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editorial

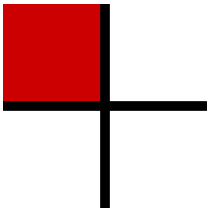
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Symptoms of Organization*

Anders Raastrup Kristensen, Michael Pedersen and Sverre Spoelstra

The contributions to this issue, which were all written by PhD students, reflect upon the meaning of a symptomatology of organization and explore its possible practice. The idea of symptomatology itself originates from medicine and refers to the study of the signs of a disease. In medicine, the general task of the symptomatologist is to interpret and organize different symptoms in such a way that they designate a more or less coherent disease. Given this medical sense of ‘symptomatology’, it might sound like we are trying to hand over the theory and politics of organization to the ‘management doctors’ of the world: the management gurus, motivational experts and self-improvement writers who offer diagnoses and cures for organizational problems.

This is not what we have in mind when we speak of a symptomatology of organization. For us, symptomatology of organization is about the relation between organization studies and philosophy.¹ It refers to a distinct approach to philosophy which differs from current uses of philosophy in organization studies in two main ways. Firstly, symptomatology makes philosophy a part of organizational research. This approach differs from the use of philosophy in organization studies as an epistemological foundation upon which organizational research can stand. Secondly, philosophy has also been used in organization studies to search for the cause of organizational diseases (e.g. capitalism causes alienation) and for their cures (e.g. the need for a social and economic revolution). But this is not what symptomatology is about either: a symptomatological approach to organizational research does not turn to philosophy in the hope of finding guidance to tackle real-life problems. A symptomatology of organization is not interested in how philosophy can help (or hinder) managers.

But why are we using the term ‘symptomatology’, which is drawn from medicine, to discuss the use of philosophy within organization studies in the first place?

* Many thanks to Nick Butler for his helpful suggestions in improving the editorial and to Armin Beverungen for his critical reading of the entire issue.

1 The idea for an issue on ‘symptoms of organization’ originated at the second Critical Management Studies PhD Forum in Copenhagen, October 12-13, 2006. In early 2007, this idea took further shape in a two-day workshop entitled ‘Symptoms of Organization: Deleuze, Foucault and Clinical Management Studies’, held at the Centre for Philosophy and Political Economy, University of Leicester School of Management, February 1-2.

Why Symptomatology?

Within medicine, symptomatology is the science of symptoms. Broadly speaking, a symptom is a sign of a disease.² The symptomatologist looks for a logic between particular symptoms which allows him or her to produce a clinical picture of the disease. For example, if the patient has chills, fever, sore throat and muscle pains the symptomatologist is able to diagnose the disease as influenza. Smith elaborates on this procedure:

What a doctor confronts in an individual case is a symptom or group of symptoms and his diagnostic task is to discover the corresponding concept (the concept of the disease). No doctor would treat a fever or headache as a definite symptom of a specific illness; they are rather indeterminate symptoms common to a number of diseases, and the doctor must interpret and decipher the symptoms in order to arrive at the correct diagnosis. (Smith, 2005: 183)

The symptomatologist interprets the local circumstances of the symptoms in order to find the concept that best designates the disease. It is this aspect of medical diagnosis that is most interesting for a symptomatology of organization.

We borrow the notion of a philosophically-informed symptomatology from Deleuze (e.g. 1983; 1989; see also Smith, 1998), but the ideas articulated here are equally indebted to Foucault's 'diagnosis of the present' and Nietzsche's 'physician of culture'. For these thinkers, symptomatology is concerned neither with designating the eternal structure of being (symptomatology is much more worldly) nor with finding the solution to actual problems (symptomatology is much less worldly). Instead, symptomatology in this philosophical sense engages with the present by reinterpreting the world and its 'symptoms'. This inevitably opens up new ways of thinking about life and creates new ways of living. Van Tongeren puts it nicely with regard to Nietzsche's idea of the philosopher:

The philosopher [that Nietzsche] presents is not just designing abstract theories or making subtle speculations; rather, he is trying to influence modern men and their culture. His goal is not to be read and recognized but instead to test modern people, challenge them and eventually change them. Nietzsche presents the ideal philosopher as one who brings about something in the world, not in place of interpreting the world (as Marx suggested of his own philosophy in the famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach), but precisely through reinterpreting it. (2000: 2)

This is a crucial point. Symptomatology does not seek to *represent* the world by examining its symptoms. Rather, symptomatology aims to *intervene* in the world by rearranging its symptoms in thought.

But what is a symptom in this philosophical sense? For Deleuze, almost anything can be treated as a symptom. On the most basic level, symptoms pertain to the forces of "life gushing forth or draining away" (1995: 143). Deleuze emphasizes the importance of these forces in his reading of Nietzsche:

We will never find the sense of something (of a human, a biological, or even a physical phenomenon) if we do not know the force which appropriates the thing, which exploits it, which

2 Symptomatology sometimes makes a distinction between a sign and a symptom: a sign is a 'piece of evidence' of a disease that is observed by the doctor, while the symptom is felt by the patient.

takes possession of it or is expressed in it. A phenomenon is not an appearance or even an apparition but a sign, a symptom which finds its meaning in an existing force. (Deleuze, 1983: 3)

According to Deleuze, Nietzsche treats all phenomena as symptoms of the various forces that take hold of them. Locating symptoms and their relations to other symptoms is thus a matter of understanding and conceptualizing the state of forces in play. These forces can be mapped out by conducting a symptomatology.

Understood in this way, it becomes clear that symptomatology is as concerned with health and vitality as it is with sickness and infirmity. Symptomatology is not solely interested in disease, but indeed in *all* 'modes of existence'. Symptoms of organization therefore imply different ways of living, thinking, speaking and feeling within an organizational setting – and do not exclusively refer to those lives which organizations have ruined. The contributions to this issue are bound together by their concern to show how these symptoms shape our organizational lives.

Doing Symptomatology

Methodologically, the symptomatologist identifies and modifies forces of life by examining and rearranging symptoms. It is important to emphasize that symptomatology does not take place on the level of representation. This is illustrated by the fact that the concept of the disease, mentioned earlier by Smith, is not a direct representation of the disease. It is, rather, a 'palpation' of a state of forces (May, 2005). In much the same way as doctors use their hands to palpate a lesion that they cannot see directly, symptomatology gives voice to this lesion: "it allows the lesion to speak: not in its own words, for it has none, but in a voice that will at least not be confused with something it is not" (ibid: 20). A symptomatology creates a zone of touch that gives voice to the state of forces that cannot be directly experienced. Palpating the symptoms of the world is never a representation, then, but a reinterpretation of other interpretations.

This reinterpretation and rearrangement of symptoms involves a process of creation and serves to bring something new into the world, namely, a new concept of the disease which implies a modified state of forces. By giving voice to the lesion, symptomatology creates a new state of forces and, as a result, recomposes the way in which we think about and make sense of the world.

We are now in a better position to explain how a symptomatology of organization differs from the most popular engagements with philosophy in organization studies. On the one hand, managerial theory for organizations makes use of philosophy by incorporating some degree of philosophical thought into organizational practice with the hope of improving efficiency, increasing profits, facilitating communication, et cetera. Critical management studies, on the other hand, is not dedicated to the improvement of organizational practice but attempts to understand organization as a broad social phenomenon. Philosophical thinking is used here to clarify the ontological, epistemological and methodological foundations upon which such a project can stand.

A symptomatology of organization, however, is not interested in using philosophy to improve organizations. Nor is it concerned with translating philosophy into paradigms or methods to discover things about organizations. The task of a symptomatology of organization, rather, is to experiment with ways in which we can think, see or feel organizational phenomena. It does this by palpating the state of forces that constitute a specific mode of organizational existence and by reorganizing the symptoms of organization. This, we believe, is what all the articles in this issue engage in. But what a symptom is and how they are to be grouped together is something that varies between each contribution. Perhaps this variation is exactly what is needed in the attempt to make philosophy part of organization studies and to avoid turning ourselves into philosopher-doctors who have already made our diagnoses in advance.

Mapping Out Symptoms

In the first contribution, 'Critical and clinical management studies', Nick Butler combines Deleuze's notion of symptomatology with Michel Foucault's idea of the 'diagnosis of the present' to discuss clinical management studies in terms of a critique of critical management studies. For Butler, Foucault's diagnostic activity refers to the historical work of simultaneously describing and transforming something about the present: our knowledge, our power relations, our selves. In this sense, Butler suggests that Foucault's 'archaeology of knowledge' is a diagnostic method for clinical management studies which exercises a critical attitude towards the present. Just as Deleuze's symptomatology is not exclusively confined to the actions of the doctor, so Foucault's diagnosis of the present raises questions about epistemology, politics and subjectivity beyond the actual practice of medicine. Clinical management studies thus seeks to regroup the symptoms of management and organization into modified arrangements and 'original clinical pictures'.

In the second contribution, 'Melancholy and the somatic subject of stress management', Rasmus Johnsen diagnoses the contemporary group of signs surrounding the phenomenon of stress in light of the concept of the somatic subject of melancholy. Through a reading of Aristotle, Johnsen identifies melancholy as a somatic subject confined to extraordinary individuals. This mode of existence is then discussed in three contemporary presentations of stress-management. These presentations all have common features with the somatic subject of melancholy, but they also herald a new mode of existence. The somatic subject in these stress-management books is no longer limited to extraordinary individuals, but is now a subject at work within every individual. This new somatic subject presents an idea of a healthy life as a matter of a dynamic and efficient self-transgression. According to Johnsen this encounter between the classic Greek conception of melancholy and contemporary stress-management discussions teaches us that stress is not only a result of contemporary work-conditions, but also presents itself as the foundation for a productive and efficient self-management.

The two contributions that follow, by Carl Cederström and Rickard Grassmann, and Casper Hoedemaekers, draw on the work of Jacques Lacan in their efforts to think about symptoms of organization. Psychoanalysis always examines the specific way in

which symptoms are organized and relate to each other, so it is perhaps unsurprising that Lacan serves as a focal point for both contributions. What is important for psychoanalysis is its attempt to understand the local logic of the symptoms instead of rushing through the process of analysis to therapy.

Cederström and Grassman's article 'The masochistic reflexive turn' locates and explores such local logics. By contrasting the cases of Google and a London-based consulting firm, Cederström and Grassman identify different ways of regulating symptoms. They draw on Lacan and Slavoj Žižek to argue that these two cases do not only present different ways of organizing work but also portray different ways of organizing affects such as *jouissance*. In fact, symptoms themselves are suggested as ways of organizing affects. In the case of Google employees are expected to domesticate these symptoms. But in the London based consulting firm, which is interpreted as part of what the authors call the masochistic reflexive turn, employees are encouraged to enjoy their symptoms.

Hoedemaekers, in his contribution, proposes to use the Lacanian term 'sinthomatology' to understand the local processes that bind affects such as *jouissance* together in managerial and organizational settings. For Lacan the sinthome is what enables the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real to be knotted together in a specific way. For Hoedemaekers, the sinthome is first of all that which regulates the distribution of *jouissance*. The sinthome is also the element that ensures the coherence and reproduction of different ideological discourses.

In the last article of this issue, 'In the name of love: Let's remember desire', Anders Bojesen and Sara Louise Muhr examine the symptoms revolving around the notion of love in contemporary HRM discourse. They pinpoint the inherent danger of this discourse turning into a paternal form of control if love and passion are reduced to a question of striving for the same. Drawing on the work on Levinas, they propose a notion of passion and love that exposes the self to what they call 'critical wounding'. To love here is not to fuse, to put two together as one, but to diffuse. Love ruptures and exposes the self to the other.

The engagement with philosophy that a symptomatology of organization entails might sound like dangerous territory for organizational scholars who do not have a formal training in philosophy. Indeed, we have often heard complaints about strands of critical management studies that are deemed to be 'too philosophical'. Organizational scholars, these critics argue, should leave philosophy to the professional philosophers at departments of philosophy. We strongly disagree with this opinion and draw inspiration instead from the management scholar P. D. Anthony (1977: 3) who said more than thirty years ago that "[we must] be allowed to do the best we can when philosophers show little interest in helping us in the analyses of practical affairs which seem to us to be important". We believe that all the PhD students who have contributed to this issue have been successful in finding an affiliation between philosophy and organization studies without sacrificing one for the other. None of these contributions, we should add, could have been written by professional philosophers at philosophy departments.

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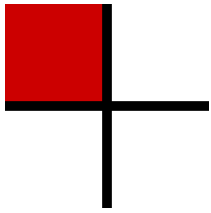
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Critical and Clinical Management Studies*

Nick Butler

abstract

This paper outlines the research method and objective of 'clinical management studies'. While critical management studies (CMS) has for some years provided much of the resources for managerial and organizational critique, it is suggested here that the label of CMS should be discarded in order to renew its critical project. Clinical management studies is proposed as a new label for critical research within management departments and business schools. At the most basic level, clinical management studies involves diagnosing the symptoms of management and organization. Foucault's method – the archaeology of knowledge – provides a set of methodological guidelines with which to conduct this diagnostic activity. It is argued that clinical management studies exercises a critical attitude towards the present because it aims simultaneously to describe and transform certain aspects of management and organization.

Introduction

Since the publication of Alvesson and Willmott's edited collection *Critical Management Studies* in 1992, there has been a proliferation of scholarship relating to the possibilities and limitations of critical management studies (CMS) in terms of methodological frameworks, theoretical underpinnings and institutional applicability. Articles, books, journals, annual conferences, university courses and even entire departments now fall quite happily under the banner of CMS. But what *is* CMS?

Somewhat schematically, it can be said that CMS involves both a negative and a positive task. Its negative task is twofold: on the one hand, CMS criticizes 'mainstream' management studies on the grounds that it acts as a handmaiden to corporate management and, on the other hand, it criticizes corporate management itself on the grounds that it is exploitative and oppressive. Its positive task is also twofold: on the

* A version of this paper was presented at the 2nd Critical Management Studies PhD Forum 'Critical Management Studies in Critical Times', Copenhagen Business School, Denmark, 12th-13th October 2006. Some of the themes contained in the paper were also explored at the PhD workshop 'Symptoms of Organization: Deleuze, Foucault and Clinical Management Studies', organized by myself and Michael Pedersen and held at the University of Leicester, School of Management, UK, 1st-2nd February 2007. I would like to thank Robert Cluley, Stephen Dunne, Campbell Jones, Eleni Karamali, Mike Lewis and Simon Lilley for their help and encouragement throughout the paper's gestation. In addition, the paper has benefited enormously from comments offered by the editors of this issue of *ephemera* and three anonymous reviewers.

one hand, CMS attempts to establish a different way of studying management with an alternative set of research methods and theoretical perspectives and, on the other hand, it attempts to elaborate a form of (non-corporate) management which is less exploitative and less oppressive. Moreover, these four individual tasks – two negative and two positive – are inextricably linked. For example, there is a need for participative and democratic forms of management because corporate management serves to maintain asymmetrical power relations. Likewise, there is a need for alternative research methods because mainstream management studies is characterized by positivist and functionalist approaches which present themselves as neutral and objective when they are in reality highly ideological and politically interested. CMS – in the broadest possible terms – can be said to move along these four interconnected axes (see e.g. Alvesson and Willmott, 1992a; 1992b; 1996; Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Fournier and Grey, 2000; Grey and Willmott, 2005).

Admittedly, this sketch of CMS is partial and bowdlerized. It ignores certain contributions (e.g. the theme of total disengagement from managerial practice) as well as recurrent controversies (e.g. periodic spats between ‘Marxists’ and ‘poststructuralists’). Not everyone who considers themselves to be working within CMS would regard this depiction as fair or accurate. Nonetheless, it serves to outline the general shape which CMS has taken over the last fifteen years or so.¹

On one level, CMS has proved to be an incredibly successful umbrella term. It has allowed certain forms of heterodox thought to gain a foothold in management departments and business schools. CMS has also served to legitimize modes of research which were previously excluded from the study of management and organizations. This is certainly no mean feat for a disciplinary area which once prided itself on its pragmatic and instrumental approach to corporate managerialism. In this way, CMS has presented an effective challenge to the institutional and intellectual hegemony of mainstream management studies.

However, despite its apparent appeal, a palpable sense of disquiet now surrounds the project of CMS. A number of commentators – sympathizers and detractors alike – have made it clear precisely why they are ‘critical of critical management studies’. For example, Parker (2002: 115-116) argues that CMS has not yet made any substantive impact on organizations because it has failed to break out of the confines of academia. For this reason, CMS remains “a glass bead game played by the cognoscenti”. Fournier and Grey (2000: 25), meanwhile, warn that CMS risks becoming co-opted by more mainstream forms of management research. This is evinced by the fact that CMS has recently become fully integrated within a number of orthodox management conferences. Thompson (2004: 368-370) contends that CMS is little more than a brand identity for a small coterie of scholars whose radical scepticism towards all ‘truth claims’ serves to encourage second-rate research based on theoretical obscurantism. In a similar vein,

1 Critical approaches to management and organizations did not, of course, originate with CMS in the early 1990s. Indeed, such studies date back at least as far as Marx’s *Capital*. More recently, critical research into management and organizations gained new impetus following the publication of Burrell and Morgan’s *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis* in 1979. Unfortunately, there is no space in this paper to reflect on the development of the paradigm debate (which popularized the term ‘radical organization theory’) and its implications for the emergence of CMS.

Ackroyd (2004: 169) suggests that CMS is a sect which pretends to be a church, since it claims to welcome diverse perspectives on management and organizations when it is in fact extremely exclusive in its theoretical approach.

Such varied criticisms hint at the extent to which CMS has failed to live up to its own promises, even if the level of cynicism and hypocrisy is at times overstated. Part of this perceived failure no doubt rests on the place of critique within CMS. While some form of critique is obviously in-built into the CMS project, the precise nature of this critical element remains frustratingly elusive. As Böhm (2006: 20) notes, some commentators view the critical element of CMS as something very specific – for example, Frankfurt School critical theory – while other commentators are happy to work with a very loose and flexible understanding of critique. Academics within CMS, then, seem to be faced with a seemingly insuperable dilemma: either one can *pin down* the meaning of critique in CMS (in which case alternative perspectives on management and organizations are liable to be excluded) or one can *open up* the meaning of critique in CMS (in which case radical perspectives on management and organizations are liable to be compromised). All too often, this dilemma serves to neutralize CMS as a coherent philosophical or political project. It thus risks turning critique into little more than an empty slogan (2006: 21; see also Böhm and Spoelstra, 2004: 100).

Fournier and Grey echo this concern. At the close of their 2000 article ‘At the Critical Moment’, they discuss the predicament in which CMS now finds itself. The way in which they propose to deal with this state of affairs is instructive.

[I]t may well be that the time has come to leave the temporary home that the CMS label has provided for critique... Witnessing the spectacle of ‘critical’ being appropriated in ways which are so extensive as to make its meaning indistinguishable from that which was formerly the target of critique, it becomes tempting to regard CMS as defunct as a label. However, and labels aside, for all the difficulties that attend it, we would not wish to give up on critique as a worthwhile endeavour in management. (2000: 27)

Like Böhm, Fournier and Grey are attentive to the way in which the critical element of CMS is open to so many different (and often mutually exclusive) interpretations. This means that CMS loses any of the philosophical and political urgency which it might once have possessed. Yet, for all the problems with CMS, Fournier and Grey maintain that critique still has a vital role to play within management departments and business schools. Perhaps, then, it is time to dispense with the ostentatious and counterproductive label of ‘critical’ management studies at the same time as insisting on the need to renew its critical project in relation to corporate managerialism and mainstream management studies.

This paper proposes to do away with the label and, along with it, some of the research methods and objectives of CMS *in the name of critique*. No doubt there is a case to be made for doing away with academic labels altogether. Perhaps labels should on the contrary be rapidly produced, made to multiply, and then swiftly discarded once they no longer serve their purpose, or become corrupted, or fail to provoke and inspire. Maybe we are not even in control of the labels which are imposed on us by friends and foes alike, and maybe they are ultimately insignificant. In any case, this paper seeks to introduce another label to the list: ‘clinical management studies’.

It should immediately be pointed out that some form of clinical management studies is, to a certain extent, already underway (see Fuglsang, 2007). For a small group of scholars in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, a clinical approach to management and organizations is increasingly coming to be seen as a viable alternative to some of the more problematic aspects of CMS. This project is now beginning to bear academic fruit, as this issue of *ephemera* demonstrates. It is the primary task of this paper, then, to outline the research method and objective of clinical management studies in more detail.

Method and Objective

Before this task is undertaken, a brief comparison will first be made between CMS and clinical management studies. On the surface, clinical management studies seems to share both its research method and objective with CMS. Certainly, both academic projects are concerned with the work of Foucault and the function of critique. But there are also important differences between them. These differences will now be described in order to orientate the ensuing discussion and to anticipate its main conclusions.

The first point of comparison concerns Foucault and the use to which his work is put. The criticisms can already be heard: you go to all the trouble of outlining clinical management studies, but in the end you fall back on one of the most popular, one of the most enduring and – it needs to be said – one of the most *obvious* thinkers claimed by CMS. If there is anyone who represents the academic project of CMS, for better or for worse, then it is surely Michel Foucault (see e.g. Burrell, 1988; Knights, 1992; 2002; Knights and Collinson, 1987; Knights and Morgan, 1991; McKinlay and Starkey, 1998; Townley, 1993; 1994; for an overview of Foucault's reception within CMS, see e.g. Barratt, 2004; Jones, 2002). How is clinical management studies able to establish its own academic project if it shares with CMS the same familiar (and by now monotonous) theoretical landmarks?

There is little doubt that Foucault has been incredibly influential within CMS over the last couple of decades. However, many of Foucault's concepts – 'discipline', 'panopticism', 'governmentality', 'power/knowledge', etc. – have become little more than emblematic motifs for his champions or, in turn, insipid clichés to his critics. Most perniciously, the slapdash application of these concepts within CMS has on occasion served to mask a certain lack of analytical rigour. In other words, it has become all too easy to invoke Foucault and to deploy a handful of his concepts instead of aiming to produce serious and robust scholarship.

Clinical management studies proposes to refrain from using such concepts for the time being. Instead, it seeks to apply Foucault's diagnostic method, the archaeology of knowledge. Much of the existing CMS literature either downplays the significance of archaeology in Foucault's later work or else ignores it entirely. As a result, the methodological structure which provides the support for Foucault's best-known philosophical concepts is frequently overlooked. Some commentators within CMS have suggested that Foucault's 'archaeological period' in the 1960s is superseded by his

'genealogical period' in the 1970s. On this view, Foucault is said to have 'abandoned' or 'dispensed with' the archaeology of knowledge as his diagnostic method (Burrell, 1996: 653; Knights, 2002: 578). Such commentators are able to maintain this position despite the continuing role which archaeology plays in Foucault's work during the 1970s and 1980s (see e.g. Foucault, 1980: 61; 1996: 375; 2003a: 60; 2003b: 10-11; 2006: 238-239; 2007: 61; 113-114). A substantial proportion of the paper will therefore be spent discussing the archaeology of knowledge in detail before drawing out its implications for clinical management studies.

The second point of comparison between CMS and clinical management studies concerns the function of critique. It was previously said that CMS is characterized by a certain 'criticality' which, ironically, might sometimes serve to hinder effective and sustained critique. Put simply, the concept of critique within CMS is either too broad or too narrow to underpin a coherent academic project.

Clinical management studies, by contrast, does not claim for itself a concept of critique based on this or that political perspective. It thus leaves open the vexed questions 'critique in the name of what?' and 'critique in the name of whom?' Unlike certain strands of critique within CMS (see e.g. Alvesson and Willmott, 1992b; 1996: 159-186; Nord and Jermier, 1992; Parker, 2002: 200-210), clinical management studies seeks neither to produce modes of 'micro-emancipation' nor to induce widespread social change. By applying the archaeology of knowledge in a managerial and organizational context, clinical management studies exercises a certain 'critical attitude' towards the present. The critical attitude prompts one to say what the present *is* at the same time as it urges one to see if it might not be possible to *change* what the present is. Clinical management studies does not therefore aim to reject institutional arrangements entirely or to develop less exploitative or less oppressive versions of them. Rather, it works at the limits of the forms of managerial and organizational knowledge which we accept as true and the relations of managerial and organizational power in which we are currently implicated. Not 'liberation' from domination and control, but the exercise of the freedom which we already possess and the testing of its limits in relation to management and organizations. This critical attitude towards the present, and its implications for clinical management studies, will be returned to in the penultimate section of the paper.

Clinical management studies, then, differs from CMS in terms of the use to which it puts the work of Foucault and the function of critique. The paper will now discuss these themes in more detail in order to elaborate on the research method and objective of clinical management studies.

Diagnosis of the Present

At the most basic level, clinical management studies involves diagnosing the symptoms of management and organization. It was said in the previous section that Foucault's method – the archaeology of knowledge – provides a set of methodological guidelines with which to conduct this diagnostic activity. The present section will examine the link

between archaeology and diagnosis in the work of Foucault in order to clarify the task of clinical management studies.

Foucault is reluctant to position himself definitively in any political or philosophical tradition, although by his own admission his work can be located at the intersection between numerous strands of nineteenth and twentieth century thought, including among others Kant, Hegel, Marx, Bachelard, Canguilhem, Cavallès, Blanchot and Bataille (2007: 130-132). But when pressed on the point, Foucault says that he is “at most a diagnostician” (1996: 218). Foucault is to be understood as a diagnostician because his archaeology of knowledge allows him to diagnose the present.

The concept of the ‘diagnosis of the present’ appears in a number of Foucault’s books and interviews, although it is paid scant attention by his commentators in CMS and beyond. In a 1969 interview, Foucault says that “[t]o diagnose the present is to say what the present is, and how our present is absolutely different from all that it is not, that is to say, from our past” (1996: 53). Foucault expands on this definition of the diagnosis of the present in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, published in the same year. Foucault’s archaeology is a suitable method for conducting this diagnosis.

Not because it would enable us to draw up a table of our distinctive features, and to sketch out in advance the face that we will have in the future. But it deprives us of our continuities; it dissipates the temporal identity in which we are pleased to look at ourselves when we wish to exorcise the discontinuities of history; it breaks the thread of transcendental teleologies; and where anthropological thought once questioned man’s being or subjectivity, it now bursts open the other, and the outside. In this sense, the diagnosis does not establish the fact of our identity by the play of distinctions. It establishes that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, our selves the difference of masks. (2002a: 147; see also 226-227)

Here, Foucault opposes the archaeology of knowledge to forms of thought which take as their theoretical foundation certain continuities between the past and the present. These continuities exhibit themselves most obviously in the figure of ‘man’, whose anthropological being or subjective identity is said to remain constant and unchanging. Archaeology, by contrast, takes discontinuity rather than continuity as its methodological starting-point. This means that diagnosis shows our present to be discontinuous *with the past*. By the same gesture, diagnosis also shows our present to be discontinuous *in itself*. The diagnosis of the present therefore entails a *double differentiation*.

How is this diagnostic task of double differentiation to be understood? What does Foucault mean when he speaks of ‘the present’ and ‘the past’? On what basis can they be distinguished from one another? Furthermore, how can the present be discontinuous not only with the past but also in itself? An overview of Foucault’s archaeological method will provide answers to these questions.

As Foucault says, the archaeology of knowledge is concerned neither with geological excavation (conventional archaeology) nor with metaphysical origins (*archē*) but with the accumulated existence of statements: it is the ‘science of the archive’ (1996: 14; 27; 57-58; 65-66; see also 2002a: 145-148). As a science of the archive, archaeology involves the study of what Foucault calls ‘discursive formations’. Examples of

discursive formations include 'general grammar', 'natural history' and 'analysis of wealth' in the classical age (1660-1800) and 'philology', 'biology' and 'political economy' in the modern period (1800-1960). In each of these discursive formations, Foucault is interested in identifying what he calls the 'rules of formation', which is to say, the conditions to which the elements of the discursive formation – objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies – are subjected (2002a: 41-42). The rules of formation are what make objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies (and therefore discursive formations) possible. These rules or conditions are established between an entire set of relations. It is important to emphasize that these rules or conditions are immanent to the relations which they presuppose, rather than imposed on them from the outside. For example, relations between psychiatric institutions, medical knowledge and penal law make the object of 'madness' possible (2002a: 45-49). Or again, relations between formal qualifications, social status and technical resources make the enunciative modality of 'the doctor' possible (2002a: 55-58). It is the task of archaeology to describe these relations.

A discursive formation can be specified once the rules of formation for objects (i.e. that which discourse speaks of), enunciative modalities (i.e. the subject positions from which objects are described and explained), concepts (i.e. the organization of an epistemological space in which such descriptions and explanations appear) and strategies (i.e. the points at which thematic choices can be made within the same discursive formation) have been adequately described. As Foucault shows in *The Order of Things*, the discursive formation of natural history in the classical age differs from the discursive formation of biology in the modern period because they are each subjected to different rules of formation. The relations which make possible and govern the objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies belonging to natural history are of a different order to the relations which make possible and govern the objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies belonging to biology. To take another example: at the beginning of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes the shift over some eighty years from the spectacular public execution of Damians in the eighteenth century to the meticulously disciplined regime of imprisonment in the nineteenth century (1991: 3-7). This shift does not involve a 'development' in penal techniques or a 'progression' in the treatment of convicted criminals. Rather, it involves an extensive transformation between a complex set of relations which signals the end of one discursive formation and the emergence of another. Foucault spends the rest of the book mapping out these relations – between architectural forms, military regulations, juridical edicts, pedagogical instruction, administrative functions, religious rituals, corrective techniques, medical knowledge, criminological theories, etc. – which serve to constitute each respective discursive formation.

When Foucault speaks of 'the present', then, he means those epistemological fields which establish *who we presently are*. For example, biological knowledge establishes our identity as physiological beings. Or again, political economy establishes our identity as value-producing labourers. But the very fact that these epistemological fields (and the relations which they involve) undergo a radical transformation over time suggests that *who we presently are* is in fact discontinuous with *who we once were*. This is the first way in which the diagnosis of the present differentiates: the present (one set of

discursive formations) is shown to be discontinuous with the past (another set of discursive formations).

It is now clear how the present is to be differentiated from the past. But in which way is the present shown to be discontinuous in itself?

It has been said that the archaeological method is concerned with the rules of formation for objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies. These rules or conditions are brought to light by describing a complex set of relations which, taken together, comprise a discursive formation. Foucault says that archaeology allows one to categorize the unity of a discursive formation as a 'system of dispersion' (2002a: 41; 80). This implies that the coherence of a discursive formation is defined by the very diffusion of its objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies. But how is it possible for a discursive formation to be unified if it is made up of dispersed and discontinuous elements? On what is its 'unity' based?

On a full, tightly packed, continuous, geographically well-defined field of objects? What appeared to me were rather series full of gaps, intertwined with one another, interplays of differences, distances, substitutions, transformations. On a definite, normative type of statement? I found formulations of levels that were much too different and functions that were much too heterogeneous to be linked together and arranged in a single figure, and to simulate, from one period to another, beyond individual *oeuvres*, a sort of great uninterrupted text. On a well-defined alphabet of notions? One is confronted with concepts that differ in structure and in the rules governing their use, which ignore or exclude one another, and which cannot enter the unity of a logical architecture. On the permanence of a thematic? What one finds are rather various strategic possibilities that permit the activation of incompatible themes, or, again, the establishment of the same theme in different groups of statement. (2002a: 41)

Foucault suggests here that discursive formations are internally discontinuous: objects do not remain the same through time but undergo modification even within the same discursive formation; modes of enunciation do not refer to a homogeneous 'style' of speaking or writing but refer instead to a heterogeneous set of subject positions within the same discursive formation; the organization of concepts in a given discursive formation is neither permanent nor comprehensive because new concepts can always appear and old ones disappear; and strategies do not define unitary themes within a given discursive formation but in fact permit incompatible theories to emerge (2002a: 35-40). Archaeology does not therefore describe temporal continuities or thematic coherences. Instead, it describes the diffusion of objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies within a given discursive formation. This is the second way in which the diagnosis of the present differentiates: the present (a set of discursive formations) is shown to be discontinuous in itself.

The diagnosis of the present, to reiterate, entails a double differentiation. Archaeology brings to light the series of discontinuities *between* present discursive formations and past discursive formations as well as the series of discontinuities *within* a given discursive formation. It should be pointed out that these are in fact two aspects of one and the same task: the present is shown to be discontinuous in itself insofar as this shows the present to be discontinuous with the past. Put simply, the former brings about the latter. The point at which one discursive formation disappears and another one takes

its place – the cusp between the past and the present – is determined by describing the rules of formation for both discursive formations.

The Clinical

It was previously said that Foucault is to be understood as a diagnostician because his archaeology of knowledge allows him to diagnose the present. ‘Diagnosis’ is a sufficiently broad term to encompass both the evaluation of everyday problems (‘to diagnose a situation’) as well as the determination of a physical ailment (‘to diagnose an illness’). I want to suggest here that Foucault’s concept of diagnosis draws on the latter, specifically medical meaning as much as the former, more general meaning. It is also my contention that the medical meaning of diagnosis in Foucault’s work can be enriched by drawing on the work of Gilles Deleuze and in particular his concept of ‘the clinical’.²

Foucault makes an explicit reference to the medical meaning of diagnosis in a 1972 interview. He begins by describing his work as a form of ‘diagnostic knowledge’:

By diagnostic knowledge, I mean, in general, a form of knowledge that defines and determines differences. For example, when a doctor makes a diagnosis of tuberculosis, he does it by determining the differences that distinguish someone sick with tuberculosis from someone sick with pneumonia or any other disease. In this sense diagnostic knowledge operates within a certain objective field defined by the sickness, the symptoms, etc... However, there are forms of diagnostic knowledge that are not located within an objective field but which, on the contrary, permit a new objective field to appear. (1996: 95)

In one sense, Foucault’s description of a doctor conducting a diagnosis by determining the differences between this and that disease is a metaphorical example. It is a way of clarifying a technical methodological point: archaeology diagnoses the present by specifying the differences between this and that discursive formation. This view seems to be confirmed by the fact that Foucault goes on to discuss the work of Saussure. Structural linguistics is said by Foucault to be a form of diagnostic knowledge which brings to light a new field of concepts (e.g. ‘*langue*’ and ‘*parole*’, ‘diachronic’ and ‘synchronic’, etc.) (1996a: 95).

However, the passage can also be read in a way which affirms the connection between medicine and the archaeology of knowledge. From this perspective, archaeology diagnoses the present by separating, arranging, grouping and regrouping symptoms in an objective field (which may simultaneously produce a new objective field).

2 *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1998), from which this paper partly borrows its title, is a collection of Deleuze’s literary essays. However, Deleuze outlines the clinical approach in more detail in his 1967 book *Coldness and Cruelty* (1991). The concept of ‘the clinical’ is also discussed elsewhere in Deleuze’s work (see e.g. 1995: 142-143; 2004a: 131-134; 135-142; 2004b: 272-274; 2006: viii-xii; Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 119-123). Smith (1998) provides an extensive review of this material in his translator’s introduction to *Essays Critical and Clinical*.

Foucault's conceptualization of the diagnosis of the present in explicitly medical terms is for the most part limited to brief comments in interviews. Despite the cursory nature of these remarks, I would argue that they provide an insight into the way in which Foucault understands his own diagnostic method. To draw out their implications, I want to turn at this point to the work of Deleuze, whose concept of 'the clinical' enables us to shed more light on the link between medicine and philosophy in relation to the archaeology of knowledge.³

The clinical is understood by Deleuze in methodological terms. It focuses on a specific level of medical practice: it is neither etiology (the search for causes) nor therapy (the development and application of treatment) but symptomatology (the study of signs) (Deleuze, 2004a: 132). This symptomatological procedure involves taking apart certain symptoms and grouping together other symptoms which were previously disconnected. New syndromes will be produced as a consequence of this reconfiguration of relations between symptoms. It is not a case of 'inventing' an illness, but of reorganizing a symptomatological table in order to individuate the signs of an illness in different, perhaps more refined ways. For example, 'the plague' does not exist today because it designated a cluster of illnesses which have since been differentiated according to new symptomatological classifications. The symptoms themselves will be transformed in this process, since they are defined by the very place each of them inhabits in the table (Deleuze, 1991: 13-16; 132-134; Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 119-123).

But what are symptoms and where are they to be found? Put simply, the entire world may be treated as a symptom and searched for "signs of disease, signs of life, signs of a cure, signs of health" (2004a: 140). Note that Deleuze does not adhere to a strictly pathological approach to symptomatology: a symptom does not necessarily refer to an ailment but can also imply forms of creativity and ways of living (2004a: 132; 1995: 143). For this reason, symptomatology is the place where artists, doctors and philosophers come together and struggle over the symptoms of the world and the meaning which is attached to them (2004a: 134).

Deleuze elaborates on this nexus between art, medicine and philosophy in *Coldness and Cruelty*, in which the clinical approach is put to extensive use. Deleuze argues here that clinical psychologists such as Krafft-Ebing, Havelock, Féré and Freud all fail to provide a proper diagnosis of masochism and sadism because they do not pay adequate attention to the specific symptoms of each perversion. This failure means that masochism and sadism are inaccurately understood by the clinical psychologists to the extent that a new syndrome – 'sodomasochism' – is produced. This syndrome is erroneous, indeed it is a "semiological howler" (1991: 134), because sadism and masochism are not commensurable in any respect. They are linked together into a single perversion only because the clinical psychologists do not take into account the very specific types of sexual behaviour found in the literary works of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and the Marquis de Sade (1991: 37-46). Deleuze spends the rest of *Coldness and Cruelty* re-examining the specific symptoms of each perversion found in Masoch and Sade's work. He is able to show that, while masochism and sadism both involve a connection

3 Rose (1999: 57-58) is one of the few commentators to discuss Foucault's diagnostic method in relation to Deleuze's concept of the clinical.

between pleasure and pain, this connection is exhibited in radically different ways in each perversion.⁴

The nexus between art, medicine and philosophy can be summarized as follows. Artists (Masoch, Sade) bring to light symptoms of sexual perversion in their literary works (*Venus in Furs*, *Juliette*); doctors (Krafft-Ebing, Havelock, Féré, Freud) revisit the literary works and identify the syndrome of sadomasochism; and finally the philosopher (Deleuze) conducts a differential diagnosis which serves to break up the crude syndrome of sadomasochism and enables him to distinguish properly between the symptoms of masochism and the symptoms of sadism. Symptomatology, then, is conducted by artists, doctors and philosophers who examine, group and regroup symptoms in a table. The crucial point is that with each successive symptomatology – that of the artist, the doctor and the philosopher – the table in which the symptoms are arranged is revised and new syndromes are created in the process.

We have given an overview of Deleuze's clinical approach. But how does this clarify Foucault's diagnostic method? This question can be answered by returning to the methodological principles which Foucault elaborates in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and the application of this method in *The Order of Things*.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault explains that archaeology suspends (at least provisionally) what he calls the conventional unities of discourse. These unities include such notions as 'intellectual tradition', 'influence', 'development', '*Weltanschauung*' and, most of all, 'the book' and 'the oeuvre' (2002a: 22-33). Such unities, for Foucault, are based on a number of assumptions which have an immediate bearing on the way in which historical research is conducted. For example, the notion of 'influence' implies a certain proximity between given theories where, conversely, one might find distance and dissension. Or again, the notion of 'intellectual tradition' suggests a linear transition from one thinker to the next where, on the contrary, one might find an alternative 'family tree' of thinkers. Conventional unities of discourse, then, may prove to be based on somewhat problematic assumptions. Archaeology suspends these conventional unities of discourse in order to avoid such assumptions and to reveal them precisely as problematic.

By setting notions like 'intellectual tradition' and 'the oeuvre' aside, Foucault is not saying that one must reject out of hand all unities of discourse. Quite the reverse. As it

4 Deleuze summarizes his symptomatological findings at the conclusion of *Coldness and Cruelty*: "(1) Sadism is speculative-demonstrative, masochism dialectical-imaginative; (2) sadism operates with the negative and pure negation, masochism with disavowal and suspension; (3) sadism operates by means of quantitative reiteration, masochism by means of qualitative suspense; (4) there is a masochism specific to the sadist and equally a sadism specific to the masochist, the one never combining with the other; (5) sadism negates the mother and inflates the father, masochism disavows the mother and abolishes the father; (6) the role and significance of the fetish, and the function of the fantasy are totally different in each case; (7) there is an aestheticism in masochism, while sadism is hostile to the aesthetic attitude; (8) sadism is institutional, masochism contractual; (9) in sadism the superego and the process of identification play the primary role, masochism gives primacy to the ego and to the process of idealization; (10) sadism and masochism exhibit totally different forms of desexualisation and resexualization; (11) finally, summing up all these differences, there is the most radical difference between sadistic apathy and masochistic coldness (1991: 134)."

was shown in the previous section, archaeology focuses on another unity (albeit a dispersed one), which is to say, the discursive formation. Archaeology does not therefore seek to dismiss or destroy all unities of discourse. Instead, it aims to produce new or modified unities by rearranging conventional ones.

This is seen most clearly in *The Order of Things*. For example, the rules of formation for the objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies in the work of Linnaeus in the eighteenth century are not the same as those found in the work of Cuvier in the nineteenth century. One is left with little choice but to identify in each case a separate and distinct discursive formation. This serves to unsettle the conventional unity of physiological discourse, which usually imagines Linnaeus and Cuvier to share the same epistemological space. In addition to abandoning some of the 'grand continuities' which link together discourses over time, archaeology also disrupts some of the 'great divisions' which run between discourses. For example, Foucault shows that the rules of formation for the objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies in the work of Ricardo and Marx are identical. One must conclude that they are both writing from within the very same discursive formation. This has the result of disturbing the surface of the conventional unity of economic discourse, which habitually pits Marx and Ricardo against each other as epistemological (not to mention political) adversaries. By altering such conventional unities of discourse – whether in terms of 'grand continuities' or 'great divisions' – Foucault is able to establish a set of new or modified unities. He elaborates on this point in the 1970 preface to the English edition of *The Order of Things*:

I did not look in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the beginnings of nineteenth-century biology (or philosophy or economics). What I saw was the appearance of figures peculiar to the Classical age: a 'taxonomy' or 'natural history' that was relatively unaffected by the knowledge that existed in animal or plant physiology; an 'analysis of wealth' that took little account of the assumptions of the 'political arithmetic' that was contemporary with it; and a 'general grammar' that was quite alien to the historical analyses and works of exegesis then being carried out. Moreover, I saw the emergence, between these different figures, of a network of analogies that transcended the traditional proximities: between the classification of plants and the theory of coinage, between the notion of generic character and the analysis of trade, one finds in the Classical sciences isomorphisms that appear to ignore the extreme diversity of the objects under consideration. (2002b: xi)

On the one hand, archaeology demonstrates that some of the distances and proximities which are usually said to characterize a given 'science' or 'theory' are in fact erroneous. On the other hand, archaeology brings to light correlations between forms of knowledge hitherto unconnected or, analogously, deviations between forms of knowledge which were previously unrecognized. In short, Foucault's archaeology of the human sciences in *The Order of Things* transforms the way in which knowledge is ordered by mapping out new or revised epistemological spaces.

We are now in a position to clarify the medical meaning of diagnosis in relation to the archaeology of knowledge. It was previously said that Deleuze takes apart symptoms belonging to the crude syndrome of sadomasochism and rearranges them to form the new syndromes of masochism and sadism. In the same way, a discursive formation is produced when archaeology dissociates groups of signs (e.g. characters, words, sentences, graphs, tables, pictorial diagrams, etc. – what Foucault calls 'statements')

from the unities of discourse in which they are commonly located and reassembles them to form modified unities. Expressed clinically, archaeology dissociates symptoms from crude syndromes (e.g. physiological discourse, economic discourse) and then reassembles these symptoms to form new syndromes (e.g. natural history and biology, analysis of wealth and political economy). In this way, archaeology diagnoses the present by separating, arranging and regrouping symptoms in new or revised symptomatological tables (see 2002b: 219).

The Critical Attitude

So far, this paper has examined Foucault's diagnostic method, the archaeology of knowledge. But what is the objective of this method? This question will first be addressed before we discuss its implications for clinical management studies.

The archaeology of knowledge, as a diagnostic activity, exercises a 'critical attitude' towards the present. This critical attitude prompts one to say what the present *is* at the same time as it urges one to see if it might not be possible to *change* what the present is. The objective of archaeology, therefore, is the simultaneous description and transformation of the present.

In a series of texts in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Foucault discusses the history of the critical attitude and its relation to Kant's question of enlightenment (see 2007). In a 1978 lecture entitled 'What is Critique?', Foucault says that there emerged in fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe "a certain way of thinking, speaking and acting, a certain relationship to what exists, to what one knows, to what one does, a relationship to society, to culture and also a relationship to others that we could call... the critical attitude" (2007: 42). This critical attitude, Foucault continues, arose in response to an entire set of ecclesiastical 'arts of government' (e.g. rules of religious obedience, methods of examination and confession, individualizing techniques, etc.) (2007: 43). By seeking to challenge, restrict or displace these arts of government, the critical attitude is considered by Foucault to be 'the art of not being governed so much' – not, it should be emphasized, the art of not being governed *at all* but rather the art of not being governed like this or that, or at this or that cost (2007: 44-45). This means that the critical attitude does not seek to reject the arts of government in their entirety. Instead, the critical attitude is "the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth" (2007: 47). For example, the critical attitude is exercised when one attempts to challenge a religious authority on the basis of its interpretation of the scriptures and the use to which biblical texts are put (2007: 45).

Although the critical attitude originated in an ecclesiastical context, it soon began to circulate more widely throughout society. This is the point at which the concept of 'enlightenment' – best exemplified by Kant's 1784 newspaper article 'An answer to the question: "What is enlightenment?"' – becomes important for Foucault. Kant opens his article by outlining what he understands by the term 'enlightenment':

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the ability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: Sapere Aude! Have courage to use your own understanding! (1991: 54; emphases in original)

Here, the thought of enlightenment 'dares to know' because it challenges some of the worst excesses of authority (e.g. aspects of religion, law and science) which maintain us in a state of immaturity. This immaturity is self-incurred to the extent that we choose not to put our reason to proper use; it thus remains governed by other forms of reason, whether religious, legal or scientific. We can pull ourselves out of this self-incurred immaturity by using our reason to question religion, law and science on the basis of the forms of knowledge which they produce and the relations of power which they maintain. It is therefore Kant's concept of 'enlightenment' put forward in his *Berlinische Monatsschrift* newspaper article, and not Kant's concept of 'critique' outlined in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, which for Foucault embodies a certain critical attitude towards the present at the cusp of our modernity (2007: 47-48).

Foucault elaborates on the relation between Kant's concept of enlightenment and the critical attitude of modernity in more detail in a 1984 essay entitled 'What is Enlightenment?' In this text, Foucault considers Kant's 1784 newspaper article to have introduced into modern philosophical inquiry a new approach to an old question: 'What is today?' Whereas philosophy once attempted to decipher the present for signs of the future, now philosophy interrogates the present in the direction of the immediate past: 'How is today different from yesterday?' (2007: 99). This question of enlightenment involves a critical attitude towards the present because it aims to show that what is taken as universal and necessary about the present is in fact singular and arbitrary. If the religious, legal and scientific authorities which govern our conduct today did not exist yesterday, then there is nothing universal or timeless about them. Indeed, they may not even exist tomorrow. Foucault thus characterizes the thought of enlightenment as a 'limit-attitude' which works on the present by analyzing and reflecting on its frontiers with both the past and the future (2007: 113). It involves determining precisely what forms of knowledge and relations of power have allowed us to constitute our thought and actions, and to what extent these forms of knowledge and relations of power have the capacity to be transformed by our thought and actions. Put simply, the critical attitude of modernity – inaugurated by Kant's question of enlightenment in 1784 – seeks "to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom" (2007: 114). Not, to be clear, 'liberation' or 'emancipation' (understood as an outright rejection of the present state of things) but 'freedom' (understood as the work which we conduct on ourselves, at the limits of ourselves) (2007: 114-115).⁵

5 Foucault remarks in an interview in 1984 that his critics sometimes respond to his work by asserting that 'if power is everywhere, then there is no freedom'. Foucault replies by saying that "if there are relations of power in every social field, this is *because* there is freedom everywhere" (1996: 441; emphasis added). The point, for Foucault, is that 'power' does not necessarily mean domination and that 'freedom' does not necessarily mean liberation from power. Freedom, rather, refers here to the exercise and modification of the power relations which one maintains with others and with oneself (see 1996: 433-49).

Foucault emphasizes that the question of enlightenment (and the critical attitude which it exercises) is not limited to Kant's newspaper article. Indeed, it characterizes Foucault's own diagnostic method (2007: 113-114). Let us recall that archaeology shows that *who we presently are* is different from *who we once were*. If historical continuity – along with its attendant themes of 'progress' and 'development' – ensures immediate legitimacy for what exists today, archaeology disrupts this continuity by differentiating the present from the past. By reorganizing conventional unities of discourse and by dissolving the historical continuities on the basis of which they are unified, archaeology reveals that the present is neither essential nor immutable but in fact contingent and subject to modification. Archaeology exercises a critical attitude, then, because it aims simultaneously to *describe* and *transform* the present.

It should be stressed that the transformative objective of archaeology is not distinct from the descriptive method of archaeology. As Foucault puts it in a 1983 interview, "the function of any diagnosis concerning what today is... does not consist in a simple characterization of what we are but, instead – by following lines of fragility in the present – in managing to grasp why and how that which is might no longer be that which is" (2000: 449-450; see also 2007: 118). The point here is not to deny everything which constitutes who we presently are. Neither is it to predict the contours which our thought and actions will one day take. Rather, it is by working on the limits of ourselves – by examining the forms of knowledge we now accept as true and the relations of power in which we are currently implicated – that it will be possible to transgress these very limits (2007: 113).

The implications of this critical attitude for clinical management studies are clear: by diagnosing the symptoms of management and organization according to the method of archaeology, clinical management studies aims simultaneously to describe and transform certain aspects of management and organizations in terms of the knowledge which they generate and the power relations which they put into operation.

Applications

But what does this mean in practice? It is obviously not possible to map out in precise detail the shape which clinical management research will take. This will emerge from a process of research based on the methodological principles outlined by Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Nonetheless, in order to clarify the task of clinical management studies and to draw the paper to a close, let us propose two directions for future research: a diagnosis of human resource management (HRM) and a diagnosis of management consultancy.

Critical approaches to HRM have often drawn on the work of Foucault (for an overview, see Barratt, 2003). So far, however, an archaeology of HRM knowledge has not been conducted. Clinical management studies would undertake this task by describing the rules of formation for HRM's objects (e.g. the object of 'competency' in relation to its evaluation, the object of 'performance' in relation to its appraisal, the object of 'aptitude' in relation to its testing); the rules of formation for HRM's

enunciative modalities (e.g. the 'employee' insofar as they express an attitude to be surveyed, the 'recruiter' insofar as they interview an employee, the 'trades union representative' insofar as they engage in wage negotiation, etc.); the rules of formation for HRM's concepts (e.g. the ordering of rating scales, the ordering of self-assessment exercises, the ordering of personality indexes, etc.); and the rules of formation for HRM's strategies (e.g. the thematic divergence between 'hard' and 'soft' HRM). In this way, clinical management studies would examine, break up and rearrange the symptoms of HRM in order to find out what it is at the same time as it tries to see if it might be possible to change what it is. For example, perhaps an archaeological analysis would show that there is not a historical continuity between 'personnel administration' and 'HRM', but that they are in fact two separate and distinct discursive formations.

In terms of management consultancy, studies within CMS have tended to focus on a specific technical area of advisory activity (e.g. management gurus, executive search, business process reengineering, total quality management, IT strategy, etc.) (see e.g. Clark, 1995; Grint and Case, 1998; Legge, 2002; Sturdy, 1997). Clinical management studies, however, would not discuss management consultancy in terms of an individual advisory activity. Instead, clinical management studies would focus on the level at which management consultancy is constituted as a discursive formation which *includes* all these seemingly disparate activities. This would involve describing the rules of formation for management consultancy's objects (e.g. the object of an 'organizational problem' in relation to its diagnosis, the object of 'data' in relation to its collection and analysis, the object of a 'solution' in relation to its recommendation and implementation, etc.); the rules of formation for management consultancy's enunciative modalities (e.g. the 'management consultant' as analyst, the 'management consultant' as advisor, the 'management consultant' as assistant, etc.); the rules of formation for management consultancy's concepts (e.g. the ordering of four-by-four diagnostic matrices, the ordering of feedback questionnaires, the ordering of client-consultant contracts, etc.); and the rules of formation for management consultancy's strategies (e.g. the thematic divergence between 'content' and 'process' management consultancy). In this way, clinical management studies would examine, break up and rearrange the symptoms of management consultancy in order to describe what it is at the same time as it tries to locate the points at which it might be transformed. For instance, perhaps an archaeological analysis would show that there is not a linear development between 'scientific management' and 'management consultancy', but that they are in fact two very different discursive formations.

Clinical management studies is by no means limited to these examples. To be sure, it is not very difficult to imagine a diagnosis of other aspects of management and organization. It should be emphasized, however, that the findings of an archaeological analysis cannot be known in advance or presupposed from the outset. They emerge from the very process of research itself. This research will necessarily be detailed and meticulous, attentive to the forms which management and organizations now take and, correlatively, attentive to the forms which they once took. Indeed, clinical management studies is guided by a single question: 'How are forms of management and organization today different from forms of management and organization yesterday?' This question can be answered by analyzing, dissociating and regrouping the symptoms of management and organization in new or revised symptomatological tables. It should be

emphasized that clinical management studies does not begin with the assumption that 'sick' organizations need to be 'cured' or that corporate managerialism is in a 'morbid state' and must therefore be 'humanely terminated'. Despite its medical connotations, clinical management studies is not concerned exclusively with pathological aspects of management and organization. Clinical management studies takes the symptoms of management and organization to imply signs of life and vitality as much as signs of sickness or bad health. It is in this spirit, then, that clinical management studies engages with managerial and organizational forms: not as systems of oppression from which we must liberate ourselves, but as regimes of truth against whose limits we exercise our freedom.

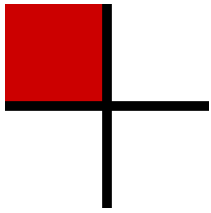
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Melancholy and the Somatic Subject of Stress Management

Rasmus Johnsen

abstract

This article explores the curious relation between the Aristotelian concept of melancholy and the contemporary concept of stress and stress management in organizations. Through a symptomatological reading of the most important Aristotelian text on melancholy, *Problems XXX, I*, it identifies the *mélaina cholé* – the black bile – as the somatic subject of a higher order of self-management among extraordinary individuals and discusses how the conceptualization of this somatic subject has been popularized in the contemporary presentation of stress and stress management in popular literature. It discusses this popularization and its effects on three levels: the individual, the organizational and the managerial, suggesting that the properties, which used to be reserved for the extraordinary in character among politicians, poets, philosophers and artists has been popularized under the assumption of an anthropology, which subsumes the great, culturally constructive achievements under a general idea of *Arbeitskraft*, of labour power.

I neither have the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation; nor the musician's, which is fantastical; nor the courtier's, which is proud; nor the soldier's, which is ambitious; nor the lawyer's, which is politic; nor the lady's, which is nice; nor the lover's, which is all of these; but it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects. (Shakespeare, 2007: IV, 1)

Introduction

What can the ancient Greek conception of melancholy tell us about stress management in contemporary organizations? Not much, it seems. Through most of Western European history melancholy was a central cultural theme; it organized, focussed and explained how people saw the world. As an epistemological category it not only framed questions of personal happiness, but also of social and moral norms (see e.g. Lepenies, 1998). Today it has been reduced to an insignificant category that does not signify much more than a pensive mood. Stress, on the other hand, has a much shorter history. When the history of melancholy culminated in Freud's 1917 essay 'Mourning and Melancholia', which introduced a whole new type of theorizing and representing the symptoms related to it, stress as a concept about emotional response had not yet even been suggested. It wasn't until the 1930s that Hans Selye, an Austrian-born

endocrinologist, came up with the term, borrowing it from the field of physics and engineering. Today, although a few studies have been made of melancholy as a cultural phenomenon in organization theory (Pelzer, 2001; ten Bos, 2003), stress seems to have replaced melancholy as the lens through which the age is viewed. As was true of melancholy in earlier centuries, there is today an enormous amount of research and writing about stress and stress management. The situation should remind us of Robert Burton's famous statement in *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621): "The Tower of Babel never yielded such confusion of tongues as this Chaos of Melancholy doth variety of symptoms" (Radden, 2000: 5). Our confusion about the meaning of the nearly epidemic levels of stress in Western societies is just as rampant. Indeed, the only consistent relation between the two concepts seems to be their shared lack of consistency.

Yet I believe that this shared lack has more to offer than meets the eye. For one, it seems to be the result of the way both concepts relate to the individual body and *what it can do*. Or as the first words of *Stress Management for Dummies* spell it out: "Everybody has it, and everybody talks about it, but nobody really knows what stress is. Why? Because stress signifies different things for each of us, and also really is different for each of us" (Elkin, 1999: xxvi). While the Classical conception of melancholy is less ambiguous when it comes to defining which melancholics it is interested in – namely the extraordinary in character – it asserts the anomaly as an individual problem in a similar way. Furthermore, and this is what makes the text revolutionary in its own time and so interesting to a contemporary perspective, the author of *Problems XXX, I* insists on an individual somatic balance *in* the anomaly, a sort of *eucrasia*, which is not primarily pathological, but is the source of great achievements. This 'great balance' is what I paradoxically paraphrasing Nietzsche's *Gay Science* (2001: 246ff.) call the "great health" of melancholy and it is what will occupy us in what follows. By reading the two cultural phenomena of melancholy and stress alongside each other, I would like to ask whether there is such a thing as a *great health of stress and stress management?*

Let me just make a few methodological comments. I specifically make a point of saying alongside and not in comparison to each other, because the point here is not to reduce one phenomenon to the other. It is neither my aim to claim the prevalence of one over the other, along the lines of 'stress is a contemporary form of melancholy', nor is it my point to assert that the Greek capability for precise diagnosis is outdated by our medical technologies, along the lines of 'melancholy is an inferior form of stress'. Rather, I suggest looking at Greek melancholy and contemporary stress as phenomena that are intimately related, both with important implications for their respective ages, but with roles to play, which can best be distinguished by setting them apart *in* their relation. My approach is inspired by a passage in Michel Serres' *Statues* (1990). Here Serres assumes a dictionary that allows translating between two very different events. On the one hand the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger* in midair on 28th of January 1986 and on the other the worshipping of Baal, the Lord of the Flies, in Cartago 600 years B.C.

Serres' description of the ritual in which a giant statue was warmed up to red heat and children were sacrificed in the fire is taken from Flaubert's *Salambo*. The idol was constructed with an ingenious mechanism that allowed the children to be transported to a landing from which, one by one, they were hurled onto the outstretched and red hot hands of the metal colossus, where they evaporated like drops of water on a frying pan,

while the crowd shouted: they are not human, they are oxen! (Serres, 1990: 11). The two events have similarities and dissimilarities, conduct and rituals in common and differences so profound that even the mentioning of them together provokes anger. What Serres is interested in is the black box they erect in unison, the locus around which the actions, habits and conducts are organized and distributed (Serres, 1990: 12). The black box is a sort of third space, in which the exchange between the two events occurs. This space itself is erected by some thing, which mediates the relationship between them (Brown, 2005: 220); in this case the metal containers full of human beings.

If we look at this from the point of view of Gilles Deleuze, we might also label this mediation or translation of events in a third space of convergence a *symptomatology* (see e.g. Butler, 2008). When in *Coldness and Cruelty* Deleuze likens the great literary writer to a doctor, it is because the medical doctor is also an inventor, not of illnesses, but of styles of thought.

The doctor does not invent the illness, he dissociates symptoms that were previously grouped together, and links up others that were dissociated. In short he builds up a profoundly original clinical picture. (Deleuze, 1991: 15)¹

Flaubert, in Serres' hands, becomes exactly that; in his treatment of the cultic rituals in Cartago he connotes signs and creates a clinical image that he then relates to another – that of the *Challenger* catastrophe.

In the case of two such disparate concepts as melancholy and stress the task will be to ask the proper question, which sets the concepts apart in their relation in this manner. I will attempt to do this by asking the question of the position of the individual body, and what it can do, in both concepts and let that question constitute the space in which they cross over and into each other (Serres, 1990: 13). The individual body, in both ages, acts as that something which resists being put in place, and to the following it will be what Bruno Latour terms our matter of concern (Latour, 2004: 231). It is very important to take this guiding principle seriously. The somatic relation, which surfaces and acts as a guideline for great achievement in both melancholy and stress, involves discursive and non-discursive practices that emerge around the phenomena, but should not be thought of as an attempt to answer the metaphysical question about what man is capable of. It really is a question of the singular body and its individual capabilities. As we shall see, both the ancient conception of melancholy and the contemporary conception of stress involve dynamic conceptions of balance, although with very different teleological implications. The historical inconsistency of both concepts mentioned earlier may be the best indication of this. Because both melancholy and stress (although not exclusively) have been thought of as results of a disproportionate relation to the

1 To the reader familiar with the classical distinction between a symptom-based and a sign-based diagnostic reflected in clinical medicine, the Deleuzian understanding of a symptomatology might seem confusing. In a classical sense the *symptom* refers to the patient's complaint, a description of inner states; a *sign*, in contrast, is an outwardly observable feature of behaviour or bodily condition: a *pain* is a symptom, a *rash* is a sign (Radden, 2000: 33). When Deleuze treats the symptom as a sign, this distinction seems to collapse. The key to this should be found in a discussion of the Deleuzian conceptualization of the subjective states, for which this is not the place (Deleuze, 1991; Smith, 2005)

individual body, both resist clinical conformation and seem relative not only to the human beings, which they are set up to describe, but also to the times of which they are products.

To present the concept of melancholy as a background for further discussion I will begin the following with a description of the Aristotelian understanding of melancholy as it is presented in *Problems XXX, I*. The description will not be exhaustive, a task that would demand more space than is available here. I will take my point of departure in the Hippocratic theory of the *Quattuor Humores* in order to demonstrate the revolutionary status of the treatment of melancholy in *Problems*. Again, I will draw attention only to certain themes in the text, which are relevant to the further analysis. These themes are specifically framed by the question that opens the Aristotelian treatment of melancholy: “Why is it that all men who have become outstanding in philosophy, statesmanship, poetry or the arts are melancholic, or are infected by the diseases arising from black bile?” (Aristotle, 2000: 57). The question is interesting in a contemporary perspective, because it presents us with the non-pathological idea of melancholy as the foundation for a class of achievements instead of treating it only as a result of it. In extension to this I will be able to discuss the Aristotelian theory of balance and the personal somatic relation it involves, implicated in the theory of a natural melancholy. I will also discuss what kind of achievement it is that the exceptional melancholic can hope for and how this sets him apart from a pejorative middle, which might be more balanced – but is not destined for true greatness according to *Problems*.

This will lead me to the discussion of the contemporary conception of stress in organizations. I will present this discussion along three lines: in relation to the individual, in relation to the organization and in relation to management. Again the discussion will not be exhaustive of its subject; rather my choice of literature representing the three themes will be exemplary.

In relation to individual stress management I have chosen to work with the popular and easily accessible *Stress Management for Dummies* (Elkin, 1999), which is as it says “Packed with stress-busting advice and exercises” (Elkin, 1999: front page). I will primarily show here how something similar to the Aristotelian conception of *eucrasia*, which in relation to melancholy was reserved for the extraordinary in character, in the contemporary conception of stress is popularized and generalized to include everybody.

In my discussion of stress management in organizations I primarily draw on Quick, Quick, Nelson and Hurrell’s *Preventive Stress Management in Organizations* (1997). My aim here will be to show how the popularization of the extraordinary balance implicated earlier is related in the organization to a certain type of achievement. Where the great achievement in the Aristotelian conceptualization of melancholy was socially constructive and bound to transcendental qualities, in the organization it is bound to the concept of productivity.

This will lead me to my discussion of stress and management. In *Lederen som stresscoach* or in English *The Manager as Stress Coach* (Andersen and Kingston,

2007)² the task of the manager as a coach for his employees is bound, not to the achievement of a balanced middle, but rather to the 'great' and dynamic middle, which also to Aristotle was the eudemonic goal of mankind and in *Problems* signifies the great health of melancholy.

The Conception of Melancholy in *Problems XXX, I*

In Hippocratic medicine the *mélaina cholé* – the black bile – was one of the four 'humours', which could be found and identified with the four elements in the human body. Next to the yellow bile, the blood and the phlegm, it was assumed to be a concrete and physical fluid, which determined the individual character of a human being through its mixture with the other fluids. But the right mixture (*krasis*) of the fluids in the body not only influenced the human character, it was also crucial for a healthy life. Illness, it was believed, was the result of a misbalanced relation between the bodily fluids (Klibansky et al., 1992; Theunissen, 1996).

The short treatise on melancholy in *Problems XXX, I*, which marks the historical source of the topic by liberating melancholy from the Hippocratic paradigm, is a part of the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, but its author is believed to be Theophrastus, a later follower of Aristotle (Radden, 2000; Theunissen, 1996). It links up with the Hippocratic theory of the humours by asserting melancholy to a physical substance. But what makes the text so revolutionary in its own time, and interesting in a modern perspective, is the way it also breaks with the theory of *the* four humours. Instead of asserting the question of balance to a relation between the different bodily fluids, it seeks to locate the right mixture in the black bile itself. Thereby it breaks with the natural essence of the Greek cosmology and alters, not only the status of the black bile, but also the conception of illness as such (Theunissen, 1996: 5). In a modern perspective, of course, what is interesting is the *typology*, which became a central theme in Western European history from then on. The epochal thesis that *Problems* puts forth asserts a kind of melancholy that *in itself* is not pathological, but is intimately related to pathological symptoms. In *Problems* we witness the birth of the Melancholic as a character.

The question which opens *Problems XXX, I*, why all men who have become outstanding in philosophy, statesmanship, poetry or the arts are melancholic, should be understood along this line. It has generally been agreed that the question introduces an examination of the source of great achievements and genius (Klibansky et al., 1992; Theunissen, 1996; Radden, 2000). But what is really surprising to a modern perspective is the interest in a *negative* that makes a *positive* conceivable. As the German philosopher Michael Theunissen points out, the question displays an astounding naturalness in its assumption that melancholy is the source of great achievements. It never asks *if*, but *why* (Theunissen, 1996: 9). This should not be taken to mean that all melancholics are natural geniuses. The author of *Problems XXX, I* specifically points out that melancholics in whom the black bile is too cold will turn out lethargic weaklings or idiots, while those in whom it is too warm will become manic and easily irritated

2 All quotes from Andersen & Kingston, 2007 are my own translation.

characters (Aristotle, 2000: 59; Klibansky et al., 1992: 79).³ But it points to the normative demand for a balance in melancholy, which remains the source of great achievements. While the author seems to indicate that everyone has some of that which makes a melancholic in them (Theunissen, 1996: 10), it is only those who live with a higher sort of melancholic anomaly or inequality that are capable of meeting this demand.

Theunissen distinguishes three ways in which the melancholic in *Problems* is unequal: in relation to others, in relation to himself and in relation to the black bile, which is ultimately the subject of his character (Theunissen, 1996: 12). In relation to others the melancholic is primarily unequal, because his character sets him apart from the mass or 'the majority' as the author of *Problems* points out (Aristotle, 2000: 59). The non-pathological or 'natural' melancholy is reserved for the exceptional.

For the melancholic the inequality with himself is a more precarious matter. To the contemporary reader the Greek text here comes very close to the notion of a conflictual subject, which we have known through most of the twentieth century, especially from psychoanalysis (see e.g. Ehrenberg, 2004: 230-280; Hoedemaekers, in this issue). It would seem, at least from a modern perspective, that the natural melancholic (and hence exceptional in character from a Greek perspective) is characterized by a peculiar self-relation that is constituted by the conflict between its elements. The splitting of the self is constitutive for the melancholic personality (Theunissen, 1996: 13). What shall primarily interest me here is how the third inequality finds its expression in this splitting of the melancholic self. As Theunissen points out, the real subject of the melancholic self is the *mélaina cholé*. The black bile is the unequal *somatic subject* of which the conflict in the melancholic's relation to himself is the individual expression (Theunissen, 1996: 13). In a very lucid example the author of *Problems XXX, I* explains how this inequality is manifested in the individual body.

For just as men differ in appearance not because they have faces, but because they have a certain type of face, some handsome, some ugly and some again having no outstanding characteristics (these are of normal character), so those who have a small share of this temperament are normal, but those who have much are unlike the majority. (Aristotle, 2000: 58-59)

Of the black bile itself the author only says that it can be too cold or too warm. But as the somatic subject of the melancholic, it expresses itself individually as that which sets him apart from the majority and also lends him the ability for outstanding achievement. It is the balancing of this *somatic relation*, in which the natural melancholic must seek that which enables him to achieve what is in his nature. The melancholic temperament in itself is variable to those who have it; and it is the task of every melancholic to strive for an individual balance in it. Only when he fails to do so does his natural melancholy become pathological and he falls prey to the illnesses inherent to his temperament (Theunissen, 1996: 18). Because of this "all melancholic persons are abnormal, not owing to disease, but by nature" (Aristotle, 2000: 60).

3 All references to *Problems XXX, I* is from the translation of the text found in the anthology *The Nature of Melancholy* (Radden, 2000).

We are beginning to see an outline of what I called the great health of melancholy. The natural melancholic who is prone to great achievement must invest himself in a dietetic relation to his body, in order not to fall ill. The diseases related to the black bile are results of a disproportionate relation to the self. But one decisive factor remains to be explained. For, contrary to what one might think, this does not mean that the Aristotelian concept of the medium or middle applies to the melancholic. In fact, what characterizes him and sets him apart from the *mésôi* – the mediocre – is his inability to attain anything like a balance in his nature. Paradoxically the melancholic is condemned to strive to achieve an unachievable middle or balance and simultaneously this striving beyond his immediate situation is what enables his great achievements. As Theunissen points out this self-transcendent trait in the melancholic temperament not only sets the course for the rediscovery of melancholy in the dietetic Renaissance philosophy of the genius, but also for the Freudian (and modern) theory of sublimation as the cause for cultural emergence (Theunissen, 1996: 18). Further it points towards the discussion of the organization of self-transcendence and subjectivity as a productive factor in contemporary management (Barley and Kunda, 1992; Kunda, 1992). While mediocre normality is neither capable of the great artistic and intellectual power, nor subject to the suffering that inheres in the anomalies of the temperament, the melancholic constitution according to the author of *Problems* is the foundation both of diseases like mania or depression and of the great cultural achievements, which characterize philosophers, artists, poets, politicians and the like. The great health of melancholy then is a dynamic balancing of a somatic subject that is the locus of great achievements and great suffering, both individual and social.

Melancholy and Individual Stress Management

In the following I will turn to the contemporary description of stress in literature on stress management in order to discover a similar concept of ‘great health’. In other words, I will look for a typology of stress in the light of melancholy. As I have already pointed out we should be careful not to conflate melancholy and stress with each other; rather, we should ask what the symptomatology developed in the Aristotelian conception of melancholy can tell us about the contemporary phenomenon of stress. Hence I will begin this discussion by turning to a popular book, *Stress Management for Dummies*, which treats stress as a practical problem to be solved individually and suggests an array of tools for doing so. My discussion will follow two leads. First I will turn to the *popularization of the extraordinary*, which simultaneously relates stress to melancholy and sets the two apart. Secondly, I will discuss how this popularization is an expression also of a *denaturalization* of what it means to be human in stress management.

Most of what can be said about the popular concept of stress if we look at it from the perspective of the balance implicated in Aristotelian melancholy is contained in the following lines from the foreword to *Stress Management for Dummies*.

Stress is an unavoidable consequence of life. There are some stresses you can do something about, and others you can't hope to avoid or control. The trick is learning to distinguish between the two, so that you're not constantly frustrated like Don Quixote, tilting at windmills. This book teaches

you how to use your time and talents effectively so that stress can make you more productive, rather than self-destructive. (Elkin, 1999: xxv)

Several things are interesting here. First of all, stress is asserted to be a natural phenomenon, a result of life itself, which there is no way to avoid, but which on the other hand can be controlled by fervent self-discipline. Stress is not a pathology in itself, but something that can lead to self-destruction if you are not careful. Taking care, on the other hand, means being more productive. In short, the perception of stress in this relation is much like the Aristotelian perception of melancholy among the exceptional, which implied the assertion of a productive *eucrasia* in the anomaly – a positive on the basis of a negative. In successful stress management “the right amount creates a beautiful tone” (Elkin, 1999: xxv). Stress, much like melancholy, is the somatic subject of achievement, which must be managed so as not to become pathological.

This is perhaps nowhere more lucid than in the pseudoscientific concepts of eustress and distress that were originally coined by Hans Selye, but are now popular in use – also in *Stress Management for Dummies* (Elkin, 1999: 21). The idea of a good stress and a bad stress, a positive and a negative force in life, employs stress, not merely as a result of strain, but as the subject also of achievement. There are “the kinds of stresses that add to the enjoyment and satisfaction of our lives. We want *more* of this kind of stress, not less” (*ibid.*). As the somatic subject of both achievement and illness, stress finds its expression, again much like melancholy, in the individual body and creates individual character. If to the Greeks the concept of a conflictual self, which goes beyond itself, was only a character trait of the exceptional melancholic, to our age it is the popular trademark of success. Stress is not something to handle in order to be able to live; stress enables a life out of the ordinary, because “effective stress management really comes down to effective lifestyle management” (*ibid.*: 2). Stress management promises better health, a longer life, more fun and more energy.

Here we touch upon the place that really sets the ancient concept of melancholy and the contemporary concept of stress apart. If the natural melancholic was an exceptional character and melancholy the somatic subject that enabled his great achievements, then stress applies this exceptional ability to everybody. If melancholy was that which created characteristic individuals, then the popularization of stress and stress management expresses the normative demand for everyone to be something special. Seen from the perspective of Aristotelian melancholy, stress is a symptom of a contemporary *popularization of the extraordinary*. What used to be reserved for only the extraordinary in character in the conception of melancholy, applies to everyone in the conception of stress. The normative demand for a balance that works to release the individual powers of character becomes part of a general anthropology.

The character of this balance becomes increasingly clear if we think of it as a *denaturalization*. I suggest we look through the lens of melancholy at stress, in order not to describe a phenomenon of a natural balancing of things, but in order to describe the phenomenon of a dynamic balance, which is never actually present, but presents itself in the individual body as an actualization of a continuous process. In melancholy, as we have seen, the concept of nature was at least ambiguous. With the black bile as the somatic subject that was the source of individual character, the Greek cosmology came apart and the counter-natural found its way into Nature. The thesis of the

melancholic nature of the exceptional human being, whose temperament, relative to himself only, was the source of both the outstanding achievement and of illness, destabilized the concept of nature. In the contemporary conception of stress a similar denaturalization is generalized to become an anthropological category, through which we recognize ourselves.

How this denaturalized, somatic subject is constitutive of individual character is clearly visible in the practical ‘stress-busting advice and exercises’ that are offered in *Stress Management for Dummies*. Most of these tests, tables, hints and scales are designed to tell the reader “how [his] body reacts” (*ibid.*: 25) and how stress can make him sick with individual somatic reactions. Paradoxically, stress is both assumed to be something that defies general definition (*ibid.*: xxv) and a hormonal reaction, which works in a straightforward causal relation: perceived stressor – hormones – body organs and muscles (*ibid.*: 18). Muscles are prime targets for stress, but also the circulatory systems and sexuality and the immune system (*ibid.*: 18-21). Stress needs to be balanced, because “finding your stress balance is one of the best ways to find out if you are overreacting to the stress in your life” (*ibid.*: 38). The somatic subject acts as a cause for an individual psychological profile, which is the result of a hormonal balance asserted to *you* as an individual.

Your sympathetic nervous system, one of the two branches of your autonomic nervous system, is producing changes in your body. Your hypothalamus, a part of your brain, is activating your pituitary, a small gland at the base of your brain, which releases a hormone into the bloodstream. This hormone (it’s called ACTH or adrenocorticotrophic hormone) reaches your adrenal glands, and they in turn produce more adrenalin (also known as epinephrine) along with other hormones called glucocorticoids (cortisol is one). This melange of biochemical changes is responsible for an array of other remarkable changes in your body. (*ibid.*: 26)

The imaging of stress on a molecular level that constitutes a character of the individual body, which we can identify, isolate and manipulate, but also mobilize, recombine and intervene on, denaturalizes the somatic subject in a way similar to melancholy, because it underlines how stress management is no longer constrained by the apparent normativity of a natural vital order. Nikolas Rose calls this contemporary process a *molecularization*, thereby hinting that the way we relate to ourselves as somatic individuals is changing (2007: 6). This process is not only visible on an individual stress management level, but also in the way organizations handle the challenge.

Stress Management in Organizations

In the following I will turn to stress management in organizations as it is presented in Quick *et al.* (1997). What I would like to do here is show how the denaturalization of stress affects the organizational ability to mobilize, intervene in and manipulate the somatic subject of stress, which is both the subject of achievement and of suffering. The conception of a higher balance in the anomaly, which I first identified in the Greek conception of melancholy and discussed above in relation to individual stress management, is also a part of the organizational imaging of stress, but here it is more exclusively tied to productivity. What I will argue is that the ability for self-transgressive action, which in the Greek conception of melancholy was specifically tied

to the artistic and intellectual achievements of thinkers, politicians and artists, in the contemporary conception of stress is generalized as an idea of productivity as such.

In *Preventive Stress Management in Organizations* the imaging of stress is fairly similar to the one described above, but with a central emphasis that is interesting to the present perspective. Stress is defined as “a creatively ambiguous word with little agreed-on scientific definition” (Quick *et al.*, 1997: 2), but simultaneously as a mobilization that “occurs through the combined action of the sympathetic nervous system and the endocrine (hormonal) system” (*ibid.*: 3). Also, stress has an individual character defined by a somatic subject similar to the one described above, because “some individuals see a specific demand or stressor as a threat, whereas other individuals see the same demand or stressor as a challenge or opportunity” (*ibid.*: 9). Organizational stress management is also concerned with the management of a higher balance in the anomaly, because stress management is “concerned with how individuals and organizations adjust to their environment; achieve high levels of performance and health; and become distressed in various psychological, medical, behavioural, or psychological ways” (*ibid.*: 2ff). But what sets organizational interest in stress apart from the individual perspective is above all the productive convergence between the two: “the individual’s and the organization’s unique vulnerability become important ingredients in understanding the experience of stress” (*ibid.*: 6). From this perspective the mobilization of stress in an individual might provoke a threat reaction in the mind-body system; to the productive organization this “is also a challenge and opportunity” (*ibid.*: 17). The task of organizational stress management is to manage the convergence between the individual dynamic *eucrasia* in the somatic subject and the interests of the productive organization. The management of stress in organizations is a matter of reaching not only a great health in the denaturalized individual convergence between achievement and illness, but also of conforming it to productivity (Pedersen, 2008).

From the point of view of melancholy this is mainly interesting because the nature of the melancholic’s great achievement was of culturally formative character. The ‘mixing’ of the somatic balance, which ultimately was unattainable to the melancholic, was not only that which set him apart from the *mésoi*, the mediocre, but also that which kept him in a conflictual relation to himself, the effect of which was continuous self-transgression. It was the self-transgressive character of his constitution, which led to his great and culturally formative achievements. In the dynamic somatic relation, to which organizational stress management challenges the employee, artistic and intellectual self-transgression has been replaced by a generalized concept of productivity. What the character of the Greek melancholic tells us about stress management in organizations is that the idea of the self-transgression of an extraordinary and socially beneficial character has been subsumed under the idea of *Arbeitskraft*, under the concept of a general labour power asserted to every individual. Seen through the lens of melancholy, the goal of organizational stress management is not the achievement of balance, but the setting of the stage for, the intervention in, the organization and management of the precarious somatic relation in stress, which is self-transgressive and potentially productive. This “great health” of stress management is what the productive organization must seek to manage.

Coaching and the Higher Balance of Stress Management

Let us turn to the illustration of a higher balance in *The Manager as Stress Coach* (Andersen and Kingston, 2007) in order to cast a light on the role the manager plays in making the somatic relation in stress productive. I emphasize two things. First, I want to show how stress coaching aims not at a balanced middle but rather at the dynamic elevated middle that the discussion of Aristotelian melancholy has revealed to us. It is the self-transgressive character of this condition that not only ensures productivity but also brings *change* to the organization. This leads me to my second point. As a role model, the manager must become a representation of a way of looking at the world, the nexus of a shared set of assumptions that enables the employees to understand or predict behaviour. In stress coaching, the manager's own behaviour must become a model or a pattern – what the Greeks called *paradeigma*. The paradigm of the manager as stress coach illustrates the desubstantialization of human nature; it illustrates the paradoxical way in which the *natural* becomes desubstantialized when related to productivity.

The Manager as Stress Coach presents the change from growth to stress in order to illustrate how the anomaly itself is the foundation of productivity. In *The Manager as Stress Coach* 'The Stress Ladder' (Andersen and Kingston, 2007: 14) is presented as a tool to measure the proportions between effectivity and stress. Interestingly, the tool shares its basic somatic imagery with the Aristotelian assumption of heat as the dynamic foundation of growth (Klibansky *et al.*, 1992: 81), which the author of *Problems* also subscribes to. On the high end the "temperate employee... feels effective – not busy – and on top of the situation" (Andersen and Kingston, 2007: 14). At the bottom of the ladder the result of too extreme temperatures come together in the distressed and non-productive employee, who has 'burned-out' (*ibid.*: 18). The way from top to bottom, *The Manager as Stress Coach* maintains, is not a question of either-or. Rather it is "a process, where your employees experience a gradual change, which might take place at such a slow pace that they don't register the change" (*ibid.*: 20). Stress is defined as what happens "when a person experiences conditions and demands in the surroundings as straining and exceeding personal estimates of abilities, competences and possibilities" (*ibid.*). As a result the cultivation of a sense of *inner control* as opposed to a sense of *outer control* among the employees is decisive for effectivity in the organization (*ibid.*: 35). From the point of view of Aristotelian melancholy established above, the effective employee represented in *The Manager as Stress Coach* must maintain a 'temperate' balance in the somatic subject of stress, which contributes to her sense of character and provides the ability for effective achievement. As I have argued above, stress is constituted, not only as a source of illness, but also as the denaturalized foundation of achievement.

Another model presented in *The Manager as Stress Coach* may be illustrative of how management in the organization must keep this balance at an elevated and dynamic level to maintain an optimal effectivity. The authors term this the 'optimal level of conflict', where "conflicts function as constructive interruptions, which create good change" (*ibid.*: 17). Measuring the proportions between the level of conflict and the temperature of the somatic subject, the model suggests that this level is placed just above the 'normal' temperature in order to foster and effect progressive change in the team. Comparing this to what we found in the discussion of *Preventive Stress*

Management in Organizations, this underlines the assumption of a self-transgressive dynamics, which has been subsumed under a general idea of labour power in stress management. This power is retained in the individual to be set free by management in a productive manner. The task of the manager as stress coach then is not only to intervene in and mobilize the somatic relation, which is constitutive of individual character in the employee, but also to organize it in such a way that it becomes a productive factor of change. In other words the coaching process effectuated by *The Manager as Stress Coach* does not have as its aim to maintain a stable balance, but rather to facilitate the sort of conflicts that mobilize the dynamics of self-transgression. Stress management is not about the attainment of balance, but about the attainment of a conflictual and productive self-relation to a denaturalized somatic subject, which used to be reserved for the extraordinary in character. The Aristotelian conception of melancholy was characterized by exaltation and a will to the “outbidding of what it means to be human” (Szilasi, 1946: 291). In stress coaching this characterization is elevated to the status of a general anthropogenetic potentiality that is actualized only in individual character through the management of a somatic subject.

This is reflected also in the role of the manager as stress coach. In *The Manager as Stress Coach*, the primary task of the manager is to be a *role-model*. It is the personal effort of the manager that becomes the measure for the achievement of the employees, because they “reflect themselves in you, your effort and your style of work” (Andersen and Kingston, 2007: 40). The simultaneous dilemma and task implicated in this becomes clear, when the authors of *The Manager as Stress Coach* maintain that management in its purest form is the opposite of coaching.

Traditional, authoritative management consists in the execution of the right to point in a direction and set demands – *as a manager I can make absolute decisions: I decide!* In its purest form coaching produces the right of the other to decide: *as a coach I can help you to make the best decisions for you independently: You decide!* (*ibid.*: 44, emphases in original)

It is the task of the manager as stress coach to manoeuvre in this convergent space between the best interest of the organization and the best interest of the employee. Coaching is a way of mobilizing and appropriating the employee’s generic capabilities to the best interest of the organization, through the paradigm of action which the manager creates. As a *paradeigma* the managerial character functions as a desubstantialization of nature, where any position outside of the anomaly measured in stress is unthinkable. In *The Manager as Stress Coach* the anomaly itself is not only the generalized foundation of achievement, it is also the authority through which any understanding in the organization of what a human being can think, can do or can hope for, must be seen (Kristensen, 2007; Pedersen, 2008).

Stress and the Sovereign Individual

So what, finally, can the ancient Greek conception of melancholy tell us about stress management in contemporary organizations? My symptomatological reading of Aristotelian melancholy emphasizes the idea of *eucrasia* in the anomaly, a dynamic and self-transgressive balance, based on the assumption of a somatic subject – the black bile

– which for the extraordinary in character is both the source of great achievement and of illness. I also argued that the dynamics of this *eucrasia* attained through the disciplined but conflictual handling of the somatic subject was that which created individual character in the melancholic and set him apart from mediocrity.

In the individual handling of stress I found the assumption of this *eucrasia* in a popularized form, with stress as the somatic subject through which the individual would recognize his own character. Stress, in this perspective, is not something to be handled in order to live, but is itself something which *enables* life. This denaturalization of what it means to be human, I argued, constitutes an anthropology, because the somatic subject of stress is no longer constrained by the apparent normativity of a natural vital order and is valid for everyone.

In relation to stress management in organizations I found the dynamic and self-transgressive character of this conflictual self-relation to be related to an idea of productivity. I also found that this idea absorbed and subsumed the thought of the culturally formative achievement, inherent to the Aristotelian melancholic character, under the general idea of a productive labour power to be set free by management. To the organization, I argued, stress management is not a question of balance, but of the setting of the stage for the intervention in, the organization and management of the precarious somatic relation in stress, which is found to be potentially productive.

I developed this argument in my discussion of the manager as stress coach. Here the dynamic character of the self-transgressive somatic relation was found to be what brings *change* to the organization. Coaching meant the cultivation of an inner control of the somatic subject in the employee that enabled effective achievement through dynamic change. The role of the manager as a stress coach, then, was that of a *role model*, whose paradigmatic action would mobilize the potential generic qualities of the employee in an anthropogenetic fashion. This, I argued, could be seen as a desubstantialization of nature. If the assumption of stress as a somatic subject would denaturalize the higher balance in the anomaly, then the role of the manager as a stress coach and *paradeigma* would desubstantialize any idea of a nature outside of it.

When Nietzsche, himself a great scholar of melancholy, in 1882 assumed the need for a health for the “nameless, hard to understand”, the being he could not yet name bear a striking resemblance to the one I have tried to describe in this article. These “argonauts”, like Nietzsche’s, “sail around all the coasts of this Mediterranean⁴ of ideals”, the unattainable middle, and like Nietzsche’s argonauts the health they seek to acquire is “*the great health* – that one doesn’t only have but also acquires continually, and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up!” Theirs is also a dangerous ideal, “the ideal of a human, superhuman well-being and benevolence that will often enough appear *inhuman*” (Nietzsche, 2001: 246f.). In Nietzsche’s sovereign individual his power over himself, his destiny and his nature has grown so instinctual that he calls this instinct his conscience (Nietzsche, 1967: 60). If it

4 I have retained Nietzsche’s original intention to hint at the ancient Greek conception of a ‘middle’ by keeping “Mediterranean” as a translation for the German *Mittelmeer*, instead of Nauckhoff’s ‘inland sea’.

is true, as it has been suggested (Ehrenberg, 2004: 262), that these values have been realized in modern individuality, then the pervasive nature of stress-related illnesses in contemporary Western societies suggest to us that the sovereign individual lacks the strength that Nietzsche imagined him to possess. Maybe it is true after all that this individual is exhausted by his sovereignty and laments his exhaustion (Ehrenberg, 2004: 262). But the concept of melancholy, so long one of the central cultural images of the West, also tells us another story about the intimate relation in our culture between passion and suffering. If the ancient Greek conception of melancholy can teach us anything about stress management in contemporary organizations it is that stress is not merely the *result* of personal or managerial demands; paradoxically the suffering it speaks of is also the *foundation* on which the conceptualization of value, effectivity and achievement is based and flourishes. In the contemporary conceptualization of stress as a somatic subject to be managed productively, the melancholic's relation between passion and suffering, which lasted for nearly two millennia, is reflected. That the Arabic word for black or melancholic after the first centuries of our era developed into a synonym for passion is not a coincidence (Klibansky *et al.*, 1992: 85). The melancholic passion was a gift or a condemnation for the few and extraordinary in character; Greek heroes like Bellerophon, who ended up hated by all immortals, wandering alone about the plain of Aleios, eating his heart out. In the contemporary conception of stress the somatic relation, which characterized these chosen few, has been generalized to involve everyone in the drama of productivity. To take this seriously in the academic debates about value-production in contemporary organizations and the pathologies related to it is important. Maybe understanding that we are the contemporaries of those who came before makes this possible. After all Nietzsche's *great seriousness* emerges, not with the end, but with the beginning of the tragedy (Nietzsche, 2001: 246), which we can call the 'great health' of stress management.

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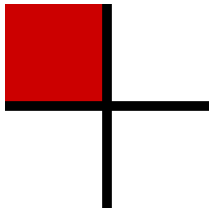
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The Masochistic Reflexive Turn*

Carl Cederström and Rickard Grassman

abstract

In this paper we explore two opposing ways of organizing work. The first relates to (neo-) normative cultures based on the communication of normative ideals. The second involves a radically different form of culture following from what we term the 'masochistic reflexive' turn, in and by which cultural transgressions and perversions are encouraged. In order to provide a thick description of each of these cultural forms we draw on two contrasting examples: Google and a London based consulting firm. These empirical discussions are then theoretically problematized and articulated through conceptualizations of the symptom in the works of both Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek. Based on these readings we distinguish (neo-) normative cultures as those that attempt to domesticate the symptom, from masochist reflexive organizations that encourage their employees to enjoy their symptom.

It certainly goes without saying that organizations venture to provide an environment that realizes an optimal amount of productivity. In order to render such ambitions achievable we encounter quite different managerial strategies, each offering or forging a unique presentation of life within the organization. Indeed, organizations, primarily as they appear in the West, are rarely conceived as a simple bureaucratic work-space, in which employees spend eight hours a day, conducting their duties. They are usually considered to be something more, something else. By crafting sophisticated and insidious cultural programmes, organizations have produced and maintained a dizzying array of identities. They have articulated normative frameworks, often with alluring and romantic overtones, through which their values, beliefs and norms can be conveyed (see Abrahamson, 1997; Barley and Kunda, 1992; Ray, 1986).

However, it has been suggested that these normative control approaches have increasingly lost their bite (Adler, 2001; Kunda, 2004; Kunda and Ailon-Souday, 2005). They often rely on rigid templates which employees are not naturally inclined to adopt, let alone internalize. This deficiency does not suggest, however, that normative control has become obsolete. Rather it indicates that normative approaches have instead taken on subtler forms (Bains, 2007; Jermier, 1998), appealing to employees 'as they really are', which is sought to be captured in the concept of the 'neo-normative organization' (Fleming and Sturdy, 2007). It points to a new strategy for gaining ascendancy over

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employees, in which ‘front stage’ corporate selves are substituted by authentic selves, predicated on a culturally validated norm of difference (*ibid.*).

In this study we take Google as an example of how a neo-normative approach is employed that engages a norm of difference. We show how this organization, in addition to celebrating differences and idealizing individuality, offers a whole arsenal of features in order to secure the physical and emotional well-being of their employees (Vise and Malseed, 2005). Sports and food have become essential elements of the Google culture, and these activities are deliberately used as a means to create the impression among employees of not being at work.

However, while neo-normative control perspectives have only begun to spread their seed across the world of organizations, we can nevertheless locate a counter-movement. Far from trying to lull their employees into comfortable and imaginary worlds, certain organizations take the opposite tack: they make a proud case of not providing security, meaning or happiness to their employees. Instead, they offer high salaries and a reflexive organizational culture, perceived to resonate better with the ‘harsh reality’ in which they operate. The employees of these organizations are not only allowed to openly despise their occupation, but they are even compelled to exhibit this disdain in order to fit in. What this form of corporate culture brings to the employees is an injunction to be reflexive and masochistic. To capture this imperative we use the term ‘masochistic reflexive turn’. This term indicates that at the same time as the employees are well aware of their unfortunate situation, they derive some form of enjoyment from it. The term masochism has a long history, stemming from the writing of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and Marquis de Sade but coined, as well as translated into a medical vocabulary, by Richard von Krafft-Ebing. We will not be offering a thorough account of the dynamics of masochism in this paper. Instead we adopt the word in its most straightforward mode, simply taking masochism to mean “a perversion that is premised on a wish to suffer pain, humiliation, and even torture” (ten Bos, 2007: 545).

The purpose of this paper is to empirically illustrate and theoretically articulate the difference between organizations that employ normative and neo-normative control on the one hand, and the masochistic reflexive organization on the other. To this end we turn to the psychoanalytic notion of the symptom, arguing that organizations of the former kind relate to the symptom as something requiring domestication, such that potentially undesirable expressions that threaten to harm their corporate culture are managed, minimized, marginalized. This orientation to the symptom is rather conventional and indeed culturally ubiquitous. It relies on the rather obvious assumption that an organization, in order to render itself competitive and profitable, requires a workforce exempted from the contingencies of life: fiercely and exclusively committed, spared from severe illness, etc. For if the attention of the employees were entirely occupied by their own symptoms – such as physical or mental sickness, stress, burnout, injuries, or any other form of time-consuming self-pity – it would quite naturally run counter to the aim and mission of the competitive organization.

The masochistic reflexive organization, in contrast, attempts neither to prevent nor to ‘repress’ the symptom. Neither does this particular strategy attempt to secure the well-being of their employees, quite to the contrary, it calls on the employees to identify with

– and enjoy – their symptoms. These organizations exhibit loyalty to a perverted form of the Lacanian maxim: Enjoy your Symptom (to borrow the title from Žižek, 1992), in which the symptom is not figured as a deviant sign of illness *to be fought*, but rather as a manifestation faithful to the pervasive structures of capitalist society and thus *to be cherished*. In order to illustrate these two opposing relations toward the symptom we draw on two examples: Google and a London based consultancy firm that we refer to as Leo Ebing.

Encapsulating the Employee: Inside the Googleplex

It is usually believed that any company that wishes to be perceived as a progressive force in the New Economy has to take seriously issues related to the well-being of its employees. This may involve more standard measures such as providing medical coverage for employees and maintaining safe working conditions. But it may also include initiatives which attempt to secure the loyalty and commitment of its employees. This latter endeavour – to create the committed and reliable employee – is undoubtedly becoming more and more prevalent. It is manifested by a series of organizational interventions that include spiritualism (Bell and Taylor, 2004; Forray and Stork, 2002) and the creation of strong identities (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Roberts, 2005).

The systematic moulding of employees' attitudes and behaviours, through which an organization takes a deliberate and active part in advancing its employees' awareness of health and good moral conduct, goes back at least as far as 1914, when the *Ford Motor Company's Sociology Department* began its operation (Hooker, 1997). The inspectors of this programme, all of whom were good Ford men, searched for employees able to exhibit or demonstrate thrift, good habits, and good home conditions. The inspectors went so far in their search as to intervene "in the private lives of their workers to ensure they were living suitably stable and puritanical lifestyles" (McGillivray, 2005: 129).

The standards articulated and set forth by Ford aimed at conforming to a unitary identity. It was a rather straightforward strategy in which employees were expected to fully obey the rules and conducts promoted by the organization. This strategy, albeit somewhat blunt, points to a control perspective which not only draws on instrumental and coercive control techniques but to a greater extent relies on a particularly subtle form of normative control that makes employees in some sense complicit in exercising the mechanisms of their own control. These mechanisms function by enjoining employees to internalize the values and attitudes of a corporation as if they were the employees' very own (Barley and Kunda, 1992; Etzioni, 1964). If conventional, 'openly' normative techniques for exercising control typified Ford's era of organizational management, control mechanisms operative in contemporary work-life are ultimately more sophisticated and insidious (Jermier, 1998). The accent is no longer placed on a rigid model which promotes the idealized employee, but on a model that takes a more 'genuine' interest in the employee as idiosyncratic and individual (Fleming and Sturdy, 2007). This insidious form of control, which is disguised as a vehicle for securing or insuring each employee's happiness and individual freedom, is closely

associated to the subtle forms of health regulations that are being employed by organizations. As McGillivray points out,

[T]here has been a subsequent shift in emphasis from direct, openly paternalistic and collective forms of organizational intervention towards more subtle techniques which target the health status of the working body. Instead of the designated Fordist inspectors visiting the homes of workers to monitor compliance with puritanical discourses, contemporary medicalised notions of organizational wellness appear to constitute each worker as his or her own inspector. (2005: 135)

An emancipatory ideal and the prospect of happiness are often tied to the image of the healthy, sound and happy employee. The maxim of the model employee in any of these organizations could be formulated as: 'Fitter, Happier, More Productive' (to borrow the title from McGillivray, 2005).

Indeed, few would deny the importance of health and it is no doubt increasingly conceived as the royal road to a prosperous and happy life. Thus organizations that provide appealing and generous health services to their employees are typically seen as heroic figures, shaping an era in which corporations truly wish and strive to prolong human life. But can not the same organizations also be interpreted as unscrupulous 'ideological machines' that, by co-opting the category of *health* and incorporating it into their ideological apparatus, become even more masterful in their endeavour to govern and regulate identities? Kelly, Allender and Colquhoun have demonstrated how a large IT firm, by promoting the image of a corporate athlete, produce a "work-place identity, an ensemble of behaviours and dispositions which employees... are encouraged, *freely*, to embrace" (2007: 281). In a similar manner, Zoller (2003) demonstrates that the promotion of health in an automobile manufacturing plant was in fact ultimately predicated on managerialist values. What these accounts point to is how health has become a vital aspect to be included in managerial ideology.

The increasing organizational interest in health within corporate culture is not at all surprising given that organizations' perceived power of attraction is popularly gauged with consideration to their health programmes. For example, in order to score high on the '100 Best Companies to Work For[®] list' (published annually in *Fortune*), it is key to 'invest' in the management of health issues and to draft workplace policies that stridently reflect the extent of that investment. The 2007 winner, Google, fits neatly into this picture: *Fortune's* website depicts them as providing "free meals, swimming spa, and free doctors onsite" (100 Best Companies to Work For, 2007).

While Google has become one of the most sought-after employers, it is possibly the organization *par excellence* that has successfully obliterated any thick distinction between private and professional identity. In their crusade for better working conditions, and in the spirit of their corporate motto, "Don't Be Evil" (Vise and Malseed, 2005: 4), Google has developed a cultural programme of identification so strong that the image of the model employee and the expression of individual identity go hand in glove.

In 2006, Google paid Silicon Graphics \$319 million for the property that has become the capital manifestation of Google's enviable corporate culture: the Googleplex. With four buildings totalising 47,038m² Google has designed a complex of homeliness. With

its numerous cafés, gyms, and other exciting facilities designed for recreational activities – the Googleplex invites its employees to enjoy themselves not simply *as Google employees* but even more forcefully, *as who they are*. Aside from onsite doctors and other health-related amenities, the most appreciated privilege among Googlers is free meals (Vise and Malseed, 2005). This feature of the Googleplex was born out of the employment of Charlie Ayers, a famous cook who prior to joining Google serviced the Grateful Dead. This bonus, however, was not without an ulterior motive.

It was a perk with a purpose. It would keep people near one another and their desks; prevent them from developing poor eating habits that would diminish productivity; eliminate the time they would otherwise spend going out to lunch and worrying over plans; and create a sense of togetherness. (Vise and Malseed, 2005: 194)

Food and entertainment became central for the exertion of Google's cultural power. The goal of this perk, as Ayers explains, "was to create the illusion you were not at work but on some type of cruise and resort" (Vise and Malseed, 2005: 197). It was used, among other things, for ushering in new employees, so called 'Nooglers', who were given their first real Google-experience at the strictly social Friday event, TGIF. They were introduced to other Googlers and sat down to drink beer, eat delicious snacks and listen to music. The prevailing atmosphere at these events was described by Charlie in the following way.

There was electricity in the air. Everyone was on fire. As soon as you walked in, you were hit with this onslaught of colors, lava lamps, people riding around on scooters in the hallway, things you didn't see anywhere else. People had their dogs at work. You walked in and looked around and people wondered, 'What kind of place is this?' It was like an extension of Stanford in a lot of ways. (Vise and Malseed, 2005: 197)

By creating the impression of not being at work, and by encouraging identification with a culture based on the prolongation of university campus life, Google has rid themselves of most accusations normally held against most organizations' normative control programmes (well illustrated by the fact that they are widely considered the most attractive employer). This successful turn could be explained by their appeal to authenticity: rather than promoting a standard template to which employees are expected to converge, Google allows its employees 'to be themselves' (see Fleming and Sturdy, 2007). Moreover, the Google spirit privileges the category of 'the hobby' to that of 'work'; their corporate website claims that the only conditions for becoming a Googler are "an obsessive commitment to creating search perfection and having a great time doing it" (Google Corporate Information, 2007). The ability to 'immerse oneself' into one's own hobby, while at the same time being free to express one's own (as opposed to the employer's) 'true' beliefs and attitudes, appears to manifest the emancipatory potential of contemporary organizations. But despite the enchanting vocabulary of 'freedom' and 'emancipation' on which the neo-normative control culture draws, such 'possibilities' do not actually liberate the employee, but rather create new forms of identity control (Fleming and Sturdy, 2007). This seemingly emancipatory development could perhaps equally be appreciated as something of a more sinister artifice. As Žižek describes:

They are under the injunction to be what they are, to follow their innermost idiosyncrasies, allowed to ignore social norms of dress and behaviours (they obey only some elementary rules of

polite tolerance of each other's idiosyncrasies), they thus seem to realize a kind of proto-Socialist utopia of overcoming the opposition between alienated business, where you earn money, and the private hobby-activity that you pursue for pleasure at weekends. In a way, their job is their hobby, which is why they spend long hours at weekends in their workplace behind the computer screen. When one is paid for indulging in one's hobby, the result is that one is exposed to a superego pressure incomparably stronger than that of the good old 'Protestant work ethic'. (Žižek, 1999: 368)

From this perspective, the Googler is in no way 'freed' from superegoic pressure but, on the contrary, under the sway of an even more insidious species of normative control. But unlike traditional normative control, the injunction is not to adapt to a corporate ideal, which would sustain the notion of incommensurability between the employee's innermost private desires and those of an oppressive institution, but rather the injunction is to simply 'be yourself'. This form of neo-normative control instils and celebrates a 'norm of difference' whereby the employee is encouraged to be idiosyncratic, individual, 'edgy', and emboldened to resist the 'temptations' of being normal.

Furthermore, the injunction to 'be yourself' precipitates the indistinction between working-self and authentic-self to an even greater degree than do normative control systems. Its blend of work and recreation – an intermixture of fun and seriousness – disintegrates *Homo faber* (the working man) to allow for *Homo ludens* (the playing man). The formula of the neo-normative perspective is that work should not be considered as a necessary evil that one is forced into, but as a hobby that one pursues and which expresses the radical 'edge' of oneself. As Žižek notes:

[W]hat the superego injunction of a postmodern corporation like Microsoft targets is precisely this core of my idiosyncratic creativity – I become useless for them the moment I start losing this 'imp of perversity', the moment I lose my 'counter-cultural' subversive edge and start to behave like a 'normal' mature subject. What we are dealing with here is thus a strange alliance between the rebellious subversive core of my personality, my 'imp of perversity', and the external corporation. (1999: 368-9)

According to the standards of the 'postmodern' corporation the model employee expresses his deviant and idiosyncratic nature. He or she refuses to grow up and attempts to uphold the virtual illusion of an everlasting childhood. "Witold Gombrowicz and many of his contemporaries", Paul Virilio writes, "noted that the mark of modernity was not growth or human progress, but rather the refusal to grow up" (2000: 94).

'Immaturity and infantilism are the most effective categories for defining modern man,' Gombrowicz wrote. After the telescopic metamorphoses of Alice, we had reached the Peter Pan stage – the stage of the child stubbornly determined to escape his future. (*ibid.*)

The final aspect that needs be added to the logic of neo-normative control is that of infantilization. Pretending not to be at work 'but on some type of cruise and resort' and to drive scooters indoors, seems to correspond well with Virilio's Peter Pan world and Žižek's 'imp of perversion'. To take it one step further it may be suggested that by developing a cultural identity predicated on a postmodern norm of difference, in which employees are pushed to exhibit their 'rebellious subversive core', the organization becomes an infantilizing milieu. It sets forth a fantasy-world that encapsulates and comforts the employee and at the same time protects it from the mean and ruthless

world of capitalism. Yet another illustration, testifying to this logic, is that Google have installed a replica of SpaceShipOne and a dinosaur skeleton in the Googleplex.

Gimping at Leo Ebing

Far from Google and what might be said to be a promotion of something like the Peter Pan world of never-neverland, we find a London based consulting firm, which we will refer to as Leo Ebing for purposes of confidentiality. If Google represents the optimistic view that inner desires and employees' idiosyncrasies can be married with work, Leo Ebing represents the opposite – work is *not* the royal road to emancipation, but rather a necessary evil, a *sine qua non*, for dwelling in a capitalistic world. Rather than preventing illness by providing a healthy work environment within the Googleplex etc., Leo Ebing illustrates the counter-strategy of actually incorporating illness as an element acknowledged as inextricably embedded within the very nature of their operations.

Leo Ebing is a high profile consultancy firm operating in London. But in contrast to many of their competitors, which often rank high on the '100 best companies to work for' list (BCG, KPMG, and Ernst and Young are all included), Leo Ebing does not provide any perks for their employees. Instead they provide high salaries and generous bonuses.

This is not to suggest, however, that Leo Ebing utilizes no incentives aside from financial benefits. Indeed, they offer something else – they offer reflexivity. As an employee of this firm one is not compelled to believe or make illusions. On the contrary, as our interview indicates it becomes difficult to make a career in the firm if one does not acquire a 'healthy' dose of self-hatred and subscribe to a corporate cynicism. Those who enter the organization and identify too much with their occupation, not buying into the corporate cynicism, are often considered less intelligent and subject to mockery.

In this section we offer an empirical vignette, the basis of which being a number of interviews conducted with a senior consultant at Leo Ebing who we will call Casper. Casper is in his late twenties and has in the course of the last four years, smoothly and rapidly climbed the corporate career ladder. At the time of the interview he was considered a member of the 'management side' of the firm. Leo Ebing has no clear 'official' demarcation between management and employees, but given that Casper both leads major projects and partakes in the recruitment process, he would fall into the former of these categories.

Employing the vignette style of data presentation imposes clear limits to generalizability (see Costas and Fleming, 2007; Thomas and Davies, 2005). And while Casper's accounts are in fact expressions of his own personal experiences, they should not be regarded as marginalized or odd. The present authors have met and spent time with five other Leo Ebing employees and their reflections correspond, by and large, with those of Casper's.

The accounts that follow are by no means encouraging or cheerful. Casper makes no secret of the fact that he despises his job. He even goes as far as to suggest that his relation to Leo Ebing is based on a mutual denial of the other as subject. He explains his view of the firm:

I see it as a loosely tied together congregation of people who don't really like what they do but are united in terms of their purposes. They need to stay there for a certain amount of time because the incentive structure is built in such a way that you will earn an optimal amount of money through staying in the firm. Most employees have an exit strategy, but consent to staying for maybe 7 or 8 years, and that incentive system is the sole reason why I stay there or why other people stay there. But we don't really have feelings towards our organization, only towards our work which we of course hate.

Perhaps the most striking difference between Google and Leo Ebing is that the latter makes no attempt to produce a strong corporate culture to which employees could relate. In clear contrast to the Googlian ambition of creating an alluring corporate culture that ventures to pamper employees into complacency, Casper describes a radically opposed picture: when asked if Leo Ebing's corporate culture expressed concern for employees' wellbeing, Casper responds: 'No, not in the slightest bit. It's almost to the contrary'.

In this respect it seems as though the only cultural incentive for working at Leo Ebing is an individualistic and 'rational' desire to gain money – but this is not the full story. Out of the deliberate attempt to ignore organizational identity regulations and creations of strong corporate cultures is borne a parallel, more informally based, culture. As Casper explains:

There is almost like this latent culture has been created whereby we pull jokes and make fun of the fact that we are being exploited by our company. So you might call it a cynical project but it revolves around the fact that we... try and alleviate our sensation of being exploited, the fact that we have to work 80 to 90 hours per week, sometimes 100 hours per week. It becomes important to try to alleviate the feeling of being exploited by pulling jokes about it. Basically saying stuff like you know, 'My life is shit... but you know... what the hell'. I'm still allowed to direct criticism against the firm. It's a very free environment in that sense.

A compelling example of this masochistic bent concerns the distribution and reception of a corporate e-mail comparing consultants with prostitutes. This e-mail contained 26 points, each of which would allegedly apply to both consultants and prostitutes. For example, 'You are not proud of what you do'; 'It is difficult to have a family'; 'Your pimp encourages drinking and you become addicted to drugs to ease the pain'. This e-mail was not spread behind the back of management. In fact, it was addressed to senior and junior consultants alike. Casper's own response to this e-mail was positive. He thought that some of the points were apt descriptions of his work-life.

There are some that stuck very well, because they fit perfectly to how we feel in our firm, 'you're not proud of what you do' – I'm not proud of what I do. I know that it's not a meaningful job. I don't really give more to society than what I take back, I don't nurture any personal interest in what I do for a living –on the contrary, I despise it. I can't respect myself for what I do in the slightest.

This e-mail shows how masochism is closely related to humour, self-mockery and cynicism. As ten Bos argues: "[h]umour is the masochist option: by gladly submitting

yourself to the laws and rules of the organization where you work, you show nothing less than humorous contempt for the world you find yourself in” (2007: 551). But this e-mail, even though it would be considered an extreme breach of political correctness at most organizations, is rather mild in comparison to other masochistic expressions at Leo Ebing. One such example was how junior consultants, in particular newcomers, were labelled ‘gimps’. The meaning of this word was new to Casper.

This is a word I’d never come across before, but if you have seen *Pulp Fiction*, the line ‘bring out the gimp’ alludes to a person who is a human being, but who is treated as a subhuman species, almost like an animal. He’s really situated at the lowest rung of the food chain, a non-person that you don’t care about; he’s dressed in leather, some form of erotic attire to further emphasize his subjugation. They bring him out of a cage to fulfil lots of seedy purposes. As a project manager you often talk about newly employed like ‘those are my gimps’, meaning they are used to carry out lots of mindless, boring tasks – often working more than hundred hours a week. And they will say the same, like you know, ‘I’m just gimping right now’. It has become a verb, carrying a specific and precise meaning that is well understood by all employees. A typical conversation between new employees could go something like this: what are you doing right know? – ‘I’m gimping away’.

Gimping, pimping, and to whore have become salient metaphorical verbs frequently used for describing the professional activities at Leo Ebing. While the use of these rather obscene words would be banned, or at least undesired, in most organizations, Leo Ebing makes no gesture to improve their political correctness – quite the contrary: working for Leo Ebing should not be associated with attaining happiness or staying healthy. They neither offer nor organize any extracurricular activities which would aim to create a stronger sense of belonging. Nor do they provide gym cards or the opportunity to participate in physical and/or recreational activities such as sports. They simply encourage a more or less hedonistic way of living, in which the consumption of fatty food and alcohol is integral. In Casper’s own words:

As anecdotal information, when I joined the company I gained 10 kilos over 5 weeks, so that’s 2 kilos per week in body fat. This is of course extreme, but it is one of the compensations that we can indulge freely in our firm. We can expense late-night dinners and lots of alcohol, and the extent to which we would do this is informally very much encouraged. On my first project we went out on expensive dinners every night and had lots of drinks and alcohol. A further piece of the puzzle is that, after you work 16 or 17 hours a day, paradoxically when you come home you can’t get any sleep. Even though you might feel extremely tired, your mind is going around overtime, the synapses are firing away without cessation, short-circuited if you wish. Thoughts keep turning in your head without being able to stop. So after a couple of days, I said I’m unable to fall a sleep, and my colleagues said – well the best trick is when you come home, that is to the hotel of course, go over to the minibar and pull out all those little whisky bottles and then down them in one go. That usually helps. So drinking, even alcoholism, is very much encouraged in the company. Remember this is after having been out on dinner drinking, probably half a bottle of wine, aperitifs, and maybe an avec to the coffee. We are usually quite drunk when we try to sleep anyway, they were encouraging me to then down those whisky bottles on top of that, to drown the senses and doze off.

Against the gloomy canvas that Casper paints, it is difficult to comprehend the charm of working, or gimping, for a non-subject such as Leo Ebing. However, he points to two advantages. The first is that Leo Ebing allows for a separation between the private and the corporate self. He refers to organizations with strong cultural programmes, such as Google, as being even worse off in that they attempt to enmesh the private self with the

company self. But in spite of Casper's claim, Leo Ebing's distinction between the private and corporate spheres remains in fact hypothetical or, by and large, illusory.

When you join the organization, you basically tell yourself that you will maintain a distinction between the professional self and the private, and I'm allowed to privately hate myself for what I do as a professional, it's ok, I don't have to pretend I like it. But still I've signed a contract in a way, meaning that in order to be able to feel that, I have to work my ass off. And to some extent, after a while you realise that the separation of the professional and private is an illusion. This private part which has been sacred and secure from any corporate interest, that kind of illusion soon dies away because you realise that you spend at least 80-90 hours per week at work so you don't have any time anyway to enjoy the fact that you maintained a private identity unaffected by the corporate culture. The only time I have free is for sleep, so why do I even care about the illusion of my private self, what's the point of it if I never have time to manifest it... I just work.

The second advantage is that out of the miasma of total cynicism emanates a form of enjoyment that Casper refers to as a 'surreal perverse enjoyment'. This sensation he describes in the following manner:

It never feels like a positive feeling, it always feels like shit but it's the same with some form of really perverted pleasure, I personally have never done anything that really perverted, that I felt very bad about after... But I can just imagine if I were to obtain sexual satisfaction from having sex with corpses or something like that, I reckon I would feel quite bad about it. Like if I were to perform an act, something utterly tabooed in society; the kind of feeling I'd be most likely to feel afterwards, after I've ejaculated and had my initial sense of pleasure, afterwards I imagine you just feel this kind of emptiness, in association with some form of guilt. Like I've done something that is forbidden and that I shouldn't have done because it was futile and pointless anyway, and I just feel dirty. That kind of feeling, the emptiness, that it was completely pointless, why did I do it, and also it just feels wrong, that kind of feeling is what I feel like the whole time I'm at work.

It follows then that when pressed, Casper actually considers both of these supposed advantages as false: the first is merely illusory, the second is perverse. We tease out at least two salient points from these confessions. The first of these is a great degree of reflexivity and how this trait renders possible the opportunity of freely expressing oneself. This 'freedom' clearly sets Leo Ebing apart from corporations employing normative or neo-normative forms of cultural control in that the former gives free rein to expressing ones discontent. Indeed, it is of great importance to Casper that his employer does not try to conceal its 'inherently' unethical and perverse nature.

The second salient point, intimately linked to the first, is a masochistic undercurrent to Casper's confession. In freely expressing oneself (with any honesty), one is forced to exhibit some masochistic tendencies, such as hating oneself, hating one's job and so on. In this respect it is not so much that the employees are 'free' to express their self-hatred, but rather that they are compelled to do so. What this amounts to, then, is that Leo Ebing, far from being freed from ideology, utilizes an ideology in which reflexivity and masochism are integral. A revealing example of this is how Casper, together with a few colleagues, ridiculed another 'duped' colleague, who identified with his professional role.

I mean there is this Danish guy who really appears to appreciate what he does, and I would totally make fun of him, like – how can you really believe that you are doing something even remotely meaningful, for the economy and society. Its really ludicrous, The only reason why we are here on this project is because some guy in senior management has a personal relationship with another guy in the senior management of this firm, and they decided over a bottle of expensive wine that

the other guy would pay out from the corporate budget to send over a few gimps, print out some overheads and do some meaningless work, and he was forced to agree. I guess he felt a bit nervous since the sheer act of agreeing to that fact, disturbs his whole worldview. His identity as a consultant was a little shattered, he felt uncomfortable about having chosen a lifestyle that is meaningless... and utterly cynical. But he privately couldn't really accept this fact, so he would outwardly agree and joke about it but you could feel he privately continued believing what he did; you know that we *add value* as consultants and such crap. But this kind of guy is a minority in the organization, there are very few who really believe in what they do. Also, they are constantly being ridiculed, to the point of harassment, so in the end they typically leave out of free will and start working for one of our competitors. They are also the kind of people who won't get anywhere in our organization, most of them have been around for ages without even the slightest hint of a promotion. Because the directors in the company don't really feel that they are of the right calibre, you need a certain dose of cynicism and distance to what you do in order to succeed in the firm.

What Casper's account points to more than anything is an encouragement to indulge in the vulgarity or the triteness perceived as inherent to their line of work, and furthermore that this very dwelling on such vulgarity nonetheless renders upon employees a sense of gratification. To embrace as a source of pleasure an evaluative disposition, normally considered crass or misanthropic – if not a sign of illness, cannot be considered anything short of perversion. Consultants seem to organize their own self-humiliation, or better still, they seem to organize their transgressions of the norm that caring about oneself matters. By putting themselves in harms way and reflecting upon these transgressions, they seem to receive a perverse satisfaction in the defiance of the common norm of self-preservation.

The Lacanian Symptom: From Meaning to Enjoyment

Thus far we have painted two contrasting canvasses of how organizations relate to normative ideals and transgressions. The richness of the cases prevents any reductionistic or simplistic theoretical explanation. The purpose of having fleshed out a detailed and thick description of these cases has been to display the complex and, at times, contradictory nature of our two broad categories. This means that we have no intention to reduce the empirical richness of the cases to any subsumptive causal explanations, such as the theoretical notion of the symptom (by either domesticating it, or cherishing it). However, by juxtaposing the cases and theoretically articulating some theoretical logics, we attempt to go beyond a radical hermeneutic approach (Glynos and Howarth, 2007).

This comparative analysis, we assert, is possible for at least two reasons. First, they all exhibit a minimal strategic deliberation in that each cultural program is specifically crafted to harness the affective side of identification. This means that we are not merely dealing with arbitrary control perspectives, accidentally present at the respective sites. The second reason as to why a comparative analysis would be possible is that each culture is a distinct response, articulated by way of dissociating oneself from something obsolete or oppressive. At Google it is a response to the rigid normative templates that fail to respect the individual as he or she really is. At Leo Ebing we witness a response against infantilization, a reaction against the belief that work can bring about a full identity, such that the employee can become him or herself (as at Google).

We would thus like to make clear that the theoretical discussion, being the focus of this latter part of the paper, is a tentative approach that aims to provide an initial articulation of the empirical problematization. In other words, we have given precedence to our empirical exposition so that no theoretical interpretation, including our own, should be taken as a given.

By reading these examples against the Lacanian notion of the symptom we aim to contribute to the overall discussion of control. More specifically, taking the symptom as our central explanatory category brings a number of commonly downplayed issues to the surface, including affect, enjoyment, suffering and fantasy.

Before we go into detail of how the symptom is situated in each of these cultures, let us first give a short description of how they, in our view, differ. In short, it may be said that the first of these organizing principles – and here we refer most notably to Google – aim to secure commitment by offering an ideal premised on the social respect and recognition of individual difference. This means that employees are encouraged to ‘be themselves’ and to exhibit a ‘radical edge’. The second organizing principle, which stands in stark contrast to the first, tries to secure commitment by offering reflexivity and a paradoxical form of masochistic enjoyment. In firms which would apply to this latter logic, employees are not only allowed to direct criticism against their employer but are in fact compelled to wage such criticism. In this respect they are ushered into a culture in which the mandated expression of mutual self-respect and mutual dignity is banned.

The remaining part of this paper aims to theoretically capture the difference between these two cultures. While we acknowledge significant differences within each of these categories, we argue that they may be separable through distinct respective orientations towards the symptom. More specifically, we suggest that while corporate cultures rely on normative and neo-normative mechanisms of control aim to domesticate or ‘gentrify’ the symptom, organizations whose mechanisms evince what we have called the ‘masochistic reflexive’ turn, such as Leo Ebing, offer a culture in which the injunction is to ‘enjoy the symptom’.

In order to flesh out our argument, we turn to Jacques Lacan and readings of his work developed by Slavoj Žižek. In his account we find a conceptualization of the symptom that greatly differs from those proffered by traditional medicine and the psychoanalytic work of Sigmund Freud.

By combining Freud’s discovery of the unconscious with structural linguistics, Lacan sets forth a reading of the symptom that significantly expands its traditional meaning. For Lacan, the symptom does not simply represent a sign of illness. Rather it assumes a more universal character, reflecting fundamental processes of meaning production. In his earlier development of the symptom, during the mid 50’s with the publication of ‘The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious’, Lacan draws on Roman Jakobson’s two polar figures of language: metonymy and metaphor (Jakobson and Halle, 1971: 76), arguing that desire is equated with the former and the symptom with the latter (Lacan, 2006: 439).

If metonymy is associated with combination and contexture, the metaphor is related to selection and substitution (Jakobson and Halle, 1971: 60). In Lacan's adoption of this distinction, considerable focus is put on how chains of significations are either expanded through metonymy or halted and retroactively organized through the metaphor. The metaphor is thereby a key theoretical construct for understanding how the potentially endless formations of signifying chains, without any intrinsic or internal distribution of meaning, become fixed and organized.

The symptom should thus be conceived as *a signifier that enters into the place where the signifying chain breaks down*. Žižek provides a compelling example to help us understand this rather dense formulation in an analysis of anti-Semitism. In his example the Jew is the symptom of fascism – more specifically, the Jew is held responsible for the inherent failure of attempts to establish a coherent meaning around the notion (or signifier) of Fascism. He explains: “The Jew is the means for Fascism, of taking into account, of representing its own impossibility: in its positive presence, it is only the embodiment of the ultimate impossibility of the totalitarian project – of its immanent limit” (Žižek, 1989: 127). The Jew, or more accurately the construction of the Jew, is thus the necessary invention of Fascist discourse by which Fascism becomes able to gloss over its inherent impossibility.

Against this background, one may suggest that the Jew is to Fascism what the gimp is to both Leo Ebing and Google. It is a necessary construct for establishing the corporate cultures of both organizations. It is the image which metaphorically overdetermines the effect of the barren nature of capitalism. But whereas consultants working for Leo Ebing identify with the gimp in claiming that the inevitable condition of work is exploitation and domination, Google denies the gimp in claiming that no asymmetry between the working self and existential inwardness exists or ought to exist.

These opposed orientations towards the symptom are illustrated in numerous ways. For instance, Google's deliberate attempt to create an illusion of not being at work may be seen as an attempt to protect their employees against the darker shades of capitalism. To take it one step further, one may suggest that Google, in order to preserve its uncontaminated culture, has to keep the pernicious gimp at a safe distance. If it fails, the gimp will open up an unbridgeable chasm that exposes as an illusion the very ideology on which the corporate identity is built.

By reading Google's operations alongside their specific orientation to the symptom, we cast a new light (or perhaps a shadow) on their corporate culture. Their obsession with recreational activities, healthy food and numerous sport activities are all illustrations of their tenacious project of keeping the symptom at bay. In short, the smouldering gimp that threatens at any moment to emerge from the ashes must effectively be domesticated.

At Leo Ebing the situation is quite different. Here the gimp, far from being the undesired symptom that must be excluded and concealed, becomes the main image for employee identification. What is perhaps most important in relation to this identification is how the process paradoxically effects a perverse kind of enjoyment, this last feature

illustrating a point which corresponds well with Lacan's later elaboration of the symptom.

Lacan's later development foregrounds the affective aspects of the symptom, arguing that it is a pure *jouissance* directed to no one (Lacan cited in Evans, 1996: 189). In this respect the symptom is conceived as "a real kernel of enjoyment, which persists as a surplus and returns through all attempts to domesticate it, to gentrify it..., to dissolve it by means of explication, of putting-into-words its meaning" (Žižek, 1989: 69). Lacan's re-orientation led him to consider the symptom's possibility for organizing enjoyment. But whenever Lacan speaks of enjoyment, one should not draw the hasty conclusion that enjoyment designates a pure and unproblematic form of pleasure. Instead, for Lacan, enjoyment or *jouissance* must be counterposed to pleasure. These ideas, developed from his reading of Freud's 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', rest on the important distinction: that between pleasure, as limited to the functioning of the pleasure principle, and enjoyment, as that which diverges from the command of the pleasure principle. More specifically, pleasure is always bound up with rational calculation – between expected pleasure on the one hand, and expected suffering on the other. *Jouissance*, in contrast, knows no such limits – it contains within itself a radical investment which, quite likely, runs counter to the subject's well-being (Evans, 1996: 92; Fink, 1995: 60). *Jouissance* is in this sense eminently transgressive. It aims to transgress the Law "and introduces an erotics that is above morality" (Lacan, 1992: 84).

Google's strenuous attempts to offer a balanced, healthy and pleasurable life to their employees are indicative of how they refuse to go beyond a certain limit of the pleasure principle. Even though their practices, such as driving scooters in the hallway, exhibit a transgression of some sort, it is nevertheless confined within a wider discourse of controlled pleasure. This means that the alleged 'craziness' at the Googleplex, however extreme it may seem from the outside, is a well attuned strategy that is articulated within the co-ordinates of the pleasure principle. As is evident from our earlier empirical discussion, all perks and activities, even the more seemingly transgressive, are deliberate attempts to create a stronger sense of belonging.

At Leo Ebing, in contrast, we face a very different orientation. By subverting the Googlian proclamation that no contradiction exists between work-identity and existential inwardness, Leo Ebing goes beyond Google in that they transgress the Law all the way, so to speak. It implies a form of reflexive eroticisation in which employees' acts stand in an immediate relation to the obscene underside. In contrast, this close encounter with the obscene underside of domination and exploitation is what the Googlian philosophy tries so persistently to disavow. For Leo Ebing the naked and terrifying encounter is with capitalistic work-relations but unlike the Googlian disavowal, enjoyment is derived from embodying the harsh symbolic space carved out by such an encounter.

But even though it may be suggested that these transgressive organizations display more honest and direct relations to their terrifying or obscene undersides, it is nevertheless the case that these means of incorporating the possible erotic fantasy are based largely on American pop culture (e.g. the gimp from *Pulp Fiction*), which is to say that the encounter has already reserved its place in the space of fantasy (see Žižek, 1989). To

identify with the gimp, or to give free range to perverse assaults, is not necessarily a transgression into something new or unknown, but rather a transgression into a fantasy that is antecedently produced or somehow already available.

But how pervasive are these transgressive organizations? While the practices of Leo Ebing certainly fit this description well, it should still be considered a rare exception in a world where organizations' conventional normative ideals, widely based on the categories of the 'ethical' or 'healthy' employee, still rule. But there certainly exist other movements within our late-capitalist society that indicate the ascent of the masochistic reflexive turn. One such example is the Pro-ana movement who tries to re-articulate the meaning of anorexia, arguing that it should not be considered a suffered illness but rather a volunteered lifestyle. In a similar fashion to what we experience at Leo Ebing, this movement attempts neither to domesticate nor gentrify the obscene underside of society's obsession with the image of the slim young woman, but rather tries to celebrate it. By employing terms such as 'thinspiration' and glorifying the act of starvation, this movement has fashioned the image of the undernourished woman into a prime ideal. Another movement which applies to this logic is the subculture of barebacking (Dean, forthcoming). By calling into question the norm of the 'heterosexual homo', that is, the homosexual allegiant to heterosexual norms of safe-sex practices, a sub-culture emerges in which sex without the use of condoms, perversely imbued with the concomitant risk of catching HIV, is considered a political contestation against the homogenization and domestication of the homosexual man.

Conclusion

In this paper we have explored organizations that go beyond normative perspectives of organizing work. These organizations, we have argued, provide a distinct corporate culture in which (neo-) normative perspectives for exerting control are supplanted by the aims of organizational cultures in which perversions and transgressions are encouraged.

In order to theoretically separate these two forms of organizing we have turned to Lacan's conceptualization of the symptom. From this reading we suggest that while organizations that utilize (neo-) normative controls intend to domesticate or 'gentrify' the symptom, organizations that cultivate a masochistic reflexivity induce an enjoyment of the symptom.

In our analysis of (neo-) normative cultures and masochistic reflexive cultures we have suggested that a closer investigation into the complex affairs of affect may shed new light on how control is exercised. However, we have consciously tried to avoid blackboxing the concept of affect, instead trying to disentangle its content. In this regard, we have presented three interrelated concepts: the symptom, pleasure and enjoyment. By having related these concepts to our empirical accounts we have attempted to show how the organization of work is also the organization of affect (pleasure and enjoyment). Moreover, we have argued that the notion of the symptom is a viable category for understanding how this pleasure/enjoyment is mediated.

Indeed, our case studies allow for more than one reading. For example, transgression does not only appear at Leo Ebing. Indeed, also Google and Sunray (see Fleming and Sturdy, 2007) celebrate the notion or ideal of the radical transgressor. An important difference, however, is that an organization like Google would only allow transgressions which do not fundamentally call the corporate culture into question. In other words, while Google's relation to transgression is closely associated with establishing an illusion of not being at work, Leo Ebing's relation to transgression indicates that it does not attempt to conceal its obscene underside – namely, the brute conditions of capitalist work-relations.

Against these arguments we suggest that Leo Ebing displays an even more sophisticated version of how to conjoin working-self with existential inwardness than does Google, namely by embracing the incommensurability of this key relation and simply sacrificing the latter term in the conjunction – but in so doing yielding a sense of enjoyment. It resonates quite well with Wagner's famous words, from Parsifal: "the wound is healed only by the spear that smote you" (Žižek, 1993: 165), or better still, what Žižek says apropos of enjoyment in sacrifice: "I'm prepared to sacrifice everything *but that*' – but what? The very gesture of self-sacrifice" (Žižek, 1993: 214).

In clear contrast to Google, Leo Ebing's 'reflexive masochistic' cultural model venture to cherish this very act of self-sacrifice. To this ideology it becomes imperative to maintain the mutual disavowal of the other as subject (regarding employer vis-à-vis employee) so that the lived experience is not perceived as a pain deliberately inflicted by the organization. Leo Ebing thus obliterates itself, effectively turning itself transparent, into a mere reflection of the cruelty embedded in the pervasive structures of our time.

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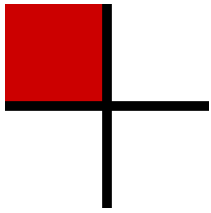
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Toward a Sinthomatology of Organization?*

Casper Hoedemaekers

abstract

In this paper I attempt to further the emerging Lacanian-inspired study of management and organization by introducing his notion of the *sinthome*. The *sinthome* must be understood as a necessary support of subjectivity rather than a pathological formation. In the Lacanian conceptualization of subjectivity, it enables the registers of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real to be knotted together in a specific way, and thereby regulates the distribution of *jouissance* that takes shape within their 'knot'. Therefore, the *sinthome* can be thought of as the specific constellation of the registers in a socio-historical context, by organizing *jouissance* and giving a superficial sheen of consistency to the subject. It reproduces itself in the registers and ensures the superficial coherence of an ideological discourse. I argue that the three functions by which the *sinthome* reproduces itself in the registers, namely consistency, hole and existence, provide a fruitful and novel theorization of how subjectivity, discourse and *jouissance* are entangled in organizational contexts.

Introduction

We can conceive of philosophy and art as involved in the reorganization of the elements of our everyday experience, in breaking away from the normalized categories that structure our experience and re-grouping it in such a way that it allows new insights to emerge. Deleuze (2004) has argued that in this sense, they operate akin to the symptomatologist, who re-orders the symptoms that he or she observes, thereby creating a new clinical picture. The new symptomatological totality, the freshly constructed 'illness', captures the reality of remedy better than before. If we view the philosopher or artist in this light, as a symptomatologist, we thereby accord their work with the possibility of transcending the normal, the unquestioned reproduction of reality. It embodies the possibility of reflexively addressing the processes by which our experience is constituted, by re-signifying the symptoms of our daily lives.

As a discipline focused on providing a 'talking cure' (Freud, 1993) to analysands, psychoanalysis has been traditionally concerned with symptoms and their effects within the human unconscious. In recent years, the work of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has stood out in particular, and has been instrumental in pointing out the

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complex interrelations between subjectivity, language, meaning and enjoyment. His work has been influential not only in psychoanalytic practice but also in many disciplines in the social sciences, in which it has served to point out the prevalent 'symptoms' of subjectivity enmeshed in capitalist society. Such use of psychoanalysis is not aimed at a pathological subject, but at the pathology of the system in which a subject comes into being.

In his 23rd seminar, Lacan introduces what he calls the 'sinthome', which he distinguishes from the notion of the symptom, which steers his focus further away from a pathological view of the subject in analysis. With the sinthome, Lacan points to the attachment of the subject to a particular form of being, which is tied up with their *jouissance*. He presents the sinthome on the basis of a detailed reading of the work of James Joyce. With its evident wordplay, Joyce's work provides very rich material for Lacan and he asks a question of it that is diametrically opposed to that of traditional literary analysis. Rather than looking at how the singularity of James Joyce is reflected in his work, he looks at how his work as a singularity has impacted upon his subjectivity. In his literary oeuvre, Lacan argues, we can find Joyce's sinthome, that which gives him consistency. The sinthome must be seen as that which gives support to him as a subject. By doing this, Lacan further builds on his notion of the subject as defined by a 'knot' between the different dimensions of language, only now extending this knot from a three-fold to a four-fold one. The sinthome comes to represent a regular feature of the Lacanian subject, rather than a pathological symptom that the analytic process must seek to cure. The sinthome becomes an indispensable part of the subject.

I will argue in this paper that management and organization studies have much to gain from this notion of the sinthome, particularly the study of managerial discourses and the role of enjoyment within them. The potential contribution of Lacan's work for organization studies has been considered in more detail elsewhere (Arnaud and Vanheule, 2007; Böhm, 2006; Jones and Spicer, 2005; Roberts, 2005;), but I will argue that the concept of the sinthome can usefully supplement the existing Lacanian-inspired research on organization by foregrounding the singularity by which particular forms of subjectivity relate to specific ideologies. As a concept, the sinthome aims to capture a distinctiveness that reproduces itself in the various dimensions of subjectivity in a discursive context. Therefore it provides an analytical starting point for understanding why subjects are caught in different trajectories of desire and enjoyment, and why they react differently to power. This paper therefore strives to add a new dimension to the understanding of subjectivity that is put forward by Lacanian work on organization, and other perspectives that engage with the interstices of being, discourse, desire and enjoyment at work.

In the following section (2), I will discuss the basic premises of Lacan's theory of the subject and the consequences that it has for understanding organizations. I will also expound how Lacan's work has been used in organization studies up to now, and how it connects to other critical approaches. In the subsequent section (3), I will outline the concept of the sinthome based on my reading of seminar XXIII. Here, I will also sketch Lacan's discussion of Joyce, paying specific attention to the distinction that Lacan makes between the sinthome and the symptom. After this (4), I will discuss how the concept of the sinthome affects the way in which the registers of the Real, the Symbolic

and the Imaginary may be used in organizational research. I will illustrate this with examples of organizational life that may be a starting point for such a *sinthomatic* reading.

Lacan and Organization Studies

Lacan's work has not been a major theoretical force in organization studies, but its influence has been growing rapidly over the last few years. In part, this is due to the groundbreaking work in political theory, philosophy and cultural analysis by writers such as Slavoj Žižek and Ernesto Laclau, who have both drawn substantially on Lacan's ideas to analyze contemporary forms of ideology. In the field of organization studies, the work of these writers has been taken up to analyze processes of determination, resistance and enjoyment (Böhm and De Cock, 2005; Contu, 2002; Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Johnsen, Muhr and Pedersen, forthcoming; Kosmala and Herrbach, 2006; Willmott and Contu, 2007). Others have engaged more directly with the work of Lacan, thereby taking an approach that is focused more on the level of the subject rather than a field of ideology (Arnaud, 2002, 2003; Arnaud and Vanheule, 2007; Cederström and Bloom, forthcoming; Driver, 2005; Jones and Spicer, 2005; Roberts, 2005).

Considering the generally acknowledged difficulty of Lacan's writings and transcribed seminars, how can we conceive of this surge of interest in his work in organization studies? I suggest that there are four mutually related reasons for why the study of organizations and management may benefit from Lacan's insights. First, it offers a highly developed understanding of subjectivity without resorting to a transcendental, essentialist or humanist version of the self. It represents the subject as characterized rather by a lack of content, and the ways in which this lack is continually filled in brings into play a number of subjective processes. Lacan hereby presents us with a sophisticated and useful manner of approaching the study of subjectivity. Second, discourse is linked into subjectivity in a way that evades the inside/outside division, by means of the concept of the Other. As something alien and Other, language fills in the lack of content in the subject, and thereby also gives a place in the social order. However, this determination is not total in the sense that a part of the subject resists the codifying influences of language. So although the subject is dependent on the linguistic Other for its existence, there is always something missing from this relationship. This provides a rich conceptual framework for the analysis of complex relations between the subject and the organization. Third, for Lacan subjectivity fluctuates between processes of determination, identification and desire. This provides a basis for understanding these different processes alongside each other, endemic to subjectivity. In Lacanian theory, these processes are all related to the notion of lack. The core of subjectivity that remains unaffected by language is a reminder to the subject that it is devoid of substantive content, and this causes feelings of anxiety about its existence. It tries to alleviate this by fabricating narrative identities (identification) and by means of fascination with fictional objects that promise to remedy this fundamental shortcoming in itself (desire). The subject must therefore be seen as an entity that embraces its own subjection, but that continuously escapes this subjection at the same time. This is an appealing conceptualization with respect to the complex nature of resistance and determination in

organizations. And fourth, Lacan's conception of subjectivity is intimately linked to the notion of enjoyment or *jouissance*, which is separate from the ordering function of language. *Jouissance* must be thought of as a form of enjoyment that is simultaneously laced with pain, in the sense that it overwhelms the subject. It confronts it with something traumatic that it cannot put into words. As such, it commands a certain fascination from the subject, and compels it to 'enjoy'. With respect to this notion of *jouissance*, a Lacanian approach to organization may highlight the ways in which people invite particular forms of workplace exploitation that put into play trajectories of enjoyment (Cederström and Grassman, in this issue).

The Lacanian subject is a complex and multifarious concept, and it rests heavily on the conceptualization of the three registers that Lacan uses, namely the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. These three comprise the subject for Lacan, and each of these brings out different dimensions of subjectivity. I suggest that this threefold structure provides a prime starting point for linking much of the extant work in organization studies on power and resistance to Lacan's conception of the subject. Establishing this linkage will highlight not only how subjectivity becomes determined in organizational settings (control perspective), and how it resists or subverts these tendencies (resistance perspective), but will also include how it may re-signify, desire and enjoy them. In the following section, I will first examine each of the registers in turn, thereby drawing out the main insights into subjective processes that are brought to light. Second, I will describe the insights that each register brings out with respect to organization, and which specific concepts associated with that register can be fruitfully used in organizational analysis. Third, I will highlight the ways in which this has been achieved up to now in Lacanian studies of organization, and fourthly I will consider how other approaches have brought out sympathetic insights.

The Symbolic

The Symbolic register must be understood as the basic structure of language, consisting of the network of signifiers in which the subject finds itself. As that which provides the 'content' of subjectivity, the Symbolic register points to the signifying effects that language has on the subject's being. It represents the signifiers on which we rely as subjects to think, to act and to communicate. These processes are largely unconscious, and this idea provides the starting point for Lacanian psychoanalysis. In this respect, the notion of the Symbolic must be seen as largely similar to that of discourse, as it is used in the Foucauldian tradition. However, I suggest that there is one main difference. The Symbolic must be understood as incomplete, failing to account fully for the subject, and thereby differs from the subject of discourse in the poststructuralist sense (Alcorn, 1994). Discourse, in the Lacanian sense, is structured around a subversive core, which threatens to undermine its integrity. A set of signifiers in which a subject comes into being gives rise to certain significations, but these are not singular or even consistently meaningful. Alternative meanings may surface from time to time, and signifiers may play off each other to render entirely new meanings.

The main contribution of this analytic of the Symbolic is to point towards the ways in which language renders itself meaningful to the subject, and in what ways it enlists it into a social order. This must be seen as a fundamentally structuralist element in

Lacan's work. However, what makes the concept of the Symbolic unique, and what distinguishes it clearly from other traditions in critical organizational analysis such as ideology critique and Foucauldian discourse analysis, is the place that Lacan gives it in relation to the other registers. For Lacan, the Symbolic fails to totalize the subject, and this failure becomes a constitutive force for other subjective processes such as desire, identification and *jouissance*, all of which go beyond the signifiers of language in some way.

The Lacanian conceptualization of the Symbolic includes the concepts of metonymy and metaphor as the main operations of language (taken from Jakobson), and the notion of the quilting point as a signifier that ties a field of signification together. In the wake of Žižek (1989), this latter concept has proved fruitful in the analysis of organization, in the sense that management discourses can be seen to carry deep paradoxes at the heart of them. This can be seen for instance in the work of Jones and Spicer (2005), who show that the field of entrepreneurship relies heavily on the signifier of the entrepreneur, while at the same time struggling to give any kind of substantive content to it. Arnaud (2002) provides another reading of the Symbolic for organizations, in which he stresses the ways in which language provides a grid of authority relations in which employees come to exist in specific organizational contexts. The theme of the Symbolic field of discourse as structured around an impossibility also bears on the work in organization studies that draws from Laclau and Mouffe's work on discourse theory (Contu, 2002; Contu and Willmott, 2005; 2007). This work highlights the ways in which discursive fields in organization are characterized by competing discourses that attempt to hegemonize it. At the same time, at the heart of every discursive field a certain impossibility can be seen that prevents this hegemony from occurring fully. This impossibility is then at the same the impossibility of hegemonization and the possibility of radical change. As I already argued above, this discourse-theoretical intervention relies heavily on the Lacanian notion of the Symbolic and could be easily extended with an analysis of subjectivity based on Lacanian concepts.

The Imaginary

The Imaginary refers to the conscious dimension of subjectivity, and the plane on which a subject constructs its identities. This describes the process of identification, but Lacan's use of the term identification departs from what is commonly understood under this heading. The crucial difference here that most conceptualizations of identification center around modelling one's identity after perceived qualities or traits of another person. In Lacanian theory, identification refers to the modelling of the ego on the ego ideal, an introjected image of the Symbolic Other. Therefore, the Lacanian perspective on identification is concerned with discursive images rather than with physical 'others' or what the subject attributes to them. In this, the Lacanian concept of identification is characterized by a very specific function in relation to the other two registers. It fulfils the role of protecting the subject from the traumatic aspects of language (as constitutive of subjectivity, and as essentially devoid of meaning) and from the void of the Real.

The Imaginary and its potential for organization studies have been powerfully introduced in Roberts (2005), in which the author examines the way in which the Lacanian concept of the 'mirror stage' (Lacan, 2006a) can be used to understand

identity work and micro-interactions in the workplace, and how they relate to processes of control. Roberts argues that the Imaginary must be seen as that which gives rise to an effect of humanist selfhood, which paradoxically derives from discursive conditions and the subject's need for recognition. This illusion of identity is used in various ways in organizational settings to control the behaviour of employees.

There is much research in critical management studies on identity in relation to power, and I suggest that Lacanian studies of subjectivity and discourse can fruitfully connect to this. Conversely, many accounts of identity in organizations lack a detailed account of how identity relates to subjectivity and as such, Lacanian theory may provide a rich resource.

The Real

The Real is the register that describes the failure of discourse to totalize or to exhaust the subject's experience. By means of the concept of the Real, the breakdown of linguistic constructions can be understood as a driving force in the production and reproduction of discursivity. In this way, the Real can be thought of as the driving force of discourse to order and classify, and for new discourses to materialize. The continual breaking down of discourse drives its productivity. I suggest that the Real provides a theorization of the interruption of discursive consistency, and shows the working of *jouissance* and desire in upholding ideologies. It can therefore also serve as a useful concept in theorizing resistance and radical change.

The Real does not figure in analysis as anything tangible or empirically verifiable, but must rather be seen as a heuristic for tracing the internal structure of discourses. As Parker (2005) has suggested, discourse analysis may proceed by interpreting instances of overwording and excessive description as indications of discursive tensions and contradictions, or what in Lacanian parlance would be known as the Real.

In organizational studies, I would like to point to the work of Jones and Spicer (2005), Kosmala and Herrbach (2006) and Bicknell and Liefoghe (2007) as examples of how the concepts of interruptions of the Real may be used as a means of analyzing organization. Outside of directly Lacanian approaches, one can find affinity with the notion of the Real in Brewis *et al.* (2005), where desire is explored in relation to processes of organization. These processes have an extra-discursive status, but impact strongly upon all facets of organizational life.

I suggest that the Lacanian notion of the *sinthome* can extend this Lacanian approach to the study of management and organization in three ways. Firstly, it allows us to situate the different functions of language in a socio-historical context. For Lacan, the *sinthome* represents a singular 'knot' of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, that keeps them in place in a particular constellation. The registers of language, as a network of signifiers, as meaning, and as a traumatic remainder of non-signification, can be understood as tied together in a particular way by the *sinthome*. Any attempt at understanding how subjectivity relates to particular ideological discourses, can therefore productively start at how the *sinthome* ties this 'knot' between the registers. Žižek (1991: 137) refers in this respect to "identification with the *sinthome*".

Secondly, it represents a way of understanding the organization of *jouissance* within subjectivity. In his later work, Lacan foregrounds the importance of *jouissance* as an important influence within the functioning of subjectivity, with effects on the way in which the subject relates to its determination. For example, Žižek (1997) has demonstrated the role of fantasy (and its promise of *jouissance*) is vital for the functioning of specific ideological discourses. Fantasy is concerned with a very specific relation to desire, in which the subject is enamoured with the image it is presented with. With the *sinthome*, Lacan introduces an ordering principle for the way in which the subject enjoys, which encompasses both the function of desire (and therefore fantasy) and that of the drive. As such, the concept of the *sinthome* provides a comprehensive and fruitful starting point for an exploration of *jouissance* in organizational discourses.

Thirdly, it provides a theorization of how discourses and modes of being can present themselves as consistent and stable for the subject. One of the questions that Lacan raises in his conceptualization of the *sinthome*, is how subjects come to identify their being with their bodies, and their relation to others in terms of individuality. Why do people conceive of themselves as owners of their minds and bodies, where psychoanalysis has repeatedly shown the opposite? Here, Lacan argues that the *sinthome* allows an Imaginary ‘consistency’ to take shape, which is no more than a temporary effect, to be thwarted by the excessive signification that emanates from speech.

The *Sinthome*

As stated, I will approach the *sinthome* by exploring Lacan’s 23rd seminar, given between 1975 and 1976. Lacan devoted this seminar entirely to the *sinthome* and he demonstrated the concept by an in-depth investigation of the work of James Joyce.

Lacan feels that James Joyce’s work (and *Finnegan’s Wake* in particular) has succeeded in going beyond the regular functioning of language, and has freed up a play of the signifier that has allowed *jouissance* to be interlaced with the text: “one feels the presence of the *jouissance* of he who has written this” (2005b: 165, my italics).¹ The text of *Finnegan’s Wake* overflows with a pure play of the signifier, which does not concentrate on conveying a particular meaning, but rather on producing certain phonemes, allusions and homophonies that make reference to other, unexpected signifying chains. Both the unusual character of this work, as well as the emphasis it places on the signifier over meaning, cause Lacan to ask what has allowed Joyce to produce this work. What drove him? And how can we conceive of his subjectivity? It is precisely this theme of the singularity of subjectivity that we see in the notion of the *sinthome*.

In seminar XXIII, Lacan starts to draw on terms that are unusual to his work as we know it, and that appear to address the discourse of other disciplines such as psychology

1 All translations from Lacan (2005a, 2005b) are my own.

and philosophy. Among these, we can find the spirit, man², the individual, the body, consistency, meaning and the idea. Lacan thus actively engages signifiers that are not his own and situates them within his thought. In this move, he simultaneously critiques the theorizations of subjectivity that he believes are strongly misguided, as well as re-inscribing the signifiers by placing them in a different context.

This places Lacan's notion of the *sinthome* at an intersection of subjectivity, discourse, and *jouissance*. Lacan states that Freud's conception of the unconscious has called into question a knowledge that is unknown to us, precisely in relation to a body that is strange to us (2005a: 149). He sets out to explore this relationship by means of his *sinthome*. How do people come to identify with a consistency, which they attribute both to their body and their mind?

Introducing the sinthome

The *sinthome* should be differentiated from the notion of the symptom, which also appears in Lacan's work. *Sinthome* is an antiquated way of writing the word symptom, and Lacan indicates that writing it in this way represents an "injection of Greek" into the French language, just as Joyce has injected many other languages into his English in *Finnegan's Wake* (Lacan, 2005a: 11). By means of this, Lacan perhaps seeks to demonstrate that the *sinthome* is already something that comes from the outside into language, from elsewhere than the Symbolic order.

By contrast, the symptom is to be found in the Symbolic. Lacan argues that "the symptom is in itself, through and through, signification" (1988: 320 II). In his earlier work, Lacan describes the symptom as something that impedes the subject to relate to its desire. The goal of analysis is then the interpretation of this symptom, causing it to be resolved. This is very much a Freudian approach to the symptom. In much the same way as Freud approaches the analysis of images in dreams, Lacan places emphasis on the signifiers in the analysand's discourse to look for anomalies, non-signifying elements, slips and so on. The symptom for Lacan is here a metaphor (2006b: 439), something that the subject has substituted for a traumatic occurrence and that has its place in the subject's unconscious. It is a signifier that has come to take the place of an occurrence whose meaning has been suppressed by the subject. In the analytic process, the symptom (as a signifier) can be given its proper signification, thereby dissolving its role as an impediment to the subject's relation to the signifying network.

This is not what is at stake in the case of the *sinthome*, which is radically different from the symptom. It is not presented in pathological terms or as something that should be cured or alleviated. Rather, Lacan presents it as something that supports the subject, giving it a consistency with regard to the different registers. It is a way of making sense of the ways in which particular subjectivities differ from others, what makes them singular (see also Butler, in this issue, on the distinction between therapeutical and

2 This concerns 'man' as in the exemplar of humanity, not in terms of the opposition man/woman. The former appears in the form 'l'homme' and punningly also as 'lom' in the text *Joyce le symptôme* (Lacan, 2005b), which represents an earlier engagement of Lacan's with many of the issues dealt with in seminar XXIII.

symptomatological aims in analysis). For Lacan, the big Symbolic Other represents the condition of possibility for the subject and as such, subjectivity always has a shared basis. It is always implicated within the social. The *sinthome* represents an effort to account for the ‘single stroke’ that sets particular subjectivities apart. It must not be sought in the identifications of the Imaginary, or even in the traumatic emptiness that the Real represents for the subject: it represents a singularity onto its own that grounds subjectivity. The *sinthome* is an act of writing that “comes from elsewhere than the signifier” (2005a: 145) and in this sense, it is “disinvested from the unconscious” (2005b: 164).

This is exemplary of Lacan’s move away from his earlier focus on the Symbolic as the most important register of subjectivity, toward the function of the Real. This draws attention to the way in which something beyond language comes to organize our subjectivity. In order to approach this problematic of the Real for the subject, Lacan draws heavily on topology. By virtue of its three-dimensional space, topology is less caught in the binary categories of language and therefore helps to explore themes such as the relationship of inside to outside or logical (im)possibilities in various chains and knots. In seminar XXIII, he puts forward the Borromean knot as an example of how the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real relate to each other. The Borromean knot represents a construction of rings of string that ties all three rings together, but in which one of the rings is directly linked to the others. If one of the rings is cut, the other two are set free. The knot is therefore dependent on all three rings. Lacan describes this knot as that which supports the subject. This knot is pictured in figure 1.

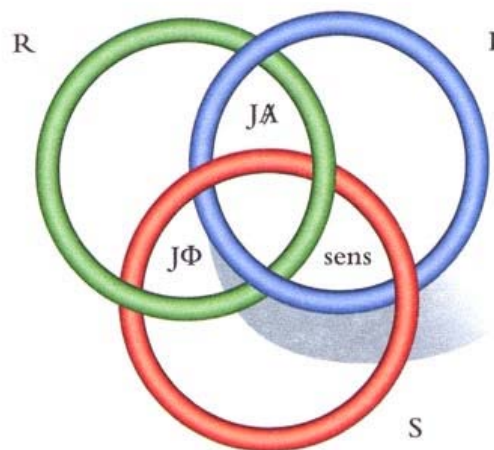


Figure 1. The Borromean Knot. Taken from Lacan (2005a: 48).

With the *sinthome*, Lacan introduces another support of the subject (2005a: 50-52), a fourth dimension alongside the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. Here, Lacan seeks to stress the lack of direct rapport between the registers of the Symbolic, the Real and the Imaginary. They have no bearing on each other, and can be more productively seen as linked up by an ‘artifice’ that knots them into a quadruple Borromean knot. The *sinthome* functions as such an artifice.

Lacan discusses this extensively by means of Joyce's literary work. I will draw out some of these points below, in order to demonstrate how the sinthome can come to function as a fourth element within subjectivity.

Joyce's Sinthome

When discussing Joyce's sinthome, Lacan picks up two themes that he believes have greatly affected his subjectivity and have found their expression in his work. These are the relationship he has towards his own body and the role of his father.

The role of Joyce's father is one that Lacan describes as 'failure'. Joyce's father has failed him. It is a recurring theme in his work, and there are many discussions of this in the correspondence that Joyce has left. But although Lacan deems the paternal function insufficient in Joyce's case, it has not left him psychotic. The paternal metaphor has been instated, but Joyce retains a trace of psychosis in the sense that language remains something 'imposed' and 'parasitical' for him (Lacan, 2005a: 96). This slip of the paternal function, caused by his father's failure, is what must be understood as Joyce's proper symptom (*ibid.*: 94, 96): "Joyce remains rooted in his father while at the same time disavowing him. It is this that is his symptom" (*ibid.*: 70). However, his sinthome is something quite different. Lacan argues here that the function of the proper name is crucial. The Name-of-the-Father has not fully failed, even though the role of Joyce's father has been insufficient. Joyce has sought to make his own name by means of his work, and it is in this place that we must look for Joyce *as* sinthome.

Concerning Joyce's relationship to his body, Lacan draws out a passage from *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, in which the main character, Stephen Dedalus, gets into a fight with some of his friends about poetry. In a cruel turn of events, his friends tie him up and give him a beating. Stephen is understandably shaken up by this at first, but quickly explains it away as if nothing had happened. He pretends not to know anything about it, denying himself the meaning of the occurrence. Joyce's terminology here is that he "casts it off like a peel". Lacan reads this passage as an autobiographical story, and therefore one that is demonstrative of Joyce's relation to his own body. He argues that the phrase of the peel is metaphorical of the relationship to his body that is substituted and cast off here (*ibid.*: 148). Lacan argues that the body is linked to the ego: "The idea of the self as bodily has a weight. It is exactly that which we call the ego" (*ibid.*: 150). The ego supports the "body as image" (*ibid.*: 150). The beating has resulted in Joyce viewing this image of his own body with disgust, causing him to let go of it. The Imaginary relationship slips away for Joyce. Lacan represents this in his Borromean knot as shown in figure 2: the ring of the Imaginary is no longer linked by means of the knot, and threatens to slip out of the picture.

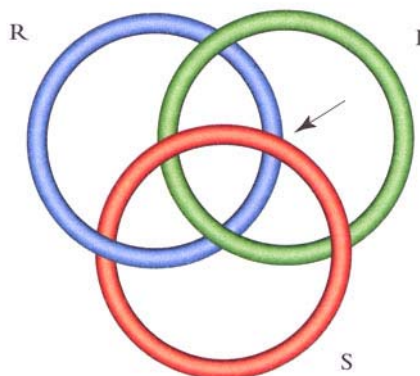


Figure 2. The Borromean Knot, with a severed relationship to the Imaginary. Taken from Lacan (*ibid.*: 151).

Lacan argues that the specifically Joycean literary figure of the ‘epiphany’ is the direct result of this inability of the Imaginary to connect with the other two registers, and therefore relies solely on the connection between the Symbolic and the Real (*ibid.*: 154). This inability of Joyce to exist within the Imaginary is then channeled in his writing, which occurs by means of these sudden, almost religious realizations that completely overwhelm him.

Lacan argues that an ‘artifice of writing’ comes to reconstitute the Imaginary rapport (*ibid.*: 152). This artifice of writing is what embodies the sinthome for Joyce. Lacan draws this out again in terms of his knot, as seen in figure 3.

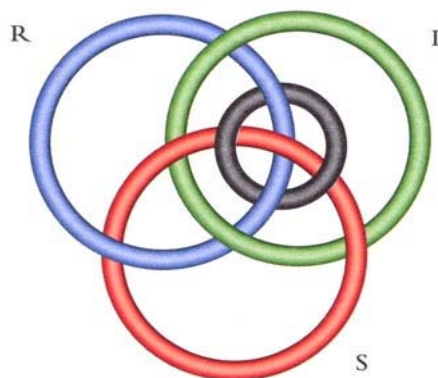


Figure 3. The Borromean knot for Joyce, with the sinthome as that which restores the knot (*ibid.*: 152).

Joyce’s body of literature comes to stand for the organizing principle of his *jouissance*. Deprived of an Imaginary identity, he comes to live out his identifications in his writings. It is through his writing that he seeks to make a name for himself, to inject his own name with new meaning. Lacan speaks in this respect about ‘*jouis-sens*’, fusing the words *jouissance* and meaning[*sens*] with each other.³ It is in this vein that Lacan states

3 Žižek (1991) has suggested the translation ‘enjoy-meant’.

that the *sinthome* “participates in an ambivalence between the [Real and the Imaginary]” (*ibid.*: 102). The normal working of the signifying chain is thus completely subverted by Joyce, and injected with a particular *jouissance*. The artifice of his work, functioning as *sinthome*, must therefore be understood as something which allows him to relate to the violent imposition of the Symbolic order upon his subjectivity. It supports his subjectivity as non-psychotic, and keeps the registers in relation to each other. Although there is much to say on Lacan’s discussion of Joyce, I now wish to turn to a more general discussion of the concept of the *sinthome*.

The Sinthome as Fourth

Lacan argues that in Joyce’s case, the *sinthome* is formed by his oeuvre. His literary work has sought to re-inscribe his name with something else, since it is his name that ineluctably ties him to his symptom, his failing father. His work embodies an ‘artifice’, a *sinthome* that re-signifies that name. At the same time, we have also seen that Joyce’s problematic relation to the Imaginary is repaired by means of this *sinthome*, which has caused him to regain contact with his body as image. This occurs through the radical play of meaning in his work, giving rise to an enjoyment-meaning that flows through the text.

Faced with Joyce’s particular *sinthome*, the question that should be addressed at this point is how we can conceive of a general *sinthome*. Lacan is clear about this, stating “what I propose here, is to consider Joyce’s case as corresponding to a way of supplementing the denouement⁴ [*dénouement*] of the knot”, because “for the most part the Symbolic, the Real and the Imaginary are entangled to the point of continuing one into the other, when lacking an operation that distinguishes them in the chain of the Borromean knot” (*ibid.*: 87). Joyce’s case is therefore drawn out as an exemplar of the way in which the Borromean knot of the Symbolic, Real and Imaginary must be supplemented by the *sinthome*, as a fourth ring. In this way, the Borromean knot (or chain⁵) can be formed by all four rings. Without the *sinthome*, there is no knot possible, nor are the rings connected to each other.

In the quotation above, Lacan highlights an important dimension of the *sinthome*; the registers run the risk of turning into one another, unless the *sinthome* allows them to be differentiated. In its capacity of repairing the Borromean knot, it creates a distinction between the registers, by keeping them in place within the knot. We saw that in Joyce’s case, the *sinthome* served to re-quilt the three registers by allowing the Imaginary to regain itself in an enjoyment-meaning within the artifice of his literary work. Lacan states that the registers, as circles in the Borromean knot, are all equivalent and “constituted by something that reproduces itself in all three” (*ibid.*: 50). Each of the registers is given a particular inflection by the *sinthome*, by virtue of the way in which they are knotted together. In seminar XXIII, Lacan attributes very specific functions to

4 Note that the French also has connotations of disentanglement of the knot. I have rendered it *denouement* to stress the narrative aspects of the word, i.e. that the adding of the *sinthome* represents the ‘final stage’ of the knot.

5 Lacan stresses that the Borromean knot can also be viewed as a chain of rings. With this, he evokes the metonymic character of the (Symbolic) signifying chain.

the three registers, putting a different spin on the RSI triad as we know it. Within the knot achieved by the sinthome, the Symbolic serves the function of the representation of holes, the Imaginary is that which gives rise to consistency, and the Real is that which makes ex-sistence possible (*ibid.*: 36). I will explain each of these functions in greater detail below, where I explore the potential contribution of the notion of the sinthome for organizational analysis.

The respective functions of the registers are thus upheld by the sinthome, and linked to each other in a singular constellation. By virtue of its demarcation of the registers and its support of the Borromean knot, the sinthome also produces a specific organization of *jouissance*,⁶ a ‘shortcircuit of pleasure’ (*ibid.*: 97). The sinthome makes the knot possible and thereby divides up the registers, allowing *jouissance* to take place within the folds of the knot. Lacan refers to this process as ‘suturing’ and ‘splitting’ (*ibid.*: 73). He distinguishes here between phallic *jouissance* and Imaginary *jouissance*. Lacan describes the latter as connected to the function of the mirror stage by means of the specular image, the mirror image of the subject’s ego. In this way, this *jouissance* is linked with the bodily image that the subject cultivates (*ibid.*: 56). It must therefore be seen as an essentially narcissistic form of enjoyment, linked to the self-image that the subject sustains. Phallic *jouissance*, on the other hand, is an enjoyment related to the signifier. It is linked to the Symbolic order, by which socio-cultural constraints become inculcated in the subject. It is in relation this Symbolic Law that a play of transgression gives rise to the phallic *jouissance* that Lacan describes. It is an enjoyment that is ‘stolen from the Other’, not condoned by the Other.

This relation of the sinthome to *jouissance* is further accentuated by Lacan in yet another topological excursion, in which he folds the circles of the sinthome and the Symbolic into one another, so that they form a circle together. However, in order to prevent the two from unraveling, a line should flow through the circle. This is why Lacan refers to it as a ‘false hole’. The point that Lacan seeks to stress with this example of the false hole, is that the sinthome is not linked directly to any one term in the Borromean knot, but that it is suspended in a relation of mutual dependency. It always depends on the totality of the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic. In the figure of the false hole, the hole itself belongs neither to the Symbolic nor to the sinthome, and is held in place by a third term that stabilizes it (*ibid.*: 139, see also 25; 83). Lacan represents this third term as a straight line representing the body (which he identifies with the Imaginary) (*ibid.*: 139), as well as the phallus (*ibid.*: 118), the signifier of the Other’s desire.⁷ In this, we can read the two forms of *jouissance* that are made possible by the sinthome, by way of its function of both dividing up and tying

6 Lacan places the relation between the *sinthome* and *jouissance* at the heart of the analytic process in seminar XXIII, stating that “we teach the analysand to splice, to make a seam between his *sinthome* and the Real parasite of *jouissance*. What is characteristic of our operation, making this *jouissance* possible, is the same thing as that which I write I-hear-meaning [*j’ouï-sens*]” (*ibid.*: 73).

7 The phallus has been a concept in Lacan’s work that has been especially prone to misunderstanding. Here, I have referred to it as the signifier of the Other’s desire, but it might equally be termed the signifier of the lack in the Other. As a signifier, it marks the idea that the Other is not complete, not perfect. Phallic *jouissance*, then, represents the subject as enjoying this imperfection in the Other, of taking advantage of it.

together the different registers of subjectivity. Both forms of *jouissance* are rendered possible by the knotting function of the *sinthome*.

By means of this notion of the ‘hole’, Lacan references the fundamental lack at the heart of the subject. This lack assures its status as a desiring being. The *sinthome* enables *jouissance* to take shape within this hole, to fill it up temporarily. This is what constitutes the final Lacanian subject: the flow of *jouissance* through the Real as recurrent in images and signifiers, given consistency by means of something that is outside the subject. This something, the *sinthome*, is what Žižek refers to as “what is in the subject more than himself” (1991: 132). It is not subsumed by the Symbolic order, but must rather be seen as something that defies this symbolization. It is therefore psychotic in this sense, because it rejects the order of the unconscious. It exists the unconscious, as a point outside the subject that gives rise to its consistency. The notion of the ‘hole’ is also used by Lacan to shed light specifically on the relation of the subject to the Symbolic dimension of language. I will return to this at length below, when I discuss the *sinthome* in relation to organizational analysis.

Given the central position that Lacan accords to the *sinthome* with regard to subjectivity, language and *jouissance*, how are we to conceive of an ‘analysis’ structured around the *sinthome*? Žižek (1989, 1991) has asserted (following Jacques-Alain Miller’s influential yet unpublished seminars) that the goal of analysis, both clinical and socio-political, must be an identification with the *sinthome*. He envisages this in terms of a radical confrontation with that which stimulates and channels our *jouissance* in an ideological discourse, thereby reducing it to its bare minimum and stripping it of its evocative force. Such an analytic strategy must be sensitive to the dispersed flows of *jouissance* within through the different modalities of subjectivity.

In the next section, I will suggest that the impact that the *sinthome* has on the registers of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary provides a useful starting point for thinking through the particular ‘knotting’ of *jouissance* in a discursive context. Furthermore, I will propose examples of how we may begin to think through the *sinthome*’s impact on the registers in an organizational setting.

Discussion

We have seen that the *sinthome* functions as a support for the subject by allowing the three registers to be knotted together in a particular assemblage. More specifically, it supports the economy of *jouissance* to which the subject is privy. Here, we are reminded of Fink’s (2004) commentary that two versions of the subject may be recognized in Lacan’s work: the subject of the signifier and the subject of *jouissance*. These also correspond roughly to the earlier and later periods of Lacan’s teaching. It is clear that in his discussions of the *sinthome*, we are dealing with the latter. *Jouissance* restores Joyce’s damaged Imaginary rapport through a play of signifiers within the signifying chain, in a continuous flow of allusions and meaning effects. Here we see a *jouis-sens*, enjoyment-meaning, that is made possible by means of his artifice, his literary work. In it, all registers are linked up and *jouissance* is allowed to take shape.

What Lacan brings in with his introduction of the *sinthome*, is the idea that *jouissance*, images and signifiers are linked in a singular way in a particular setting. Just as Joyce's enjoyment-meaning supports his subjectivity and stops it from sliding into psychosis, an ideological discourse is supported by an unacknowledged assumption at its basis. This is the *sinthome*, which knots it together and thereby stabilizes it.

However, as central as it is to the functioning of the registers, the *sinthome* must nevertheless be thought of as outside the subject. It *ex-sists* the subject, in Lacan's terms. Although itself not elusive or unattainable, it is not part of the unconscious, nor does it figure as an object of desire. It forms an infrastructure in which the registers can take shape, along with their respective forms of *jouissance*. It 'makes a name' for the subject, as we saw in Joyce's case. Its function is the splitting and suturing of registers, thereby giving them a relation to one another.

The *sinthome*, as an unacknowledged assumption that underlies the subject's relation to discourse, can be seen in various ways in the registers of the Imaginary (perception and identity), the Symbolic (signifiers) and the Real (*jouissance*). He argues that it produces the functions of *consistency*, *the representation of the hole* and *ex-sistence* in the three registers.

The fundamental character of this use of the knot is to illustrate the trinity⁸ that results from a consistency that is only feigned by the Imaginary, a hole that follows from the Symbolic as if it were fundamental, and an *ex-sistence* that, belonging to the Real, forms its fundamental character. (Lacan, 2005a: 36)

The *sinthome* reproduces itself in the registers and thereby gives these special functions of consistency, hole and *ex-sistence*. The *sinthome* functions here as that which allows the registers to be distinguished from each other (*ibid.*: 53), and therefore as that which holds the ideological structure together. What would an analysis based on the registers look like, given the inflection that the *sinthome* gives them? This is the question that I will now turn to.

Imaginary Sinthomes

As a result of its knot with the *sinthome*, the Imaginary comes to function as that which provides consistency. Given support by the function of the knot, the Imaginary register manifests itself as uniform and whole, as "that which draws together" (*ibid.*: 64). As I have explained above, the Imaginary is the conscious realm of subjectivity, where sensory perceptions are received, where meaning is experienced and identifications are crafted. Lacan insists that the Imaginary obscures the way in which the constitutive function of language and its Real complement construct subjectivity, whereas the Imaginary provides the subject with a misleading sensation of Cartesian selfhood. It creates the impression of unity, harmony and control for the subject, which Lacan views

8 Lacan's French here, *triplicité*, similarly alludes to the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This theme pops up occasionally in seminar XXIII, where he uses it as a means of exploring Joyce's relation to his father (the father, the son) and something that goes beyond this relation (the Holy Spirit – the *sinthome*), as well as linking it back to the 'holy trinity' of his own three registers, which he subverts by adding a fourth (see also Harari, 2002).

as a way of ‘covering over’ the subject’s dependency of the function of language in the Symbolic and the Real. In seminar XXIII, Lacan links the Imaginary more strongly to the body, by means of the term ‘consistency’, and argues that the relation that the subject has to its body is primarily based on the *image* that it cultivates of this body, and that this bodily image gives it the false impression of being self-contained and autonomous (*ibid.*: 150). For Lacan, of course, the subject derives its being from the Other, and not from any consistency onto its own. While discussing the subject as a speaking being or ‘*parlêtre*’⁹, Lacan states that “the *parlêtre* adores his body, because he thinks he owns it. In reality, it is his only consistency – mental consistency, mind you, because his body leaves the scene all of the time” (*ibid.*: 66). Furthermore, this mental consistency that Lacan refers to is far from stable, open as it is to interruptions that come from the side of the Symbolic and the Real.¹⁰ Even though the subject attempts to present itself as coherent in its discourse, its speech cannot be limited to the meaning that it attempts to convey, or the image that it tries to present of itself. In short, it fails to control the discourse that constitutes it.

Where in his earlier work, Lacan would often emphasize the fragmented and illusory nature of Imaginary identification, in his later work he seems determined to show how perception and identity wed themselves to *jouissance* to give rise to a fantasmatic image of consistency and holism. If we use this Lacanian conceptualization of the Imaginary as a resource for analyzing organization, we can consider the way in which organizational images come to appear as coherent and consistent, and what makes them appealing as such to subjects. Themes that may be identified with the Imaginary *as consistency* are unity, intentionality and harmony, among others, and how they come to be represented within organizational images.

One example of an Imaginary analysis of organizational processes is how images of unitarism (Fox, 1973) come to function within a particular discursive context. In this way, a single purpose is attributed to organizational activity, as a shared and rational goal that is pursued by all involved. It is represented as wholly in the service of managerial interests, devoid of conflict or suppressed alternative interests. Such unitarist discourse is reproduced by means of organizational practices as diverse as accounting, financial reporting, organizational culture initiatives and performance appraisal. From a Lacanian perspective, it would be interesting to see how this fantasy of ‘rational’ and ‘conflict-free’ organization works to cover over alternative elements in organizational life, that fall outside its scope of the pursuit of the ‘common goals’ of productivity and profit. How does this fantasy of consistency retain its fascination? And what effects does this have on the signification of work and other areas of managerial practice? These are just some of the questions that can be asked when we analyze organizational images on the basis of their role in giving consistency to a particular Imaginary reality. We must remember, however, that this fantasmatic consistency is in itself impossible to maintain, and it is routinely subverted by alternative meanings that arise in the signifying chain. This brings us to the question of signification and its limits, which are part and parcel of the Symbolic register.

9 ‘*Parlêtre*’ may also be read as a play on ‘*par lettre*’, by way of the letter.

10 Here, Lacan also plays on the coincidence of the word ‘*mentalité*’ with the verb ‘*mentir*’, to lie (2005a: 66), stressing that the conscious mental states of the subject are often deceptive.

Symbolic Sinthomes

In seminar XXIII, Lacan identifies the Symbolic primarily with the function of the hole. Above, I introduced the Symbolic order as language in its structuring form, which allows the subject to come into being and provides it with the linguistic categories that give rise to its existence in the social. With the introduction of the *sinthome*, Lacan links this Symbolic order to the function of ‘the hole’. Hereby Lacan draws even further attention to the paradox of the subject’s dependency on the fundamentally flawed and incomplete structure of language. The *sinthome* brings the Symbolic network of signifiers in a stable relationship with its lack, the impossibility at its centre. It fixes a place for desire within the structure of language.

In order to elaborate on this a bit more, I would like to refer back to the topological problem of the ‘false hole’ that I discussed above. The figure of the false hole is constituted within the knot, and it necessitates the presence of an intersecting line, needed to keep the structure in place. In terms of internal consistency, the line is necessary to sustain the figure of the hole, otherwise it unravels. Lacan uses the figure as a way of saying that the Symbolic is structurally incomplete; it is structured around a hole, something that is missing from it. The Symbolic (supported by the *sinthome* in Lacan’s topology) allows the hole to become visible, although the hole itself defies representation. Within any discursive context, signification is never total and in that sense always structured around a missing element, a hole.

From a Lacanian perspective, the meaning that we experience as subjects is a product of the machinations of the signifying chain. Signifiers gain their sense only by way of their position in the complete chain of signifiers, by virtue of everything they are not. There is no inherent connection between signifiers and meaning. The differential relation between signifiers fleetingly provides them with meaning, yet this meaning is never definite or stable, but rather characterized by a certain degree of indeterminacy. Signification is not total, but retains some ambiguity, and the meaning that is produced in a discursive context depends upon the shifting network of signifiers that constitute it. It is incomplete in this sense, structured around an impossibility of full representation. It is in this way that we can understand the ‘hole’ in the Symbolic. Language continuously comes up against the impossibility of fixing representation; it cannot prevent alternate meanings from ringing out, or unexpected substitutions from taking place in the signifying chain.

If we approach organizational analysis on the basis of this notion of the Symbolic register as representation of the hole, a useful starting point can be to explore the signification of organizational processes. For example, we can investigate the way in which the organization as a signifier attempts to account for organizational processes. As a proper name, it can be understood as something that groups and quilts the processes that take place under its heading. But all of these activities fail to be fully represented by the organization-signifier. Rather, they cut into other areas of life. Organizational life is therefore not bound to any specific place or time, but exceeds the processes that are quilted by its signifier. Therefore, the boundaries that this organization-signifier attempts to set are insufficient and its significations spill into other areas of social life.

At the same time, the significations that it produces are not singular but rather multiple and overdetermined (Freud, 1993: 310, 338); they arise from the totality of the signifying network rather than any one signifier. The organizational processes that are grouped under the organization-signifier ring out with multiple meanings. A host of activities that take place in organizational settings can be seen as ‘alternate meanings’, as processes that do not fall under the dominant reading of what an organization is, or what purpose it serves. Here, we are reminded of practices of workplace resistance, from overt forms of resistance (see for instance Ezzamel *et al.*, 2001; Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995) to more subtle forms of resistance such as the use of silence (Brown and Coupland, 2005), cynicism and dis-identification (Fleming, 2005; Fleming and Spicer, 2003) or subversion of control initiatives (Rosenthal, 2005).

In light of the *sinthome*, the Symbolic register as ‘representation of holes’ emphasizes the themes of incompleteness and failure. These provide a useful way of exploring the signification of organizational life and how it is marked by an impossibility to fully capture its object.

Real *Sinthomes*

Whereas the Symbolic is that which surrounds the hole, thereby enabling that absence to be represented as such, the Real is precisely that which is excluded. It has a status of ex-sistence. It resists representation in the Symbolic, and therefore functions as an ultimate barrier to the signification that takes place within this register. It is in this sense that Lacan says that “the Real conditions reality” (2005a: 132): the Symbolic is structured around the Real, which functions as its absolute limit. It is barred from both the Symbolic chain of signifiers as well as the Imaginary field of images and meaning.

In seminar XXIII, the Real appears as a force that not only cuts up speech and consistency of the subject, but that also maintains a balance in the registers: “the Real bring forth the element that can keep [the Imaginary and the Symbolic] together” (*ibid.*: 132). It is, as we have seen, tied up in the Borromean knot with the other registers and the *sinthome*. The Real is simultaneously the limit of representation in the Symbolic, and the space in which fantasy takes shape in the Imaginary.

However, the Real does not figure as pure absence in the later work of Lacan, unlike his earlier works where it has the function of pure lack or loss of the Other. We see it emerge here as the place where the drives arise. Lacan argues that the drives suspend the subject from the life of language, and from the relationship to the body (*ibid.*: 148). This is the subject of the drive, the subject that ex-sists. It is nothing else but a drive for *jouissance*.

We can pursue this thematic of the Real as ex-sistence as a basis for the study of organization only in relation to the other registers. Since it resists representation, the Real has no empirical status of its own, and therefore can only be used as a heuristic. This can be used to explore two functions of the Real. Firstly, it is that which disrupts the consistency of the Imaginary, and it marks the limits of the Symbolic order. It *cuts up* the other two registers. Secondly, it ex-sists as the subject of affect, as *jouissance*. The subject can temporarily function within the drive, away from the Law of the

signifier, in search of enjoyment. The ex-sisting Real is in a sense an outside in which the subject escapes, outside of the gaze of the Other.

An example of how the thematic of the Real may be useful in organizational analysis would be to explore how *jouissance* is distributed in a particular organizational context. For Lacan, *jouissance* “is what serves no purpose” (1998: 3). I suggest that any exploration of *jouissance* in an organizational setting must ask this very question, and look at the way in which activity that “serves no purpose” is sustained at work. One can consider for instance employee pastimes such as gossip, humour or aimless web surfing from the viewpoint of the *jouissance* obtained. This form of enjoyment cannot be framed in terms of a transgression of the Symbolic law, in which the subject tries to take its *jouissance* back from the Other, but which provides it with fleeting exhilaration unlinked to any other commandment than the superego’s incitement to “Enjoy!” By means of this definition of *jouissance*, we can gain insight into how managerial discourses not only work to structure organizational life on the Symbolic and Imaginary level, but also how they are entangled in the subject’s Real.

Dénouement

These three inflections of consistency, hole and ex-sistence may serve as a fruitful starting point to begin to think the *sinthome* within the context of organizations. Although I have only been able to provide a very brief description of its effects on the registers here, I hope that it has introduced a set of questions that can shed light on the complex ways in which language and *jouissance* affect subjectivity in organizational contexts.

What makes the *sinthome* especially salient to management and organization studies, is that it is itself a mode of organization. It conceptualizes a singular knot between the different functions of language, which also regulates the distribution of *jouissance* that takes shape within their interrelations. It represents the discursive and extra-discursive particularity in which the subject takes shape, and can in that sense be compared to the diagnosis of the present that a clinical analysis of organization and management would undertake (Butler, in this issue). Thinking through the *sinthome* highlights the ways in which the Real, Imaginary and Symbolic aspects of discourse are quilted together in a singular manner, and grouped around a kernel of enjoyment. Therefore, the *sinthome* can be thought of as the specific constellation of the registers in a socio-historical context, by organizing its *jouissance* and giving it a superficial sheen of consistency. It reproduces itself in the registers and thereby ensures the superficial coherence of an ideological discourse.

It is exactly on this surface, this apparent consistency, that any interruption of the Real in a particular ideology must be sought. The task for organizational analysis then consists not only in identifying this *sinthome*, but as some have suggested, in identifying with the *sinthome*. This means taking up the place of that which allows for *jouissance* within a particular ideological frame, to acknowledge the “pathological singularity on which the consistency of our enjoyment depends” (Žižek, 1991: 138). By

acknowledging the *jouissance* that is central to an ideological discourse, and its constant interruption in our social reality, we can begin to unravel the knot that supports it.

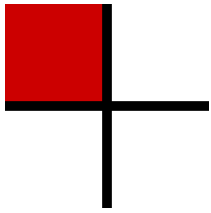
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In the Name of Love: Let's Remember Desire

Anders Bojesen and Sara Louise Muhr

abstract

The discourse of HRM has become subject to a code of love in which the organization expects employees to be fully committed and passionate about their work. This coded language reproduces the idea that there is one best way of managing the employee, only the employee is now expected to exhibit passion by being proactive, take initiative and anticipate the future needs of the organization. The code of love thus suggests an appropriating treatment to ensure the passionate self-managing employee. However, if it is true that passion has become a prerequisite for the working subject then the code of love should be made fragile, giving way to the unmanageable and desiring subject. Such a love would go beyond the beloved. It would not try to heal and appropriate the employee, but see the goodness in exposing the self to critical wounding. Love should therefore not be a striving for the same, but rather maintain the possibility for the beloved to retain a level of alterity. If not, the passion of organising risks falling prey to a state of paternal love and control where ethics is obsolete.

It is evil to think one person can manage another. And it is certainly evil to think of somebody else as an asset or resource. (Kaulingfreks, 2005: 38)

Introduction

There seems to be an ongoing trend within human resource management to shift its focus from employee control to emotional commitment (Barley and Kunda, 1992; Kunda, 1992; Loehr and Tony, 2003; McGregor, 1960; Walton, 1985). This trend stresses issues like empowerment, self-management and flexibility, which are said to provide greater freedom and recognition for the employee. It is about caring properly for the employee. As Legge (2005) points out, this proper care is said to lead to sufficient self-development and a 'better', 'more efficient' and maybe even 'more healthy' employee. Ultimately HRM is transformed into a discourse of love (Andersen and Born, 2001; 2005; 2007; Bauman, 2003; 2007; Kunda and Van Maanen, 1999) in which "the company's interests and those of its employees are equated" (Legge, 2005: 128). In fact love has become a growing business enterprise. Employees are offered counselling to become happier with the work they do, courses in self-management are

offered, and consultancy firms now sell entire 'love packages', teaching companies how to develop a 'Loving Life', 'Loving Management' and 'Loving Culture'.¹

The seemingly harmonious state promoted by this HRM discourse can be easily contested. Taking on the role of the devil's advocate one might, with Kaulingfreks (2005), ask: is HRM in this way rather evil than good? In his polemical piece, Kaulingfreks advances the view that evil is common in organizations and that organizations are guided by a profound mistrust and contempt for people. According to Kaulingfreks the wickedness of organizations does not lie in the manipulation and control of the employee, but more in that it is presented as philanthropy and as a concern for human wellbeing: "a whole system conspires to make people think that the only way to fulfil one's existence is to follow the path of the organization" (Kaulingfreks, 2005: 38). The point that Kaulingfreks makes is *not* that management is evil in absolute terms. In fact, he ends up asking: how can we get rid of all this goodness? The point is rather to make us reflect upon the inherent consequences of what certain kinds of labelling and rhetoric do to us. Thus, seeing something (sometimes even unconsciously) as an intrinsic good or evil is according to his view truly bad. With this paper we want to bring about reflection about the inherent goodness in the discourse of love by raising the question: What does it mean when people at work are offered to take part in a discourse of love?

The article echoes Watson (2001) view on management as a 'social and moral activity', but it does so at a conceptual level, thereby calling into question the place and role of ethics in the management of human resources. Is exhibiting love the 'good' treatment that ensures devoted and passionate employees? The first part of the paper, 'Love in HRM', explores how contemporary workplace politics and practice is fuelled by a rhetoric of love and what consequences this rhetoric has for the working subject. This is made probable by investigating recent HRM literature and its critics to see how the discourse of love is constituted as well as questioning the inherent presumptions of love as an act of goodness. As such, we follow Townley (1998) and Steyaert and Janssens (1999) by not beginning our analysis with idealised models (HRM, Ethics, the Human) and go in search for practices, but rather to examine how practices structure social relations, in this case how the employee relates to oneself in the discourse of love. The second part of the paper, 'Making Love Fragile', challenges the traditional definition of the concept of love used in the HRM literature. Based on the moral philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, it attempts to reflect on the discussion of love and consider how love might be linked to desire, alterity and infinity. By making love fragile in its dealing with desire, we aim at providing alternative ways to think love for people at work. By questioning the concept of love, we designate the present 'illness' of turning human beings into loving, caring, unifying assets and resources and hereby call for a bringing back of the human to HRM.

1 *The World in Love Centre for Hearts and Love* is a Danish based company, established in 2005. The Centre holds lectures and arranges seminar series for private as well as professional purposes. In 2005 they drew up "Five promises to your heart" to support people who want their hearts to guide their lives. The five promises to your heart are: "1: To listen to your heart 2: To be faithful to yourself and the truth 3: To live according to your innermost values 4: To live out the meaning of your life 5: To show love whenever you feel it – and to accept it, when it is given to you" (World-in-love, 2007, authors' own translation).

Love in HRM

Most current HRM discourse stresses coaching, developing and empowering in order to do 'good' and care for the 'well-being' of the employees and the company in which they work (Salaman *et al.*, 2005; Storey, 2001). From the company's desire to do good employees are expected to account for themselves. 'Tell me all about you – even the bad stuff – and we will help you. If we know you, and you know yourself, we can plan and manage your work life together' (for popular literature on coaching see e.g. Covey, 1999; Loehr and Tony, 2003; Lundin *et al.*, 2001; Peters, 1997). This view on HRM is explicitly related to a discourse of love by Andersen and Born (2001; 2005; 2007). Kunda and Van Maanen (1999) likewise describe a code of love, but also provide a critical counterpoint to its positive effects or inherent ethical tone: "the imagery of love and marriage fades into obscurity, replaced by short-term affairs and one-night stands" (1999: 73). Without explicitly labelling it 'love', several other authors express a critical voice towards this emphasis on empowerment and self-management being an act of care for the employee's well-being – or love as we call it. It has for example been argued that this approach easily leads to stress (Casey, 1999), burnouts (Barley and Kunda, 1999) and cynicism and scepticism (Van Maanen, 1991). Although this approach has advertised empowerment and greater freedom for the employee, Fleming and Sturdy (2007) claim that it instead amounts to another form of control since it exposes more of the employees' self to the organization. In a similar manner Kunda and Van Maanen (1999) report respondents saying that they feel swallowed by culture.

Legge (1999) also belongs to this line of criticism as she questions the human and inhuman sides of HRM by exploring how organizational life is represented by two different metaphors: the market and the community. In the market metaphor, the human becomes customer, commodity and resource and in the community metaphor the human is portrayed as a member of a team and a family, respectively. These images of organizational life coexist and overlap one another, but with very different ethical consequences. When the organization takes on the role of the family, the discourse of love is given specific propitious conditions. Legge paints a family portrait suggesting the role of the father (fulfilled by management) is to have control over the children (non-managerial employees) and with the HR function playing the motherly image of the man-in-the-middle to reconcile matters and make ends meet. Without discussing the politics of the gendered language further, she recognises this to be a somewhat rigid hierarchical and idealised model of organizational life, albeit still very common (Legge, 1999: 253). While paternalism might prevail, one could ask what this organizational family portrait might look like in today's era of civil partnerships, mass divorce, and single mothers and fathers. Perhaps the question should not be how the self can be contemplated as a family member in organizational life, but how the familiar discourse of love constitutes a subject centred on itself? And what possibilities this subject has in this discourse?

On the downside of being proclaimed as a family member according to Legge is that the employee risks being subordinated to paternal love and control. However, according to Andersen and Born (2007), the supposed advantages of the discourse of love within HRM does not mean that the employee simply loves the organization, as a man would

love his wife or children, but that the conditions for how one can become a (successful and competent) employee are altered.

In a number of texts based on a comprehensive study of archival data from Danish governmental services, Andersen and Born (2001; 2005; 2007) suggest the coming of a 'code of live' as a result of specific changes in the semantics used about the employee. From seeing the human as a public servant taking part in a legal system sustaining themselves as legal persons, the authors argue that employees are today exposed to a discourse of love in which they are expected to value themselves as human material with certain potentials with the aim of becoming specialised generalists. There is a displacement from the juridical subject of the civil servant to the specialised generalist via the import of the employee as human potential. The specialised generalist does not only direct attention inward at the office and employee function but also outwards in a self-managing reflection at the bureau and its place in a larger societal context. A concomitant displacement in content is at play from fidelity for life, loyalty, diligence, and formal qualifications of the civil servant to the flexibility, mobility, and knowledge of the broader societal development of the generalised specialist (Andersen and Born, 2001: 74). This change is installed via a change in semantics evolving with the employee who assumes responsibility via sound judgement, capacity for emotional contact and empathy.

This change in semantics of the employee is not only reflected in the alteration of the self's view of the organization (from inward to outward directed) but also in the coming of a new sense of subjectivity in which the perfect functioning of the organization as a whole (and the role of the subject herein) should work as a lighthouse guiding one's actions. Thus Andersen and Born speak of the responsibility-assuming and responsibility-seeking employee. This desire for development is directed at 'managing' the inner self of the working subject. But it also relies on the human subject to know itself, and display management by special techniques (like coaching, interviews and assessment exercises) in order to be able to give an account of oneself. However, as Judith Butler (2005: 12) points out, to tell a story about oneself is not the same as giving an account of oneself. The account is based on narratives, but also draws upon effects like voice and authority directed towards an external audience with an element of persuasion. Much like Andersen and Born, Butler argues that the process of accounting for oneself opens up an endless field in which norms, technologies and frameworks can be utilised to assess the performance of the subject. But where Butler explores how this process of accounting for oneself can be seen as an ethical question, Andersen and Born seem to neglect this debate, partly due to their theoretical grounding in systems theory in which "there cannot be more or less appropriate engagement and commitment, it is either-or" (Andersen and Born, 2007: 46). We will return to the role of ethics in the next part of the paper, and for now centre on how the discourse of love is said to work and function within HRM practice. In their recent paper, Andersen and Born propose that,

- a) passion becomes a management medium in the form of an expectation about the passionate employee, b) an organizational semantic is developed in order to make passion observable, c) technologies are developed for the preservation of employees' passion maintenance, d) the employment contracts are changed so that they take on the form of self-contract. (Andersen and Born, 2007: 42; numbering added)

When the family relationship that Legge mentions is turned into an emotional membership in the discourse of love sustained by HRM rhetoric, new management problems arise. As especially Townley (1993; 1994; 1998) has been keen to point out, there is an indissoluble link between the idea of managing the subject at work and issues of power, discipline and subjugation. In a reading that relies heavily on Foucault, she states “power is the desire to know” and the “individual is one of power’s prime effects” (Townley, 1993: 521ff). She concludes that “the rationale of HRM is to create the individual as an analysable, describable subject to be assessed, judged, measured and compared” (Townley, 1993: 535). This leads her to quote McGregor saying that no one knows the individual better than itself (which apparently should be a problem to be taken care of by management). We join Butler in arguing quite the contrary: the human subject will never be able to give a full account of itself. In fact, we direct attention to the “ethical importance that follows from the limits that condition any effort one might make to give an account of oneself” (Butler, 2005: 21). What is interesting though is that the discourse of love invokes an image of ‘tough love’ in which the knowing of oneself and the self-sacrifice for the greater common good is seen as a prerequisite (Legge, 1999: 253; Legge, 2005: 127). As Legge has it, ‘care’ for the individual appears essentially as a respect for the employee’s ability to be developed in ways that the organization deems appropriate. By the use of HRM rhetoric, human care and concern for the employee and the logic of free market forces meet. But isn’t this just business? Is this not simply the providing of the best economic opportunities for the wealth and prosperity for both company and individual? As Legge and others show, in the discourse of HRM the company’s interest and those of the employee are equated. By the logic of the free market “tough decisions may be made in loving concern for the employees the company wishes to retain, who depends on its survival and growth” (Legge, 2005: 128). This is so even though it implies that inadequate individuals might be seen as an opportunity cost, subject to so-called treatments of ‘outplacing’, ‘downsizing’, ‘rightsizing’, ‘manpower transfer’, ‘headcount reduction’ and even ‘workforce reprofiling’ (Legge, 2005; see also Keenoy and Anthony, 1992). But is this treatment a truly loving care? Is the discourse of love truly good when it can be used to sack people and even further present these actions as both positive and most rational?

Love as the Greatest Evil?

Though until now it has remained unmentioned, the commentators of the discourse of love do acknowledge and address (some of) the ethical issues underpinning HRM rhetoric. Legge (1999) discusses both Kantian and Aristotelian notions of ethics, which she respectively labels individualistic and collectivistic and in Storey (2001) an entire chapter is devoted to the ‘place of ethics in HRM’. Nevertheless, the way ethics are dealt with in these texts do little other than make reference to and stress the importance of us bearing in mind the vast body of ethical knowledge. Thus, ‘big words’ (utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics) and ‘big names’ (Mill, Kant, Aristotle) are often pointed to, but the consequences not really analysed in detail. As Jones *et al.* (2005: 18) reminds us: “the usefulness of such grand language should not be underestimated, since it can be sufficiently obscure to impress and since it allows the business ethicist to sound fairly clever.” Indeed, one could analyse the above notion of

the loving human in HRM as an ethical concept built on Aristotelian virtue ethics (and variations hereof). However, what we want to do is to go beyond these grand categories and *question* the role of ethics and its consequences inherent in the discourse of love in HRM. But before we go any further, let us take a look at the ethical aspect of the love discourse and how it comes to be an ethical problem in the first place. The argument, as presented in the love discourse, goes something like this.

On the one hand. The company defines the virtuous characters of the employees, expects them to manage their development and personal growth themselves and become responsible for their own virtuousness. In a similar way, the organization shows its love for the employees (via techniques of coaching etc.) and inspires them to open up and tell them who they are, how they can be a whole person and make use of that wholeness in the organizational context. In this way, the organization commits itself to behaving ethically and believes to be caring for the employees, and their right to be free, whole persons, responsible for their own life and living. *On the other hand.* The disadvantage of this so-called love is an increased job-insecurity caused by the vast amount of opportunities, job-rotations and employee turnover, as well as an individualised responsibility to fail (see for example Fleming and Sturdy, 2007). On this view, choices are personal and not organizational, which means that the individual is now being held responsible instead of management. This puts pressure on the employees to involve themselves and make the right decisions; a pressure which can provoke anxiety (Casey, 1999; Salecl, 2004). The paradox according to Legge (1999: 256) is that the more organizations in this way value the whole person as a resource, the more it leads to its consumption rather than its development. The pressure to involve one's whole person often leads to stress or a fear of failing (Casey, 1999; Salecl, 2004); employees cannot be developed on this basis but are rather consumed by expectations the company holds of them. Now, what is good and what is bad here (or even evil, as Kaulingfreks would have it)?

In fact can this self-evident 'goodness' be questioned and turned upside down, mistaken for wickedness instead? In performing what organizations believe to be acts of pure goodness, don't they risk ultimately consuming the employees as individual human beings, leaving them stressed and burned-out? We often take for granted that we can distinguish clearly between good and bad, hero and villain. In turning good and evil upside down and questioning the self-evident goodness we often take for granted, Kaulingfreks (2005: 38) points out that "there has never been so much evil as that which is done in the name of goodness for mankind – in the name of care for the other", and Žižek (2003: 23) follows a similar line when he argues that "the ultimate source of evil is compassion itself".

On this view, we emphasise the importance of questioning and doubt; an act of goodness might very well be an act of evil. So we should question whether the concept of love in HRM really is a self-evident good. In fact, we argue that in this discourse of love, care for the well-being of the employee in a sense might have the potential of becoming the greatest evil. Care for the other is argued for as an act of love, but risks becoming a sign of mistrust and assimilation; employees are supposed to aspire to the needs of the organization and give to it their whole person. However, they might end up experiencing the love shown from the organization as turned into a unifying act of

assimilation – that wants to own you; absorb you, direct you to its needs – all in the name of love.

In this way, we argue along with Andersen and Born that the discourse of love imbues work-life with an intimacy. The loving rhetoric of HRM is installed in order to make the organization flexible, and make the demands of the employee and the organization meet so as to create one, whole, aligned unity. Where we differ from Andersen and Born is that we question love as an extension of oneself and the possibility to tell what is good from what is bad. Andersen and Born (forthcoming) argue that “the system of love” is constituted by “the binary code of love: loves me/loves me not in which it is obviously better to be loved than not to be loved”. In this way the exterior world gets internalised and reduced into the one and only perfect love. When confronted with the (in the Christian world so common) idea of the One love, one (sic) should always be open to doubt and questioning. Listen to Kristeva’s almost total reversal of the Christian notion of the One love.²

What a violent, all-consuming, impetuous love! It thinks only of itself, lacks interest in anything else, despises all, is satisfied with itself! It confuses stations, disregards manners, knows no bounds. Proprieties, reason, decency, prudence, judgment are defeated and reduced to slavery. (Sermon on the Song of Songs 79:1, in Kristeva, 1987: 151)

Her main message is that love is not necessarily an act of goodness. Love can be violent, narcissistic, consuming the beloved and therefore risks ending up in a form of slavery. Is this the kind of love HRM is looking for? In the following we reflect on the concept of love, make it fragile, and suggest an alternative view on love intertwined with desire, alterity and infinity.

Making Love Fragile

When we think of a happy, harmonious society, we most likely imagine it built on love. Love is said to exalt us, exceed us and bring joy. However, as we learned from Kaulingfreks love is not always necessarily good; love is not always nice and beautiful. Love hurts just as well as brings joy. Indeed, as Kristeva (1987: 2) says, it “never dwells in us without burning us”. Kristeva furthermore points out that instead of being associated with understanding, joy and calmness, passionate love can also be equated with the delirium, disengagement, and breach of the same. Inspired by this questioning of the inherent goodness of love, we want to reflect on the concept of love, open it up for discussion, and thus to question the inherent ethical goodness and healing value ascribed to love. In a sense, we want to make the concept fragile, disconnect it from its safe anchoring in care and goodness and make it vulnerable (open to wounding). We now take a brief historical glance at the concept of love, which we use as point of departure for opening up the phenomena.

2 “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (New International Bible, 2007).

Our understanding of love in modern society still to a significant degree rests on the classical perspective of Christian love. The epitome of Christian love is often said to stem from the book of Matthew, where Jesus says: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “Love your neighbour as yourself”. These are the two commandments on which all the Law and the Prophets hang (Matthew 22, 36-40). But as Nygren (1982) reminds us, Christian love through God’s relationship with mankind can be assembled by two concepts, delivered to us from the ancient Greeks: *Agape* and *Eros*. *Agape* denotes a love given freely, and is based on the character of the one loving rather than any merit in the object of love. *Eros*, on the other hand, typifies the Greek philosophy of Aristotle, Plato and the Gnostics, and denotes an acquisitive love, which responds and aspires to the beauty or finite perfection of its object. Today, Nygren argues, Christians, and Western thought influenced by Christianity, have tended to view love as *Eros*. But whereas in the Greek *polis* *Eros* aimed at the citizen’s happiness, Christian love is a love for all one’s fellow men, including not only one’s kin and the righteous but also enemies and sinners. It is a love of charity and mercifulness: a sort of disinterested gift where everyone is to be loved as we love ourselves (Kristeva, 1987). This all seems very admirable.

However, we see some problems when modern organising and HRM take up such a concept. In this type of love the self is firmly the centre of reference. The beloved will be loved as one loves oneself and this love of self thereby becomes a prototype of any other love. In this sense loving as oneself rests on notions of proximity and similarity and holds an identifying purpose of sameness. Kristeva goes so far as claiming that there is a sort of narcissism in the ontology of love. After all, often this good and kind love ends up erasing the differences between lovers. In erasing the differences between myself and the Other, the Other is roughly turned into an intermediary for the diffusion of the Other good in myself, of myself into the Other as good (Kristeva, 1987). Kristeva is clearly critical towards this identifying perspective on love and would most likely agree with Badiou (1996: 39), who points out that love is not the “prostration of the same on the altar of the other”. On this view, the Other is consumed by my love, and I am consumed by the Other – we become one.

Following Kristeva, we don’t see love as a kind of final stage of purified affect, but rather as a much more violent concept; love ruptures, it jolts you. To love another must also be to recognise the beloved’s differences, to be open to the differences the beloved holds and, most importantly, to be ready to be changed by the encounter with this difference. Love should not only be viewed as an extension of love for myself, as a feeling that identifies, assembles and accumulates. Instead, “in the rapture of love, the limits of one’s own identity vanish, at the same time that the precision of reference and meaning becomes blurred in love’s discourse” (Levinas, 1987a: 2). Love is an interruption; it changes the person that loves. Isn’t it just as Žižek says, “When I fall violently and passionately in love, my balance is disturbed, the course of my life is derailed” (Žižek, 2003: 113).

In other words, the unifying love of *Eros* might entail devotion, but leaves out that which jolts, interrupts, and disturbs. Such a love that jolts, interrupts and disturbs would rather be based on infinite desire, not with the aim of finite perfection. Bataille among others reminds us of the importance of desire in a discourse of love. Where Christian

love makes you want to preserve the moment, desire is the opposite, that is, it always implies a certain disorder (Bataille, 1986: 170). On this view desire would be what interrupts love, makes it fragile and introduce difference into identity. But what is love without desire?

What is Love without Desire?

O'Shea (2002: 931) differentiates between negative and productive desire by stating that "[productive] desire is an opening up to difference; it is the capacity to affect and be affected that offers potential for social improvement and progress and is thus affirmative". We will argue that this affirmative notion of desire is capable of making love in HRM fragile, make it tremble and fill it with fear, and thereby capable of rupturing our world. In this sense rapture and rupture are linked, rapture might lead to rupture. Though more interested in Bataille, O'Shea (2002) acknowledges the importance of the work of Levinas in relation to a productive and affirmative discussion of desire. We will take up this idea especially because Levinas treats desire in an ethical perspective, which makes it possible for us to reconnect the discussion on love and desire to ethics and the acts of care and goodness, which was our initial point of departure. Levinas' work reveals an affirmative desire that places the subject of desire into a relationship with an Other. Levinasian desire thereby confronts two subjects in an encounter and acknowledges that both become other and therefore altered through the experience of desire. In fact, desire for Levinas is exactly a longing for an ethical encounter with the Other.

Through his reflection on desire, Levinas also questions the stable connotation many concepts of love hold. Levinas calls most traditional views on love for "the most egoist and cruellest of needs" (1961: 254), as love on these views turns into a search for an unobtainable fulfilment, which is doomed to failure. If it is ever satisfied, the desired object is lost. If love in this way is focused only on the lover and the beloved uniting as the long lost one, it comes to exist as though they were alone in the world. In this sense, love makes us blind to the respect towards the third person (Levinas, 1987a: 31). Even though similarities are rarely found, here Žižek in fact says something similar, which supports Levinas' point: "The only way to have an intense and fulfilling personal (sexual) relationship is not for the couple to look into each other's eyes, forgetting about the world around them, but, while holding hands, to look together outside, at a third point" (Žižek, 2003: 38). Badiou (1996: 38) also rejects love as a fusion, as love for him does not make a One out of a structured relationship between two. Because love is never limited to the two becoming a one, it is not even an experience of the Other; it is rather an experience of the world. In this sense the experience of the loving subject, never constitutes a specific knowledge of what love is.

Over all, it can be said that in a Levinasian approach, love goes beyond the beloved (Levinas, 1961: 254). A love that goes beyond the beloved holds the possibility for the Other to be loved and to be an object of a need while still retaining a level of alterity. In fact, it is a desire for what is not yet, and thereby exactly not only about the two in love, the couple, but about a third point, that which is not yet, which can be said to be the

very idea of personal development. The ethical responsibility therefore always reminds me of every other Other, and makes me look to the third (Levinas, 1993: 181ff). For Levinas it becomes a matter of desire for what the Other's otherness can bring about in me.

Otherness challenges me, empties me of myself and keeps on emptying me by showing me ever new resources. I did not know I was so rich, but I don't have the right to keep anything anymore. Is the Desire for Others appetite or generosity? (Levinas, 2003: 30)

In this quote, Levinas not only tells us that otherness challenges the self, but also that it empties the self. Opening up to the Other's world makes me richer in thought than ever, but is frustrating, since the thoughts are not mine to keep. In the ethical encounter with the Other, I am not acquiring the Other's person; the Other cannot even give it to me out of love. Levinas, therefore, asks the rather rhetorical question, whether the ethical encounter is based on generosity or appetite. For Levinas I may be fulfilling a need simultaneously with desiring the infinity of the Other, that is, the very ungraspability of the Other. The question therefore insinuates that the ethical relation with the Other is not only about morally serving the Other, it is also about my desire for the Other's otherness. To show genuine interest in the Other's otherness with the purpose of being inspired and renewed – inseminated with new thought (Levinas, 1961: 219). Therefore, in answering Levinas' question, the ethical encounter is bound to start as generosity. If it started as appetite, it would be reduced to pure egoism, a longing to possess what is inside the Other's head. Instead generosity stems from a genuine ethical response to the Other's face – a welcoming of otherness based on a desire for infinity – not to consume the other's thoughts.

Desire and Infinity

Following Linstead (2005), we argue that a Levinasian notion of desire raises the question of relational ethics and generosity instead of self-identity and self-management, learning and development instead of domination and consumption. Desire is, in a Levinasian style, a desire for the infinity of the Other. That is, desire consists in thinking more than is thought, where the Other's status as ungraspable and unassimilable is maintained (Levinas, 2003). The alterity of the infinite is thereby not cancelled; it is not erased in the thought that thinks it. "In thinking infinity, the I from the first *thinks more than it thinks*. Infinity does not enter into the *idea* of infinity, is not grasped, this idea is not a concept. The infinite is the radically, absolutely, Other" (Levinas, 1987a: 54). In this way the conversion of ontological infinity into ethical infinity broadens the meaning of infinity. It signifies my infinite separation from the other; the fact that the Other infinitely surpasses my idea of the other. In contrast, an object we attempt to know is integrated into the identity of the same, that is in assimilation I make of the other a theme, and it becomes a property or a victim (Levinas, 1987a: 54ff). What Levinas teaches us here is that in treating the Other ethically, the Other can never be thematised and turned into a property or appropriated through a discourse of love. To be ethical is to leave room for differences, undecidability, absurdity and play. In fact, ethicality is not subjection and consumption, but rather interruption and change.

According to Levinas, the ethical act is always an interruption, a disturbance and a calling into question of common sense (Levinas, 1961: 43). Ethics is therefore not accomplished as loving the other as oneself. The notion of loving the other as oneself and the identifying practices inherent therein cannot be ethical at all because it has nothing to do with our original experience of the other as Other. Instead, the notion of desire and its relation with infinity becomes of great importance in our discussion of the ethicality of the discourse of love. The relation between desire and infinity has the potential to broaden the concept of love. In a desire for infinity there has to be a thought that is more than it understands, more than its capacity. “To understand more than one understands, to think more than one thinks, to think of what withdraws from thought, is to desire” (Levinas, 1987a: 72). A desire for infinity is a desire renewed in the encounter with the desirable; it is productive. Even though desire is some kind of absence it is an absence other than the void of an abstract nothingness (Levinas, 1961: 256), instead it refers to the not yet – the future. Desire, in a Levinasian sense therefore permits itself to be appealed to by the absolutely irreducible exteriority of the Other, and because of the irreducible exteriority of the other it can never be satisfied. This desire without satisfaction acknowledges exactly the alterity of the Other. Moral consciousness is therefore essentially unsatisfied, or again is always desire. In fact ‘unsatisfaction’ of conscience concurs with desire. “The desire for infinity does not have the sentimental complacency of love, but the rigor of moral exigency” (Levinas, 1987a: 59).

With this notion of a productive desire, love crosses the barrier of what both Badiou (1996: 47) and Kristeva (1987) refer to as narcissism. “It is firstly at the point of desire that love fractures the One in order that the supposition of the Two might occur” (Badiou, 1996: 47). That is, if we allow narcissistic love to be interrupted by the infinity of desire we open up for a more productive concept. This is a form of love that does not try to heal and appropriate the employee, but one that sees goodness in exposing the self to critical wounding (Levinas, 1974: 49). It is a concept that allows for the subjectification of the employee to happen exactly in the paradox of ethics. And to follow Badiou (1996) love does not relieve this paradox it lives from it. It is a love where the desire for the unknowable Other is a moral responsibility.

Concluding Discussion

We began by discussing what it means when employees are offered to take part in a discourse of love. We have shown how this discourse works and how it is strengthened with the rhetoric of HRM. The rationale of HRM is to form the employee as an analysable, describable subject to be assessed, judged, measured and compared (Townley, 1993: 535). But it goes further: through a discourse of love this creation is justified as ethical. ‘Love’ for the employee becomes a respect for the employees’ ability to be developed in ways that the organization deems appropriate. We have raised the question of whether this love for the other is good. Through a questioning of the attempt to differentiate sharply between good and evil, we claim that the ongoing discourse of love in HRM is not necessarily an act of goodness, as it easily invokes an

image of 'tough love' in which self sacrifice for the greater good of the community is seen as a prerequisite.

Rather, the HRM discourse of love has the opposite effect of the one it is intended to have. HRM sets up the goal of freedom and empowerment, but ends up performing a unifying control – what Fleming and Sturdy (2007) call neo-normative control. Recent critiques of the discourse of love (Andersen, 2001; 2005; 2007; Bauman, 2003; 2007) foresee a world of resentment, in which not much free space, if any, is given to the employee. Thus, if we are to take the message of discourse of love in HRM seriously, and to see it as more than yet another attempt to control and manipulate the employee, it should be possible to be passionate and show one's enthusiasm in multiple ways. The discourse in HRM needs to get beyond the Christian claim that one should "love thy neighbour as yourself". If love is a consciousness of the other, the other is identifiable in consciousness as the same – not an Other. In this process of sameness, the beloved will be loved as one loves oneself and this love of self thereby becomes a prototype of any other love; the 'Oneself' is stretched out to also include neighbours, foreigners and even sinners. What would it mean for HRM if we opened up the discourse of love to a much more violent concept; a concept where love ruptures. Love is never a fusion; love does not make a 'one' out of a structured relationship between two. Love is not a striving for a same. Love instead signifies a paradox; a paradox not relieved by management – especially if management is evil.

To open up the discussion of love in HRM – and seek a concept that does not have the same assimilating and unifying connotation as Christian love – we introduce Levinasian desire. Desire, following Levinas, is a desire for the infinity of the Other, where the Other's status as ungraspable and inassimilable is maintained. Love, in this status of infinity, holds the possibility for the Other to be loved and to be an object of a need while still retaining a level of alterity. In fact, ethical responsibility to the Other is the origin for every desire for what is not yet, for that which is not yet, which can be said to be the very idea of personal development. By reflecting on the concept of love utilised in HRM, we have opened it up for a discussion that has questioned the inherent ethical goodness and healing value inherent in the HRM discourse of love. We follow Levinas and argue that to be truly ethical we should dare to leave our shelter and expose ourselves to critical wounding. Love should not unify, it should also expose our vulnerability.

It is therefore not love's ethical responsibility to heal the wound. Instead, it is the ethical responsibility of desire to always keep the wound open. After all, productivity happens exactly in the exposure of the wound; not in the closure of healing. This is why, we, on behalf of the discourse of love in HRM, still dare to have high hopes, joyfully proclaiming: In the name of love let's remember desire. But as Levinas (2000: 174) asks: "how is a *suffering* possible as a *passion*?" How can HRM justify its transformation into a discourse that instead of relying on words like 'love', 'freedom', 'empowerment', 'self-management' and 'flexibility' relies on words like 'vulnerability', 'wounding', 'infinity' and 'desire'? The answer is that through my passion I can make my vulnerability constructive. Employees are not rational beings, whose passions are to be managed by the organization. Instead, through my openness to the call of the Other, I can allow the wound to be constructive, because only by exposing myself and allowing

for wounding can I truly change. The wound doesn't stop me, doesn't limit my endeavour. The minute the wound is closed, I settle, I deny interruption, I deny the Other.

In this way, HRM needs to keep its wound open, that is, acknowledge the limits to full accountability and the impossibility of fully managing and controlling its employees. As Keenoy (2007) has argued: "HRM emerged more than 20 years ago on an agenda of thinking the employee relationship differently: promoting emancipation, freedom and progress, today the employment relationship has disappeared as a theoretical focus within HRM." Our aim with this paper was to bring back the *human* to human resource management, this time in the shape of the irreducible, unassimilable Other. Perhaps HRM will no longer be able to know itself, if it took on the Levinasian critique. But if so, our aim with this paper has been successful. With this paper we suggest a theorisation of the employee relationship that breaks with what has become HRM tradition: the shared interest between company and employee. We have shown that the discourse of love can just as well be evil as good. To make it good, the infinite difference of the other must be remembered. We propose to inject a bit of vulnerability into HRM. Only in keeping the wound open and remembering the impossibility of achieving freedom through unity can HRM become truly ethical and open to the Other. The Other can never be reduced to my consciousness of the Other's passions. The Other is always before my consciousness of the existence of the Other, and that is before my own consciousness. The Other, who is always before rules, who always already haunts me, calls me into question. This is why HRM in its endeavour to be ethical should abandon the sentimental concept of a unifying love and open up to the rigorousness of infinite desire.

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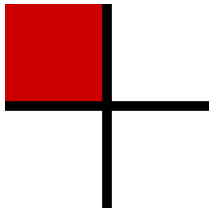
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Hallward's Strangely Elegant Car Crash

Rowland Curtis

review of:

Hallward, Peter (2006) *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation*. London: Verso. (PB: pp. 199, £14.99, ISBN: 1-84467-555-6)

Reading Hallward

This was an enjoyable book to read. Somehow, multiple and disparate parts of Deleuze's corpus have been brought together into a systematic and approachable handful of clear and illuminating chapters. Difficult and obscure ideas are presented with clarity and fluidity, and situated with a certain mastery and rhythm among Deleuze's various philosophical contemporaries and forebears. The extensive pages of footnotes provide detailed and meticulous page references, comments and qualifications to the text in a way that allows the main body of the book to flow, while accompanying it with a consistent and impressive scholarly rigour that is admirable and sets a high standard for Deleuze scholarship to-come. The overall effect of the text on this reader was a hint of the atmosphere of wonder and imagination that has often been one of the great pleasures with reading Deleuze's philosophy, and the small Verso paperback edition, with swirling shades of blue and white on its cover had the effect at times of picking up a story-book and being carried away with Hallward into his Deleuze. And Hallward indeed has a story about Deleuze to tell, some might say a fantasy, which we are told will take us "right to the heart of Deleuze's philosophy" (p. 1). For those of us who like our stories with surprise endings however, Hallward disappoints, giving the end to his story upfront. In his Introduction Hallward sums up the book's argument, that Deleuze's philosophy is what he calls 'extra-worldly' (p. 3). For Hallward,

Rather than a philosopher of nature, history or the world, rather than any sort of 'fleshy materialist', Deleuze is most appropriately read as a spiritual, redemptive or subtractive thinker, a thinker preoccupied with the mechanics of dis-embodiment and de-materialisation. Deleuze's philosophy is oriented by lines of flight that lead out of the world; though not other-worldly, it is extra-worldly. (p. 3)

In this concern of Hallward's with the neglect of the 'worldly', we might hear echoes here of debates within organization studies relating to the claim to represent or engage with the realities of organization: from those who place the emphasis on what have been called the insistent 'structural' and 'material' realities of organization (e.g. Reed, 1997),

to those who rather look to the role of language in the construction of such realities (e.g. Chia, 2003) – or, even, what others have considered to be the unrepresentability of the Real in our the perverse relationship between organization and the symbolic (e.g. Contu, 2006). Hallward's concern for the 'worldly' can also be seen to have an implicit relevance beyond the concerns of contemporary 'Deleuze studies', to the broader ways we interrogate our own intellectual practices, and the extent to which they may or may not be adequate to the political and organizational realities of the world 'out there'; or furthermore, to the haunting question of what being 'in' (an) 'organization' might mean (cf. O'Doherty, 2007: 27).

In terms of how Hallward's story progresses, in the opening chapter, Hallward sets up his understanding of Deleuze's ontology of the virtual, moving on in the second chapter to make a case for the priority of the virtual over the actual in Deleuze's philosophy. The third chapter then describes the notion of the 'anti-creativity' of actual 'creatings' (e.g. p. 63), moving on in the fourth chapter to the theme of the 'recovery' of the creative through processes of 'counter-actualisation'. The fifth and sixth chapters discuss the role of art and philosophy, respectively, in movements of 'redemption' from the actual back to the unity of the virtual, moving on in the Conclusion to what he understands to be the political import of his reading. Hallward's final judgement, as he concludes in the final words of the book, is that, for all the inspirational qualities of Deleuze's philosophy, "those of us who still seek to change our world and to empower its inhabitants will need to look for our inspiration elsewhere" (p. 164).

Hallward and Badiou

This Deleuze-story of Hallward's will come as a surprise to some; for others, it could even administer 'a shock to thought' (Massumi, 2001). For those who haven't been aware of its reception among Deleuze scholars, among its first reviewers there has been a recognition of elements of distinctiveness and originality in Hallward's reading; even timeliness. For John Protevi for example, Hallward's text is a 'fine work', which, in pointing out what are considered by Hallward to be the errors of Deleuze, it "forces you to think" and forces one "to go back to Deleuze with a fresh eye" (2007: 1) – an indicator for Protevi of "the maturation of philosophical work on Deleuze" (*ibid.*). For Jason Read, meanwhile, Hallward's book "represents something of an event in the Anglo-American reception of Deleuze" (2006: 1). For Read,

Whereas for years the dominant trend of writing on Gilles Deleuze (and Félix Guattari) has been a series of 'guides' and 'introductions' to the dense and perplexing philosophy of Deleuze, Hallward's book is, by contrast, a critical engagement, even a polemic. (*ibid.*)

And in a manner of speaking, Hallward's engagement is indeed critical, indicating upfront his intention to 'help us consider anew' Deleuze's various concepts and notions – a Deleuzian conceptual lexicon that for Hallward has become "casually familiar while often remaining unhelpfully arcane" (p. 2). It can also be said that Hallward also makes an impressive reading of Deleuze across his different works, creating what some might call a transversal line through the different stages of his intellectual transformations, and which is arguably one of Hallward's most distinctive and impressive achievements here.

It would seem however, that, perhaps to its detriment, Hallward's reading of Deleuze exists in the shadow of another secondary reading published six years earlier, surely the text most deserving of the title of a disruptive event in the Anglo-American reception of Deleuze: Louise Burchill's translation of Alain Badiou's *Deleuze: La Clameur de l'Etre* (2000 [1997]).

Badiou's interpretation has been described as having had "the effect of a bomb" on Deleuze scholarship,¹ in terms of its evaluation of Deleuze as 'an aristocrat of thought', and as a 'physicist' in the pre-Socratic tradition (2000: 102). At the core of Badiou's reading is the judgement that, "Deleuze's fundamental problem is most certainly not [as previously thought] to liberate the multiple but to submit thinking to a renewed concept of the One" (2000: 10). It is the influence of this other text that will mean that for some, Hallward's arguments will have a faint but persistent tinnitus-like ring of familiarity about them, and it is in the aftermath of Badiou's controversial reading of Deleuze's philosophy that Hallward's reading is perhaps best understood. Indeed, a fairly good case could be made that Hallward's (re)interpretation of Deleuze directly builds upon and takes forward core elements of Badiou's radical reading – a reading which can be seen to have inspired Hallward's evaluation of Deleuze's philosophy as being extra-worldly. The plausibility of such an interpretation of Hallward's work would seem to also be affirmed by Hallward's status as one of the most thorough and affirmative readers of Badiou's work, as demonstrated in his two substantial books on Badiou (Hallward, 2003; 2004), and by his translation of Badiou's *Ethics* (2002), with Hallward describing Badiou's reading of Deleuze as both "concise and illuminating" (p. 86). In his other writing, Hallward has at times engaged critically with Badiou's work, so it is perhaps disappointing to find that he appears to have been so strongly influenced here by Badiou's forceful reading. It should perhaps be stressed here though, that in its tone and balance, this review is intended to provide an affective engagement with Hallward's text, with the intention of stimulating those who haven't yet read it to seek out the book for themselves; and, for those already familiar, to stimulate debate and to shake up settled evaluations, hopefully bringing the reader back to reconsider Hallward's arguments and to reassess his controversial conclusions. As a result, the review will be taking up certain themes and ideas that are seen to characterise Hallward's reading, while not intended to be comprehensive in its treatment of the text in its detail – a sort of letter to a harsh critic, if you will (cf. Deleuze, 1992). In terms of the layout of the review then, in the next section we will begin by considering what will be posited as Hallward's Badiouan understanding of the Deleuzian virtual and its consequences, before moving on to what will be seen as his inheritance of the notion of a 'monotony' in Deleuze's work. We will then appraise Hallward's call for a separate register of the political, taking a closer look at his representation of Deleuze's essay 'Desert islands', drawing some wider conclusions of our own regarding the tenor of Hallward's Deleuze encounter.

1 Comment by Wlad Godzich, University of Geneva, cited on the rear cover of Badiou's *Deleuze* (2000).

The Virtual

To begin with Hallward's relationship to Deleuze's much discussed Bergsonian-derived concept of the virtual, it is with some reluctance that we observe a recurring implication throughout Hallward's text that Deleuze's interest in the 'virtual' must mean that he is not interested in what Hallward might call the 'actual world'. Such an interpretation of Hallward's would seem disappointingly wayward given the impressively detailed work of reading that Hallward has clearly conducted of Deleuze's writings. Meanwhile, Hallward's reading of the primacy of the virtual – and Hallward's associated 'theophanic' thesis – can be seen to be based upon elements that have been carried over from Badiou's earlier critique of Deleuze.² We can see this influence perhaps most clearly in Chapter Two of Hallward's text, where he makes the case for "the unqualified dependence of the actual on the virtual" (p. 47), and represents Deleuze's philosophy as one whereby "the virtual alone is constituent" (p. 37). Hallward also makes a connection here with his 'theophanic' thesis – which in turn would be true to Badiou's reading of Deleuze as submitting thinking to a "renewed concept of the One" (2000: 10) – suggesting that we might 'cautiously' call the pure impulse or élan of the virtual "a sort of virtual creator" (p. 37). This leads Hallward to conclusions in this chapter such as Deleuze's reliance upon "an intensive form of power whose primary medium is spiritual and whose paradigmatic vehicle is divine" (p. 54). While we might agree with Hallward's citation that, in Deleuze's thought, "what is decisive is always the movement of de-actualisation or deterritorialisation that 'liberates a pure matter' and dissolves the pertinent forms of identity or stability by dispersing them along a line of flight" (p. 40), there is no necessary reason why we would then be led to the conclusion that "the virtual alone is real" in Deleuze (p. 35).

On Badiou's critique, Keith Ansell-Pearson writes authoritatively, arguing that his "curious affirmation" of the univocity of the actual "shows he has inadequately understood the role of the virtual in Deleuze and [furthermore] discloses a fundamental incoherence in his own thinking" (2002: 98). While this is clearly not the place to recount all of Ansell-Pearson's extended and sophisticated critique, we can look to his conclusions to see that in his reading, for Badiou, the actual is reduced to being nothing more than the "function of its virtuality" (*ibid.*). By contrast, for Ansell-Pearson in fact, "the virtual is not of the order of transcendence" and, instead, with respect to ontology, "the virtual has to be seen as an immanent and not an eminent power" (*ibid.*: 8). It is striking the extent to which this analysis of Badiou by Ansell-Pearson might be carried over to an analysis of Hallward's reading (or misreading) of the relationship between the virtual and the actual in Deleuze. Indeed, Ansell-Pearson's citation above of Badiou as understanding the actual-virtual pair as proceeding from the transcendent virtual, and involving a passive and static role for the actual, can be seen to be one of the defining characteristics of Hallward's reading. To quote Hallward here,

... since [Deleuze's philosophy] acknowledges only a unilateral relation between virtual and actual, there is no place in Deleuze's philosophy for any notion of change, time or history that is

2 A similar criticism is also made regarding aspects of Slavoj Žižek's recent book on Deleuze & Guattari by Eric Alliez (Alliez, 2005; Žižek, 2003).

mediated by actuality. In the end, Deleuze offers few resources for thinking the consequences of what happens within the actually existing world as such. (p. 162)

This misreading of the nature of the actual-virtual relation can be seen to have been the basis of Hallward's persuasively argued, but fundamentally misguided 'theophanic' thesis, by which he means where, "every individual process or thing is conceived as an expression or manifestation of God, or a conceptual equivalent of God (pure creative potential, force, energy, life...)" (p. 4). By contrast, as emphasised in a recent essay by the Deleuze scholar Constantin Boundas, and which summarises our point nicely here,

Becoming, instead of being a linear process from one actual to another, should rather be conceived as the movement from an actual state of affairs, through a dynamic field of virtual/real tendencies, to the actualisation of this field in a new state of affairs. This schema safeguards the relation of reversibility between the virtual and the actual. (2006: 5)

In conclusion on this point then, contrary to Hallward's (and Badiou's) reading, we would argue that we should not understand the virtual in Deleuze philosophy as something 'extra-wordly' or 'Godlike' (cf. p. 4-5), where the actual 'creatings' of the world ('creatures') must aspire to achieve unity through subtractive, redemptive strategies, but instead, that we should rather understand the virtual as being an ontological dimension of the (material) real that provides the basis for dynamic movements between one actual state of affairs to another – 'political' or otherwise.

The 'Monotony' of Deleuze's Philosophy

A further aspect of Badiou's reading of Deleuze's philosophy that would seem to have strongly influenced Hallward – to the detriment of his account – is the idea of the monotony of Deleuze's productions (Badiou, 2000: 14-16). Hallward, affirms this notion of monotony in adjudging Deleuze's concepts as having been "rigorously consistent" (p. 79) throughout his philosophical career, meaning that for Hallward therefore,

... the real challenge in writing about Deleuze's philosophy lies not in the remarkable diversity of materials that he considers, but in the monotony of the underlying logic he invokes to understand them. (p. 2, italics added)

As identified by Jason Read in his review of Hallward's book (2006: 2-3), we can see a systematic tendency in Hallward's reading to 'force a unity' on the work of Deleuze – what John Protevi (2007: 2) has called the 'continuity thesis' regarding Deleuze's output.

While we might congratulate Hallward for the ease with which he carries the reader along with ideas that are seen by Hallward to span Deleuze's different works, we might also say that this has been the source of one of the main weaknesses of Hallward's reading, arguably failing to give due recognition to the mutations of Deleuze's ideas across his texts, and, perhaps more importantly, to the neglect of the detail and specificity of Deleuze's later collaborative works with Félix Guattari. Indeed, there is a strong case to be made here that this latter tendency has contributed to Hallward's

underappreciation of some of the most politically minded aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's collective thought, leading to one of the most controversial aspects of Hallward's reading, where he (rather abruptly) concludes that Deleuze's philosophy lacks any potency as a basis for political action. To quote the concluding sentence of Hallward's book,

Few philosophers have been as inspiring as Deleuze. But those of use who still seek to change our world and to empower its inhabitants will need to look for our inspiration elsewhere. (p. 164)

It is perhaps unsurprising that Hallward has been led to such conclusions given the way he fails to engage in any sort of way with the 'toolbox' of concepts to be found in the *entre-deux* of Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative works, where he might have found such inspiration for strategies of political change. Furthermore, for a text making such strong conclusions regarding the political Deleuze, it would also seem rather ill fitting that the topic of Deleuze's politics is not raised until the last four pages of the book, or consigned to footnotes to these pages.

Deleuze's Conception of the Political

The idea that the lack of a specifically political register in Deleuze's philosophy is problematic is another aspect of Hallward's reading that we can trace back to Alain Badiou's work. To quote Badiou on this subject:

How is it that politics, for Deleuze, is not an autonomous form of thought, a singular section of chaos, unlike art, science and philosophy? This point alone testifies to our divergence, and everything could be seen to follow from it. (Badiou, 2004, cited by Alliez 2005: 4)

Indeed, to turn to one of the authors Hallward specifically positions himself to in contradistinction on the question of the political, Nicholas Thoburn takes up exactly this point in relation to Badiou. Badiou proposes an alternative politics to Deleuze's on the basis of the problems that are seen to exist with generalising politics across the terrain of life, as Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is seen to do (Thoburn, 2003: 5-6). For Thoburn, Badiou's point is an important one, but indicates a fundamental misunderstanding of the distinctive conception of politics developed by Deleuze and Guattari. For Thoburn (*ibid.*: 6), "it is the very difficulty of, and commitment to, [a politics of intervention that is adequate to capital] that necessitates that Deleuze does not delineate the specifically political register of thought that Badiou describes as lacking". For Thoburn, such "an undetermined and continually open, but no less practical project" is "especially evident" in Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the minor – outlined in two of the authors' co-authored books, yet overlooked in Hallward's reading of Deleuze (*ibid.*, citing Deleuze and Guattari, 1986; 1988). It could be argued, thereby, that in considering there to be a monotony across Deleuze's cases and works, including his co-authored works with Guattari, both Badiou and Hallward can be seen to have overlooked or misrecognised the distinctive nature of the ideas in these later texts, and following Thoburn's analysis here, have failed to accommodate the distinctive and difficult nature of the politics to which Deleuze and Guattari aspire. In light of Thoburn's arguments then, Hallward's rather terse assessment that all Deleuze

and Guattari have to add to Marx is “a new eschatology” involving the creation of a subject “worthy of the end of history or the end of actuality” seems rather contestable, to say the least (p. 103). We might instead say then, in contrast to Hallward and Badiou, that this idea of Deleuze and Guattari’s posing of the question of politics as a problem or a question rather than a set of existing concepts or a predetermined programme (cf. Villani, 2006: 238) is what lends it potency for engaging with the specific material (and territorial) conditions of particular political situations. Yet it is this same characteristic that is, arguably misguidedly, seized upon by Hallward as demonstrating what he calls a fundamentally ‘extra-worldly’ character.

Hallward’s Desert Island

Some of these perceived problems regarding Hallward’s appraisal of Deleuze’s (and Deleuze and Guattari’s) politics can be seen to be exemplified in his treatment of Deleuze’s ‘Desert Islands’ essay (2004), which we will consider here to be significant for the way it founds a core element of an argument regarding Deleuze’s ontology, and which is taken forward and developed through the latter chapters of his book.

Hallward understands Deleuze’s essay to be about the way in which “the inhabitants of an island trap it in a static actuality” (p. 23), requiring a labour of virtual ‘depopulation’, ‘evacuation’ and ‘subtraction’ to affirm the island in its desertion through the abandonment of a territory (p. 23). Hallward would also read this as a story about “the coherence of a single destiny” in terms of a redemptive reunification with a Godlike virtual whole (p. 26). Yet, if we are to return to Deleuze’s (rather beautiful) short essay, we read that in fact for Deleuze there is no strict relation between desert islands and populations at all. Deleuze is clear here that an island doesn’t stop being deserted simply because it is inhabited (2004: 10), and moreover, that certain ‘uncommon humans’ live there already anyway – those human beings that are understood to ‘precede’ themselves (*ibid.*: 11). Instead, the unity of the deserted island and its inhabitant is for Deleuze, “not actual, only imaginary”, and so it is that human beings as such “always encounter the desert island from outside” (*ibid.*: 11). Meanwhile, rather than the geographical meaning of the island, for Deleuze it is “the idea of a *second origin* [that] gives the deserted island its whole meaning”, the desert island being about “the survival of a sacred place in a world that is slow to re-begin” (*ibid.*: 14, italics added). For Deleuze, “what must be recovered is the mythological life of the deserted island”, “a prototype of the collective soul” (*ibid.*: 13). Yet, importantly for Deleuze, the desert island’s destiny is at the same time “subject to those *human conditions* that make mythology possible”; requiring “the collective imagination, [and] what is most profound in it, i.e. rites and mythology” (*ibid.*: 12, italics added). Mythology being subject to certain human conditions suggests that there is a more profound tie between the myth of the island, and the idea of an island as territorial or geophysical entity than Hallward would give Deleuze credit for, in terms of the socio-material aspects of language and thought that would offer the basis for such an imaginary creation, and for the formation of a new collective social whole. For Deleuze humans can live on an island only by forgetting what an island represents – “an active

struggle”, “either from before or after humankind” and the emergence of an imaginary which Deleuze evokes here can be seen as being part of this struggle (*ibid.*: 9):

Dreaming of islands – whether with joy or in fear, it doesn't matter – is dreaming of pulling away, of being already separate, far from any continent, of being lost and alone – or it is dreaming of starting from scratch, recreating, beginning anew. Some islands drifted away from the continent, but the island is also that toward which one drifts; other islands originated in the ocean, but the island is also the origin, radical and absolute. (*ibid.*: 10)

In terms of Hallward's reading of an absolute and 'extra-worldly' deterritorialisation, we might instead make reference to concepts outlined in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988) – a text we have argued has been undervalued by Hallward in his 'monotonised' reading of Deleuze's corpus – regarding the important additional move here to be a reterritorialisation, following the original separation and pulling away from the human. Such a sociopolitical reading of Deleuze's essay is affirmed in a recent essay by Ronald Bogue (2006), who draws attention to the political significance of the fable in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, in terms of its role in the creation of a 'people to come', seemingly overlooked in Hallward's account. Discussion of the relationship between myths, literature, the social unconscious and the creation of communities to come are all touched upon and connected in some of the more subtle parts of Deleuze's essay, yet are missed or ignored by Hallward in his restricted interpretation of Deleuze's own brush with fabulation. Perhaps if Hallward had looked to Deleuze's later associated essay 'Michel Tournier and the world without others' (1984) (not referenced by Hallward), he might also have developed a better feel for the creative (and some would say 'ethical') intentions and possibilities of the meaning and significance of the phrase “the people are missing”, or the political significance of the notions of “a land without a people and a people without a land” (1988: 416). Hallward might also have had a less reactionary response to what he rather dramatically calls “the sacrifice of that most precious sacred cow of contemporary philosophy – *the other*”, and to have considered some of the creative energies and potentials that might come with such an accomplishment (p. 92).³

3 For Hallward, “Nothing is more foreign to Deleuze than an unconditional concern for the other qua other” (*ibid.*), and Hallward sees this lack of concern for the other illustrated in Deleuze's distinctive reading of Robinson Crusoe, where Deleuze writes that “it is the Other who disturbs the world. The Other was the trouble” (p. 93, citing Deleuze, 1990). We might associate Hallward's criticism here with his concern for “the exclusive primacy of non-relational difference” in Deleuze's philosophy – what he calls “a notion of strictly intra-elemental rather than inter-elemental difference” (p. 153). For Hallward this leads to Deleuze's inability to provide “a coherent theory of relation between terms,” in that “once Deleuze rejects every notion of mediated difference he rejects any viable theory of inter-individual relations as well” (p. 152). We might also associate this with Hallward's general unease with what Deleuze and Guattari have called the “three virtues” of “imperceptibility, indiscernibility, and impersonality” (p. 81, citing Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 81), pointing towards what could be seen as Hallward's implicit interest in the revival of a politics of the subject. Common ground with Badiou can again be interpreted here, such as seen in Badiou's ethical concern that Deleuze's machinic conception “precludes any idea of ourselves as being, at any time, the source of what we think or do” (2000: 11-12).

Crashing Deleuze

In conclusion, what we have called Hallward's 'restricted' reading of Deleuze's 'Desert Islands' essay could also be seen to exemplify tendencies in his wider reading of Deleuze in terms of his refusal in the last instance to take Deleuze's writing on its own terms, and, more specifically, in terms of Hallward's evaluation of Deleuze's problem of the political by an alien set of criteria adapted from Badiou. In judging Deleuze's philosophy in such alien terms, is this not what we might call trying to put a round philosophical peg in a square hole in the sense of using a set of ideas that are foreign to Deleuze's philosophy to search for a language and a logic that cannot be found there, and, in the process, to then overlook the distinctive value of the alternative conceptualisation to be found there? As a sympathetic alternative conclusion, we might suggest instead that in a certain sense Hallward has taken Deleuze's own methodology for reading other philosophers and turned it against him. The epigraph at the beginning of Hallward's Introduction would appear to support this, for example, with Hallward quoting Deleuze's statement that, "Rather than repeat what a philosopher says, the history of philosophy has to say what he must have taken for granted, what he didn't say but is nonetheless present in what he did say" (p. 1). What is arguably missing here in Hallward's engagement, however, is a sense in this reader that Hallward has achieved such a creative reading. As Deleuze and Guattari knew, lines of flight are risky, and sometimes in our endeavours we can end up riding "a pure cold line of abolition" (1988: 229-30). We conclude instead that Hallward's reading is better characterised – appropriately perhaps? – as more typical of the way that Alain Badiou has described his regard for Deleuze: as a 'nonrelationship', rather than, say, a constructive relation of difference (2000: 1).⁴ In a rather perverse recovery though, perhaps like an assassination attempt, or like the shock of a near death experience, perhaps Hallward's reading will sharpen and intensify our appreciation of the vital Deleuze, and, out of a negative movement, produce a rather perverse creative effect. In slowing down and gaping as we get a good look at Hallward's strangely elegant car crash of a Deleuze reading we might rescue something still breathing from the wreckage. In any case, we might say to Hallward that if he is left feeling after having read Deleuze that he needs to look elsewhere for his political inspiration (p. 164), perhaps we might suggest instead that he return to Deleuze, this time not as a means to a hermeneutic assassination, by "forcing the nature of things" (p. 161), but in the interest of cultivating desert islands-to-come.

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4 In this spirit, might we say then that producing a terminal 'critique' of Deleuze (or, as in this case, a critique of a critique) is about as inappropriate (or ironic?) as we might consider to be producing a biography of Foucault (or indeed, a biography of his biographer) (cf. Halperin 1995).

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Encountering Althusser*

Armin Beverungen

review of:

Louis Althusser (2006) *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-1987*, edited by F. Matheron and O. Corpet, translated and introduced by G. M. Goshgarian. London and New York: Verso. (PB: pp. 300, £16.99, ISBN: 1-84467-553-X)

Gregory Elliott (2006) *Althusser: The Detour of Theory*. Leiden and Boston: Brill. Historical Materialism Book Series (13). (HB: pp. 410, €93.00/US\$139.00, ISBN: 90-04-15337-3)

Introduction

Has organization studies ever encountered Louis Althusser? What Althusser? We can discern effects of Althusser's writings, for example, in work on ideology, where it mostly gets discussed in relation (and often deference) to Antonio Gramsci (e.g. Mumby 1998; Deetz, 1992), or, more recently, to Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek (e.g. Jones and Spicer, 2005; Fleming and Spicer, 2005). Yet the "quite unexpected revival of interest in Althusser" that marked the 1990s, sparked by the publication of his autobiography (Althusser, 1993) and a biography (Moulier Boutang, 1992), which "revealed the existence of a hitherto unknown Althusser" (Elliott, 2006: 317) – this revival for all means and purposes bypassed organization studies.

What, then, might one gain from a new encounter with Althusser? What is the importance of the work by Althusser published since his death (for an overview, see Elliott, 2006: 318-319), and in particular the material contained in *Philosophy of the Encounter*? I would like to suggest that there are three particular points to consider. *First*, this work reveals a new Althusser, or at least an old one in new clothes, one that appears much unlike the one who is vaguely familiar to organization studies. This work thus makes possible a new encounter with Althusser; not with Althusser the 'structuralist', but with Althusser the philosopher of the encounter.

Second, this does not mean that we have to completely abandon or disregard Althusser's earlier work, such as *For Marx* or *Reading Capital*. Rather, as Elliott points out,

* I would like to thank participants of the Althusser reading group that took place in Leicester in early 2007 for the fruitful debates that occurred.

Althusser's late works "facilitate a litmus test on the Althusser of the 1960s and 1970s, indicating underlying themes across his oeuvre" (2006: 360). These late works thus allow us to read the earlier Althusser differently, anew. *Third*, the identification of an 'undercurrent of the materialism of the encounter' in the history of philosophy, which not only includes Marx but also such diverse figures as Epicurus, Machiavelli, Heidegger and Derrida, challenges us to resituate the work of Marx and Althusser within a different genealogy of thought, and to develop this particular current of philosophy, perhaps with the aim of rekindling the effects of Marx's and Althusser's work, and the challenges they pose to theory and politics, also in organization.

Gregory Elliot's *Althusser: The Detour of Theory* serves as an indispensable companion in this endeavour. Unfortunately, this is not the 'new synthesis' – Elliott himself admits (2006: ix) – the posthumous publication of Althusser's work deserves. Yet the book is still the "fullest account to date in English of Althusser's philosophico-political career in the 1960s and 1970s" (*ibid.*), and the addition of a new preface, extended postface, and updated bibliographical data mean that it can serve the purpose of introducing the most important aspects of Althusser's work, while relating the various periods of Althusser's work to each other. To this end, and somewhat cheekily, Elliott offers a periodisation of Althusser's work, much like Althusser did of Marx's work (except here the discontinuities are conceptual and not epistemological). Elliott (2006: 365) suggest the following:

- (i) 1945-1950: the Early Works
- (ii) 1950-1959: the Works of the Break
- (iii) 1960-1975: the Mature Works
- (iv) 1976-1978: the Transitional Works
- (v) 1979-1986: the Late Works

The texts that make up *Philosophy of the Encounter* all fall into the period of the Late Works, except 'Marx in his Limits' (1978-1979), and the 'Letter to Merab Mardashvili' that introduces it, which belong to the Transitional Works. 'The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter' (1982-1983) is the other major essay in the volume, a piece meticulously assembled by the editors out of an unfinished book manuscript. These texts are supplemented by the interview 'Philosophy and Marxism' (1984-1987), assembled out of conversations with Fernanda Navarra, as recorded in the correspondence relating to the interview, also published here. 'Portrait of the Materialist Philosopher', Althusser's last philosophical work, completes the volume.

Philosophy and Marxism

Who, then, is this 'new' Althusser? In what ways is he different? The easiest way to encounter this later work of Althusser is perhaps through 'Philosophy and Marxism'. In the interview Althusser provides a reflection on his earlier project familiar to organization theorists under the title 'Althusserianism', explains his 'break' with the same, and introduces his later project of developing a 'materialism of the encounter'.

Althusser here, as elsewhere, asserts that Marx's work is incoherent and incomplete, and that this is due to Marx's relation to philosophy, and the way he has failed to break with a certain philosophical tradition. It is the absence of a philosophy proper to Marx that lead Althusser in his earlier work to attempt to recover a philosophy from Marx's texts, for example in *Reading Capital*, where – alongside Balibar, Rancière and Establet – he attempted to recover the 'logic of *Capital*' 'implicit' therein. On this project he now reflects:

We did so not on a whim, but out of a profound necessity: to make it possible to read and to think Marx's thought, we had to bring out the philosophy implicit in it, the only philosophy capable of clarifying the difficulties in his great work, *Capital* – capable, in a word, of rendering it thinkable, that is, *rational and coherent*. Turning every possible clue to advantage, then, we set out to acquire – to discover and elaborate – what was massively absent from it [*cette grande absente*]: Marx's philosophy. And we fabricated for Marx, really and truly *fabricated*, the philosophy that he lacked: this rational, coherent philosophy. (2006: 210, emphases here and subsequently in original)

Althusser acknowledges that the attempt to uncover the philosophy of Marx, his very own, in effect 'missed the mark' in that it gave Marx a philosophy dominated by 'the spirit of the times', one of 'Bachelardian and structuralist inspiration' which, Althusser writes, cannot be called 'Marxist philosophy' (2006: 257). Althusser thus leave behind this project and instead pronounces a new task, one of inventing a philosophy *for* Marx. That philosophy "will simply be a philosophy that takes its place in the history of philosophy" – as an undercurrent, as we will see below. It will be "capable of accounting for the conceptual discoveries that Marx puts to work in *Capital*", "it will be a philosophy *for Marxism*" (2006: 258).

It is remarkable that Althusser reposes the question 'what is (a Marxist) philosophy?' at this point, effectively acknowledging that his previous answers under the terms 'Theory of theoretical practice' and 'class struggle in theory' – which gave philosophy too much and too little space, respectively – were unsatisfactory. It fits into the picture here that in 'Marx in his Limits' Althusser seeks to show us the limits of Marx's philosophical practice, together with its political consequences, and that in 'Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter' he searches for a new philosophy and practice for Marx.

Marx in his Limits

If we are on the road towards a new philosophy for Marxism, then what is left of Marx, and of the earlier Althusser? 'Marx in his Limits' is the last piece of writing Althusser completed before the period of psychosis during which, in 1980, he killed his wife, and which, as a consequence, ended his academic and political career. The piece thus marks a certain limit, a certain end, of Althusser's work up to that point. Here, once again, for the last time, and much more directly and effectively than previously, he provides an account of the 'limits' of Marx. He also, in effect, provides an account of the limits of his own work up to that point. In the 'Letter to Merab Mardashvili' he writes:

... the day of *reckoning* has come. It doesn't much matter who draws up the bill, it can even be nobody at all, but eventually a day comes when the little debts that one had avoided totalling show up on a list of things: and, in general, it's not the big spenders who have to pay the tab, but poor sobs like you and me (and how many others who are still more confused). Since bills are always wrong or rigged, one has to check them, but first one has to agree to pay them: all this in a political and theoretical cesspool without precedent (barring worse), the sole advantage of which is that there's no avoiding it. (2006: 2-3)

In light of the 'crisis of Marxism' that Althusser pronounces here, he proposes to 'ask the limit-question', which is: "What can we retain of Marx today as being truly essential to his thought, even if it has perhaps not (indeed, has surely not) always been well understood?" (2006: 13-14). This is all within a certain tradition of 'self-criticism' and 'rectification', evident in Marx's 'endless wrestling' with philosophy (2006: 45) as well as in Althusser's own work. The task here still revolves around effecting the break with philosophy that Marx instituted, and around overcoming the negative effects of the traces of idealism in Marx which have imposed certain limits on Marx's work, as well as on Althusser and on us.

Thus the obvious need to 'shift ground' or adopt a position 'representing the proletariat', however keenly Marx was aware of it (there is an interval of thirty-two years between the two formulas!), clearly did not suffice, in and of itself and from the outset, 'to settle accounts' with Marx's former philosophical consciousness... A materialist will conclude from this that there was more in Marx's practice, thought, and the contradictions of his problematic than in his consciousness. *He will also conclude that the limits of Marx's thought were not without effect on his acts or those of others.* (2006: 45)

It is no wonder, perhaps, that considering the question of Marx's break with philosophy revolves around materialism and idealism, where the 'real movement' is given primacy over the realm of ideas, that the limits that Althusser sees in Marx revolve precisely around the realm of ideal forms, those of the superstructure. In the remainder of the essay Althusser discusses various limits of Marx with regards to the state, ideology and politics.

Althusser starts off with a discussion of the state. For Althusser the state-machine is separate from class struggle "because that is *what it is made to be for*", since "the state needs this 'separation' in order to be able to intervene in the class struggle 'on all fronts'" (2006: 71). This implies that the state always has a function in class struggle and cannot simply be taken over by the proletariat, but must be dismantled. And since democracy as a merely political form leaves the state-machine, together with its function in the class struggle, intact, Althusser defends the notion of a 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. The latter "can only designate the whole set of economic, political and ideological forms by means of which the proletariat has to impose its politics on the old dominant, exploiting class" (2006: 90). For Althusser, the political forms of the domination of the proletariat "are 'normally' forms of the broadest possible mass democracy, in which democracy 'is taken to the limit'" (2006: 94) – proletarian domination means, 'normally', mass democracy.

We encounter another limit of Marx in his thinking on ideology, and his adherence to the notion of fetishism. Althusser is adamant that the theory of fetishism in *Capital* is a parable only necessary because of the false idealist form of argument imposed on the text, and that there is little use in the notion of fetishism. He wryly concludes that "I do

not think that it makes any sense at all to talk about the fetishism of the commodity, as if the commodity could be the source [*l'auteur*] 'of' fetishism" and it is rather the ideological state apparatuses that "may be at the origin of massive mystifications that go well beyond the illusion that consists, or is said to consist, in taking social relations between man for social relations between things" (2006: 134-135).

In the last few pages, Althusser turns to a discussion of Gramsci's notion of hegemony. Here Gramsci – supposedly working away at Marx's limits – is reprimanded for the effects that his notion produces on our thinking of the state and ideology in relation to production and reproduction. The idea that "it is possible to decipher everything about the terribly material nature of production and exploitation (hence of class struggle in production) ... by referring exclusively to the reality that Gramsci christens Hegemony" strikes Althusser as 'astoundingly idealist'; and "the pathetic little tag to the effect that 'hegemony is born in the factory'" does not remedy the effects of Gramsci 'bracketing out' the infrastructure (2006: 144-145). We are thus still caught within the limits of Marx, that, in Althusser's eyes, Gramsci is unable to overcome in this instance.

Democracy, commodity fetishism, hegemony: three terms that are quite popular in organization theory today; that Althusser sees these to be part of the limits of Marx, and that he suggests very different perspectives on these than the ones prevalent in organization studies today, should at least leave us thinking. Yet the last limit of Marx that Althusser points to might be considered the most important:

Yet the fact is that this aberrant thesis brings us to the threshold of another 'absolute limit' of Marxist thought: namely, its inability to think 'politics'... our authors have never given us, except in the form of lists or descriptions, even the rudiments of an analysis responding to the question: *just what might politics be?* Where is politics to be found? In what forms? What distinguishes it from non-political forms, and how then should we designate these other forms? (2006: 150, emphases in original)

Materialism of the Encounter

How, then, are we to work on these limits – of Marx, of Althusser, of our own thought? And how is this to contribute to thinking the political? 'The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter' was the first thing Althusser wrote after 'Marx in his Limits', in which Althusser considered the political limits of Marx to be an effect of the philosophical conundrum that he found himself in. It is perhaps fitting that 'Underground Current' thus seeks to uncover a new philosophy.

My intention, here, is to insist on the existence of a materialist tradition that has not been recognized by the history of philosophy. That of Democritus, Epicurus, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau (the Rousseau of the second *Discourse*), Marx and Heidegger, together with the categories that they defended: the void, the limit, the margin, the absence of a centre, the displacement of the centre to the margin (and vice versa), and freedom. A materialism of the encounter, of contingency – in sum, of *the aleatory*, which is opposed even to the materialisms that have been recognized as such, including that commonly attributed to Marx, Engels and Lenin, which, like every other materialism of the rationalist tradition, is a materialism of necessity and teleology, that is, a disguised form of idealism. (2006: 261-262)

Althusser moves very quickly through a discussion of Epicurus and the swerve, Heidegger and the *'es gibt'*, Machiavelli and the 'atomized country', Spinoza and the philosophical void, Hobbes and the 'war of all against all' as an enforced encounter, Rousseau and the social contract as 'an encounter that has taken form', only to end up with Marx. That the stakes here are not merely philosophical but also political is emphasised by Althusser's comment that the concepts of encounter and conjuncture are "a means with which to think not only the *reality* of history, but, above all, the reality of *politics*; not only the essence of reality but, above all, the essence of *practice*, and the link between these two realities in their *encounter: in struggle*" (2006: 188) – which thus brings us back to the limits of Marx.

The rather brief commentaries on such a vast array of thinkers are suggestive rather than conclusive, and the whole piece can probably most productively be read as a provocation, one that seeks to unsettle the philosophical positioning that Marx and Althusser have been subjected to in organization studies and elsewhere, and one that seeks to situate Marx and Althusser in a strand of (methodological) 'anti-necessitarianism' (Suchting, 2004: 66). These are thus the first rough sketches of an attempt to explore, develop, and even invent a new philosophy for Marxism, a task which has been taken up by Suchting (2004) and Morfino (2005), but one that will take much more work.

A New Encounter?

The task then is to encounter Althusser anew. It is also one of inheriting Marx through Althusser, of reading him through his limits, of reposing Marx's challenge to philosophy and of developing a new philosophy for Marxism. Yet the contours of this engagement are far from certain. Elliott writes:

Following the geopolitical earthquake of 1989-91, and in the utterly changed context of the present, what remained an unresolved issue twenty years ago constitutes a profound enigma to me today, revolving around not only *what* to be for or against in Althusser and *how*, but the *whys and wherefores* of the very operation. (2006, x-xi)

Unfortunately, Elliott will not accompany us any further on this journey, for, as he writes, "however long the future lasts, this will, for better or worse, be my final written word on the subject of Louis Althusser" (2006: xii). *The Detour of Theory* will thus serve merely as a door-opener to a further meeting with Althusser, one that will instead be accompanied by various other voices seeking to take up the inheritance of Althusser, such as that of G.M. Goshgarian, who so thoroughly introduces *Philosophy of the Encounter*, and a few others (e.g. McInerney, 2005; Montag, 2003; Morfino, 2005; Suchting, 2004).

The stakes of this encounter revolve around the limits of Marx and Althusser. For organization studies, this also involves posing the question of post-Marxism. Will this later work of Althusser – which has been said to involve a 'self-overcoming of Marxism' (Vatter, 2004; Montag, 2004) – challenge the dominant post-Marxism of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) in organization studies? Will it lead to a reconsideration of

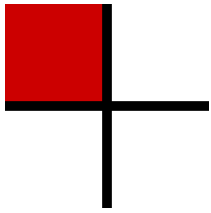
questions of state, ideology and politics within organization studies? One can only hope that an encounter with Althusser will take place in organization studies, and that this time it will take hold.

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The Civilization of Clashes

Viktorija Kalonaityte

review of:

Appadurai Arjun (2006) *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. (PB: pp. 153, £9.99, ISBN: 0-8223-3863-7)

Thoughtful, insightful, multilayered, *Fear of Small Numbers* delivers its promise – to cast light over the harshest results of globalization. More so, I believe that *Fear of Small Numbers* is a book of lasting relevance, not only because it is acutely attuned to the changed and changing nature of organizing, identity and politics, but also because it is so utterly committed to the globalization of hope.

The point of departure of *Fear of Small Numbers* is an investigation of the shadow sides of globalization – large-scale political violence, ethnic cleansing, social exclusion and ethno-cultural antagonisms. These issues of pressing urgency, of which we have seen an outburst over the past two decades, are occurring all the while the world is engaged in an increasingly intense exchange of images and ideas and is becoming intricately interconnected through new technologies, global flows of capital and people. *Fear of Small Numbers* provides Appadurai's explanation of the linkages between what he refers to as contemporary ethnocidal violence, the global political economy and the changed modus operandi of potentially lethal, but also potentially emancipatory transnational communities.

I would say that *Fear of Small Numbers* contributes to the collected body of work of scholars who, alongside Appadurai, are writing against the culturalization of politics, to use Žižek's (2007) term, and call for a more nuanced analysis of political violence and the nature of cultural and religious identities, associated with it. In that sense, Appadurai shares his viewpoints with Sen (2006), and his argument that we need to de-essentialize and broaden our view of social identity. Sen's (2006) book *Identity and Violence* can be seen as an in-depth appeal to abandon reductionist notions of civilizational divisions and religious identities as the causes of the violence we are witnessing today. Appadurai's contribution here is to reconnect the notion of identity to the political economy, social exclusion and the ideology of national-ethnic purity.

Similarly, *Fear of Small Numbers* echoes Mohanty's (2003) critique of growing social and economic inequalities around the globe, as well as the significance and potential of

progressive grassroots movements. Here, even if Mohanty (2003) approaches grassroots movements from a feminist point of view, while Appadurai discusses these movements as one form of transnational network organizations, I can see how both authors' observations point to the importance to recognizing and understanding these new platforms for social action, which do not necessarily operate on the basis of a priori defined set of ideological premises or easily labelled activist stances. In that sense, even Mohanty (2003) points to that while some of these movements may never choose the label of feminism to describe themselves, the betterment of living and social conditions for women in the Third World are an integral part of their accomplishments.

Finally, I can also see a parallel to Bauman's (2006) analysis of social uncertainty as one key feature of our social life in *Liquid Fear*. Bauman's (2006) book is an inventory of the fears of our age, characterized by uncertainty of what the threat is and what we can do to counter it, among which the fear of terrorism and large-scale violence is one among several. Thus, Bauman's (2006) investigation of modern anxieties can be seen as an exploration of social insecurities in their full spectrum, while Appadurai's book attempts to explain the nature of terrorism and violence. However, Bauman is more narrowly focused on the Western societies in his analysis, while Appadurai's work brings global processes in view in a far broader fashion.

Appadurai's foremost contribution lies in how he weaves these observations into an overall diagnosis of the seemingly paradoxical world condition, where expansion of capital, liberal ideas and human rights is coupled with an outbreak of extreme political violence and ethnic cleansing. Appadurai's analysis goes beyond traditional models and theories, in its discussion of the features of the emergent global networks, violent and otherwise. One profound observation that Appadurai makes concerns the changing nature of organizing in the light of globalization. He coins two interrelated concepts, cellular and vertebrae organizations, as a way to better grasp the processes that are taking place. The terms 'vertebrae' and 'cellular' stem from biology, and as metaphors, bring forth biological associations. Vertebrae organizations, according to Appadurai's classification, represent the nation state and its derivatives, bound to the centralized structures such as national financial and political institutions and national ideologies. Vertebrae systems, of which nations are largest in scale, are defined by their adherence to a set of coordinated, regulative norms such as international treaties and agreements and symmetrical principles of mutual recognition between nations despite asymmetries of power or wealth. Corporations, according to this classification, have, over the past decades, become increasingly free from vertebrae structures via post-Fordist, flexible modes of production and accelerated mobility of capital and technology and combine cellular and vertebrae features. On the other side of the spectrum, we have cellular organizations, which, in turn, are networks, such as terrorist cells, functioning in concordance with global flows.

The most interesting feature of cellular organizations, I would say, is not so much their ability to retain contours and direction despite their being decentralized or their self-replicating capacity, but lies in how these organizations cut across the conventional boundaries and grounds of classification. It seems to me that the notion of cellular organization is founded on the observation that the relationship between identity and politics is itself made disjunctive under the conditions of globalization. Something is

left out of focus if we continue to imagine transnational networks as groupings of people on the basis of profession, class interests, national and regional origin and such. Sure, such networks exist, their influence is growing and they do play a significant role in the global economy, which we can also find out by browsing through Friedman's (2005) *The World is Flat*. What Appadurai seems to be saying is that global conditions of social insecurity and growing social injustices create a certain type of politics, and these politics can only be understood via people's location within the global economic system now, not by tracing their various traditional affiliations. The many types of anti-Americanism, the mobilization of terrorist cells across the national and class boundaries, and, on the other side of the spectrum, progressive grassroots movements which defy the generalized universal language of identity and interest, cannot be understood without taking this emergent type of politics into account.

So Appadurai's answer is yes, we are witnessing clashes across the globe, but these clashes are misunderstood if treated as clashes among civilizations, particularly if civilizations are seen as racialized and geographical fortresses of culture. Rather, we have entered an age where wars are waged in the name of ideology alone, within traditions, within nations and within the global world system. If the social fuel of these violent clashes is insecurity, uncertainty and surplus rage, it is by far easier to grasp the struggles and the violence, unleashed in the name of national ethnos and eradication of the minorities as the reminder and a threat to the intrinsic incompleteness of national purity. Cellular organizations remain difficult to pin down in terms of conventional political allegiances and divisions, mainly because they are born of and conditioned by the global system of flows, and so the temptation to succumb to categorization of struggles into clashes of monolithic civilizational identities seems to be an easy solution for many.

I daresay that the political potential of cellular organizations remains somewhat insufficiently explored in *Fear of Small Numbers*, yet we must keep in mind that this question is not only of paramount importance for critical social sciences, it is also a question which is admittedly difficult to answer. Recent debate within political sciences indicates this, how the very notion of left politics cannot be understood without the new global landscapes in consideration, and yet the politics of these new landscapes are not always clear (e.g. Therborn, 2007). We don't have to look far to find examples of how the global political economy juxtaposes elements of political orientation. New types of migration create unprecedented tensions between identities of origin, residence and aspiration. Global flows enable, and many times compel large groups of people from various peripheries of the world to seek their destiny in the metropolises of the globe despite social exclusion and imperialist cultural imagery, processes which produce new alliances and new struggles.

Appadurai traces the links between the indignation over social exclusion, subordination to American standards in a vast variety of areas, anything from academic standards to international policies, and the incidents when disillusioned youth identifies with the social imaginary of cellular terrorist organizations in order to create a sense of belonging to a greater global majority. Appadurai provides many examples of paradoxical life projects and politics, and is probably at his best when he discusses cellular grassroots movements which accomplish change in a qualitatively different

manner than the customary charity or protest-oriented humanitarian work. In so far as *Fear of Small Numbers* is concerned, I would say that Appadurai analyzes the question of politics and cultural identity specifically, consistently with the questions he raises. Yet the cellular world of political action as such probably requires a book of its own, which would include other contemporary movements, such as networks based on sexual and gender identity, or online file sharing communities.

There is one other remark to make regarding Appadurai's observations concerning the disjunctive landscapes of contemporary political movements and ideology. The question of gendered imagery and the relationship between ultra-masculinist rhetoric, nationalist 'predatory identities' and the mobilization of cellular counter-movements seems to be touched upon only in a fleeting manner. Appadurai does write of how the notion of saving Muslim women from Muslim patriarchy is effectively exploited by the Indian Hindu nationalists, an example which is characteristic of how nationalist imagery incorporates and uses the notion of oppressed Muslim women. At the same time, it is important to remember that the exploitation of the imagery of oppressed Muslim women is by no means limited to Hindu nationalism, as that very trope keeps returning as a part of the war rhetoric and as an argument for boundary creation or social exclusion.

I am also inclined to argue that the issue of gender identity and gendered imagery need to be investigated further, and that the clashes we are witnessing, albeit intracivilizational, would be better understood if masculinity was included in the analysis. One obvious example of the problematic of not including gender in the analysis lies in the possibilities for young women, in contrast to young men, to negotiate their position vis-à-vis nation states which exclude them and certain type of violent cellular organizations, which seem to appeal to a primarily masculinist sentiment. The complication also lies in the far greater concessions women are required to make in their travels within the global circuits of labour. I also wonder whether sexual and gender identity has a considerable impact on the manoeuvring routes and new-found communities of those seeking opportunities within the metropolises of the world. In other words, Appadurai's analysis could be enriched by a dialogue with scholars, such as Mohanty (2003), who include the gendered dimension of globalization into their analysis.

Fear of Small Numbers, as Appadurai suggests already from the very start, is an essay and indeed should be read as one or several essays on interlinked topics such as the double-edged status of cultural minorities, as the victims of cultural violence, and as perpetrators of terror, the emergence of new organizational structures within which means of mass destruction and ideological mobilization reside vis-à-vis nation states, or the roots and the diversity of anti-American sentiments. The broad terrain the book covers is its strength and its weakness. Appadurai provides many empirical examples, many of which are based on the case of India and Hindu nationalism, which are illustrative of his argument, yet do not amount to a convincing empirical case per se. Similarly, Appadurai coins a large number of concepts such as ideocide and civicide, or cellular and vertebrae organizations, some of which do not amount to a fully crafted theory in its own right, with which we can proceed to assert what is afoot in our globalized world. The abundance of terminology bears with it other, more problematic

risks as well, namely those of simplified appropriation of the terminology without any in-depth consideration of the theoretical foundation and politics, underpinning Appadurai's book.

On the other hand, the breadth of the book also tells us something about the nature of the investigated phenomena. *Fear of Small Numbers* is a decentralized piece of writing which follows ideas across nations, historical events, levels of analysis and disciplinary boundaries. In that sense, Appadurai's book is a mapping of the changing terrain of the globalized world, providing us with the necessary landmarks to dive in and explore certain aspects of it in greater depth and detail. I am inclined to argue that the scope of analysis of the book is characterized by a certain cellularity *per se*, a reminder that interconnectedness, and not isolation, is the key feature of contemporary phenomena.

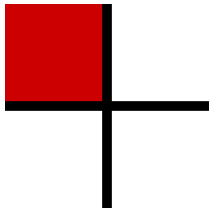
Appadurai introduces his essay as produced during an intellectual transition, an itinerary which begins with the investigation of the harshest effects of globalization and lands in the discovery of grassroots movements and their radically emancipatory potential. *Fear of Small Numbers* presents only the preliminary results of the observations Appadurai has made concerning the emancipatory, humanitarian movements, within which the hopes for a better future for large parts of the world's population may very well reside. Between the violence and the hope, *Fear of Small Numbers* is an intellectual exploration of some of the novel and major features of globalization, an inspiring and informative book for any scholar who wishes to engage with questions of identity, politics and organizing in a non-parochial manner.

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The Shape of Order at the Edge of Chaos

Patrik Baard

review of:

Chesters, Graeme and Ian Welsh (2006) *Complexity and Social Movements – Multitude(s) on the Edge of Chaos*. New York: Routledge. (PB: pp. 195, £20.00, ISBN: 978-0-415-43974-9)

[T]he presentation of the alter-globalisation movement as anarchic disorder in effect conceals the extent to which the alter-globalisation movement embodies organizational forms and aims that *are* the future. (p. 89)

Resistance is located in the rejection of ‘habits of mind’ associated with the ‘common sense’ constructed through the disperse logics of control and the formulation through encounter of an ethics of invention and intensity... the bringing together of diverse elements in a way which allows them to escape the plane of organization. (p. 136)

At First...

The concept of organization might not be a concept that seems to fit neatly with the analysis of today’s social movements, which tends to have a heavy emphasis on ‘fuzzy’ networks and constant becoming in face of the static. This review would suggest that the way in which social movements, and in particular the multitude or alter-globalisation movement, is presented in the book *Complexity and Social Movements – Multitude(s) on the Edge of Chaos* (Chesters and Welsh, 2006) can be contrasted with the topic of organization. It is a concept which, when used to analyse social movements, tends to be problematic concerning the ambiguous relation inherent in networked social movements (or multitudes) such as what the authors call the alter-globalisation movement and the network form of such movements which does not fit nicely into an organizational framework. The authors stress how it tries to avoid a too rigid organization, but still needs a certain stability in the social, cognitive, and practice movements of the alter-globalisation movement in order to enable protest, renegotiate aims and strategies, as well as construct alternatives to neoliberal globalisation. According to the authors the alter-globalisation movement exceeds the options of *anti* and *pro* but *alter* (p. 107), and tries to present spaces of deliberation and to do so a certain stabilisation is at hand. What is interesting is how the alter-globalisation movement avoids falling into the static structures of the organization, but still enables

mobilisation and one of the rewards of this book is how it tries to formulate and describe this ambiguous situation within the alter-globalisation movement between chaos and order and what shape an entity which avoids both can take.

The book, by Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh, uses a Deleuzian framework by which to analyse the alter-globalisation movement. Using the philosophers of multiplicity and the proclaimed enemies of the logic of the One, Deleuze and Guattari, to analyse the alter-globalisation movement seems fitting, and paired with the empirical data presented means that the authors take a different approach on the multitudes to for instance Hardt and Negri, who work on a more theoretical field. Indeed Chesters and Welsh almost deem it necessary to use Deleuze and Guattari as a conceptual frame when analyzing the alter-globalisation movement because it is a platform which is based primarily on *inclusion* and *processes* and thus “sediments a process of ‘becoming’ within the alter-globalisation movement which is one reason why the work of Deleuze and Guattari is so central here” (p. 35). Because one thing this book contains is a well-documented view of the alter-globalisation movement ranging from prior to Seattle 1999 to Genoa 2001 and beyond. We find here documents from the movements themselves, which give flesh to the concepts used, such as plateaux, and excerpts from media coverage and police reports to understand how the alter-globalisation movement becomes identified, that is, how its internal plurality is reduced to a single identifiable entity with specific characteristics, and the space in which it moves becomes stratified and thus limited. An identification far away from the plurality and becoming of the complex alter-globalisation movement.

The threat to the alter-globalisation movement is never entirely from external stigmatisation and repression from authorities and media, but also from the internal configuration of the movement itself and it is here we find the importance of the concept of organization. Indeed the alter-globalisation movement can be viewed as presenting an organization which promotes becoming-other and is inherently rhizomatic in that it affirms social, cognitive as well as practical becoming and exceedings by way of what in the book is called weak ties and reflexive framing. These concepts enable the alter-globalisation movement to move beyond the static configuration of an organization and the unidimensionality earlier social movements present when frames, aims and methods are concerned. By way of the always becoming-other inherent in the alter-globalisation movement the authors seem to subscribe to the Guattarian refusal of “an inevitable and necessary program” (Guattari, 1996: 277). There are many concepts presented in this book whose basic function is to exceed the static but maintain consistency in the face of chaos, and some of the most important ones will be presented in this review. The book can be read as presenting a way to understand organization and change.

In-between Chaos and Order...

While discussing the alter-globalisation movement or social movements in general one faces the problem of organization and stabilisation of becoming. A movement eager to become-other and provide change becomes static in its social composition as well as the

aims and theoretical frame in and by which it operates. But this is also a problem as to the nature of mobilisation – in order to be able to mobilise and include other people in the movement a certain stability is needed; topics to mobilise protest around, visions of alternatives. In *Complexity and Social Movements* the plane of organization, the concept used by Deleuze and Guattari to designate a firm and static organization of chaos, is something that the alter-globalisation movement tries to avoid whereas a certain moment of stabilisation is needed in order to proliferate social connections and render mobilisation and collective action possible. Chesters and Welsh are using the concept of ‘plateaux’ in order to understand this momentary stabilisation of forces and becomings: “it denotes a sustained plane of intensity not intended to result in any form of climatic outcome or pre-ordained conscious dénouement” (p. 20). The concept of plateaux provide an understanding of the alter-globalisation movement as, while offering a sustained plane on which to act, there is no final goal or method which subjugates or guides the act or its outcomes. The nature of the plateaux entails a never ceasing re-negotiation in order to get out of what the authors call ‘habits of mind’.

The plateaux offers only a momentarily stability, but a cognitive and social space in which to act, and hits right at the centre of the concept of any rhizomatic organization, if one were to call it such, namely the question of consistency in becoming. If one were in a reductive mood, one could claim that the plateaux is situated in the middle of rigid structures and total chaos. It avoids both the blockage of becoming which is a fact in the plane of organization, as well as the suicidal and destructive becoming which becomes subsumed in chaos, and hence the writers seem to take heed of the warning Deleuze and Guattari provide in *A Thousand Plateaus*: “mimic the strata, one does not reach the body-without-organs and its plane of consistency by wildly destratifying”, it is through a “meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2003: 161). Mimicking the strata, but without getting stratified, could well be the call from rhizomatic organizations or another description of the alter-globalisation movement.

The plane on which the alter-globalisation movement operates would be a plane of consistency, a concept which has a surprisingly low level of significance in Chesters and Welsh’s book, only being mentioned on a few occasions. Instead they settle for the concept of plateaux, and while they describe it in the aforementioned manner it seems to be used exclusively to describe the protests occurring during summits, giving them name such as ‘Seattle plateaux’ or ‘Prague plateaux’. The plane of consistency in the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari would be a much more fitting concept on some occasions, such as when the authors describe movements during ‘latency periods’. Plateaux is described by the authors as that which exceeds the social structures of movements and is described as such: “we use plateaux as a descriptor for the process of intensive networking in material and immaterial spaces that occurs around nodal points of contestation or deliberation, such as protest events or social fora” (p. 102). Hence they emphasise not only the plateaux as a ‘sustained plane of intensity’ but also the way in which it affirms becoming by way of multiplying social networks by way of intensive networking. This intensive networking is an important part of the inclusive part of the alter-globalisation movement, as it accelerates participation. The networking process is also described by using the concept ‘weak ties’, breaching the way in which Deleuze and Guattari describe the multiplicity of a plateaux: “we call a ‘plateau’ any multiplicity

connected to other multiplicities by way of superficial stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2003: 22). However, it is unclear why the authors use the concept of plateau exclusively for “protest events or social fora” and perhaps the attention paid to ‘plane of consistency’ would include so called latency periods as well, times in between plateaux. By doing so they would include not only the intensive social networking and renegotiations of frames at protests plateaux, but also the latency periods as a whole – and in doing so regain a level of consistency as a whole for a movement that is not only alive or active during summits and social forums.

But this only concerns the more active periods of the alter-globalisation movement and the authors go to great effort to describe what they call, following sociologist Melucci, ‘latency periods’ (p. 29). These are times when frames and social networks are constructed, as well as repertoires of protest and issues are negotiated. The concept ‘frame’ is derived from sociologist Erving Goffman, and is meant to describe the understanding of the surrounding world which is inherent in a social setting. *Complexity and social movements* presents the concept of ‘Computer Mediated Communication’ (p. 9) which implies that the re-negotiating of frames involves a greater quantity of agents when being mediated by computers and communication technology. This is a characterisation of the loss of the so called ‘master frame’, or any master ideology which subsumes activity to a specific goal. Rather, the process of negotiating frames become open (p. 19). One of the first uses of Computer Mediated Communication is the case of Chico Mendes, a Brazilian trade unionist and environmentalist whose opposition to clearing of rubber bearing forest led to him being murdered in 1988. This murder was followed by an intervention by social movement Friends of the Earth, who “were amongst those distributing e-mail, phone and fax numbers of not only Embassies and Departments of State in Brazil but also specific police stations holding activists associated with Mendes and the rubber-tappers movement” (p. 27). These actions predated the internet in its current development by at least a decade, and was an important part of the use of Computer Mediated Communication. The case of Chico Mendes also proves to be paradigmatic for the alter-globalisation movement as it involves not only Computer Mediated Communication but also a plurality of issues – mixing issues on labour with environmentalist concerns, a plurality seen over and over again in the alter-globalisation movement, manifesting itself most explicitly by the slogan ‘teamsters and turtles unite’ used in Seattle 1999.

Another example of the use of Computer Mediated Communication and the reflexive frame during latency periods is the period leading up to the protests in Seattle 1999 when an active negotiation was manifested in a circulating e-mail discussing topics such as ‘motivation and objectives’, ‘lines of action’, ‘responsibilities and participation’, ‘finances’, ‘possibilities for the future’, and ‘proposal for the discussion process’. The e-mail is dated to 1996 by an anonymous writer, and circulated on e-mail lists between non-governmental organizations and social movements, as well as network actors which maximised the availability of actors. This process of increasing use of Computer Mediated Communication can be viewed as a preface to social forums such as the *Encuentero* initiated by the Zapatistas and later on the World Social Forum. The aim of the encounter in the Chiapas 1999 was to bring together a multiplicity of actors in order to view the similarities as well as differences. Chesters and Welsh conclude that “in this encounter they discovered their targets were essentially the same, the ‘hylomorphic’

architecture of globalised capitalism ... the only difference was in the form and type of resistances. Although resistance was occurring globally there was little attempt to coordinate and communicate between movements in a “cohesive or comprehensive way” (p. 111). Thus a way to speak of a common plane on which to act, but with a multiplicity of methods and strategies for resistances due to the many actors involved – thus making it impossible to succumb the actors to the guise of a transcendent organization. This encounter in the Chiapas was the main influence for the World Social Forum which “was conceived as a participatory, dialogical and pedagogical space that would be non-directed and non-representative and therefore unique as a self-organised space of encounter between civil society actors including social movements, NGOs, trade unions and engaged activists/intellectuals” (p. 121) – a sustained plane of intensity, bringing together diverse elements in order to create a multiplicity, much like the first encounter initiated by the Zapatistas which “as an attempt to offer space for connections to be made, to construct an inclusive framework and to announce a space for thinking alternatives” (p. 111). A question the book raises is how self-organization is possible and maintained, without falling into the traps of either a too rigid organization or a plunge into chaos and networks too loosely knit to enable mobilisation and action.

The bringing together of diverse elements which characterises the World Social Forum may not fit into our discussion of how the alter-globalisation movement enables us to understand the concept of organizational form in a different setting. Because the World Social Forum actually is a platform of a wide array of actors aligning in a common meeting or summit, it seems foreign to the concept of organization. There are however other examples which the authors discuss and which breach upon the in-between space of organization and chaos in a more thorough fashion than the World Social Forum. People’s Global Action is one such example. The People’s Global Action is a network of networks, or plateaux, which was founded in 1998 in Geneva. It functions by way of established hallmarks, which of course are renegotiated, which since the third international conference of People’s Global Action has a focus on taking a confrontational attitude, which stands in opposition to the function of Social Forums which primarily accumulate networks and links, and it has “an organizational attitude based on decentralisation and autonomy” (p. 113). The conference in Geneva, according to Chesters and Welsh, employed the “familiar mechanisms in constructing a collective identity”, which included discussion of aforementioned hallmarks as well as constructing a manifesto. Constructing a collective identity is of course a basic premise for any organization, the People’s Global Action however maintained and indeed encouraged “tensions between agreements” and simultaneously “maintain the space for articulation of singularities” (p. 114) and in this way obliterate the image of a collective identity to which one has to “conform” to a consensus and renders a plane of consistency which enables becoming-other. In one way the People’s Global Action put into effect the words of Félix Guattari, when he claims that “it’s something that develops precisely in the direction of diversity, of a multiplicity of perspectives ... it’s not a question of creating agreement; on the contrary, the less we agree, the more we create an area, a field of vitality ... it’s a completely different logic from the organizational, arborescent logic that we know in political or union movements” (in Stivale, 1998: 197). It is within this field that the People’s Global Action operates as a plane of consistency which enables co-ordination of events and re-negotiation of

strategies and struggles. Because the People's Global Action emphasises a certain disagreement and discussion it never makes the unidimensional claims of the party. It also exceeds the unidimensionality of the organization and its organization of the world and instead affirms the multiplicity of being. The whole point of an organization of complexity might well be to enlarge the aforementioned field of vitality in order to avoid stratification and statification – by maintaining complexity the inclusionary social aspect as well as the aspect of plural issues is kept in motion, in becoming.

The complexity of the alter-globalisation movement is the key element in order to understand the way it exceeds the structure of an organization, but never succumbs to the depth of chaos. A social complexity due to inherent inclusiveness, and a cognitive complexity because of communication which enables a broad range of perspectives and hence make sure that the frames of the alter-globalisation movement never gets too comfortable, and a use of Computer Mediated Communication which exceeds both social as well as cognitive rigidity and enables the construction of always other alternatives to the present neo-liberal globalisation, which is presented as a main enemy. Chesters and Welsh describe the complexity as a direct cause of “resisting co-option by party discipline and ideological strictures” (p. 105), a capacity which is “growing as a direct result of increasing complexity” (*ibid.*).

The complexity of the alter-globalisation movement does not only involve a complexity in its social configuration and its cognitive frames but it also involves embracing a wide repertoire of methods of protest and again the enemy seems to be unidimensionality. When writing on protests during summits Chesters and Welsh maintain that the reports by both the media and the police reduce the complexity of the alter-globalisation movement and instead try to write them off as “mindless thugs” or “anarchists”, thus discursively “collapsing complex identities to a ‘mob’” (p. 75) and that by “removing the identity of the individuals and focusing on the group as ‘anarchists’ and ‘thugs’ they become associated with the violence that the media chooses to focus upon, not the message their activism seeks to advance” (p. 81). Throughout the alter-globalisation movement a certain carnivalesque strategy was spawned, which seemed to try to accelerate the repertoire of protest in order to get away from well-known tactics of demonstrating and rioting. For instance in Prague a group called Tactical Frivolity would dress up in silver and pink and thus avoid the often chosen fashion of black hoodies and masks amongst protesters. The book offers an excerpt from an interview with one activist from Tactical Frivolity, who explains the chosen methods in the following way:

Throughout history we have like a whole human history of like people fighting each other and righteously fighting each other and going well, I'm fighting you because you're evil and you're wrong and so that means that I have to fight you, you know, and it's like somehow trying to get away from that and kind of play it differently so that we're saying well we don't like what you're doing, we don't agree with what you're doing. But that doesn't mean that I'm going to get out a bigger stick than you've got and beat you dead with it... Just by dressing up and making ourselves vulnerable, to me it was a sort of symbolic moving us out of that war like space in a way, you know, trying to get away from the total black and white, them and us. (p. 55)

This approach seemed to arouse distress amongst both the police as well as protesters who were more familiar with the common ‘black bloc’-technique of confronting the police with violence with Tactical Frivolity being stuck dancing in-between the police

and more aggressive protesters due to them insisting being in the front line. Eventually, however, the police would strip the complexity of actors within the so called pink bloc and attack the pink and silver-clad Tactical Frivolity after “male protestors produced pieces of timber and started beating the police” (p. 58). Embracing such “event novelty confounds established habits of mind leaving engaged actors confronted by the unknown associated with heightened complexity” (p. 71), thus not only confounding the police who at a ‘Global Street Party’ in Toronto in 1998 would maintain that “this is not a protest. This is some kind of artistic expression” (p. 71) but also affirming the complexity within the alter-globalisation movement itself. By widening the repertoire of protest methods and turning to the carnivalesque the desire to never be captured or come to a stand still in any area of the alter-globalisation movement is manifested.

By way of constructing spaces for encounters, building weak ties and maintaining a complexity in cognitive frames and repertoires of action, the alter-globalisation movement tries to construct an alternative to both the environmental and labour policy of neoliberal capital, as well as offering an alternative to the unidimensional organizational configurations. The authors call the space the alter-globalisation movement is aiming for a Global Civil Sphere, as the citizens of states are more and more detached from the governmental policies which are more interested in companies than in people. Consequently the need for alternative spaces is growing. What used to be the open space in which to debate policies and protest them, offer alternatives, and to link personal problems with political agendas (the *agora* of *polis*), the civil society, is “absorbed in the state... The consequence of this is an explosion of the elements that were previously coordinated and mediated in civil society”, Chesters and Welsh quote Hardt and Negri saying (p. 99). The explosion of actors is the complexity of the alter-globalisation movement, and the ability to act collectively is manifested in protest plateaux.

Finally...

Is it possible to understand an organization in becoming; to understand a complex organization without having to turn to other concepts such as plateaux or plane of consistency? Can we imagine an organization which enables becoming or is it inherently and permanently the enemy of becoming-other and change? This book would certainly disagree with the juxtaposition of organization to change and tries to formulate an organization which embraces change while still maintaining both complexity and consistency.

The greatest effort of this work is that it provides a thorough analysis of the alter-globalisation movement between the years 1999-2001, and how it applies concepts derived from Deleuze and Guattari while working close to the empirical data from the movement itself. But it also exceeds the alter-globalisation movement and implicitly urges us to investigate the field between order and chaos, organization and becoming, to a greater extent by using the alter-globalisation movement as a model. By doing so Chesters and Welsh provide a different understanding of the concept of organization which exceeds the boundaries of the subjugative and arborescent organization. Rather it

is a question of maintaining consistency, of creating different motifs by which to keep close to chaos and thereby affirm complexity and a multiplicity of perspectives but at the same time “keeping a distance to the forces of chaos knocking at the door” (Deleuze and Guattari 2003: 320). The book beautifully illustrates the multiplicity of motifs or plateaux which is the main point where the organization is exceeded yet consistency maintained.

In a world based on the network model it is important to understand how the nodes of the network communicate, mobilise, and form a plane of consistency. That is, how they form a unity without finding their singularity reduced. This is the reason why it is important to investigate the in-between space of order and chaos. It is never a question of complete order and unidimensionality opposed to chaos but rather of maintaining a certain unity which renders acting in tandem possible, a degree of multiplicity which enables becoming and rhizomatic lines of social and cognitive escape lines, and a modest becoming in order to never succumb to neither the claustrophobic static organization nor finding oneself crippled by the unbearable thickness of chaos.

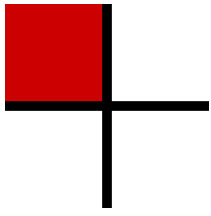
The alter-globalisation movement is never a simple model of organization, but one which maintains its complexity, or rather one which due to its complexity never succumbs to the unidimensional logic of the One, whether it's one method, one frame, or one organizational structure. The book addresses the issue of how a diverse range of actors relate to each other, construct a cognitive frame and re-negotiate it, and how these actors come together and mobilise for actions despite the wide mix of actors and issues involved. The book does its work well, and in its retrospective look on the alter-globalisation movement it provides concepts which make us understand the in-between of chaos and organization, and which different methods, forms of social networks, cognitive frames and techniques are used when one exceeds the static organization and looks forward to constituting consistent spaces of complexity.

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Shit and Signifiers

Thomas Hedebye

review of:

Guattari, Félix (2006) *The Anti-Œdipus Papers*. New York: Semiotext(e). (PB: pp. 439, \$17.95, ISBN: 1-58435-031-8)

Got to pee, monsieur de Deleuze. I always have to pee. I've heard you never have to! (p. 365)

To readers already familiar with the writings of Félix Guattari, straightforward and un-cut comments, like this one on pee made to Deleuze, should come as no surprise. Even on peeing habits, Guattari never was a big fan of 'mediation'. Indeed, in the collected writings now named *The Anti-Œdipus Papers*, Guattari's language is at times straightforward and un-cut like a glossy Hollywood magazine targeting Neo-Marxist intellectuals. To readers less familiar with the writings of Guattari: *The Anti-Œdipus Papers* is a large collection of working letters that Guattari wrote to his friend and colleague Gilles Deleuze during their writing *Anti-Œdipus* together. Publishing *Anti-Œdipus* in 1972, and with their subsequent writings, Guattari and Deleuze undertook arguably the most daring intellectual quest of our time, rewriting Marxism, psychoanalysis, capitalism and philosophy through several series of very radical conceptual innovations. In addition to the working letters Guattari sent Deleuze in that regard *The Anti-Œdipus Papers* contains Guattari's private journals revealing a somewhat turbulent private life – including a troubled professional relationship with friend and teacher, psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan.

What I feel like is just fucking around. Publish this diary for example. Say stupid shit. Barf out the fucking-around-o-maniacal schizo flow. Barter whatever for whoever wants to read it. Now that I'm turning into a saleable name I can find an editor for sure. (p. 400)

Familiarity aside though, ironically Félix Guattari himself was also rather un-cut about the idea of selling his letters and journals to capitalize on his saleable name. Therefore, some level of initial scepticism, regarding why we are now able to buy and read this stupid shit in English, seems advisable. Reading his letters and journals, one cannot help but to be a bit curious about what Guattari's reaction would have been, had he read the present and somewhat controversial Semiotext(e) edition. (I'll be returning to the controversial aspects later). Positive or negative, from the experience of reading *The Anti-Œdipus Papers*, surely Guattari's reaction, had he felt fit to continue the extreme writing style of his letters, would be one of sudden outcries (!); unfinished or

undeveloped lines of thought; beautiful spontaneous accelerations of sense; and extremely abstract thinking covered in implicit and esoteric academic references, leaving any actual *Bedeutung* sitting in a ‘fucking-around-o-maniacal schizo flow’ for poor readers to unravel themselves. If experience counts, Guattari would definitely also leave sentences half finished, perhaps even add a weird dream reading here and there, before finally glossing up everything with a touch of semi-inappropriate confessional exhibitionism disguised as self-analysis. If not a lesson on pee, *The Anti-Œdipus Papers* is quintessentially stupid shit in a ‘fucking-around-o-maniacal schizo flow’ format. So why would you ever want to buy and read this shit?

Obviously, to scholars enjoying hermeneutic fetishes, *The Anti-Œdipus Papers* will serve as an important historical source in creating the necessary contextual narrations to legitimize interpretations of Deleuze/Guattari’s *Anti-Œdipus*. While difficult, the letters are very rich in personal and academic detail, which can definitely be turned into a testimony to the specifics of the already famous collaboration between Deleuze and Guattari. If hermeneutic interpretations are your poison, you will also be happy to find that Deleuze’s annotations to the original letters are noted in the Semiotext(e) edition. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, Guattari’s letters are sufficiently detailed to support interpretive studies of the chronological *conceptual* development of the fore mentioned *Anti-Œdipus* collaboration. Some very interesting and complex conceptual work is to be found in *The Anti-Œdipus Papers*. This includes elaborate discussions on the need for, and problems regarding, the incorporation of elements of Hjelmslevian semantics in the base of Deleuze/Guattari’s joined schizo-thinking. Basically, what Guattari is trying to work out in the letters is how to *keep* the Marxist conception of capitalism as ‘value being constituted in general forms’ (through means of production), while *changing* the immanent semantic engine of Marxist political economy from Hegelian dialectics to a differential machinic ontology. While contemplating this change, Guattari debates, at great length and complexity, different conceptions of form and meaning. He is trying to dismiss the Hegelian dialectical formation for being the imperialism of an ‘impotent signifier’ (which Guattari’s favorite way of saying “meaning produced through a principle of transcendent formal unity coding onto substance”), and re-injecting a new and more powerful conception of formation, now driven by differential machinic power. Inspired by Hjelmslevian semantics, machinic power works as a figural split *between* content and expression (each of which is now given its own form and own substance), thereby ‘double articulating’ meaningful reality. In the realm of this split reality, Guattari argues, capitalistic machines work by introducing, or signifying, sovereignty of a decoded flow standard, thereby enabling physical exchange AND cognitive recognition.

So while creating a new conceptual foundation to analytics of capitalism, Guattari essentially seeks to also destroy the ‘impotency’ of classical bourgeois capitalism by letting machinic power penetrate concepts of bourgeois capitalism from within; it works as if you violently forced open a pair of scissors from inside a cheap plastic ring.

From this point on, *The Anti-Œdipus Papers* serves many an interpretive dish with meat on the bone. It does so because it is clear from the subsequent journals that Guattari’s fight against the ‘impotencies of signifiers’, while significant to the development of the analytics of capitalism, is equally important to him personally. Basically, it becomes

clear that the fight against the ‘impotencies of signifiers’ exists in almost all other areas of his personal life as well: his political fight against government power, his professional and personal fight against Lacanian influence, his private love life, indeed even in his relationship with Deleuze is at times described in the journals as mediated through impotence. So hermeneutic fetishists building contextual narrations, or drawing lines of conceptual development, should have a field day. *The Anti-Œdipus Papers* is definitely a useful, and pleasurable, read.

As Guattari also spends a great deal of time and energy debating Lacan’s theoretical framework in general, and ‘*petit a*’ in particular, reading *The Anti-Œdipus Papers* will definitely serve as a very interesting – and probably very provoking! – experience to people working with Lacanian analytics. In his letters, Guattari intensely criticizes Lacanian analytics for being the very epiphany of impotent capitalistic mediation, rather than a framework enabling critique of capitalistic production processes and social liberation. The letters, therefore, serve as a great study in Guattari’s intense attempts to eradicate the capitalistic notions inherent in Lacanian analytics and discontinue this influence through conceptual innovation.

To Guattari, the question of capitalism and psychoanalysis becomes a problem of ontology. Rather than accepting the separation of ‘the Real’ from any analytical entity, such as the Symbolic or the Imaginary, he insists on the notion that nothing is separated from ‘the Real’. *Everything* is Real in *The Anti Œdipus Papers* and, even though ‘the Real’ may exist *virtually*, *nothing lacks* in the Lacanian sense of ‘lack’. Instead, Guattari understands formation of ‘the Real’ ontologically through two stoic conceptions of time ‘modulation’: *Chronos* and *Aion*. Lacanian notions, Guattari argues insistently, are insufficient because they are traversed, or mediated, by *Chronos* (the time of logic) thereby representing *Aion* (the eventual time of revolution) in a bad way. It serves as a bad representation of being because, by making too much fuzz of *Chronos*, we tend to neglect *Aion* in existence. Specifically, *Chronos* is a kind of temporal organizing that enables an internal economy (like a Lacanian structure) to exist ontologically. The establishment of a chronologic economy results in the possibility for powerful dynamics (like real thought or desire) to be codified and moved sequentially, like on a line, through different points of time and space. Thereby existence is given conceptual conditions that are fixed, and controlled, through the repetition of specific points in time and space, and semantic production is allowed to exist *only* as exchange between these repeated conceptual positions. Another way of saying this is that the result of *Chronos* is an overarching causal logic and production of bourgeois sense; everything is in order. Generally, the problem is related to the way, the mode, in which existence is articulated and signified. To Guattari the specific point of irritation seems to be that conceptual innovations (like *petit a*) supposedly existing ‘outside’ or ‘free’ of the fixed positions defined by this causal logic, indeed concepts that shall serve as means of critique or possibility of change of this very system, works through *negation* of this system. The concepts therefore exist only in negative relation to the *prerequisite* of chronological economy. Basically, every time Lacan points to ‘*petit a*’ as representation of desire, he is pointing to a negative ‘remainder’ of a chrono-economic systematic, the existence of which did NOT change. Rather it just got repeated in the critical process. (In *The Anti Œdipus Papers*, now would be the time when Guattari would be serving readers the analogy of Saturn eating his children to

sustain his own existence.) This means that to Guattari, in essence, Lacanian analytics is only a con game on the primacy of logical time. With Lacanian thinking nothing *really* changes. Consequently, a substantial proportion of Guattari's letters are devoted to his trying very hard to overcome this intellectual inertia by making *Aion* (the eventual time of revolution) the prime temporality of reality.

In the future, perhaps Lacanians, provoked from reading *The Anti-Œdipus Papers*, will be analyzing Guattari's letters meticulously to unravel whether or not the concept of *Aion*, then, is itself precisely that: a negative remainder mediated by some inherent chrono-economic system...

However, and we are now closing in on the controversy I mentioned initially, the editor of the present Semiotext(e) edition has made some rather spectacular decisions, making life much harder on readers who wish to enact the fore mentioned academic exercises. Indeed, it must surely be leaving hard core Deleuze/Guattari fans and scholars alike thinking: 'what the *hell?!* This is destruction by the signifier!' The controversy stems from the fact that, rather than keeping the chronological order of Guattari's letters and journals, the editor has chosen to organize (Mr. Nadaud makes an attempt at calling it 'assembling') the writings under a series of six signifying conceptual frameworks. They are:

Texts for Anti-Œdipus

Psychoanalysis and Schizo-Analysis

Militant Incidences

Pragmatic Linguistics

Planes of Consistency

Corrections Made to Anti-Œdipus

Obviously this choice poses problems to readers seeking exactitude, for instance in the chronological conceptual development of the Deleuze/Guattari collaboration. Researching *The Anti-Œdipus Papers*, these readers will have some serious cutting and gluing to do. However, considering the importance of the problem of the impotence of signifiers inherent in Guattari's work, using these six conceptual frameworks to organize *The Anti-Œdipus Papers* turn out to be an immense strengthening of the papers. Not because the frameworks are good, though. Rather because the frameworks are bad. Really bad... Extremely insufficient actually, not at all capturing any meaningful level of the complexity or significance of Guattari's 'fucking-around-o-maniacal schizo flow'. The reason is that, in their signifying relation to the schizo flow, the six conceptual frameworks become caricatures. The frameworks are basically too easy, too obvious a choice, clearly making a privilege of biographical and conceptually monumental elements of the Guattarian legacy, rather than capturing the real intellectual fighting within letters and journals themselves. Ironically, it is in this sense of non-performing insufficiency that the organization becomes a stroke of genius, because the frameworks of *The Anti-Œdipus Papers* organize the writings in a composition that is characterized by exactly the kind of shit Guattari was fighting to

destroy: signifying shit. Impotence. By daring this controversial choice, the editor (perhaps inadvertently, but who cares?), has created a plane of composition that is very different from what would probably have been the case, had he succumbed to the apparent ease of chronology.

The impotence of the composition entails several interesting consequences. First, it changes the literary status of the letters and journals from 'communication' to 'oeuvre', which is important because this, in return, changes the degree of freedom that readers are 'allowed' to enjoy in reading and using the writings. Second, it destroys the privileged positions of the usual primary signifiers of the letters (the original *Anti-Œdipus* publication, and the Deleuze/Guattarian collaboration), thereby allowing new *Bedeutung*, different code surplus value, to be drawn from the schizo-flow. Third, because the six conceptual frameworks are very weak in their signifying relation to the power of Guattari's writing, readers are brought in a position to understand the many problems, inherently unfolding in the letters and journals, *in their own right*, rather than as preliminary writings the significance of which is to be understood only in relation to transcendent circumstances. To the future value of Guattari's letters and journals, these changes are probably very important.

In other words, the positive effect of the impotence and insufficiencies of the six signifiers chosen by the editor is that it creates a quite beautiful consistency in their affiliation to the schizo-flow. It becomes a dramatization of what is arguably the most significant problem Guattari was facing at the time of his writing the letters and journals: Oedipal disempowerment. Readers of *The Anti-Œdipus Papers* will find that desire (of) overcoming (his) disempowerment is precisely what organizes virtually all of the significant conceptual oppositions developed in Guattari's journals and letters to Deleuze: Molar organization vs. Molecular formatism – Despotic signifiers vs. Machinic figurism – Writing machine vs. Machinic writing – Lacanian *petit a* vs. Power sign – Anti-production vs. Real production – *Urstaat* BwO vs. Socius BwO – Impotence vs. Desire, etc. In *The Anti-Œdipus Papers* all of these concepts, created through desire to penetrate and explode disempowerment from the inside, are still under construction. They are unfinished intellectual innovations unfolding through a Guattarian 'fucking-around-o-maniacal schizo flow' tied to a capitalist code surplus value problematic, which literally makes them quasi-nonsensical shit!

But, regardless of whether readers read *The Anti Œdipus Papers* in order to understand *Anti-Œdipus* better or differently; read to psychoanalyze Guattari or the Deleuze/Guattarian cooperation; read to gain critical perspective on Lacanian analysis; or read to continue the Deleuze/Guattarian method of conceptual creations, reading this 'shit' is *really* quite a ride.

the author

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