understanding of the context in which complex constellations of individual factors strike together and spark, or not, is necessary to comprehend the development and mutation of disciplinary formations. The emergence of organization theory, Shenhav reminds us, occurred under particular social and political conditions and appeared and became established often, as the result of surprises, as in detective stories. Shenhav's account of this emergence functions as a palliative to the uncritical acceptance of particular facets of organization theory that still remains palpable throughout the discipline (Jones, 2003). In a disciplinary environment where the "easy satisfaction of expectations, the harmonic fusion of an image with reality itself and the elision of tensions without placing undue demands on the audience" (Linstead, 2002: 660) is an inherent feature of (some) theoretical discussion, such historical excavation and the role that such exercises can play in encouraging the reinterpretation of the present is to be welcomed (Jacques 1996: 13). One debate that does appear to reflect the easy satisfaction of expectations, at least within the HOT, is that of incommensurability.

Incommensurability

Incommensurability is an issue that McKinley and Mone (HOT) have seen fit to return to within their paper in HOT. McKinley and Mone provide a useful review of various schools of thought within organization theory characterising these as either micro or macro perspectives. Their chapter represents a laudable attempt at meta-theorising, where the overriding objective is "to obtain a more profound understanding of extant…theory" (Ritzer, 1991: 17). On the side of the micro theoretical perspectives, McKinley and Mone discuss neo-contingency, resource dependence, and transaction

cost theory. Macro perspectives include, population ecology and neo-institutional theory. It is their argument that "all these schools[3] are founded on ambiguous theoretical constructs. While ambiguous theoretical constructs foster creativity in empirical research…they also preclude conclusive empirical testing of the schools that are organized around them…and make the schools incommensurable with one another" (McKinley and Mone, HOT: 346).

This argument appears to be perfectly plausible and indeed the definition of incommensurability utilised by McKinley and Mone reinforces this: "By 'incommensurable', we mean that there are no widely accepted standards by which the relative validity of different schools with competing claims can be judged" (HOT: 346). Extending while at the same time tempering their previous arguments for the development of a democratically built construct dictionary (e.g. McKinley and Mone, 1998: 176), akin to that proposed by Campbell (1920, 1957) for physics in the 1920s, McKinlay and Mone set forth outlining their thesis of the incommensurability of the various schools of thought, the general argument being as follows: "We submit that any efforts to assess the relative validity of these three explanations…would be problematic, due to construct ambiguity…Thus we reiterate the conclusion we arrived at above: construct ambiguity and incommensurability are major problems in any effort to compare organization theory schools of thought empirically" (McKinley and Mone, HOT: 357).

For example, in their examination of neo-contingency theory and transaction cost theory, they assert that concepts such as 'translation' or 'efficiency' "are formulated at such an abstract level that…their meaning is unclear and multiple interpretations are possible. This situation could be considered good for transaction cost theory in the sense that no individual empirical study, or even a body of studies is likely to constitute a falsification of the theory…However, it is not evident that the situation is good for organization theory as a whole, because construct ambiguity makes it difficult to assess the validity of transaction costs theory relative to other schools" (McKinley and Mone, HOT: 356).

The criticism I am going to make will be contentious, operate at an abstract level,[4] and is difficult to specifically tie to McKinley and Mone's chapter due to their frustrating tendency to assiduously avoid the citation of any philosophers of science whose views are associated with the issue of incommensurability (for example, Davidson, Feyerabend, Hattiangadi, Kuhn, Putnam, Shapere and so on), and who might have sensitised and advanced McKinlay and Mone's discussion of this issue; especially with regard to their own conceptual clarity regarding the incommensurability thesis, i.e. whether they are referring to semantic, methodological, or meta-incommensurability

---

3   I am assuming that schools of thought are commensurate with a research speciality and that a research specialty clusters around a paradigm. Research specialty is not equivalent to a discipline (Kuhn, 1970a).

4   Engaging in a nuanced discussion of the various forms of incommensurability and attempting to compare the content of different theories would require a separate paper and is currently being undertaken as part of a larger project. It is recognised that this endeavour is made more difficult in view of organization studies being multi-paradigmatic and synchronic in nature (Jackson and Carter, 1991) rather than mono-paradigm and diachronic.

resulting from referential, ontological difference between realism and non-realist (cf. Hoyningen-Huene, 1993). Nor do they explicitly locate their views in relation to Burrell and Morgan (1979). This renders it difficult for any major criticism of their views to be put forward and once more, indicates a lack of meta-theoretical analysis on the part of McKinley and Mone. In spite of this, it is worthwhile to reflect upon McKinley and Mone's understanding of incommensurability. Incommensurability is an issue which has vexed numerous scholars and has eventually found itself in a kind of theoretical limbo, although worthy commentary such as Jackson and Carter (1991) has advanced debate surrounding this topic. Brown (1998) manages to capture this sentiment nicely when he admits: "I'm still not quite sure if we finally sorted out the issues of incommensurability" (Brown, 1998: 374).

In order to engage with McKinley and Mone's argument I want to consider the extent to which McKinley and Mone hedge their thesis with qualification. For example, they hold the view that there are no widely accepted standards by which the relative validity of the claims of different schools can be made and that ambiguous theoretical constructs "preclude *conclusive* empirical testing of the schools that are organized around them" (McKinley and Mone, HOT: 346; emphasis added). Fine. There are no widely held standards against which different claims can be evaluate. Nor are we likely to ever have conclusive empirical testing of various theories as there will always be conflicting viewpoints, I would hope, in a discipline as variegated as organization studies. So, while we may never have conclusive empirical testing this does mean that such comparisons cannot be made, only that each group will be politically motivated to support their research speciality via *ad hoc* manoeuvres and qualifications. Incommensurable theories produced by incommensurable schools of thought make different claims about a specific subject of research and these will not be literally translatable into one another. If we want to compare two theories, it is necessary to learn the language of the theory and become bi or multilingual (Oberheim and Hoyningen-Huene, 1997), the difficulties of which, are well documented (Kelemen, 1995; Lincoln, 1990).

Of course, there are differences between translating a language and understanding it, as where it is possible to fail to translate from a foreign language to the mother tongue, it does not necessarily follow that it is impossible to *understand* the language (Feyerabend, 1987). Both Kuhn and Feyerabend have argued that comparing two incommensurable theories is difficult and more complicated than comparing commensurable theories. This is because commensurable theories share a similar apparatus of concepts and, as such, the empirical precision of the predictions made by each theory will be relatively clear. In the case of incommensurable theories this comparison via superimposition, as Kuhn's (2000) example of 'phlogiston' illustrates, is rendered complex because incommensurable theories conceptualise the same phenomena differently. Incommensurable theories cannot be compared through the adjudication of some common measure because different paradigms are complex constructions and any comparison will, of necessity, be multidimensional in nature. This does not mean that they cannot be compared (Sharrock and Read, 2002).

However, the question remains whether comparison via 'empirical' testing is desirable in light of recent suggestions that the paradigm debate needs to be 'managed' if the incommensurability associated with theory pluralism is to be neutralised for the benefit

of managerial decision-making (McKinley and Mone, 1998; Scherer, 1998; Scherer and Dowling, 1995). Empirical comparison in this environment might lead to a Stalinist purge similar to that fantasized about by Pfeffer (1993) and used to discipline emergent forms of inquiry. What I hope is clear is that the empirical and political argumentation surrounding incommensurability and commensurability equally merit extended examination as they in the case of McKinley and Mone's commentary deficient since it fails to account for recent advances in the philosophy of science or question the politics of the 'management' of consensus on the issue of incommensurability that they desire and assimilation of paradigm debate into the mode of production of advanced capitalism (Fuller, 2000).

In contrast to the version of incommensurability that McKinley and Mone advance which assumes that conceptual ambiguity precludes empirical testing and thus, by implication, that conceptual clarity and definitional consensus is required and will facilitate comparison and evaluation, thereby ridding organization theory of incommensurability (HOT: 353, 357, 360, 365, 367; see also McKinley and Mone, 1998: 171). Feyerabend has argued that the issue of incommensurability "*turns up* when we sharpen our concepts in the manner demanded by the logical positivists and their offspring" and "*disappears* when we use concepts as scientists use them, in an open, ambiguous and often counter-intuitive manner. Incommensurability is a problem for philosophers not for scientists, though the latter might become *psychologically* confused by unusual things" (Feyerabend, 1993: 211, emphasis in original). In addition to this reversal of McKinley and Mone's argument, Feyerabend bemoans the uncritical acceptance of precise concepts and rules that, if followed slavishly, may appear to be the only correct representations of thought. These, he argues, are only adhered to because they represent the criteria against which research is evaluated. This, he argues, serves to stifle the imagination and creativity of a researcher (Feyerabend, 1987) and contributes to the production of research "devoid of ideas, and full of fear" (Feyerabend, 1999b: 189).

Of course the systemization McKinley and Mone seek is understandable since conceptual clarity is useful for the puzzle-solving activity of (hyper)normal science and allows new researchers to develop linguistic and practical proficiency in technical language-games relatively quickly (Thoenig, 1982). Equally though, the conceptual clarity that McKinley and Mone desire, has the potential to become a suffocating straightjacket since the "more we try to be precise and exact, the less we are able to say and the harder we try to follow a rigorous theoretical system, the more we are temped to fill it out with uninspired observations" (Van Maanen, 1995: 139). Let us hope that rigor and clarity functions to highlight anomaly and stimulate the destruction of restrictive theoretical systems "by new emancipating, and at the same time, enslaving conceptions" (Berlin, 1962: 19). Even so, I'm not optimistic about subscribing to anything close to a falsificationist view, no matter how sophisticated.

Let me be clear about the incommensurability thesis that McKinley and Mone ambiguously draw upon. It does raise legitimate questions about conceptual change in science, even though the implications for the philosophy of science are less extreme than is typically argued. "Reference change is not so radical as to preclude referential connections between theories. Translation failure prevents neither communication nor

comparison" (Sankey, 1994: 220). Provided that is, those associated actually want to communicate with each other, rather than talk past one another (Morgan, 1983: 17). These tendencies are, of course, not restricted to organization studies debates within the natural sciences provide reassurance that incommensurable differences can form the basis for profitable communication. Take for example, the paradigmatic transformation of classical physics to that of quantum physics, a radical transformation in the history of science. The protagonists in this debate, Bohr and Einstein (among others), discussed every stage in this debate: "Einstein raised an objection; Bohr was mortified, thought intensely, found an answer, told Einstein, and Einstein accepted the answer. Einstein raised another objection; Bohr was again mortified, thought intensely-and so on" (Feyerabend, 1999a: 267).

However it would be wise not to view this example as the norm for academic discourse since the ideological nature of paradigmatic affiliation will ensure that a reconciliation of differences is not easily forthcoming (Jackson and Carter, 1991). Communication will be, at best, partial. To understand why this is the case, we have to remind ourselves of the rationale behind Kuhn's original formulation of the incommensurability thesis which he saw as a challenge to a realist perspective and the assumption of ontological convergence. This, he contrasted to what can loosely be termed 'non-realist' view with these two different parties holding distinct metaphysical assumptions (see Hoyningen-Huene, 1993: 34; translator's note, 62-66, 121-125, 267-271). Incommensurability between these parties is most usefully seen as a form of meta-incommensurability and is a consequence of the referential differences between terms such as 'world' or 'reality' that exist for these groups. This throws into doubt the relationship seen to exist between theory and reality and the ontological status of the object referred to and results in "partial or incomplete communication, the talking-through-each-other" (Kuhn, 1970b: 232) with "debate about paradigm choice…necessarily circular" (Kuhn, 1970a: 94). The only way out of the argumentative circularity that inhibits meta-theoretical and meta-incommensurable theory choice is, as gestured to previously, to become bi or multilingual. This, Fabian (2000), reminds us consumes more resources than a conventional research education or project and is likely to discourage new researchers, particularly when the various pressures I have already mentioned are factored in.

To conclude this section, since "so few of the radical claims associated with the incommensurability thesis are warranted by the phenomenon of conceptual change [or ambiguity]…it is not clear that there is anything left for the word 'incommensurability' to stand for…there seems little point in saying that theories are incommensurable" (Sankey, 1994: 221). Such conclusions are not simply the preserve of the philosophy of science literature but can also be found within the marketing literature (e.g. Hunt, 2003: 229).

Conclusion

These insights drawn from the history and philosophy of science serve to highlight the epistemological fragility of the argument presented by Tsoukas and Knudsen that this volume contains contributions that have actively sought to meta-theoretically reflect

upon the present status of organization theory. McKinley and Mone's conceptualisation of incommensurability has drawn attention to the lack of any substantive attempt by the authors to engage in meta-theorisation, i.e. through the inclusion of "new developments…in the philosophy, sociology, and history of science" (Tsoukas and Knudsen, HOT: 3), in their analysis.

In reading the papers reviewed here I repeatedly found myself asking whether the discussion of metatheoretical analysis or incommensurability was interesting. If the criterion of interesting is conceived in terms of challenging taken-for-granted assumptions, I would say not. Less interesting ideas, Smith (2003) proposes, and I am inclined to agree, tend to be those that are consistent with and reaffirm already held beliefs and there does seem to be, a willingness within the HOT to perpetuate ideas that offer comfort, rather than cast doubt, on what is a politically contentious issue. Yet in spite of the conservatism inherent in Tsoukas and Knudsen's attempt to distance organization theory from its predecessors and McKinley and Mone's reaffirmation of incommensurable disciplinary categories, there are chapters present within this text that seek to question the historical formation and perpetuation of these tendencies.

Undeniably the inclusion of Shenhav's chapter is due to the increasing capital associated with such an approach and the availability of exemplars of this style of research against which potential contributions can be evaluated. It is also the result of adhering to the tacit rules of the academic game. Shenhav minimises criticism of the institutional form and location of organization studies by carefully noting how business schools in the United Kingdom differ from their American counterparts: "they allowed for other voices to be heard and a wider range of theoretical options" (Shenhav, HOT: 203). But equally, Shenhav refuses to consider his account as an authoritative conclusion, instead preferring to see it as a contribution to the critical literature "with the objectives of unmasking power relations and control structures" (Shenhav, HOT: 204). This is a task, Burrell argues, should remain high on the agenda of organization studies especially in view of the "three billion people on the planet who remain outside of conventional notions of organization" (Burrell, HOT: 534).

It is perhaps not unexpected then, that McKinley and Mone fail to extend their analyses further into potentially provocative areas, as this may incite calls of hereticism and heretics within both the natural and social sciences are "still made to suffer from the most severe sanctions this relatively tolerant civilization has to offer" (Feyerabend 1999b: 182). Just ask Immanuel Velikovsky (see De Grazia, 1978; Mcaulay, 1978), Bjorn Lomborg (2001; cf. *Grist*, 2001; *Kuro5hin*, 2003), or Copernicus (Zaltman and Lawther, 1979) and others whose work has posed potential challenges to established beliefs. The foregoing scrutiny of either Tsoukas and Knudsen or McKinley and Mone's chapters should not be taken as a purely negative summary. I prefer to view it as an affirmation of the benefits that can potentially accrue to organization theory when new perspectives on issues such as incommensurability are drawn from other disciplines in order to encourage the transgression of current categories of thought. Transgression then, can be seen as the affirmation of difference, with transgressors "those whose words and images are picked from familiar forms, but who twist and distort those forms in order to place before us a monster that is nevertheless born of our flesh and blood"

(May, 1992: 14) and this, Giddens has maintained, is "the very life blood of conceptual development" (1993: 1).

After reading the HOT my view is that it is an edifice whose marketing imagery, in the limited number of cases considered here (with the exception of Burrell and Shenhav's chapter), triumphs over substantive content and represents little more than a parody of efforts conducted within, for example, sociology. This is especially disappointing as the HOT has demonstrative value, derived from the symbolic capital of its contributors and as such these efforts at meta-theoretical analysis may be taken as indicative of the appropriate standard for such analysis. Which, they most assuredly, are not. The overriding lesson to be derived from the HOT is that, "*ideas and arguments should be evaluated independently of their origins,* [and] *we must first learn of those origins*…Ignorance may appear…due to the surface clarity of relatively contemporary texts, which effectively discourages any probing of their sources" (Fuller, 2003: 71-72; emphasis in original). I can only hope that this text does not function as an exemplar of meta-theoretical analysis but rather as indicative of the problems associated with trusting that which purports to be meta-theoretically informed.

references

Apple, M.W. and L.K. Christian-Smith (1991) 'The Politics of the Textbook', in M.W. Apple and L.K. Christian-Smith (eds.) *The Politics of the Textbook*. London: Routledge, 1-21.

Berlin, I. (1962) 'Does Political Theory Still Exist?', in P. Laslett and W.G. Runciman (eds.) *Philosophy, Politics and Society*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1-27.

Black, I. (2004) *The Dead*. London: Headline.

Boje, D.M. (1993) 'On Being Postmodern in the Academy: An Interview with Stewart Clegg', *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 2(2): 191-200.

Brown, S. (1998) 'Unlucky for Some: Slacker Scholarship and the Well-Wrought Turn', in B.B. Stern (ed.) *Representing Consumers: Voices, Views and Visions*. London: Routledge, 365-383.

Burrell, G. (2003) 'The Future of Organization Theory', in H. Tsoukas and C. Knudsen (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 525-535.

Burrell, G. and G. Morgan (1979) *Sociological Paradigms and Organization Analysis*. London: Heinemann.

Calás, M. and L. Smircich (1999) 'Past Postmodernism? Reflections and Tentative Directions', *Academy of Management Review*, 24(4): 649-671.

Campbell, N.R. (1920) *Physics: The Elements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Campbell, N.R. (1957) *Foundations of Science: The Philosophy and Theory of Experiment*. New York: Dover.

Canguilhem, G. (1994) 'The Death of Man, or the Exhaustion of the Cogito?', in G. Gutting (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 71-91.

Case, P. (2004) 'The Blind People and the Elephant', in Y. Gabriel (ed.) *Myths, Stories, and Organizations* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 49-65.

Davis, C. (2004) *After Poststructuralism*. London: Routledge.

De Certeau, M. (1988) *The Writing of* History, trans. T. Conley, New York: Columbia University Press.

De Grazia, A. (1978) *The Velikovsky Affair*, revised ed. London: Abacus.

Dreyfus, H.L. and P. Rabinow (1983) *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Fabian, F.H. (2000) 'Keeping the Tension: Pressures to Keep Controversy in the Management Discipline', *Academy of Management Review*, 25(2): 350-371.

Feyerabend, P. (1987) *Farewell to Reason*. London: Verso.

Feyerabend, P. (1993) *Against Method*, 3rd ed. London: Verso.

Feyerabend, P. (1999a) *Conquest of Abundance*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Feyerabend, P. (1999b) 'How to Defend Society Against Science', in J. Preston (ed.) *Paul K. Feyerabend: Knowledge, Science and Relativism: Philosophical Papers Volume 3*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 181-191.

Foucault, M. (1984) 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in P. Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader*. London: Penguin, 76-100.

Foucault, M. (2000) 'On the Archaeology of the Sciences: Response to the Epistemology Circle', in J.D. Faubion (ed.) *Aesthetics: Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*, Vol.2. London: Penguin, 297-333.

Fuller, S. (2000) *The Governance of Science*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Fuller, S. (2003) *Kuhn V. Popper*. Cambridge: Icon.

Giddens, A. (1993) *New Rules of Sociological Method*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity.

Gioia, D. (Personal Communication) 11/11/2003.

Grist (2001) [http://www.gristmagazine.com/books/lomborg121201.asp], visited 5th February 2004.

Hernes, T. (2002) 'Boundary Behaviour and Organizational Dynamics', in A.V. Iterson., W. Masterbroek., T. Newton., and D. Smith (eds.) *The Civilized Organization: Norbert Elias and the Future of Organization Studies*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 99-115.

Hinings, C.R. and R. Greenwood (2002) 'Disconnects and Consequences in Organization Theory?', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47: 411-421.

Hoyningen-Huene, P. (1993) *Reconstructing Scientific Revolutions: Thomas S. Kuhn's Philosophy of Science*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Hunt, S.D. (2003) *Controversy in Marketing Theory: For Reason, Realism, Truth, and Objectivity*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe.

Jackson, N. and P. Carter (1991) 'In Defence of Paradigm Incommensurability', *Organization Studies*, 12(1): 109-127.

Jacques, R. (1996) *Manufacturing the Employee: Management Knowledge from the 19th to 21st Centuries*. London: Sage.

Jones, C. (2003) 'Theory After the Postmodern Condition', *Organization*, 10(3): 503-525.

Kelemen, M.L. (1995) *The Role of Leadership in Achieving Total Quality Management in the UK Service Sector: A Multi-Paradigm Study*. Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, Oxford University.

Kelemen, M. and J. Hassard (2003) 'Paradigm Plurality: Exploring Past, Present, and Future Trends', in R. Westwood and S. Clegg (eds.) *Debating Organization: Point-Counterpoint in Organization Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell, 73-82.

Kuhn, T.S. (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kuhn, T.S. (1970a) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kuhn, T.S. (1970b) 'Reflections on my Critics', in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds.) *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge: Proceedings of the International Colloquium of the Philosophy of Science, London, 1965*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 231-278.

Kuhn, T.S. (1977) *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Kuhn, T.S. (1996) *The Structure of Scientific* Revolutions, 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kuhn, T.S. (2000) *The Road Since 'Structure': Philosophical Essays, 1970-1993*, ed. J. Conant and J. Haugeland. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kuro5hin (2003) [http://www.kuro5hin.org/story/2003/12/20/193036/63], visited 4th February 2004.

Letiche, H. (2004) 'Jean-François Lyotard', in S. Linstead (ed.) *Organization Theory and Postmodern Thought*. London: Sage, 64-87.

Lewis, M. (1996) 'Managing the Paradoxes of Multiparadigm Research: An Illustrative Study and Self-Reflection, *Proceedings for the International Academy of Business Disciplines*, April, 669-673.

Lewis, M. and A. Grimes (1999) 'Metatriangulation: Building Theory from Multiple Paradigms', *Academy of Management Review*, 24(4): 672-691.

Lincoln, Y.S. (1990) 'The Making of a Constructivist: A Remembrance of Transformations Past', in Egon G. Guba (eds.) *The Paradigm Dialog*. Newbury Park: Sage, 67-87.

Linstead, S. (2002) 'Organizational Kitsch', *Organization*, 9(4): 657-682.

Lomborg, B. (2001) *The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mannix, E. (2003) 'Editor's Comments: Conflict and Conflict Resolution – A Return to Theorizing', *Academy of Management Review*, 28(4): 543-546.

March, J.G. (1996) 'Continuity and Change in Theories of Organizational Action', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41(2): 278-287.

Masterman, M. (1970) 'The Nature of a Paradigm', in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds.) *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge: Proceedings of the International Colloquium of the Philosophy of Science, London, 1965*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 59-89.

May, T. (1993) *Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics, and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Mcaulay, R. (1978) 'Velikovsky and the Infrastructure of Science: The Metaphysics of a Close Encounter', *Theory and Society*, 6: 313-342.

McKinley, W. and M.A. Mone (1998) 'The Re-construction of Organization Studies: Wrestling with Incommensurability', *Organization*, 5(2): 169-189.

McKinley, W. and M.A. Mone (2003) 'Micro and Macro Perspectives in Organization Theory: A Tale of Incommensurability', in H. Tsoukas and C. Knudsen (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 345-372.

Mills, C.W. (1959) *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Morgan, G. (1983) 'Research as Engagement: A Personal View', in G. Morgan (ed.) *Beyond Method: Strategies for Social Research*. Beverly Hills: Sage, 11-18.

Morrow, R.A. (1994) *Critical Theory and Methodology*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Oberheim, E. and P. Hoyningen-Huene (1997) 'Incommensurability, Realism and Meta-Incommensurability', *Theoria*, 12(3): 447-465.

Organization (2003) 'Why Neo-Disciplinary: Why Now?', *Organization*, 10(3): 403-420.

Orwell, G. (1964) *1984*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Parker, M. (2000) 'The Sociology of Organizations and the Organization of Sociology: Some Reflections on the Making of a Division of Labour', *The Sociological Review:* 124-146.

Parker, M. (2002) '"Future Challenges in Organization Theory?" Amnesia and the Production of Ignorance', in J.S. Jun (ed.) *Rethinking Administrative Theory: The Challenges of New Century*. Westport: Praeger, 37-52.

Ritzer, G. (1991) *Metatheorizing in Sociology*. Lexington: Lexington Books.

Ritzer, G. (2001) *Explorations in Social Theory: From Metatheorizing to Rationalization*. London: Sage.

Sankey, H. (1994) *The Incommensurability Thesis*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Scherer, A.G. (1998) 'Pluralism and Incommensurability in Strategic Management and Organization Theory: A Problem in Search of a Solution', *Organization*, 5(2): 147-168.

Scherer, A.G. and M.G. Dowling (1995) 'Towards a Reconciliation of the Theory-Pluralism in Strategic Management – Incommensurability and the Constructivist Approach of the Erlangen School', *Advances in Strategic Management*, 12A: 195-247.

Sharrock, W. and R. Read (2002) *Kuhn: Philosopher of Scientific Revolution*. Cambridge: Polity.

Shenhav, Y. (2003) 'The Historical and Epistemological Foundations of Organization theory: Fusing Sociological with Engineering Discourse', in H. Tsoukas and C. Knudsen (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 183-209.

Smith, D.C. (2003) 'The Importance and Challenges of Being Interesting', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 31(3): 319-322.

Sutton, R.I. (1997) 'The Virtues of Closet Qualitative Research', *Organization Science*, 8(1): 97-106.

Thoenig, J.C. (1982) 'Discussion Note: Research Management and Management Research', *Organization Studies*, 3(3): 269-275.

Thompson, C.J. (2002) 'A Re-Inquiry on Re-inquiries: A Postmodern Proposal for a Critical-Reflexive Approach', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29: 142-145.

Tsoukas, H. (1994) 'What is Management: An Outline of a Metatheory', *British Journal of Management*, 5: 289-301.

Tsoukas, H. and C. Knudsen (2003) 'Introduction: The Need for Meta-Theoretical Reflection in Organization Theory', in H. Tsoukas and C. Knudsen (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-36.

Van Maanen, J. (1995) 'Style as Theory', *Organization Science*, 6(1): 133-143.

Weaver, G.R. and D.A. Gioia (1994), 'Paradigms Lost: Incommensurability vs. Structurationist Inquiry', *Organization Studies*, 15(4): 565-590.

Zaltman, G., C.R.A. Pinson, and R. Angelmar (1973) *Metatheory and Consumer Research*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Zaltman, G. and K. Lawther (1979) 'Let's at Least be Interesting: The Art of Challenging Assumption', in O.C. Fennell, S.W. Brown and C.W. Lamb, jr. (eds.) *Conceptual and Theoretical Developments in Marketing*. Chicago: American Marketing Association, 501-516.
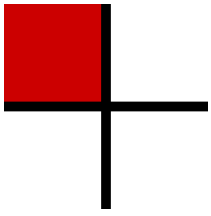
the author   Mark Tadajewski is currently a research student at the Management Centre, University of Leicester. His research interests coalesce around issues implicated in the production, marketing and consumption of theory.
Address: Management Centre, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH.
E-mail: mt66@le.ac.uk

Progress, Pessimism, Critique

Peter Fleming

review of: Warwick Organizational Behaviour Staff (eds.) (2001) *Organizational Studies: Critical Perspectives on Business and Management* (4 Vols.). London and New York: Routledge. (HB: pp.2121, £525.00, ISBN: 0415215536).

> The impression of fulfillment and of end, the muffled feeling that carries and animates our thought, and perhaps lulls it to sleep with the facility of its promises, and makes us believe that something new is about to begin, something that we glimpse only as a thin line of light low on the horizon – that feeling and impression are perhaps not ill founded. (Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*)

Introduction

The appearance of *Organization Studies: Critical Perspectives on Business and Management*, an extensive and weighty collection (including around eighty pieces) edited by the Warwick Organizational Behaviour Staff (or 'WOBS'), is indicative of the continuing institutionalization of 'critical' perspectives in organization studies. Drawing on scholarship both within and outside the field (e.g., Z. Bauman, S. Lukes, D. Harvey, M. Foucault, P. Feyerabend, etc.), this collection presents the reader with a valuable sample of some of the most interesting critical material published over the last forty years. The collection has been selected on the basis of their 'hard to find' or obscure standing within the academy, with the expressed aim of eschewing well-known pieces and focusing on influential articles and book chapters not easily accessible to students in common texts (hence the absence of Marx, Weber, among others.). This is a sensible way to employ the space provided by such an anthology, and it will definitely be helpful for students and seasoned researchers alike to have classics like S. Marglin's *What do Bosses Do?* (Volume One: 'Modes of Management'), L. Humphries' *Tearoom Trade* (Volume Two: 'Objectivity and its Other') or S. Milgram's *Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority* (Volume Three: 'Selves and Subjects') in one easily accessible location.

Apart from some minor inconsistencies and duplication of themes across the volumes (for example, feminism is discussed in both volumes two and three with little integration by the editors, as is resistance in volumes three and four), the structure of the collection *in toto* holds together reasonably well. Each sub-editorial preface relates their volume back to the *modus operandi* statement in the *General Introduction* and makes a good attempt to integrate the individual pieces in relation to this editorial directive. Individually, every volume develops a specific theme that the editors flag as salient to the reader interested in the critique of contemporary organizations and management. The first volume, titled 'Modes of Management', deals with the concept of management as practice and ideology and reproduces contributions aiming to 'upend' assumptions underlying much mainstream managerialism (with papers by K.W. Hoskin and R.H. Macve, R. Jackall, T. Watson, H. Willmott, etc.). While the second volume, 'Objectivity and its Other' gives perhaps too much space to the already dated 'paradigm wars' that occupied the field in the early 1990s, it tackles epistemological issues and especially the dominance of positivism in organizational science (including work by J. Van Maanen, K. Gergen, E. P. Thompson, K. E. Ferguson and J. Acker). Volume three centres on the topic of 'Selves and Subjects' and is concerned with how the concept of subjectivity has been increasingly theorized and developed in critical research (with contributions by N. Rose, E. Goffman, J. Pringle, C. Grey, D. Kondo, R. Leidner, etc.). And the forth volume is entitled 'Evil Empires?' It groups together papers that highlight the political consequences of the burgeoning corporations that now prowl the global marketplace, mass culture and everyday life (including articles by E. Abrahamson, B. Townley, P. Thompson and S. Ackroyd, and L. Taylor and P. Walton).

While the collection is eclectic and varied, presenting a rich and colourful array of critical research in organization studies and beyond, a central organizing principle (or thematic) is at work here. This principle is informed by a self-professed *poststructuralist* angle on social critique and critical organization studies (an editorial direction that may sit uncomfortably beside papers like S. Marglin's, for example). Indeed, the image of Foucault in particular looms large in its choice of content and the meta-narrative binding each volume to the broader project. It is in the ominous spirit of an anti-modernist, anti-enlightenment, anti-progress and anti-emancipatory stance that the editors proceed to define what they mean by 'critical' in the *General Introduction* and the suggested protocols readers should practice when wading through each volume (a similar explanation of this version of critique can be found in Burrell, 2001). This statement is repeated in each volume as a reminder to readers about how to go about digesting the contributions. Given this repetition and the somewhat surprising analysis in the *General Introduction*, this review essay will explore WOBS' concept of critique in more detail as a way of assessing the overall tenor of the collection.

That Evil Idea called 'Progress'

The definitive elements of *critical* organization studies as opposed to more mainstream approaches has been thoughtfully discussed in the field as the perspective develops an

institutional identity (e.g., see Alvesson and Deetz, 1996; Fournier and Grey, 2000, Gabriel, 2001, etc.). In the WOBS collection, the editors too endeavour to define what is meant by critique in the *General Introduction*. Here, critical organization studies is said to generally consist of six distinct features, of which WOBS subscribe to only the first four. These are: 1) The *political* (recognizing the ways in which power and domination is manifest in organizations), 2) The *iconoclastic* (an attempt to break down dominant social imagery and icons associated with mainstream management thought), 3) The *epistemological* (a movement away from the dominant positivist paradigm of social and organizational research), 4) The *investigative* (a process of surfacing and bringing to light issues that may have been silenced or dismissed in other research), 5) The *revelatory* (a commitment to unlocking the ideological obfuscations of dominant discourses), and 6) The *emancipatory* (a political stance that champions freedom from arbitrary domination and exploitation). While positively identifying their brand of critical organization studies with the first four elements, WOBS are not so keen on endorsing the last two. The task of revelation, for example, is considered inappropriate because it wrongly assumes that there is a truthful subject 'behind' power relations that can be reached through reason. The notion of revelation also implies that intellectuals are bearers of the Truth that they dispense to the duped masses, a proposition that WOBS will have no truck with. They write, "it is difficult in these post-modern times to hang on to what is itself an illusion, that only a small group of intellectuals is in possession of the one and only Truth" (2001: xxxiii). In many ways, this is a fair enough assertion by WOBS and one that is often required in order to check the continuing hubris in much critical analysis.

The *emancipatory* element that is said to be an important part of the tradition of critical theory (especially in the Frankfurt School) and early models of critical organization studies (that drew mainly on Marx and Weber) is similarly jettisoned. The concept is considered to be fundamentally untenable in these 'post-modern times' because it rests on a notion of *progress*. Indeed, the *General Introduction* expresses the WOBS view that the idea of progress is one of the most dangerous vestiges of the Enlightenment project because it presumes we can move forward towards a space free from power and domination. But, as WOBS intimate, the march of 'progress' has also introduced the gulags, the holocaust, environmental degradation and a frenzied nuclear age. The very assumption of progress, WOBS write, is a dangerous myth that they strongly encourage us to abandon:

> It is important for us to belabour the point then that we are not optimistic about the idea of 'progress'. Indeed, we are deeply suspicious of the concept of progress at all. We see it, too, as a myth – a comforting myth from which human optimism may spring 'eternal', or at least spring from the enlightenment. This set of readings does not buy into the concept of progress. It seeks to 'boil the carcass of the old order' and engage in negations in an ongoing but ultimately doomed challenge to the present. We are anti-Panglossian and/but profoundly pessimistic. (2001: xxxiv)

And in the *Introduction* to Volume Four ('Evil Empires?'), it is similarly stated that critique is not about struggling to 'move ahead', but challenging or at least avoiding the poisonous fairytale of progress:

> Does critique of its self lead to revelation and emancipation or, on the contrary to further critique? In this volume, we take the latter view. It is not sufficient to critique managerialism – we have to critique the critique, for by not doing so, we fall back into the myth of progress. We are not

therefore optimistic that by critiquing managerialist approaches we enable a different sort of progress occur – a progress towards a more humanistic and progressive sort of work organization (WOBS, 2001: 1592).

Here we can detect a poignant pessimism regarding the idea of political, social and economic progress in relation to organizational forms, economies and structures. Indeed, as far as WOBS are concerned, because we cannot truly escape the clutches of power and domination, the assumption that we can progress out of servitude is at best a sham and at worst a form of thought control in and of itself. They go on to argue:

> Since power is everywhere, the myth of human liberty is just that. The manumission of slaves in the USA gave them new won freedom – the freedom to starve. Emancipation from something may almost certainly involve enslavement to its opposite. Emancipation almost always means enslavement for something or someone. There are few grounds for liberationary optimism as chronological time kicks us into the 21st Century. (WOBS, 2001: xxxiv)

It is this pessimism regarding the possibility of 'emancipatory progress' that WOBS frame the four volumes, providing the lens through which the reader approaches each contribution. While there are definite advantages to this mode of analysis, for this reviewer at least, there are three key concerns that come to mind when reading WOBS' manifesto. First, there seems to be a gross ethical 'equivalentizing' of domination so that it is impossible to distinguish between slavery, democracy, socialism, communal bartering, etc. This is a good example of what Adorno (1966/73) called 'identity thinking' in which important and qualitative differences are forcibly rendered equal. Because each social form involves power, then they must be as 'bad' as each other. The implied corollary is we cannot favour or support one over the other. Of course, this is a very problematic method of studying power, politics and social organization because it universalizes an abstraction ('power') and fails to identify the substantive particularizations of this abstraction, its various forms, configurations, formats, etc. that press at the wall of the concept. Surely the mechanisms of domination found in pre-civil war American slavery, for example, are somehow different to, say, those associated with the modern middleclass professional. Both involve power and domination, but not in the same way. If 'emancipation' and 'progress' are defined as 'the escape from power', then the *General Introduction* is indeed correct in its pessimism; this would be a dangerous and simplistic illusion. But if, as Laclau (1996) states, emancipation is a *contextual* reconfiguration of power by subaltern stakeholders that simultaneously reaches out to a socially necessary *universal* (the non-exploitive, the egalitarian, etc.), then we must be circumspect about how we conceptualise the notion of freedom. We ought to see it not in terms of an acontextual absolute, but as a kind of *culturally specific absolute* that may be possible to attain in a limited sense.

The second concern with WOBS' analysis is the implicit conservativism lurking in the text. Because power is deemed to be everywhere, this means that there can be no such thing as emancipatory progress because political subjects merely move from one set of dominating power relations to another. Therefore, it is futile to imagine or envisage any 'alternative' to the present because it will be just as oppressive as what we have now. Or, to continue the example in the above excerpt, given that manumission is a myth, the slave can only hope for continued subordination or the prospect of starvation. This is, of course, a very difficult logic to accept. Let's take the contemporary organization of work. Based upon only a cursory glance of employment conditions around the world,

one can easily reel off a raft of ways in which organization's could be 'better' in relation to remuneration, gender, the environment, decision-making opportunities, democracy, etc. And I believe this can be done without hubris or insipid moralizing. In this sense, the critical organization studies that WOBS propose is far behind the progressive politics that are actually occurring in and around work organizations today as practiced by unions, volunteer groups and community action associations that understand the vast differences in how power can be organized.

The third reservation relates to the question of 'why bother?' with critical organization studies if we cannot make statements about how employment realities might be somehow 'better' or 'improved' compared to the current state of affairs. Given their statements on the topic of critique thus far, WOBS too ask this question in relation to their own approach: "Why bother developing a critical approach? … contestation is life affirming. Critique can even be fun" (2001: xxxv). While this does have a credible Nietzschean tone about it in which criticism is about affirming life rather than denying it, it does seem, to this reviewer at least, a little introspective. For example, one possible implication of the statement is that critical organization studies is not so much directed at the realities of work institutions or those employed in them, but the desires of researchers themselves. We do critique for mainly personal reasons (and even self-gratification), rather than because we feel that a certain story about reality ought to be told. While it is certainly important to be reflexive about the role of the researcher or theorist in relation to the researched (see Lincoln, 1993), surely a commitment to a critical perspective is more than a cloistered and somewhat solipsistic 'affirmation of life' and 'even having fun'.

Historical and Political Pessimism

The pessimism towards the notion of progress in the WOBS *General Introduction* reflects a variegated tradition of scholarship that is worth exploring in order to gain a better understanding of the issues being raised here. In critical and radical theory more generally there has always been a deeply pessimistic suspicion about the notion of progress – especially the assumption that Western civilization in particular can be depicted as a series of successive stages in which it finally reaches the 'end of history' in the form of liberal capitalism. A pivotal moment in the history of this pessimism was Marx's break with the utopian socialists. As Balibar (1995) maintains in his superb analysis of Marx's philosophy of time and revolution, it is disappointing that his work is so often dismissed as a simple-minded proponent of a teleological view of history in which the laws of social progress automatically propel us towards some preordained future. Although we can certainly find elements of this view in some of his early political writings, he generally maintained a critical distance from the 'ideology of advancement' in bourgeois political philosophy, as well as the radical socialism of the likes of Saint-Simon and Proudhon. Indeed, in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847/1976), he critiques Proudhon's optimistic theorization of historical movement in which a gagged social justice is posited as a prime causal mechanism. Marx's contrary suggestion is that a survey of human civilization only confirms the lamentable principle that "it is always the bad side that in the end triumphs over the good side. It is the bad

side that produces movement which makes history" (Marx, 1847/1976: 174). In other words, it is the bad side that makes struggle and politics the ultimate horizon of human activity.

For Marx, the fundamental problem with utopian versions of social critique is that it envisages a better social formation by retroactively inscribing it in history. That is to say, 'the good' is assumed to be a steadfast historical undercurrent that will one day reveal its true hand in the dawn of a new era of freedom. This kind of utopianism is always looking over its shoulder for cues. In Marx's view, this was a rather naïve and juvenile assumption, which he had given up on, especially by the time that *Capital* (1867/1976) was being prepared (*Grundrisse*) and subsequently written. Marx was also critical of the ideas of progress proffered by the bourgeois economic philosophers. In a similar fashion to the utopian socialists, Bentham and Mill also had their eye on the past, construing all hitherto social history as a mere artificial prelude to a naturally human present (i.e. capitalism). For Bentham and Mill, "there are only two kinds of institutions, the artificial and the natural. The institutions of feudalism are the artificial institutions, those of the bourgeoisie natural…thus there has been a history, but there is no longer any" (Marx, 1847/1976: 174).

It is this dialectical understanding of social development that made such an impact on the first generation of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. Adorno and Horkheimer's (1947/1973) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a cultural criticism born in the enormity of devastating world war, concentration camps, imperialism and rapacious financial crisis. The enlightenment had promised so much but delivered death and mayhem on a gigantic scale. The main target of this dialectical criticism was not only capitalism but modernity generally. The dialectic of the enlightenment is simple to discern: science generates improved means of preserving life but at the same time weapons of mass destruction; capitalism produces a level of wealth never before witnessed, but also pseudo-human wage-slaves, etc. The history of progress is indeed a nightmare that we are trying to wake up from, and Adorno (in his characteristically acerbic tone) even goes so far as to attempt to "free dialectics from affirmative traits" (Adorno, 1966/1973: xix), leading to a kind of unqualified 'bad on bad' image of history.

This pessimism is perhaps most famously articulated by a fringe member of the Frankfurt School, Walter Benjamin. In 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', Benjamin reformulates Marx's principle that history advances by its bad side. The essay argues that the 'cultural treasures' of modernity and capitalism must be viewed with 'cautious detachment' for "there is no document of civilization that is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (Benjamin, 1940/1970: 258). Benjamin's messianic and 'wizened' historical materialism recognizes the irony of propounding a progressive politics in a milieu that has perfected misery with mathematical precision. This reflexive pessimism is captured in one of Benjamin's best known excerpts in which he employs the Klee Painting, *Angelus Novus*, purchased by Benjamin in 1910 for his study:

> A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one perceives the angel of history. His face is towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon

> wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin, 1940/1970: 259-260)

We must place this thesis in its broader social circumstances. It was written in 1940 when the Nazis were rampaging across the European continent. Indeed, this was literally a geography of fire and for the Jewish-Marxist literary critic, a space that represented the culmination of a brief and catastrophic era in enlightenment thought. The angel of history is all that is *novus* (new, inexperienced and not yet 'wizened'). Its apocalyptic wingspan is caught within the raging gale of progress and change, and as a result, nothing settles for long before being uprooted and wrecked – this is the ironic blindness (its back is facing the future) of the enlightenment tradition (also see Böhm, 2001). For sure, a similar pessimism regarding the assumption that history is about the movement towards a better society can also be found in the work of Nietzsche (morality), Weber (rationalization) and Foucault (psychiatry and punishment). This sort of pessimism is very important for critical thinking. The name of progress has so often been deployed as an ideological weapon to shore up asymmetrical relations of power. A trained pessimism is therefore an indispensable antidote to technological fetishism, the aggrandizement of social rationalization and colonial myths of superiority.

What relationship does this criticism of the concept of progress have with that expressed by WOBS in the *General Introduction*. What I believe has happened is a *historical* pessimism (critiquing the assumption that history automatically moves forward) has been translated by WOBS into a *political* pessimism. The former never forecloses the possibility that things may genuinely improve, while the latter rejects outright the possibility that things might get better. Marx and the Frankfurt School, for example, develop a pessimism about the structure of the past/present in a manner that abandons any teleological preconceptions. However, this fuels a kernel of hope regarding the future, or what David Harvey (2000) refers to in a recent book as a 'space of hope' in which barbarism is subverted into a place of intervention. The WOBS approach, however, translates, or more accurately, *conflates* this historical pessimism with a paralysing political doubt in which there is little reason to hope. While there are undoubtedly close connections between these two types of pessimism, they do indicate quite markedly different analytical territories. It is important that history and politics are never reduced to each other; what has been, what is and what might be cannot be smoothed out into a clear chain of equivalences. Even Benjamin's pessimism, one that conceptually suspended the 'cultural treasures' of the Enlightenment, still maintained a glimmer of expectant redemption in the form of a progressive historical materialism. His strange hybrid of messianic theology and Marxist political economy is particularly distilled is this passage: "The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer, he comes as the subduer of the Antichrist. Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious" (Benjamin, 1940/1970: 257, emphasis in original).

This urgent ambivalence in which one is deeply pessimistic about the history of capitalism and optimistic about 'what is to be done' signifies a politics that is open to

the future. The hope/justice couplet is an important orientating axis here. This space of hope is undeconstructable, in Derrida's (1994) sense of the term, because it is always coming, an unpredictable and haunting murmur of a present that has not yet arrived. The *aporia* between the present and the future is the very stuff of political agency, and it involves challenging the present in a way that is committed to debate about 'how things might be different/better' in relation to social structures and practices, as well as formulating criteria for making such judgements and organizing thoughtful practice.

A Progressive Critical Organization Studies?

In light of this review of how the idea of progress has been approached in social theory, it is germane to ask whether we can have a critical organization studies *without* some kind of a conception of how things could be different and better than the present. Or, to put it differently, what is critical organization studies if it does not involve some kind of notion of political progress? Importantly, perhaps this is less a question of 'a programme' than an ethical relationship to one's scholarship, research subjects and position in privileged and rather cloistered institutions called universities. For WOBS, there *prima facie* appears to be very little room for a concept of progress in critical studies of work and organization. The *General Introduction* might even be interpreted as a concerted effort to dismiss even a speculative attempt to theorize the positive dimensions of a reformulated notion of progress. Its brand of negation might be 'life affirming', but it is ultimately resigned to its own pointlessness as it languishes in the face of a corrupt reality. And it is exactly this kind of negation that Lenin (1914-1916/1961) addressed when discussing Hegel's contention that in order to fully understand dialectics, one must place a radically *political* positivity at the heart of the Negation in order to fully grasp the dynamics of social movement:

> This is very important for the understanding of dialectics, Not empty negation, nor futile negation, not sceptical negation, vacillation and doubt is characteristic and essential in dialectics – which undoubtedly contains the element of negation and indeed is its most important element – no, but negation as a moment of connection, as a moment of development, retaining the positive. (Lenin, 1914-1916/1961: 226)

The politically positive dialectics that Lenin is subscribing to (perhaps one that Adorno (1966/1973) would not favour given his attempt to free dialectics of affirmative traits) supersedes the cheap liberalist gesture to 'progress'. But this, of course, then raises an extremely important issue, one that I suspect WOBS has also pondered when developing their version of critical organization studies: *progress for whom?* In the spirit of relativism we could push this querying further and hypothesize, 'might not progress for some be oppression for others?' These are useful questions that need to be addressed by any scholarly consideration of the meaning of critique, in organization studies or elsewhere. As a further step, we might want to pose similarly tough questions, such as 1) Is the idea of progress always an oppressive ruse, designed to justify violence? 2) Can we have an idea of progress without proselytising, preaching or having a vanguard mentality? and 3) Is the word 'progress' so invested with a particular liberalist discourse, that we need to employ a different kind of word altogether?

47

Conclusions

Upon surveying the contents of the handbook, one does wonder whether WOBS' notion of critique (and its pessimism towards social, economic and political progress) belies a subtle sense of irony (rather than contradiction) about its own logic and engagement with the field of critical organizations studies. That is to say, while framing the contributions in an almost nihilistic manner where there seems to be little room for hope or betterment, many of the articles included by the editors seem to betray, to varying degrees, both a sense that not all is right in the world of work *and* that it could somehow be made better. For example, in the first volume, 'Modes of Management', papers by M.B. Calás and L. Smircich ('Dangerous Liaisons: The 'Feminine-in-Management' Meets 'Globalization'') and S. Marglin ('What Do Bosses Do?') give a critical analysis of current management practices with an eye to more equitable alternatives. There are some fantastic contributions in Volume Three, 'Selves and Subjects' by R. Pringle ('Bureaucracy, Rationality and Sexuality*)* and M. Noon and P. Blyton ('Survival Strategies') that also seem to have a progressive edge compared to the message found in the *General Introduction*. David Collinson and Karen Dale's introduction to this volume provides an excellent overview of developments in the field that is as interesting as the contributions that follow. Moreover, in Volumes Three and Four there are two sections (respectively subtitled 'Survival Practices' and 'Organizations, Power and Resistance') devoted to acts of resistance, subversion and contestation. Notwithstanding the sub-editorial claim in Volume Four that readers must maintain a sceptical outlook regarding emancipation, the contributions in it (such as L. Taylor and P. Walton's 'Industrial Sabotage' and D. Waddington *et al.*'s 'Keep the Red Flag Flying?') could be read in a relatively positive and progressive manner.

This incongruence between the dire political pessimism of the *General Introduction* and at least some of the contributions included in the collection is fascinating and perhaps beyond the scope of this essay to explore in more depth. Indeed, perhaps it is the case that I have been somewhat myopic to discuss *Organization Studies: Critical Perspectives on Business and Management* in terms of its editorial theorizing of critique. The collection does have much to offer by way of gathering valuable material into one source handbook. But the understanding of critique developed in the *General Introduction* (and repeated at the beginning of each volume) is somewhat unconvincing and indicative of a cursory reading of poststructuralist analyses. While this collection stands as a riveting and exceedingly useful set of readings for the student of critical research, its overall message about why we bother to engage in criticism is in need of further elaboration and justification. For the muffled feeling that there is still a space of radical alterity 'to come' is perhaps not ill founded altogether.

references　　Adorno, T.W. (1966/1973). *Negative Dialectics*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Adorno, T.W. and M. Horkheimer (1947/1973) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. J. Cummings. London: Allen Lane.

Alvesson, M. and S. Deetz (1996) 'Critical Theory and Post-Modernism: Approaches to Organizational Studies', Iin S. Clegg, C. Hardy and W. Nord (eds.) *Handbook of Organization Studies*. London: Sage.

Balibar, E. (1995) 'Time and Progress: Another Philosophy of History?', in *The Philosophy of Marx,* trans. C. Turner. London: Verso.

Benjamin, W. (1940/1970) 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zohn. London: Fontana/Collins.

Böhm, S. (2001) 'Walter Benjamin and the Modern Subject's Experience of the Other', paper presented at the 17th EGOS Colloquium. Lyon, France.

Burrell, G. (2001) 'Ephemera: Critical Dialogues on Organization', *ephemera: critical dialogues on organization*, 1(1): 11-29.

Derrida, J. (1994) *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. P. Kamuf. New York: Routledge.

Fournier, V. and C. Grey (2000) 'At the Critical Moment: Conditions and Prospects for Critical Management Studies', *Human Relations*, 53(1): 7-32.

Foucault, M. (1970) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage.

Gabriel, Y. (2001) 'The State of Critique in Organizational Theory', *Human Relations*, 54(1): 23-31.

Harvey, D. (2000) *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Laclau, E. (1996) *Emancipation(s)*. London: Verso.

Lenin, V.I. (1914-1916/1961) 'Conspectus of Hegel's Science of Logic', in *Collected Works*, Vol.38. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Lincoln, Y.S. (1993) 'I and Thou: Method, Voice and Roles in Research with the Silenced', in D. McLaughlin and W. Tierney (eds) *Naming Silenced Lives: Personal Narratives and Processes of Educational Change*. New York: Routledge.

Marx, K. (1847/1976) 'The Poverty of Philosophy', in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol.6. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Marx, K. (1867/1976) *Capital*, Vol.1, trans. B. Fowkes. London: Penguin.

Warwick Organizational Behaviour Staff (WOBS) (eds.) (2001) *Organizational Studies: Critical Perspectives on Business and Management*, 4 Volumes. London and New York: Routledge.

the author   Peter Fleming is a researcher in the Department of Management at Melbourne University, Australia. He is studying the transformation of employment practices and post-industrial labour movements in Western economies. His other research interests include workplace democracy, ideology critique and industrial semiotics. He begins a new post at Cambridge University in September 2004
Address: Department of Management, University of Melbourne, Parkville VIC 3010, Australia.
E-mail: p.fleming1@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

ephemera | reviews

critical dialogues on organization
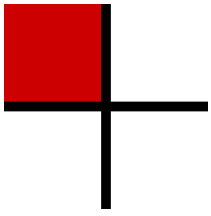
The Archive and its Other[*]

Campbell Jones

review of: **S. Clegg (ed.) (2002)** *Central Currents in Organization Studies I & II* **(8 Vols.). London: Sage.** (HB: pp.3250, £990.00, ISBN 0761947264)

> A new archivist has been appointed. But has anyone actually appointed him? Is he not rather acting on his own instructions? Certain malevolent people say that he is the new representative of structural technology or technocracy. (Gilles Deleuze, 'A New Archivist (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*)')

> How can anyone who "publishes" today accept to leave out of the picture, in the outside-text [*hors-texte*], or rather in the non-published, the whole complex functioning of the editorial machine: its mechanisms of selection, control, sanctioning, recruitment, internal promotion, elimination, censorship, and so on? (Jacques Derrida, 'Between Brackets I')

Collecting

At first glance, possibly the most obviously striking aspect of this collection is its gargantuan size. Here we have 142 articles reprinted over 3,250 pages in eight volumes. These eight volumes are broken into two parts, with the first four volumes concerned with 'Frameworks and Applications' and the latter four with 'Contemporary Trends'. To this Professor Clegg has contributed two editorial introductions, which introduce the two halves of the collection. The stated goal is to bring together the *Central Currents in Organization Studies*, and the size of this collection surely reflects the magnitude of such an undertaking.

Titles always risk missing their target and Clegg, being aware of this, makes efforts to delimit the domain of his archive. In the first note to the editorial introduction to the first volume he writes:

_____

> There is some debate about the appropriate title for the endeavour represented here, as to whether it should be "organization theory", "organization analysis", "organization science", "organization studies" or just "management" (see Clegg and Hardy, 1996). I have followed the convention established in the "Handbook" of using the broader title. (Clegg, 2002b: xxii)

One might be excused for finding this explanation of the choice of title rather confusing. Clegg gives us a list of five possible names for his collection, suggests that the project of archivisation is open to 'debate' (see Oswick in this issue on questions of 'debate') and proposes to settle this debate by using the 'broader title'. But he doesn't inform us *directly* which of these five it will be. To get to the answer to this riddle involves a certain amount of inside knowledge (and as we will find, this presumption of inside knowledge runs throughout this collection).

The conscientious student or uninitiated reader might seek to refer to the work that Clegg cites here (Clegg and Hardy, 1996), but will face the slight difficulty that this work does not appear in the bibliography for this editorial introduction. With a little inside knowledge (that is, if one already knows something of the 'archive' that is 'organization studies'), it is fairly safe to assume that the reference to Clegg and Hardy (1996) is intended either as a reference to Clegg, Hardy and Nord's *Handbook of Organization Studies* (1996) or the selections reprinted from that in paperback, Clegg and Hardy's *Studying Organization* (1999). But importantly, this missing reference draws attention to a few things that should be known about this collection in advance, which can be summarised telegraphically as follows: (1) there are numerous errors in Clegg's editorial apparatus, of which this missing reference is but one example; (2) this practice of self-citation in order to refer to apparently established protocols recurs throughout both editorial introductions; and (3) there is a game of the insider here, that involves a vast and complicated set of questions about interiority and exteriority.

But in case you sense that these criticisms run too quickly and I am accused of tilting my lance at a giant who is really a windmill, let us consider the title of the collection further. Here we find another example of editorial indiscretion. This relates directly to the choice of the name 'organization studies' for the collection. Embarrassingly, something strange seems to have happened in the printing of the covers and the printing of the inside cover pages. The spine and cover of all 8 volumes display the title *Central Currents in Organization Studies*. So far so good. With a deep red cloth cover and lettering in black and silver, everything here gives the sense of a carefully constructed publication from a publishing house of quality.
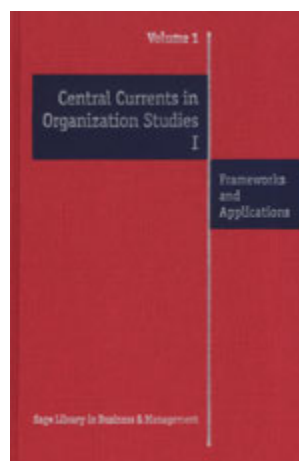
But inside the cover of each of the first four volumes one is met with a discrepancy that could miss the eye of a careless proof-reader. On the inside of the four volumes we find the title *Central Currents in Organization Theory*:
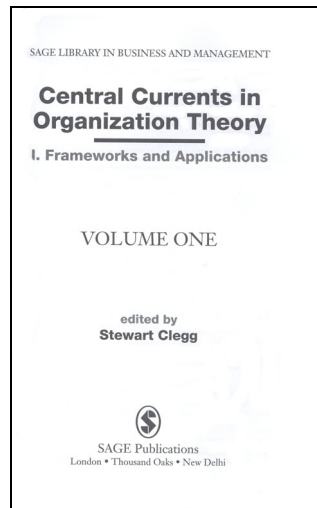
This inconsistency is not only an error in the copy of this collection that I consulted. On the publisher's websites advertising the first four volumes, for example, we find, on a page headed *Central Currents in Organization Studies*, the claim that: "The volumes will enable any instructor to construct a coherent and evolutionary course on 'organizations'. *Central Currents in Organization Theory* volumes 1-4 presents all the main works that lead to the emergence of organization theory and which still constitute central debates in the field".[1]

Given that Clegg was so careful to specify that 'organization studies' was his preferred title, how could this have happened?[2] It could be a simple typesetting error, which could have been the oversight of a negligent typesetter. But the same error on the website suggests that something more is up. As a clue, perhaps we should take seriously Clegg's own warning that "There is some debate about the appropriate title for the endeavour represented here" (Clegg, 2002b: xxii). This warning could be applied 'outside the text' to recall that such debates do not only take place within the academic sphere, but in the space of publishing and in the relations between authors and publishers. Is it not possible that this inconsistency is indicative of frequent debates about the appropriate title of publishing endeavours? Quite often an author has one title in mind while the publisher has another. If such a discrepancy had not been sorted out in advance of printing the covers and the title pages of volumes 1-4, this would provide one possible

---

1   See the European website at http://www.sagepub.co.uk/book.aspx?pid=100902 or the US website at http://www.sagepub.com/book.aspx?pid=8542. While I refer to the websites as at January 2004, it will be interesting to see if this page is changed at a later date.

2   This mistake recalls Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, a tale held together around a set of apparent errors. There is also the famous joke about the young undergraduate who returns Joyce's *Ulysses* to the bookshop with the complaint that there are spelling mistakes throughout, and especially at the end. While such comparisons might be fruitful, in these examples the printing 'errors' are inserted purposefully. In the current case, I will not assume that Clegg has cleverly filled the text with errors. Although this is, of course, possible.

explanation of the situation at hand. And it would draw us closer to the need for further consideration of the relations between authors and the apparatuses involved in the production of archives.

Producing

In 1798 Kant wrote two letters to Friedrich Nicolai, a publisher who had previously written scathing attacks directed at the critical philosopher. In the second of his letters Kant explicitly addresses the question of the commercialisation of publishing, an issue that is certainly raised by Clegg's collection, and that we should not relegate to an 'outside text' here. Kant writes:

> The *turning out of books* is not an insignificant branch of business in a commonwealth whose culture has already progressed quite far, and where reading has become a nearly indispensable and general need. This part of *industry* in a country, however, thereby reaps uncommon gains if it is carried on *in the manner of a factory*, which, however, cannot happen unless by means of a publisher capable of *judging* the taste of the public and *paying* for the skill of every manufacturer who is to be employed. Yet as a stimulus to his publishing trade, he does not need to take into account the inner worth and content of the commodities he produces, but only the market *to* which, and the fashion of the day *for* which, the in any case ephemeral products of the printing press are brought into lively currency, and can achieve a swift, even if not an enduring, turnover of inventory. (Kant, 1798: 625-626, emphases in original)

Kant points to several important aspects of publishing, in terms of the means and the ends towards which publishing is put. He takes up an attractively dialectical position with regard to the press. That is to say, he defends the freedom of the press and the democratising institution of publishing but is also critical of what publishers may do with that freedom. But we should note that the set of eight volumes that we have in front of us is not a mere 'ephemeral product' that has no intention of anything other than selling itself in cheap paperback reproductions for a mass market. On the contrary, *Central Currents* sells itself on the basis of its exclusivity and authority. *It is the very opposite of ephemera*. It is a mighty, sturdy, erect monument that is of value as a commodity exactly because it is anything but a passing whimsy. Forget the fleeting and the small. This is the *Central Currents* of organization studies.

Still, *Central Currents* brings itself to market as commodity, and in this respect Kant's comments still hold. Considering *Central Currents* as a commodity, we might consider some of the financial statistics related to this collection. The *Central Currents* commodity comes to the market with a staggering price tag of £525 for the first four volumes, and the same again for the latter four. For the whole set the discounted price is £990.[3] With eight volumes this comes to £123.75 per volume. With 3250 pages plus 54 editorial pages this comes to around 30 pence per page. With 142 articles reprinted, this comes to £6.97 per article.

---

3   In the US that is $850 for each half, or $1650 for all 8 volumes.

So this is not the kind of book that I am personally in the habit of buying, and I guess that the same is the case for most readers of this review.[4] Quite obviously, with this kind of pricing strategy, this book is not intended for the personal library of the average student or academic, but is targeted at a quite different market. Clearly – university libraries . So when the publisher's websites suggest that 'The volumes will enable any instructor to construct a coherent and evolutionary course on 'organizations'', they might add that no student ever known to a university educator would buy this volume. I can envisage the situation now, as the seventy-odd students on my Critical Perspectives on Management module rush to the library to borrow the first volume of Clegg (2002) for their first week's reading!

If this is a library book, marketed to and for libraries, should a reader of this review recommend it for purchase for their institutional library? One of the selling points of a collection like this is that it could be a time-saving device. It could bring to the library the central currents, and hence save the time of scouring through other already existing archives. But before rushing out to order *Central Currents*, the sensible librarian should ask if there aren't alternative ways of getting one's hands on these articles. Most obviously, perhaps, one might consult already existing archives in one's library. After all, very few of the articles reprinted here are rare or hard to find. Indeed, most of them will exist on the shelf or the electronic archive of a decent research library. And if they aren't, then they should be available to that old-fashioned technology of the interlibrary loan. Given that the reprinted volumes come in at £6.97 per article, it is probably worth the time of filling in the interlibrary loan forms.

But before abandoning *Central Currents* and setting ourselves to work constructing our own archive, we should check to see if Clegg's collection doesn't provide us with an editorial apparatus that would add something over and above a box file with 142 photocopied articles in it. But unfortunately our archivist disappoints us once again. One might have hoped for some basic editorial devices such as a system of indexing, which could be used to trace lines across the archive. An index that would indicate each time a particular word, concept, or author is mentioned across the *Central Currents*. We can find a particularly nice example of such devices in the French edition of the non book-length works of that other archivist, Michel Foucault. In the four volume collection of Foucault's *Dits et écrits* we find page upon page in the last volume of indexes, by subject, name, place, date and author. To select another example, in the collection of the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (now available in paperback for a mere £9.99 per volume) we find a complete volume (vol. 24) of indices. By comparison, in Clegg's collection, we have nothing. Not even the most basic index. Further, Clegg's collection does not even reproduce the original page numbers of the articles reproduced here, which is standard practice in many collections

––––––––––

4 One might think that this is the kind of book that is the object of affection of a collector like Walter Benjamin (see 'Unpacking my Library' in *Illuminations*). But while this collection has all of the outward appearance of value (the lustre of cover, the red, black and silver, the high-grade paper, and so on), this is hardly the 'irreplacable item' that founds a collectors collection. On the contrary, while making a show of its finery, this is a result of what Benjamin called 'mechanical reproduction', one which strips the original of its aura while presenting itself as technically superior to the original (see 'The Work of Art in Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Illuminations*).

and makes it possible to check and to cite page sources from the reprinted version. But not here. Nothing other than the archive.[5]

The Archive

Let us turn therefore to the contents of the archive. Structurally, each half of the archive is broken into eight sections. Hence, in volumes 1-4 ('Frameworks and Applications') we find the following sections:

1. Early histories: The emergence of formally rational organizations
2. Human relations in formally rational organizations
3. Sociological foundations for theories of modern organizations
4. Building organization theories
5. Debating contingency theory
6. The environments of organizations
7. Institutions and organizations
8. Economics and organizations

And in volumes 5-8 ('Contemporary Trends') we find the following:

1. Power and politics of organizing
2. Inter-organizational collaboration and alliances
3. Discursive subjects
4. Researching organizing qualitatively
5. Organizations as encultured and encoded
6. Organizations as sense-making arenas
7. Paradigms and organization studies
8. Paradigms for new organizational forms

Readers of *ephemera* will be asking what gets left out of this division and subdivision. Any inclusion will result in exclusion, of course. To the side of the central currents will be a remainder. So, what is missing? There are no distinct sections on developments in 'theory' or poststructuralism (or even 'postmodernism') or on critique (or even 'critical management studies'), although there are a few selections that could be considered to cover these sectional interests. There are no separate sections for feminist or postcolonial analyses of organization. There is almost nothing from critics of economic globalisation. And nothing on the anti-capitalist and anti-corporate movements. These, obviously, are the 'other' of this archive.

_____

5   One might begin to wonder if it is fair to call this collection an 'archive' at all. Commenting on an earlier draft of my review, Dag Petersson noted: "The tome that you target for your critique is not an archive for the very reason that it is closed. An anthology of texts is not an archive because (1) no other texts can be included into it (only in a second edition, but that is a different body of text), (2) there is no classification system nor a catalogue that organizes it, and (3) it does not perform the sedimentation of knowledge that for Foucault is the attractive thing about the word 'Archive'." For further discussion of archives and power, see Petersson (2003).

The flipside of what is left out is the question of what gets into the archive. We find some interesting reading if we look at which journals are represented in the selections that appear in this collection. Looking at the half dozen most highly represented journals in volumes 1-4 we find these journals represented (with the number of articles reprinted from that journal):

Rank	Journal Title	Selections
1	Administrative Science Quarterly	18
2	American Sociological Review	6
3	American Journal of Sociology	6
4	Academy of Management Review	3
5	Organization Studies	3
6	Theory and Society	3

In volumes 5-8, we find the following:

Rank	Journal Title	Selections
1	Administrative Science Quarterly	14
2	Organization Science	10
3	Organization Studies	9
4	Academy of Management Review	6
5	Organization	5
6	Human Relations	4

No surprises here then, although from this we get something of the sense of an historical shift across time. The first four volumes select from a significant number of sociologically oriented journals, but by comparison the journals selected for the latter four volumes look more like the kind of list of journals that might be recognised as the 'organization studies' journals today. One constant across time is the journal *Administrative Science Quarterly*, which strides triumphant across this collection. With 18 our of the first 69 selections and 14 out of the latter 73 selections, this gives a representation of 26% of the first four volumes and 19% of the latter four. Overall, this represents 23% of the reprinted entries, which leads one to wonder if the collection might better be titled *Central Currents in Administrative Science*.

While it would be rash to suggest that a journal such as the *Administrative Science Quarterly* is merely a mouthpiece for American neoliberal conservatism, it is hardly leading a vanguard across the barricades. Its presence here raises the issue of the conservatism that could be seen to run throughout this collection. But I do not want to suggest that this is simply a conservative collection. This would be unfair, firstly, because there are a number of articles reprinted here that could be considered 'critical' and that certainly challenge certain ways of thinking about organization. But also, this collection is of such a size that it would be foolish to speak of singular leanings that run

across it as a whole. There would always be examples to the contrary, and this archive is not unified or totalisable.

In the place of a reading of the entire contents in this vast collection, we might pose the question of conservation by looking at the procedures of selection and censorship at work. If we look at the latter four volumes which make up the 'Contemporary Trends' section, we find that half of the articles in this section were originally published in or before 1990, and three quarters were originally published in or before 1995. Less than a quarter were originally published after 1995. In short, this collection, published in 2002 and being read in 2004, has a decisively dated feel. Once again, the title 'contemporary trends' for these latter four volumes misses its mark.

This brings me to the basic problem that I have with this collection, which is that it is principally a backward-looking collection. Perhaps this is inescapable when reprinting journal articles or collecting an archive. One must look back, see what is there, and from the past one must select, collect and represent history. *In a particular way*, one might add, and this cuts to the heart of the matter. If we accept, as Clegg puts it, that "in historical science…there are an enormous number of variables, great complexity, unique actors, and no possibility of artful laboratory closure" (2002c: xxvii), then we should also recall that it is also impossible to avoid closure. The question before us, following Derrida, is not whether or not one closes, but of how one closes.

This is important because closure of an archive always involves that the "complex functioning of the editorial machine: its mechanisms of selection, control, sanctioning, recruitment, internal promotion, elimination, censorship" (Derrida, 1995: 29). The point is not to imagine a space in which such things would no longer take place – which is the fiction of escape, pure transcendence, other-wordliness, onto-theology – even if such a notion of escape might organize and coordinate our hopes for a future to come. The task of critically reviewing history is to consider its emplacement – the ways that it has been put in place. It is possible to see history as a story of development, of *Bildung*, evolution, and so on; or, alternatively, it is also possible to see history as censorship, control, elimination and so on. We know the first conception of history as history of the central current and the latter as (Nietzschean or Foucauldian) genealogy.

Clegg has made this kind of distinction throughout his writing (see Clegg, 1988, 1998, for example), and has almost always come down in favour of the latter (in theory, at least). This distinction could be recalled here to think about the procedures of selection of the archive that Clegg has collected. In brief, there is almost nothing new in this archive. Almost nothing that will surprise. It reproduces history *in a particular way*, that is to say, it gives us a story of the past that will be largely comfortable and reassuring to those already 'in' what is agreed upon as 'organization studies'. This is not the kind of archival work that one might expect from a Foucauldian historian, the kind of historian that Clegg has presented himself as, and been presented as, on more than one occasion (see Rowlinson and Carter, 2002, cf. Jones, 2002). Surely the Foucauldian task of a genealogy is to "cultivate the details and accidents that accompany every beginning; it will be scrupulously attentive to their petty malice; it will await their emergence, once unmasked, as the face of the other" (Foucault, 1977: 144). But this other is not what you will find in this archive.

references

Benjamin, W. (1969) *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zohn. New York: Shocken.

Calvino, I. (1981) *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*. London: Minerva.

Clegg, S. (1988) 'Radical revisions: Power, discipline and organizations', *Organization Studies*, 10(1): 97-114.

Clegg, S. (1998) 'Foucault, power and organizations' in, A. McKinlay and K. Starkey (eds.) *Foucault, Management and Organization Theory*. London: Sage.

Clegg, S. (2002a) (ed.) *Central Currents in Organization Studies*, 8 vols. London: Sage.

Clegg, S. (2002b) 'Editorial introduction: Frameworks and applications' in, S. Clegg (ed.) *Central Currents in Organization Studies*, vol. 1. London: Sage.

Clegg, S. (2002c) 'Editorial introduction: Contemporary trends' in, S. Clegg (ed.) *Central Currents in Organization Studies*, vol. 5. London: Sage.

Clegg, S. and C. Hardy (1999) (eds.) *Studying Organization*. London: Sage.

Clegg, S., C. Hardy and W. Nord (eds.) (1996) *Handbook of Organization Studies*. London: Sage.

Deleuze, G. (1988) 'A new archivist (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*)' in, *Foucault*, trans. S. Hand. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Derrida, J. (1995) 'Between brackets I' in, *Points…Interviews, 1974-1994*, trans. E. Weber. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Foucault, M. (1977) 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' in, Donald Bouchard (ed.) *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Foucault, M. (1994) *Dits et écrits*, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald, 4 vols. Paris: Gallimard.

Freud, S. (2001) 'Indexes and bibliographies' vol 24 of J. Strachey (ed.) *Standard Edition of the omplete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Vintage.

Jones, C. (2002) 'Foucault's inheritance/Inheriting Foucault', *Culture and Organization*, 8(3): 225-238.

Joyce, J. (1992) *Ulysses*. London: Penguin.

Kant, I. (1798/1996) 'On turning out books: Two letters to Mr Friedrich Nicolai from Immanuel Kant' in, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. M. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Petersson, D. (2003) 'Archives and power', *ephemera: critical dialogues on organization*, 3(1): 26-49.

Rowlinson, M. and C. Carter (2002) 'Foucault and history in organization studies', *Organization*, 9(4): 527-547.

the author

Campbell Jones is Director of the Centre for Philosophy and Political Economy at the University of Leicester (www.le.ac.uk/ulmc/cppe). For some years he has acted as co-editor of *ephemera*, but until now refused to write anything other than editorial ruminations for the journal. Having broken the silence, it looks like his editing days are numbered. And so he will have to open his hands and set the mayfly free…
Address: Centre for Philosophy and Political Economy, Ken Edwards Building, University of Leicester, Leicester, LE1 7RH.
E-mail: c.jones@le.ac.uk

ephemera | reviews

critical dialogues on organization
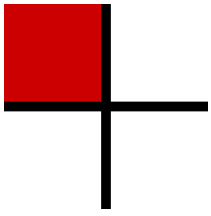
Strawberries for Gregor

Roy Stager Jacques

> As he fled the machine, Gregor ran, nauseous and terrified, past severed limbs and lifeless corpses which littered the workshop. Within the temporary safety afforded by a pile of shattered furnishings, he thumbed frantically through The Handbook, seeking a way to disenable the rampaging machine. Desperately, he turned to the chapter headed 'Emergency Procedures;' in despair he read: *The present handbook...does not offer readily usable or 'cookbook' knowledge... It accentuates enlightenment in the expectation that the enlightened practitioner will be sufficiently clever to be practically innovative.* (Franz Kafka, *In the Laboratory*)

One will note the lack of an affiliation following my name above. For about a dozen years I was actively involved in teaching and publication in organization studies, and I may return to these roles at some future point, but for the past four years I have identified primarily as a business-person, first in building the *Ravenheart of Sedona* coffee shop group, which I recently sold, and presently as the principal in a venture to franchise a turnkey coffee shop package. So, I approach this review having contributed to writing theoretical esoterica and also as 'the practitioner.'

Based on preliminary thoughts shared by the editors of this volume, I gather they are sceptical of the growing number of handbook and encyclopaedia projects in our field, in large part because they see behind this trend the danger of unified dogmatism. That would be an unfortunate eventuality, but one only marginally worse than the existing state of fragmented dogmatism. If well edited, I see encyclopaedias as relatively benign objects. It is becoming more and more difficult to stay abreast of knowledge in an increasingly scattered domain. Encyclopaedias could potentially abet this difficulty. As for handbooks, the more the merrier. One might, indeed, ask why a half-century old field which claims legitimation as an applied science does not judge its success or failure *primarily* based upon the amount of problem-solving assistance provided to people attempting to create and operate organizations. As Habermas might have said about Modernity, the fact that it has not been done well yet does not mean that it is without potential. Of course, a major caveat is that the handbook has to be useful.

As I wish to review the present handbook sympathetically, I begin by asking, 'what is a handbook?' It is nearly tautological to presume that a handbook is a book one keeps at hand. Why, then, might one keep a book handy? Unless one is heading towards the loo with *Middlemarch*, probably because the volume at hand is useful in problem solving. This raises two immediate questions: To whom might the handbook apply? What problems might it assist one in addressing?

Thus the leitmotif above. The excerpt is not from Kafka, of course, but it is only partially fabricated. The italicized passage is quoted from pages *vii* and *viii* of the *IEBM Handbook of Organizational Behaviour*. Upon reading it, my immediate question was, 'In what altered reality does one produce a handbook with the stated intention of *avoiding* readily usable knowledge?' I am ambivalent as to how to evaluate a handbook produced with this goal. The goal has been admirably accomplished, but why would one set this as a goal?

Offhand, I can think of three audiences for a handbook of OB. These would be (1) business-people, (2) graduate students and professors, (3) undergraduate business students. As textbooks constitute more or less a handbook for undergraduates, we are left with two potential audiences whose needs diverge greatly. My experience with business-people and as a business-person is that we are almost exclusively concerned with practical problem solving. This is not because we are lower animals who think only with our brainstems. It is a simple result of role and responsibility. When one is running a business, one's business reality is an endless procession of problems needing attention. However great one's hypothetical interest may be in 'accentuating enlightenment,' reflection is what one dreams of indulging in when writing one's memoirs. So, if Sorge and Warner's 'handbook' is not written for daily use in practice, perhaps it is intended for the organizational researcher and/or teacher?

For these constituencies, I can imagine a useful handbook only within an area well defined by a thematic boundary. For instance, a well-executed *Handbook of Institutional Theory* might be somewhat coherent as a reference source to keep at hand. A *Handbook of Actor-Network Theory* would be a stretch because of the newness of the area, yet it is not impossible to imagine. A *Handbook of Postmodernism* would be a self-negating joke, as there is little commonality binding those who have assumed – or who have been the lucky recipients of – this label. What problem would one attempt to address in a Postmodern way? I can, however, imagine an *encyclopaedia* of Postmodernism, a volume whose domain is defined as writing to date that might collect and offer background for the understanding of organizational writers who have invoked that slippery signifier. An encyclopaedia is simply a collation. It does not carry a mandate to aid problem solving.

Introducing the handbook under review, Sorge and Warner implicitly reflect this distinction. The content of the *Handbook* consists of selections already available in the *International Encyclopaedia of Business and Management*. For purposes of review, then, it is irrelevant that the contributors to this volume are a distinguished and multinational lot. Some of the contributions are quite interesting, informative and/or challenging in their own right, but the question this review must answer is whether there is justification in republishing them as a putative 'handbook.'

As with Gregor, my hope began to fade upon learning that this book is intended to *not* be readily usable. It disappeared entirely when I encountered, in the introductory essay, the homogenizing fantasy that, "Organization [*sic*] behaviour has now emerged as a well-grounded interdisciplinary field" (p. 27). This is the legitimating fairytale we use in undergraduate texts about the march of progress in the field. It invariably ends with the assertion that the field is 'about to become' a paradigmatic science. My oldest source of this fairytale is dated 1847 (Jacques, 1996). Waiting for the Messiah is legitimate as religious activity, but it is quite out of place in what is presented as an empirical discipline. Invoking such a platitude in a volume directed toward informed insiders runs the dual risk of misguiding the reader and discrediting the authors. There has been widespread lamentation for decades – and by defenders of the *status quo* – documenting that the evidence ceases to fit the plot of this smooth trajectory starting at least as early as 1970. The goal of knowledge development is not served by masking the paradigmatic disagreements and internal lamentations of disciplinary stagnation or fragmentation.

A final barrier to the use of this volume as a handbook for the theorist or teacher is the lack of a unifying theme, which I stated above would be necessary if this book is to be something other than redundant with the organizational encyclopaedia whence the selections came. The volume, instead, is edited with the apparent goal of comprehensively covering the terrain of organizational behaviour – as well as much of organization theory, a bit of business strategy and a smattering of operational research. Speaking as a theorist, it is quite unclear to me what the logical domain or the pedagogical purpose of these selections might be. So, I return to wondering if this volume is intended for the practitioner.

But this still seems unlikely. For instance, the first section of the book consists of one hundred thirty pages of 'theoretical approaches and paradigms.' Imagine, by analogy, a *Handbook of Plumbing* which begins with a dozen chapters examining contemporary theoretical debates in the science of hydraulics and theoretical physics. The practitioner's interest in the physics and metaphysics of hydraulics can quite likely be summed up in four words I once heard from a trades school instructor: 's**t doesn't flow uphill.' Paradigmatic debates are unlikely to be salient when sewage is washing across the living room carpet.

There are two more features of this volume which are likely to be experienced negatively by 'the practitioner.' A minor point, perhaps, but one indicative of the editorial perspective, is the fact that it ends with twenty thumbnail biographies which, with the sole exception of Henry Ford, illustrate how theorists have solved the problem of creating theory. Business people are avid readers of biographies, but a perusal of the local bookseller's business section would illustrate conclusively that this interest is directed at stories which tell how people *in* business solved their problems.

The second, more fatal, problem is that neither the contents nor the index are ordered with reference to problems of practice. They are ordered with reference to concepts, debates and individuals of importance to theorists. Both the biographies and the referencing are indicative of the output-driven nature of organizational studies at this point in time. This, perhaps, more than any individual failings of Sorge & Warner, is the problem on which we should focus.

The Great Divorce: Theory and Practice

In 1988, when I went to my first Academy of Management meeting, the conference theme was *The Marriage of Theory and Practice*. This must have been an especially unhappy marriage because I have seldom seen the two partners together. Fifteen years later, I was unable to find a single presentation in the 2003 Academy of Management program that I could profitably share with my managers.

As both mainstream and critical approaches to the study of organization increasingly address problems of interest to theorists, practitioners have less and less reason to follow what is occurring in the business school. In my academic career, I regularly heard the question, 'where are the practitioners?' Sometimes, this was asked with the implicit subtext that the practitioner fails to know what is good for him or her. Other times, it is asked to query how research can be more effectively communicated to the practitioner. Seldom does anyone recognize that perhaps there is simply little of use to the practitioner occurring in the business school. That, however, is largely the case at present. It has not always been so.

If one looks at the periods when organization studies was making rapid strides – the late 1800s, immediately following the Great War, again in the 1950s – we find that the studies which were foundational to these periods of vitality generally emerged from collaborations between employers and researchers. More to the point, the objects of study central during these periods were questions whose answers mattered greatly to the employers whose resources made the research possible. This is not to suggest that organizational research should be dictated only by the needs of top management; I am already critical of the field for being too biased in that direction. But research in public health is dictated by public illness. Research cannot be directed at the researcher until the researcher community is independently capable of funding itself.

In my view, the last period of great vitality in organization studies was the 1950s, stretching into the late 1960s. What has followed has increasingly been, to borrow an image from Yeats, the rattle of pebbles under a receding wave. In the average Organizational Behaviour textbook, the core of knowledge presented is pre-1970. What is more recent could be described with little distortion as an attempt to hang patches for current events onto an increasingly outdated core – power in organizations, organizational culture, 'managing' diversity, 'paradigms,' international management, entrepreneurship, business ethics. These are all worthy topics, but their motley addition to the knowledge base is one indication of a field without a sense of mission to serve any identifiable clients.

Rectifying this drift has been made almost impossible by a dominant dogma, gradually emergent through the twentieth century, which makes it axiomatic to believe that the knowledge base of the field can be expressed in the form of statistically testable hypotheses. Had the question been formulated as, 'How can hypothesis testing assist the development of organizational knowledge?' statistical analysis could have been a toolkit of great usefulness. Instead, the question has been formulated as, 'How can organizational knowledge be expressed in the form of testable hypotheses?' Well, it can't. The knowledge amenable to hypothetico-deductive analysis is, and will remain, a

subset of the knowledge necessary for effective operation in organizations. The great optimism held for this project in the 1950s (read the first issue of *Administrative Science Quarterly* for a revealing snapshot) has, of necessity, given way to pessimism, as, in one area of investigation after another, hundreds or thousands of studies have resulted in explanation of less than 10% of the relevant variance. Today, it is difficult to find a relationship between highly researched organizational variables which cannot be summarized as, 'researchers differ regarding the significance of this relationship and further research is indicated.'

The mere failure thus far to validate key organizational relationships could be spun as a mere practical problem – too few monkeys and too few typewriters. It is still possible that *some*day the facts will actually speak for themselves. Before that day comes, however, the object of analysis, the organization, will have changed beyond recognition. We are already at least a quarter-century past the first glimmer of realization that changing boundaries of technological possibility related mostly to the microchip and intertwined changes in the worldwide relationships of production and exchange are resulting in organizations significantly different (no pun intended) from those of the mid-twentieth century. These changing relationships are making the old core problems peripheral, while bringing to the fore new core problems. This is a fatal problem for a knowledge base founded on what Kuhn called 'puzzle solving' science because the puzzles being (putatively) solved are no longer puzzles of interest, yet new puzzle-solving research must be an elaboration of prior studies.

In a field governed by a mission to produce knowledge useful to an identified client base, the changing needs of this clientele would dictate the pace and direction of change in establishment of the core problems to which puzzle-solving elaboration could then be applied. However, severed from the concrete need of a constituency, Truth (and Tenure) can only derive from elaboration of past knowledge. Thus, while organizations change fundamentally in form, organizational knowledge cannot follow without structural changes to the machinery of knowledge.

Those who identify as critical theorists are largely free of the knowledge-development problems caused by normal science puzzle solving, but critical knowledge production is, if anything, more removed from practice than are mainstream approaches. Studies in the labour process are generally sympathetic to 'the employee,' but they are accessible to few employees. Much critical theorizing is internally focused on critiques of the field. Much is utopian in advocating values that can only become meaningful if there is fundamental change to the present order of things. Some is merely critical in that no constructive alternative to the phenomena criticized is offered.

I affirm the *potential* value of all these varieties of critical scholarship, an area which includes my own publication. What is lacking is a structural link of esoteric theory to practice. There is a paucity of institutional relationships that can apply critical perspectives to applied problems and that can direct critical efforts based on practitioner need.

So, while theorists are largely directing efforts toward the solution of problems defined by theorists, practitioners are developing theories-in-practice to meet a set of problems

posed by their experience. There is a theory and practice of theory and a separate theory and practice of practice. In a field legitimated as an applied science, this constitutes a fundamental crisis that is likely to threaten the vitality, possibly even the survival, of the field.

Fishing With Strawberries

In a book that is extremely popular, although not with theorists, Dale Carnegie wrote:

> Personally I am very fond of strawberries and cream, but I have found that for some strange reason, fish prefer worms. So, when I went fishing, I didn't think about what I wanted. I thought about what they wanted. I didn't bait the hook with strawberries and cream. Rather, I dangled a worm or grasshopper in front of the fish and said: "Wouldn't you like to have that?" Why not use the same common sense when fishing for people? (1936/1982: 32)

As expressed in Jacques (1996), I have serious concerns about the input-driven institutional practices of the management disciplines. I believe that if these practices continue they will result in increasing marginalization of the field from positions which permit influencing behaviour in organizations. The management disciplines have traditionally been legitimated as applied disciplines. This means we claim expertise in the use, not the production, of social theory. Our business 'suppliers' are departments of philosophy, psychology, sociology, engineering and others. Success in applying knowledge to organizational problems has not been steady, but there have been fecund times. This is not one of them. I believe two barriers stand in the way of – pardon my language – 'increasing productivity and effectiveness.'

Neither our increasing need to manage proliferating information nor the need to successfully apply knowledge in practice are served by output-driven publication practices. Today, academic output in the management disciplines is primarily of interest to academics because it is produced primarily to meet the needs of academics. The editors state that they desire to flit about, pooing at will. I respect their interest. However, I would welcome significantly less freedom of esotericism in the field if it were due to the fact that groups of researchers were clustering around significant practical problems of organizing rather than methodological dogma or theoretical ideology. *The IEBM Handbook of Organizational Behaviour* is yet another theoretical strawberry. How about a few more worms?

references

Carnegie, D. (1936/1982) *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Jacques, R. (1996) *Manufacturing the Employee*. London: Sage.

the author

Roy Stager Jacques, MBA, PhD, received his graduate degrees at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (USA). He has held faculty positions at the California School of Professional Psychology, San Francisco and Los Angeles campuses, and at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. His primary theoretical interests have been gender/diversity and the discursive construction of modern management 'knowledge'. His views as they relate to the present review are more completely expressed in his book *Manufacturing the Employee* (Sage, 1996). He most recently has built and sold the

Ravenheart of Sedona coffeeshop group in Arizona, USA. He is presently engaged in a start-up entrepreneurial venture in Chicago, IL, USA.

E-mail: roystagerjacques@yahoo.com

ephemera I reviews

critical dialogues on organization
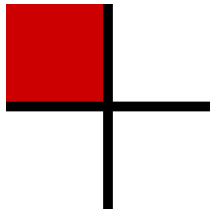
Bridges, Barricades, Sandcastles

Cliff Oswick

This review is not really a review. It does not attempt to offer a detailed critique of the specific contents of Westwood and Clegg's edited collection. Instead, the primary focus here is to consider this volume in relation to the genre in which it is located – i.e. field defining and field encompassing books in organization studies. More specifically, the extent to which the 'debate approach', based upon a series of point-counterpoint chapters, adopted within this text represents a significant and meaningful departure from the proliferation of more conventional 'organization studies handbooks' (see for example: Clegg, Hardy and Nord, 1996; and the books reviewed in this issue) is subjected to critical scrutiny.

There are two main parts to this paper. The first part contains a section dealing with the question of topic coverage and the processes of exclusion and inclusion at play in deciding what constitutes 'the field'. And then, a section unpacking the claims made regarding the benefits of debates in comparison to the more popular alternative of univocal renditions. The second main part of this paper comments on the potentially limiting effects, and unintended consequences, associated with the debate format advocated by Westwood and Clegg. It also proposes how we might consider moving away from debates and towards embracing other plurivocal, but less adversarial, modes of engagement within organization studies.

Bridges

Doing Organization Studies Texts: Exhaustive, Illustrative or Selective?
Whether implicitly or explicitly, many handbooks lay claim to the status of being definitive in nature. Those who adopt a slightly more modest position still, nevertheless,

are inclined to frame their work as being broadly representative of the field covered. In this regard, Westwood and Clegg's volume is refreshingly different in two ways. First, it does not profess to have handbook credentials and, as such, no outlandish claims are made about the content mapping the field.

Second, they resist the urge to resort to the familiar 'get-out-clause', used by volume editors, of asserting that the content is indicative or illustrative rather than extensive or exhaustive. Instead, Westwood and Clegg unashamedly confess that the contents of their book are selective. In doing so, they exhibit a level of reflexive engagement that is to be commended. In their introduction the editors acknowledge the degree of agency they exercise over the text, including addressing the politics of producing the book:

> The issue of exclusion causes us to reflect on the role of editors in general, and projects such as this in particular. Editors clearly occupy a position of power – in the way a text is defined and framed, in the process of selection, and in the act of editing itself. (Westwood and Clegg, 2003: 16)

The level of openness in the editors' reflections exceeds what one might expect in an edited volume. This is exemplified in Westwood and Clegg's candid comments on the role publishers played in the production of the text: "Publishers enter the political process too; they indicated their desire to see 'known' people, with reputations, included in the project" (2003: 17).

In terms of the scope and nature of coverage of organization studies, Westwood and Clegg's *Debating Organization* provides a nice lead for other 'handbook-type' texts to hopefully follow insofar as it highlights the precariousness of claims to either comprehensive or representative content and reveals the partial and political nature of pulling together a collection of contributions. Other supposedly field-spanning volumes and handbooks within organization studies would undoubtedly benefit from similar editorial reflexivity and critical reflection upon the processes of 'text production' and 'text consumption' (Fairclough, 1995) at work. This reflection should also reach beyond 'what' is included to also consider 'who' is included. After all, as van Dijk reminds us, if we want to understand texts we have to ask: "Who uses language, how, why and when?" (1997: 2).

From Isolated Monologues to Engaged Debates?

At a fundamental level, *Debating Organization* offers welcome sanctuary from the positivistic, univocal accounts that continue to dominate in both teaching (e.g. textbooks) and research (e.g. handbooks) – a kind of 'intellectual safe-house'. The very process of introducing a countervailing perspective to the orthodox or dominant view has to be viewed as a good thing within organization studies. Not least, because it promotes deeper and richer understandings of the diverse, complex, polyphonic and contested nature of knowledge within the discipline.

The overriding rationale offered by Westwood and Clegg for a point-counterpoint format is that it facilitates "a more active and productive engagement between positions in OS [organization studies] that typically would not be engaged – indeed, would not even inhabit the same textual space" (2003: 17). They go on to suggest:

> It struck us that too often debate is not met and opportunities for the productivity of thesis meet antithesis, or the mere juxtaposition of radically opposing perspectives are lost. Regrettably, certain institutional orthodoxies often collude with this isolationism and paradigm exclusionism. In other respects there is simple inertia, ego-defensiveness, or lack of opportunity. (2003: 17)

There are two aspects to Westwood and Clegg's assertions about their debate approach. One is the extent to which there is widespread isolationism in organization studies and the other is whether debate between antithetical positions is conducive to 'productive engagement'. In short, they posit that there is a lack of debate in organization studies and that debate is a good thing. The productive potential of debate will be examined in the subsequent section. For now, the discussion will address the question of isolation.

The message that Westwood and Clegg drive home in their introduction is that the book brings together and connects perspectives that do not normally interface or interact. This is highly questionable. The concept of debate is not perhaps as rare in academe as Westwood and Clegg would have us believe. In many ways debate is a fundament part of university life. In terms of structured events, brown bags lunchtime sessions and staff seminar series, within universities, and international and national conferences, across universities, are obvious sites of debate. If we concentrate on written exchanges, we also find considerable evidence of debate taking place. For example, even within mainstream organizational behaviour textbooks, such as Huczynski and Buchanan (2003) and Robbins (2003), we find that a point-counterpoint format is utilized. Equally, a number of well-respected journals encourage debate via commentaries, responses and replies to previously published work (see, for example, the 'dialogue' section of *Academy of Management Review* or the 'speaking out' section of *Organization*). And within the context of this special issue, it would also be rather remiss not to point out that the subtitle for *ephemera* is actually *critical dialogues on organization*!

There appears to be a credibility gap between Westwood and Clegg's characterization of the field of organization studies and the absence of debate. In the introductory chapter, they talk of diversity and heterogeneity and depict the field as a "contested discursive terrain" (p.2). This raises the question of where and how this contestation manifests itself if there is isolationism and limited debate between perspectives. Surely, in academic circles at least, it is impossible to have contestation without debate?

The notion of isolationism and a lack of debate are also difficult to sustain if we glance at the list of contributors to the book. Many of the protagonists that have written chapters for *Debating Organization* have done so from an established and enduring orientation to the field of organization studies. As such, their respective positions have been well rehearsed and have, at least in part, been honed through ongoing exchanges with opposing and antithetical positions. If we take, for example, the work of Lex Donaldson we find evidence of a history of engaging in a debate with interlocutors. This is particularly apparent in the 'A Reply to the Critics' subtitle of *In Defence of Organization Theory* (Donaldson, 1985). Similarly, Chia's notion of a 'becoming ontology' (2003) has been subjected to extensive exploration, including via a four-part debate between interlocutors (i.e. with Martin Parker, Mike Reed and Haridimos Tsoukas) in a themed section of *Organization* (Oswick *et al.*, 2000a).

Overall, it would seem that isolationism in organization studies has tended to be overplayed. Arguably, the strength of *Debating Organization* is not that it helps to fill a 'debate vacuum', but that it pulls together a series of otherwise fragmented and atomized debates, that are spatially and temporally dispersed, into a coherent collection of 'key debates'. However, this gives rise to a further set of issues pertaining to the liberating and constraining potential of the 'debate approach'.

Barricades

From Debates to Dogmatism?

As previously indicated, Westwood and Clegg contend that a point-counterpoint debate approach promotes "productive engagement between positions in OS" (2003: 17). But does it? This is a decidedly optimistic view of debate. It is entirely possible that the meeting of fundamentally opposing positions may also have destructive consequences and produce decidedly negative outcomes. The editors appear to be acutely aware of the combative connotations of debating. In discussing the etymology of the word 'debate', they acknowledge that it comes from old French and literally means 'to strike down'. Yet, there remains an unwavering commitment to 'positive' and 'productive' power of debate.

Several contributors to the edited collection voiced their reservations about the debate format employed. Gherardi, Marshall and Mills' (2003) contribution to the book focuses on gender issues in organization studies. In doing so, they are uncomfortable with, and critical of, what they see as the masculine undertones of the point-counterpoint structure of the book. A means of undermining the unmistakably adversarial framing of the debates within the book is offered by Albert Mills. During an extract of transcribed dialogue with his co-authors, he concludes:

> My personal answer is simply to bring the issue to the fore and share with each other and the reader that we see this more as a journey of discovery, a collaborative effort where we share our differences. (Gherardi *et al.*, 2003: 326)

Equally, reverberations of dissent are evident in chapter 5b where Peter Case offers a lucid and cogent response to a direct question from one of the editors asking why he is uneasy with the debate structure. He responds:

> It has to do with the way in which the cultural expectations of debate and the rhetorical strategies associated with it are rigged in such a way that there's rarely a genuine meeting of hearts and minds for the interlocutors concerned. The outcome of debate is much more likely to be the entrenchment of antagonistic and mutually incompatible views than a reassessment and reappraisal of one's ideas brought about by the other's argument. In other words, mutual incomprehension is a more likely outcome of the conventional academic debating process than shared understanding. (Case, 2003: 171)

It would seem that far from leading to 'productive engagement' debate tends to actually stimulate a retreat into isolationism (i.e. stand-offs) as debaters become more resolute in the defense of their respective positions. At a meta-level, what is at stake here is the utility of debate as a vehicle for making meaningful progress in understanding

organization studies as a complex, diverse and plurivocal field. In effect, the conceptual metaphor of 'argument as war' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), which is synonymous with notion of point-counterpoint debates, is inclined to lead to the erection of barricades rather than the building of bridges.[1] It is somewhat ironic that Westwood and Clegg actually champion an antithetical position by framing their deployment of debate as a means of barricade avoidance:

> We believe that one positive impact the book is likely to make is in its use as a practical resource for exploration and debate of various positions within the actual disposition of the field – rather than being reinforcements for those already arming the barricades of various theoretical dogmas. (2003: 35)

The fact that the book presents each central topic in terms of a debate between *two contrasting positions* means that it is unlikely to be conducive to the 'exploration and debate of *various positions*' in the manner claimed by the editors. Rather, it is far more likely to encourage readers to 'take sides' (i.e. aligning themselves to 'those already arming the barricades').

Beyond Binary Debates

Debating Organization is structured around thirteen chapters; this includes opening and closing chapters, and a chapter on gender that is not subjected to debate.[2] The remaining ten chapters are sub-divided into two sub-chapters (i.e. contrasting contributions) and an accompanying commentary by the editors. In effect, it is the pairing off of these twenty contributions into ten chapters that constitutes the focal debates. In this regard, each of the debates can be seen as two-way (i.e. binary). The overt intention for Westwood and Clegg in setting up a series of two-way debates was to stimulate interaction between opposing positions. As they explain:

> We wanted to set before the reader as full an array as possible of the areas of critical contestation around core issues. We sought an expressly polyvocal, multipositional text constructed around dyads of point and counterpoint, thesis to antithesis, paradigm against paradigm. (Westwood and Clegg, 2003: 17-18)

The head-to-head, almost gladiatorial, subtext to the positioning of debate in the book is inescapable. This is discernible in the use of terms like 'critical *contestation*' and 'paradigm *against* paradigm'. It is even more pronounced elsewhere in other utterances, contained in the introductory chapter, such as: "clashing tectonics, robust monoliths, volcanic irruptions and ghostly implosions were our desire" (2003: 17).

Ultimately, at the heart of the debate structure is the issue of power. The adversarial positioning of protagonists is not simply about academic content. Rather, it is a power

---

1   This is not to say that debate is *de facto* always a bad thing. There are occasions when combative-style engagement and the strident defense of a position can be productive. That said, the central tenet here is that positive outcomes from debate are generally less commonplace than negative ones.

2   The chapter on gender is presented as a collaborative conversation between three scholars. This format is used to deliberately escape what the contributors perceive to be the masculinist point-counterpoint structure employed elsewhere in the volume.

struggle between identities. It is because the primary point of contestation is about 'who I am' rather than just 'what I say' the combative stakes of debate are raised.

Beyond the adversarial tone of two-way debating, there is another more troublesome dimension to the approach inasmuch as it, albeit unintentionally, reinforces 'dichotomous thinking' (Beech and Cairns, 2001), promotes the formation of 'false binary oppositions' (Tsoukas, 2000), and encourages an 'either/or logic' (Gergen, 1999). This emerges through a form of 'bounded rationality' (Simon, 1945) wherein the two views of the world represent the world and, therefore, the repertoire of possible readings is reduced down to a choice between two competing alternatives (i.e. which one wins out as the more plausible or legitimate account). In effect, this process shuts off, or at the very least restricts, the scope for acknowledging and exploring the existence of other perspectives beyond the constructed dualism.

For instance, the point-counterpoint debate on epistemology contained in the book has contributions from Lex Donaldson (2003) on positivism and Barbara Czarniawska (2003) on social contructionism. Are we to assume that these perspectives constitute the only, the main, or the most important epistemological perspectives? Critical realism and poststructuralism are, for example, entirely absent from the debate.

By foregrounding a two-pronged representation of the field rather than multiple takes on it, the debate approach has severely limited potential for generating polyphonic insights. Moreover, it would seem that Westwood and Clegg's espoused aim to produce 'an expressly polyvocal, multipositional text' is, ultimately, hampered by the very framework (i.e. a debate format) that they claim is best suited to delivering it.

Towards Polyphonic Dialogue

Having raised some significant reservations about the value of point-counterpoint debates as a means of enhancing the study of organizations and organizing, it may be helpful to briefly sketch out an alternative direction. One that is less adversarial and more inclusive. Given the negative connotations of debate, the incorporation of more dialogically-oriented modes of textual exchange in organization studies might prove beneficial. Unlike debate, which is typically more positional, antagonistic and intransigent in nature, dialogue is predicated on a certain level of flexibility, receptiveness and openness during the interactive process. Moreover, debate is often competitively structured to produce winners and losers while dialogue is collaboratively structured in ways that facilitate mutual gains and mutual understandings (Oswick *et al*., 2000b). The crux of the difference between debate and dialogue rests upon what Stan Deetz describes as the 'information' and the 'dialogue' perspectives on communication:

> Most organizational members and researchers attend psychologically and sociologically to human interaction as an information process. Meaning is already possessed, and the reason I talk is to get it to others, hoping to change their choices. Dialogic communication suggests that meaning is always incomplete and partial, and the reason I talk with others is to better understand what I and they mean, hoping to find new and more satisfying ways of being together. (1995: 97-98)

As Gergen and Thatchenkery (1996) point out, dialogue can be conceived of as a transformative endeavour. This is achieved via a process referred to as 'generative dialogue' which attempts to "enable participants to escape the realities they enter and

enable them, working collaboratively, to formulate models of understanding or action that incorporate multiple inputs" (Gergen and Thatchenkery, 1996: 368).

The combative predisposition of academic debate simultaneously produces a concomitant defensiveness and attack-mindedness. This, in turn, places a pressure on the participants in a debate to focus the vulnerable points in the other person's arguments. Contrastingly, an approach called 'appreciative inquiry' (Cooperrider and Srivasta, 1987; Hammond, 1996; Watkins and Mohr, 2001) provides a very different entry point to engagement; one that involves looking for the good in a given situation. As such, it focuses attention on the positives and the strengths of an interlocutor's position, rather than on attacking weak areas, and through appreciation it seeks to build upon, extend and develop the arguments. Appreciative inquiry has proved to be popular in a number of areas (e.g. social work, community relations, and public policy administration) and, although it would require a significant shift in thinking, there is a case for enlisting the appreciative approach in organization studies. It would certainly be interesting to see an edited collection in the field where contributors from different perspectives are encouraged to be appreciative and 'build bridges' by identifying and engaging with the strengths of the other contributions.

Finally, dialogue, as articulated by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), is unquestionably a polyphonic phenomenon. For 'real dialogue' (Oswick *et al*., 2000b)[3] to occur it is a necessary precondition that there are more than two parties involved. This circumvents the prospect of a two-way debate. It also maximizes the probability of transformative insights and new meanings being generated (Bohm, 1996). This is rendered achievable because:

> Each participant in dialogue always brings pre-existing expectations and 'frames of meaning' to bear on the comprehension of concrete discourse. Therefore, the crux of an 'active and engaged understanding' is the act of incorporating the word of the other into one's own conceptual system, thereby imbuing the word with an entirely new range of inflections and evaluative nuances. It is this feature of linguistic interaction that makes genuine dialogue possible, and it facilitates the introduction of new meanings into language. (Gardiner, 1992: 38-39)

Accommodating multi-voiced dialogue within handbook-style, organization studies texts is somewhat impractical. If we reconsider Westwood and Clegg's volume, covering ten topics via two-way debates, resulting in twenty contributions, is clearly manageable, but to absorb four-part dialogues, for instance, on each topic would generate problems concerning space and acceptable word limits. This problem is amplified with the case of more extensive handbooks (e.g. Clegg, Hardy and Nord, 1996).

---

3   'Real dialogue' is seen as occurring when there is an openness and receptiveness to, and an unconditional positive engagement with, the other's position.

Sandcastles

The metaphor of a sandpit has been used by Perrow (1974) to depict the study of organizations and organizing. As explained in Oswick and Grant:

> He [Charles Perrow] describes organization theorists as being like children playing in a sandpit; each child oblivious to, and uninterested in, what the others are doing concerned with building their own sandcastles and pausing only occasionally to destroy an alternative sandcastle that threatens to become more impressive. (1996: 214)

The evocative imagery of sandcastle building seems to resonate as a characterization of organization studies in general and some of the arguments forwarded in this review in particular. The image of children being concerned with building their own sandcastles and being oblivious to what others are doing nicely parallels Westwood and Clegg's concerns about isolationism in organization studies. That said, the form of adversarial debate that they champion to counter isolationism in organization studies appears to most closely resemble the child-like behaviour of 'destroying an alternative sandcastle that threatens to become more impressive'. It is possible to further extend Perrow's sandpit metaphor. We could perhaps envisage a situation where the children learn to play together and deal with their differences constructively. In this scenario the children would collaborate and cooperate in the construction of their respective sandcastles and, on occasions, they might come together to collectively build sandcastles.

It is important to stress that the notion of dialogue espoused here is aspirational. It should not be thought of as a pathway to an utopian society. Dialogue can never be perfectly symmetrical and inclusive. Moreover, we cannot escape the *Realpolitik* of power and domination in communicative spaces. This does not, however, mean that we should not promote collaboration and attempt to engage in 'real dialogue'. The active, albeit ongoing, pursuit of collaborative ways of being as an alternative to the more prevalent combative alternatives in academe remains worthy of endeavour even if utopian outcomes cannot be fully realized.

So, where does this leave us? The breath of coverage demanded for handbooks requires compromises in terms of the depth of coverage required in order to produce meaningful multivocal, dialogic insights. Arguably, the answer is that we need fewer handbooks in organization studies and more tightly-framed, theme-specific collections that contain contributions from a range of perspectives, but that also engage in a constructive process of dialogue with each other. In short, we need to rethink the way we produce organization studies texts to ensure that in the future we collaboratively build impressive and innovative sandcastles.

references   Bakhtin, M. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. M. Holquist, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Austin, TX: Texas University Press.

Beech, N. and G. Cairns (2001) 'Coping with Change: The Contribution of Postdichotomous Ontologies', *Human Relations*, 54(10): 1303-1324.

Bohm, D. (1996) *On Dialogue*. London: Routledge.

Case, P. (2003) 'From Objectivity to Subjectivity: Pursuing Subjective Authenticity in Organizational Research', in R. Westwood and S. Clegg (eds.) *Debating Organization: Point-Counterpoint in Organization Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Chia, R. (2003) 'Ontology: Organization as 'World-making'', in R. Westwood and S. Clegg (eds.) *Debating Organization: Point-Counterpoint in Organization Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Clegg, S., C. Hardy and W. Nord (eds.) (1996) *Handbook of Organization Studies*. London: Sage.

Cooperrider, D. and S. Srivasta (1987) 'Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life', in R. W. Woodman and W. A. Pasmore (eds.) *Research in Organizational Change and* Development, Vol.1. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Czarniawska, B. (2003) 'Social Constructionism and Organization Studies', in R. Westwood and S. Clegg (eds.) *Debating Organization: Point-Counterpoint in Organization Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Deetz, S. (1995) *Transforming Communication, Transforming Business: Building Responsive and Responsible Workplaces*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Donaldson, L. (1985) *In Defence of Organization Theory: A Reply to the Critics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Donaldson, L. (2003) 'Position Statement for Positivism', in R. Westwood and S. Clegg (eds.) *Debating Organization: Point-Counterpoint in Organization Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Fairclough, N. (1995) *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Longman.

Gardiner, M. (1992) *The Dialogics of Critque: M.M. Bakhtin and the Theory of Ideology*. London: Routledge.

Gergen, K.J. (1999) *An Invitation to Social Construction*. London: Sage.

Gergen, K.J. and T.J. Thatchenkery (1996) 'Developing Dialogue for Discerning Differences', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 32(4): 356-377.

Gherardi, S., J. Marshall and A. Mills (2003) 'Theorizing Gender and Organizing', in R. Westwood and S. Clegg (eds.) *Debating Organization: Point-Counterpoint in Organization Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Hammond, S. (1996) *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*. Plano, TX: Thin Book Publishing.

Huczynski, A. and D. Buchanan (2003) *Organizational Behaviour: An Introductory Text*, 5th Edition. London: Prentice Hall.

Lakoff, G. and M. Johnson (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press:

Oswick, C. and D. Grant (1996) 'The Organization of Metaphors and the Metaphors of Organization: Where Are We and Where Do We Go From Here?', in D. Grant and C. Oswick (eds.) *Metaphor and Organization*. London: Sage.

Oswick, C., T. Keenoy, D. Grant and R. Marshak (2000a) 'Discourse, Organization and Epistemology', *Organization*, 7(3): 511-512.

Oswick, C., P. Anthony, T. Keenoy, I.L. Mangham and D. Grant (2000b) 'A Dialogic Analysis of Organizational Learning', *Journal of Management Studies*, 37(6): 887-901.

Perrow, C. (1974) ''Zoo Story' or 'Life in the Organizational Sandpit'', in Open University Course Team (eds.) *Social Sciences: A Third Level Course in People and Organizations*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Robbins, S. (2003) *Organizational Behavior*. London: Prentice Hall.

Simon, H.A. (1945) *Adminstrative Behavior*. New York: Free Press.

Sorge, A. and M. Warner (eds.) (2000) *Handbook of Organizational Behaviour*. London: Thompson Learning.

Tsoukas, H. (2000) 'False Dilemmas in Organization Theory: Realism or Social Constructivism?', *Organization*, 7(3):531-535.

van Dijk, T.A. (1997) 'The Study of Discourse', in T.A. van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse as Structure and Process*, Vol.1. London: Sage.

Watkins, J.M. and B.J. Mohr (2001) *Appreciative Inquiry*. San Francisco: JosseyBass/Pfeiffer.

the author
Cliff Oswick is Professor of Organization Theory and Communication at The Management Centre, University of Leicester. His current research interests are concerned with the application of aspects of discourse, dramaturgy, tropes, narrative and rhetoric to the study of organisations, organising processes and organisational change. In addition to co-editing a number of books and contributing to various edited collections, he has published work in a range of national and international journals, including recent and forthcoming contributions to *Human Relations, Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, Journal of Management Studies, Organization, Academy of Management Review and Organization Studies*. He is the co-director of ICRODSC (the International Centre for Research in Organizational Discourse, Strategy and Change) and a member of the editorial boards of the *Journal of Organizational Change Management, Journal of Business Communication, Group and Organization Management* and *Tamara: Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science*.
Address: Chair in Organization Theory & Analysis, The Management Centre, University of Leicester, Ken Edwards Building, University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH, England
E-mail: c.oswick@le.ac.uk

ephemera | **reviews**

critical dialogues on organization
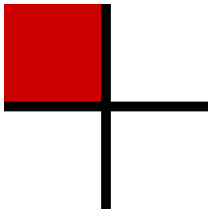
Management? …*Whatever**

Damian O'Doherty

review of: **S. Crainer and D. Dearlove (eds.) (2001) *Financial Times Handbook of Management: On the State of the Art*, 2nd edition. London: Pearson.** (HB: pp.800, £30, ISBN 0273643509)

> The violence of that which forces thought develops from the *sentiendum* to the *cogitandum*. Each faculty is unhinged, but what are the hinges if not the form of a common sense which causes all the faculties to function and converge? (Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*)

It is possible that we may come to speak of an encounter, an essential encounter, but in the form of an articulation that is barely known to our ears: cries and shrieks and primal screams, swoops and laughter, tears and bellyache. The *Financial Times Handbook of Management* offers not so much an introduction to the thinking and practice of contemporary management, nor a summary of the field, but what amounts to a shrewd and subtly disguised *pharmacological* experiment. Be warned – *Abandon hope all ye who enter here*. Respect. Do not expect to come out at the other end of this *tour de force,* the same person you think you might have been on entering. Insofar as the text removes all prospect of dialectical synthesis and denies the opportunity for a position of neutral intermedium or transcendent *supervision*, we will have no place within which and from where we can measure such metamorphosis and change. A most peculiar, place(less) spacing then, that, furthermore, cannot even offer the possibility of asking such questions for it would, from *this side* of our logic, make no sense to do so (presumably). Which makes (this) review (im)possible. Take your dog tags, invest in maps and tattoos, pack photographs of home. *Tour de force*? This is going to be more like a 'tour of duty' – a progressive infolding thousands of 'clicks' deep into a presumed enemy territory, teeming with strange flora and fauna, ghosts of Marlow, faltering voices from the past, and the silence of the infinite, punctuated by flickers and shards of an ephemera-to-come in a veritable drama at the heart of darkness.

We are being sent into a *delerium tremens* in our efforts to come to some kind of terms with this text, but what will prove to be an essential *délire* (Lecercle, 1985) in securing

_____

access and passage through this phantasmagorical collection and exhibition (see Benjamin, 1999: esp. pp.22, 116, and *passim*; Cohen, 1993: 227-59). Crainer and Dearlove's edited volume marks a possible end to those reviews and readings formed out of an established critical repertoire, theory familiar to students of *ephemera* – whether this be post-marxist, or neo-marxist critical theory, what passes for poststructuralism and deconstruction, or a psychodynamic reading that identifies the text as some kind of prosthetic transference object for the collective succour of management in today's financial times. A cry for help, though, it certainly is. Yet this handbook proves resistant to the very conventions of reading and thinking; and, not only or *simply* resistant, but transformative – and in this respect this text deserves the credit for producing a truly radical and subversive intervention in the field of management and organisation.

The exact repercussions of this event can only be dimly surmised, but there is probably little exaggeration in the claim that this volume smuggles its contraband through the perimeters of our 'paramount reality' (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) to discharge its viral dehiscence in waves of endless proliferation, migration, and miscegenation. In what follows we will attempt to subject this dissemination machine to a series of established critical readings, but all will be found wanting, for this volume only makes sense for another kind of logic; some may dare call it a 'post-human' logic.

Subverting Critique

The *Financial Times Handbook of Management* must be, without doubt, one of the most radical, audacious, and extreme conceits to have been devised. In response, a number of methods of reviewing are immediately suggestive and, at first sight, promising. One could read this text, for example, from the position of an outraged highbrow mandarin scholar grappling with despair at the further infiltration into the academy of an instrumental and utilitarian agenda. The Handbook brings together established and prestigious names from the world of the university who need little or no introduction – including Warren Bennis, Andrew Kakabadse, D. Quinn Mills, and John Storey – together with consultants and freelance commercial, private sector commentators, analysts and writers. Stephen Coomber is a freelance business researcher and writer, for example, and Shere Hite is an 'internationally renowned thinker on human relationships and sexuality'. Some contributors can boast of a distinguished history in global advertising – Sam Hill, for example, co-founder of the New York and Chicago based *Helios Consulting*, who lists as credentials his previous role as vice chairmen and strategy officer of *DMB&B* – a 'top 20 global advertising agency' – and partner and chief marketing officer at *Booz-Allen & Hamilton*. Others share equally impressive curriculum vitaes. Anthony M. Santomero is the current president of the *Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia*. Harold Rose, in addition to his Emeritus Professorship at the *London Business School*, is the head of economic intelligence at Prudential Assurance and director of *The Economist*, and Peter Lorange, who is the President of the *International Institute for Management Development* based in Laussane, Switzerland.

Our senior, tenured college don, offering his review, then, would doubtless balk at this heteroclite assembly of usurers and money grubbers. With its bold subtitles and convenience packaging, designed for short attention spans and those who want to read as a form of consumption and immediate gratification, this volume can only offer consternation and despair. One can only imagine the sheer horror of this reviewer confronted by what for many appears to be utter banality and simplicity, presenting such a confused mix of prescription and description that it is never clear what is intended by the author, what is actually meant, what is really being said, or really what is even there by accident or design. This text displays all the analytical rigour of a sensational front-page tabloid exposé of some second division media celebrity fallen-on-hard-times. The juvenile grammar is itself a marvel to behold, a text so full of non-sequiturs, amphigouri, imbecility, spurious logic, and – lets be clear here – sheer *folly*, that it would be no surprise if our reviewer was confined to bed for an indefinite period of rest and recuperation. Writing that is littered with such a cornucopia of media friendly sound-bites, catch-phrases, column after column of the ubiquitous bullet-point, and its excruciatingly embarrassing graphics and diagrams, that just about reproduce the whole gamut of textual vulgarity dispensed by today's mass market publishers, would pose a challenge to even the most experienced and hardy reader of trashy pulp – let alone our high patrician academic. There are few reviewers left who would support this model of reviewing and fewer still who would be prepared to commit to print such a potentially slanderous diatribe: a case of logophilia diarrhoea, or logorrhoea.

Instead, particularly in the context of this journal, one might expect to read a review informed by developments in critical management studies, or an application/extension of what has become known, perhaps unfortunately, as 'postmodernised' organisation analysis. Other interested reviewers might approach this handbook from a perspective in 'marxisant' industrial relations (Hyman, 1989: 127), neo-pluralist employment relations, or neo-marxist, 'materialist' studies of the labour process. Doubtless the *British Journal of Management* and the *Journal of Management Studies* will publish reviews that interrogate the empirical veracity of the interpretations and analysis offered in the collection. Here one might expect to see reviewers raise questions concerning the reliability, generalisability, and applicability of the findings and prescriptions. The 'funky model' of organisational design, for example, that is heterarchical, leveraged, innovative, and focused, in which "playgrounds …gradually replace the pyramids" (Nordstrom and Ridderstrale, p.65), is likely to be seen as fanciful and unrealistic in the context of the growth and internationalisation of the call centre and the expansion of employment in low paid, part-time, and insecure forms of manual labour.

The *Financial Times Handbook* is also easily dismissed within the framework and analysis provided by the Frankfurt School-inspired critical management studies and from a perspective developed out of a reading of poststructural and deconstructive theory. Alvesson and Willmott (1996) would help us to see how the text is a media and outcome of a systematically distorted field of communicative action and in its reduction of management to a set of discrete and autonomous, technicised activities, contributes to a reification of management practice and the denial of 'organisation' as an arena of inequality, conflict and struggle. Where Birchall writes that executive "management has to create a vision of where it wants the organisation to go and then agree an appropriate strategy for getting there" and that "this will lead to a streamlining of the organisation to

increase its focus and long-term profitability" (p.130), critical management studies would expose how such a simplistic conception of organisation helps serve dominant power interests at the expense of a more egalitarian, collective reconstruction of organisation. The sanitised tone of Birchall's discourse and the assumption of a value-neutral Reason, is only a thin disguise for the perpetuation of suffering and poverty, one that denies genuine debate over purpose, meaning, and value, a debate that can only be realised through an extended collective participation. 'Streamlining', for example, would be better translated as redundancy, a phenomena that entails enormous social, economic, and psychological damage, consequences that management routinely denies and prefers to ignore. Moreover, Birchall, typical of all of the contributors to this volume, persists with this idea that 'organisation' is an entity or 'thing', in which it makes sense to talk about 'it' as if 'it' had 'interests' for itself, that is, that organisation pre-exists, in some way, the representational efforts of its differentially positioned participants.

This is the fallacy of what critical theorists call 'reification', the perpetuation of which serves only to bolster the naturalisation of ideological distortion as mundane, everyday common-sense. Similarly, the simplistic equation of cause-effect and its application to action in organisation, as if organisation could be under the simple directive authority of some cohesive cadre of managerial strategists, reproduces an impoverished understanding of what are complex and dialectical force-fields, processes and dynamics at work in organisation. More developed accounts from a critical theory perspective might also interpret this publication as part of what Alvesson and Willmott (1996: 103) call 'cultural doping'.[1] For Alvesson and Willmott cultural doping is understood more in the terms of an orchestrated, self-conscious, agency driven managerial campaign that works in part on the conscious but also, in large part, on the unconscious dimensions of subjectivity and identity. Texts such as Crainer and Dearlove only assist in the naturalisation and normalisation of a very narrow, one-dimensional managerial reality, a form of 'training', in effect, that works to cultivate the right orientations, values, and ideals, amongst its readership and management audience. In sum, the positive, up-beat tone of the contributions to this volume, which presents management as an exciting, practicable, and efficacious exercise, enacts, in part, a defensive denial and to some extent a public relations exercise, a flight of fancy that belies the ideological engineering that motivates research and publications of this kind.

A review of Crainer and Dearlove motivated by popular forms of 'textbook' deconstruction, on the other hand, might concentrate on the denial and repression of that which is un-manageable, disorganising, and disruptive of sense and meaning in the text. Here, we would seek to identify the role of critical nodal points distributed throughout the writings of the contributors around which this displacement is mobilised – textual moments that, at the same time, unwittingly reveal the trace of this attempted excise and exclusion. What has become known as the modern, western episteme of knowledge, through which the discourse of managerial research and writing such as this *Financial Times Handbook* has itself been formed, is organised around a series of artificially separated conceptual oppositions, polarities, and dualisms (see for example Cooper,

---

1   Critical management studies show some sensitivity to this idea of texts as 'pharmacological' experiments, which we will develop later.

1989; Chia, 1996; Knights, 1997). This has the effect of unduly stabilising phenomena through an occluded process of hierarchicisation and categorisation that provides the reassurance of our everyday, familiar world-shared-in-common, a world which remains an assumption and illusion, or indeed collective *delusion* that persists in part because it has become so familiar that it is no longer seen. The conventional categories that serve as the 'foundations of management', in section two of Crainer and Dearlove, commit this 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness' (Whitehead, 1978: 18ff; cf. Whitehead, 1985, chapter three), separating management into such routine divisions as 'Strategy', 'Managing Human Resources', 'Marketing', and 'Finance'. Once we begin to carefully read the chapters that have been designed to be contained within each of these categories, however, the 'repressed' returns as we begin to discover glitches and inconsistencies. The more rigorously we read, the more dissonance appears, for example, between the putative 'container' and the 'contained'. So much so that towards the extreme, routine oppositions begin to oscillate and migrate, even reversing their polarity to leave a suspended, undecidable realm of meaning and significance.

Let us consider, as an example, part two of this book, which is titled 'The foundations of management'. Here, Costas Markides opens the proceedings with a discussion around strategy that raises the question in its title 'What is strategy and how do you know if you have one?' (p.230). Immediately, despite Markides efforts to elide this complexity, we have, for a section putatively about the *foundations* of management, a rather unusual and perplexing epistemological and ontological problematic. We will disregard, for the time being, the problem of this 'you' indicated in the title (is it stating the all-too-obvious to suggest that this 'you' is simply a humble reader?). Confusion and complexity rapidly ensue when we read in Markides that it is 'top management' whom are the decision makers in choosing which strategic idea to enact (p.234). It would seem that far from being a foundation *of* management, then, management must be there in place, in role, *beforehand*, after which along comes strategic options from which management chooses what they believe to be the most promising. Yet, on further inspection, the text subsequently reveals that it is 'companies' that develop strategies (p.231), and then, on the very same page, in perfect *mise-en-abyme*, it is 'strategy' itself that "must decide on a few parameters", and further, "strategy must put all our choices together to create a reinforcing mosaic" (p.236). What strange actor this 'strategy' has become! The concept of strategy has undergone a strange migration and metamorphosis in the development of this text. From a phenomena that supposedly provides a support or foundation for management, we discover that it is something that management has to partly invent, adopt, and enact. Strategy is clearly less than a foundation and more like an outcome or culmination of management practice. However, by some bizarre reversal, strategy itself comes to assume the features of an animate, self-acting, conscious phenomena. The *contained* – strategy as a sub-category of foundations – has seemingly out-grown its confines to almost usurp the role of *container*, the part leaps over the whole, so to speak, so that the foundations of management are now, seemingly, the product, the *dependent* sub-component, of strategy. We are left with the apparently absurd ('inside-out') conclusion that strategy could well be a foundation of management, one that acts itself, moreover, like a strange *Doppelgänger* of

management.[2] Paradoxically, this does in fact confirm the declared intentions of the text *despite the conscious and best efforts of its author*. All kinds of reversals, displacements, confusions and transgressions are taking place here.

Alternatively, we could say that this author simply does not know what they are talking about.[3] It should, therefore, come as no surprise that when it comes to empirical research, particularly ethnographic and participant forms of critical action-research, we are provided with findings that confirm the on-going confusion and miscegenation of boundaries emerging out of the actual practice of management and organisation, further undermining the classificatory neatness and 'organisation' performed by texts such as this (see, for example, Latour, 1996; Law, 1994; Watson, 1994).

Pataphysical Slide: Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough

The Crainer and Dearlove volume simply submits and yields to such critiques, it lays down, or bends over – despite its sturdy spine, and celebrates those failings identified by the critical resources of marxism, poststructuralism, and deconstruction. It is not merely the case that this text is unworthy of such heavyweight, high-minded seriousness, rather it would appear that it is able to quite neatly side-step, whilst incorporating, these readings. Indeed it is almost as if the text cocks a snook at such readings, a deliberate bravado and provocation that actually *invites* these critiques and dismissals. How else is one to read the interpretation made of Weber in Peters' chapter (pp.25-7)? In contrast to Marx, we are told that "Weber offered a more pragmatic view – the subjugation of individuals to organisations was reality" (p.25). Developing her theme, Peters goes on to write that the "machine's aim was to work efficiently: no more, no less" (p.26). How many first year undergraduate essays have we painstakingly corrected and annotated for committing such a range of gross errors: reification; over-generalisation; lack of textual care; leaving the concept of efficiency unproblematised and without definition; meanwhile informing the student that subjugation is not a conditional clause enacted by agents of organisation, and requesting some elaboration on this term 'reality'. Five out of ten, could do better. As for Yip's 'hexagon of competitive advantage' (p.255), we would be reaching for our red pen in despair to remind our student that anecdote and reportage is no basis for generalisation or model building. Professor of Strategic and International Management at the London Business School he may well be, but we all need reminding of the dangers of speculative free-will, lazy generalisation, the importance of epistemological clarification, the dangers of positivism, and the problem of prejudice dressed up as theory.

---

2   To push this further we might then think about the possibility of another category mistake, namely the anthropormophic projections of the all-too-human writer or reader in attributing a form of existence and behavioural mode of logic of the human to its other, namely, in this case 'strategy'.

3   The reader may find the rest of the paper 'somewhat tedious and repetitious', at least if one reviewer of this paper is correct. Others may sense that something is being missed.

We do not have space to offer further illustrations of the deployment of these *agent-provocateur* techniques; suffice to say that the puerility, frivolity, and excess, must form part of a quite deliberate, pataphysical strategy on a par with Jarry's Ubu series, where we meet characters such as (rendered in English) 'Dogpile', 'Wallop', 'McClub', 'Barmpot Gripshit', 'Swankipants the Banker', and 'Sergeant Pisseasy'. In the *Financial Times Handbook* we meet a similar entourage of characters, objects, subjects, and events (the distinctions are left wonderfully ambiguous): from 'Funky Inc', to 'stretch people'; 'incubators' and the 'bottom up process'; 'skunkworks', 'fluid talent pool', and 'current reality' (as opposed to '*raisonne* de real', perhaps?); all of whom can take pride of place alongside their Jarryesque relatives. Disposable, makeshift concepts and esoteric, portmanteau words accumulate, agglomerate and take flight in a carnivalesque riot that parodies and dramatizes the surreal and delirious production of commodities and services proffered by contemporary 'casino capitalism' (Strange, 1998). Failing this interpretation, one might be forced to conclude that these authors simply do not care. However, so radical is this writing, in fact, that this volume only *takes on* the appearance of one of those utterly contemptuous, cynical and dumbed-down, mass market publications that provide nothing but misery and suffering for its readership. There can be few who would hesitate to confirm that, at least in its own genre, this volume clearly competes with that pantheon of infamous literary hoaxes: Shakespeare; Orbis Tertius; Castaneda; certain Chinese encyclopaedias; Nat Tate; the Sokal affair, etc.; and, more recently, Huczynski and Buchanan (O'Doherty and Case, 2003). Moreover, if it were not for the humour and self-deprecation of the contributors to this edited volume, we may have been complaining of an arrogant assumption to this elevated class of pranksterism. That they avoid this arrogance and genuinely write with the innocence and naiveté of a new-age cult member is a marvellous achievement.

Indeed, from the very outset the handbook announces this intent, and given the title of its opening chapter, 'The *Rise* of Management' (emphasis added), only the most pedestrian of reader will fail to suspect something is amiss. Associating on the possible intimations and implications of this title rapidly leads to a condition that can only be described as one of awe and stupefaction. So close to 'ruse', one can't help wondering if there are devotees and initiates who will immediately grasp the true significance of this contribution to management education. Lacanian inspired readings will not fail to make the connection to 'the phallus'. Marxist industrial relations scholars, on the other hand, may be invited to index their reading in terms of class struggle and the distributive inequalities of surplus value and the labour process. Students of humour and organisational badinage might lift an eyebrow at the idea of a 'rise', as in who is getting a rise out of who?, whilst more deconstructionist inspired writers might note the homonymous 'absent-presence' of the word 'wry'. However, in true mantric fashion – or perhaps in mockery of those populist reductions of management practice to a series of mantra sounding soundbites – repeated to oneself sufficient times, its secret palimpsest begins to echo as 'wise', and wise this book certainly is.

'The Rise of Management' straight away lulls you into a false sense of security as it opens with a tetravalent *hors d'oeuvre* of quotations by Drucker, Mintzberg, and Fayol. Familiar territory, *or so you might think*. By the time one has read through to the final word on page 784, those opening words of Drucker seem oddly double-edged, reversible, if not faintly palindromic, "Management means, in the last analysis, the

substitution of thought for brawn and muscle, of knowledge for folklore and superstition, and of cooperation for force" (p.3; see Drucker, 1974). There can be few words in management that compete with this seamless, Roussel-like interfold of narrative significance and meaning (Roussel, 1995; see Foucault, 1987), which seems to mirror if not anticipate that double-talk of more contemporary managerial discourse, where, as Willmott (1993) writes, we are persuaded to think 'Strength is ignorance' and 'slavery is freedom'. At first one naturally assumes that Drucker must mean that brawn and muscle represents the antiquity of management, but as one thinks a little further, perhaps it is more accurate to say that, because history does not simply *progress*, what Drucker might mean is that in fact we can look *forward* to the eclipse of reason and thought and the return of a more immediate and visceral managerial regime, ruled by bullying, fear, and intimidation. As one reads forward through Crainer and Dearlove, in ever increasing fear and trembling, the text itself certainly seems to stage a series of similar reversals that compels a regression of sorts – as we shall see – but we can never be sure if the tone is one of irony, parody, or even celebration. The idea of 'substitution' in this opening quotation from Drucker works both ways and provides a leitmotif that haunts the rest of the volume. In deconstructive terms, we might say it has a *supplementary* and *undecidable* quality. So much so, in fact, that any sustained study causes the poles of the opposition to resonate ever more rapidly, intensifying to a moment of equivalence that sets up that old *perpetuum mobile* thought loop, leaving those of us immersed in Baudrillard, wide eyed and agape, staring into infinity, seemingly fascinated and bored in equal measure. There is a lesson and a warning here for the profound disorientation staged in the main body of this text.

So obvious is this ploy that on returning to these choice words by Drucker one feels the compulsion to kick oneself. *Of course*, you shriek. It's so obvious! The very first few words of the volume tell you precisely what is going to happen: Reversals. Transgression. Disorientation. The collapse and inadequacy of reason. Undecidability. However, it is a testament to the creative elegance and control of Crainer and Dearlove that the text is structured and measured in such a way that it only *slowly* dawns upon the reader what is actually happening. This volume is a triumph of pace, rhythm and control. Only at the end can one return to the beginning and appreciate the subtlety invested in the production and presentation of this text. So, to reach the end of this book one must turn the *end over*, quite literally stitching together the final section – 'When two worlds collide' (pp.725-51) – with what we had first, naturally, taken to be the exordium, 'Current Reality' and 'The Rise of Management', to form an eternal return of sorts which then casts into relief role of this text as a generator of difference and repetition (Deleuze, 1994).[4] Magic! In so doing, one works towards the re-commencement of the circle and, in this commitment to work, one also remains, therefore, always displaced, un-ready, and yet-to-come to fulfilment, identity, and completion. Perfect! To permit this book to do its work, then, one must first learn to take this book from *behind, a tergo*, so to speak – or to allow this book to take you from behind,[5] *a rebours* (see Huysmans, 1884), by surprise and unawares (cf.: Derrida,

---

4   More exactly we need to twist the two ends of the volume as we attach them end-to-end to form a möbius strip.

5   The desire to kick oneself in the behind might be seen as a twisted, albeit erotic, early-warning sign of the movement and play of forces mobilised and amplified by this text.

1993). Behind, displaced to one side, *and* yet-to-come, this is quite clearly an invidious and disorientating 'position' from which to read this text or to seek to take back its lessons into the practice of management. It must be part of that 'rise' which is management today – the irony, the forked-tongue, the inside joke. Incoming, from behind oneself: one of the lessons of this text is that we are always waiting to catch up with ourselves, as if a part of ourselves, an 'envoy', of sorts, has been sent out into the future; which means that the *re-view* must itself have to wait in limbo. Sent out or captured by the future, the 'view' is no longer; it has been taken from us, and so it can make little sense to think about a *re*-view at the same time that it must make review and repetition *originary*, in some sense. After the end(s) of the book – and the ends of the reader assumed by and co-implicated in this historico-contingent textual form[6] – performed in this text, we can, perhaps, only hope to form a view looking behind. In sum, we may have to learn to use our rear-view mirrors if we want to go on seeing at all.[7]

Meta-forces and metaphors

With these questions and struggles one rapidly finds oneself assuming the role of a 'character' in the drama of this handbook of management – a theatrical production scripted by appeals to 'agility', improvisation, 'adhocracy', and what can only be, presumably, the *blarney*[8] of the 'shamrock' organisation (pp.96ff).[9] We have been made

---

6   Ends which are proving 'end for end' and side-by-side, leading to the confusion of upside-down and inside-out. These mark out some of the baroque outfoldings and consequences of the Deleuzian difference-repetition generator, textual threads and lines of flight that we are being asked to carry and bear.

7   However, recent developments that identify and critique what is called the ocularcentric prejudice of the modern western episteme (see Levin, 1993; Hoskin, 1995; Jay, 1993) is suggestive of the operation of forces and movements that, in order to access or come to some kind of terms, compel a move beyond the familiar sensory constitution of the all-too-human. Following Nietzsche, we might ask what 'views' might come from hearing, from touch, taste, or from a more 'synaesthetic' becoming of the human sensorium (see Massumi, 2002)? Is there not now an urgent need to re-envision vision, instead of simply submitting to a disembodied viewing? I can assure the reader that this book tastes truly awful.

8   And this, here, this Morphean reviewing, perhaps little more than an obsession, a quest for the apostrophe in organisation, the ' of *O'Doherty*, that joint and division, the tonsil clapper of occlusion in Derrida's *Glas* (1986), of possession and dispossession, paternity and filiation. Hence this quest for that which plays *between*, the coming of a volatile intermedium, the *achievement* of the humus of organisation (see Cooper, 2003), all that which interrupts and suspends, the pregnant pause, the *hic-up* of organisation as it turns on its wheels of structuration, object and subject, structure and agency.

9   A new theatrics becomes the space of a possible, emergent new theorising in organisation analysis, where in actual fact it would be more correct to say that the Greek God Theo is *falling* rather than rising, as implied in theo-rising. If Theo falls, along with *horao*, which means 'to look at something attentively', according to Heidegger's etymological deconstruction of Plato's Greek (Heidegger, 1977: 164-5), then old ways of looking and the preoccupation with the light of illumination, distinction, and separation, may give way to a twilight that demands a more embodied, sensuous relationship with the phenomena of organisation. Here we might return to some notion of 'dispatch' and 'envoy', of a traveller in foreign lands, which is also available, if now forgotten, in the Greek 'theoretician'.

a problem in opening and entering this text – and this problematisation forms an important part of a subtle pedagogic apprenticeship staged by Crainer and Dearlove, designed, we may infer, to circumvent disciplinary limitations on learning and the complex, existential defence-mechanisms elaborated collectively and individually in response to what Bion (1962) calls our 'hatred of learning'. The linguistic innovation, the hypertrophied conceptual productivity, the dizzying leaps of imagination, the speed of the arguments, the graphics and diagrams, combine to mount a sensual onslaught, stimulating its prey first into excitement and then into a state of exhaustion and ennui. No longer simply a passive reader, nor even a more actively, critically-engaged reader, this text provides a passport outside the limitations of disembodied reading or study. It is at this stage that we may find ourselves as reviewers and readers scattered, the text itself becoming agency, as we slip into regions of a post-human logic, an 'ambulatory automatism' (Hacking, 1999) with unpredictable consequences.

Initially we become aware of the scripted *act* that is reading or reviewing as the rules and procedures of its discipline slowly distil, cast into a penumbra of recognition. Once made available in this way we have the opportunity to become aware of the inauthenticity[10] of much of our comportment and behaviour. Crainer and Dearlove provide, then, what is perhaps the first *limit-text* in management writing. It could be the most rigorous introduction and test of management we have at the moment. It takes away our scripts and rules that for-all-practical purposes allow us to carry-on (see Garfinkel, 1967); eventually it robs us of our very credulity and leaves us bereft, stripped bare, stuttering with inarticulacy, howling and shrieking in a world that does not seem our own. Aaghhh! Eeiijjeek!Uuukkuuujh…*I hear you*.

This leaves the review in a quandary, of sorts. The danger of a review is that it often deprives the reader of the experience of discovery, and especially for a text such as this, where the pedagogic instruction works in the background like a machinic shadow, too much revealing of the mechanics will cancel the possibility of apprenticeship. For, in a climate of cleverness, irony, 'knowingness', and heightened self-consciousness, it is doubtless the return to apprenticeship that holds out the most promising if not the *only* possibility for learning and development. The textual and narrative strategies employed in this volume by Crainer and Dearlove is strongly suggestive that the authors have grasped one of the most ineluctable problems of contemporary management education, namely how to pierce the carapace of self-defence offered by commercially cultivated forms of ego-centric flight and narcissism. Not only by revealing the end of the book, but in its subtle 'preparation' of the reader for the text – its genealogical exercise of location and placement, and the tracing of predecessors and influence – the review, typically, tends to flatten out that event which is the possibility of learning, learning through otherness, alienation, interruption and discontinuity. On reading this text we are made aware that up to this point we might have been silently managed all along. This text edited by Crainer and Dearlove provides ways of thinking through these unthought dimensions of management and the limitations it imposes on contemporary organisation and management practice. Its pedagogy begins with the very attempt to review it and its unbearable lightness of being.

---

10 The experiential deconstruction of authenticity/inathenticity is still a long way off.

Oblique Ambulation: The environment announces itself afresh

Weighing in at a little less than 950 grams, this heavyweight 'handbook' demands the support of a book chair, or a reading table, an investment I was promptly encouraged to make after little more than thirty-three minutes of reading this text. Curiously enough, he had only recently seen an advertisement for an inclined reading table in the classified section of the Saturday edition of the Financial Times. Little could he have seen then how this was only the humble incunabula of what was to become a bizarre and labyrinthine exodus that would further call into crisis the very possibility of scholarly *re*-view. That 'I' of which he speaks can only be sustained up to the point at which it becomes the 'eye' of a storm, a pawn in the centre of some vast international conspiracy and Manichean intrigue involving arms shipments, double-agents, celluloid Latino street pimps and dark, east-European bob-haired femme fatales, illegal-drug cartels, Liverpudlian 'robber-barons' (see Maffesoli, 1996), cash for questions, and the Nike swoosh, 'Just Do It'. Behind the façade of globalization, the wired generation of flows, signs, and simulacra, the aesthetics of culture, logo and corporate branding, we find this darker, more disturbing world. Is management the glue that binds together this complex stage-play? The runners and gophers? The middle-men and women? Or are they the rather more benign, half-innocent public relations officers, unknowing double-agents themselves only dimly aware, through some dark glass, of the forces they modulate and the nefarious inchoate they re-present? Who would go so far as to suggest 'idiot-savants'?

Our suspicion should have been raised at the outset by the Contents, usefully listed on pages *vii* through *x* where, as if surreptitiously placed by some 'deep throat' agent commissioned on behalf of the forces of a Deleuzian dark-precursor (Deleuze, 1994: 119-24), we are introduced to the prospect of 'Funky Inc.', the 'shamrock' organisation, the 'strategic inflection point', 'talent wars', 'customer stretch', 'corporate religion', 'leveraging intellect', the 'incubator', and 'thought leadership'. Blimey! Reader, I fear this book might have fallen into the wrong hands. We are clearly going to need, in what follows, all the resources of a 'sympathetic magic' (Taussig, 1993).

Before the decision to purchase a prosthetic reading aid, I had just read the sentence, on page 40 of Georgina Peters chapter, 'Creating the modern organization': "Perhaps Welch was too brutal, but there is no denying that by the end of the 1980s GE was a leaner and fitter organization". The irony was only too telling. I was exhausted, ashamed by my quite obvious lack of virility and strength. It was as if the text was waiting for me, as if some 'Andon' light had suddenly shifted from green to orange, accompanied by a shrill intermittent alarm alerting the cadre of review managers and supervisors that O'Doherty LC07091967 was in need of some discipline and punishment. Was he even up to the task of reviewing this book? Was he sufficiently lean and fit enough? In the wider world of work organisation, repetitive stain injury might be the equivalent of an earlier asbestos crisis in health and safety and the subsequent cause of many a managerial nightmare, but for this reviewer it was pain bordering on chronic fatigue syndrome that was the most visceral reminder of this 'state of the art' in management. The sheer physical strength required to hold this 'handbook' would surely have been a test even for Martin Johnson, the triumphant captain of England's 2003 rugby world cup winning team. Yet, like the broken hammer, of which

Heidegger speaks in *Being and Time,* that breaks the spell of a utilitarian, familiar worldly absorption for the Black Forest carpenter, the loss of this book's readiness-to-hand brings "to the fore the characteristic of presence-at-hand in what is ready-to-hand … It becomes 'equipment' in the sense of something which one would like to shove out of the way" (Heidegger, 1962: 104).

The accident that ruptures the inter-nested contextual spheres of involvement, meaning, and being, thus provides an occasion to recall a totality of 'references and assignments', to make it 'available' now – and perhaps only temporarily – as a *contingent* possibility. "Our circumspection comes up against emptiness, and now sees for the first time *what* the missing article was ready-to-hand *with*, and what it was ready to hand *for*. *The environment announces itself afresh*" (*ibid*.: 105; emphasis added in last sentence). One makes an oblique slide, or the gravity of an oblique ambulation starts up, a line of flight taking us elsewhere, a strange *Abgeschiedenheit* that offers a suspension from where we may tarry with a looming present-at-hand. The heavy-book-become-sore-limbs, becomes a 250mm x 160mm x 45mm lump of uncanny, ominous tomb-like black rectangle, a veritable Latourian 'black box', or a discarded clump of tar-black coal that rolls across the kitchen table rather like Heathcliff announced his arrival in Wuthering Heights (Bronte, 1965).[11] We might best 'review' this book, then, only once we have stolen into our university study following suspension without pay, after-hours, late at night and all alone, the low-drone of the computer hum our only companion, a network *wiring* that disturbs the resonating systemic circulation of the ego-bound synthesis that is the *Dasein* of the academic 'reviewer'. It all asks rather a lot of the 'Biddles' binding spine, that hinge which enfolds this tomb before us; perchance, it enquires into the capacity of the book to *manage* that which it has unleashed.

Stretched Review

I was party to a curious encounter at our local Suntop Media Furnishings shop whilst seeking to purchase my reading table, what I later discovered was called an interrupted proactive 'customer service interception', or what Sandra Vandermerwe in her chapter in this volume – (still-badly)-at-hand – calls the 'customer lock-on' (p.432). Painful as it might sound this was in fact, as it turned out, the occasion for quite a peculiar, and not altogether unpleasant, *frisson*. I entered the capacious, open-planned and colourful interior of the shop, smiling to myself as I recalled several passages from Benjamin's *Arcades Project*,[12] and made my way towards a display of book supports, wooden

---

11   In a sequel to this review, for Crainer and Dearlove surely demands such attention, I intend to subject this artefact to a serious of laboratory tests. Not only is it important to carbon date this publication more accurately, but it might be useful to test some of its more general physical properties – quality of resistance to a speeding bullet; 'floatation' capacity; acoustical dampening quality – especially useful if this object is to be used to prop up student hi-fi speakers; and perhaps its response-elasticity (chi-square revised) to the Heimlech-Lawson test for aubergine pressing.

12   Specifically, convolute A3,6; A3a,7; A12,5; and convolute O2,1; the latter of which I later realised had been an unfortunate mistake when I was able to consult Benjamin on returning to my study. Why I had made this association remains a mystery, though the careful reader will surely see a subliminal connection with Vandermerwe's idea of a 'customer stretch' (p.431).

lecterns, podiums and pulpits, and what *looked like* a collection of acutely angled plastic braces or callipers, recalling some ghoulish medieval torture chamber. I was quite obviously being followed, if not by the writings of Benjamin, then the store's security cameras, so I feigned an air of casual indifference and, expressing no interest in this exhibition, headed, instead, towards the shimmering reds, the blues, and greens, of what I assumed to be the contemporary designs of the desk lectern. Little more than half-way towards the conclusion of my intended destination I sensed and then noticed, off to my left shoulder, a body-in-motion. As I ducked and weaved to alter the course of my motivation, this shadowy figure, uncannily, performed exactly the same manoeuvre. More strange doublings. Auspicious conjunctions, resonance and mirroring. There was little to avoid it …an encounter! I had been spotted. *Puis la nuit*, as Baudelaire might say. 'May I help you, Sir?', smiling, the young dark haired stranger spoke, with a slight east-European accent. Ah! Of course, a shop assistant, simply offering the hand of friendship….

'A match of corporate and individual souls releases those 'E' factors (energy, enthusiasm, effort, excitement, excellence, etc)',[13] Charles Handy is quoted as saying in Dearlove and Coomber's chapter on 'Corporate Values' (p.211). Quite clearly that handy managerial lesson from our still unready-to-hand *Financial Times Handbook* was in evidence given this enthusiastic and perfectly calibrated interception and opening gambit. Part customer service interaction, part research opportunity, part flirtation and seduction, part surveillance and control – this encounter typified many of those increasingly hybrid and genre-blurring episodes that punctuate the processes of contemporary management and work organisation. Moreover, when we are told by Vandermerwe that management must cultivate organisational resources in ways that incorporate customers as life-time citizens, where "the aim is to become more involved with the customer's experience in a defined 'market space', and to stretch relationships to gain increasing amounts of customer spend over time" (p.433), we might have reason to re-think the nature of this encounter at Suntop Media Furnishings.

---

13 Despite Handy's performative nomenclature that establishes *The 5 E-factors*, there must be, strictly, six 'E' factors, if 'etc' is indeed a desired motivational outcome. What this etc. might mean would surely be the cause of some confusion and consternation without the groundbreaking work of Garfinkel and his colleagues under the auspices of ethnomethodological study (see Garfinkel, 1967). Might we assume that Handy is indexing the etc. of the ethnomethodology etc., in what would then amount to a clever etc. squared (etc^2), and as if Handy were anticipating this reading with a kind of a tactical, meta-touché held in reserve? Or worse, if this reference was not intended, how many 'E' factors are there if we read etc. in its conventional way? We are then faced with the prospect not only of a meta-reflexivity, but also an infinite-regress, for is there not a potentially infinite number of 'E' factors within the category 'E'? If this is the case then not only does the distinction between container and contained break down, but in addition, it becomes unclear whether we are talking about 'factors' or a 'category'. Some might speculate that Handy was signalling the possibility that 'enterprise', 'eager', 'ecstasy', and 'ebullience' might also qualify as 'E' factors, but then others would doubtless suggest 'embittered', 'edacious', 'edgy' or 'elinguation'. The meta-reflexive combined with the infinite regress suggests movement in two opposed directions at once, which barring the highly unlikely prospect of an equalisation of force, motivates an asymmetrical rhythm to the movements of analytical labour, setting off a gyratory delirium akin to the St.Vitus dance; which might suggest the influence of another kind of 'E'.

Fragmentation, proliferation, and confusion, together with devious manipulation, control, and conspiracy. Was I being targeted for recruitment, 'stretched' within the apparatus of a potential 'customer lock-on'? Was my 'spend' simply an entrance ticket to life-time employment *as a customer*? The flirtation an expedience, a seductive corporate 'come-on'? What role had the handbook played in preparing me, the reviewer, for this encounter, or what was the text's involvement in constructing the backcloth and stage props of this stage I had stumbled into? Strange reversals and paradoxes abound in this event; it is an event that marks the inauguration of a series of unfolding, multiple implications involving progressively more expansive horizons and contexts – up to the point at which, at the limit of the outer-most context of possibility, there, where the chief executive officer of Suntop Corporation fades to dissolve, yielding to the superimposition of a clandestine, international arms dealer – we return to the immediacy of the here-and-now, where 'Caroline' is simply informing us that, for our purposes, perhaps the wooden book reading lecterns would be more appropriate.

Recall that our unready-to-hand handbook, broken open on its spine, is lying prostrate upon the horizontal of a study desk awaiting the elevation of a prosthetic support. Yet, in a sense, we are discovering that, oddly, it is (always) already out-there in the high street, in the hearts and minds of managers, supervisors and shop-floor assistants, customers and researchers alike. It was almost as if it was being woven into the fabric of the everyday, perhaps, we might speculate, through a metempsychosis of sorts, or a transmigration of souls – as hinted at in the Handy quote above. The *Financial Times Handbook* appears to percolate out into the everyday-world around us, for a time evoking the possibility that all the world's a stage. It seeps out, shifting our sense of mundane phenomena, but it also recruits its 'theoreticians' into something resembling the interzone of Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973). You begin to meet others who have passed through 'the handbook', as it is colloquially referenced; others seem to know you have become an initiate; hitherto unknown individuals in the street begin to smile as you pass; a nod here, a wink there. Suddenly a police siren, a turn of heads. You worry. Are they coming for you?[14]

Like Don Quixote we appear to have entered a world analogous to that of fictional narrative with a cast of characters more devious and capricious than the simple pataphysical absurdity of Ubu. Our doubts about our own role within its unfolding plot – what is the role of a reviewer, of a review? Insider/outsider? Disinterested observer or motivated participant? – render us acutely sensitive to forces and processes beyond the 'dimmed down' presentation secured in the orthodoxy of management and organisation. Upon realising our entry on this stage, inspired by questions such as these, one may begin to hear more signs of a coded language, of a possible Gnostic encryption, at first

––––––––––

14 A similar story is told in the Clifford and Marcus (1986) collection *Writing Culture*, of a doctoral student of anthropology investigating the dance and costume rituals of some remote African tribe. The chief of the tribe, on struggling to answer one question about the use of a certain type of ceremonial head-dress, dispatched one of his entourage who returns with a copy of a book written by the doctoral students' supervisor. For Foucault, it was the episteme of the renaissance in which the world was written like a book, but if we have never been modern as Latour suggests, perhaps we are never that far from more spatially or temporally remote regions of experience which linger-on as volatile layers of sediment just below the surface of our mundane, paramount everyday.

through a complex dispersal of 'signature effects'[15] in the Crainer and Dearlove text (see Ulmer, 1985: 128-153; Royle, 1995: 85-123), in what comes to show all the signs of a suicide cult covertly intoning its post-human call to arms. How else is one to understand the aporias and impossibilities requested of the all-too-human, the paradox of the appeal to pull oneself up by one's bootstraps encapsulated in the ideas of a '360-degree feedback' (p.377-8), 'leveraging intellect', proposed by Quinn et al. (p.589-94), and, after all that we have learnt from Heidegger, the call to being 'just-in-time' (p.411-12)? Forget what is said on the surface of these chapters, this remains simply the Trojan horse, and, like Nietzsche's miming of the genre of nineteenth century biography in *Ecce Homo*, a necessary disguise and rationalisation in which the subversive agents of this apophatic conspiracy make use of a familiar conventional form and narrative mode within which to distribute their propaganda. It may be, of course, that some of the contributors remain unwitting participants; even the editors themselves may be only too dimly aware of the forces they serve.

Despite this proviso, look, once again, at some of the contributors names: Des *Dearlove*; David *Butcher*; *Shere Hite*; Anthony *Santomero*; and *Watts Wacker*. This must raise a modicum of doubt for even the staunchest defenders of anti-conspiracy. Love, sacrifice, heavenly heights, the Virgin Mary, the waste and sin of *watts wacker*, an updated, ironic and *postmodernised* (?) version of Rousseau's confessional biographer: can we not see here the traces of a Christian allegory? Only thinly disguised remains this missionary zeal in the section on Marketing[16] – *and marketing, of all places!* – where we are invited to consider 'corporate religion', the company as 'king' (Cram, pp.457-65), and the 'Ten commandments for a brand with a future', written by a one 'Thomas Gad' (repeat the surname a couple of times and the homonymic play soon reveals itself),[17] the authenticity of whom must surely be in doubt, particularly since the biographical section on the contributors to this volume tells us he (she, they, or even 'it' – who can really tell?) has recently merged to become 'Differ' (p.736). Curious, indeed. The Derridean overtones can surely be no mistake, and the confusion between profits and prophets generated by contemporary corporate organisation never more obvious. A shape shifting

---

15 In this respect consider the play of 'Crainer' and 'Dearlove' that runs throughout this volume. Through signature effects and homonymous slide 'Crainer' and 'Dearlove' are made characters in the drama of this *Financial Times Handbook*, but one can only prise open this dimension of *organising*, of surreptitious seduction and recruitment, of organisational consolidation, when one is prepared to submit to interpretation the counter-transferential dove-tail of one's own signature effects. 'Crainer' appears on stage at a number of junctures, but always as that analytical over-reach, as in a *cranial* transgression, or as a crane that is stretching – *craining*, so to speak, to carry or transfer heavy loads. As one of the editors a 'Crainer' might be thought of as the one who drives or controls the *crane*. And a crane is certainly needed to lift the weight of this ironically titled 'handbook'. 'Dearlove', on the other hand, seems to play the role of partner, as in the good cop/bad cop double act, the velvet g(love) to the iron fist, or soft HRM in league with hard HRM. The Handbook appears then, however disguised, denied, or displaced, as a collection of love-letters written by the authors to themselves – an offering, an export, a projection, or an outfolding of self and its possibilities in a quest for discovery. As we know, for Montaigne, all essays were really love letters to the author.

16 See also sections on making 'the leap of faith' (p.189-90); 'the quality gospel' (p.389-94); 'thought leadership' (p.612); 'inspirational mission and vision' (p.636); instructions on the 'formation of international joint-ventures' (p.708ff); and, 'creating a global mindset' (p.721-24).

17 At the risk of over-labouring these efforts at transparency, recall in U.S. and U.K. slang the use of Thomas to refer to the phallus, and Mellors use of this term in Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

deity deferred and differed, apparently. What is really significant and taking place in this handbook, then, seems to be what is *not-said*, that which lies *behind* and *between* the words, in suggestion and innuendo. A sophisticated, apophantic allegory. Waiting for Gadot, perhaps.

The End of Review and the Beginning of the End: Management

We are being made a problem in stepping through this text. Things are beginning to fray; structure and direction dissolving. We have been tracing here a pataphysical slide into meta-forces and metaphors, an entry into a strange parallel ontology that appears to be seeping into the warp and weft of our own, slowly consuming and corroding our sense-making apparatus. This oblique ambulation, only partially recounted here, has no doubt over-stretched the possibility and credulity of review as our theatrical-becoming generates a scattering of phenomena into ephemera and larval disorganisation.[18] That I fear that this has been only a partial return to the communicative orthodoxy of the scholarly review provides a measure of hope that there is still some sense to be made from the fragments of *rear-view* presented here.

Crainer and Dearlove, together with their compatriots, seem to speak out of and towards a swelling, tumescent 'interzone'; an alien intelligence from an organisation yet-to-come, it sends out envoys and portals that are opening up all around us like rabbit-holes, vacuoles and pock marks that slowly granulate and dissolve the fabric of what is still left of 'paramount' reality. We have to think against ourselves if we hope to achieve some kind of understanding or settlement with this alien invasion, for it is already happening and you don't know what it is, do you Mr Jones? We will be excused for the histrionic tone, the hyperbole and bombast, for we are all unprepared and immature passengers in this coming-organisation. Bereft of all co-ordinate we are compelled to invent what Deleuze and Guattari (1994) call 'conceptual personae' to help navigate what is to all intents and purposes an 'ambulatory automatism', a recollection of the somnambulant *rear-view* rather than a re-view in the traditional sense.[19] You will realise what a relief and achievement it is then to end this review with the exclamation: *Management? …*Whatever.

references

Alvesson, M. and H. Willmott (1996) *Making Sense of Management*. London: Sage.

Benjamin, W. (1999) *The Arcades Project*, trans. H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bion, W. (1962) *Learning from Experience*. London: Maresfield.

Bronte, E. (1965) *Wuthering Heights*, ed. D. Daiches. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Berger, P. and T. Luckmann (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

---

18 We write generate, but it is, equally, never clear if this process describes an *active* generation or an opening onto, a revelation of an always-already decaying of organisational *subject-matter*.

19 We can only hope that the 'rear-viewer' is not confused with that perennial academic problem of navel-gazing, or its rather more crude variation. However, we may have to court this danger if we are to make any head way with this text – and not simply in a *psychoanalytical* way.

Chia, R. (1996) *Organizational Analysis as Deconstructive Practice*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Clifford, J. and G. Marcus (eds.) (1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Cohen, M. (1993) *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Cooper, R. (1989) 'Modernism, Postmodernism and Organizational Analysis 3: The Contribution of Jacques Derrida', *Organization Studies*, 9(1): 91-112.

Cooper, R. (2003) 'Primary and Secondary Thinking in Social Theory', *Journal of Classical Sociology* 3(2): 145-72.

Deleuze, G. (1994) *Difference and Repetition*. London: Athlone Press.

Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (1994) *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.

Derrida, J. (1986) *Glas*, trans. P. John Leavey Jr. and R. Rand, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Derrida, J. (1993) *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. A. Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Drucker, P. (1974) *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*. Heinemann: London.

Foucault, M. (1987) *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*. London: Athlone.

Garfinkel, H. (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Hacking, I. (1999) *Mad Travellers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1962) *Being and Time*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Heidegger, M. (1977) *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*. New York: Harper and Row.

Hoskin, K. (1995) 'The Viewing Self and the World we View: Beyond the Perspectival Illusion', *Organization*, 2(1): 141-62.

Hyman, R. (1989) *The Political Economy of Industrial Relation*. London: Macmillan.

Huysmans, J. (1884/1998) *Against Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jay, M. (1993) *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought*. Berkeley, CA. & London: University of California Press.

Knights, D. (1997) 'Organizational Theory in the Age of Deconstruction: Dualism, Gender and Postmodernism Revisited', *Organization Studies*, 18(1): 1-19.

Latour, B. (1996) *Aramis, or The Love of Technology*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Law, J. (1994) *Organizing Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lecercle, J.J. (1985) *Philosophy Through the Looking Glass*. La Salle: Open Court.

Levin, D. (ed.) (1993) *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*. Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Maffesoli. M. (1996) *The Time of The Tribes*. London: Sage.

Massumi, B. (2002) *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

O'Doherty, D. and P. Case (2003) 'Motorvation: Chrysology, Mutant Offspring (hucbuc), and All that TAT', paper presented at the 21st Annual International Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism, Cambridge, UK.

Pynchon, T. (1973) *Gravity's Rainbow*. New York: Viking.

Royle, N. (1995) *After Derrida*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Roussel, R. (1995) *How I Wrote Certain of My Books and Other Writings*. New York: Sun Books.

Strange, S. (1998) *Mad Money*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Taussig, M. (1993) *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. London: Routledge.

Ulmer, G. (1985) *Applied Grammatology: Post(e) Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.

Watson, T. (1994) *In Search of Management: Culture, Chaos and Control in Managerial Work.* London: Routledge.

Whitehead, A.N. (1978) *Process and Reality*, corrected edition by D.R. Griffin and D.W. Sherburne. New York: The Free Press.

Whitehead, A.N. (1985) *Science and the Modern World*. London: Free Association Books.

Willmott, H. (1993) 'Strength is Ignorance; Slavery is Freedom: Managing Culture in Modern Organizations', *Journal of Management Studies*, 30(4): 515-52.

the author   Damian O'Doherty is a lecturer in organization analysis at the Manchester School of Management, UMIST. Soon to be transformed.
Address: Manchester School of Management, University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, Manchester, M60 1QD, UK.
E-mail: damian.p.o'doherty@umist.ac.uk