Whither Marx in the Business School?

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ABSTRACT

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In this thesis I read critical studies of management reading Marx. I explore the inheritance of Marx in the business school through a symptomatic reading of labour process theory and critical management studies. In Part I I explore the conditions of this thesis. The university-based business school is introduced as the context in which this thesis is written, and as an institution concerned with management as object of theory and its relation to capital. I outline a symptomatic reading which explores how particular theories or problematics focus on particular objects, such as management or capital. In Part II I read works in labour process theory to demonstrate how Marx is inherited in these discourses and how labour process theory seeks to constitute a study of management within a Marxist problematic, before abandoning the Marxist problematic and establishing a new problematic of management. In Part III I read works in critical management studies to demonstrate the ways in which Marx and a problematic of management is established. Here a variety of both theoretical and political positions emerge, from a Marxism to anti-Marxism in theory, and a for and against management in politics. The symptomatic reading demonstrates that overall a particular reading of Marx leads critical studies of management away from a clear position within a Marxist problematic, to moments in which Marx is no longer read and in which capital emerges as a symptom that is not accounted for theoretically. This is followed by a return to a reading of Marx in the business school, which seeks to account once again for capital. This thesis contributes to the work of inheritance in the business school, and the conclusion points to current moments in this work, which leave the question "whither Marx in the business school?" contested.

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1 INTRODUCTION

> Of course, we all have read, and all do read *Capital*. For almost a
> century, we have been able to read it every day, transparently,
> in the dramas and dreams of our history, in its disputes and
> conflicts, in the defeats and victories of the workers'
> movement... But some day it is essential to read *Capital* to the
> letter.
>
> (Althusser, 1970: 13)

Whither Marx in the Business School?

This thesis traces the reading of Marx in the business school as it occurred in the
emergence of critical studies of management. It shows both how Marx has been
read in the business school in the past, and the conditions for reading Marx in the
business school of today. It starts with the present state of critical studies of
management in the business school, noting a peculiarity relating to Althusser's
epitaph above. On the one hand, capital is read in the business school all the
time, everyday: in a sense the business school is precisely occupied with the
everyday of capital – with the organization of production, the management of the
labour process, and so on. On the other hand, however, in the business school of

today it does not seem to be considered essential to read *Capital* to the letter. This might not be a concern if the everyday of capital were to appear transparently, as Althusser suggests above. It might not be so obvious why Marx's *Capital* would help us in making sense of "really existing capitalism" as it appears in the business school today. Critical studies of management certainly claim that they are capable of making sense of management, and consequently also of business and capital. And if in the process of constituting themselves, they have to a certain extent at least abandoned Marx, then so be it.

Tracing the emergence of critical studies of management in the business school shows that Marx has been read in the business school, often when it was a question of reading capital, but that to a certain extent the consolidation of critical studies of management has coincided with a turn away from Marx. The double meaning of the title aims to capture these two aspects. On the one hand, "whither Marx in the business school?" asks which direction Marx is taking in the business school. The emergence of critical studies of management in the business school as it is recalled here commences with Marx. Labour process theory, conceived as Marxist studies of management, understands management as a function of capital. Subsequently, in their reading of Marx, where do critical studies of management take Marx, and take the business school? On the other hand, in their evolution, critical studies of management turn away from Marx. Here the question becomes "wither Marx in the business school?" Critical management studies appears to let Marx wither away in the business school, only to resuscitate him as soon as capital once again appears and an interpreter

is needed. The answers to both questions, therefore, are far from conclusive, or decided, as I will show.

The thesis, then, commences with this state of critical studies of management: its ambiguous relationship with Marx and its difficulty in comprehending capital. And through a reading of the emergence of critical studies of management and their reading of Marx, it provides an account of how this state of affairs came about in the business school. The reading in the thesis is in the first place a symptomatic reading of labour process theory and critical management studies, which are taken to be the most important representatives of critical studies of management that emerged first outside the business school and then entered it. This reading, which considers how these fields of study are constituted and produce theoretical objects for management and capital, takes place within a concern for understanding how these studies read Marx. So the symptomatic reading is supported by a consideration of what the conditions are for reading Marx. On the one hand, the history of critical studies of management in the business school, and readings of Marx within them, provides a condition for reading Marx in the business school today. On the other hand, Marx is also read, and more so, outside the business school, and throughout the thesis consideration is given to how the reading of Marx in the business school relates to readings of Marx outside the business school. This will be particularly apparent in the last chapter, where some of the thousand Marxisms that exist outside the business school are seen to enter the business school, and the future of Marx in the business school is contemplated.

Outline

PART I traces the conditions of this thesis with its situation in a university-based business school and within a tradition of the labour of reading taken from Marx, Althusser and Derrida.

CHAPTER 2 considers the university-based business school as the place in which this thesis is written. It briefly traces the confluence of the university and the business school, noting that the business school, representing the "world of affairs", is not at first welcome in the university occupied with reason and culture. The business school is understood as having management as its primary object of theory, but management struggles to establish itself as a profession not tainted by the perceived inequities produced by capital. It is here already that the question of the relation between management and capital is raised, and its suspension means that the business school is not fully integrated into the university. As the university embraces excellence, the situation changes. Excellence also brings capital to the university, and the university now is itself under threat. The choice for both the university and the business school now becomes one of either embracing excellence, performativity and capital, or one of drawing on the critical tradition inherited from the modern university to question capital. It is out of the latter option that critical studies of management emerge and enter the business school. The following chapters thus recount the history of an attempt to establish critical studies of management.

CHAPTER 3 provides a methodological account of the symptomatic reading performed in this thesis. The chapter will commence with a protocol for

approaching the inheritance of Marx. The heterogeneity of the texts of Marx will be emphasised, and three reasons for this heterogeneity will be given: the sheer spread of the texts of Marx; the process of rectification in Marx that led to self-criticism; and the fall of Soviet dogma. If this understanding of Marx poses particular challenges for his inheritance, then so do the thousand Marxisms that exist mostly outside the business school, which are also a consequence of this heterogeneity. These conditions for reading Marx will be considered in the rest of the thesis both in the assessment of how labour process theory and critical management studies have read Marx, and how it might be possible to read Marx in the business school today. The chapter proceeds with an outline of a protocol for a symptomatic reading, to be performed in the remainder of the thesis on labour process theory and critical management studies. This reading is a double reading, which first reads a text on its own terms and subsequently performs a second reading in which the symptoms of a text are interpreted. In the case of this thesis, the symptom that will be encountered primarily will be the various conceptions of capital that sporadically appear in the texts of labour process theory and critical management studies, considered symptoms insofar as they are hardly theoretically accounted for in these texts.

PART II contains the reading of labour process theory, considered as a first attempt to establish critical studies of management, starting with Marx, which was to enter the business school.

CHAPTER 4 discusses the founding text of labour process theory, Harry

Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974). Braverman is chosen as a

starting point not only because he is considered to single-handedly have

restarted a Marxist analysis of the labour process, but also because his book still

today serves as perhaps the most important reference point for Marxist studies

of management. Braverman identifies Taylorism as capital made conscious and

able to speak, and offers a stark critique of forms of management contemporary

in his time. Management is understood as a function of capital, a function wholly

determined by capital. So while Braverman founds a Marxist studies of

management, in these studies management does not appear as an object in its

own right insofar as it is always already determined fully by capital. Yet the

nature of this determination is one that remains largely unexplored in

Braverman, and while his structuralist arguments serve as an important

counterpoint to and critique of the subjectivist sociology of work of his time –

and of our time – it is this identification of management with capital and this

structuralism that is later attacked most sharply by his critics. Braverman's work

thus stands at the beginning of critical studies of management, a beginning in

which management does not yet appear as a sufficiently independent object, and

where capital still appears dominant, even if this dominance remains under-

theorized.

CHAPTER 5 explores Marxist responses to and critiques of Braverman, most

importantly those of Burawoy, leading to his own attempt to invent a critical

studies of management, *Manufacturing Consent* (1979). The Marxist critiques of

Braverman can be considered attempts to rectify some of Braverman's Marxism,

and to reread Marx to offer a different Marxist study of management. Here it is a question of separating the symptoms of Marx and Braverman. It is shown that most responses improperly assign symptoms to Marx, when they properly belong to Braverman. It is however Burawoy's work that succeeds in mapping a different Marxist study of management, one conceived in stark contrast to Braverman. Here management is not equated to Taylorism, and is instead understood as the production of hegemony in the factory. Nonetheless, management appears equally determined by capital, insofar as even contestations of managerial rule are presented as almost inevitably subsumed under managerial and therefore capitalist rule. Burawoy's work thus stands in contrast to Braverman as a different invention of a Marxist study of management, one in which however the imperatives of capital are equally determinant as in Braverman's case, and management does still not appear as a sufficiently independent object of theory.

CHAPTER 6 explores labour process theory as it enters the business school. It investigates the split that occurred in labour process theory in the late 1980s and the subsequent drawing and sedimentation of boundaries between subjectivist, Marxist and core labour process theory. The chapter explores Thompson's attempt to establish a core labour process theory, as a critical studies of management that draws on Marx but does not consider itself Marxist. Here management appears relatively autonomous from capital, and the determinations of management are once again under-theorized. The arguments between core and subjectivist labour process theory are traced to highlight how a concern with the subject and action, taken up from Burawoy, is a concern for

both types of labour process theory, which, while it is addressed differently by both, leads overall to a shift in concern away from questions of political economy towards a more contained or isolated view of management. The split between core and subjectivist theory, then, belies an underlying unity with regards to the autonomy of management. The Marxist critiques of core and subjectivist labour process theory are presented as a reminder of Marxist attempts to pose the question of the determination of management by capital, which however remains largely unsuccessful. Core labour process theory establishes itself as the dominant tradition, with the relation between management and capital only receiving limited attention, while subjectivist labour process theory is reincarnated as critical management studies, the subject of the next section of the thesis.

PART III contains the reading of critical management studies, as a successor to and competitor of labour process theory, and the most recent attempt to develop critical studies of management, where Marx is largely abandoned only to be read again once capital appears as a symptom.

CHAPTER 7 explores the ways in which critical management studies established itself both in developing a critical conceptualisation of management, and in its reading of Marx. First, I explore some pre-readings of Marx that pre-structure the reading of Marx in critical management studies: labour process theory as considered in Part II, Burrell and Morgan's (1979) paradigms, and postmodernism. Second, I read Willmott's work symptomatically, to show how it

develops from an initial structuralist Marxist position to a post-Marxist one. Management as an object of theory there gains increasing autonomy before a theory of management and capital is abandoned, to be replaced by a political analytic of the constitution of identities. Willmott's work is put into conversation with that of Armstrong to note the contested nature of his reading of Marx, and to note the limits of Marxist theory on management. Finally, I provide some discussions about the contested limits of the field of management studies with reference to the reading of Marx.

CHAPTER 8 explores some of the consequences and symptoms of the withering away of Marx in the business school. It commences with Clegg et al.'s (2006) plea for management, and explores Clegg et al.'s anti-Marxism and how this leads to the disappearance of capital as an object of theory. Parker's *Against Management* (2006) is read to reveal the ambiguity and uncertainty prevalent in the treatment of capital. While this text, more so than earlier ones, represents a productive critique of management, capital appears here as an excess and a symptom which the texts cannot fully account for. As these texts make sense of management, the question of management's relation to capital once again emerges. Critical management studies thus arrives at a point at which it articulates a critique around management as theoretical object, only to find that this theoretical object is insufficient, and the critique is incomplete without a consideration of capital, which these texts do not manage to exclude. The symptomatic reading traces this emergence of capital as symptom to Parker's reading of Marx.

CHAPTER 9 explores the further emergence of capital as a symptom, and of a return to the reading of Marx, in Fleming and Spicer's (2007) *Contesting the Corporation*. The symptomatic reading shows how Fleming and Spicer constantly engage with capital as an object of theory, which nonetheless escapes them. It is only towards the end of their book that Fleming and Spicer turn to a reading of contemporary Marxism to start to develop a theoretical account of capital. The chapter proceeds with a brief discussion of other moments in critical management studies where Marx is read again. As critical management studies recognizes its own symptoms, the chapter explores some responses to these symptoms in Adler's call for a paleo-Marxism, noting that in response to the symptom of capital, which does not appear transparent, a return to Marx and to a reading of Marx occurs.

CHAPTER 10 concludes this thesis. It provides a summary of the directions the reading of Marx and critical studies of management themselves have taken. It outlines the contribution of the symptomatic reading of critical studies of management in this thesis to an inheritance of Marx in the business school. And it poses the question "whither Marx in the business school?" as an open question, one responded to by struggles over the inheritance of Marx in the business school.

2 THE UNIVERSITY-BASED BUSINESS SCHOOL AND THE EMERGENCE OF MANAGEMENT

The university, what an idea!

(Derrida, 2004: 83)

Great Mammon now rules where Minerva did reign

And her silly old owl has no use for its brain.

(Lawrence Grant White, 'Thoughts on the Business School', in

Khurana, 2007: 129)

University business

This chapter explores the university-based business school as the context for the

emergence of critical studies of management, as well as the context for this

thesis. There are two parts to the engagement with the university-based

business school as context, and the question of Marx within it. On the one hand,

the chapter provides a reflection on the university-based business school as an

institution conditioning the reading of Marx. This institution is marked by

particular characteristics which effect the kind of reading of Marx that might take place within its walls, which I propose to understand in the terms outlined below. On the other hand, the chapter also considers the university-based business school not only as condition but also as target of a reading of Marx. The "whither" is here understood not only to be about where the business school is taking Marx, or whether he is withering away within the business school, but also, proactively, where Marx might take the business school. This, in a sense, is the principal question of my concern with the reading of Marx, one that I touch upon towards the end of this chapter, which occupies implicitly all central chapters of this thesis, and which returns explicitly in the concluding chapter.

Posing the question "whither Marx in the business school?" of course implies that Marx is already in the business school. While the central chapters of this thesis ascertain precisely to what extend Marx can be considered to be in the business school – in terms of a reading of Marx conducted by labour process theory and critical management studies – here my concern is to outline some of the conditions for Marx's being in the business school. It will be argued that it is certainly no accident that Marx is in the business school. On the contrary, the chapter argues that while management emerges as the primary object of study in the business school, this object is found to be insufficient insofar as it is found to be dependent upon capital. Where capital emerges as a further object of study in the business school, where, so to speak, the business school tries to read capital, there is always at least the possibility that *Capital* will also be read. I argue that the question of the relation between management and capital is one that haunts the contemporary business school, and that it is one that remains unresolved.

One consequence of this suspension of the question of the relation between management and capital is that the business school is not fully integrated into the university. As a consequence, Marx emerges both on the side of the business school, where he appears as a reader of capital, and on the side of the university, where he appears as part of the critical tradition institutionalized in the university.

The chapter proceeds with a discussion of the peculiar nature of the institution that is the university-based business school – a term which I adapt from Khurana (2007). It traces the emergence of the modern university and considers the position of the "world of affairs", of business, within it. It notes that initially there was no space for business within the university, and that in the first place the university was hesitant to embrace the business school. When the business school finally entered the university, the relation between the two had to be negotiated. This was attempted first through the liberal arts, with business education as an appendix to a traditional humanist education, and second through turning management itself into a profession, and the business school into a professional school along the lines of law and medicine which were already part of the university. However, as these attempts to integrate the business school in the university failed and are failing, and the question of the relation between management and capital remains unresolved, two other forms of integration arise, which represent two alternative futures for the business school of tomorrow. On the one hand, excellence and performativity create a ground on which the university and the business school can embrace capital. On the other hand, the remainders of the critical tradition within the university can

be appropriated within the business school for a critique of management and capital. The reading of Marx takes place in this second alternative, and after having recounted the reading of Marx in labour process theory and critical management studies, the concluding chapter of this thesis will pick up the discussion around what is at stake in these two alternatives.

No business

If we follow Readings (1996), the modern university starts off with an idea, one that was most clearly articulated in Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1992). This book was to have a major influence on the authors surrounding Humboldt, who was in charge of setting up the University of Berlin in 1800, the first modern university (see Müller, 1990). According to Readings the "characteristic of the modern University is to have an idea that functions as its referent, as the end and meaning of its activities", and there have historically been three such ideas: reason, culture and excellence (1996: 54). With Kant, the modern university is born since it is the first time that the university is guided by one principle that is immanent to it, and organizes it: reason. This is in contrast to the medieval university where the division between the disciplines within the university is Aristotelian, and there is no principle of unification except an external one, theodicy.

> What distinguishes the modern University is a universal unifying principle that is *immanent* to the University. Kant ushers in the modernity of the University by naming this principle reason, which is to say that reason provides a *ratio* between the disciplines. And reason has its own discipline, that of philosophy, the lower faculty. (Readings, 1996: 56)

So what makes the university modern is the fact of it being guided and unified by one idea and principle alone. What does the modern university contain, then? What does this guiding principle allow to be its content? In the Kantian scheme, the university follows a particular architectonics that is guided by reason. Accordingly, there are three higher faculties and one lower faculty. The three higher faculties are those that have a content, as we will see shortly, whereas the lower faculty has no content and is concerned only with one thing: reason itself. This is the faculty of philosophy, which has a special function in the Kantian University. Then there are three higher faculties only. Since the whole structure of the university is given by reason, according to Kant, the university cannot simply contain anything, and every faculty of the university must have a place in the university that reason allocated to it. The three higher faculties are theology, law and medicine. It is quite lucky that here the reality of the German university of the time coincides with the rational schema that Kant sees represented in it. But why are there only three lower faculties?

While the Kantian University is organized according to reason, this is always done with reference to the government that grants the university its existence. And while the faculty of philosophy must remain independent of government – or only agree to its rule by its own accord (see Readings, 1996: 56) – the higher faculties stand in the service of government. They are thus tools for government, and it is because they serve three purposes differentiable by reason that they are all part of the university, and as such can help the government influence the people through their teaching. Kant writes:

According to reason (that is, objectively), the following order exists among the incentives

that the government can use to achieve its end (of influencing the people): first comes the

eternal well-being of each, then his *civil* well-being as a member of society, and finally his

physical well-being (a long life and health)… So the ranks customarily assigned to the

higher faculties – *theology* first, *law* second*,* and *medicine* third – are in accordance with

reason. (Kant, 1992: 31-33)

There is thus a clear reason for the existence of each of the three lower faculties

within the university: they each concern a different type of well-being, and this

division is not merely one imposed by the government or the people, even

though it is shared by both, but is given by reason. There is thus simply no space

in the Kantian architectonics of the university for another higher faculty, since

there are only three types of well-being, each already with a faculty of their own.

There is only additional space for one lower faculty, that of philosophy, which

stands in the service of protecting reason and thus the integrity (in the

architectonic sense) of the university against inflictions by government. While

the teachings of the higher faculties draw their authority from instances outside

the university – theology from the Bible, law from the civil code, medicine from

the medical profession – they are in constant conflict with the faculty of

philosophy. This is because the logic of government that enters the university

through these heterogeneous sources of authority for the higher faculties –

authorities in which the government seeks to assert its authority and power –

stands potentially in conflict with the principle of reason that founds the

architectonics of the Kantian University. It is within the remit of the lower faculty

(philosophy) to defend reason against power:

It is absolutely essential that the learned community at the university also contain a

faculty that is independent of the government's command with regard to its teachings; one

that, having no commands to give, is free to evaluate everything, and concerns itself with

the interests of the sciences, that is, with truth: one in which reason is authorized to speak

out publicly. For without a faculty of this kind, the truth would not come to light (and this

would be to the government's own detriment)… (Kant, 1992: 27-29)

Thus, while the university and the faculty of philosophy are in the final instance at the mercy of the government, it is in hoping that the government will recognizes its own interests in promoting reason that Kant puts forth an argument for the freedom of the faculty of philosophy. Through its struggle with the higher faculties the lower faculty will infuse reason into these faculties, guard the unity of the university, and at the same time assure that government itself becomes more reasonable. The lower faculty within the university then defends the university as such, against power.

Yet this university of reason is marked by a certain fragility that is the result of two particular connected features: one is the particular dialectic and conflict that regulates the interaction between the higher faculties and the lower faculty, the other is the powerlessness of the faculty of philosophy. *The Conflict of the Faculties* (Kant, 1992) can be read as a defence of the university against the state, as the introduction in which Kant engages with the controversy surrounding his book on religion and reason attests to. It is thus clear that this is not a setup that is ever achieved or realized, but that it is a fragile construction, which is at the mercy of outside powers. As Derrida notes:

Because it is a stranger to power, because it is heterogeneous to the principle of power,

the university is also without any power of its own... Because it is absolutely independent,

the university is also exposed, tendered citadel, to be taken, often destined to capitulate

without condition, to surrender unconditionally. It gives itself up, it sometimes puts itself

up for sale, it risks being simply something to occupy, take over, even buy; it risks

becoming a branch office of conglomerates and corporations. (Derrida, 2001: 236-237)

In Kant's time there were no big corporations yet to take over the university, but there was always the state and the church to fend off. The threat is always of the university becoming something that it does not want to be, of the ends of the university not being determined by itself but by an outside power. There is thus always a fear that the university will be made useful for something outside it, a use that might undermine its own architectonics. The point is not so much to defend the uselessness against use, but rather to point out that the university, through its organization which is not geared towards immediate use, might be useful nonetheless, e.g. in the way Kant does when he suggests that government might benefit from reason, too. In a sense, this university represented a kind of ideal society for Kant: it represented carefully both the different professions active in organizing society, and gave an account of the role of government in this; but most importantly it put reason at its centre, as an organizing principle, and the whole architectonics of the Kantian University can in a sense be read as a blueprint for the dissemination of reason throughout society.

Where can we find business or a business school in this? In short, nowhere. There is no business in the Kantian University. The "world of affairs" was not one

that was recognized by reason, or honoured with its own faculty in the Kantian architectonics. The three types of well-being (spiritual, civil, physical) were the only three recognized by Kant's reason, by the government of its time, and were thus the only ones deemed to be worthy of inclusion in the university in the form of higher faculties specifically concerned with them as content. There was simply no concept of something like "economic well-being", nor was the economy as such present as a concept of government. Surely there was an economy, and thus business, but the economy was far from asserting its dominance over society, as it does today.

This did not change much either with the transposition of the modern university into the American context, where it would later encounter the business school. Before it went to America, the modern university was transformed first from the Kantian university of reason into the Humboldtian university of culture (see Readings, 1996). Here reason as guiding principle of the university was replaced by that of culture. Now it was culture that would assure the unity of the university, and it was the teaching of culture in the university that would ensure the unity of the state. The concern here then was not so much with infusing reason into government, but with uniting a split nation (Germany in this case). At the heart of this project was what was termed *Bildung*:

> "The German Idealists propose that the way to reintegrate the multiplicity of known facts into a unified cultural science is through *Bildung*, the ennoblement of character. Through *Bildung*, the nation-state can achieve scientifically the cultural unity that the Greeks once possessed naturally. The nation-state will come to re-embody the unity that the

multiplication and disciplinary separation of knowledges have imposed in the intellectual sphere, that the division of labor has imposed in the social sphere." (Readings, 1996: 65)

The history of the university is certainly more heterogeneous and complex than this (see Readings, 1996 for a philosophical overview), but what is interesting is precisely that perhaps the (empirical) heterogeneity of the university can be related to a history in terms of its guiding principles, which is much more compact, if no less complex. And in neither the university of reason nor the university of culture do we find reference to a business school. The only mention in *The Conflict of the Faculties* of "business", as Spoelstra (2007: 5) rightly points out, is with reference to "the businessmen of the three higher faculties", who seek to sell the magic power of their teachings to the public, and in that have to be challenged by the lower faculty of philosophy who denies that magic power and asserts the value of truth (Kant, 1992: 51). This, however, has very little to do with a faculty of business; although, as we will see later, this negative image of teaching seeking shortcuts to utility without proper reverence of truth also haunts the business school.

It is perhaps no surprise that this model of the university of culture would appeal to the "new world" which was similarly concerned with defining and constructing itself as an integral and independent nation. And so, by a second transformation, the German university was imported into America and thus became the modern American research university. As Newfield (2003) explores, this American university is one that emerges alongside the business corporation, and there develops a very complex relationship between the two, with the

university playing a major role in "establishing corporate capitalism and two of its major pillars, commercial technology and organizational management", while at the same time remaining "a major, if partial, outsider to this business system" (2003: 3). This suggests that the image of the university of reason and culture has to be significantly revised as soon as it gets in touch with business, specifically in the American context. It also warns that despite the utopian space promised by the humanities and liberal arts, a space that also promises to be outside or beyond business, business might have found its way into the university also there. This transformation and development of the university will become more evident later. For now, however, it is necessary to consider how business entered the business school directly, namely through the emergence of the university-based business school.

Enter the business school

How and when did the business school enter the university? One might expect quite a bit of resistance to business entering the university, considering the delicate situation the university found itself in, always having to fend off power for its freedom: business interests would surely not be welcomed. There had been plenty of trade schools emerging in the latter parts of the nineteenth century, certainly in the USA, but, as Khurana points out in his detailed history of the American business school, initially there was quite a bit of resistance to the institution of business schools within the university. He recounts how for almost thirty years the then president of Harvard "ignored repeated calls to establish a school of business", on the premise that "such a project would be anathema to the university's educational purpose of teaching students how to live worthy

lives" (Khurana, 2007: 45). It was only after sustained pressure, and the realisation that a large proportion of graduates were indeed becoming managers, that finally Harvard Business School was founded in 1908. And while the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania had been founded already in 1881 as the first university-based business school, it was only well into the twentieth century that the business school securely established itself in the university. It was from the USA that the business school model would spread to the rest of the world, where its dissemination "ebbed and flowed, was moulded by an unpredictable array of national and international factors, and inevitably bore the scars to prove it" (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007: 35).

How was the business school brought into the university? A conflict between the university and business – if not immediately the business school, whatever that would develop into – became immediately apparent, not only from the resistance against the business school within the university. Most clearly, this was understood to be a conflict between the "profit-maximizing imperatives of business" and the "more disinterested mission of universities" (Khurana, 2007: 4), as the second epigraph above suggests. Of course such a conflict, as we saw above, is nothing new to the university. Already a conflict between the disinterestedness of the lower faculty in Kant – the faculty of philosophy interested in nothing but truth – stood in a perennial conflict with the higher faculties' interestedness in the well-being of citizens and how their teaching could aid government. In a sense, the whole history of the business school can be seen to be a history of struggle between itself and the university, where both seek to establish their relationship, define the business school's purpose within

the university, and establish the rules for conflict between the two. And at the centre of this conflict is the question of the relation between management and capital, as will be discussed shortly.

At the start, there were various ways in which the emerging conflict was handled. Two particular ways of, if not resolving, then institutionalizing and neutralizing this conflict, become apparent: first the attempt to mediate it through liberal arts education; second the attempt to turn management into a profession and the business school into a professional school along the model provided by law and medicine. The first way of integrating the business school into the university is exemplified by the case of Harvard. Harvard Business School was founded as a graduate school only. It was understood that any student would first have to complete undergraduate study in the liberal arts before proceeding to graduate studies in business. This was to serve the ennoblement of character through *Bildung* that was the cornerstone of the university of culture. Thus, at least in the beginning, "the liberal arts remained available to their academic leadership as, at least in theory, tools for the production of the broadly educated, socially responsible, genuinely professional managers they aspired to fashion" (Khurana, 2007: 124).

In a sense, this is a way of integrating the business school into the university while not really doing so at all, and thus a way of avoiding the problem. It was only once the aims of the liberal arts education that was the cornerstone of the American university of the time had already been achieved that students were allowed to study business. Business education was thus only a footnote to a

liberal arts education that remained intact, and the business school was only an appendix to the university body that remained unchanged. Or, to be perhaps a bit more gratuitous, the work of integrating the business school into the university was done not by professors or administrators within the university, but was left to the students, who would apply themselves – as fully-formed subjects already a product of the liberal arts – to bringing the character that stood for all that the university sought to achieve to the world of affairs. It is worth mentioning, however, that this might also have brought about a transformation of the liberal arts themselves, and Newfield (2003) suggests that the "permanent dependence" of liberal arts education on business agendas left its mark, without however resolving or regulating the conflict between business and the university that was identified above.

This, second, suggests that there was another way in which business schools were being integrated into the university. Khurana suggests that the birth of the university-based business school is part and parcel of a professionalization project for management which sought to ground management as a legitimate activity by linking it to the sciences, the university and the professions. "Business" or "management" here was thus not something that had already found itself and simply wished to assert its right to be part of the university. It was not simply a matter of bringing the profit imperatives of business to the university in order to get them legitimized. Rather, the move of the teaching of business and management to the university entailed a desired change in the object itself, a move to create a space where both managers could be educated

and scientific knowledge for management produced, thus creating the foundations for management as a profession.

> The vehicle that would enable management to unify production of managerial knowledge with the production of managers turned out to be the university-based business school, operating in the capacity of a *professional* school that was to be comparable in every way to schools for such established professions as medicine and law. Indeed, the founders of the modern business school had an explicit goal of creating precisely this kind of institution so as to establish management itself as not just a recognized occupation with a scientific knowledge base but, rather, as a genuine profession. (Khurana, 2007: 100)

This endeavour to turn management into a genuine profession with its own school involved two particular affirmations that still haunt the business school today. The move of business education "away from proprietary schools organized to turn a profit and into universities ostensibly dedicated to the pursuit of truth and social betterment" (Khurana, 2007: 90) exactly left the university-based business school forever faced with the questions of the truth of its teachings and of their social utility – questions which have been raised throughout its existence at various points and are today perhaps more unanswered than ever.

That the business school sought to model itself on the already existing professional schools within the university, namely medicine and law, as the quote above suggests, implies that it sought to answer the question of its truth and utility exactly in the way that gets done in those professional schools. There is a difference, however, between the conflict of the faculties described by Kant

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(and in other forms still present in the Humboldtian university and the American research university), and that emerging between the business school and the university. Whereas the remit of each faculty in the Kantian scheme was clearly defined, and Kant sought to delimit very clearly what constituted legal and illegal conflicts between the faculties, neither the remit of the business school within the university nor the legality of its conflicts with the rest of the university were then clearly defined. Nonetheless the business school sought to gain ground. On the one hand, the early twentieth century is the time when Fredrick Taylor's scientific management represents one of the first attempts to establish management as a science. Even if this science of management does not emerge from the business school itself (with Taylor only later starting to teach at business schools), the business school certainly seeks to benefit from this scientization of management to also raise its claims to scientificity, knowledge and truth (Khurana, 2007: 91). Around the same time, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) was founded (in 1916) to both lend credibility and legitimacy to the emerging university-based business schools and to standardize curricula in order to make them more scientific (see Khurana, 2007: 137ff.).

The efforts of the Carnegie and Ford foundations during the middle of the twentieth century once again sought to strengthen this development of the business school, once their reports had asserted that business schools at the time were far from being scientific, and were in fact still plagued by being not much more than trade schools (see Khurana, 2007: 233ff.). What characterized the effect of the Ford and Carnegie foundation reforms was an influx of academics

from other disciplines – chiefly psychology, sociology and economics – into the business school, which meant that research output increased dramatically and with it the "academic respectability of business schools" (Khurana, 2007: 307). With regards to the social utility of management and the teaching of the business schools, it was an expressed goal of the business school movement both to assert the necessity of management as a function within the modern corporate form that was emerging at the end of the nineteenth century and became dominant during the "organizational society" of the post-war era (Khurana, 2007: 197), and to ensure the social utility of management by embedding it in a professional structure exactly through the founding of university-based business schools and organization such as the AACSB or the Academy of Management. It was only after the reforms instituted by the foundations, and the adoption of this scientific model of the business school throughout much of the Western world, that questions of social utility once again took centre stage, and the tensions between a focus on truth and scientificity versus utility and application became apparent.

These developments had a curious consequence for the question of Marx in the business school. Whereas the politics of this "behavioural revolution", as Tadajewski (2009a) has pointed out, were in fact aimed at countering the communist infiltration of the universities, being marked as they were by cold war politics, its effect at least in the UK were that many of the social scientists trained also in reading Marx entered the business school once the social sciences themselves found themselves in decline (Fournier and Grey, 2000). The attempt to increase the academic respectability of business schools through the importation of social scientists therefore had the effect of creating a split within

the business school between what was later to be termed "mainstream" management studies and the more critical studies of management that are the subject of this thesis.

Did this second way of the business school integrating itself into the university succeed? The question is whether management succeeded in turning itself into a profession, and positively succeeded in responding to the question both of its social utility and truthfulness. It is on both of these points that the success of this integration is put into question, also by voices from within the business school. On the one hand, the question of its scientific foundation, or the relation of its teaching and research to truth, has never been finally affirmed, nor is there a consensus on workable techniques – which raises the question of whether management is a profession at all (e.g. Grey, 2004: 181; Khurana, 2007: 331). This also puts in doubt the role of business schools for management education – what is its object? Spoelstra suggests that in Kantian terms the business school can be understood as "the faculty of economy, designed to take care of the economic well-being of the people" (Spoestra, 2008: n.p.). Yet can the business school be so easily integrated as one of the higher faculties into the university? Even if "economic well-being" might be a proper object for a higher faculty in Kantian terms, it is far from clear that the business school is the faculty that takes care of this object, considering the critiques levelled at it for its managerialism and partisanship in business.

On the other hand, the business school seems to have been aptly aware of this conflict between what the university stood for and what it might bring to the university in terms of outside interests from business, management or capital. There are surprisingly many references to the importance of the liberal arts for management education, not only at the very beginning, as we mentioned above, but also more recently. So, for example, Bennis and O'Toole suggest that while traditionally "business schools have lacked offerings in the humanities", their curricula should be "infused with multidisciplinarity, practical, and ethical questions and analyses reflecting the complex challenges business leaders face" (2005: 104), while Ghoshal is not alone in demanding the teaching of ethics in the business school (2005). This "embrace" of the humanities or liberal arts in the business school is even stronger in the critical and philosophical turn (e.g. Grey, 2004; Dey and Steyaert, 2007) discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

What seems to have happened, then, is that the question of the position of the business school within the university has largely remained unresolved. Its integration as a professional schools has certainly not been successful, and the main reason for this seems to have been that the question of the proper object of the business school, as well as the proper function of management or business – both "objectively" (as Kant says, "according to reason") and in terms of a social utility that is supposed to guide a profession – remained in suspense. In fact, what I suggest is that it is here exactly where the crux of the matter lies: in order for the business school to make a case for its integration into the university, and for its utility to society perhaps in terms of its care for economic well-being, it

must first of all explain its relation to capital. There can be no "faculty of economy" with the economic well-being of citizens as its object without defining what (and whose) such well-being might be or what proper function management or business might have in the economy. And this question has remained suspended in the contemporary business school, even if it cannot be muted. In a sense the rapprochement between business education and the liberal arts or humanities can be read as the business school internalizing the conflict that Kant describes (cf. Spoelstra, 2007: 9), i.e. to pose itself the questions that it might expect from a faculty of philosophy. It is important to point out here that this questioning of the business school is not one that needs to be introduced from the outside, e.g. through a reading of Marx, but that it is the business school itself that regularly poses this question. Nonetheless, it is also this question of the business school's relation to capital that provides a point of attack for critical studies of management and their reading of Marx.

The university in ruins

The above discussion cannot proceed without considering how the university itself has changed during the twentieth century, and this change will fundamentally effect the terms of the relation between the university and the business school, and I will argue below that it also suggest two possibilities of engaging with this relation: performativity or critique. Whereas before we discussed the integration of the business school into the models of the universities of reason and culture, towards the latter parts of the twentieth century the modern university had taken on a different form yet. Neither reason

nor culture could any longer serve as the grounding principle of the university that would organize it and provide the foundations for its architectonics. Lyotard describes "two major versions of narrative legitimation" for knowledge, which were both central to the university: one is the narrative of human emancipation stemming from the French Revolution, the other is the narrative of the speculative spirit and the quest for knowledge stemming from German Idealism. As Lyotard writes, "the unification of these two sets of discourse is indispensable to the *Bildung* aimed for by Humboldt's project" since the latter "consists not only in the acquisition of learning by individuals, but also in the training of a fully legitimated subject of knowledge and society" (1984: 33). It is these two metanarratives for the legitimation of knowledge and the university as its institution, which were differently implicated in both the university of reason and of culture, which, according to Lyotard, have lost their credibility. In fact, it is the grand narrative as such, which "has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation" (1984: 37). There is no more unification, and all we are left with are little narratives (*petits recits*), which legitimate the various knowledge games going on within the university.

This explains the rise of the university of excellence that Readings (1996) describes, where excellence replaces reason and culture as the idea of the university. Readings argues that today we work in the university of excellence, were excellence is the predominant idea of the university, which, however, cannot organize the university in the way reason and culture did since excellence has no referent.

To put this another way, the appeal to excellence marks the fact that there is no longer any idea of the University, or rather that the idea has now lost all content. As non-referential unit of value entirely internal to the system, excellence marks nothing more than the moment of technology's self-reflection. All that the system requires is for activity to take place, and the empty notion of excellence refers to nothing other than the optimal input/output ration in matters of information. (Readings, 1996: 39)

A consequence of the falling apart of the university and of the rise of excellence is that knowledge can no longer justify itself on its own account, which also means that the university cannot justify itself, and thus becomes ever more vulnerable to outside attacks. This is how the importance of what Lyotard terms the principle of performativity and what Derrida and others calls "end-orientation" gains momentum. As we mentioned above, the university has always been a fragile institution and already during the time of Kant it had to fend its autonomy from state and church, and it only managed to do so precisely through its architectonics and what it promised in terms of reason also to government. Once this architectonics breaks down so do the defences of the university, and it becomes more vulnerable to outside intervention and demands for it to be accountable and useful – it must become performative.

In any case, even if the performativity principle does not always help pinpoint the policy to follow, its general effect is to subordinate the institutions of higher learning to the existing powers. The moment knowledge ceases to be an end in itself – the realization of the Idea or the emancipation of men – its transmission is no longer the exclusive responsibility of scholars and students. The notion of "university franchise" now belongs to a bygone era. (Lyotard, 1984: 50)

The university thus finds itself in ruins (Readings, 1996). What is the consequence of this for the business school? One might imagine that these developments might suit the business school: it no longer has to worry about finding its place in the university: it is welcomed very easily, fits in nicely, and all is set for it to rise to prominence within the university. One might even think that this focus on performativity and usefulness would exactly suit the business school; after all, the intention has always been for it to have a certain utility in relation to business practice. What this means for the business school, however, is that while it might be more easily welcome in the university, there is not much to this welcome: as long as the contemporary business school is excellent it can be part of the university, yet it does not matter what the content of its teaching is, or whether it be relevant to management practice, students' careers, or anything else. Since excellence is purely an internal measure of accounting, it does not refer to such standards. The architectonics of the university of reason that we described above, which had very clear mechanisms for dealing both with the question of truth and of utility through the higher faculties' relation to the faculty of philosophy and to the respective professional organizations and the government, has effectively broken down.

Nonetheless, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the business school, after having enjoyed phenomenal success in terms of rising student numbers and income in the latter decades of the twentieth century, came increasingly under attack (see in particular Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005). Pfeffer and Fong, for example, note that while business schools have

enjoyed considerable success, they might have had "less success that meets the eye", and they suggested that there "are substantial questions about the relevance of their educational products and doubts about their effects on both the careers of their graduates and on management practice" (2002: 78-79). Similarly, Bennis and O'Toole argued that by "allowing the scientific research model to drive out all others, business schools are institutionalizing their own irrelevance", and urged business schools to "rediscover the practice of business" (2005: 100; 103). Ghoshal even went a step further by suggesting that not only did business schools produce useless knowledge, but also the research conducted at business schools actually "has had some very significant negative influences on the practice of management" in that "by propagating ideologically inspired amoral theories, business schools have actively freed their students from any sense of moral responsibility" (2005: 76). These criticisms of the contemporary business school contain at least two related arguments. One is that in pushing the business schools towards scientificity, the reforms neglected the focus on the utility of teaching and research within the business school: while the business school became more academically respectable, it became not more useful to business practice, but less so. Another is that the push towards scientificity in fact led teaching and research in the business school onto the wrong path: it was the wrong kind of scientificity.

The integration of the business school into the university does not provide either the institutional assurance of the utility of its teachings which Pfeffer and Fong (2002) and Bennis and O'Toole (2005) demand, nor does it guarantee a certain relation to knowledge and character building through *Bildung* that Ghoshal

(2005) seems to demand. With the breakdown of the metanarratives and with the breakdown of the university architectonics based on reason and culture, there is no principle that holds the university together. If there is no more *Bildung* or ennoblement of character, then knowledge becomes something that is not a use-value to the subject produced by the university, but knowledge becomes instead an exchange-value that is bought and sold. Without the guiding principle of *Bildung* it is not very hard to understand how what Ghoshal criticizes can actually occur. The character of the subject of education simply no longer takes centre stage, and therefore it is no wonder that research and teaching in the university produce "amoral theories" or "irresponsible managers": there is simply no longer a relation of responsibility between knowledge and the knower, nor is the emphasis on developing responsible individuals (accountable to reason or culture). And, similarly, it is not hard to explain how knowledge produced in the business school can be useless, which is what Pfeffer and Fong and Bennis and O'Toole are concerned with: the use-value of knowledge (in whatever way it is measured) is simply not relevant as long as its exchange-value is in place.

Rising from the ruins

We are thus faced with an odd situation today: the university is in ruins while the business school is in crisis. The university in its desperation looks towards the business school for solutions to its malaise, while the business school, despite its material success, finds itself in crisis and hopelessly looks towards the university for solutions to its own issues. What is a way out of the crisis of the business school then? The conception of the business school as a professional

school, and of management as a profession, is still perhaps the most prominent today. Interestingly, all of the above critics of the business school (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005) suggest that a way out of the malaise of the contemporary business school is to turn it (back) into a professional school. Yet is this a feasible proposition? The fact that the business school has not managed to convince itself, the university nor business that it indeed is a professional school, or could be, combined with the fact that the particular structure of the university that the business school tried to integrate itself into has broken down, suggest no reasons for why this model might succeed in future. Add to this the criticisms levelled at the professional model by such critics as Tinker (2004), who suggests that the professional model simply can't solve the malaise of the business school since this hasn't worked for accountancy either, and Grey (2004: 181), who suggests that by promising to teach reliable techniques – a basic necessity for a professional school – business schools promise "something entirely illusory, something that in principle couldn't possibly exist", and the picture looks even bleaker.

The question that this particular discussion on the business school still sidesteps is the following: what is the proper object of the business school, what is it for? I suggested above that the invention of the business school as a faculty of economy might be a feasibility, but can only be approached once the question of capital is addressed. "Business" or "management" are thus perhaps insufficient objects, hardly defined, on which to found a school, when "capital" might be the term that is more readily in need of engagement. And it is capital that is also what haunts the contemporary university. As we suggested above, once we reach the age of

the university of excellence, the quest for performativity sweeps through the university, the university gets subsumed under existing powers, and it is capital that reigns in the university. The question of capital is thus one that gains prominence in the business school and the university, and the way of dealing with this is not to reinvent the business school along professional lines, but to face the question of its integration into the university and its relation to capital head on by opening up towards the university. This is a movement in which the business school embraces the university in ruins and seeks to reconstruct itself together with the university. Their fates thus become intertwined.

This analysis of the contemporary condition of the business school and the university suggests that, besides the surviving attempt to address the precarious state of the business school by turning it into a professional school, two further avenues open themselves up for both the business school on the university. These address the question both of the relation between management and capital and between the university and capital. These two avenues are performativity (in the sense of Lyotard) and critique. They stand in conflict with each other, and many of the struggles in the contemporary business school can be understood as an expression of this conflict. For example, a recent paper by Spicer et al. (2009) attempts to make critique itself performative, and make performativity critical, by reasserting the productivity of critique.

Performativity is what offers itself most immediately to the contemporary university. As the above analysis suggests, with excellence having conquered the university, the doors are open for performativity to sweep through the

university. The university becomes a knowledge factory (Aronowitz, 2000), and plays its part in academic capitalism (Slaughter and Leslie, 2001). This process is exacerbated by the financialisation of universities (Beverungen et al., forthcoming) and the way in which the private is loosing out to the public in the university (Newfield, 2009). Here the question of the relation between capital and the university is clearly answered by a subordination of the university to capital: relevance, employability and entrepreneurship become the buzzwords of the contemporary university. This does not merely represent a dominance of the business school within the university – although that, too – but it moreover entails a transformation of the university into a servant of capital. The consequences of these developments are being felt everywhere in the university today. This also requires the extinction of what remains of the critical tradition previously institutionalized in the university: there is hardly a trace left of the Kantian lower faculty, and the conflict of the faculties described by Kant has dissolved in favour of the end-orientation of the higher faculties.

However, this prerogative of performativity is contested in the contemporary university, as a large variety of current struggles attest to (the *Bildungsstreik* in German universities in 2009; the demonstrations and occupations in the University of California system in 2009, etc. – see www.edu-factory.org for records). This suggests a different avenue for the contemporary university, one that refuses to accede to the ruinous state of the university and seeks to recover what is left of the critical tradition, and to provide a different answer to the question of the relation between capital and the university. Most of the sources referred to in this chapter are part of that alternative, and so are the critical

studies of management that are the subject of this thesis. I suggest that the development of critical studies of management is an attempt from within the business school to draw on the remainder of the critical tradition to pose the question of the relation of management and capital, and to offer a different response to the question of the relation between capital and the university. Precisely through questioning the neutrality of management, through establishing a critical studies of management that seek to expose the ways in which management is determined by capital, and through developing a critique of capital, the attempt is made to put the contemporary business school and the university on a different footing. It is also in this context that Marx is read in the business school.

The context of the university-based business school, then, emerges as one in which critical studies of management intervene. Critical studies of management intrude in the settlements that capital tries to achieve with the university. They start from the failure of the project to turn the business school into a professional school, and management into a profession. Responding to the emergence of management as the primary object of study in the business school, they pose the question of management's relation to capital. In doing so, they implicitly also address the unresolved question of the business school, that of its own relation to capital. They draw on the remnants of the critical tradition of the university and thus seek to keep these alive. And by putting the question of capital on the table, they intervene in the fate of the contemporary university and business school. The chapters in Part II and Part III of this thesis trace the

emergence of these critical studies of management, and the concluding chapter discusses their effect on the status of the contemporary business school.

3 READING CRITICAL STUDIES OF MANAGEMENT READING MARX

> It will always be a fault not to read and reread and discuss Marx
> – which is to say also a few others – and to go beyond scholarly
> "reading" or "discussion." It will be more and more a fault, a
> failing of theoretical, philosophical, political responsibility.
>
> (Derrida, 1994: 13)

Critical studies of management with and against Marx

In this thesis I propose to respond to the question "whither Marx in the business school?" by reading critical studies of management reading Marx. In this chapter I will justify both the question and my approach to its response, as well as outline my method of reading.

There are three reasons for asking the question and responding to it in such a way. First, as Althusser's epigraph to Chapter 1 suggests, we all read capital every day. Yet, unlike Althusser suggests, the transparency of capital, and our ability to read it, is not given. In particular, as the concluding chapters of this

thesis will demonstrate, it seems as if critical studies of management in the business school have lost the ability to read capital. Capital hardly appears as a word, concept or object in the texts of later critical studies of management, and if it does appear, it appears mostly as a symptom for which the texts of critical studies of management cannot account theoretically. Considering that, as I will demonstrate in the chapters to follow, critical studies of management, for example in the work of Braverman (1998), commence with a reading of Marx whose object is capital, this is a state of affairs that requires explanation. This thesis sets out to provide such an explanation in its interpretation of the history of critical studies of management, on the basis of a symptomatic reading.

Second, as I argue in the conclusion to Chapter 2, management appears as the primary object of theory and critique in the university-based business school. This object is already present in Marx. Marx, for example, mentions management in *Capital*, particularly in the chapters on the labour process in volume I, as well as the discussion of the rise of monopoly capital and the split between finance and management in volume III (see Dumenil and Levy, 1994). Yet Marx's object of study is capital, and it is not self-evident how the relation between capital and management is to be understood. That, however, is a key question for the university-based business school, as I argued in Chapter 2. I therefore propose to explore both how management emerges as a central object of theory in critical studies of management, and, concomitantly, how critical studies of management theorize management's relation to capital. Put differently, I propose to study how critical studies of management, representing a certain problematic of

management, relate to Marx, representing a certain problematic of capital. Again, it is through a symptomatic reading that I approach this question.

Third, as Derrida (1994: 91) suggests, we are all "today to a certain extent the heirs of Marx and Marxism". As such we face the responsibility of inheriting Marx, one that Derrida in the epigraph above understands in terms of a reading of Marx. The question "whither Marx in the business school?" therefore also entails an inquiry into the inheritance of Marx in the business school, a question I propose to study through a reading of the reading of Marx in critical studies of management. A reading of critical studies of management reading Marx therefore considers how Marx has been inherited in the business school. Furthermore, and significantly, it also argues that this inheritance of Marx in the business school today also entails a reading of critical studies of management. Derrida in the epigraph above speaks of "a few others" who it will also be a fault not to read. I argue that in the business school, considering not only the inheritance of Marx, but also the inheritance of critical studies of management, it would be a fault not to read the authors considered in this thesis. That is, an understanding of inheritance as outlined in Derrida (1994) applies equally to critical studies of management themselves, and to a reading of Marx in the business school, a reading which always already takes place with reference to critical studies of management.

The question "whither Marx in the business school" therefore ask how Marx has been inherited in the business school, explored here in terms of the reading of Marx by critical studies of management. The most general concern of the thesis is

therefore the inheritance of Marx in the business school. In the next section I will outline some parameters to consider in a reading of Marx, parameters which will serve as guidance for my reading of the reading of Marx in critical studies of management in the coming chapters. On the one hand, parameters must be established which will allow an evaluation of the reading of Marx taking place in the business school. While not imposing a particular reading of Marx on critical studies of management, a few principal parameters will be suggested. On the other hand, since it is not certain that Marx should be read today in the business school exclusively *through* critical studies of management, these parameters for a reading of Marx will also be considered in thinking about reading Marx in the business school today.

There is, however, a more specific concern of the thesis, one that does not run counter to the general concern with the inheritance of Marx in the business school, but one that responds to the first two reasons given above. This concern is to assess the specific difference of Marx and critical studies of management. It acknowledges that in the reading of Marx, critical studies of management is not merely concerned with the inheritance of Marx, but is also concerned with the construction of a critical theory of management. Marx serves as a starting point and a resource for the development of such a critical theory concerned with management as central object. The moments of the reading of Marx and the development of a critical theory of management are thus closely intertwined, at least at the beginning of critical studies of management. The question that I pose is to what extent critical studies of management constitutes a theory or problematic different from that of Marx, and I propose to approach this question

through a symptomatic reading. This symptomatic reading is a specific way of engaging with the inheritance of critical studies of management, and of Marx by critical studies of management, and I will justify and outline this method of reading in the section after next.

Before proceeding, it must be stressed that there are two reasons this chapter will not give, two questions it will not answer. First, it does not provide reasons for why Marx should be read in the business school. No argument is made here for why Marx should enter the business school, or for why it should be demanded, from a position outside the business school, that Marx should be read within it. Such an argument is simply not necessary, precisely because the thesis commences with the acknowledgment that Marx is already inside the business school. The preceding chapter has already established as much. It is not necessary to impose the question "why read Marx?" or the injunction "read Marx!" upon the business school, since the question is already posed within the business school. In the following chapters, those texts of the business school will be considered which have already asked the question and responded to the injunction. It is therefore merely a matter here of providing some reflections on how the reading of Marx performed in the business school might be evaluated, and to establish a few parameters for that task.

Second, no reason is given here for the selection of texts considered in the following chapters. The selection of texts follows a very simple principle: the question "whither Marx in the business school?" requires an account of how Marx has been read in the business school, and how it is possible to read Marx in

the business school today. The texts of critical studies of management considered in this thesis are texts which show traces of a reading of Marx and which are indispensible points of reference for a reading of Marx in the business school today. Such a point can merely be asserted here; while reasons will be given explicitly or implicitly for the selection of particular texts as the thesis proceeds, a reverse reading of the thesis should show the necessity for the inclusion of these texts for our understanding of the reading of Marx in the business school today.

Reading Marx

I propose to approach the reading of Marx with the help of Althusser, Balibar, Derrida, and a few others. I suggest that the key to reading Marx is to consider both the heterogeneity as well as the singularity of his work. For Althusser, Marx's singularity concerns "the discovery of the theory of history and political economy, the discovery of *Capital*" (Althusser, 1970b: 186). For Derrida, the singularity of Marx's event lies in the way in which this event as "the event of a discourse in the philosophico-scientific form claiming to break with myth, religion, and the nationalist 'mystique'… has been bound, for the first time and inseparably, to worldwide forms of social organization", thus proposing "a new concept of the human, of society, economy, nation" (Derrida, 1994: 91). Balibar situates Marx's ruptural event with the emergence of the concept of "social relation" in Marx, which philosophically led him away from theoretical humanism, yet is keen to emphasise various other ruptures and fissures (Balibar, 1995: 6). Here I will suggest that there are three reasons for the heterogeneity of

Marx's work. It is only once we grapple with this heterogeneity that we can ask what is singular about Marx's work – a question that will not be answered here, although the answers that readers of Marx in the business school provide will be considered throughout this thesis, and some overall reflections will be offered in the concluding chapter.

The first reason for the heterogeneity of Marx is his texts. There is simply no unified Marxist text. There are some readers of Marx, like Fromm (2003), who argue for a certain continuity in Marx's work, in this case with regards to the concept of alienation – an interpretation that, as will be shown, is important in critical studies of management. Here, a certain concept is taken to represent the essence of Marx's work, and to ensure a unity across his works. There are others, notably Althusser (1969), who propose that Marx's work is marked by ruptural events, and can thus be categorized into different periods. The question that both of these readings address is that of doctrine. Fromm suggests that it exists, and that it takes the shape of a humanist Marxism concerned with alienation. Althusser suggests that a certain doctrine, a science of history, a Marxist philosophy, only exists in Marx's mature works (Althusser and Balibar, 1970; Althusser, 1969). Yet neither of these positions recognizes that they rely on a construction of a certain doctrine out of the heterogeneity of Marx's text, as Althusser (2006) later concedes. Balibar perhaps most strongly suggests that it is not merely a question of challenging the construction of certain doctrines, or of choosing between them, but of admitting that a Marxist doctrine simply does not exist in his texts.

> Where, in fact, could it be said to be? *In which texts*? 'He did not have the time', as we know, and we are speaking here of something that goes way beyond any distinction between a young or old Marx, Marx as philosopher or Marx as scientist. All we have are resumes (the 1959 Preface), manifestoes (grandiose ones), outlines which are long and articulate, but which never arrive at final conclusions and which – as we would do well to remember here – Marx himself *never published* (*The German Ideology*, the *Grundrisse* of 1857-58). There is no doctrine; there are only fragments (and, elsewhere, analyses, demonstrations). (Balibar, 1995: 117)

The first reason for the heterogeneity of Marx then is simply the diversity of texts that we inherit. This material fact itself can be explained with reference to a particular aspect of Marx's work that brings forth this constant revision of his work – the second reason for Marx's heterogeneity. Derrida (1994: 88) identifies this as the spirit of "a *radical* critique, namely a procedure to undertake its self-critique. This critique *wants itself* to be in principle and explicitly open to its own transformation, re-evaluation, self-reinterpretation." Balibar (1995: 117) further specifies this self-critical moment in Marx by suggesting, "his thought represents a deliberate pursuit of the unfinished":

> [Marx] never, in fact, had the time to construct a doctrine because *the process of rectification went faster*. Not only did that process anticipate his conclusions, it anticipated the critique of those conclusions. Out of intellectual obsessiveness? Perhaps, but that obsession was subordinated to a twofold ethic: a *theorist's* (scientist's) ethic and a *revolutionary's* ethic. We encounter the same terms once again. He was too much the theorist to 'botch' his conclusions, too much the revolutionary either to bow to reverses of fortune or to ignore catastrophes and carry on as though nothing had happened. (Balibar, 1995: 117)

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Marx's work, then, according to Balibar, is as fractured as we receive it today because Marx himself was the first to leave it unfinished, because it is a theoretical work always marked by a practical, political engagement. Kouvelakis (2008: 24) suggests that this characterisation also applies to Marxism itself, which "can only be defined as a combination of theory/practice stamped by a radical historicity", where crises produce controversies which then "pose the question of a wholesale reorganisation of the theoretico-practical configuration". For Kouvelakis (2008: 25) "Marxism is *constitutively*, from Marx's contribution itself, including the internal discrepancies, limits and incompletion of his *oeuvre*, crisis theory." Such a conception of Marx's work is also supported by Jameson (1996: 20-21), who suggests that the crises of Marxism always respond to changes in capitalism as Marxism's object of study.

These arguments undermine those of Laclau and Mouffe (2001) and those made by some in the business school (e.g. Clegg et al., 2006), who suggest that the last crisis of Marxism in the 1970s (Althusser, 2006) also precipitated its death. What this line of argument suggests, on the contrary, is that "Marxism never stops haunting our present", and that "every 'death' of Marxism will invariably be followed by its 'return' on the occasion of a changed conjuncture" (Kouvelakis, 2008: 24). Jameson (1996: 54) even goes so far as to suggest that capitalism always demands Marxism, and that "a postmodern capitalism necessarily calls a postmodern Marxism into existence over against itself." Considering this, it will be important to ascertain in the following pages to what extend critical studies of management perceive a crisis or a death of Marx and Marxism, and to what

extent critical studies of management are a cause or response to crises of Marxism.

The third and final reason for the heterogeneity of Marx has to do with the fall of "really existing socialism". Derrida presented what was to become *Spectres of Marx* (1994) in 1993 at a conference entitled "Whither Marxism?" "Really existing socialism" had come to an end, and many assumed Marx and Marxism were buried at either side of it. The announcement of the end of history by Fukuyama (1992) was only the most articulate expression of this perception. There, as elsewhere, it was suggested that now that communism, in the form of the Soviet experiment, had come to an end, we were faced with an end of history in which the future had been decided, where it had arrived. And it was going to be the present, that other present, not "really existing socialism", but "really existing capitalism". The breakdown of "the dogma machine and the 'Marxist' ideological apparatus", as Derrida (1994: 13) calls the Soviet Union and its tentacles, was in Fukuyama seen to represent the end of Marx, and the end of Marxism, too. Yet for Derrida this is exactly the wrong conclusion. Rather, it is only once these machines and apparatuses which tried so hard (and in many ways succeeded) to capture Marx's spirits, only once they have disappeared, that Marx's spirits have been set free. In Derrida's words, it is "the *effectivity* or the *presence* of a specter, that is of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum" (1994: 10) that is set free once it is severed from its material support in these machines and apparatuses.

Once this has occurred, as Derrida writes, "we no longer have any excuse, only alibis" (1994: 13) for not reading and discussing Marx, for not assuming this responsibility. The question "whither Marxism?" posed in 1993 (Magnus and Cullenberg, 1995) was responded to by what Tosel (2008) calls "a thousand Marxisms". No longer are we dealing with an official Marxism and a few heretical Marxisms, as during the existence of the Soviet Union, but with a veritable multiplication of Marxisms. Perhaps there are as many Marxisms as there are spectres of Marx. The signs are everywhere. The *Historical Materialism* conference of 2008 was entitled "Many Marxisms". And the recently published *Critical Companion to Contemporary Marxism* (Bidet and Kouvelakis, 2008) self-admittedly was unable to capture the multiplicity of Marxisms in its 800 pages. The third reason for the heterogeneity of Marx then concerns these thousand Marxisms. A question for the inquiry that follows is to what extend various orthodox and heretical Marxisms of the Soviet era, and how many of the thousand Marxisms of today, are present in the business school.

Reading critical studies of management

In this section, I will justify and outline symptomatic reading as the method of reading adopted in this thesis. First, it is one way of addressing the singularity of a discourse. As mentioned above, inheritance must engage both with the heterogeneity and the singularity of a discourse. Symptomatic reading does so by establishing the specificity of a theory as a discourse-object unity (or problematic, or theory), in terms of the differential nature of the object of theory, and of its relation to that object. I will define these terms shortly. For our reading

of critical studies of management, this implies that a symptomatic reading will explore the singularity of these studies. It asks whether they establish a distinct theory or problematic.

Second, as mentioned above, management emerges as the principal object of theory and critique in the business school, and early critical studies of management read Marx for a critical theory of management. Yet it is to be determined whether in doing so critical studies of management merely reproduce or articulate a critical theory of management already inherent in Marx, or whether they depart from Marx in establishing a critical theory of management on its own terms. The question as to the specific difference between Marx and critical studies of management therefore arises. And a symptomatic reading of critical studies of management precisely addresses this question, in that it differentiates between theories or problematics on the basis of their object and their relation to that object.

Finally, as equally mentioned above, one of the observations that prompted the posing of the question "whither Marx in the business school?" is that in later critical studies of management capital appears as an object that these texts cannot adequately account for. How is such an appearance of capital as an object that appears to not be fully integrated into these texts to be explained? A symptomatic reading of critical studies of management enables an understanding of capital in these texts as a symptom, and provides an account of the emergence of capital as a symptom in terms of critical studies of

management's reading of Marx. What this symptomatic reading will reveal is a certain avoidance of capital by critical studies of management.

Althusser (Althusser and Balibar, 1970) proposes to identify and distinguish theories as particular problematics. For Althusser "every theory is in its essence a problematic, i.e., the theoretico-systemic matrix for posing every problem concerning the object of the theory" (Althusser, 1970b: 155). A theory then is defined as a problematic – it entails a particular object of theory to which problems are posed, with the posing itself governed by the problematic. Elsewhere Althusser refers to a theory or problematic as a discourse-object unity, in that a particular (scientific) discourse is related to a particular object, and poses it particular problems. Althusser notes that this is

> a fact peculiar to the very existence of science: it can only pose problems on the terrain and within the horizon of a definite theoretical structure, its problematic, which constitutes its absolute and definite condition of possibility, and hence the absolute determination of *the forms in which all problems must be posed*, at any given moment in the science. (Althusser, 1970a: 25)

The identification of the specificity of an object of a particular theory, and the kind of problems this theory poses that object, enables Althusser to define a theory as a particular problematic. Althusser here draws on the metaphors of sight, space and speech to elaborate on the possibilities and limits of certain problematics. Althusser in particular develops this conception of a problematic in his reading of Marx. Althusser seeks to establish what distinguishes Marx from classical political economy, both in *For Marx* (1969) and in *Reading Capital*

(Althusser and Balibar, 1970). Althusser suggests that this is a philosophical question.

> We read *Capital* as philosophers, and therefore posed it a different question. To go straight to the point, let us admit: we posed it the question of its *relation to its object*, hence both the question of the specificity of its *object*, and the question of the specificity of its *relation* to that object, i.e. the question of the nature of the type of discourse set to work to handle this object, the question of the scientific discourse. (Althusser, 1970a: 14)

For Althusser, this is what differentiates a philosophical reading from a historical, sociological or economic reading. Here it might simply be understood as a theoretical reading, a reading that is concerned no so much with the sociological detail or historical accuracy provided in the texts under consideration, but rather with the theoretical status of their endeavour. It is also worth noting here that Althusser differentiates between a real object and a theoretical object, so when Althusser speaks of an object, he is referring to a theoretical object, since he is concerned with theoretical practice.

So the first thing such a reading established is the particularity of a theory, or problematic, or discourse-object unity. What immediately follows from this, however, is a discussion of the specific difference of a particular problematic. This first implies recognition of the limits of a particular problematic, and then an account of a break between problematics. This is where the double reading entailed in symptomatic reading occurs. Althusser suggests that in Marx we can decipher a particular way of reading, a double reading, which Althusser and his co-authors seek to apply to the Marxist text itself. This double reading consists of

"two radically different reading principles". The first seeks to understand the existing text through its own discourse, it is a "retrospective theoretical reading" which observes the "presences and absences" in the text (Althusser, 1970a: 18). The issue with the first reading, however, is that "it does not *see* that the combined existence of sightings and oversights in an author poses a problem, the problem of their *combination*" (ibid: 19). This is to say that while the first reading, which might be termed an internal reading of a certain discourse, a reading on the discourse's own terms, its own self-understanding, might very well understand that there are certain absences within its presences, i.e. that there are a few things it cannot explain even if it is aware of them, the discourse simply cannot make sense of why these absences exist. It is not necessarily a question of an object that is missing from sight, but, at least in the case of political economy before Marx, of not recognizing or seeing what a certain discourse can actually see; it is an oversight that concerns the sight itself (ibid: 21).

This is not a question of the limited visibility of a particular author; rather, it is the "field which *sees itself* in the objects or problems it defines – sighting being merely the necessary reflection of the field on its objects" (ibid: 25). This moment is interesting for Althusser, however, because it is here that new objects of knowledge are produced, without the discourse necessarily being aware of it, but nonetheless bringing with it "a transformation of the *entire* terrain and its *entire* horizon" (ibid: 24). There is then a possibility, as new theoretical objects are produced in a certain discourse, e.g. an object such as management, that this

leads to a revolution in theory, and the founding of a new problematic around this new object.

> Putting this fact in a language I have already used, the production of a new problem endowed with this *critical* character (critical in the sense of a critical situation) is the unstable index of the possible production of a new theoretical *problematic*, of which this problem is only one symptomatic mode... Hence what is in balance in this unstable and apparently local event is the possibility of a revolution in the old theory and hence in the old problematic *as a totality*. (Althusser, 1970a: 25)

However, while the limits of a field's vision might appear in the shape of new "objects and problems", these in a certain way are "forbidden" since they are not part of the discourse (ibid: 26). The discourse might fleetingly notice its limits, and with it new objects on its horizon, but these escape it, since they are not part of the field and forbidden by it. Only a leap to a different discourse could allow these objects to emerge.

The limited vision of a particular discourse or field requires a second reading, a symptomatic reading, one which "divulges the undivulged event in the text it reads, and in the same movement relates it to a *different text*, present as necessary absence in the first" (Althusser, 1970a: 28). The particularity of this second reading is that "the *second text* is articulated with the lapses in the first text" (ibid.). This articulation of a new text proceeds on the basis of the production of new theoretical objects to be found in the primary text. Althusser sees in the production of these new theoretical objects a challenge. Theoretical concepts "do not magically construct themselves on command when they are

needed"; at the beginning of a new discourse "the exact set of new concepts do not march out on parade in single file" (1970a: 51). The difficulty and challenge is therefore to construct these concepts, where all that might be there in the beginning is a word, and when every "word is of course a concept, but every concept is not a theoretical concept, and every theoretical concept is not the representative of a new object" (Althusser, 1970b: 146). The distinctions that Althusser draws here between words, concepts, theoretical concepts, objects and problems suggest a reading which acknowledges that a concept might not yet be a theoretical concept, i.e. a term conceptually integrated into the particular theory or problematic; nor might a theoretical concept be representative of a new object, i.e. it might simply refer to an already existing object.

These words that appear in discourses are often silenced; by they can also produce breakthroughs if they are read symptomatically.

> All that a simple literal reading sees in the arguments is the continuity of the text. A '*symptomatic*' reading is necessary to make these lacunae perceptible, and to identify behind the spoken words the discourse of the silence, which, emerging in the verbal discourse, induces these blanks in it, blanks which are failures in its rigour, or the outer limits of its effort: its absence, once these limits are reached, but in a space which it has *opened*. (Althusser, 1970b: 86)

A symptomatic reading, then, works with the space a certain discourse has opened, and proceeds from the outer limits of the efforts of an existing discourse.

As suggested above and in the previous chapters, in the business school management emerges as the central object of theory. I therefore propose to treat critical studies of management as the particular discourse to be read symptomatically. The question here is whether critical studies of management, in general or specific studies, can be understood as theories or problematics that pose particular problems to the object management. The question is whether critical studies of management have established themselves as a new discourse-object unity after Marx. It is not so much a question of whether their discourse is scientific or not – although, as we already saw in the previous chapter, that is a key question for management studies – rather, it is a question of whether critical studies of management can still be considered Marxist. While the word "management" appears in Marx, the question is whether it is already a theoretical concept that critical studies of management can simply appropriate, or whether it needs to make it such. And later it is a question of whether the word "capital" that appears in the texts of critical management studies is a theoretical concept, or instead a symptom pointing to another text yet to be constructed.

Heterogeneity and inheritance

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Marx and critical studies of management are not to be treated differently. Symptomatic reading was outlined as the approach to the reading of critical studies of management performed in this thesis. It was chosen at it asks the question of the difference between Marx and critical studies of management. Some reflections on the state of Marx and

Marxism were offered to consider both how the reading of Marx performed by critical studies of management can be assessed, and what the conditions are for reading Marx both through critical studies of management, directly, and through the thousand Marxisms in existence today.

The heterogeneity both of critical studies of management and of Marx and Marxism suggest that reading is a difficult task. That is not to say that these works are not to be read, but rather it forces us to read them in a particular way. In fact, this heterogeneity is a condition for any reading to take place at all. If a text was self-evident, if reading methods were clearly given, results would be precluded and no reading would actually have taken place. That would mean that in fact we had made no effort to actually inherit Marx. As Derrida notes:

> Guaranteed translatability, given homogeneity, systematic coherence in their *absolute forms*, this is surely (certainly, *a priori* and not probably) what renders the injunction, the inheritance, and the future – in a word the other – *impossible. There must be* disjunction, interruption, the heterogeneous if at least *there must be*, *if there must be* a chance given to any "there must be" whatsoever, be it beyond duty. (Derrida, 1994: 35)

A reading and inheriting of Marx must therefore take account of the heterogeneity of the Marxist text. So it is not simply a question of responding to the question "Marx?" with an emphatic "Yes!" but rather to take up the work of inheriting Marx. Marx's spectres do not determine our future; it is possible to deny this inheritance. This taking up of the responsibility of inheriting, this affirmation necessarily involves choosing. As Derrida writes, "*one must* filter, sift, criticize, one must sort out several different possibles that inhabit the same

injunction"; and one must "inhabit it in a contradictory fashion around a secret" because if "the readability of a legacy were given, natural, transparent, univocal, if it did not call for and at the same time defy interpretation, we would never have anything to inherit from it" (Derrida, 1994: 16). It is thus nonsensical to be either for or against Marx or Marxism *in toto*. And the same can be said of critical studies of management.

What also becomes apparent, and will become more so, is that the reception of Marx in the business school has not yet fully taken place, is not yet over. While many of his spectres have been kept at bay, only few of them have found inroads into the business school and its discourses, in many ways as symptoms of what has been disavowed in the business school: capital. The point here is not to revise the errors of the business school at merely a theoretical level while leaving the edifice of the business school intact: it is evident that a different reading of Marx will lead the business school in new directions. In particular, it is vital that this "return to Marx" does not remain a purely theoretical act, or that Marx gets neutralized through our reading. In particular, his injunction that it is not enough to interpret the world, but that it is also necessary to change it, must be upheld (Derrida, 1994: 32). This is not to have Marx integrated too quickly into the business school.

> Marx remains an immigrant *chez nous*, a glorious, sacred, accursed but still clandestine immigrant as he was all his life. He belongs to a time of disjunction, to that "time out of joint" in which is inaugurated, laboriously, painfully, tragically, a new thinking of borders, a new experience of the house, the home, and the economy. Between earth and sky. One should not rush to make of the clandestine immigrant an illegal alien or, what always risks

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coming down to the same thing, to domesticate him. To neutralize him through

naturalization. To assimilate him so as to stop frightening oneself (making oneself fear)

with him. He is no part of the family, but one should not send him back, once again, him

too, to the border. (Derrida, 1994: 174)

If we thus read critical studies of management reading Marx, it is to keep the

"conspiratonal futures" that Marx's work promises alive (Jameson, 1999: 64-5).

4 BRAVERMAN: SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT AS SYMPTOM OF CAPITAL

Marx and Braverman

There are few Marxist texts on management that have been as influential as Harry Braverman's *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (1998[1974]). Braverman is generally understood to be the first to have followed Marx into the hidden abode of production. As Braverman himself claims, and few have contested, since Marx completed his "critical analysis of capitalist production" in the mid-1860s, "Marxists have added little to his body of work in this respect" (Braverman, 1998: 7). Because of a lack of such work Braverman writes that the "intellectual influence under which this work was composed is that of Marx", and "little that has been written by any Marxists since Marx plays a direct role in those portions of this book concerned with the labor process" (1998: 6). Braverman, then, consciously positions himself in direct relation with Marx. Braverman's work on the labour process debates offer themselves as a privileged discourse to engage with in this thesis concerned with Marx in the business school, considering its status as a discourse emanating from Marx and taking place also in the business school. Whereas Braverman himself does not write from inside the business

school, his work will serve as foundation for the field of labour process theory to establish itself within the business school. Because of its unique position as inheriting Marx and taking place within the business school, labour process theory has importance for both Marxism and the business school.

As regards Marxism, the study of the labour process, in Braverman and after, was very early recognized among "the most significant developments in Marxist thought over the past decade" in the way in which "the rediscovery of the centrality of Capital's domination over the labor process" aided "an understanding of the persistence of bourgeois hegemony in the 20th century, especially in advanced capitalist countries" (Aronowitz, 1978: 84). In this *Labor and Monopoly Capital* "immediately stood out among twentieth-century studies in the degree to which it penetrated the hidden abode of the workplace, providing the first clear, critical understanding in more than a century of the labor process as a whole within capitalist society" (Bellamy Foster, in Braverman, 1998: x). If some therefore saw the work of Braverman and others as a crucial contribution to the vitality of Marxist thought, others saw in it a moment in the dissolution of Marxism. For Laclau and Mouffe (2001: 75-85), in their deconstructive reading of the Marxist tradition, the study of the labour process plays an important role in the emergence of the concept of hegemony. Laclau and Mouffe see this as undermining the economy as "the last redoubt of essentialism", and for them this unravels itself into a rejection not only of economic essentialism, but also of class as the privileged political subject, which ultimately leads them to their "post-Marxism". Consequently a further concern for the symptomatic reading in this part of the thesis will be to understand the

relation between Marxism and labour process theory, and to assess the contribution of labour process theory to a renewal or overcoming of Marxism.

As regards the business school, labour process theory is deemed to be of importance for the study of work, in the business school and beyond. Bellamy Foster suggests that Braverman "opened the way to the flood of radical investigations of the labor process that followed" (Bellamy Foster, in Braverman, 1998: x). Littler describes the importance and attractiveness of Braverman's work as follows.

> Beyond the intrinsic weaknesses of traditional British industrial sociology lay the fact that the academic study of work and work relations had been distributed among managerial studies, organisations theory, industrial relations and the sociology of occupations as well as industrial sociology. Braverman's major contribution, as I have said elsewhere, was to smash through the academic barriers and offer the potential for the birth of a new, integrated approach to the study and history of work (Littler, 1982: 25-26) which provided an (apparently) coherent theoretical framework and also directed attention to a range of issues and problem areas both within and beyond the workplace, which had previously been seen as unrelated. (Littler, 1990: 47)

The importance of *Labor and Monopoly Capital* thus lay, at least from this point of view, in the way in which it reconfigured the fields of study of work, one that activated the work of Marx for itself. As such labour process theory can be considered the first field of study of work and labour that draws on Marx and at the same time takes place in the business school. As such it is central to our inquiry here of "wither Marx in the business school".

Braverman re-enacts Marx's turn to production, and his inquiry into the labour process. But there are also a few other things taking place in Braverman's text – in particular his analysis of Taylorism as a modern form of management. Apart from the importance of Braverman for Marxism and critical studies of management, as outlined above, what is of interest here also is to consider to what extent Braverman establishes a new field of study around the object "management". Is this a new theory that can be considered separate from Marx, one which establishes a new problematic and a new theoretical terrain around a new theoretical object, "management"? And if so, what is the character of this new field of study? More specifically, the symptomatic reading of Braverman in this chapter will assess to what extend Braverman established a new problematic around management as a new central object of theory, and to what extent this new problematic is different from that of Marx, if at all. Braverman here is read then in terms of his importance for the establishment of critical studies of management; an importance that emerges out of a retroactive reading of critical studies of management, where Braverman serves as a critical point of reference, and an importance that will also become visible as the inquiry here proceeds.

The first part of this chapter deals with how Braverman situates his analysis of the labour process in relation to Marx's critique of political economy. Where in this turn to production re-enacted by Braverman is the field of "labour process theory" constituted, and how does it relate to the "critique of political economy"? We will see that Braverman, through a particular interpretation of Marx's turn to

the hidden abode of production, ascribes a centrality to the study of the labour process within volume one of *Capital*. This move allows him to pronounce an equivalence between labour process theory and the critique of political economy. Braverman here seeks to establish management as an object of theory within the Marxian problematic of *Capital I*, however, the question of the success of this theoretical manoeuvre remains unresolved. While Braverman with this positioning asserts the continuity between his work and that of Marx, his identification of labour process theory with the critique of political economy will be challenged in later labour process theory. It also leaves under-theorized the relation between capital and management, and the question of determination between the two.

The second part of this chapter explores Braverman's particular conceptualisations of the capitalist production process. In particular, he characterizes the capitalist production process as one dominated by control through a division between mental and manual labour and the consequent destruction of craft skill. While Braverman here assumes the determination of value, in that the control imperative relies on the necessity of valorisation, this determination is not theorized explicitly. This will have severe consequences in the further history of labour process theory, since it allows later labour process theorists to separate an inquiry into the labour process from a Marxist critique of capital, while also ignoring the specifically capitalist character of the labour process. In addition, and as a consequence, Braverman understands Taylor's scientific management to be an expression of capital as such – arguing that Taylorism allows capital to speak and to become self-conscious – rather than as

only a particular historical form of management. This point will be challenged in later labour process theory concerned with categorizing different forms of management congruent with valorisation. The symptomatic reading reveals here that management emerges as a symptom of capital: while Braverman seeks to establish it as an object of theory within the Marxian problematic, it remains under-theorized insofar as it is wholly determined by capital.

A third part of this chapter will address a peculiarity in Braverman's approach to the study of the labour process that in many ways has become fatal for labour process theory: his "self-imposed limitation to the "objective" content of class and the omission of the "subjective" will" (Braverman, 1998: 19). While Braverman justifies this move as an act of defiance towards bourgeois sociology, it not only troubles Braverman's own study but has marred labour process theory since. While in the late 1990s many labour process theorists largely agreed with Thompson's argument that the "construction of a full theory of the *missing subject* is probably the greatest task facing labour process theory" (Thompson, 1990: 114), since then this precise task has lead to a split condition within labour process theory, one that we will address in Chapter 6. Here, we will discuss the issue of subjectivity with regards to Marx and particularly *Capital I* itself, noting that while *Capital I* certainly emphasises the objective developments of capital, it does not exclude the subjective factors to the extent that Braverman does. Ironically, while Braverman suggests he is merely excluding subjective factors from his analysis, but allows for them to be added to his analysis later, he in fact does not manage to avoid addressing the question of subjectivity, and an analysis of management emerges in his text that is

understood as the destruction of subjectivity as such. As the symptomatic reading of later labour process theory in the following chapters will reveal, this question of subjectivity will be activated in order to break with Braverman's Marxism, and to establish management as a more autonomous object of theory.

The labour process in the critique of political economy

If we are to consider Braverman's relation to Marx, we need to explore the relationship between Braverman's inquiry and that of Marx. The lacking relationship between labour process theory and a Marxist (critique of) political economy has been lamented by several commentators on later labour process theory (e.g. Carter, 1995; Cohen, 1987; Neilson, 2007; Rowlinson and Hassard, 1994; 2001; Spencer, 2000), but how is this relationship set up in Braverman's work itself?

Braverman, as he tells us in the opening pages of *Labor and Monopoly Capital,* first of all "was interested in the structure of the working class, and the manner in which it had changed"; what he found was a contradiction between those who saw in these changes a process of upskilling and those who saw it as a process of alienation" (Braverman, 1998: 3). Braverman's concern is thus first and foremost an exploration of the structure of the working class, as well as the question of skill. Is this an object of inquiry that we can find or place in *Capital I*? Even though the problem is simply not posed in this way in Marx, it does concern the ways in which the real subsumption of the labour process under the process of valorisation shapes that labour process and the worker within it. So the

"structure of the working class" is discussed in the chapters on relative surplus value in so far as the revolution of the labour process leads to movements between different sectors of the economy, the integration of women and children into the workforce, and the creation of an industrial reserve army. And the question of "skill" is discussed in so far as the reorganization of the labour process in co-operation, manufacture and machinofacture also leads to changes in the involvement of the worker in the labour process, his or her relation to technology (from tool to machinery), and a change in the character of the worker itself.

It is clear though that these are neither primary occupations of Marx, since in his turn to production he is concerned with the way capital produces and is produced; nor does Marx pose the issue in terms of "the structure of the working class" or "skill". Braverman here imports a certain sociological logic into Marx's inquiry in the way in which he seeks to provide a sociographic picture of the state of the working class and the distribution of skill. How does he manage to suggest that this inquiry is still that of Marx? First, he tells us, his interests expanded "to include the evolution of the labour processes *within* occupations as well as the shifts of labor *among* occupations"; he was then "led into the search for the causes, the dynamic underlying the incessant transformation of work in the modern era"; and as this inquiry necessarily included "the evolution of management as well as of technology, of the modern corporation as well as of changes in social life", he found himself "attempting a study of the development of the capitalist mode of production during the past hundred years" (Braverman, 1998: 3-4). Braverman thus starts off with a narrow interest in class structure

and skill, only to end up with an historical study of the capitalist mode of production.

Braverman is concerned first with the structure of the working class and the question of skill, i.e. with consequences of the real subsumption of the labour process, and this leads him to study the capitalist mode of production. For Braverman, an inquiry into the labour process is at the centre of *Capital I*; he interprets the moment of the turn to production as confirming this assertion.

> The central place in the first volume of Marx's *Capital* is occupied by the labor process as it takes place under the control of capital, and the subtitle describes it accurately as a "critical analysis of capitalist production." In this volume, the only part of his projected study of capitalism that he was able to realize fully, Marx shows how the processes of production are, in capitalist society, incessantly transformed under the impetus of the principal driving force of that society, the accumulation of capital. For the working population, this transformation manifests itself, first, as a continuous change in the labour processes of each branch of industry, and second, as a redistribution of labor among occupations and industries. (Braverman, 1998: 6)

Note that Braverman insists that the labour process is not only merely important in *Capital*, or takes on *a* central space, but most explicitly occupies *the* central place in *Capital I*. And note also that for Braverman this inquiry into the labour process is concerned mostly with "the working population", with Braverman's initial objects of class, structure and skill. It is unfortunate here for Braverman that the subtitle of capital given as "critical analysis of capitalist production", one that affirms the centrality of production to *Capital*, and one that Braverman

appropriates to sustain his claim, is a translation of what since Ben Brewster's translation is also in English called "a critique of political economy". A different translation of the subtitle of *Capital I* therefore points to a different discourse with a different object of theory. Braverman, by confirming the centrality of the labour process to *Capital I* can assert his closeness to Marx, but if this centrality is in question so might be Braverman's relation to Marx. Is Braverman right in asserting the centrality of the labour process to *Capital*, or has the unfortunate event of a mistranslation of a subtitle already led to a slippage in the object of theory?

The question that emerges here is that of the relation of labour process theory and the critique of political economy, and of the determination of the labour process by capital. Braverman writes that in the whole book "we shall be considering the manner in which the labor process is dominated and shaped by the accumulation of capital", only to remark in a footnote that this "is not the place for a general discussion of the capital-accumulation process, and the economic laws which enforce it on the capitalist regardless of his wishes" (1998: 37). Instead, Braverman directs us to Part VII of *Capital I*, as well as a "very clear and compressed exposition of the capitalist drive for accumulation, considered both as subjective desire and objective necessity" in Sweezy's *The Theory of Capitalist Development* and Baran and Sweezy's *Monopoly Capital* as a supplement (ibid.). So Braverman does want to consider the specifically capitalist labour process, but he does so without himself discussing how a labour process becomes capitalist, how capital determines the labour process; for that, he directs us elsewhere, to Marx and Baran and Sweezy.

In fact Baran and Sweezy had invited the kind of study Braverman presents us with, when they wrote that their own study of "the generation and absorption of surplus" under monopoly capital "has resulted in an almost total neglect of a subject which occupies a central place in Marx's study of capitalism: the labor process" (Baran and Sweezy, 1966: 22; Braverman, 1998: 176). For Braverman the advent of monopoly capitalism is thus one of the main reasons for having to take up a Marxist study of the labour process, and he even considers this comment from Baran and Sweezy an invitation for such an endeavour, since they also affirm that the labour process at least "occupies *a* central place in Marx's study of capitalism" (emphasis added). He even goes further and suggests that there exists in fact an identity between their work and his, suggesting that where Baran and Sweezy deal with the movements of products he deals with production and the "new and different processes of labor, a new occupational distribution of the employed population, and thus a changed working class" brought about by new products. For Braverman, then, it follows that "the investigation of the movements of *labor*" in *Labor and Monopoly Capital* is "another form of the investigation of the movements of *value* undertaken in *Monopoly Capital*" (Braverman, 1998: 176). Sweezy, in the original introduction to *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, also referring to the above passage from *Monopoly Capital*, commends Braverman's book as a "serious, and in my judgement solidly successful, effort to fill a large part of this gap" (Sweezy, in Braverman, 1998: xxv), i.e. the treatment of the labour process under monopoly capital.

Where does this leave the relation between labour process theory and the critique of political economy? The three issues discussed above – Braverman's introduction of a sociological concern with the structure of class, occupation and skill; his conception of the labour process at the centre of *Capital I*; and his deferral to Baran and Sweezy for an understanding of circulation – all have as a consequence that the relation between the critique of political economy in Marx and the inquiry into the capitalist labour process in Braverman is under-theorized. While Braverman still asserts the unity of his inquiry and that of Marx, this unity is not established conclusively in his texts, but is rather assumed. So Braverman considers his inquiry to be an extension or deepening of the Marxist inquiry into the labour process, and forms of management therein. He does not seek to establish a new problematic, a new discourse surrounding a new object of theory. Labour process theory is here still resolutely Marxist. However, this unity of labour process theory and the critique of political economy is assumed, but not theoretically established. The symptomatic reading of Braverman here shows that Braverman resolutely positions himself within a Marxian problematic, and considers management not as new object for a new problematic, but rather as one object subsumed under capital as primary object of theory.

There is, however, something more going on in Braverman's text than a mere continuation of Marx. Braverman's text is pivotal in that it places an inquiry into the labour process at the centre of the critique of political economy; that is not merely a restating of a critique of political economy as it is to be found in Marx, but there is a subtle shift in the object of theory from capital and its production

in volume I, its circulation in volume II, and its production as a whole in volume III of *Capital.* As the next sections will clarify, Braverman emerges as a theorist of management, where management is conceived as the destruction of subjectivity. That is, Braverman, despite himself, takes steps towards establishing a new problematic around management as an object of theory. This analytical and theoretical moment is what makes Braverman's work singular, and it is also what decisively shifts the focus away from a wider critique of political economy, towards a concern with alienation, deskilling, and the destruction of the subjectivity of labour at work, rather than this object of theory being related to wider studies of the circulation of capital or its production as a whole. While a break from Marx is here not completed, Braverman in a sense leaves open the question of whether his inquiry can be reintegrated into a wider critique of political economy, Marx's problematic, as his reference to Baran and Sweezy and his suggestion that his study mirrors their study of value imply, or whether it will be separated from such a problematic and form a new one. In the following chapters, Burawoy will be shown to pursue the former strategy, while much of later labour process theory performs the latter break.

Control and value

Since Braverman is concerned with characterizing the capitalist labour process, how does he proceed? How does he define management? Above Braverman characterizes the labour process as a labour process that takes place under the control of capital. The metaphor of army and war, already at work in Marx, is also one that Braverman uses to describe the dynamics of the labour process,

while Braverman develops the term management to represent all ways in which the capitalist seeks to assert his or her control over the labour process.

> In all these early efforts, the capitalists were groping toward a theory and practice of management. Having created new social relations of production, and having begun to transform the mode of production, they found themselves confronted by problems of management which were different not only in scope but also in kind from those characteristics of earlier production processes. Under the special and new relations of capitalism, which presupposed a "free labor contract," they had to extract from their employees that daily conduct which would best serve their interests, to impose their will upon their workers while operating a labor process on a voluntary contractual basis. This enterprise shared from the first the characterization which Clausewitz assigned to war; it is *movement in a resistant medium* because it involves the control of refractory masses. (Braverman, 1998: 46)

So for Braverman management is a function that the capitalist develops to extract surplus-value from the worker in the context of antagonism. Note here also that the capitalist appears once again as the subject, a subject both with interests and with a will. Yet what is the character of this "management"? Again Braverman emphasises the centrality of control.

> Like a rider who uses reins, bridle, spurs, carrot, whip, and training from birth to impose his will, the capitalist strives, through management, to *control*. And control is indeed the central concept of all management systems, as has been recognized implicitly or explicitly by all theoreticians of management. (Braverman, 1998: 46-47)

Where in Marx the worker sold his hide and could expect nothing but a tanning, in Braverman the worker sold his rear and could expect nothing but a whipping. Control becomes the "central concept of all management systems", and while Braverman reminds us that this is all to "the maximum advantage for the capitalist" (1998: 47), control appears as the only obsession of the capitalist.

In the chapter on the division of labour (Braverman, 1998: 49-58), Braverman outlines the division of labour in the capitalist labour process as distinct from the social division of labour that precedes it.

> While the social division of labour subdivides *society*, the detailed division of labour subdivides *humans*, and while the subdivision of society may enhance the individual and the species, the subdivision of the individual, when carried on without regard to human capabilities and needs, is a crime against the person and against humanity. (Braverman, 1998: 51)

We certainly recognize the division of labour as a key feature of the real subsumption of the labour process as described in *Capital I*, as we do the division of the worker (a theme both Marx and Braverman take from Ruskin). There is however a way in which Braverman valorises a natural social division of labour in the form of craftsmanship that we will explore shortly. What is also perhaps in excess of Marx's description of the division of labour is that Braverman ventures to call it "the general law of the capitalist division of labor", which is "not the sole force acting upon the organization of work", but "certainly the most powerful and general" (1998: 58). We therefore move not only from value to control as the

central characteristic of the capitalist labour process, but furthermore this control is also characterised as chiefly a division of labour.

Braverman removes any reservations about the force of this tendency in his discussion of scientific management (1998: 59-85). Here our capitalist both learns how to speak and becomes conscious. Braverman argues that it is important to concern us in detail with Taylorism since it is "a theory which is nothing less than the explicit verbalization of the capitalist mode of production" (1998: 60). This is certainly one of the most remarkable statements in *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. Whereas Marx had to spend most of his critical energies precisely on showing how the commodity does not speak the truth and how the realm of "Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham" in fact hides what goes on in the hidden abode, it seems that now nothing is hidden anymore since scientific management speaks for capital, and speaks the cruel truth. The capitalist hides nothing, he has taken down the sign that says "No admittance except on business", and he speaks.

And yet – what does scientific management say? It does not speak of value, but it speaks of control, and it speaks of the division of mental and manual labour, of conception and execution. What is more, this speaking allowed Taylorism to "dominate the world of production", to employ human relations and industrial psychology as its "maintenance crew", to "become the bedrock of all work design", to raise "the concept of control to an entirely new plane", and to effect "a far greater revolution in the division of labor than any that had gone before" (Braverman, 1998: 60-62). In fact, it seems that only after this scientific

management speaking through its basic principles did capitalist production become conscious of itself.

> Modern management came into being on the basis of these principles. It arose as the theoretical construct and as systematic practice, moreover, in the very period during which the transformation of labor from processes based on skill to processes based upon science was attaining its most rapid tempo. Its role was to render conscious and systematic, the formerly unconscious tendency of capitalist production. It was to ensure that as craft declined, the worker would sink to the level of general and undifferentiated labor power, adaptable to a large range of simple tasks, while as science grew, it would be concentrated in the hands of management. (Braverman, 1998: 83)

It is, then, no surprise that Marx did not speak much about management, at least not as centrally as Braverman does, since modern management needed Taylor to come into being, after Marx. And it is also Braverman who can express the nature of management as control through the division of labour a lot more precisely than Marx, since it is only since scientific management spoke for capitalist production and allowed it to become conscious of itself that it could appear so clearly. Yet – can Braverman trust this speech of scientific management, and can we trust Braverman in properly recognizing capitalist production and its consciousness in the speech of scientific management?

That this speech that Braverman deciphers might be more about his own craft background than the essence of capitalist production becomes more and more clear as we read further, and then reread, and as the reference in the above quote to the decline of craft already points to. It is in the chapter on the effects of

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scientific management (Braverman, 1998: 86-95) that it becomes clear that Braverman's analysis of Taylorism relies on a distinction between capitalist labour and craft that has various dimensions. Although Braverman addresses those who have read his book and might conclude that he has "been influenced by a sentimental attachment to the outworn conditions of now archaic modes of labour" on account of his background of craftsmanship, and reassures them that he has been "conscious of this possibility" but has "tried not to let any of my [his] conclusions flow from such a romanticism" and thinks that "on the whole I [he] do not believe that this criticism would be warranted", such craft romanticism seems to be exactly what dominates Braverman's analysis.

It is the division of mental and manual labour that is central. Braverman writes in the said chapter:

> The separation of hand and brain is the most decisive single step in the division of labor taken by the capitalist mode of production. It is inherent in that mode of production from its beginnings, and it develops, under capitalist management, throughout the history of capitalism, but it is only during the past century that the scale of production, the resources made available to the modern corporation by the rapid accumulation of capital, and the conceptual apparatus and trained personnel have become available to institutionalize this separation in a systematic and formal fashion. (Braverman, 1998: 87)

Taylorism, according to this, only served as the speaking out and the making conscious of a tendency "inherent" in the capitalist mode of production "from its beginnings". Earlier Braverman had warned us that the anthropological unity of conception and execution, which marks humans, "may be dissolved" in that

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although "conception must still precede and govern execution" in human labour, "the idea as conceived by *one* may be executed by *another*" (1998: 35). The natural, human state however was the unity of conception and execution. And this was also the basis of a "social division of labor", a "social division according to craft" which is "apparently inherent in the species character of human labor as soon as it becomes social labor" (1998: 50). Braverman thus naturalizes the unity of conception and execution in a natural social division of labour according to craft, and at the same time allows for its dissolution. This social division of labour, as we already noted above, is counter-posed to the capitalist division of labour.

It is because of the naturalness and humanness of the unity of conception and execution that the "subdivision of humans" in the capitalist labour process, can be termed "a crime against the person and against humanity" according to Braverman (1998: 51). For Braverman craft, because of its eternal character as the natural human form of the social division of labour, is both his image of the past and of the future. Here is his image of the past.

> From earliest times to the Industrial Revolution the craft or skilled trade was the basic
> unit, the elementary cell of the labor process. In each craft, the worker was presumed to be
> the master of a body of traditional knowledge, and methods and procedures were left to
> his or her discretion. In each such worker reposed the accumulated knowledge of
> materials and processes by which production was accomplished in the craft... (Braverman,
> 1998: 75-76)

And here his vision of the future.

[M]y views about work are governed by nostalgia for an age that has not yet come into being, in which, for the worker, the craft satisfaction that arises from conscious and purposeful mastery of the labor process will be combined with the marvels of science and the ingenuity of engineering, an age in which everyone will be able to benefit, in some degree, from this combination. (Braverman, 1998: 5)

The image of craft is thus the image of the unity and fulfilment of the human. What are we to make of this image, and how does this compare to Marx? In Braverman as in Marx the analysis of capitalist production involves a critique of the ways in which the powers of socialization and technology appear to belong to the capitalist. But whereas both Braverman and Marx concede to the powers of science while viewing it in the service of capital and seeing the need for labour to appropriate them, Braverman cannot follow Marx in his positive appraisal of the forms of socialization that emerge from the capitalist organization of production. The only image of socialization that Braverman allows is that of craft and the concomitant social division of labour. Marx, on the other hand, while certainly condemning the division of labour in capitalist production, also sees its positive potentials.

What are the overall implications, then, of this Bravermanian conception of the labour process? An understanding of the labour process in terms of the imposition of the imperative of value is replaced by an analysis that is focused almost exclusively on the control imperative, and on the particular character this control takes under Taylorism, namely the destruction of craft skill. As discussed

above, Braverman assumes the subsumption of the labour process under capital, and therefore sees Taylorism as the becoming conscious and speaking of capital. The symptomatic reading of Braverman here demonstrates that management emerges as the central object of theory in Braverman's work. Yet even as this object of theory is conceptualised, and characterised control in the form of the destruction of craft skill, it is not an autonomous object of theory at all. It is always understood to be determined by capital. However, it is precisely this determination that remains under-theorized in Braverman's work. The consequence is that management appears as a symptom of capital – it gains importance in Braverman's work, and Braverman develops a new discourse around management as object of theory. Yet Braverman does not establish a new problematic insofar as management as object is always already determined by capital. Braverman's work is still conceived within the Marxian problematic of *Capital I*, yet management appears as a symptom that points to a new problematic, that of a critical theory of management. While Braverman seeks to subsume it in the old problematic, it is to be critical studies of management to follow that will wrest management as an object of theory away from the Marxian problematic, and seek explicitly to establish a new critical theory of management.

There are two aspects of this analysis that will be unravelled by later labour process theory. The first is that control can in fact take many forms. The work of Friedman (1977a; 1977b) and Edwards (1979), amongst others, pointed out that in fact a variety of forms of control are compatible with the imperative of valorisation itself, and they set out to categorize these. Here it emerges that

Taylorism is only one among many forms of control that respond to the control imperative, although it still remains to be established to what extent Taylorism remains historically dominant, considering also Braverman's comments on human relations being the "handmaiden" of scientific management. These authors, then, asserted that control does not simply have to be about deskilling. It was the deskilling or degradation thesis to be found in Braverman in particular that led to extensive discussions in labour process theory that followed (see e.g. Wood, 1982).

There is also a second aspect, closely related to this, which challenges Braverman's analysis a little further. That is his assumption that valorisation leads immediately to a control imperative. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Burawoy (1979) in particular challenges the interpretation of subsumption or subordination in Marx as control. The argument is that the necessity for the labour process to be subsumed under the valorisation process does not imply that the capitalist or manager must control the labour process, whether this is directly or indirectly. Rather, this subsumption can again take very different forms, and the control imperative that Braverman sees at work in Taylorism is only one, if historically the most important, example of this. Later for critical management studies this point will be important, especially when it comes to discussions of self-management (e.g. Grey, 1999). Braverman's interpretation of Marx is, then, challenged by this work which does not accept the understanding of subsumption in terms of a control imperative, and which seeks to account for different ways in which subsumption is achieved. This also

relates to the previous section, in which the question of the determination of management by capital is once again posed.

Finally, a third aspect of Braverman's analysis that has been addressed by labour process theory is his supposed exclusion of a discussion of subjectivity. For Braverman, because of his assumptions regarding craft, the consequence of destruction of skill under Taylorism also ultimately leads to the destruction of humanity. It is this aspect of his analysis that is the subject of the next section.

Subjectivity and the labour process

It is worth recalling the historical and political context of the initial publication of *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. As we saw in the introduction to this chapter, Braverman was precisely praised for creating a Marxist perspective to the study of work and labour. Braverman's primary target here was the sociology of work of his day, which was preoccupied with studying worker subjectivity and consciousness. Braverman was a harsh critic of this sociology which took the conditions of work for granted and was only interested in the worker's "habituation" to his or her work. Several times in his book he finds very harsh words for this sociology.

> The evolving work processes of capitalist society are taken by these schools as inexorable givens, and are accepted as "necessary and inevitable" in any form of "industrial society." The problems addressed are the problems of management: dissatisfaction as expressed in high turnover rates, absenteeism, resistance to the prescribed work pace, indifference, neglect, cooperative group restrictions on output, and overt hostility to management. As it

presents itself to most of the sociologists and psychologists concerned with the study of work and workers, the problem is not that of the degradation of men and women, but the difficulties raised by the reactions, conscious and unconscious, to that degradation. It is therefore not at all fortuitous that most orthodox social scientists adhere firmly, indeed desperately, to the dictum that their task is not the study of the objective conditions of work, but only of the subjective phenomena to which these give rise: the degrees of "satisfaction" and "dissatisfaction" elicited by their questionnaires. (Braverman, 1998: 97)

Braverman doesn't have much time for this kind of sociology that is merely concerned with consciousness and not with questioning the conditions of work itself. While Braverman assures us that his comments are not meant to "deprecate the importance of the study of the state of consciousness of the working class, since it is only through consciousness that a class becomes an actor on the historic stage" (1998: 20), he focuses on the objective conditions of work, and leaves out a study of consciousness. He also justifies this move with the necessity to limit his analysis. What interests us here is the manner in which Braverman makes it possible for himself to exclude the subjectivity as an aspect of his study. How is this possible?

In his argument for not dealing with subjectivity he deals with the conceptual distinction "class-in-itself" and "class-for-itself", which was initially proposed in Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy*, to allow himself to focus only on the former and not the latter.

No attempt will be made to deal with the modern working class on the level of its consciousness, organization, or activities. This is a book about the working class as a class

in itself, not as a class *for itself*. I realize that to many readers it will appear that I have

omitted the most urgent part of the subject matter. There are those who hope to discover,

in some quick and simple manner, a replacement for the "blue-collar workers" as an

"agency for social change," to use the popular phrases. It is my feeling, to put it bluntly,

that this constitutes an attempt to derive the "science before the science," and I have tried

to dismiss such preoccupations from my mind on the theory that what is needed first of all

is a picture of the working class as it exists, as the shape given to the working population

by the capital accumulation process. (Braverman, 1998: 18-19)

The distinction between class in itself and class for itself allows Braverman to

ignore any discussion of the class for itself, which he seems to identify primarily

with consciousness, but also the organization and activities that follow this

consciousness. The only way in which Braverman can not only make this

distinction, but also separate the two elements, is by assuming a temporal order

between the two. It is the objectivity of the class in itself that precedes the

subjectivity of the class for itself. So class in itself precedes class for itself, and

Braverman concerns himself only with the first, while leaving the door open for

others to deal with the second. There are, however, several aspects of his text

that undermine his intention of dividing objectivity and subjectivity and of

ignoring the latter.

The first thing to note is that he simply does not manage to ignore the

subjectivity of the worker completely. So in the chapter on "the habituation of

the worker to the capitalist mode of production" (1998: 96-104) in particular,

Braverman describes the ways in which the worker is affected subjectively by

the revolutions of production under capital. So, for example, he speaks of the

ways in which the "transformation of working humanity" into an "instrument of capital" appears as a condition "repugnant to the victims" as it "violates human conditions of work" and since "the workers are not destroyed as human being but are simply utilized in inhuman ways", with "their critical, intelligent, conceptual faculties" however "deadened or diminished" always "a threat to capital" (1998: 96). The worker subject is thus characterized by repugnance and threat. Or, elsewhere, Braverman notes that the "apparent acclimatization of the worker to the new modes of production" hides "the hostility of workers to the degenerated forms of work which are forced upon them" – a hostility that manifests itself as a "subterranean stream that makes its way to the surface" at times and "expresses itself in the unbounded cynicism and revulsion which large numbers of workers feel about their work" (1998: 104). The worker subject is thus also marked by hostility and revulsion, and Braverman already discovers the cynical subject that will become an object for critical management studies later (e.g. Fleming and Spicer, 2003). Braverman, then, does not exclude subjectivity as an object from his study, he merely relegates it to the sides, or, more importantly, shows its destruction. Nonetheless, the comments mentioned here and his focus on craft and anthropology described in the previous section show very clearly that Braverman does have a particular conception of subjectivity and its character in reaction to capital.

The second thing to note is that Braverman does not ignore the subjectivity of the capitalist either. In fact, the capitalist in Braverman's text appears as the supreme subject. Here Braverman appears not so much as a reader primarily of Marx, Baran and Sweezy or Lukács, but as a reader of Marcuse, with the

consequences of the scientific-technical revolution now appearing as the dissolution of the worker subject and the elevation of the manager subject.

> Thus, after a million years of labor, during which humans created not only a complex social culture but in a very real sense created themselves as well, the very cultural-biological trait upon which this entire evolution is founded has been brought, within the last two hundred years, to a crisis, a crisis which Marcuse aptly calls the threat of a "catastrophe of the human essence." The unity of thought and action, conception and execution, hand and mind, which capitalism threatened from its beginnings, is now attacked by a systematic dissolution employing all the resources of science and the various engineering disciplines based upon it. The subjective factor of the labor process is removed to a place among its inanimate objective factors. To the materials and instruments of production are added a "labor force," another "factor of production," and the process is henceforth carried on by management as the sole subjective element. This is the ideal toward which management tends, and in pursuit of which it uses and shapes every productive innovation furnished by science. (Braverman, 1998: 118)

In Marx the "subjective factor" is relegated and subsumed under the "objective organization" of the labour process in capitalist production. Here in Braverman, we see that it is the manager who becomes the "sole subjective element" in capitalist production and history more widely. What immediately follows from the second point then, is that, third, we are faced with an extreme disparity between manager-capitalist and the worker. We now have the manager as his or her own subject concerned not with value but with control. And everything that the manager does is to undermine the worker as a subject. We certainly also find the undermining of the worker subject in real subsumption as described by

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Marx, but there it does not have the final character attributed to it by Braverman in some passages of his text.

The odd consequence of Braverman's attempted disregard for the question of subjectivity is therefore that he ascribes nearly none to the worker and nearly all to the manager. Consider also the following passage, which describes how the capitalist-manager uses machinery to reduce the worker to nothing.

> [A] social evolution must take place which parallels the physical evolution of machinery: a step-by-step creation of a "labor force" in place of self-directed human labor; that is to say, a working population conforming to the needs of this social organization of labor, in which knowledge of the machine becomes a specialized and segregated trait, while among the mass of the working population there grows only ignorance, incapacity, and thus a fitness for machine servitude. In this way the remarkable development of machinery becomes, for most of the working population, the source not of freedom but of enslavement, not of mastery but of helplessness, and not of the broadening of the horizon of labor but of the confinement of the worker within a blind round of servile duties in which the machine appears as the embodiment of science and the worker as little or nothing. (Braverman, 1998: 134)

Again it is the capitalist-manager who appropriates the forces of science and technology to destroy the craft worker. While it is not certain that this process, as the one described in the previous quote, for Braverman has the character of finality or is merely tendential, the possibility of worker becoming a subject is certainly put into question. That one can thus add a study of the class for itself after Braverman is also questionable.

What are the consequences of this treatment of subjectivity in Braverman? First of all, it is odd to note in the chapters to follow that hardly any readers of Braverman have noted that he does in fact deal with the question of subjectivity. Most of his readers in labour process theory have taken him at his word, not his work. An exception is Aronowitz, who has most clearly argued apropos Marx that the "result of his analysis of the labor process, and of the accumulation of capital of which it is a part, has been to abolish the possibility for a theory of subjectivity" (Aronowitz, 1978: 107). Consequently, Aronowitz argued that a similar conclusion could be reached for Braverman, since he sought to follow Marx in this analysis. It will be necessary to trace in the following two chapters how this judgement was responded to by labour process theory.

Second, it seems that the theoretical effects of Braverman's use of the distinction between class in itself and class for itself are negative. In fact, it would appear that he only takes this distinction from the sociology of work that he sought to critique, and despite giving it a Marxist character still ended up caught by a duality that the sociology of work set up. So rather than counteracting a sociology of work concerned with subjectivity with a Marxist study of work concerned with the objectivity of class, Braverman, by objectifying the developments taking place in capitalist production, effectively was lead to the same conclusion as this sociology of work: namely that the objective conditions of work under capital must be taken as given, and subjectivity can only manifest itself as a consciousness that has the choice either of "habituation" or of hostility, cynicism and revulsion, but not action or change. As we will see in the next

chapter, latter labour process theory takes on this conclusion by effectively giving up on changing the social relations of production.

Finally, by announcing the exclusion of a study of the subjective factors of work, Braverman effectively challenges the labour process theory to follow to remedy this state of affairs. As will become evident, the question of subjectivity will be one that will be of great concern to labour process theory, to Burawoy in the next chapter as much as to later labour process theory, where different responses to this question will split labour process theory. My symptomatic reading there will demonstrate that the question of subjectivity will be activated to argue for a certain autonomy of management as object of theory, and will therefore lead labour process theory away from Marx.

The birth of labour process theory?

Having discussed key elements of Braverman's work, where does these leave critical studies of management? What are the result of the symptomatic reading of Braverman?

The firs thing to emphasise is that Braverman seeks to construct a Marxist study of management. That is, he commences with the object management that emerges in Marx's work, and develops this to construct a theory of management to make sense of his experiences on the shop floor. As was discussed, Braverman sees this as a continuation, even a deepening of the Marxist text, insofar as Braverman considers the labour process to be the central part of volume I of

Capital. As suggested in Chapter 3, the symptomatic reading of Braverman performed here asks to what extend his text can be characterised as a new theory, an new problematic that stands in difference to Marx's work. The singularity of Braverman's work, what makes him such a key reference in critical studies of management, is that he attempts to re-found this new field of study, after Marx. Braverman wishes to develop a conceptualisation of management with the Marxian problematic.

The second thing to note is that in re-founding labour process theory, the relation between this labour process theory and the critique of political economy remains unclear. Braverman insists that his work is Marxist, and that the labour process and management must be understood as determined by capital. Management here emerges as a central object of study, yet it is considered to be wholly determined by capital: management is a capitalist function. However, this determination itself is not theorized, but largely assumed. Consequently management appears as a symptom of capital – it is given no theoretical autonomy. Management appears as a symptom at the limit of Braverman's discourse – as an object that Braverman considers part of the Marxian problematic of *Capital I*, but for which he provides no account of how it is to be integrated into the existing problematic, since an account of the determination of management by capital is incomplete. This will give opportunity, as will be shown in Chapter 6, for later labour process theory to question the Marxism of labour process theory, and to question the determination of management by capital. The question of the relation between labour process theory and the critique of political economy, and the status of management as a new central

object of theory, thus remains unresolved, or only formally resolved, in Braverman.

A third point to make is with regards to Braverman's theorization or characterization of management, and what it promises. Braverman's analysis leads him to posit a control imperative based on the necessity for valorisation, and he specifies the character that this control takes as Taylorism, as the division of labour, the degradation of work, the destruction of skill, and the destruction of the subjectivity of labour. It is for this analysis that Braverman is best known, as a theorist and critic of Taylorism. It is here that his analysis is most convincing, yet it is here also where Braverman's limits are most apparent. On the one hand, his historical situation makes him identify Taylorism with capitalist management as such, rather than as a historical variant of it. This will force later labour process theory to consider what other forms of capitalist management are congruent with valorisation, but it also challenges it to assess the limits as much as the ubiquity of Taylorism. On the other hand, the importance given to craft in Braverman's work has as a consequence that Braverman over-estimates the destruction inherent in Taylorism, and the negative effects of the revolutions of the capitalist labour process by management. What later labour process theory will do, especially after Burawoy, is to take these theoretical discussion around management, and the different characterizations of management emerging, as a starting point for the establishment of a new problematic with management as principal object of theory.

Finally, the question of subjectivity in Braverman's work is one that will occupy later labour process theory. Braverman's self-imposed limit to a consideration of the objective factors of work implied a split that will trouble later labour process theory, and it is also one that will be challenged. Whereas Braverman's focus on the destruction of subjectivity – despite is promise not to consider subjective factors – is testament to the critical force of Braverman's work, it is also the moment where his work reaches an impasse. If capitalist management is characterized as the destruction of subjectivity, then what is left of the working class for which Braverman writes his book?

The following chapters all, in their different ways, respond to this work of Braverman, so that its effects will be felt throughout this thesis, and indeed in any engagement with Marx and management.

5 AFTER BRAVERMAN: TOWARDS ANOTHER MARXIST STUDY OF MANAGEMENT

Inheriting Braverman, inheriting Marx

Labor and Monopoly Capital was received by a vast number of reviews and commentaries, with several major journals running dedicated issues or sections on it, such as *Insurgent Sociologist* (Aronowitz, 1978; Edwards, 1978; Gartman, 1978), *Capital & Class* (Brighton Labour Process Group, 1977; Friedman, 1977a; Elger, 1979), *Monthly Review* and *Politics & Society* (including Burawoy, 1978). These included several texts by Marxists seeking to read Marx differently to Braverman, or drawing on contemporary Marxism. While some merely sought to clarify and re-present Marx's conception of the labour process (e.g. Brighton Labour Process Group, 1977; Gartman, 1978), especially Aronowitz, Burawoy and Elger sought to not only reread Marx but also situate Braverman's work within contemporary Marxism. It is therefore worth studying first the two contributions of Aronowitz and Elger in particular to show how these authors struggle with the effects of Braverman's text and seek to guide labour process theory into different directions.

The previous chapter demonstrated that Braverman sought to establish a study of management within a Marxist problematic, where however management appeared as a symptom that was not conceptually integrated into this problematic, and where management therefore appeared as a potential object of theory for a new problematic. In this chapter I will explore Marxist responses to Braverman (Aronowitz, 1978; Burawoy, 1978; Elger, 1979). What unites these responses to Braverman is their reading of Braverman alongside their reading of Marx. All of these responses grapple with the same position that Braverman finds himself in, namely to establish a Marxist study of management, within a Marxist problematic. What a reading of these responses to Braverman reveals is that different inheritances are shaped by different readings of Braverman and Marx, which in turn produce different Marxist studies of management. A symptomatic reading of these responses, and in particular the alternative labour process theory put forth by Burawoy (1979; 1985), explores to what extend these inheritances of Braverman reproduce or change the status of labour process theory as a Marxist study of management with which the previous chapter concluded.

In the first section, the responses to Braverman by Elger (1979) and Aronowitz (1978) are explored, to show how they respond to some of the dilemmas posed by the Bravermanian text. This is to show how Marx can be read differently, how these authors challenged Braverman's reading of Marx, and how this opens up a space for a different labour process theory, addressing the open questions raised in the conclusion to the previous chapter. In the second section, the work of Burawoy (1979; 1985) is introduced as a different labour process theory

constructed in difference to Braverman. Here a different conception of capitalist

management emerges, where it is understood as the organization of consent. In

the third section, Burawoy's conception of labour process theory is assessed,

with particular attention paid to his understanding of subjectivity and its

implication in capitalist management. In stark contrast to Braverman, Burawoy

does not theorize capitalist management as the destruction of subjectivity; on

the contrary, Burawoy highlights how capitalist management works through

subjectivity and on subjectivity. The chapter concludes with considerations on

the state of Marxist studies of management after these contributions.

Elger and Aronowitz reading Braverman and Marx

Elger (1979) provides a first example here of the Marxist response to

Braverman. He raises a series of disagreements. Elger is concerned with

questioning both the objectivist analysis of the working class as a class in itself

by Braverman, as well as the latter's sole focus on production. His quarrel is with

the underlying theme of Braverman's work, which is that "a fundamental feature

of monopoly capitalism is that capitalist control and domination is secured in a

thoroughgoing fashion *within* production", wherein "the process of degradation

of work and the disciplining effort of the reserve army of labour together appear

to produce a virtually inert working class" (Elger, 1979: 60). Elger is not

contesting the focus on production, but rather the fact that Braverman assumes

that control and domination are successful in that sphere. Elger does not deny

"the significance of an analysis of the development of the capitalist labour

process", but argues that such an analysis must both account for the ways in

which class struggle is produced within production and relate this to "broader forms of political domination and struggle" (1979: 61). Braverman's picture is in Elger's view too restrictive since it does not consider how struggle occurs in production and shapes the production process, nor does it consider how these struggles are connected to what occurs outside production. Braverman in Elger's view institutes a very dangerous myopia.

For Elger this is clearly a consequence of Braverman's adoption of Marx. Elger argues that when it comes to deskilling or degradation as the hallmark of real subsumption, it is possible to read Marx differently and therefore offer a more complex picture of real subsumption that is situated in an analysis of "the development of the complex organisation of collective labour in relation to specific strategies of valorisation and accumulation and their characteristic contradictions and forms of class struggle" (1979: 66). So while Braverman's reading of real subsumption in Marx is possible, Elger argues that a different reading is necessary. Recall that in the previous chapter I concluded that Braverman first understood the imperative of valorisation as that of control, and then characterised control as that of the separation of conception and execution that has deskilling as its result. Elger here attempts to reverse both of these movements. Reading other work on the labour process (by Brighton Labour Process Group, Palloix and Mandel), Elger argues that

> Braverman's account moves too directly from an abstract impulse to control labour power to the concrete strategy of deskilling, in a way which provides a partial and telescoped view of the development of the capitalist labour process. [The authors

mentioned] suggest the importance of locating an account of that development within a more complex and sustained analysis of the historical development of capital accumulation, the contradictions to which accumulation gives rise, and the manner in which such contradictions develop and are resolved in class struggle within and beyond production. (Elger, 1979: 70)

Elger here suggests that it is necessary to take a broader view of the development of the capitalist labour process, and to do so on the basis of a historical account of capital accumulation.

There are two aspects to Elger's reading of Braverman that should be emphasised. First, with regards to the symptomatic reading performed here, Elger implicitly acknowledges the danger entailed in Braverman's emphasis on management as a central object of theory, and the lack of an account of determination between capital and management in Braverman's work. Elger responds by proposing that any study of management and control must be situated within a study of capitalist accumulation, and management and control as objects of theory must themselves be subsumed under capital. Elger therefore attempts to firmly place management within a Marxist problematic, where in Braverman management appeared as a symptom of capital that however potentially pointed to a new problematic. Second, in terms of the inheritance of Marx, Elger here proposes to inherit Marx differently. He proposes a re-reading of *Capital I* that emphasises class struggle, rather than the destruction of the subjectivity of labour, as in Braverman. This reading of Braverman by Elger therefore constitutes an attempt to differentiate Braverman and Marx. For Elger, Braverman is not Marx, Braverman does not offer a privileged reading of Marx;

instead, Elger's return to Marx, in avoidance of or against Braverman, suggests that a different reading of Marx is possible, and therefore also a different Marxist study of management, in his case one integrated into the Marxian problematic, itself characterised by an emphasis on class struggle.

A second response to Braverman, one that follows a slightly different path, is that of Aronowitz (1978). Aronowitz's extensive commentary on and analysis of Braverman is rich in detail and argument, and it will not be possible to account for everything here. What is of relevance to the question of inheritance of Marx, and to the symptomatic reading, is the way in which Aronowitz relates Braverman's text back to the text of Marx itself, shows how Braverman is situated in relation to contemporary Marxism that portrays similar features, and then offers his own alternative reading of Marx. Aronowitz's main thesis is that in *Capital I*, and particularly in the *Resultate*, the capital-logic side of the argument, i.e. that of subsumption (of labour, science, technology, culture, consciousness), is overdeveloped, and that this theory of subsumption is implicitly reified by Braverman and others (1992: 80). Aronowitz seeks to counter this reading of Marx. He explores the consequences of the theory of subsumption in three varieties of contemporary Marxism: Braverman and labour process theory; Adorno, Marcuse, Lefebvre and critical theory; and Althusser and Poulantzas on state and ideology.

> The inescapable conclusion from the drawing together of the three strands of contemporary Marxism – the degradation thesis, the notion of one-dimensionality, and the new functions of the state in capitalist society – is that we have come to the end of the

inner dialectic of capitalism's development and decline. For the inference that may be

drawn from these positions, when taken as part of a single theoretical system, is that

capitalism is able to repress its contradictions, not because of this or that policy, but

because its logic of integration and subsumption makes the concept of a "class in radical

chains" absurd within the prevailing order. (Aronowitz, 1992: 82)

Braverman, according to Aronowitz, has then inherited a certain position not only from Marx but also from a more widespread reading of Marx of which he is a part. It is important to situate Braverman with reference to Marxism, since it shows how Braverman's thesis is not only shaped by his counteraction against bourgeois sociology or his experience on the shop floor, but by the intellectual milieu from which it emerges. It also highlights the contradictory character of labour process theory, whose turn to production and its politics tried to counteract a certain Marxism that could only see the breakdown of capitalism at the periphery, but nonetheless failed on precisely this count due to its enthrallment with the subsumption thesis. I demonstrated in the previous chapter how Braverman's objectivist view gives almost every power to the capitalist-manager and almost none to the worker subject, and this will also be the main point of attack for latter labour process theory, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter.

Aronowitz proceeds by showing how the dominance of the subsumption thesis is itself a symptom of the Marxist text. Curiously, it is the *Resultate* – the unpublished "6th chapter" of *Capital I* that was only added as an appendix to the 1976 edition – that is the most clear exposition of this thesis in Marx, which however might not have been available to many of the authors that Aronowitz

mentioned, who all wrote prior to its publication (unless they had access to its German version published in Moscow in 1933). For Aronowitz, the *Resultate* represents the most clearly expressed argument in Marx that "(1) the subsumption and subordination of labor under capital is the heart of the logic of the capitalist system, and (2) modern capitalism tends toward the absolute, self-directed hegemony of capital as a social relation..." (1992: 86-87). It is the processes of formal and real subsumption that Marx outlines in the *Resultate* and that Aronowitz recalls here.

In Aronowitz's reading of Marx, the consequence of the historical process of subsumption is "nothing less than the tendency of capitalism to abolish the subject as an historical actor" (1992: 101). For Aronowitz, then, it is no wonder that Braverman does not deal with the question of the subject, not because he wants to exclude a study of subjectivity and consciousness, but because "the "shape given to the working population by the capital accumulation process," the subject of the book, "may itself exclude the question of consciousness, if Marx's theory is rigorously followed" (Aronowitz, 1992: 102). So for Aronowitz this is a question precisely of Braverman's fidelity to Marx, so that the position is Marx's, not Braverman's first. Aronowitz here defies arguments which contend that what we have of *Capital* is incomplete and Marx intended to complete it with a theory of class (starting in the last, incomplete chapter of Vol. 3), and presumably a theory of consciousness (e.g. Althusser, 1970b).

> The problem is, however, not what Marx intended, but what his legacy is. The result of his analysis of the labor process, and of the accumulation of capital of which it is a part, has

been to abolish the possibility for a theory of subjectivity. Braverman, Marglin, and others who have studied the degradation of labor following Marx's suggestions cannot find a solution for the problem of consciousness, not because they are "bad" Marxists, but because they have been faithful to the framework that he set out in his magisterial fragment. (Aronowitz, 1992: 107)

Aronowitz suggests that the exposition in *Capital I* and particularly the *Resultate* exclude the possibility of a theory of subjectivity, and that under the rule of capital subjectivity is "afforded no autonomous space" (1992: 107-108). Aronowitz also suggest that the same might be said of Braverman, since he seeks to follow Marx's analysis. Aronowitz seeks to escape this aspect of Marx's work by arguing that "the logic of subsumption is no more than a *tendency*"; subsumption then cannot be understood as a *fait accompli* or even a process that always succeeds. This is also because, concomitantly, labour, culture and consciousness should be seen to have a "relative autonomy" in Marxist theory (1992: 82-83), so that they at least have the capacity to escape the process of subsumption. For Aronowitz this tendency is counteracted by "causes" such as "the law of uneven development, the profound influence of ideological and cultural questions within capitalist societies, and of course the contradictions of the internationalization of capital" (1992: 110).

It is striking how this assessment of Aronowitz is taken up by later labour process theory. Once Thompson (1990) explicitly poses the question of the missing subject, to which subjectivist labour process theory sees itself responding (e.g. Knights and Willmott, 1989), labour process theory effectively assumes that this is the only possible reading of Marx. Very little effort is made to

challenge this reading of Marx and of Braverman, to ask whether it is really the case that a theory of subjectivity is excluded from this work. The comments in the previous chapter on Braverman not ultimately managing to exclude a discussion of subjectivity have suggested that while Braverman's conclusions are largely pessimistic, and management appears as the destruction of subjectivity, there still emerges an image of a subject that is cynical and recalcitrant. Nonetheless, labour process theory after Braverman has felt it necessary to always supplement Marx and Braverman with different works, such as that of Foucault or Fromm, that do provide an account of subjectivity.

What Aronowitz' reading of Braverman demonstrates is that reading and inheritance are conflictual and contested. Whereas Elger reads Marx against Braverman, Aronowitz reads contemporary Marxism against a certain Marx and against Braverman. Aronowitz sees the problem particular with Braverman's position on subjectivity not emerge from his own work, but rather from Braverman's fidelity to Marx, and therefore from a certain Marx, specifically the Marx of the *Resultate*. In terms of the inheritance of Marx in later labour process theory, explored in the following chapter, it is relevant that later labour process theory adopts Aronowitz' reading against Marx and Braverman, without however exploring the different Marx and the different Marxism that Aronowitz proposes. Instead, Aronowitz's argument that a theory of subjectivity is impossible in these works is used to justify a turn away from Marx.

Burawoy against the subsumption thesis

What is Burawoy's response to Braverman? Like most commentators, Burawoy starts off with praise for Braverman, but very quickly moves on to his criticisms. Like Aronowitz, Burawoy also situates Braverman's work within Marxism, but this time in relation to Lukács. For Burawoy, Braverman follows *History and Class Consciousness* (Lukács, 1971) in presenting capitalism "as a process of becoming, of realizing its own inner essence, of moving according to its immanent tendencies, of encompassing the totality, of subordinating all to itself, and of destroying all resistance" (Burawoy, 1985: 22-23). Instead of the revolutionary proletariat as the messianic subject, as in Lukács, Braverman however only offers us a romantic utopianism (1985: 23), which we already discovered in Chapter 4 as one of craft plus science. While Burawoy sees this as an analysis focused solely on the objective, the point is not to simply complement Braverman with a focus on the side of the subject, or to substitute it with the same, since Braverman "pushes the subject-object framework as far as it will go and thereby lays bare its limitations" (1985: 23). I will show below how Burawoy responds to this challenge with his conception of ideology and struggle.

For Braverman, Braverman's focus on the objective also has consequences for his conception of capitalist control. We already saw in Chapter 4 how Braverman translated real subsumption as a control imperative. Considering that subsequently "subsumption" – or, as it is often translated, "subordination" – is often directly and unreflectedly understood simply as "control" to be exercised by the capitalist-manager, it is worth quoting Burawoy here.

> If there is a single concept that has served to generate ahistorical accounts of organizations and to mystify their operation, it is the concept of control. By virtue of its use as a general concept – and by incorporating an imprecision as to whom or what is being controlled, for what ends, how, and by whom – modern social science has successfully obfuscated the working of capitalism. (Burawoy, 1985: 26)

While such a warning concerning the concept of control is applicable to much of the theory we encounter in this thesis, Burawoy's charge against Braverman more specifically is that his assertion that control is necessary in the translation of labour power into labour is based on an implicit theory of antagonistic interests of capital and labour (1985: 26-27). What Burawoy points out though, is that although there might exist a certain contradiction between capital and labour at a more abstract level in terms of the production and appropriation of surplus-value, this does not immediately translate into antagonistic interests. Rather, the "crucial issue is that the interests that organize the daily life of workers are not given irrevocably" and we therefore require a theory of interests that takes account of "the ideological terrain on which interests are organized" and which must "investigate the conditions under which the interests of labour and capital actually become antagonistic" (1985: 28-29). I will show below how Burawoy develops such a theory in his own work, but his criticism of Braverman is that he does not account for the way in which consciousness or ideology is produced at the point of production. Braverman thus is "unable to uncover the essence of the capitalist labour process" as he "assimilates the separation of conception and execution to the fundamental structure of capitalist control" (1985: 35).

Next Burawoy concerns himself with Braverman's distinction between a class in itself and a class for itself. For Burawoy this is an unsustainable distinction, since "capitalist control, even under the most coercive technology, rests on an ideological structure that frames and organizes 'our lived relationship to the world' and thereby constitutes our interests" (1985: 36). For Burawoy the distinction between "objective" and "subjective" – and thus between class in itself and for itself – is arbitrary and one cannot separate an economic realm from "specifically political and ideological 'structures' of the workplace" (1985: 39). In Burawoy's view Taylorism in fact might not always work in favour of capital since the separation of conception and execution might threaten the obscuring and securing of surplus-value (1985: 49). Braverman can only assume that Taylorism equals capitalist control by imputing certain interests into the capitalist (and the worker), while confusing causes and consequences. In the remainder of his critique of Braverman, Burawoy explores how Braverman's vision of capitalism and socialism is marred by Braverman being caught in his own times, and Burawoy suggests that in understanding totality as expressive, as one in which cause and effect cannot be separated, Braverman can not understand how different parts of the totality interact. This means Braverman can only assume that Taylorism is equal to capitalist control, rather than one of many different expressions of it. It also means that Braverman fails to account for the conditions of existence of this totality, so that he cannot envision a different totality, or the precarity of the current totality.

Burawoy also articulates, alongside his critique of Braverman, a critique of Marx, without however discussing the relation between Braverman's and Marx's text.

As I will show below, Burawoy defined the specificity of the labour process under capitalism as the obscuring and securing of surplus value. This definition is directly opposed to that of Braverman, whose understanding of the labour process as marked by capitalist control in the shape of the division between conception and execution is in conflict with Burawoy's. Burawoy also explicitly poses this definition against Marx. Burawoy acknowledges that "Marx, of course, had a great deal to say about the mechanisms of securing surplus value in the labor process", and he outlines some of the forms of real subsumption that Marx discusses in *Capital I* (Burawoy, 1979: 26-27). In his view, however, Marx assumes that all of these forms of securing surplus value are only about coercion, and therefore not about consent.

> All these mechanisms, and Marx's analysis of the labor process in general, rest on the assumption that the expenditure of effort is decided by coercion. For their economic survival, workers are presumed to be totally at the mercy of the capitalist or his agent, the overseer, who can arbitrarily intensify the work, provided that his demands are compatible with the reappearance of the worker the next day (and sometimes not even then) and that they remain within certain broad and often unenforced legal limits. In other words, Marx has no place in his theory of the labor process for the organization of consent, for the necessity to elicit a willingness to cooperate in the translation of labor power into labor. (Burawoy, 1979: 27)

Burawoy suggests that the causes for this omission on Marx's part might be historical, arguing that at the time of Marx's writing "the arena of consent was small", and that only after a period of class struggle the wage became more independent of work effort, so that "coercion must be supplemented by the

organization of consent" (1979: 27). Burawoy even later suggests that Marx was

studying a different type of capitalist labour process, one in which the

organization of work was despotic (1979: 74). Here workers "have no ways to

defend themselves against the arbitrary whims of the manager or overseer who

hires and fires at his own discretion", since "[a]narchy in the market leads to

despotism in the factory" (ibid.). Burawoy contrasts this to the hegemonic

organization of work that he studied, where consent rather than coercion

predominates, and where "[s]ubordination of the market leads to hegemony in

the factory" (ibid.).For Burawoy the omission of consent, however, is not only to

be explained historically; it also has a theoretical effect, namely the omission of

the worker subject.

> Following Marx, twentieth-century Marxism has too often and too easily reduced wage
>
> laborers to objects of manipulation; to commodities bought and sold in the market; to
>
> abstractions incapable of resistance; to victims of the inexorable forces of capitalist
>
> accumulation; to carriers, agents, or supports of social relations. It has been left to
>
> industrial sociology to restore the subjective moment of labor, to challenge the idea of the
>
> subjectless subject, to stress the ubiquitous resistance of everyday life. (Burawoy, 1979:
>
> 77)

Burawoy here then accuses Marx and Marxism of a certain ignorance of "the

subjective moment of labour". In a footnote, Burawoy specifies:

> This is as true of "scientific Marxism" and of French structuralists such as Louis Althusser,
>
> Etienne Balibar, and Maurice Godelier as it is of so-called "Western Marxism," exemplified
>
> in the work of Georg Lukács, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno. However, Marxism
>
> has more recently rediscovered "spontaneous subjectivity" in the writings of Henri

Lefebvre, Cornelius Castoriadis, Jürgen Habermas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and others, although Herbert Marcuse has long since recognized this as "false subjectivity," or what Paul Piccone recently referred to as "artificial negativity." (Burawoy, 1979: 229)

We are here veritably in the midst of many Marxisms. Burawoy reprimands Althusser et al. with the help of Castoriadis et al., only to employ Marcuse to dismiss the latter. Burawoy is seemingly on a quest for "true subjectivity", as opposed to the "false subjectivity" identified. I will show in the next section how Burawoy develops his position in this regard, also drawing on the Marxisms he here reprimands.

What the reading of Burawoy here demonstrates is once again the contested nature of inheritance. What is particularly noteworthy is that here Burawoy, not unlike Aronowitz, clearly traces some of the misgivings he as about Braverman back to Marx. In addition, he also traces them back to contemporary Marxisms. Burawoy's clearest point of attack is the subsumption thesis, which in his view gives to much power to capital and leads to an ignorance of the subjective moment of labour. In the next section, I will explore Burawoy's own work to explore how he develops a different conception of management out of his critique.

Burawoy: management as the organization of consent

Manufacturing Consent (Burawoy, 1979) is the most important Marxist statement on labour process theory after *Labor and Monopoly Capital*

(Braverman, 1998). What is particularly intriguing about this work is the question it starts off with and the way it goes about seeking to answer it. In the context of his own work experience as a machine operator, Burawoy notes apropos *Labor and Monopoly Capital*:

> At the time it failed to speak to my experiences on the shopfloor, to get at what work meant to me and my fellow operators. We were constructing a shopfloor life of our own that took for granted what Braverman bemoaned: the separation of conception and execution. Our jobs may have had little skill in Braverman's sense, but they involved ingenuity enough. They absorbed our attention and sometimes even left us too much autonomy. Uncertainty could be as nerve-wracking as it was seductive. Objectification of work, if that is what we were experiencing, is very much a subjective process – it cannot be reduced to some inexorable laws of capitalism. We participated in and strategized our own subordination. We were active accomplices in our own exploitation. That, and not the destruction of subjectivity, was what was so remarkable. (Burawoy, 1985: 10)

Burawoy, at least at this point, takes the realities of the labour process under capitalism that Braverman describes for granted. He insists, however, as we saw above, that this does not lead to a "destruction of subjectivity", but rather it is precisely the question of the subject that comes to the fore in this constellation.

Burawoy starts off with a particular understanding of the specificity of the labour process under capitalism: that it is characterized by the obscuring and securing of surplus value. With the securing of surplus value he is referring to the need to turn labour power into labour, and to make sure that in this a surplus is produced. With the obscuring of surplus value, Burawoy refers to the fact that

this extraction of surplus value must remain hidden from the worker. The capitalist must thus succeed to both produce surplus value and to hide this surplus from the worker. The important consequence of this is that it is not sufficient to simply obscure surplus value, but that labour power must be actualized in labour to produce surplus value. Burawoy insists that this process is one that the subject must be involved in: labour must be made to work. For Burawoy this involves "specific combinations of force and consent":

> The defining essence of the capitalist labor process is the simultaneous obscuring and securing of surplus value. How does the capitalist assure himself of surplus value when its production is invisible? ... Obscuring surplus value is a necessary but not sufficient condition for securing surplus value. In other words, it is necessary to explain not only why workers do not act according to an imputed set of interests but also why they attempt to realize a different set of interests. The labor process, therefore, must be understood in terms of the specific combinations of force and consent that elicit cooperation in the pursuit of profit. (Burawoy, 1979: 30)

For Burawoy this obscuring and securing of surplus value, and this combination of force and consent to elicit cooperation is a process that takes place in production. In his definition of a mode of production, Burawoy distinguishes between the relations of production and the labour process (1979: 15). The relations of production in a class society decide "the particular manner in which surplus labor is expropriated from the direct or immediate producers" (ibid.). The labor process, on the other hand, is defined as "a particular way of appropriating nature, or producing useful things", so that the relations of production are "always combined with a corresponding set of relations into

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which men and women enter as they confront nature…" (ibid.). The labour process itself has "two analytically distinct but concretely inseparable components – a relational and a practical aspect" (ibid.). The relational aspect is what Burawoy names as the relations *in* production, and the practical aspect is the activity of labour including the transformation of raw materials into useful objects (ibid.). Although the mode of production is thus defined as a combination of relations of production and a corresponding labour process, in terms of social relations it is the difference between relations *of* production and relations *in* production that is important, and the conceptual distinction that has been picked up from Burawoy most widely. It is worth noting that Burawoy here rejects the Marxist distinction between forces and relations of production, because in his view the forces of production are too often "presented as a set of things… that are neutral with respect to exploitation and domination" and because this notion is "usually associated with a teleological view of history" (1979: 220). Burawoy therefore seeks to shift conceptually from a notion of "forces of production" to a notion of the labour process as containing a relational (relations in production) and practical (labouring activity) aspect, which allows for a political study of the labour process itself. The distinction between relations and forces of production will, despite Burawoy, be revived in later critical management studies (in particular in Adler, 2007).

Burawoy subsequently asks how these social relations can be reproduced, since "as a condition for the existence of a given mode of production, there must be a set of mechanisms that guarantee the reproduction of the relations of production" (1979: 15). For Burawoy, by definition this is a question of politics,

and his distinction between relations *of* and *in* production forces him to distinguish between two forms of politics (which, curiously, he only elaborates in a footnote): the politics linked to relations *in* production he calls "politics of production"; the politics linked to the relations *of* production he calls "global politics" (Burawoy, 1979: 220n5). It is the politics of production that are of primary concern to Burawoy, and that give the title to his later book (1985). There are particular reasons for why Burawoy privileges this arena of politics. First and foremost, the peculiarity of capitalism is that the relations of production are reproduced in production itself: "the production of commodities is, simultaneously, the reproduction of the relations of production" (Burawoy, 1979: 25). Exactly because the relations of production are reproduced in production, Burawoy sees himself justified in focusing on production. He does, nonetheless and secondly, discuss "the way the labor process is affected by variations in relations of production, conceived broadly as the relations embodied in the supply, product, and labor markets" (1979: 123), which serves as the rationale for section 4 of *Manufacturing Consent* on the relative autonomy of the labour process.

In this section Burawoy discusses the effects of a recession on the labour process (chapter 8), and comes to no firm conclusions, although suggesting that workers simply absorbed the external pressures and thus avoided changes in the labour process (1979: 134). More interestingly, though, in his discussion of the labour process and worker consciousness (chapter 9), Burawoy attempts to explore how consciousness formed outside of production affects production itself. He concludes:

I have tried to show, first, that variations in imported consciousness do not give rise to different relations in production; second, that imported consciousness mediates the translation of relations in production into activities, but only within narrow limits; and third, that the mediating effect of such consciousness varies in accordance with position in the labor process, that is, its effect is shaped by the labor process itself. These very tentative conclusions, based on flimsy data, converge with those of chapter 8, where I tried to show how changes in markets, brought on by the 1974 recession, affected the labor process in ways determined by the organization of work, the internal labor market, and the internal state. From all these findings I concluded that the labor process at Allied is relatively autonomous – that is, it autonomously shapes the outcomes of external changes, and… it creates its own characteristic dynamics. (Burawoy, 1979: 156)

In asserting the relative autonomy of the labour process – with the term "relative autonomy" borrowed from Althusser (1969) – Burawoy therefore presents a second reason for why he is focusing on the politics of production. It is only in *The Politics of Production* (1985:12) that he specifies a third reason for focusing on production, which is that under capitalism the state (as an instance of a global politics) is separated from the factory (as opposed to the situation in socialism); and furthermore, in the particular setup at Allied he will later come to call the "hegemonic" organization of work, the state directly intervenes in the factory, leaving its traces there, as we will see shortly.

For now, this allows Burawoy to argue against those who do not take the sphere of production seriously as a space in which consent is achieved and therefore where capital is reproduced. In particular, he criticises those sociologist, like Goldthorpe et al. working on the "affluent worker" study (1968), who take

external orientations to work as an explanation for the existence of consent at work (Burawoy, 1979: 136-140). Consent at work in this sociology is explained psychologically by showing how workers have "instrumental" attitudes to work that emerge from outside the workplace. Consent at work can therefore be assumed in those cases where workers hold those attitudes, and Goldthorpe et al. suggest that this will become more common as affluence affects more and more workers. These sociologists do not explore production itself, and therefore ignore the production of consent at work. So Burawoy insists on a Marxist study of production.

Apart from arguing against this particular kind of sociology, Burawoy also argues against a particular Marxism, while also borrowing its tools. He wants to counter "the conventional wisdom among both Marxists and non-Marxists" that hegemony is produced outside of production in the school, the family, by the state etc., precisely by demonstrating "how consent is produced at the point of production" (1979: xii). In particular, Burawoy refers to Gramsci's essay "Americanism and Fordism", where Gramsci states emblematically that hegemony "is born in the factory" (1971: 285). Burawoy says he wants to "develop and elaborate this suggestive but elusive comment" (1979: xii), and he does so by employing a concept of ideology developed out of Marx, Althusser, Balibar, Poulantzas, Godelier, and a few others. The concept of ideology he develops is firmly Althusserian, in that he argues that "the production of things is simultaneously not only the production and reproduction of social relations but also the production of an *experience* of those relations", and defines this experience as an "imaginary", "lived" relation, following Althusser (1969: 233).

Following a short discussion of ideology, Burawoy suggests that it is "lived experience that produces ideology, not the other way around", and that ideology "is rooted in and expresses the activities out of which it emerges" (Burawoy, 1979: 18).

Lived experience, ideology, for Burawoy is thus equally a part of production as commodities or social relations, and it is out of this ideology that interests emerge (1979: 19). Burawoy argues that we must "develop a theory of interests, a theory of how they are constituted out of ideology" (ibid.), in contrast to much of sociology that imputes interests or takes them as given. Burawoy, then, insists that if one is to try to understand the reproduction of capital, one must be concerned with hegemony in production. For him this leads on to a study of ideology at work, since it is the experience of work that mediates the social relations of work and that constitutes a certain "spontaneous consciousness" (ibid.). Interestingly, Burawoy sets up a distinction between interests and "radical needs" that he adopts from Heller. Here "the very concept of interests reflects the standpoint of capitalist society", and "interests" are considered to "express the reduction of needs to greed", a fetishised form. In contrast, "the true motive" of a class struggle "is represented by the 'radical needs' of the working class" (Burawoy, 1979: 20, quoting Heller). This differentiation between (fetishised) interests and radical needs must be kept in mind as we read Burawoy's account of the production of consent at work, since it curiously precludes Burawoy's analysis and findings.

From here Burawoy proceeds to his famed account of "making out", in which the labour process appears as a game, as well as his discussion of the internal labour market and the internal state. All of these are mechanisms of the obscuring and securing of surplus value, and of the constitution and coordination of the interests of managers and workers. So the internal labour market internalizes "the competitive individualism of 'free and equal' laborers", and "the mobility it engenders at the point of production dissolves some of the tensions between worker and management and generates new tensions among workers"; in this way it manages to promote competition between workers and thus divides them, and through seniority rules fosters commitment. Thereby it "concretely coordinates the interests of capitalist and laborer in the generation of surplus value" (Burawoy, 1979: 107). Similarly, the internal state coordinates interests through grievance procedures and collective bargaining, and "obscures capitalist relations of production in the labor process by constituting workers as individuals... rather than as members of a class" (1979: 119). The internal market and state, then, serve similar functions, and also complement each other at times. While ambiguities and tensions remain within these institutions in production, Burawoy comes to the conclusion that in his study they proved to be very successful at obscuring and securing surplus value. The case of the labour process as a game, however, is where Burawoy's analysis is at its most striking.

In his discussion Burawoy points out how in contrast to Braverman these games precisely succeed in obscuring and securing surplus value by "the expansion of choices" within "ever narrower limits" (1979: 94), a dynamic which Braverman missed in his account of Taylorism. Perhaps surprisingly, then, while setting out

to show how one must give an account of subjectivity and ideology in the production of consent at work, and despite Burawoy's insistence that the concept of game "is more than a tool of explanation" as it "is also, and necessarily, a tool of critique" (1979: 92), Burawoy comes to conclusions that are as bleak as those of Braverman, and are worth quoting extensively. Reflecting on the concept of game, he writes:

> First, it represents the link between individual rationality and the rationality of the system… The possible variations of outcomes is limited but is not entirely beyond our control. That is, we do make history, but not as we please… Second, just as playing a game generates consent to its rules, so participating in the choices capitalism forces us to make also generates consent to its rules, its norms. It is by constituting our lives as a series of games, a set of limited choices, that capitalist relations not only become objects of consent but are taken as given and immutable… Third, just as the game defines a set of goals, so capitalism generates a set of interests [which] are the product of capitalism [and] are taken as given, and, like the rules, they are not formed through democratic consensus. Fourth, just as the possibility of winning or maximizing one's utility makes a game seductive, so the possibility of realizing one's interests, of satisfying one's needs, defined by capitalism in general or by making out in particular, is the very means for generating consent to rules and relations, presenting them as natural and inevitable… In short, dissatisfaction, of which there is much, is directed not against capitalism but toward its reproduction. (Burawoy, 1979: 92-93)

Burawoy therefore sees very little hope for games to produce anything but consent, and so the obscuring and securing of surplus value is achieved mostly successfully. Earlier, Burawoy had already asked whether making out was radical, as Castoriadis claimed, or a form of voluntary servitude, as Burawoy

assumed Marcuse would argue (1979: 73). Already a few pages later, and preceding the above discussion, he had concluded that the game "is entered in for its *relative* satisfactions, or what Herbert Marcuse calls *repressive* satisfactions", and that in this sense the game "represents a need that is strictly the product of a society "whose dominant interests demand repression."" (Burawoy, 1979: 80-81). The "radical needs" mentioned above, which according to Burawoy might lead out of capitalism, are not satisfied here.

How does Burawoy arrive at this position? In his analysis in the book, as we saw above, he employs both Althusser et al. and Marcuse, contra Castoriadis. Before proceeding to a discussion of Burawoy's work, it is useful to briefly consider his particular reading of these Marxisms, and to emphasise the possibility of a different reading. Burawoy reads Althusser, and also Marx, in a particularly way, foreclosing the possibility of discovering a conception of the subject in either Marx or Althusser that would allow him to offer a more productive analysis of the worker subject. In Burawoy's study the obscuring and securing of surplus value is ultimately always achieved, as Burawoy himself concluded. His turn to the "subjective moment of labour" therefore disappointed its promise. The key to this is given in Burawoy's definition of consent.

> Unlike legitimacy, which is a subjective state of mind that individuals carry around with them, consent is expressed through, and is the result of, the organization of activities. It is to be distinguished from the specific consciousness or subjective attributes of the individual who engages in those activities. Within the labor process the basis of consent lies in the organization of activities as though they presented the worker with real

> choices, however narrowly confined those choices might be. It is participation in
>
> choosing that generates consent. (Burawoy, 1979: 27)

Consent, in Burawoy's definition, is not a "subjective state of mind" but rather a result of the "organization of activities", in Burawoy's case the playing of games in particular. For Burawoy the cunning of the production of consent in the labour process lies in pretending as if workers are given real choices in the organization of activities. We saw above how Burawoy concluded himself that choices in the playing of games were very narrowly defined, and how the needs satisfied in playing games were themselves repressive needs in Marcuse's terms. This particular definition of the production of consent is derived directly from Althusser's definition of the subject, as Burawoy makes clear in a footnote to the above.

> Or, as Louis Althusser puts it, "The individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order
>
> the he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e., in order that he shall make the gestures and
>
> actions of his subjection 'all by himself.' There are no subjects except by and for their
>
> subjection. That is why 'they all work all by themselves.'" (*Lenin and Philosophy and Other*
>
> *Essays*, p. 182). The creation of an apparent freedom – freedom within limits – and the
>
> expression of consent on the shop floor is illustrated by the responses I received from
>
> fellow workers when I asked them why they worked so hard... What is interesting about
>
> all those responses is the absence of fear or coercion as a motivating factor and the
>
> assumption that there is a real choice open to workers as to how hard they are going to
>
> work..." (Burawoy, 1979: 223-224n26)

What is striking in this reading is that Burawoy interprets the moment of subjection described in Althusser as one in which the subject is promised an

"apparent freedom". Burawoy seems to presuppose that there is such a thing as "real freedom", which presumably comes along with the "true subjectivity" mentioned above. What Burawoy does not consider, however, is that this moment in Althusser can be understood as far from one-sided. Balibar, for example, notes that this moment of the constitution of the subject is a double moment of the constitution or activation of the subject and its subjection. Balibar (1994) terms these two aspects of the same moment "subjection" and "subjectivation". It is not merely a question of a total subjection, of a total subordination of the individual to ideological forces. It is only in this moment that a subject is activated or constituted in the first place. It is only after this moment (which has always already occurred), that one can speak of consciousness, or of action. It is then only from this moment onwards that one can search for a subject. And this subject is not the one we find in Burawoy, or in Braverman, one that is always already totally subjected, whether through the destruction of subjectivity or its hegemonic domination. Strangely, then, despite Burawoy's reading of Marx and Althusser, he does not recognize this other aspect of their work, and this contributes to his pessimism.

A different Marxist study of management

What consequences are to be drawn from a symptomatic reading of Burawoy reading Braverman?

First, what is important to recognize that we are here dealing with a debate around the labour process that is internal to Marxism. Burawoy makes very clear, as did Braverman, that his is a "Marxist study" and "not an exercise in neo-

Marxism, Marxist revisionism, or any other label social scientists may apply to the Marxism they may wish to take seriously" (1979: xii). We are therefore still involved in a project which seeks to construct a Marxist study of management. What is striking in the case of Burawoy, even more so than in the case of Braverman, is that here we have an invention of labour process theory that forcibly positions itself within a Marxist problematic, and draws on various contemporary Marxisms. In the first place the exposition above, in comparison to that of the previous chapter, is testament to both the way in which Marx can be read differently and to how an engagement with certain Marxisms produces a particular labour process theory.

Second, this insistence on a Marxist problematic puts into question organization theory, or any study of management without reference to capital. Burawoy pronounces his critique of such an organization theory, and such a sociology of work, in the starkest terms.

> Once the question of reproduction is posed, one must go beyond the organization and
> examine the interrelationship of the different parts of society that guarantee its
> reproduction. But this involves, first, examining *what* different organizations produce and,
> second, recognizing not only that they produce useful things or "services" but that, directly
> or indirectly, they also produce profit. It involves the construction of a concrete totality
> that represents capitalist or advanced capitalist society – in fact, the construction of a
> theory of advanced capitalism. Not only would it go beyond organization theory; it would
> deny the latter its right to exist as a distinctive enterprise. It would restore the timeless
> generalities of organization theory to their specific historical context. And, by the same
> token, it would unmask appearances, link the part to the whole, the past to the future, and

thereby shatter the appearance of naturalness and inevitability in the present order of

things. (Burawoy, 1979: 7)

This demand for an analysis of reproduction that takes us beyond a certain

organization theory, which demands that we consider social relations beyond

the organization, pushes a study of management towards a Marxist problematic.

Third, in defining management as the obscuring and securing of surplus value,

Burawoy provides a much clearer theoretical account of the relation between

management and capital. On the one hand, management is here integrated into a

Marxist problematic insofar as management is understood as the production of

surplus value, rather than as Taylorist management, which in Braverman

emerged as a symptom of capital. Management in Burawoy cannot be

understood without reference to capital, and Burawoy establishes clear

theoretical relations between management and capital, in particular when he

justifies his focus on production in terms of the importance of the production of

hegemony in production for capital. On the other hand, this emphasis on a study

of management within a Marxist problematic also shifts the Marxist problematic

itself. The arguments Burawoy develops particularly against those Marxisms

which ignore the hidden abode of production or see hegemony produced only in

the "superstructure" point to a reconfiguration of the Marxist problematic, giving

a more pronounced space to production.

Fourth, however, while Burawoy establishes clearer theoretical relations

between capital and labour, there are still various moments in the text which

point to a separation of a labour process theory and a critique of political economy. I showed how Burawoy affirmed the relative autonomy of the labour process, which in itself does not amount to a separation. Burawoy also towards the end of *Manufacturing Consent* and even more so in *The Politics of Production* engages in an analysis of the labour process as it relates to political economy, in the way he relates his factory regimes to changes in capitalism; in this analysis the movement is one outwards from the labour process to the mode of production, and returning to the labour process (1979: 194). On the other hand, in arguing for a focus on the "politics of production", which he clearly differentiates from a "global politics", as we saw above, Burawoy enacts a separation between the study of the labour process and the critique of political economy. The terms for this relation between a labour process theory to come and the critique of political economy, then, are as of yet precarious.

Fifth, what is most striking in Burawoy in contrast to Braverman is his insistence on the category of the subject. However, despite Burawoy's recognition of the importance of the category of the subject, which was pushed to the side in Braverman, both end on the same pessimistic note in that both the destruction of subjectivity in Braverman and the hegemonic reproduction of the relations in production appear to foreclose the possibility of such a subject emerging in the labour process. We will see in the next chapters that this is a problematic that will stick with labour process theory and critical management studies. However, what is noticeable in Burawoy is that the prominence of the question of the subject pushes aside much of what was included in Marx and Braverman in

labour process theory, particularly the questions of the constant revolution of the labour process with the help of technology and science. Despite Burawoy's insistence on the term surplus value, and his definition of the specificity of the labour process under capital as the obscuring and securing of surplus value, Burawoy has surprisingly little to say about valorisation. Burawoy partly ascribes this difference to a historical move from despotic to hegemonic organizations of the labour process. Nonetheless he offers us a very limited view of the capitalist production and the production of capital, insofar as labour as the source of value is placed at the centre of view while the actualization of labour power into labour is only understood as a matter of achieving subjection, rather than in its practical or technical aspects. This will have its effects particular in critical management studies in their focus on the dynamics of control and resistance at work.

6 DISTANCING MARX, ENTERING THE BUSINESS SCHOOL

Bravermania

In this chapter I will discuss what happens after these first moments of labour process theory. It is the "Bravermania" (Littler and Salaman, 1982) of the late 1970s and early 1980s that places labour process theory in the business school proper. Whereas before it had emerged as a discourse concerned with business and management – where management itself emerged as an object of study which was accorded its own (relative) autonomy – it is only with the work of authors such as Friedman (1977a; 1977b), Littler (1982), Thompson (1989[1983]) and Edwards (1986) that labour process theory also is written from within the business school. While the 1980s are marked by a veritable proliferation of writing on labour process theory (for reviews see Littler and Salaman, 1982; Littler 1990; Thompson, 1990), it is only around 1990 that certain solidifications in positions occur and contrasts between positions become marked. While one might explore directly how the change of institutional context affects labour process theory, here I will trace the theoretical consequences of these developments, of inheriting early labour process theory and of moving into the business school.

In hindsight, the period from 1990 onwards can be seen as a sustained attempt to establish a new orthodoxy for labour process theory. This is the project of identifying and enforcing a new "core theory" that emerges out of the work of Thompson (1989; 1990), and to which he and a few of his colleagues have been remarkably faithful (e. g. Thompson and Smith, 2001; Thompson and Smith, 2009). This was certainly not a consensual project for those involved in labour process theory, its conferences and academic circuits. In particular, this core theory has seen continuous attacks and criticism from two particular camps. On the one hand, there are those who focus on what Thompson called "the construction of a full theory of the *missing subject*" (1990: 114). The proper names associated with these texts are Knights, Willmott, O'Doherty and a few others (e.g. Knights and Willmott, 1989; Jermier et al., 1994; O'Doherty and Willmott, 2001a; 2001b). On the other hand, there are those who, much like the authors encountered in the previous chapter, read this emerging new orthodoxy of labour process theory against Marx and Marxism, and find it wanting (e.g. Cohen, 1987; Rowlinson and Hassard, 1994; 2001; Carter, 1995; Spencer, 2000). Labour process theory then does not appear as a unified discourse, despite attempts to mediate conflicts (Parker, 1999).

What is remarkable, however, is how core theory has managed to define what is known as labour process theory. It is perhaps only with hindsight that the relative success of core theory in establishing a new orthodoxy is apparent and striking. The Marxist critique of this emerging orthodoxy was never a project which sought to found a new, Marxist labour process theory, and therefore

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remained a fundamentally negative movement against the new orthodoxy. The "subjectivist" critique, in contrast, did seek to establish a different labour process theory, and various works are associated with this trend (e.g. Collinson, 1992; Jermier et al., 1994). Yet despite a sustained effort this tendency did not manage to establish itself, and the next chapter will reveal what it turned into: critical management studies. The relative success of core theory, then, is what allows Ackroyd to call contemporary labour process theory "the basis for a species of 'normal science'" (2009: 263). It is also what allows Thompson and Smith (2009) to insist that those who "diverted" from core labour process theory or who stuck to the "old orthodoxy" were mere "secessionists".

It is precisely because of the differences between these positions that we are about to explore that writers make very different assessments of the vitality of labour process theory, and of the nature of its symptoms. For some, by 1985 labour process theory had already "run into the sand" (Storey, 1985). And while others saw it "crawling from the wreckage" shortly afterwards (Thompson, 1990), by the mid-1990s again it was considered to be "deceased" and "diseased" (Willmott, 1995). After the turn of the century, while some emphasised the ongoing "vitality" of labour process theory (Jaros, 2001; Delbridge, 2006), others spoke of "decline" (O'Doherty and Willmott, 2009b). Yet even authors dissatisfied with its development showed an interest in its resuscitation, for example by proposing a restoration of the "subversive intent" of Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (Spencer, 2000), or by way of "oblique entry and transversal movement" attempting a search for "ways of escape from the double-binds, infinite regress, and solipsism inherent to the labour process" (O'Doherty,

2009). All of the authors involved therefore offer different interpretations of the symptoms of labour process theory, from Marx and Braverman onwards, and consequently seek to develop it in different directions. The division here between "new orthodoxy", "Marxist" and "subjectivist" labour process theory functions as a heuristic with which to present the field.

There are three moments that coincide in this chapter. First, labour process theory enters the business school and constitutes itself there. Some of the positioning and argumentation in its texts must therefore be understood in the context of the business school outlined in Chapter 2. While the authors considered here still read Marx, and Braverman and Burawoy, they also read and respond to other texts, such as those of the sociology of work, organization studies, and a few others. Perhaps because of this the texts become more heterogeneous, with Marx and Marxism no longer necessarily the central points of reference. Second, labour process theory takes its distance from Marx. Where core and subjectivist labour process theory articulate an ambiguous break with Marx, Marxist labour process theory seeks to re-establish links with the critique of political economy, but in this is largely unsuccessful. The chapter traces both the articulations and the effects of this break with Marx. Third, labour process theory is split between the already mentioned core, Marxist and subjectivist labour process theories. As the discussion of these texts will demonstrate, this split is sedimented as these different labour process theories mark themselves off from each other, while this split also is a symptom of some key unresolved questions within labour process theory.

A new orthodoxy?

Thompson initially articulates core theory in response to certain critics (e.g. Littler and Salaman, 1982; Storey, 1985) who had pronounced labour process theory dead. In Thompson's view these had mistakenly identified the core of labour process theory as Braverman's thesis on deskilling. The earlier work in labour process theory had shown this thesis to be false insofar as various studies showed not only that in new forms of work new skills were being created, but also that it was wrong in the first place to equate capitalist control with Taylorism and therefore deskilling. Much of what Thompson calls the second wave of labour process theory was concerned not only with disproving the deskilling or degradation thesis, but more positively to develop various classifications of types of control (e.g. Friedman, 1977a; 1977b; Edwards, 1979). Thompson's move is therefore a defensive and affirmative one that seeks to recover labour process theory from its demise, which in its affirmation seeks to found a new core labour process theory. At the same time, however, as will become clear in this section, Thompson seeks to distance himself from Marxism, and wishes to found a labour process theory which is not Marxist (1990: 102). What we must trace therefore is both how this new orthodoxy founds itself and at the same time distances itself from Marx.

Thompson introduced his plea for a core theory as follows.

> I want to argue that labour-process theory can still provide a viable general framework for an understanding of the capitalist organisation of work. Without such a framework there

is a danger of a return to an empiricist tradition of accumulating plant studies, differentiated only by appropriating the language of the theory some seem so keen to discard. This in no way implies a defence of orthodoxy, Marxist or otherwise. There is a well-established body of critical evaluation of labour process literature which provides a new starting point of debate. In addition there is a need to recognise and set out the limits and boundaries of the theory; and to restore its emancipatory intent through the development of an adequate politics of production. (Thompson, 1990: 96)

Thompson announces here a frame-work for core labour process theory. He asserts that "a return to an empiricist tradition of plant studies", as much as "a defence of orthodoxy, Marxist or otherwise", must be avoided. Thompson positions labour process theory between or beyond the Marxist and empiricist orthodoxies, to be found both inside and outside the business school. Core labour process theory is to provide "a new starting point for debate" and "to restore its emancipatory intent", so that novelty and restoration serve as two founding movements of core labour process theory. For Thompson the task also requires "a need to recognize and set out the limits and boundaries of the theory", an endeavour which he proceeds to engage in, and which is to assure a certain coherence or even unity of labour process theory.

Thompson here performs a frame-work, a work that seeks to frame core labour process theory, to position it in relation to other discourses. Thompson recognizes that this frame-work, this work of framing, must be performed in order to establish core labour process theory. The frame here provides a potent figure for the work that Thompson performs in his texts: it is a question of positioning, of boundary work, of offering a particular view, of fixing. Thompson

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proceeds by outlining a core axiom followed by four consequences, which together constitute the framework of core labour process theory. In discussing these foundational moments of core labour process theory, the frame-work that Thompson performs is uncovered, and the discovery will be that this frame fixes too much and too little at the same time. On the one hand, Thompson introduces certain axioms or beginnings of core labour process theory, which fix or position it, instead of opening it up towards debate. On the other hand, Thompson's text introduces certain conceptual breaks and discrepancies, which leave the relation between core labour process theory and Marx undecided.

Thompson suggests that at the centre of labour process theory we find a conception of the "central indeterminacy of labour potential", following Littler (1982: 31).

> The social relations into which workers enter to produce useful things become a capitalist labour process when the capacity to work is utilised as a means of producing value. This rests on the capacity of capital to transform labour power into labour for profitable production, and therefore on the unique characteristics of labour as a commodity. (Thompson, 1990: 99)

Thompson here reads Marx. The labour of reading, performed in reading Marx or Thompson, always involves interpretation, and interpretation always involves not merely repetition but also change. What changes in Marx when Thompson reads him? The labour process for Thompson becomes capitalist when labour power is made to produce value. Capital has and uses its capacity to transform labour power into labour for profit, and in doing so relies on the unique

characteristics of labour as commodity. Concepts present in Marx's texts and already worked on by Braverman and Burawoy in the previous chapters appear here once again. Are they still the same concepts, or have they been transformed, are any concepts missing, or have new ones emerged? There are a few points to note here. First, in Marx there are two moments in which a labour process becomes capitalist, formal and real subsumption. Under formal subsumption the labour process itself remains largely intact, but is now under the control of capital, and it used to produce absolute surplus value. Under real subsumption the labour process itself is transformed in order to yield relative surplus value. This conceptual distinction present in Marx is not excluded by Thompson here, but it is not present in this text, although it appears later.

Second, Thompson refers to the "unique characteristics of labour as a commodity". Is such a concept to be found in Marx? Marx speaks of the "peculiar nature of labour-power as a commodity" (Marx, 1976: 277). This is defined by Marx as labour being the only commodity capable of producing surplus value. The price of labour power is defined by the cost of its reproduction, i.e. through the socially necessary labour time required to reproduce it. This is what the capitalist pays for. Labour power, however, does not enter production as a value, unlike the means and objects of production, but as labouring activity. It is this labour that can produce both value necessary for the reproduction of labour power, and surplus value. Marx therefore speaks of the peculiar nature or unique characteristic of labour power, not labour itself. This distinction itself relies on Marx's "discovery" of the distinction between labour and labour power, and the consequence that the capitalist buys "labour power" in the market and gets

"labour" in production. While Thompson again does not exclude this distinction, he refers to labour and not labour power as a commodity and therefore does not employ the distinction. It remains to be assessed what the consequences of this conceptual difference are.

Third, Thompson speaks of the capacity of capital to transform labour power into labour, which allows capital to have labour produce value and surplus value. It was noted in Chapter 4 that Marx as much as Braverman emphasise that once the labour process has been subsumed by capital, the ability to organize and socialize labour appears as that of capital, and that capital achieves this appearance by appropriating the means of organizing the labour process. Marx suggests that while this appearance is part and parcel of the capitalist domination of the labour process, it is also one that can be overcome when labour itself appropriates not only the means of production but also the means of organizing production. Thompson above again does not exclude this analysis, but he also does not emphasise that the worker can transform his or her labour power into labour, without needing capital to do so. The capacity to transform labour power into labour is therefore not one possessed solely by capital, which merely seeks to assert its dominance over the labour process by enforcing its own organization. What occurs here then is that the problem of management emerges, as Braverman noted (see Chapter 4). Capital must make itself necessary in the labour process, must develop and impose its own capacity to turn labour power into labour.

In this first quote from Thompson then we already see a certain frame-work performed in which Marx is read and labour process theory is established. For Thompson four "crucial things follow from this and further constitute the core theory" (1990: 99). These are: the privileging of the labour process as a focus for analysis; the necessity, due to a logic of accumulation, for constant revolution of the labour process; a control imperative; and a structured antagonism between capital and labour. An exploration of these four further aspects of Thompson's exposition of core theory reveals how this core theory is related to Marx's texts, and how it is constituted conceptually.

> First, as the labour process generates the surplus and is a central part of man's experience in acting on the world and reproducing the economy, the role of labour and the capital-labour relation is privileged as a focus for analysis. (Thompson, 1990: 99)

This first axiom of core labour process theory is fundamental since it justifies the very existence of labour process theory with its focus on the labour process under capital. Thompson wants to privilege "the role of labour", and the "capital-labour relation", because "the labour process generates surplus" and because the labour process "is a central part of man's experience". Does this justify a focus on the labour process, and does this properly identify an object of theory for labour process theory? Is the object of labour process theory, and the labour process itself, clearly defined by "the role of labour" and "the capital-labour relation"? What is the "role of labour"? If Thompson merely refers to labour as an activity in general, then this simply does not lead to a focus on the capitalist labour process. Either core labour process theory must then concern itself with all kinds

of labour, all ways in which man acts on the world, inside and outside the capitalist labour process, or Thompson must qualify that core labour process theory is only interested in labour that produces value. Similarly, in what way is "the capital-labour relation" concurrent to the labour process? Marx made argued that capital produces and is produced in the hidden abode of production, so it is there that capital and labour produce and are produced together. Yet is the capital-labour relation restricted to the labour process? Does this exclude the relationship as constituted in the market where money owner and the seller of labour power meet, and its reproduction also outside of production? The object of analysis for core labour process theory here is evasive, and as a consequence, as we will see, the object and boundaries of labour process theory remain under-theorized.

Meanwhile, Thompson adds:

> This necessarily incorporates relations of exploitation, though it need not and should not involve a labour theory of value (see Hodgson, 1982; Wright, 1985). Exploitation does not depend on the notion of labour alone creating value, let alone socially necessary labour time determining the value of a commodity in exchange. Rather, it rests on the appropriation of the surplus labour by capital based on its ownership and control of the means of production, and the separation of direct producers from those means.
> (Thompson, 1990: 99-100)

Thompson wants to retain the concept of exploitation, but he does not want the labour theory of value. Thompson here refers the reader to the work of Hodgson and Wright, without however providing any insight into the logic of their

argument. The reader is left to trust that these sources have established that a labour theory of value is not needed or wanted. Yet, this is one of the most hotly disputed questions in Marxism, in particular in relation to the work of Sraffa (see Steedman, 1977). Thompson wants to abandon both the idea that labour is the only source of value, and that socially necessary labour time determines the value of a commodity in exchange. Thompson here therefore wishes to undermine the source of value (labour) and the measure of value (socially necessary labour time) as defined in Marx. And Thompson is confident that he can define exploitation without these as "the appropriation of the surplus labour by capital", which depends on the separation of labour from the means of production now owned and controlled by capital.

How can Thompson define value, and what is its measure? How can "surplus labour" be defined in contrast to "necessary labour"? Marx, in volume 1 of *Capital*, shows how socially necessary labour time establishes itself as the measure of value in generalized commodity production, and how in commodity fetishism this value appears as the property of a commodity, rather than the expression of a social relation that underlies it. Thompson makes no similar attempt to show how a measure of value emerges, and he complicates the setup in arguing that labour is not the only source of value. What remains here of the concepts "value" or "surplus", or "exploitation", as found in Marx? In Thompson's texts, these concepts remain under-theorized, since Thompson does not provide a theoretical definition of them. This leaves these concepts fragile, and puts into question the critical force of Thompson's use of the term exploitation. This allows, on the one hand, Marxist critics to demand a return to the law of value in

Marx, and, on the other hand, subjectivist critics to argue that any objective definition of exploitation must be abandoned, as we will see below.

Thompson proceeds with the second consequence of the "indeterminacy of labour potential".

> Second, there is a logic of accumulation which forces capital constantly to revolutionise the production process. This arises from the competition between units of capital and the antagonism between capital and labour that is unique to capitalism as a mode of production. (Thompson, 1990: 100)

Thompson argues that two factors bring forth a logic of accumulation: competition between units of capital, and antagonism between capital and labour. This logic of accumulation forces capital to revolutionize production. Is this a description or elaboration of the emergence of value that seeks to self-valorise, of capital that must be reproduced? Thompson again presents a few elements of an argument regarding the propensity of capital to revolutionize production. Yet the argument itself is not made, but is assumed. "There is a logic": Thompson asserts, positions, fixes. While, reading Marx, there is little objectionable, there is a way in which Thompson's introduction of the principle that capital must revolutionize production proceeds by assertion, not by argument, and therefore takes this principle for granted, with its effects merely to be observed in a study of the labour process. Thompson therefore retreats from a critique of political economy which seeks to grasp how these dynamic aspects of capital emerge in the first place.

Thompson proceeds with his third point.

> The third point follows from the above. There *is* a control imperative. Market mechanisms
> alone cannot regulate the labour process. As Littler observes: 'To translate legal
> ownership into real possession, the employer must erect structures of control over labour'
> (1982: 31). There is a parallel here to Marx's notion of the transition from formal to real
> subordination... Recognising the control imperative specifies nothing about the nature,
> specificity, or level of control mechanism... (Thompson, 1990: 100-101)

Thompson here intervenes in an earlier debate within labour process theory, where some had questioned the control imperative outlined in Braverman. What Thompson asserts is that there is a general control imperative, in that the labour process must be subsumed, but that this subsumption does not imply a particular form of control. Real subsumption of the labour process under the valorisation process can take different forms, including different forms of "control" and "management". It is generally unhelpful to translate "subsumption" as (direct) control, and therefore question subsumption itself as soon as a certain direct form of control is shown not to be historically ubiquitous. So Thompson here corrects and clarifies an important theoretical point. With Braverman, Thompson asserts that the problem of management appears as that of control. And against Braverman, and with Braverman's critics, he asserts that control can take different forms. Thompson thus poses the task of exploring contemporary forms of control and management.

Finally, Thompson's fourth point.

Fourth, the social relation between capital and labour is an antagonistic one: 'one in which conflict is a structured characteristic' (P. K. Edwards, 1983: 12). Exploitation, the struggle to transform labour power into labour, the requirement for capital to seek some control over the conditions of work and maximise their side of the wage-effort exchange; all these factors create a variety of forms of conflict and resistance. It is here, however, that the most substantial modification to the core theory must be made, particularly in the light of the orthodoxy of Marx and Braverman. Precisely because capital has continually to revolutionise production and labour's role within it, it cannot rely wholly on control or coercion. At some level workers' co-operation, creative and productive powers, and consent must be engaged and mobilised. (Thompson, 1990: 101)

So Thompson follows Edwards in arguing that the capital-labour relation has the character of a "structured antagonism", a consequence of exploitation, revolution and control to be found in the labour process. As already noted above, it is not clear how Thompson defines exploitation. Here Thompson seems to define exploitation as capital trying to "maximise their side of the wage-effort exchange". As discussed above, Marx makes a distinction between labour and labour power, with labour power bought and sold in the labour market, and labour performed in the labour process. In Marx, there is no such thing as a "wage-effort exchange". There is only a "wage-labour power exchange", and the "effort" itself needs to be achieved in production, as labour. Thompson introduces the term "wage-effort bargain" from a different discourse, from industrial relations; it remains to be assessed what the consequences of this conceptual shift are; it does, however, leave the term exploitation uncertain in Thompson's text.

Thompson suggests that a correction of the orthodoxy of Marx and Braverman must be made, insofar as coercion is insufficient to assure the functioning of the labour process. Thompson here draws on Burawoy's argument regarding the necessity for consent. What was demonstrated in the previous chapter in relation to Burawoy, is that a different reading of Marx and Braverman reveals that in their texts it is not simply assumed that coercion alone suffices; instead, in Braverman management appeared as the destruction of subjectivity. The positioning of core theory here therefore relies on a contested reading of Marx and Braverman, which puts its relation to these texts into question.

Where does this symptomatic reading of Thompson leave this new orthodoxy, then, in relation to Marx? Above I have charted various ways in which the relation between core labour process theory and the Marxist text is undecided, mostly because it uses some of its vocabulary, but at the same time leaves out much. So Thompson rejects labour as the only source of value, and socially necessary labour time as the measure of value, without however providing any answers as to how "value" in his text is to be understood. The consequence of this is that terms such as "value", "surplus", "valorisation", "capital", "accumulation", and "exploitation" are under-theorized. And where Thompson does provide other concepts to specify these, such as "wage-effort bargain", conceptually core theory does not become more but less determined. Core theory is marked both by an undecided relation to Marx, and by a conceptual setup that is far from defined. Thompson borrows terms from Marx, but as these are taken out of context their clarity dissipates. Thompson's frame-work seeks to

fix core theory through axioms and assertions, and as the fixations preclude an inquiry into their emergence, core theory is split off from a wider critique of political economy. As a theory or problematic is defined in terms of its object of theory, and the problems it poses that object, here core labour process theory struggles to establish itself as a problematic, since its object of theory remains out of focus, and key conceptual relations, and problems posed to its object, are under-theorized.

A symptomatic reading traces this undecidedness of core labour process theory to Thompson's rejection of Marxism.

> The analysis presented as core theory draws heavily on Marxist categories, but it is not in my view Marxist. This is not primarily because of the rejection of any specific element of the 'package' such as the labour theory of value. Rather it is because there is a direct and empirically unsustainable link in Marxism between the analysis of the capitalist labour process and a theory of social transformation through class struggle. While a politics of production can be derived from the dynamics of the labour process, this has no automatic progression to a wider social transformation in the Marxist sense. (Thompson, 1990: 102)

Thompson's main argument against Marx is a presumed "direct and empirically unsustainable link in Marxism between the analysis of the capitalist labour process and a theory of social transformation through class struggle" (ibid.). While such a link is established at certain points in the texts of Marx and Marxism, it is unclear how this would leave Thompson to reject Marxism, or suggest that core theory is not itself Marxist. The ascription of "Marxist", however, is not relevant, as Marx himself has shown. It is however important to

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consider the consequences of drawing on Marxist categories. This section demonstrated that Thompson does draw on Marxist categories in his construction of core theory, but that many of these terms remain undecided when they are taken out of the context of a critique of political economy. The old theoretical space is abandoned for the shores of a new one; but while the old theoretical space is abandoned partially, there is no replacement. Instead, we find theoretical holes and undecidedness. It is this undecidedness of core theory that serves as a point of attack for its Marxist and subjectivist critics.

Relative autonomy? Value and class

In this section I will discuss some of the critiques of labour process theory by Marxists (Cohen, 1987; Rowlinson and Hassard, 1994; Carter, 1995; Spencer, 2000; Tinker, 2002; Jaros, 2005; Neilson, 2007). These critiques, apart from Cohen (1987), all deal with core labour process theory, and follow those critiques of Braverman discussed earlier (Aronowitz, 1978; Burawoy, 1978; Elger, 1978). What all these critiques have in common is that they critique labour process theory as it exists, but in principle affirm the need for a labour process theory, but one that is Marxist. Cohen's (1987) critique was already articulated before Thompson instituted core labour process theory, so it deals with labour process theory of the early 1980s, and Thompson responds to this critique at the same time as founding core labour process theory (1989; 1990). Cohen argues that despite some critics of labour process theory, "the issue of the labour process has not become irrelevant to modern-day capitalism"; rather, existing labour process theory has "consistently misunderstood, ignored, or

misrepresented its true relevance" (1987: 35). Cohen seeks to "restore a Marxist understanding of *valorization* and *exploitation* as central to the operation of the capitalist labour process and to the politics of workers' resistance" (ibid.). Her argument is that in focusing on control instead of exploitation, post-Braverman labour process theory has omitted the "materialist perspective" of Braverman (Cohen, 1987: 37).

For Cohen the consequence of her argument is that, on the one hand, the labour process must be seen as "both central and political in that it lies at the heart of capitalist production relations through the production of surplus value", and that "we can define the central dynamic of that process in terms not of 'control' but of exploitation" (1987: 40). Cohen rejects charges of essentialism, determinism and economism, made by some (Storey, 1985). For her the "contradiction embodied in exploitation is central", not "for some abstractly theoretical, 'essentialist' reason", but rather "because it accounts for real, existing workers' struggles" (1987: 42). She directly criticizes Thompson (1983/1989) for following Burawoy (1979) in separating production politics and global politics, since this is "to *preclude* a whole area of actually existing struggle from the arena of politics and significant social conflict" (1987: 48). For Cohen here valorisation and exploitation are important insofar as we can only understand the relation between production politics and global politics by "understanding how the structural factors of valorization and exploitation *constitute* the arena of struggle within capitalism"; and she warns that this position is "discounted as 'determinist'", then we are simply "left in a structureless, subjectivist, idealist – and, in the end, profoundly pessimistic – space" (1987: 49).

To reverse this 'production-less' understanding of the labour process, to conceptualize the labour process from the point of view of valorization, is to integrate structure and response, object and subject, by identifying capitalist relations of valorization and exploitation as *central to* and *productive of* the inherent antagonisms at the heart of the labour process. In this way we are able to acknowledge and perceive that struggle within capitalism can continue to be endemic whatever the level of political awareness of those involved. Thus while workers do not, *pace* the early labour process debate, continually challenge the reproduction of capitalist relations of production, nevertheless these very relations contain inherent contradictions which, whatever the ideological state of mind of the workers themselves, throw up struggle. (Cohen, 1987: 49)

It is perhaps ironic that Cohen seeks to defend Braverman against post-Braverman labour process theory in order to avoid pessimism, when we saw in chapter 4 that Braverman reached very pessimistic conclusions. But apart from that, what is important here is that Cohen makes a distinction between an antagonism between capital and labour that exists at a certain level of abstraction (both real and theoretical), and the immediate struggles and constituted interests between capitalist and worker. This negates Thompson's above criticism of the "direct and empirically unsustainable link in Marxism between the analysis of the capitalist labour process and a theory of social transformation through class struggle" (Thompson, 1990: 102), since it precisely acknowledges that there is a gap between abstract antagonism and empirically present struggle, without abandoning the former by only accepting the existence of the latter.

For Thompson, however, this is not enough, and he argues that Cohen will reinforce the "distorted impression of critics that labour process 'orthodoxy' considers management actions and strategy to be 'dictated by what appears to be an iron law of surplus extraction' (Streek, 1987: 284)" (Thompson, 1989: 234). Thompson, in contrast, wants to show that labour process theory "can cope with and integrate diversity, contradictions and uncertainty" (ibid.). Thompson's critique is overstated, in that Cohen nowhere introduces exploitation as an "iron law", but instead seeks to account for the ways in which value imposes itself. Note, however, how Cohen presents valorisation and exploitation as "structural factors", even as she suggest that the distinction between "structure and response", "object and subject" can be integrated by studying relations of valorisation and exploitation. Cohen, to a certain extent, presents valorisation and exploitation as structural factors, and opposes these to subjective factors. Cohen therefore is in danger of falling into the trap that Braverman already fell into with this separation. Yet there is an important difference in presenting valorisation as a structure or as a relation. In sociology the term structure is usually complemented by the term agency, which immediately alludes to the agency-structure debates in sociology. There is here assumed to be a structure, one that is often not even conceived to be "constituting" an arena (of struggle in our case), but often it is simply understood to delimit what an actor is able to do. The term relation, on the other hand, emphasises precisely the constitutive element, in that there is no other term like agency which complements it. However, Cohen does not explore how understanding valorisation as a relation might offer a theory of management. Cohen here insists on a study of

management in terms of valorisation, but she does not produce such a study or theory of management herself.

As Carter has noted, the consequence of Cohen's insistence on value is "to pose the question, 'who is producing value and when?'", which "raises class as a central relationship within the production process in a particularly stark way" (Carter, 1995: 52). As already mentioned, Thompson contests the link between production politics and class politics that for him is endemic to Marxism, and he particularly argues that the "gravedigger thesis" which assumes that the proletariat will rise to overthrow capital is "an *impossible burden*", one that apparently Braverman dealt with by a leap of faith in the revolutionary zeal of the working class (Thompson, 1990: 115). These arguments point to the ways in which core labour process theory seeks to establish a space for itself. The question of class for Thompson represents a "boundary problem" (1990: 113). Thompson already in proposing a core labour process theory acknowledged that "there *is* a problem of both the boundaries and limits to labour process analysis", where the "difficult boundary-drawing task is to differentiate labour process theory's specific and proper object of analysis" (1990: 110-111). At that point Thompson had argued that core labour process theory's focus on production only becomes a problem if it "either excludes or neglects the influence of other social relations, or 'invades' the spaces occupied legitimately by other spheres of analysis and subordinates them to a narrow focus, and consequent conception of struggles" (1990: 111). Thompson argued for the "relative autonomy" of the labour process and thus labour process theory, a concept taken up from Edwards. Edwards argued that "the mechanisms of the workplace" may be

understood as relatively autonomous because they are "not divorced from other areas and because the degree of autonomy varies between workplaces and over time", and because they still involved "distinctive principles" (Edwards, 1990: 133-134). The term relative autonomy is taken from Althusser (1969), as we already saw in Burawoy in chapter 6. There it serves as an index of a problematic, rather than a solution: what relative autonomy means is always something that still has to be thought.

This issue is taken up again in the critique by Rowlinson and Hassard (1994; 2001). They criticise labour process theory for separating itself from a Marxist political economy, and state very clearly that if "labor process theorists prefer to explain the labor process in terms of domination rather than exploitation, there is little connection between labor process theory and Marxist political economy" (2001: 90). Rowlinson and Hassard demonstrate that this is due to Thompson's abandonment of the labour theory of value. It is this which "shows that the capitalist labour process is exploitative"; consequently, if it is abandoned then "the connection with Marxian political economy is largely severed, and it becomes difficult to distinguish labour process theory from radical organization theory" (Rowlinson and Hassard, 1994: 70). Thompson, and a few others, thus stands accused of rejectionism: since an analysis of exploitation is abandoned, and with it the horizon of social transformation, the "major concern becomes deciding which strategies of resistance workers should adopt in order to persuade management to pursue more palpable strategies" (Rowlinson and Hassard, 1994: 87; see also Spencer, 2000: 234).

The response by Thompson here is double. On the one hand, there is a clear shift in Thompson's later work to emphasise political economy. So, he argues for the need for a "big picture"; that an "emphasis solely on the workplace is likely to neglect the underlying machinery of markets"; and that there is a need "to pursue the connections between the various territories – the labour process, employment relations, firm governance structures, capital and product markets" in order to understand the restructuring of the labour process (2003: 360, 366, 370). Elsewhere, he specifies that the "objective is to examine structures and actors at different *levels*, without reducing the workplace to a mirror expression of these processes, or providing over-arching schemas of determination, such as the 'de-skilling thesis' or 'post-Fordism'" (Thompson et al., 2000: 1153). Still elsewhere and later, he argues that in labour process theory analysis there "was a drift away from a systemic description of the relations between the labor process and structural trends in capitalist political economy" (Thompson and Smith, 2009: 156).

So, on the one hand, Thompson reposes the question of relative autonomy and implicitly agrees with critics such as Jaros (2001) that this autonomy was conceived too absolutely. On the other hand, however, he refuses to understand this relation between labour process and political economy in terms of valorisation. Against Rowlinson and Hassard (1994), he argues that "invoking the law of value and the historical mission of the working class as signifiers of authenticity is dogmatic and backward-looking", and while labour process theory should be linked to political economy, and must acknowledge its Marxist roots, "there is no evidence that any particular theory, whether it be the law of

value or productive labor, are necessary preconditions for understanding and utilizing that link" (Thompson and Smith, 2001: 48). Thompson and Smith argue that it simply is "too economistic to treat control as subordinate to valorization since both exist in unified tension" (2001: 47).

These discussions attest to the difficulties of core labour process theory establishing itself as a distinct theory or problematic. The peculiarity emerges from the fact that labour process theory wants to recognize the specifically capitalist character of the labour process, without however accepting the terms in which this was posed in Marx. While in Marx capitalist production was characterized by the dominance of the process of valorisation over the labour process, in core labour process theory this setup is abandoned insofar as the process of valorisation is discarded. However, in Marx it was precisely value which forced us into the hidden abode of production, where capital produces and is produced. With core labour process theory abandoning labour as the sole source of value, and socially necessary labour time as the measure of value, it simply has few tools to theorize the relation between the labour process and the wider political economy. Jaros suggests that to redefine exploitation we should rely on a notion of "unequal labour market exchange" (2005: 14), yet we already saw above that this misses the primary insight of the distinction between labour and labour power, which precisely notes that exploitation also takes place in the labour process. Core labour process theory thus appears powerless, at this point, of either successfully establishing itself as a problematic that can take its place somewhere between organization studies and the critique of political economy, since it is suspended between the two. At the same time, it is drawn into the

Marxist problematic through the Marxist critiques, and is drawn towards organization studies in its defence against these critiques. It is further challenged by the question concerning the missing subject.

Subject missing?

In the above section we saw how core labour process theory struggled to establish itself as a discourse separate from the critique of political economy. Core labour process theory drew on the concept of "relative autonomy" to do so, but the related issues of class and value, brought to the fore by Marxist critiques, undermined this effort. In this section, we will see how core labour process theory was challenged in its status from a different side. Following both Braverman's perceived lack of engagement with the subjective, and Burawoy's perceived failure in tackling the question of the subjective successfully, this question was to haunt labour process theory. Thompson himself argued that the "construction of a full theory of the *missing subject* is probably the greatest task facing labour process theory" (Thompson, 1990: 114). I will show in my symptomatic reading how what I will term "subjectivist" labour process theory criticized existing labour process theory from Marx onwards first by critiquing the so-called essentialist conception of human nature in Marx, and then proposed to replace this with a Foucauldian relational view of power and subjectivity, and an existentialist view of identity. I will also show that Thompson et al. responded to this critique by arguing that the focus on subjectivity via Foucault and existentialism ignored labour as a subject. What must be noted at the very start is that this labour process theory is profoundly marked by the "control-resistance paradigm" that developed out of early labour

process theory and is also evident in Thompson. We already saw that this paradigm itself is concerned with control and not primarily value, and we will see shortly the effect of this also on subjectivist labour process theory, namely that there is little mention of value, but a primary concern is to discover resistance. After Braverman and Burawoy ended on such pessimistic tones, and Thompson had posed the problem of the missing subject, this subjectivist labour process theory is concerned both with finding resistance and with identifying a subject capable of this resistance. In the following chapters on critical management studies, I it will become evident that this will also be primary concern.

The clearest statement of a subjectivist labour process theory is to be found in Knights and Willmott (1989), and the culmination of this project is perhaps the collection by Jermier et al. (1994). Knights and Willmott set out to "critically review Marx's analysis of subjectivity in his ontology of labour", and to argue "that both the essentialism in his early 'philosophical' writings on alienation and the treatment of individuals as personification of economic categories in his later, 'scientific' work each impede the development of a full social theory of subjectivity" (1989: 537-538). Knights and Willmott therefore start off with a double rejection of Marx, one that is based on arguing that a break exists in Marx between and early Marx whose work was "philosophical", and a late Marx whose work was "scientific". Chapter 2 proposed that Marx can be read otherwise, and that such divisions of his work, here taken from Althusser, understate both the singularity of Marx's work, and its heterogeneity. Meanwhile, Knights and Willmott's rejection first of the "essentialism" to be found in Marx, and, second,

of his treatment of subjects as "personifications of economic categories" must be explored.

The "anti-essentialist" critique of Marx is articulated in Jermier et al. (1994). The authors argue apropos the conception of alienation in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* that "Marx's essentialist view of human nature led him to postulate a natural and 'inevitable antagonism between the exploiter and the living raw material he exploits'" (1994: 3); with alienated labour experiencing itself as inhumane and therefore revolting. For Jermier et al. the "philosophical anthropology underlying Marx's and Braverman's views on the capitalist labour process… entails labour attempting to develop itself in ways that fulfil the (latent) destiny of a fixed, universal human nature" (1994: 5), and this is what constitutes Marx's essentialism. The danger is that these "assumptions can easily lead to a theorizing of subjectivity that relies on concepts of false consciousness and reification", with the consequence that "sharp distinctions between 'real' or 'genuine' (class-conscious) resistance and everyday forms of resistance are drawn", which for Jermier et al. are "epistemologically problematic" (1994: 5). Jermier et al. reject this Marx because they do not accept this "essentialism", as it undermines the authority of the subject, and neglects forms of resistance that do not conform to class struggle.

A similar argument is provided in Knights (1990), where Braverman is held to subscribe to Marx's expressivist conception of human nature, one that is "implicit in the whole of his work", even if it "was given less attention as Marx developed his thesis in a more sociological rather than psychological manner" by

focusing on commodity fetishism (Knights, 1990: 299-300). In Knights' view this "philosophical anthropology is essentialist in treating humanity as wholly dependent on the individual interaction with nature and transforming it, through labour, into useful objects"; the trouble being that "Marx was engage here in collapsing a material necessity in terms of species survival (transformation of nature) into a psychological or spiritual necessity for the individual (labour as expressive of essential being)" (1990: 301; see also Knight and Willmott, 1989).

What are the theoretical consequences of these arguments, in terms of an inheritance of Marx and development of a study of management? Knights recognizes that the problematic of alienation is one that continues throughout Marx's work, and is not one abandoned after 1844. What he does not consider, however, is the transformation this concept goes through. Whereas in 1844 it was wedded to a philosophical anthropology that might be open to a critique of the variety articulated by Knights and others, it should be acknowledged that philosophically speaking much occurred in Marx's work between the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and *Capital I*. Marx in the latter defines labour as a metabolism between man and nature, where man "sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs", and in doing so "he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature" (1976: 283). Note that this is a definition of labour and not of human nature. There is no indication that this is Marx's definition of human nature, as there is in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, although an argument to that regard might still be put forward.

What is relevant, however, is that here Marx states very clearly that man in labouring changes nature and his own nature. There is therefore no stable human nature in the sense invoked by Knights and others. The nature of work is precisely the transformation of humanity itself. This is emphasised by Marx's concept of production, and the primary historical act as the production for human needs and the production of needs for this production. "To be human, for Marx, is to create new needs. History is the process of expansion of human needs and the productive forces corresponding to them." (Osborne, 2005: 41). As Osborne has made clear, Marx redefines human essence socially, so that "rather than being an 'abstraction inherent in each single individual' (what all humans have in common), 'an inner, mute generality *naturally* uniting the many individuals'", human essence is defined as "to be distributed *relationally* among all humans", whence Marx's definition of humanity as "the ensemble of social relations" (Osborne, 2005: 30). Marx "viewed the economic as an ontological category of the human ('ontology' is the systematic study of being or what is): the social production of means of subsistence is the production of the human itself." (Osborne, 2005: 37-38). The criticism of Marx as an "essentialist" as it is articulated above, which might apply to Marx's early works but arguably not to *Capital*, can therefore be contested.

What about the second critique, that of Marx's structuralist treatment of the subject? This critique is most clearly articulated in Willmott (1995). Knights and Willmott had already emphasised that they did not want to "deny the force of the 'structuralist' critique of bourgeois sociology" but were seeking to "develop an

alternative response to its inadequacies" articulated in Braverman, i.e. the famed "missing subject" (1989: 537). Willmott equally affirms some of the critical purchase of the structuralist critique, namely "its deflation of action-centred explanations" that "reveals how the realization of individual projects… is inescapably constrained and impeded by the dynamic operation of the structure of capitalist relations of production" (1990: 8). He also argues that the "representation of complex individuals as 'personification of economic categories' does not deny that they possess individual characteristics", or that "individuals have responsibility for their own actions" (ibid.). So for Willmott, this "enables us to appreciate how structural imperatives condition human action in ways that systematically support and expand some possibilities whilst they confine and restrain others" (ibid.). The problem for Willmott, however, is that "in focusing upon structure, it excludes, or at least marginalizes, the role of action in the reproduction and transformation of structural imperatives" (1995: 9; see also Knights and Willmott, 1989; Willmott, 1990)

> As noted above, there is a self-conscious awareness of the limitations of the methodological stance taken by Marx and adopted by Braverman. But these limitations are not themselves addressed; and no consideration is given to their implications for the analysis of the dynamic and contradictory 'structure' of the capital-labour relationship. In effect, it is assumed that the process of forming 'subjects', 'individuals' or 'agents' is either largely irrelevant to, or highly circumscribed by, the 'class relations and interests' which, objectively, they are deemed to bear (ibid). There is an appreciation of how 'structure' conditions 'action'; but little attention is paid to the formation of 'agency' and how agents act to reproduce or transform 'structure'. (Willmott, 1995: 9)

What are the theoretical consequences of this critique of the "structuralist" Marx and Braverman? What is striking immediately is that much like Thompson above, Willmott and others always immediately complement the term "structure" with the term "agency", and understand structure to be merely about confinement, restraint or impediment – three terms Willmott uses above to describe how structure functions. In this reading of the "structuralist" aspects of Marx and Braverman, they do not consider the possibility of a reading which foregrounds the relational ontology that we above emphasised again with the help of Osborne, and in the discussion of Burawoy's position in the previous chapter. Here, the understanding is not that there is a class relation which simply limits or restrains what an agent can do; rather, the worker subject (as much as the capitalist subject) is constituted in this relation. In this context the argument to reject class as "totalizing, collective consciousness" (Jermier et al., 1994: 8) appears challengeable. What is remarkable is that on this count both core labour process theory (Thompson) and subjectivist labour process theory (Knights, Willmott, etc.) are united in their dissociation from Marx based on their reading of Marx through the agency-structure lens. It is only through this reading that the problem of the "missing subject" could emerge in the first place, and that the split between core labour process theory and subjectivist labour process theory could be affected.

What, nonetheless, is the response of Knights and Willmott to this perceived failure of Marx, Braverman and others? They famously propose to supplement Marx with Foucault. They argue that the "distinctiveness of Foucault's (1979a) perspective on subjectivity resides in its appreciation of the subject as the

constitutive product of a plurality of disciplinary mechanisms, techniques of surveillance and power-knowledge strategies", and that "his work mounts a direct challenge to those who continue to perceive subjectivity as that creative autonomy or personal space not yet captured by political economy" (1989: 549). They read Foucault through existentialism, in particular the work of Fromm which the authors engaged with earlier (Knights and Willmott, 1982), and Laing, whose term "ontological security" appears throughout much of their work. It is on the basis of this reading that Knights and Willmott (1989; Willmott, 1990; 1995) develop their concept of "identity fetish". Consider this key passage to highlight this reading.

> In effect, modern technologies of power subjugate by forcing individuals back in on themselves so that they become 'tied to (their) own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge' (Foucault 1982: 212). Although he is never so explicit, we would not see it as a misreading to suggest that subjugation occurs where the freedom of a subject is directed narrowly, and in a self-disciplined fashion, towards participation in practices which are known or understood to provide the individual with a sense of security and belonging. In short, it is the comparative social isolation which subjects suffer as a result of the individualizing impact of modern power that renders individuals vulnerable to precisely the demands or expectations that such power makes of them. (Knights and Willmott, 1989: 550)

A little earlier, Knights and Willmott had suggested that there are two meanings of "subject" in Foucault, with the second meaning sensitizing "us to the ways in which we may become subjugated as our sense of self is shaped and attachments to this experiential and symbolic sense of self become strengthened" in a

disciplinary process (1989: 543). Whereas earlier Knights and Willmott praise Foucault for wanting to get rid of the "transcendental subject" (1989: 549), here they effectively reintroduce both this transcendental subject and a "human essence" which they wanted to rid Marx of. Knights and Willmott essentialise one particular description of subjection, one that is a subject concerned with ridding itself of anxiety and insecurity through the constitution of an identity.

In this context it is possible for Thompson and core labour process theory to reject this "deviation" by arguing that in this question for subjectivity "*labor* as a subject is missing" (Smith and Thompson, 1999: 215). This is because Knights and Willmott are interested in power, but they do not read the relations value and class themselves as power relations, and therefore do not consider how the subject that is constituted in the labour process is marked as a class subject. The force of the Foucauldian argument is therefore sidestepped. And because there is a displacement from the question of the specific constitution of the worker subject in the labour process towards an "identity fetishism", it is equally possible for core labour process theory to discount this subjectivist labour process theory as showing that "labor remains trapped in a seemingly self-defeating struggle against normalizing disciplines or searching for the holy grail of ontological security" (Smith and Thompson, 1999: 215).

Do these reprisals by core and Marxist labour process theory undermine subjectivist labour process theory? There are two important consequences of this debate. One is that a discussion of identity fetishism and subjectivity in this way shifts the object of theory of labour process theory. Where Burawoy

considered subjectivity in the labour process to be relatively autonomous, while capital was still ultimately successful in producing hegemony in the factory, here an autonomous sphere of subjectivity is outlined that is independent of the labour process. The subject of power, and the existential subject, at least as they are presented here, are constituted independently of the labour process. This challenges labour process theory to consider to what extent subjectivity in the labour process is autonomous, and to what extend it is subsumed under capital. This however immediately implies a second consequence. Subjectivist labour process theory leaves an open question: how is it possible to think or conceptualise the production of subjectivity in the labour process, in relation to class and capital? It is this question that remains open also in core and Marxist labour process theory, and therefore challenges their own dismissals and criticisms of the subjectivists. It reveals that labour process theory still has to constitute itself as a thought that is capable of thinking subjectivity at work.

What is left of labour process theory?

Where do these considerations leave labour process theory? As already mentioned in the introduction, it is core labour process theory that has managed to establish itself as dominant. In a different reading of core theory, Ackroyd suggests that it can be understood as a normal science.

> If we now turn to the consideration of recent developments in LPT, the notion of normal science is useful to draw attention to distinctive values and practices of the LPT research community as it is now constituted. Firstly there is the empirically grounded research into

the varieties of the labor process which is continuing to be produced in considerable

volume. Exponents of LPT utilize accepted concepts and clearly value the pursuit of

empirical research employing standard research procedures… Secondly, the philosophical

doctrine underpinning LPT has been more explicitly formulated and acknowledged. These

ideas make it clear that LPT has a conception of itself as a version of social science; that is

an enterprise capable of producing cumulative knowledge. Thirdly, and most importantly,

there is the expanding horizon of research activity… (Ackroyd, 2009: 268-269)

The symptomatic reading of core labour process theory and its critics in this

chapter suggests that this position can be challenged. It is not clear what these

"accepted concepts" are, and on the basis of the above it must be concluded that

instead of viewing labour process theory as a "normal science" it is perhaps more

accurate to account for its popularity with its undecidedness. The minimal core

that Thompson has outlined above does not amount to a normal science, and it is

perhaps its undecidedness that allows so many other texts to be articulated with

it. At this stage, then, it is not clear how Thompson's stated intentions (see

above) of providing a "viable general framework for an understanding of the

capitalist organisation of work", one that avoids the danger of "a return to an

empiricist tradition of accumulating plant studies" (1990: 96), is achieved.

Rather, it would appear that the general framework is so undecided that it

precisely supports this accumulation of empirical studies "differentiated only by

appropriating the language of the theory some seem so keen to discard" (ibid.).

The vitality of labour process theory might therefore be constituted by its

undecidedness, which does not assure its status as a normal science, but which

ensures that the open questions of core theory will remain to be addressed in

any research based on this core theory. In this sense the establishment of labour process theory as a problematic, with a clearly defined object of theory, and a clear exposition of the problems that this theory poses its problems, also in different to the Marxist problematic, is still to come. There are at least three questions that a labour process theory that sought to establish itself as a problematic would need to start addressing. Thompson himself poses one such question: core theory merely asserts the control imperative, but argues that this does not determine the form that management takes. The challenge that core theory therefore poses itself is to produce an analysis and theory of contemporary forms of management. A second question is raised by Marxist labour process theory, and by the analysis outlined in this thesis: what is the relation between labour process theory and the critique of political economy? If the term "relative autonomy" is only ever an index to a problematic, then Thompson's and Edwards' use of this term to settle this relation between labour process theory and the critique of political economy, or between the labour process and management, on the one hand, and capital, on the other, must be challenged. The frame-work performed by Thompson here remains unsuccessful, and it requires more than Thompson's later reflections on the circuits of capital to put the question of this relation firmly on the agenda of labour process theory. Without this engagement, the relation between labour process theory and the critique of political economy, and its relation to Marx and Marxism, remains undecided. Finally, a third question emerges from subjectivist labour process theory: to what extend is subjectivity determined by capital in the labour process, and how is it possible to think and conceptualize the constitution

of subjectivity within the labour process? This question will occupy critical management studies, as will be explored in the next two chapters.

In terms of the inheritance of Marx by critical studies of management, then, it is evident from the reading of labour process theory performed in this chapter, that Marx does get read in the business school, but that the relation that these critical studies of management establish to Marx remain undecided. Referring to core and subjectivist labour process theory, it is no longer possible to refer to Marxist studies of management, while it might still be to early to speak of post-Marxism. Marxist labour process theory serves as a reminder of Marx, and a challenge to read Marx, one that will also remain in critical management studies in the next two chapters. However, this Marxist labour process theory does not establish itself as it addresses neither the question of the subject posed by subjectivist labour process theory, nor the challenge to develop a critical theory of management, to take seriously management as an object of theory, posed by core labour process theory. Overall, this leaves labour process theory in a precarious state, and leaves the question "whither Marx in the business school?" as yet unresolved.

As labour process theory enters the business school, is split and takes its distance from Marx, there is however one devastating consequence that follows. Recall that both Braverman and Burawoy were resolutely Marxist, and considered this to entail the possibility and demand for a change in the mode of production, rather than some minor changes to forms of management. Core and subjectivist labour process theory, in stark contrast, have explicitly abandoned

any promise concerning a change in the mode of production. Ackroyd and Thompson, for example, pronounce that they are interested not in class struggle, not even in resistance "treated as a phenomenon in its own right", but still less, namely "another realm of workplace behaviour that should not be understood merely as a form of or step towards what has become identified with the term resistance" (1999: 165). While this certainly proves that "not all is quiet on the workplace front" (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995), there is hardly any relation between such an endeavour and the critique of political economy in Marx. Core and subjectivist labour process theory have by and large accepted both the inevitability of capital, and the necessity of management. In the next chapters I will demonstrate how such a political and theoretical position is reproduced in critical management studies, only to be challenged later.

7 WITH MANAGERIALISM TOWARDS POST-MARXISM?

From labour process theory to critical management studies

Hassard et al. (2001) propose to explore the political significance of the emergence of critical management studies after labour process theory, which they consider to be one of its tributaries. In particular, Hassard et al. (2001: 339) contend that critical management studies scholars' "location and intellectual trajectory needs to be understood in the political context of the historical defeat of the Left since its highpoint in 1968". Hassard et al. seek to challenge the critical credentials of critical management studies, since "it barely acknowledges the extent and significance of the defeat of the Left", which for Hassard et al. is a sign that it "is detached from the intellectual heritage of the Left and from contemporary radical social movements" (2001: 343). Hassard et al. provide a theoretical account for this separation of critical management studies from the Left and radical social movements, through a reading of labour process theory.

They argue that Braverman inherits a managerialist analysis from Baran and Sweezy. These had "diverged from orthodox Marxist political economy in their characterization of the modern capitalist corporation" by accepting "the

managerialist argument that there has been a significant separation of ownership from control, which has freed corporate management from control by the owners of capital" (Hassard et al., 2001: 344). So for Hassard et al. one of the key characteristics of labour process theory from Braverman onwards was its managerialist analysis. This, they argue, "could be said to have opened the way for those labor process theorists (e.g. Knight, 1990; Willmott, 1990) who began to invoke Foucault in the 1980s to argue that power rather than exploitation drives domination in the labor process" (Hassard et al., 2001: 347). Since Braverman understood management to be about control rather than profit, an analysis of management could turn to Foucault or Weber (cf. Clegg, 1994) and concern itself with domination rather than exploitation.

Yet Hassard et al. emphasise that where Braverman's analysis was managerialist, "his political stance was decidedly in the *anti-management* tradition of revolutionary Marxism" (2001: 349). Hassard et al. argue that it was only later labour process theory which also adopted a managerialist politics. They identify the moment in which diverse strategies for managing labour were explored by labour process theory as the moment that "robbed labor process theory of Braverman's argument that workers are subject to an inevitable process of "deskilling and homogenization"" (2001: 348). This deskilling thesis had, however, served as the replacement in Braverman for the law of the rate of profit to fall, and had provided Braverman with a "science of the second coming of communism" (Hassard et al., 2001: 351). Once this was abandoned by labour process theory after Braverman, the "view that a variety of managerial strategies are compatible with capitalist production, some more acceptable to workers

than others, opens the way to reformism insofar as it denies the ultimate

necessity for a revolutionary transformation of society" (Hassard et al., 349).

For Hassard et al., then, later labour process theory was both managerialist in its

analysis and its politics, and this opened the way both for a reformist politics in

which revolution was abandoned as a political goal, and for an analysis of

management in which its specificity in capitalist relations of production was lost

(see also Rowlinson and Hassard, 1994; 2001). For Hassard et al., however, this

managerialism is not a theoretical imperative, or a necessary moment in the

inheritance of Marx. Instead, they clearly view such theoretical and political

developments as "the presentation of internalized political defeat as intellectual

progress" (2001: 348). Instead of a mark of intellectual progress, then, these

developments are merely symptoms of the political defeat of the Left. In

consequence, for Hassard et al., the presence of critical management studies in

business schools "is not the culmination of progressive intellectual revelation";

rather, they "see the anomalous institutional location of critical management

studies as the outcome of contingency and the defeat of the Left" (2001: 354).

I point to this account of the turn form labour process theory to critical

management studies first of all because it demonstrates the contested nature of

this development. Hassard et al. challenge such accounts of critical management

studies, in particular Fournier and Grey (2000), which suggest that critical

management studies represent an intellectual advance on labour process theory.

In doing so they not only point to some political factors involved in this

development, to do with politics and the business school, which I partly explored

in Chapter 2 and to which I will return in the concluding chapter of this thesis; they also emphasise the role the inheritance of Marx plays in these developments. For Hassard et al. the emergence of critical studies of management, and even of later labour process theory, is characterised by a certain anti-Marxism, and they point to some of its theoretical and political causes and consequences, in particular with regards to the "subtle suppression" of a Marxist messianic (Hassard et al., 2001: 351).

While I address the political context for these developments in chapters 2 and 10, there are two aspects to the reading in this thesis which are different, even if largely complementary, to Hassard et al.'s analysis. First, the question of the inheritance of Marx in the business school is here approached through a reading of the reading of Marx in the business school. In Part II I have already explored the reading of Marx in Braverman, Burawoy, Thompson, and a few others. And in Part III I will explore the reading of Marx in critical management studies by authors such as Willmott, Clegg, and a few others. Perhaps contrary to what Hassard et al.'s argument insinuates, I demonstrate here that Marx continues to be read in different ways also in critical management studies. In particular, chapter 9 will discuss a certain return to Marx within critical management studies, one that perhaps defies Hassard et al.'s dismissal of critical management studies.

Second, the symptomatic reading of labour process theory and critical management studies demonstrates that these discourses are struggling with management as object of theory. Where Hassard et al. intimate that the

managerialism they ascribe to Braverman and labour process theory is a deviation from a Marxism whose problematic is safely centred on capital, the symptomatic reading of labour process theory revealed how management itself emerged as an object of theory within a Marxist problematic, namely in Braverman and Burawoy. It also showed, in Chapter 6, that the Marxist critics of labour process theory failed in their critique insofar as they could not account for management as a theoretical object. The strength of the symptomatic reading here therefore consists in demonstrating how management emerges as an object of theory and unsettles the Marxist problematic, and how labour process theory does not succeed in establishing a new problematic with management as a new object of theory. In this way a symptomatic reading explores "managerialism" in its theoretical effects, without however discounting it as a mere theoretical aberration.

I will therefore proceed in Part III with my reading of critical management studies, exploring how critical management studies inherit Marx – and also reading him through labour process theory – and how it struggles with management as a theoretical object. In this chapter I will first explore some of the conditions for the emergence of critical management studies and for the reading of Marx, before discussing developments in the work of Willmott, leading to post-Marxism.

Pre-readings of Marx

The new orthodoxy of labour process theory is still around, even if its vitality is put into question by some of the critiques explored in the previous chapter. And while subjectivist labour process theory has kept battling with this new orthodoxy throughout the 1990s and early 2000s (e.g. Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995; Willmott, 1995; Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Knights, 2001; O'Doherty and Willmott, 2001a; 2001b; Thompson and Smith, 2001; Friedman, 2004; O'Doherty and Willmott, 2009a), it seems that subjectivist labour process theory despite some attempts to resuscitate labour process theory through "fatal writing" (O'Doherty, 2009) has now finally approved its decline (O'Doherty and Willmott, 2009b). This is not to say, however, that new orthodox labour process theory has established itself as the supreme and uncontested discourse on management. Instead, the site of struggle has decidedly shifted. Alongside labour process theory, we saw the emergence of what was very quickly called "critical management studies" (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992). It is under this name that much of what was excluded from new orthodox labour process theory, and much more, was to be amassed. Labour process theory can therefore be considered partly an alternative critical discourse on management, but also one that partly belongs to the pre-history of critical management studies.

In outlining some ways in which Marx was pre-read for critical management studies, i.e. how the reception of Marx in critical management studies is already mediated by other readings of Marx, it must be emphasised that here labour process theory plays a key role. Critical management studies cannot be understood, either in its reading of Marx or in its treatment of management as a

theoretical object, without reference to labour process theory. To note that labour process theory belongs to the pre-history of critical management studies, then, requires, apart from an account of the discontinuities between these two discourses, a consideration of how critical management studies inherits Marx and management as a theoretical object from and through labour process theory. Part II of this thesis therefore serves as an account of a certain pre-history, and thus also of a pre-reading of Marx and management, for critical management studies. Throughout Part III of the thesis, I will emphasise the ways in which these discourses, in their reading of Marx, are intimately related, and relate to each other, for example in the following section with regards to the arguments between Willmott and Armstrong.

There are two further pre-readings of Marx, which can already be considered part of the early history of critical management studies, which I will shortly introduce here, before proceeding to a symptomatic reading of key readings of Marx in critical management studies. The second pre-reading to be considered is that provided in Burrell and Morgan's *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis* (1979). The influence of this book is hard to overestimate. In this book the work of Kuhn (1962) on paradigms was loosely adapted, focusing specifically on the incommensurability between different paradigms, to provide a model for the different sociological paradigms that exist in the field of organisation studies. While overall the most important intent of this text was to open up the field of organisation studies to a variety of paradigms, and to counter a functionalism prevalent in the field, and its most important result were the "paradigm wars" that seemingly remain unresolved (see Tadajewski, 2009b), here the reading and

presentation of Marx in this work is of concern. Burrell and Morgan provide a matrix based on two dimensions giving four paradigms. The two dimensions are subjective-objective and regulation-radical change (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 21ff.). These dimensions provide four paradigms: radical humanism, radical structuralism, interpretivism and functionalism. For Burrell and Morgan Marx appears here in two of these paradigms, radical humanism and radical structuralism. While both of these paradigms are said to be part of the sociology of radical change, they are differentiated by their position on the subjective-objective dimension. Burrell and Morgan suggest that this division within Marxism can be traced back to Althusser.

> [W]ithin the context of the sociology of radical change there has been a division between theorists subscribing to 'subjective' and 'objective' views of society. The debate in many respects takes its lead from the publication in France in 1966 and Britain in 1969 of Louis Althusser's work *For Marx*. This presented the notion of an 'epistemological break' in Marx's work and emphasised the polarisation of Marxist theorists into two camps: those emphasising the 'subjective' aspects of Marxism (Lukács and the Frankfurt School, for example) and those advocating more 'objective' approaches, such as that associated with Althusserian structuralism. (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 21-22)

Burrell and Morgan thus appropriate Althusser's (1969) partition of Marx's work into different periods to suggest that two paradigms are based on the early and late or mature works of Marx respectively. It is important to consider the effects of these divisions of Marx's work, which are partly represented but also reproduced for organisation studies in Burrell and Morgan, on the reading of Marx in the business school. A first point to note is that the division that

Althusser proposes is reproduced in a lot of Marxists texts, many of which we have seen the authors of the previous part of the thesis. The work of Burawoy (1979; 1985), for example, is heavily influenced by the work of Althusser (1969; Althusser and Balibar, 1970), even if it does not preclude engagement with such authors as Lukács, who for Burrell and Morgan belongs to a different paradigm. This differentiation of Marxisms has certainly left its marks on labour process theory also. For example, terms such as "relative autonomy", which belong to the vocabulary of "structuralist" Marxism, have been appropriated by such authors as Burawoy (1979), Edwards (1990) and Thompson (1989; 1990).

Secondly, then, much of later labour process theory and early critical management studies can be considered a response to these divisions. Where "structuralist" Marxism asserted a certain dominance, for example in Burawoy or the early work of Clegg and Willmott, as will be shown shortly, the rise of the question of the subject, as well as the turn towards "poststructuralism" and "postmodernism" in critical management studies, are both indices of a turn away from "structuralist" Marxism towards a different Marxism or away from Marxism. Here Burrell and Morgan's distinction between radical structuralism and radical humanism certainly leaves its mark, as can be seen in texts such as Aktouf (1992) or Wray-Bliss and Parker (1998). The remainder of this chapter will also demonstrate how critical management studies struggles against a certain "structuralist" Marxism, but not necessarily towards a radical humanism.

The third pre-reading of Marx to be considered here concerns the rise of postmodernism and its influence during the early moments of critical

management studies. More so than critical theory, postmodernism is understood in the business school to entail a rejection of Marx and Marxism. In many ways critical management studies constituted itself *against* Marx. Examples here abound, but Alvesson and Deetz (1996) can serve as a first example. In this text, critical theory and postmodernism are presented as the intellectual sources of critical management studies. The authors argue that these two intellectual strands were only discovered by management studies "relatively late", which the authors argue is due to "the 'modernist' assumptions embedded in organizations and the rather dogmatic and exclusionary character of dominant research traditions of either a positivist or a Marxist bent" (Alvesson and Deetz, 1996: 191). Marxism in this instance is presented as "modernist", "dogmatic" and "exclusionary", and for Alvesson and Deetz it therefore is part of an intellectual tradition that must be abandoned with the postmodern turn.

Here postmodernism is understood to derive from the work of Derrida, Foucault and a few others, and as focused on themes such as "the constructed nature of people and reality, emphasizing language as a system of distinctions which are central to the construction process, arguing against grand narratives and large-scale theoretical systems such as Marxism or functionalism, emphasizing the power/knowledge connection and the role of claims of expertise in systems of domination…" (Alvesson and Deetz, 1996: 192). Foucault and Derrida are presented as postmodernists who reject "grand narratives" and "large-scale theoretical systems" including Marxism. Similar positions can be found in Alvesson and Willmott's *Critical Management Studies* (1992).

A second example for the importance of postmodernism in the reading of Marx is the work of Clegg. While Clegg's early work (1975; 1979; Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980) was strongly influenced and marked by structuralist Marxism. He articulates a critique of organization theory as representing the interests of capital (1977: 22), functioning similarly to vulgar political economy as viewed by Marx. Clegg accepts a definition of exploitation as the material basis of capital's domination over labour, and defines management as a function of capital (1977: 33). These positions are articulated also in his two early books, of which Clegg notes that one (Clegg, 1975) was "incipiently structuralist", while a later one (Clegg, 1979) was "full blown structuralism, with a Gramscian twist" (Clegg, 2005: 298). In these works Clegg therefore privileges an analysis concerned with relations of production, which are understood in structuralist terms.

This changes dramatically with Clegg's "radical revisions" (1989a). Here Clegg emphasises "the centrality of economic domination and relations of production" in concert with Marx (1989b: 98). Clegg also argues that organizations "should not be conceptualized as the phenomenal expression of some essential inner principle such as economic exploitation or rationality", but rather as "loci of decision and action" (1989b: 105). In this, despite stressing the centrality of relations of production, Clegg argues against Marxism, which he considers a particular genre of organization employing a "common narrative technique of representing organizations as totalities necessarily structured by some essential feature" such as exploitation (Clegg, 1989b: 111).

> Organizations are composed of competing calculations and modes of rationality rather than being expressive of rationality *per se*. Relations of meaning, as well as relations of production are central to the structure and functioning of organizations, the government of which is expressed through daily 'effort bargains' and struggles over contractual relations which seek to 'fix' these other relations. (Clegg, 1989b: 112)

Marx and Marxism here stand accused of essentialism. Clegg presents himself as a reader of Foucault, and many others, and appropriates some of the latter's critique of Marxism. Many developments in Clegg's work mirror arguments put forward by others in the name of postmodernism or poststructuralism, including his rejection of the grand-narrative of Marxism (Clegg, 1990: 12), or arguments about interests not being determined by structural positions (Clegg, 1994: 156). These examples taken from Alvesson and Deetz (1996) and Clegg therefore suggest that one pre-reading of Marx dominant in early labour process theory was that provided by particular versions of postmodernism and poststructuralism. While it would certainly be inaccurate to suggest that the reading of critical and postmodern theory has led all of critical studies of management to reject Marx and Marxism, such readings and arguments as outlined above have certainly left their mark, so that it would not be inaccurate to argue that if not a rejection that at least a distancing from Marx also constituted a founding moment of critical management studies. The readings of Willmott, Parker and others in the following chapters will demonstrate particular effects that such pre-readings of Marx had on critical management studies.

What a discussion of these three pre-readings of Marx in early critical management studies suggests, then, is that these were important aspects of this reading which have left a mark on the way in which Marx has been read and received in critical management studies, and on the way in which critical management studies has constituted itself, in many ways against Marx. While it is necessary to trace some of these marks, it is also inevitable, for any future critical management studies, to challenge these marks and these traces, and to offer a different reading of Marx, one that does not rely on this pre-reading.

Willmott and the managerial labour process

In this section I propose to read Willmott's work symptomatically. Willmott is important as a figure in critical management studies for various reasons. First, he represents here a key figure in the movement from labour process theory to critical management studies. I already considered his work on labour process theory, mostly with Knights, in the previous chapter. Here I will trace the way in which Willmott develops a theory of management alongside and on the basis of and response to his engagement with labour process theory. Willmott is also a key figure in the movement which seeks to institutionalize critical management studies in the business school, for example through key texts which attempt to provide overviews of the field (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; 2003; Grey and Willmott, 2005; Alvesson et al., 2009). As such his work has been highly influential. While much of this work takes place with Alvesson, particular *Studying Management Critically* (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996) as a key

introductory and foundational text for critical management studies, here I will focus mainly on his individual authored work since it provides clear examples of Willmott's reading of Marx, and a development of a theory of management, at points in stark contrast to that of Alvesson.

Willmott's importance for critical management studies also concerns his theoretical contribution, which are numerous. For example, Willmott has contributed to debates on paradigms (e.g. 1993b) and postmodernism (e.g. 1994), and has therefore influenced the way in which critical management studies was set up through these pre-readings of Marx. Willmott has also continued to develop a conceptualisation of management and work with regards to culture (e.g. 1993a) and identity (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) as forms of control, therefore continuing some key research themes emerging out of labour process theory. However, what is of particular interest for my symptomatic reading are some key contributions to the development of a critical theory of management. Willmott very early on explored different images and ideals of management prevalent in the business school (1984), and put forth his own critique and proposal for a study of managerial work (1987). He engages widely with work of authors such as Reed (1989), Watson (1994) and Tsoukas (1994), who seek to establish a sociology, theory or meta-theory of management (Willmott, 1996; 1997). Here Willmott's development of a theory of management will be traced through four particular contributions (1984; 1987; 1997; 2005b), with reference to Willmott's other work. Finally, what justifies a focus here on Willmott, and what my symptomatic reading of Willmott will conclude with, is Willmott's turn towards the post-Marxism of Laclau and Mouffe (2001). Willmott

in this turn to post-Marxism exemplifies a particular post-Marxist position in critical management studies, and it emphasises one particular distinct direction in which the reading of Marx in the business school evolved.

In his 1984 exploration of "images and ideals of managerial work", Willmott argues that "the work of managers is widely (mis)represented and idealized as a technical, politically neutral activity", where the "occlusion of the political dimension… is no less damaging for management as a practice than it is for the theory of management" (Willmott, 1984: 350). For Willmott this is "because the neglect of the 'micro' and 'macro' politics of managerial work ill-equips managers for their latent function of devising and reproducing the behavioural and institutional technologies for assuaging and appeasing the contradictions and conflicts characteristic of capitalist economic organization" (ibid.). So for Willmott images and ideals of management at that time do not recognize the political aspects of managerial work, particularly as it relates to capital.

Willmott argues that this unitarist position is challenged by pluralist and radical positions which "theorize organization organizational structures in terms of conflict of interest" (1984: 360). The pluralist view, however, doesn't go far enough for Willmott, since it does not recognize how power is distributed in organizations, or how it is institutionalized "in the structures of work organizations" (Willmott, 1984: 360-361). To remedy this, Willmott subscribes to a political economy perspective.

The political economy perspective, in contrast, reveals how organizational structures are designed to secure and advance the interests of a ruling class whose interests they chiefly (but not exclusively) represent. Managerial work is accordingly seen to be shaped by a capitalist structure of production relations of which managers are understood to be principal 'bearers'. From this 'radical' standpoint, managerial work is primarily viewed as involving the development, application and maintenance of the social and material technologies capable of preserving the prevailing structure of production relations (Edwards, 1975). (Willmott, 1984: 361-362)

It is noteworthy that Willmott in this article draws on early labour process theory (Edwards, 1975; Friedman, 1977b) and early critical studies of organization (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980) to argue that management is a function of capital. Willmott in the quote above accepts Marx's use of the term bearers to describe the position of a subject in a social relation, and he develops this not only to suggest that capitalists are bearers of capital, but that managers are, too. Willmott also explicitly states that the perceived interests of managers are irrelevant, insofar as even though managers "may perceive themselves to be safeguarding the interests of *all* the stakeholders in an organization", nonetheless "their work is seen to be guided and governed by 'rules of the game' that systematically favour the interests of capital" (Willmott, 1984: 362). Willmott at this point, therefore, subscribes to a particular structuralist position which accepts that managerial work involves "creating and maintaining a structure of relationships in which those who are 'in control' act in the interests of capital" (ibid.).

What is peculiar, however, is that this position is simply asserted rather than explained. Willmott, for example, does not mention the process of valorisation or the processes of formal and real subsumption (he uses the term subordination once but in a different sense). How then, are we to understand why managers serve the interests of capital? The particular concept of structure employed here is one that remains rather ill-defined, and Willmott does, in particular, not conceive this to be a question of subjection, as we have seen and will see shortly again. Nonetheless, at this stage Willmott represents a political economy position, one which is close to Marx in that it recognizes the dominance of capital over management and organization. In that sense, Willmott here sees management as an object of theory firmly integrated into a Marxist problematic, even if he does not provide an account of the theoretical relation between management and capital.

This situation does not change much as we look at Willmott (2005a [1987]), except that the theoretical language used here to describe management shifts towards Giddens. Willmott draws on Giddens in order to be able to speak not only of structure but also of agency, through the concept of structuration. Willmott commences with a review of studies of work by Mintzberg, Dalton, Kotter and others, and concludes that these "have been guided by frameworks of interpretation that have disregarded or trivialized its institutional reality and significance", that they have separated "work from its social context" and therefore "largely disregarded the 'political aspect' of managerial work" other than managers' pursuance of self-interest, with the consequence being that "the institutional grounds of managerial work as an expression of politico-economic

relations of power" are overlooked and obscured (Willmott, 2005a: 329). Willmott again promotes a radical standpoint which argues that the division of labour in which managers take on specialist and technical roles is "primarily conditioned by the political economy of labor processes in capitalist society", rather than simply by economic necessity (Willmott, 2005a: 330). So far, then, Willmott's argument is one against the autonomy of management as object of theory, and the necessity of understanding it in relation to capital.

Willmott goes further to specify that relations of production are marked by "a basic contradiction between the 'principles' of socialized production and private appropriation (Giddens 1979: 136-7)", a contradiction, which "underpins and succours (but does not determine) a class division of labour" (Willmott, 2005a: 331). This in turn results in "tensions within structures and strategies of control as capital depends on labour for the cycle of production and valorisation to be sustained…" and as managers as "the servants of socialized capital… are formally required to organize the resources at their command to ensure the extraction of surplus value" (Willmott, 2005a: 331). Willmott therefore sees production characterized by this contradiction between socialized production and private appropriation, one that brings forth the resistance of workers and puts managers in a position where they are formally responsible for the extraction of surplus value but whose action is not wholly determined by this.

> [T]he argument of this article is that managerial work is theorized better as reflecting and sustaining a fundamentally contested structure of social relations in which an institutionalized organization of the interests of capital is tempered and compromised:

first by systematic contradictions; second, and relatedly, by individual and collective

resistance from below; and, third, by managers themselves who, at the very least, interpret

and act out their 'functional roles' in the light of their own (minimally) autonomous

cultural and ideological values. (Willmott, 2005a: 334)

This leads Willmott to seek to account for manager's agency. Whereas in his

1984 article he insisted on conceptualising managers as bearers of social

relations, in this 1987 article he is drawn to Giddens' theory of structuration.

This, Willmott argues, "offers a conceptual framework for connecting the

'strategic' and 'institutional' aspects of managerial work", and through using this

theory "the social practices that constitute managerial work can be studied as

the skilled accomplishment of agents *and* as an expression of the structural

properties of systems of interaction…" (Willmott, 2005a: 336). Willmott

therefore introduces agency besides structure, with the intention to "advance the

study of managerial work by appreciating how, within capitalist relations of

production, the work of managers is both a medium and outcome of the

structural properties of a social system founded upon the contradiction between

socialized production and private appropriation" (2005a: 341). Note that here

Willmott is not questioning the unity of this medium and outcome, whose result

is the reproduction of the capitalist relations of production, even if this is

produced through contradictions. Willmott here demonstrates an interest in

"bringing agency back into organizational analysis", which he also pronounces

elsewhere (1994).

Willmott's conception of managerial work here thus changes, although it is not immediately apparent what the conceptual differences are between an understanding of managers as bearers of social relations and managerial work as medium and outcome of social structure. Here Willmott is engaging with the inheritance of structuralist Marxism, as mentioned in the previous section. Presumably, for Willmott the concept bearer emphasised structure to the detriment of agency, and a re-conception in terms of medium (agency?) and outcome (structure?) allows for managerial agency to emerge. However, Willmott's use of both Giddens and structuralists Hindess and Hirst, which upon inspection might prove far from compatible, leaves many questions unanswered; most importantly, the question of how precisely the unity between medium and outcome is achieved, or, put differently, how agency and structure relate and how their mutual determination is understood. Managers and their work here is still under-theorized, insofar as it is now not wholly determined by capital (although of course it never was in Willmott's initial definition), whereas its precise determinations are not explored.

There is one movement in Willmott's argument, however, which is paramount. Whereas in his 1984 article management appeared as a force that shaped the labour process, here managerial work itself is understood as a labour process (Willmott, 2005a: 341). Willmott here recognizes the contradictory class situation of the manager, where the manager performs functions for capital but also performs labour. This position is criticized by Armstrong, who argues that "this contradicts the basic definition of what a labour process *is*: namely, the means of securing the material base of human existence" (1989: 309). The

trouble for Armstrong is that such an analysis ignores class since managerial work is simply treated as another form of work within a division of labour, rather than as an activity which itself perpetuates the division of labour and which is not concerned with production but with the extraction of surplus value (Armstrong, 1989: 209-311). For Armstrong, once managerial work is understood as a labour process, the category of unproductive labour disappears, and "the attempt to identify the wastes and contradictions of the capitalist mode of production is thereby abandoned" (Armstrong, 1989: 310). Instead, Armstrong proposes to understand managerial work as a function of capital, and as agency, rather than expertise.

> The real work of 'management', then, occurs within the circuit of capital and its defining features are decision-making and control, either of subordinate managers or of intellectual and manual workers. This identification of management with capital functions means that, from the point of view of ownership, the generic 'management problem' is not, in the first instance, that of expertise but that of *agency* – the problem of ensuring that managers, so far as is possible, make decisions which are in the interests of ownership. (Armstrong, 1989: 311)

Both Willmott and Armstrong here engage with the conflictual class position of the manager as a figure emerging between those of capital and labour. In volume 3 of *Capital* Marx outlines how the capitalist appears as a worker in production: the capitalist directs production and circulation, and because the work of exploitation takes effort, the capitalist's "profits of enterprise presents itself to him as independent of his property in capital and rather as the result of his function as non-owner, as a *worker*" (Marx, 1991: 503). Once these functions are

separated completely from ownership, the manager emerges, but the problem remains. Marx suggests that in managerial work the functions of coordination and exploitation are not separate, with the unproductive managerial work of performing the function of exploitation "directly and inseparably fused, under the capitalist system, with the productive functions that all combined social labour assigns to particular individuals as their special work" (Marx, 1991: 510). Armstrong emphasises the capitalist function that management performs, where Willmott is interested primarily in the coordinating function of management.

Willmott revisits this issue in an article ten years later (Willmott, 1997). Here he argues against certain limits of a Giddensian framework as much as against a structuralist Marxist framework. Against Whittingon (1992), who had criticised Willmott (1987) for assuming that capitalist principles always prevail in managerial work, Willmott insists that managerial authority relies on capitalist resources and must be direct to capitalist ends (1997: 1333). Against some studies of managerial work (Reed, 1989; Watson, 1994), Willmott insists that Marxist theory "provides a penetrating analytical framework for understanding the nature and dynamics of this 'show'", referring to capitalism as the show sustained by managerial work, while at the same time acknowledging limitations which "stem from a methodological stratagem of treating human agents as personifications of economic categories – limitations that are clearly evident in Marx's sketchy, formulaic analysis of managerial work..." (Willmott, 1997: 1333). The limitations he is referring to are the ones he has engaged with in his considerations above. Willmott also responds to Armstrong's criticisms, acknowledging the danger of using the term labour process to describe any kind

of work, while however insisting that Armstrong' position, the "manager-as-agent-of-capital formulation effectively denies, or at least views as insignificant, the *contradictory positioning* of many managers within capitalist work organizations" (Willmott, 1997: 1336).

Here then, in contrast to Braverman and Burawoy, management is not understood as wholly determined by capital, as merely a function of capital, and contrary to Thompson, the imperatives of control and exploitation of the labour process are not presented as axioms of a (labour process) theory, but are put into question. Management and managerial work here therefore gain a certain relative autonomy in theory, one that it was not considered having in earlier critical studies of management, except subjectivist labour process theory. Here Willmott again draws on his work discussed in the previous chapter, again enrolling his concept of "identity fetish" to consider managerial work.

> The existential concern to secure a stable and acceptable sense of self-identity is not simply "noise" which detracts from the "signal" in capital's circuits of control. Rather, it is an inescapable medium of the signal's generation and transmission. For this reason, it is necessary to complement, qualify, and deepen an analysis of the embeddedness of managerial work in the contradictory operation of capitalism with an appreciation of how the management of these contradictions is mediated by concerns to secure or enhance a sense of self-identity. (Willmott, 1997: 1354)

Here the self-identity of the manager is introduced as a mediation of the managerial work of managing the contradictions of capitalism, where previously the self-identity of the worker in the labour process was considered to mediate

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the production of class struggle. Willmott here picks up an important point that Burawoy made for labour process theory. Burawoy argued that production relied on the subjectivity of the worker, and management therefore could be defined as the organization of consent. Willmott here suggests that the management of production relies equally on the subjectivity of the manager. And in pointing to the contradictory class position of the manager, as well as the two aspects of managerial work, Willmott identifies a key question for critical studies of management. However, in the same way in which in the previous chapter I noted that Knights and Willmott's work on identity fetishism and subjectivity sidestepped an important question, namely how control and exploitation in the labour process produce a class subject, here a central question, emerging from his own conceptualisation, also escapes Willmott: how is it possible that, despite the concern for self-identity of managers, managers still perform the functions of capital, and capitalist principles prevail?

Willmott thus raises the question of the determination of management by capital, only to then sidestep it by proposing to answer it through a consideration of identity fetishism. This is where Whittington (1992) criticises Willmott for not being able to account for why capitalist principles prevail. Armstrong (2008) makes a similar point in a recent rejoinder to the debate, suggesting that Willmott's conceptual difficulties stem from

> the logical impossibility of the position which Willmott attempts to take up. Between an indiscriminate pluralism which fails to recognize the primacy of the capitalist social relations of production and a Marxist/labour process approach which does, there is simply

no intermediate position. Unwilling to recognise this, Willmott seeks to create one by constructing a parodied version of 'labour process orthodoxy' in which managers are depicted as doing *nothing but* perform the functions of capital. It is into this imagined space that he seeks to insert his own theory of a managerial contrariness driven by a proletarianisation of their conditions of employment. The ironical result is a labour process approach to management which neglects the role of managers in controlling the labour process. (Armstrong, 2008: 2)

While Armstrong here points to a limit in Willmott's work, or rather a in his view false solution to a question that both Willmott and Armstrong identify, Armstrong here also points to the limits of Marxist thought on management. Armstrong suggests that it is a matter of "recognizing the primacy of the capitalist social relations of production", yet the challenge that studies of management pose to Marxism is to not only recognize this primacy but of demonstrating how it is constantly reasserted. It is this question of the determination of management by capital, which is also not addressed in Armstrong (1989; 1998).

In a more recent work, Willmott (2005b) attempts to overcome some of these limitations of his conception of management by turning the work of Laclau and Mouffe (2001). He suggests that this post-Marxist discourse theory "offers a more satisfactory way of avoiding the Scylla of objectivism/positivism without foundering upon the Charydbis of subjectivism/idealism" (2005b: 749). For Willmott Laclau and Mouffe offer a resource for "thinking through the significance of key post-structuralist insights", without at the same time "turning one's back upon issues of political economy" (ibid.). Willmott also insists that in

the term post-Marxism in Laclau and Mouffe "the retention of 'Marx' signals its continuity with a radical tradition of thinking that they seek to deepen" (2005b: 764). So Willmott here assures the reader that he is still concerned with political economy and with retaining continuity with Marx's radical tradition in his theorizing of contemporary control. Willmott also enrols Laclau and Mouffe in a purging of Marx from necessary laws of history and from a crude economism (Willmott, 2005b: 749, 769).

Willmott draws on Laclau and Mouffe not for a theory of capital or of management (see also chapter 9), but instead for a theorization of the formation of identities. This also entails both an insistence on a diversity of relations of subordination, decentring the capital/labour relation, and on proposing that, in capitalist work organizations, "processes of identification are understood to be discursively accomplished rather than tendentially predetermined by the structure of the wage labour/capital relation" (Willmott, 2005b: 769). This is because "the space of the economy is structured as a political space (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 76-7)" (Willmott, 2005b: 770), implying that structural positions do not lead to political identities.

> Through a fundamentally political process of identification, people are understood to attribute interests to themselves and to others. There is, then, no 'external force' requiring certain people, deemed by Porpora to be 'capitalists' *tout court*, to maximize profit or to suffer if they fail to fulfil this requirement. That is because, from Laclau and Mouffe's standpoint, such people are subject to a plurality of identifications that compete with that of 'capitalist' or, indeed, 'worker'. But, to repeat, this does not rule out the possibility that such identifications will become primary and transformational. (Willmott, 2005b: 770)

Willmott also ascribes to Laclau and Mouffe's conceptualisations of relations of subordination, which can be theoretically identified, but which only become politically antagonistic when such identifications take place (2005b: 772). The capital/labour relation is therefore not understood to be antagonistic in itself, and Laclau and Mouffe and Willmott do not propose to provide any conceptualisations for how this relation might become conflictual.

The first thing to note about Willmott's appropriation of Laclau and Mouffe is that he develops a political analytic, i.e. a theory of how political identities are constituted, mostly *ex nihilo*, and he does not develop or demand a theory of capital or management. Instead, Willmott is concerned systematically to downplay the specificity of the capital/labour relation. Instead of arguing that certain structural positions immediately lead to certain interests, as we saw in Braverman (1998) or in Willmott's earlier piece (1984), or to explore how conflictual or consensual identities are produced at work, either to challenge or to sustain capital accumulation, as in Burawoy (1979), Willmott here reduces the specificity of the capital/labour relation to almost nothing.

The second thing to note is that, apart from not proposing a theory of management or capital here, Willmott also precludes the possibility of such emerging through the work of Laclau and Mouffe (2001). That is because Willmott denies the importance of an account of any relations, such as the capital/labour relation, for the study of the constitution of identities. Even the categories capitalist and worker are here discursive constructs that what were

previously understood to be bearers of these relational identities can now deny. The distance taken to Willmott's earlier structuralist theorization of management and capital is therefore marked. Such is the post-Marxism of the later Willmott.

On the one hand, then, Willmott seeks to establish critical management studies which take management as an object of theory seriously. Willmott enters an ambiguous relation to Marx and Marxism, since his texts are undecided on the question of the determination in the last instance of management by capital. This undecidedness manifests itself in the many quotation marks in which he wraps terms such as 'capital', a gesture which perhaps does not amount to Derrida's practice of working with a term under erasure, marked by a line through a term, such as ~~capital~~, but suggesting that these terms are of a questionable and questioned status in Willmott's work. At the same time, and on the other hand, Armstrong reveals that his Marxism cannot deal with the object management appropriately either, since it recognizes the primacy of capital but cannot demonstrate or conceptualize its determination. While Armstrong therefore, through his reading of Marx, withdraws from critical studies of management to a Marxism that does not allow for management to emerge as a proper object of theory, Willmott distances himself from Marx, is drawn towards management as an object of theory, but in doing so does not succeed either in establishing a critical management studies that provides an account of how capital determines also through the subjectivity and work of the manager. Critical management

studies here emerges undecided both in its relation to Marx, and with regards to the determinations of management.

Whither Marx?

This chapter traced some of the readings of Marx from early critical management studies. The first section outlined some aspects of the reading of Marx in critical management studies, in particular the reading of Marx through labour process theory, Burrell and Morgan's (1979) paradigms, as well as postmodernism. It was suggested that these pre-readings of Marx were to leave their traces on the reading of Marx by critical management studies. The second section considered developments in the work of Willmott. My symptomatic reading demonstrated that Willmott moved from a structuralist Marxist position to one which attempted to provide a more careful account of managerial work. There the object management gained more theoretical autonomy from capital through a consideration of the subjectivity of the manager. This also entailed an ambiguous relation to Marx and Marxism. Willmott's later work emerged as a post-Marxism which abandoned the interest in and possibility of a theory of management or capital, to instead focus on a political analytic of the constitution of identities. While a similar movement will also be evident in the work of Parker and Fleming and Spicer I will read in the coming chapters, with notable differences, Willmott's position here emerges as post-Marxist. This post-Marxist position sits alongside the anti-Marxist position of Clegg et al. (2006), which I will explore in the next chapter, and positions such as that of Armstrong that are more resolutely Marxist. It is this diversity of positions on Marx that characterizes critical management studies.

Some of these readings of Marx can be accounted for by the dominance of structuralist Marxism, against which much of critical management studies positioned itself. The choice here was largely laid out by Burrell and Morgan (1979), insofar as the solution provided by the paradigmatic framework for a rejection of structuralist Marxism lay in a turn towards others sociologies of radical change, in particular critical theory and French existentialism. Burrell and Morgan's matrix did not however yet take account of postmodernism and poststructuralism to emerge in the 1980s in management studies. These were to provide an important resource for authors such as Alvesson and Clegg with which a dissociation or even rejection of Marx and Marxism could be executed.

These turns away from Marx left their marks not only on the individual works of authors discussed above, but also on texts which sought to speak for the newly emergent field of critical management studies, particularly *Critical Management Studies* (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992) and *Studying Management Critically* (Alvesson and Willmott, 2003). These traces of post- or even anti-Marxism did not remain unnoticed, especially not by those writing out of labour process theory. Ackroyd, for example, accuses these texts to exclude not only orthodox Marxism but also orthodox labour process theory, even if is "a crass calumny to suggest that there are many recognisably Marxist labour process analysts in the critical management studies community today" (2005: 166). Ackroyd refutes that the critical management studies represented in these texts have any claim to either empirical breadth in terms of its subject matter, or conceptual breadth, since "it is not Marxism that is the only problem, but actually any approach to the

subject which rejects the kind of subjectivism embodied in the particular notion of literary / aesthetic insight that is implicitly invoked by most of these writers" (2004: 169). These complaints come as the introduction to the 2003 collection had already been revised to include more mentions of critical management studies' pluralism.

A similar critique can be found in Thompson (2005), who challenges the constitution of critical management studies as it is for example outlined in Fournier and Grey (2000). While much of the argument repeats an earlier argument against postmodernism (Thompson, 1993), Thompson here concludes:

> While decades of activity on the left have inoculated me against making claims in the name of labour or anyone else, critical workplace researchers cannot ignore the interests of labour and management (albeit fractured in each case). But, for CMS, in the name of fragmented identities and refutation of dualisms, the material reality of divergent interests is set aside, or consigned to the compartment labelled 'out of date and no longer relevant'. (Thompson, 2005: 377-378)

Thompson here hesitantly welcomes a proposal by Adler, who suggests that the key target of critical management studies' "critique should be the capitalist, market-based form of society, and our critique should be primarily but not exclusively in the name of working people" (2002: 389).

These tensions within critical management studies are acknowledged in later summaries of the field, such as Adler et al. (2007). Here it is recognized that a "major tension within critical management studies has been between often

Marxist inspired, structural-materialist streams and postmodernist /

poststructuralist streams which place greater emphasis upon agency, language

and contingency" (Adler et al., 2007: 42). The authors also suggest that critique

in critical management studies also includes a radical critique of capitalism, and

they suggest that the pluralism of critical management studies "accommodates

diverse theoretical traditions, ranging from varieties of Marxism through

pragmatism to poststructuralism" (Adler et al., 2007: 3, 8). It is these struggles

over the inheritance of Marx in the business school that produce different

positions on Marx, more of which I will explore in the next chapters.

8 FOR OR AGAINST MANAGEMENT: POLYPHONY AND IDEOLOGY

Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed some pre-reading of Marx in critical management studies, pre-readings which affect the way in which Marx is inherited and management is conceptualised as an object of theory in critical management studies, as will also become apparent in this chapter. I also read the work of Willmott as an example both of the emergence of critical management studies out of labour process theory, and of a reading of Marx that takes critical management studies away from a Marxist problematic. While in Willmott's earlier work a structuralist Marxist position was gradually replaced by a more complex one in which management as an object of theory was given increasing autonomy in theory, in Willmott's later work (2005b) this reading of Marx was interrupted to a certain extent and a different pre-reading of Marx, that of Laclau and Mouffe (2001), was embraced. Willmott emerged as an example of a post-Marxist position in critical management studies, one he was shown to share with several other authors (e.g. Contu, 2002; Contu and Willmott, 2005; Thomas and Davies, 2005).

In this chapter I will explore two further positions on Marx and management prevalent in critical management studies. The first is the anti-Marxism of Clegg, Kornberger, Carter and Rhodes (2006). I already very briefly explored Clegg's "radical revisions" (1989b) of his earlier structuralist Marxist positions (Clegg, 1979; Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980), where a particular reading of postmodernism had already led Clegg to largely abandon Marx. The anti-Marxism that here emerges in Clegg's work is also one shared by his co-authors, and is also evident in some of their other work, for example: where a managerial ethics are explored without reference to capital (Clegg, Kornberger, and Rhodes, 2007); where critiques of critiques of management are provided which emphasise the polyphony of management, without reference to Marx (Rhodes and Pitsis, 2008); where Foucault's ethics is proposed as a replacement for a Marxist study of management and managerial subjectivity (Ibarra-Colado et al., 2006), or where management is conceptualised as discursive practice, without reference to Marx (Kornberger, Clegg, and Carter, 2006). My reading of Clegg et al. (2006) here is rather brief, since in these texts we hardly find an account of the reading of Marx, and where a concept of management is provided in terms of polyphony, capital disappears as an object of theory.

If Clegg et al.'s anti-Marxism represents a certain extreme or limit of the reading of Marx in the business school, then the work of Parker (2002) considered here in contrast is perhaps representative of a certain ambiguous position on Marx. As my reading of Parker will demonstrate, Parker, in reading Marx through postmodernism, rejects a particular kind of structuralist Marxism, but embraces a humanist Marxism as a resource for an ethical critique of management.

However, as Marx here emerges as an ethical theorist, capital as an object of theory – also in this version of Marx itself – disappears, only to emerge as a symptom in Parker's text. Where in Braverman management appeared as a symptom of capital, in Parker capital appears as a symptom of management. However, Parker's reading of Marx, as I will demonstrate, has as a consequence that capital as an object of theory is not accounted for, since Parker rejects the possibility of knowing capital – or management for that matter – and is instead concerned with an ideology critique of managerialism, and an ethical critique of management. I will discuss the relation of Parker to some other work in critical management studies later. His position, in contrast to that of Clegg, represents two key theoretical positions on Marx and management. And despite their similar focus on discourse and their reading of postmodernism, their positions emerge as two extreme political positions, in that Clegg et al. propose that critical management studies consider being *for* management, where Parker insists it should be *against* management. The next chapter will explore different positions, where capital as symptom is recognized, a return to a reading of Marx and Marxism is performed, and the possibility emerges once again to be against not only management but also capital.

Clegg et al. for management

In a late text, Clegg et al. (2006) propose a representation of management against Marxist theories of management.

Over the past decades there have been persistent radical critiques of management. Previously the goal was to apply forms of Marxian analysis to the world of management and organizations, usually seeing it as a sphere of false consciousness, distorted and unreflective practices, and three-dimensional power or hegemony. Surprisingly, even after the Marxist scaffoldings that supported such claims have been deconstructed – both practically and theoretically – there are still current contributions to management thought that seek to resuscitate the same critiques, often under the rubric of Critical Management Studies. These representations seem increasingly bizarre, given the theoretical currents emanating from post-structuralist and postmodern thought that have emerged in recent years, associated ideas such as polyphony, difference, deconstruction and translation. In this article we draw on these sources to produce a different representation of management – one that we would argue acts as an effective counter-factual to that which provides support to some of the central tendencies manifest in critical approaches to management. Rather than seeing modern management as necessarily a totalitarian practice, one that should necessarily be subject to a negative critique, we would argue that, at its best, it enables polyphony rather than tyranny, and the possibility to be both critical *and* for management. (Clegg et al., 2006: 7)

Here Clegg et al. reproduce some of the theoretical manoeuvres already identified with regards to postmodernism as an aspect of the reading of Marx in the business school, also with reference to Clegg's "radical revisions" (1989a). Here once again Marx is rejected with reference to postmodernism and poststructuralism. Clegg et al. propose that critical management studies trades in false certainties by subscribing to an ideology of being against management. They propose that a certain reflexivity present in the field should be aimed also at its theoretical certainties and should "include the certainties that hold management as being both totalizing and 'bad'" (2006: 12). The authors propose to "explore the possibility of what it might be like to be 'for' management

without being trapped in the limiting and problematic identity position that suggests any support of management is a support for technocratic desire for performativity" (2006: 12).

Here the points of attack are both Marxist studies of management which see it determined by capital and therefore inherently exploitative and totalizing, and Weberian studies of management which understand it to be characterized by domination. Clegg et al. suggest that the world is more complex than these analyses allow, and contend that their "interest in language and discourse enables [them] to provide a different account of management practice, organization theory, and their relation – an account that is less totalizing and determined and more open to the potential plurality of events" (2006: 12). Clegg et al. are not concerned with the question of the determinations of management. What they are suggesting is that if, in critical studies of management, management itself appears as totalizing or determining, then that is not due to the nature of management but to the manner in which it is represented in these theories. Clegg et al. propose the concepts of "polyphonic" and "heteroglossic" organization as an alternative.

> Such conceptions of organization are incipiently democratic rather than totalizing and suggest that organizations need not be exclusively dominated by a 'market managerial notion of organizing' (Parker, 2002: 11). Indeed, such 'radical' views of domination have been criticized trenchantly by perspectives influenced by post-structuralist approaches to power, which argue that power is inherently less monadic and authoritarian in its practice and far more plural and potentially unstable (Clegg, 1989). Concepts such as the polyphonic organization cater for this fact: they start with a potentially open and diverse

field of forces that might be structured, silenced or enacted in different ways at different points in time. Rather than assuming a priori that management dominates its subordinates we suggest understanding organizations as less clear-cut and more complex spaces. This suggests that the integration of overarching analytical concepts (e.g. domination, emancipation, etc.) as the foundation of a research enterprise is itself problematic. (Clegg et al., 2006: 13)

What is remarkable in this argument is that it is not a question at all of considering the nature of management or its determinations. Rather, it is the "overarching analytical concepts", including domination and exploitation, which are problematic and simply make management appear as totalizing or dominating.

Here the consequences of a rejection of Marx are stark. Clegg et al. suggest that management can be represented in terms of polyphony, rather than domination or exploitation, without however providing any account of how management could in practice become polyphonic (Parker, 2006a). Clegg et al. take no account of factors which might limit the possibilities of management becoming polyphonic, since they are not interested at all in providing an account of the determinations of management. They are merely concerned with providing a different concept of management, one that entails polyphony, rather than an analysis of management and a concept of management which accounts for the ways in which management is made to speak, or who it might be speaking for.

The consequence of Clegg et al.'s rejection of Marx, then, is an embrace of management, and the complete autonomy of management in theory. No account

is provided of management's polyphony in reality, but a theoretical

representational break towards polyphony is supposed to suffice. These authors

conceive of the possibility of being for management, and enact this possibility by

proposing a concept of the polyphonic organization. Critical management studies

here emerges as resolutely anti-Marxist. This position, one extreme position on

Marx and management in critical management studies, contrasts sharply if not so

much in its theorization of management then in its politics for management.

Parker against management

In this section I will read Parker's (2002) *Against Management: Organization in

the Age of Managerialism* symptomatically. In the previous section, Clegg et al.'s

(2006) work resulted in a call to embrace management. It was suggested that

critical management studies should contemplate being for management, and it

was proposed that this was supposed to be a matter of thinking of management

in terms of polyphony. While Clegg et al.'s (2006) text was itself a response to

Against Management, Parker (2006a) responded to it by reasserting his analysis

of management, and his oppositional stance. In Parker's view, Clegg et al. had

missed a crucial point, namely to consider all the ways in which management

today is precisely not polyphonic, and to offer explanations for why this is the

case or how this could become otherwise. Parker's work therefore offers a stark

contrast to that of Clegg et al. (2006), and promises that critical management

studies has successfully identified and characterised management as an object of

theory, and has developed a critique of it. *Against Management* therefore

represents an important statement of later critical management studies.

Parker is a figure who emerges later than the authors considered in the previous chapter, and who has since contributed extensively to critical management studies. Parker was heavily involved in debates on postmodernism (e.g. 1992a; Hassard and Parker, 1993), partly responding to Clegg (1990), and the implications of postmodernism for critique (Parker, 1995; Clegg, 1995; Willmott, 1997). Here a line of argument privileging the primacy of ethics (Jones, 2003a: 226-227) emerged that Parker subsequently developed both in an intervention in labour process theory (Parker, 1999; Thompson et al., 2000) already considered in chapter 6, as well as in discussions on discourse, organization and epistemology (Parker, 2000; Oswick et al., 2000). Parker also contributed to debates around ethics and politics in critical management studies (2003b). *Against Management* stands out in his work insofar as it represents an attempt to amalgamate earlier work particularly on community (1998a), business ethics (e.g. 1998; 2003a), and critical management studies (2003b), and – continuing the line of argument privileging ethics – articulating a critical position on management, which I will explore below. The book is also pivotal in his work insofar as it leads on to his later work on alternative organization (Parker et al., 2007) and the attempt to develop a cultural studies of organization (Parker, 2006; Rhodes and Parker, 2008). In the symptomatic reading I will consider how *Against Management* relates to Parker's earlier and later work, as well as to critical management studies more widely, highlighting in particular how the emergence of capital as a symptom in Parker's work can be accounted for by a particular reading of Marx performed by Parker.

Parker commences his book with a description of some features of his object of critique. Management is said to have become ubiquitous, "an inextricable part of the common sense of my world, and almost certainly of yours too" (2002: 2). In Parker's view, "many people believe that management is a precondition for an organized society, for social progress and economic growth" (ibid.). Here management appears as a very broad category, and for Parker this is necessarily so, since "what we understand as management nowadays is predicated on a very large story about social progress" (2002: 5).

> [T]he very generality of management reflects a claim that this is a form of knowledge that can be made widely applicable across a huge variety of domains. Once it has been learnt, management can be applied anywhere, to anything or anyone. More than any other form of knowing or practice, management is claimed to be absolutely nomadic and universally useful. It is the synthesis and culmination of the stories of control of things, the control of people and even the control of control itself." (Parker, 2002: 5)

Parker therefore adopts a necessarily broad definition from a common sense understanding of management (see also Grey, 1999). He attributes the use of the term management in the widest sense to the way it is today understood to provide control over things, over people, and over control itself, as the quote above suggests. Parker suggests that three definitions of management can be appropriated: management as a person, i.e. the manager; management as a practice; and management as an academic discipline (2002: 6-9). The ubiquity of management is therefore explained with reference to its broad definition and possible applicability to almost all areas of life, and through the visibility of

managers and management as practice, as well as the discipline of management which is seen to produce it.

Parker defines managerialism as "generalized ideology of management", and the corporation as the home of the imperialism of management (2002: 11). It is against this ubiquity and dominance of management, which in his view dominates the way we think about organization, that Parker positions himself.

> So I am *not* (in some perverse way) trying to set this book up against management as coping, or against all versions of organization, or even against all versions of markets. I *am* trying to argue that the particular version of managerialism that has been constructed over the past century is deeply implicated in a wide variety of political and ethical problems, and that it limits our capacity to imagine alternative forms of organizing. This, it seems to me, is a matter of politics, because conceptions of organizing are politics made durable. (Parker, 2002: 11-12)

Parker then has positioned his text against a certain managerialism, but is this object of analysis and critique clearly defined? At this point in the book, Parker has merely noted the dominance of managerialism as a way of thinking about organizing, has lamented this dominance, and has made reference to "a wide variety of political and ethical problems" in which managerialism is implicated. He has also suggested that managerialism, despite its ubiquity, is "at home" in the corporation. Insofar as the corporation is understood to be a capitalist form of organization, this is a first suggestion of a link between managerialism and capital. It is in the rest of the book, however, that Parker tries to explore and carve out a critique of managerialism as an ideology of management.

Parker does not proceed, as some of the other authors considered in this thesis,

with a reading of Marx or others, or with a theoretical discourse in which a

concept of management is developed. Instead, Parker turns to a discussion of

discourses of or against management to search for a definition and critique of

management in these texts. Parker commences with a consideration of

bureaucracy, citizenship and community. In the chapter on community, Parker

identifies the key question as "whether, or under what conditions, a critical

politics might sponsor the idea of an organizational or work-related community

and what form such a community might take" (2002: 68). Here Parker seeks to

appropriate a discourse on community at work of which he is highly critical,

since it is espoused by management itself, and is therefore in danger of being

tainted or appropriated by managerialism. Parker, however, wants to avoid an

easy dismissal of these discourses as ideology. Parker proceeds to sketch an

"orgunity" as a "thought experiment, an ideal type, to see how far the community

in organization idea might be taken" (2002: 81).

Parker here proceeds along similar lines as those followed by Clegg et al.: the

question of how management could be otherwise is considered to be a question

of imagination and thought experimentation. The limits of managerialism must

first be overcome in thought. There are however two important differences in

Parker. On the one hand, Parker in this instance reads Marx also in his reflections

on community, once in understanding community as freedom in association

(Parker, 2002: 80), and again with regards to the common ownership of the

means of production as a necessary prerequisite for community at work (2002:

82-83). Parker here reads and appropriates Marx selectively, and while it is not apparent how sustained this engagement is, Parker also points to its limits when he warns that he does not consider it convincing to dismiss any claim to organizational community within the current relations of production as false consciousness, as he suggests a "simplistic Marxist alternative" view would (2002: 88). More on Parker's reading and appropriation of Marx shortly.

On the other hand, and more importantly, a difference between Clegg et al. and Parker emerges when the limits of this thought experiment on management are pointed out. Where in Clegg et al. it was a matter merely of imagining how polyphonic management could be, in Parker capital intervenes.

> [T]here is a sense here that a particular form of warmly comforting language is being colonized for largely utilitarian ends. As even Deal and Kennedy ruefully acknowledge (2000), the actual practices of contemporary capitalism tend to work against the potential stabilities of community, culture, citizenship and so on. There is much talk about consent and commitment, but in practice down-sizing, mergers, out-sourcing, McJobs and so on are far more characteristic of the contemporary lean and mean landscape of work. (Parker, 2002: 86)

The limits of the discourse on community at work is established then not simply through a lack of imagination. It is also limited by colonization "for largely utilitarian ends", if not by the determination of capital then at least by a certain capitalist discourse of efficiency and profit. Parker acknowledges a similar problem with regards to the discourse of business ethics (see also Jones et al.,

2005: 96ff.). Parker again attempts to wrest a critique of managerialism from the discourse of business ethics, only to note the limits of this endeavour.

> In a strange and potentially catastrophic reversal... the very words that might be used to sponsor radical change are appropriated and domesticated by managerialism and placed in the service of a globally rapacious capitalism. Politics disappears, and the casuistical ethics of the bottom line claims its place. Ethics becomes something to be fitted into the corporate strategy document. (Parker, 2002: 93)

Parker therefore notes that his strategy of appropriating a discourse and attempting to pry it away from managerialism has its limit: capital. Or, to be more precise, it is managerialism itself that succeeds in appropriating the discourse of business ethics and to have it serve capital. Managerialism here is already working for capital. Does Parker clarify the relation between managerialism as a generalized ideology of management, and capital?

Parker here remains at the level of discourse, and does not proceed to outline how conceptually terms such as management and capital are related. The remainder of the text does not reveal a concept of management in some way determined by capital. Instead, there are three or four terms in particular which appear variously in the text, and which stand in an unclear relationship: management; the market; the corporation; and capitalism. The object of critique therefore slips away from Parker. Parker speaks, for example, of "corporate managerialism" (2002: 181), and "myopic market-managerialism" (2002: 125), and in the closing chapter Parker speaks of "the generalized application of managerialism" (2002: 184) as the object of critique, yet he also speaks of

"globalizing turbo-capitalism" bringing forth management (2002: 184). The extent of Parker's conceptual promiscuity is evident in the closing lines of his book.

> As this chapter has shown, there *are* organizational alternatives to market managerialism and corporate domination. History does not have to end with global capitalism, even though there are powerful forces who are trying to persuade us that there are no alternatives. Dissent is difficult under such circumstances, when commonsense seems colonized and 'noble despair' a preferable option. But commonsense is not the end of thought or action, and despair feeds only on itself. Alternatives can be built, and should be built, but this is only to suggest how the story might begin. (Parker, 2002: 213)

Parker here speaks of "market managerialism", "corporate domination" and "global capitalism", although no commentary is offered on the relation between these terms. Parker, however, suggests that managerialism is the key object of critique, and that it is a matter not of establishing conceptual relations between these terms, but of understanding the determinations of discourse. At one point, Parker suggests that management puts forward a "peculiar conception of the market", a rhetoric which provides the legitimation for management's dominance (2002: 185). "The story they tell justifies the centrality of management, their high rewards and status, their 'right' to manage, and warns us of the disastrous consequences should we buck the 'law' of the market" (Parker, 2002: 187). Here then it appears as if management is the determining moment and the market is merely rhetorically used as a justification for management.

Parker does however elsewhere propose a justification for the term market managerialism, and suggests the corporation to be its most developed form.

> So what really seems to have been solidified in this mythical story is the centrality of management (as occupational group, process and form of knowledge) combined with the celebration of a very particular form of market. This story is not a neutral one, in other words. It is an account that elevates top-down versions of power, that legitimizes the separation of conception from execution and the growth of huge disparities in status and reward. Further, in the case of the corporation (perhaps the most highly developed form of market managerialism), it is a story that is spreading across the globe and having disastrous ramifications for the human and non-human environment and for the autonomy of states and local communities. (Parker, 2002: 201)

Here market managerialism involves a particular discourse based on a particular myth of market and management, one which imposes a particular practice that is materialised in the corporate form. Peculiarly, while this statement offers some clarification on the relations between the terms used, the term capital is here excluded. It remains unclear to what extent it is this market managerialism materialised in the corporation that is Parker's object of theory and critique, and what role the term capital plays. Parker remains at the level of a description of managerialism as an ideology of management, and the market and the corporation appear as effects or results of the discursive dominance of managerialism. Parker does not offer a conceptual account of the relation between the terms management, corporation and capital. How are we to account for this state of affairs? While part of this conceptual predicament might be accounted for by the way in which management has gained a certain autonomy

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as an object of theory in critical management studies, I suggest three reasons for the variety of terms present in Parker's text, and for his emphasis on discourse and ideology.

First, Parker's method is one, as already mentioned, that does not proceed through a reading of theoretical texts, or via a conceptual exegesis, but instead through a reading of texts in which objects of analysis and critique emerge. Parker appropriates the discourses on bureaucracy, citizenship and community, as well as on business ethics, critical management studies and anti-capitalism, and wrests a critique of managerialism from these discourses. The plurality of objects in Parker's text then merely represents that to be found in the discourses which he explores. Parker notes that the book "has been concerned to pull a variety of forms of 'noble despair' together, and use them to construct a critique of managerialism", and he adds that he hopes "they add up to an interesting (if not coherent) story" (2002: 182). While Parker suggests that the discourses considered in his book "all add up to a widespread questioning of managerialism", he concedes that it might not be possible to "add all these bits and pieces together and get a new social movement" (2002: 187). What Parker acknowledges here then are the limits of his methods, namely that it is not to be expected that a fully formed critique of managerialism will emerge. Parker proceeds with this type of approach in his later work on cultural studies (Parker, 2006b; Rhodes and Parker, 2008), where he proposes, "instead of providing a critique *of* culture we instead attempt to document the 'critique *in* culture'" (Rhodes and Parker, 2008: 633). This approach to the development of critique is thus one that is widespread particularly in Parker's later work. Part of the reason

that Parker gives for this approach is a critique of Marxist and Foucauldian approaches.

> Now it might be that what we are actually documenting here are the painful moments when resistance accommodates itself to power as if popular culture acts as a metaphorical safety valve in the grand machine of capitalism... This might be a position that would be adopted by (some) Marxists and/or Foucauldians who wished to explain pessimistically that we can never escape from ideology or discourse, condemned forever to march in the prison yard of life with our eyes always looking down. Of course, on their own terms, such positions are self-sealing, but also unprovable. (Rhodes and Parker, 2008: 634)

Rhodes and Parker here suggest that it is worthwhile to explore the critiques present in popular culture, and importantly they propose that Marxist or Foucauldian positions that discount these critiques in advance as hopeless are "unprovable". More on this, particularly Parker's position on the relation between epistemology and critique, shortly.

A second reason that justifies the variety of terms present in Parker's text is his position on theory, or more precisely his refusal of Theory. Parker suggests that a concern for Theory, with a capital T, is an academic obsession of no relevance to political action.

> But what Theory do you need to throw a brick through the window of a McDonald's? Who is most relevant in taking aim at corporate capitalism – Marx, Althusser or Deleuze? Who cares, outside the seminar room? Of course we all need theory (with a small 't') to recognize a brick and a window, but do we need a Theory to connect them? ... If academics continue to play their endless glass bead game in which 'theory' is incorporated within

'Theory' they are doomed to relative irrelevance in the bigger games that shape all our

lives. (Parker, 2002: 162-163)

For Parker, then it is not necessary to provide a conceptual definition of a term

such as management or capital, or provide an account of their relation or

determination, since such theory is simply not required. Parker is therefore

content with the conceptual incoherence evident in his text. He considers

arguments within academia, regarding for example the ends of critique and what

counts as critical management studies, to be unhelpful.

Critical? Critical of capitalism, or managerialism, or corporate domination? Critical of

patriarchy, or imperialism, or heterosexism? What can be included and what must be

excluded? Further, are we to be critical of positivism, of the hegemony of the scientific

method? Or should we be suspicious of any claims to truth, whether realist or

interpretivist? And if our critique becomes accepted, perhaps the cornerstone of a new

hegemony, should we switch positions and become critical of that too? (Parker, 2002: 127)

Parker, then, seeks to put forth a critique of managerialism. He provides a loose

definition of management, and defines managerialism as the generalized

ideology of management. The market is considered a rhetorical prop for this

managerialism, and the corporation provides it a home. This is as much

conceptual work as Parker performs in his text, and it is perhaps already more

than is to be expected, considering Parker's position on theory, and his method

of taking his objects of inquiry from existing discourses.

What is striking here, however, is that management as an object of theory and critique remains seriously under-theorized and hardly characterized. Parker suggest that the dominance of management is reinforced by managerialism as the ideology of management, and Parker's work can therefore be considered an ideology critique of managerialism. Yet management itself as an object, and as a practice reinforced by the managerialist ideology, remains evasive. Parker's text functions largely as a critique of managerialist ideology, but not as an analytic of management. The consequence of this is that as long as Parker engages with the ideological level, the practical level of management escapes. It is only to the extent that the ideological level is considered to be dominant that the critique articulated in Parker will have an effect.

Here Parker is surprisingly close to Clegg et al., who similarly suggested that it was merely a theoretical matter of conceptualizing management in terms of polyphony, rather than of providing an account of the way in which certain determinations of management preclude such polyphony. Parker comes very close to such a position when he notes:

> I *am* trying to argue that the very peculiar and particular notion of management that has been constructed over the past century is deeply implicated in a wide variety of political and ethical problems, and that it limits our capacity to imagine alternative forms of organizing. (Parker, 2002: 187)

And

> The enemy that needs to be named, then, is not managers as such, or business gurus, or the WTO, or compliant politicians, but lack of radical imagination. Being against management and managerialism, in the way that I want to end this book, is not meant to stop with an unquestioned sense of my own righteousness but to (again) lay the foundations for an endless utopian project that experiments with different ways of organizing ourselves." (Parker, 2002: 211)

In suggesting that it is the ideology of managerialism that limits our imagination, and that it is a question of a radical imagination for organization, Parker shuns the question of the determination of management by factors other than ideology, including capital. Here a reading of Parker's earlier work can explain how Parker comes to this position, and how this relates to his reading of Marx.

Marxist humanism as ethical resource

In one of his earlier pieces (1992a) Parker had sought to intervene in the discussions around postmodernism in organization studies, discussions which were sparked by key contributions such as those from Cooper and Burrell (1988) and Clegg (1990). At that point Parker had attempted to draw a distinction between postmodern organizations and post-modern organization theory, between postmodernism as periodization and epistemology, but had himself not taken a clear position on these matters. After a critique by Tsoukas (1992), Parker responded by "getting off the fence" (1992b), consequently developing his position in Parker (1995). There, Parker argued "the key problem raised by postmodernists is the impossibility of having certain knowledge about 'the Other' (person, organization, culture, society)" (1995: 553). For Parker this

leads to relativism with regards to claims to truth, and what he characterises as a postfoundationalism. Parker suggests that as soon as the challenge of postmodernism is accepted, namely to acknowledge the relativity of truth claims, a theorist has the choice either of being a postmodernist following Lyotard or a critical modernist following Habermas (Parker, 1995: 554). Parker sides with critical modernism and suggests that this is sufficient to "be humble about your truth claims" (ibid.). Parker effectively suggested three positions on knowledge: systemic modernism, critical modernism and postmodernism, and Parker discounts the systemic modernist position, as it does not respond to the postmodernist challenge. Here Parker is drawing on the distinction between systemic and critical modernism put forward by Cooper and Burrell (1988), and identifies with the critical modernist position in order to fend off the postmodernist position, which he identifies with Clegg (1990) amongst others.

The consequences of Parker's analysis are that organization studies is caught between systemic modernism and postmodernism, which are both unacceptable positions for Parker. His aim is to "provide the theoretical clarity which will allow critical-radical studies of organization to negotiate or avoid the subjectivist and relativist quagmire of postmodernism without falling into the trap of naïve positivism or empiricism" (1995: 554). Parker therefore attempts to develop a critical modernist position, with reference to Alvesson and Willmott (1992), that does not have any pretensions to science, but that still gives a theorist reason to write. Parker finds this reason in humanism.

> If the dominant mood of the late twentieth century is aesthetic irony, I would wish this to be replaced with a mid-twentieth century existential passion and engagement on the grounds that it is difficult to speak clearly when you have your tongue thrust firmly in your cheek. Because of this, I will certainly be accused of 'humanism', and possibly also the greater sin of 'bourgeois humanism', but unless I act (and write) as if I were an individual capable of making choices then I do not understand how I can treat others with the respect I accord to (my)self – however ontologically fictive that self might be. (Parker, 1995: 56)

Here humanism emerges in Parker's work as a justification for writing which only involves relative claims to truth and no pretensions to science. Humanism here is introduced as a solution to an epistemological problem, but Parker gives little justification for this manoeuvre. I will shortly show how Parker looks to Marx to provide such an argument.

Parker develops this position later when he argues that postmodernism "has explicitly moved ethics to a new centrality" in the human sciences (1998a: 2).

> To put it simply, if there are no foundational grounds for epistemology or ontology then we either stop writing altogether or provide ethical-political reasons why we believe our writing is important. This is not to say that we will therefore discover foundations for ethics either, but simply to say that ethical-political claims of some sort are made – perhaps have to be made – to account for any saying and hence the possible reasons for making that saying. (Parker, 1998a: 2)

This centrality of ethics for Parker is also supported by the "cultural or humanist turn in theories of organizations" (1998a: 3). Parker makes ethics primary where questions of epistemology do not offer solutions. Parker himself develops this

argument in debates with labour process theory (Parker, 1999), where he intervenes to suggest that "if epistemological purity cancels out ethical commitment, and vice versa (Parker 1992)" (1999: 26), then "it might be rather more productive if we simply begin with ethics (Parker 1995; Willmott 1997)" (1999: 41). Parker intervenes in a similar fashion in debates around discourse, organization and epistemology (Parker, 2000; Oswick et al., 2000), suggesting that epistemological arguments are in fact standing in for political and ethical arguments to be had instead.

This reading of earlier texts by Parker puts into context some of the gestures performed in *Against Management*. Parker privileges ethics and sidelines questions of knowledge or epistemology. Parker's position on theory and against Theory outlined above can therefore be seen to stand in direct connection with his earlier arguments: since certainty in knowledge is impossible, and since questions of knowledge are a "less important sideshow" (Parker, 2000), Parker does not offer a theoretical treatise on management, or a conceptual exposition of management and its relation to capital or the corporation. Instead, Parker is preoccupied with developing an ethical critique of managerialism. It is in articulating this critique that Parker draws on Marx again.

> If work is conceptualized as wage labour, and often labour that is fairly meaningless for those people who engage in it, then alternative organizational forms such as those I have described here can be seen as attempts to make work more meaningful... Work, in other words, could be one of the ways in which we become human, and not just a job performed in particular times and places for money. This suggest a humanist Marxist way of thinking about how the potential relationship between human beings and their world might be

understood in terms of creative labour, and how capitalist conceptions of 'work' serve to alienate people from this possibility and make labour into something external and wearisome. (Parker, 2002: 208-209)

Parker had noted earlier with regards to debates in labour process theory encountered in Chapter 6 that he is "generally identified as one of the post-structuralists and not one of the neo-Marxists" (2002: 116). It is therefore necessary to briefly explore Parker's reading of Marx. Parker had already suggested earlier that "the labour process 'tradition' is, for me, simply one (neo-Marxian) element in a strand of theory and analysis that focuses on inequalities and injustices in organizations and society with the intent to understand and change them" (Parker, 1995: 554). Parker there introduced Marxism as a resource for ethical arguments about management and organization. This treatment of Marx, and this reading of Marx in the context of postmodernism, is also evident in Parker's most pronounced statement on and reading of Marx (Wray-Bliss and Parker, 1998).

Wray-Bliss and Parker suggest that "Marxism can be seen as an ethical stance in itself – and a very powerful one at that" (1998: 30), and they "argue for a Marxism which is humanist and respectful of agency, an interpretation usually associated with Marx's early, rather than late, writings" (ibid.). To support their reading of Marx, Wray-Bliss and Parker differentiate between a Marxist ethic and a Marxist "science" (1998: 31), and provide a critique of the latter. For them "scientific" Marxism, including the structuralist Marxism of Althusser, is dogmatic insofar as it claims epistemological authority for itself (1998: 32).

However, Wray-Bliss and Parker suggest that the teleological worldview implied by this scientific Marxism "effectively means that questions concerning the lived moralities of capitalism or the basis of knowledge and judgement are simply irrelevant because Marxist science claims to have access to the truth" (ibid.). Parker and his co-author here aim the postmodern argument regarding the impossibility of the certainty of truth at this Marxism.

> In other words, by attempting to provide an epistemological warrant for its work, rather than engaging with debates about ethics, or practical political intentions and effects, scientific Marxism effectively ends discussion, analysis and, ultimately, agency. (Wray-Bliss and Parker, 1998: 34)

Here again it is epistemology that gets in the way of ethics. However, for Wray-Bliss and Parker there is another Marx, the early, humanist Marx, which can be read differently to offer a Marxist ethic. It is this Marx which they embrace, and which they propose offers a different reading of Marx.

> Marx does not have to be read as a determinist, and cannot therefore be so easily disregarded by those seeking to develop a formulation of ethics from a post-scientific context. An alternative, and possibly more useful, way to understand Marxist thought is one that presents people not as passive and determined subjects of historical and economic forces, but as active, creative, and resistant human beings engaged in the construction of their world and themselves. (Wray-Bliss and Parker, 1998: 35)

Parker affirms a humanist reading of Marx also in the text considered here (Parker, 2002: 208-209). In particular, Wray-Bliss and Parker suggest that it is

the concepts of labour and alienation in Marx that lend themselves to a development of an ethical perspective, and they outline and discuss the four aspects of alienation that Marx (1844) develops, and propose that these offer an ethical critique of capitalism.

> So, through employing these various formulations of alienation, it becomes possible to argue that capitalism itself is an unethical state of affairs because it denies certain human possibilities. Within a capitalist society we are prevented, through the objective structures we create and that create us, from realizing our unique potential to self-create and world create. (Wray-Bliss and Parker, 1998: 41)

At the same time, Wray-Bliss and Parker suggest that alienation should not be narrowly defined, that the flexibility of the concept alienation is actually advantageous, and that "it is important that the use of the concept of alienation does not in itself become alienating" (1998: 41). Here alienation is understood not as a structural condition of the working class or other, but is understood discursively as a concept which can be appropriated by an ethical critique of capitalism (see also Costas and Fleming, 2009; Fleming, 2009).

Wray-Bliss and Parker, then, follow the pre-reading of Marx provided by Althusser (1969) and Burrell and Morgan (1979), and contrast a structuralist Marxism with a humanist Marxism. And they follow the critiques of structuralist Marxism of Willmott and Clegg, amongst others, encountered in Chapter 7. They also read Marx through postmodernism, in relation to the arguments developed in Parker (1995). Marx here is abandoned as a theorist of capital, and Marxism is rejected as a science, while an ethical critique of capitalism is developed from

Marx. The late Marx is rejected on account of his scientism and modernism, while the early Marx is appropriated as a resource in the development of a humanist ethics. Marx here provides a resource for the development of a humanism that Parker only announced hesitantly earlier (1995: 56).

Parker's reading of postmodernism and of Marx through postmodernism can therefore account for the way in which in *Against Management* Parker does not provide a theoretical exegesis or conceptual account of management and its relation to capital. Parker foregrounds ethics and politics (see also Parker, 2003), while questions of epistemology and knowledge are only of secondary importance. Nonetheless, capital emerges in Parker's text, where it does appear, as in the examples given above, as a symptom, which the text can no longer account for. The appearance of the term capital in Parker's text suggest that there is an excess here which Parker does not account for theoretically or conceptually. While this can be understood as an attempted exclusion of capital as an object of theory, one that could be related to Parker's reading of Marx, it can also be understood as a symptom insofar as its appearance already points to a text beyond this text. Additionally, the appearance of capital as a symptom in Parker's text also suggests that management as an object of theory is itself found to be insufficient. Parker cannot exclude the term capital from his text, because he finds it impossible to speak of management without speaking of capital.

Capital as symptom

In this chapter I explored the theoretical positions of Clegg et al. (2006) and Parker (2002) as providing similar analyses of management in terms of

discourse and opposed politics in terms of a *for* and an *against* management. Clegg et al.'s anti-Marxism and Parker's ambiguous ethical Marxism are presented here as two particular positions on Marx in critical management studies, emerging from different readings of Marx through postmodernism in particular. A few outcomes of this symptomatic reading of Clegg et al. and Parker are worth highlighting.

First, in Clegg et al. (2006) management appears as a theoretically autonomous object. Clegg et al. provide no account of the determinations of management, and do not attempt to establish conceptual relations between management as an object of theory and other such objects, such as capital. Management is defined as polyphony, which is understood to be a matter of imagination. While Parker (2002) similarly focuses on managerialism as a discourse, he develops a critique of that ideology of management. His reference to a few real as well as imaginative limits to the polyphony of management leads him to explore critiques of management in various discourses. Parker, however, does not provide a theoretical exegesis or conceptual account of management, and instead remains at the discursive level. The determinations of management, and the relation of management to capital, remain under-theorized.

Second, in Clegg et al. (2006) capital disappears as an object of theory as a consequence of their anti-Marxism. Here all traces of a Marxist problematic, one in which capital is the primary object of theory, are erased. Clegg et al. understand management to be an object of theory sufficient unto itself, and an object not so much of theory as of imagination; it is, in fact, difficult to speak of a

theory of management in the case of Clegg et al. Several critics of this position (Parker, 2006a; Willmott, 2006) have argued against such a conceptualisation of management as polyphony. In particular, a missing link to capital as an object of theory is identified. In the symptomatic reading of Parker (2002) above, I demonstrated how capital emerges as a symptom in Parker's text, as an object of theory that is not conceptually integrated into his critique of managerialism, and one that is foreclosed by Parker's hesitance to offer a theory of management rather than a discursive and ethical critique of it. Where Clegg et al. try to avoid capital as an object of theory, then, at the limit of Parker (2002) capital appears as a symptom that points to the insufficiency of management as an autonomous object of theory, as an object of theory already corrupted or marked by capital, a symptom which Parker, however, does not see.

Finally, this emergence of capital as a symptom in some of critical management studies can be understood as a consequence of a particular reading of Marx. I argued above that capital disappears in Clegg et al. as a consequence of their anti-Marxism, and how in Parker it re-emerged as symptom again as a consequence of his reading of Marx as ethicist but not theorist of capital. As capital emerges as a symptom in critical management studies, as an object of theory that is not accounted for, this particular moment in critical management studies will lead to a different moment, one in which critical management studies recognizes capital as symptom. In the next chapter I will demonstrate through a symptomatic reading of Fleming and Spicer (2007) how there the recognition of capital as symptom coincides with a particular return to a reading of Marx and Marxism. These different positions on Marx and different theories of

management, then, show once again how intimately a reading of Marx is related to the establishment of a problematic of management, and how capital is still read in the business school, where it is read, through Marx. It is also a matter, there, of countering the positions against Theory in Clegg et al. and Parker, to offer a theory of management, and capital.

9 FROM CAPITAL AS SYMPTOM TO RETURN TO MARX

Introduction

In this chapter I will explore a certain moment in later critical management studies. Specifically, I propose to explore a text (Fleming and Spicer, 2007) in which capital appears as a symptom, as a theoretical object that the text cannot account for properly, but, unlike Parker's (2002) text considered in the previous chapter, this is also a text in which an attempt is made to account for capital. Here then a response to capital as symptom emerges, namely a certain return to Marx, or, more specifically, to a certain kind of contemporary Marxism. The symptomatic reading will trace the readings of Marx in the text, trace the emergence of capital as a symptom, and then note moments in the text where this symptom is addressed via a reading of contemporary Marxism. It must be emphasized that this moment in Fleming and Spicer's text is not representative of critical management studies. The readings of Marx and positions on Marx, such as Willmott's post-Marxism or Clegg's anti-Marxism, still persist. However, Fleming and Spicer's text provides one example of a text in which capital is recognized as a symptom, and in which a response to this recognition of a certain theoretical limit of critical management studies is developed in a turn to a

reading of contemporary Marxism. The concluding section of this chapter will explore other instances of such moments in later critical management studies where a certain return to Marx and Marxism is performed, and will situate these moments in critical management studies, as well as provide some characteristics.

I will read Fleming and Spicer's *Contesting the Corporation: Struggle, Power and Resistance in Organizations* (2007) symptomatically. There are several reasons, apart from the one given above, for choosing to focus on this text and these authors. Fleming and Spicer are representative of a later generation of writers in critical management studies who are grappling with the readings of Marx performed in earlier critical management studies, not least the ones presented in the previous chapters. So, for example, in their contribution to *Contemporary Organization Theory* (Jones and Munro, 2005), Fleming and Spicer (2005) discuss the work of Clegg. There are three specific criticisms that Fleming and Spicer make of Clegg's work, which are concerns that guide their own work. They point to the danger of discursive idealism in taking a discursive approach to organizations in general and to power as the constitution of subjectivity in particular (2005: 102); it is these limits of a discursive approach that is addressed in their work. They also suggest that Clegg's circuits of power model is ironically abstract, and evinces a tendency to grand theory that is a remainder of the 1970s (2005: 103); their own work is concerned with developing a less abstract and more practical model of power. Finally, they criticize Clegg for "his unwillingness to go beyond formalist description and develop a more normative political theory" (2005: 103), which they set out to do in their own work.

Fleming and Spicer therefore are working at certain limits of earlier work in critical management studies.

Fleming and Spicer have also already contributed to some key debates in critical management studies. In particular, their work deals with the control-resistance paradigm that I already identified in Chapter 6 as a key aspect of debates in labour process theory. Here their contributions involve, for example, a consideration of alternative modalities of resistance (Fleming and Sewell, 2002), responding particularly to earlier work by Willmott (1993) on culture, and an emphasis on cynicism as an aspect of contemporary dynamics of workplace resistance (Fleming and Spicer, 2003), returning to Braverman's (1998: 104) identification of unbounded cynicism as a consequence of the habituation of the worker to the new mode of production. Fleming and Spicer have explored and encouraged new approaches to organizational politics beyond power and resistance (Fleming and Spicer, 2008), and they have also intervened in key debates in critical management studies, for example with regards to the supposed non-performative intent of critical management studies (Fournier and Grey, 2000; Grey and Willmott, 2005; Spicer et al., 2009), or with regards to the political pessimism of some of critical management studies (Burrell, 2001; Fleming, 2004; De Cock et al., 2007). More recently, they have also turned to themes other than management that are gaining attention in critical management studies, in particular entrepreneurship (Jones and Spicer, 2009), leadership (Alvesson and Spicer, 2010), and the question of the role of authenticity in critique (Fleming, 2009).

Here I will focus specifically on *Contesting the Corporation* both for its importance for critical management studies in general and for its position in the work of Fleming and Spicer in particularly. In the work of Fleming and Spicer the book plays a key role in two respects. First, it is an attempt to amalgamate earlier work on cynicism (e.g. Fleming and Spicer, 2003), sex (Fleming, 2007), space (Fleming and Spicer, 2004), the public sector and globalisation (Spicer and Fleming, 2007) and social movements (Spicer and Böhm, 2007). Fleming and Spicer here collect much of their earlier work and put it in relation to each other. Second, and more importantly, they seek to develop a framework for studying power and resistance at work in terms of the concept of struggle (see also Fleming and Spicer, 2008). Partly this is their response to Clegg's and much other work on power in organizations; and it is also an attempt to schematize and structure their previous contributions. A symptomatic reading of this work will reveal that this attempt to provide a framework through which to read and with which to conceptualize Fleming and Spicer's previous work is only partially successful. *Contesting the Corporation* is also important for critical management studies insofar as it is a key later theoretical position statement. Where in Parker's *Against Management* (2002) market managerialism emerged as the principal object of critique, and Parker's critique took the form of an ideology critique and a discursive struggle, in *Contesting the Corporation* it is the corporation that emerges as the central object of critique, and Fleming and Spicer's critique takes the form of an analytic framework for studying struggle in organizations, although, as I will demonstrate shortly, there are also other aspects to their work.

Power, resistance and struggle in the corporation

Let us proceed, then, with a reading of *Contesting the Corporation*. Fleming and Spicer open their book with a story about McDonalds, and conclude that this story

> reminds us that the largest organizations have astounding power over our working lives, our consumption patterns, our bodies, the economy and our very way of life. The story also reminds us that the power of large corporations is far from unchecked. Any organization like McDonald's faces a thousand swarming refusals, ranging from the disgruntled employee who mocks his/her officious boss to the social movement that unveils corporate misdemeanours in the international media. At the very heart of organizational life is the ongoing struggle between those in the corporation who seek to assert power and those who seek to resist and perhaps destroy this power. It is this struggle that gives organizations a sense of vitality and a life-giving political pulse. It is this struggle that is the topic of this book. (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 3)

Fleming and Spicer thus highlight the terms struggle and corporation as the most important ones for their book: it is to be concerned with struggle in and around corporations. These terms, however, do not appear by themselves. The term struggle is supposed if not to completely replace then certainly to supplement the terms power and resistance, and Fleming and Spicer proceed in Part I of their book to outline how the term struggle is to be used alongside the terms power and resistance. I will explore this focus on struggle shortly.

In the case of the term corporation, however, things are unclear. It is used in the above quote seemingly interchangeably with the term organization. Fleming and

Spicer speak of the largest organizations, and of large corporations; of organizations facing a thousand refusals, and of movements unveiling corporate misdemeanours; of struggle between those in the corporation, and of struggle giving organizations vitality. Yet where Fleming and Spicer provide ample justification for the use of the term struggle, they do not comment upon their use of the term corporation, nor the term organization. A certain self-evidence seems to be assumed here in the text, one that perhaps implies that large organizations usually are corporations. Yet the substitutability of these terms is one that has been put into question in critical studies of management considered so far. The work of Baran and Sweezy (1966) and Braverman (1998) in particular is concerned with understanding the rise of monopoly capitalism entailing the rise of the corporation and within it the rise of management. There it is a question of understanding how the corporate form establishes itself as a dominant form of organization, and in chapter 4 I also emphasised how for Braverman it is also a matter of developing a critique of corporate organization and to develop a different image of organization. Furthermore, as already discussed in chapter 5, Burawoy criticises organization theory for speaking of organization abstractly, which implies the loss of "the distinctiveness of the profit-seeking capitalist enterprise", even if it this manoeuvre expresses "a very real truth, namely, the penetration of bureaucratic patterns and commodity relations into all areas of society" (1979: 5-6). For Burawoy it is important precisely to understand how organization is shaped by capital, and therefore to differentiate organization and corporation.

In this context, do Fleming and Spicer offer a reason for the substitution of the terms organization and corporation, or do they proceed to differentiate the terms? Fleming and Spicer do not differentiate the terms; although the continued symptomatic reading shows that here Fleming and Spicer's thought precisely sets a limit, insofar as it poses the question of how organization can be other than corporation. Fleming and Spicer do, however, provide a suggestion for why, in conjunction with the term struggle, and their conceptual work on power and resistance, corporation and organization cannot be seen to be merely synonymous.

> When we approach politics as an ongoing interplay of struggle, we are not led into either surrendering to the power of the corporate prison or whiling away our days in self-indulgent play (or heterotopia, as the case may be today (Hjorth, 2005)). Rather, we recognize that we are always implicated in an ongoing struggle to establish a particular kind of organization. Precisely because this is a struggle, the results are always precarious and open to challenge, compromise and reversal. There is always the possibility of asserting another form of organizing in the face of the status quo. There is always the possibility that the organization elites currently enjoy will be torn asunder and replaced. (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 6)

The concept struggle for Fleming and Spicer then implies that organization is always contested, and that organization is neither simply a "corporate prison" nor merely a question of play or heterotopia. Instead, struggle is always also a struggle about establishing a particular kind of organization, and it is an interminable process. Fleming and Spicer's conceptual work on power and resistance therefore suggests that power is not simply successful in establishing

corporation, and that resistance is also productive of different organization. It is therefore necessary to proceed to Fleming and Spicer's conceptualisation of power, resistance and struggle to explore whether this accounts for the specificity of struggle in and around the corporation.

Fleming and Spicer proceed with exploring first the faces of power and then the faces of resistance to be found in existing literature on power and resistance. Fleming and Spicer commence with asserting that "power and politics are endemic in organizations", and that "organizations have, in fact, become one of the most important sites of power and politics in contemporary societies" (2007: 11-12). They suggest that in the long and complex history of power two traditions of political philosophy have dominated: the normative and the Machiavellian tradition. Fleming and Spicer suggest that what "remains so interesting and perhaps shocking about Machiavelli's work is that he rejects normative niceties to stare into the bloody abyss of power in operation" (2007: 13). Fleming and Spicer propose to explore the four faces of power prevalent in the literature to consider how they help in understanding the workings of power. In this following of Machiavelli they also follow Clegg (in particular 1990), whose work they had characterised as Machiavellian (Fleming and Spicer, 2005). The four faces of power that Fleming and Spicer explore, following Lukes (2005) and others, are: coercion, manipulation, domination and subjectification. These faces are a familiar way of understanding power (e.g. Hindess, 1996). Fleming and Spicer supplement their discussion of faces of power with equivalent faces of resistance, which are: refusal, voice, escape and creation. While Fleming and Spicer suggest that these faces of resistance map onto the faces of power, they

acknowledge "the fuzzy nature of such a mapping", and note that it is "more a heuristic exercise than a concise relational model" (2007: 45).

Fleming and Spicer proceed to argue that there are certain problems with differentiating power and resistance. In particular, they argue that the uncertainty surrounding the distinction between power and resistance relates to three assumptions, namely that power and resistance can be distinguished epistemologically, ontologically or politically and ethically (2007: 48-51). Because of this Fleming and Spicer suggest struggle as a concept as a supplementary term which "captures a more nuanced and ambivalent reality" (2007: 51). Fleming and Spicer identify six features of struggle.

> First, struggle lies at the heart of *political change*. This directly contrasts with the common assumption that struggle represents stalemate and deadlock. Second, struggle constitutes the *self-consciousness* of the actors involved. This contrasts with the common assumption that actors arrive to the struggle with pre-defined ideas about what they want and who they are. Third, struggle produces the *sociality* of actors, in terms of their ability to relate with themselves (what we might describe as self-esteem), their ability to relate with their own groups and their ability to socialize between groups. This contrasts with the common assumption that struggle leads to the breakdown of sociality. Fourth, struggle is *creative*, in that it produces new identities, institutions and social arrangements. This contrasts with the assumption that struggle is a destructive and inimical force. Fifth, struggle occurs through *communicative* action. This contrasts with the assumption that struggle represents the breakdown of communication. Finally, communicative struggle involves a process of *categorization*. This contrasts with the idea that struggle results in the distortion and/or contradiction of social categories. (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 57)

Fleming and Spicer proceed to suggest that the four couplets of power and resistance they discussed can be understood as struggles over action, inaction, interests, and identity (2007: 58-61). They "treat all these modes of struggle as flexible conceptual constructs that are not meant to be mutually exclusive" but instead "describe a more complex set of relationships that animate the dynamic between power and resistance" (2007: 60). Furthermore, Fleming and Spicer suggest that the "most significant aspect of struggle is the fact that it is an ongoing, live, tense and overwhelmingly dynamic social process" (2007: 61). For Fleming and Spicer this requires an inquiry into the temporal dynamics of struggle, of strategies and tactics, and they propose that the interaction of power and resistance can produce different cycles of struggle (ibid.). They identify three possible dynamics of struggle as destructive struggle (resulting in utter victory or annihilation), resentful struggle (an interminable display of resentment) and loving struggle (struggling with someone and acknowledging their right to exist) (2007: 61-64).

There is, then, certainly a lot of conceptual work going on in Fleming and Spicer's outline of their theoretical framework for *Contesting the Corporation*. Fleming and Spicer engage with much of the discussion around power and resistance encountered in previous chapters, and they specifically respond to their own critique of Clegg (Fleming and Spicer, 2005) in developing a less abstract and more practical concept of power and resistance. In terms of the question of their reading of Marx, and of the question of the difference between corporation and organization posed above, a few things are worthy of note. First, Fleming and Spicer still are using the terms corporation and organization interchangeably.

They speak of "faces of power in organizations", "faces of resistance at work", and "struggle in organizations". The specificity of the corporate form recedes to the background, for example when Fleming and Spicer note that they "have traced the various forms of power that are involved in the process of organizing" (2007: 27), or when they note that each of the faces of resistance they outline "represents a particular aspect of dissent that might be found in any act of opposition" (2007: 45). Here power is considered to be involved in any form of organization, and resistance is a part of any act of opposition, whether in an organization or not. This focus on power and resistance (and struggle) without reference to the specificities of the corporation or a capitalist work organization is a tendency that was already present in labour process theory encountered in chapter 6. Fleming and Spicer here can be seen merely to reproduce a certain conceptualisation of power and resistance independent of the corporation or capitalist work organisation as context, one present in early labour process theory, but also in much of the sociological literature on power they draw on (e.g. Lukes, 2005). At this stage, then, the discussion of power and resistance, and the development of the concept struggle, does not clarify the distinction between corporation and organization.

There is, however, second, something more going on in the text. This concerns they way in which Fleming and Spicer, in their criticism of theories of power and resistance, make sustained reference to capital and the way it is excluded from these theories. For example, one of the criticisms of power as coercion is that this view of power hardly poses questions "about aspects of power implicit in the broader system associated with managerial and shareholder capitalism" (2007:

16). Fleming and Spicer also recapitulate Lukes' (2005) critique of power as manipulation, arguing that the focus on individual behaviour ignores "broader structural processes related to capitalism" (2007: 19). With regards to power as domination, Fleming and Spicer endorse Clegg's (1979; Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980) concept of domination, noting that Clegg's work "expands our understanding of how domination operates through shaping ways of life via the broader social structures of capitalism" (2007: 20). And, finally, with regards to power as subjectification, Fleming and Spicer note both how this view of power helps for example to understand accounting systems as rendering subjects "more amenable to the business of capital accumulation", while also acknowledging criticism of this face of power as underestimating "the continuing influence of wider structural relations of force linked to capitalism, the nation state, kinship and so on (Reed, 1998, 2004)" (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 24, 26).

In this section of *Contesting the Corporation*, therefore, capital emerges as an important object of theory, one which Fleming and Spicer consider necessary to be accounted for in theories of power, resistance and struggle. Yet at the same time their theoretical framework neither makes explicit reference to capital, nor does it consider the specificity of the corporation as a capitalist form of organization. That is not to say that much of the discussion around power, resistance and struggle isn't made with reference to capital. So, as already mentioned, all of the figures of power are developed with reference to capital. Fleming and Spicer also suggest that the image of resistance as refusal derives from "a classic Marxist approach" and highlights "overt attempts to subvert capitalism" (2007: 33), and they make reference to *The Communist Manifesto*.

Their characterization of struggle as creative is also derived from Marx's theory of social class (2007: 54). And, more still, their conception of struggle has certain affinities with dialectics, and their conception of cycles of struggles has certain affinities with a Marxist understanding of history as the history of class struggle. Yet still their model does not make explicit reference to capital or the corporation. It is therefore necessary to consider whether in their application of their theoretical framework in the remainder of the book this changes.

From political analytic to moral grammar to communist politics

Fleming and Spicer proceed with a discussion first of "forms of resentful struggle" in Part 2, and then turn to "overt, organized and collective struggle" in Part 3. Here they do not conform to their own distinction between destructive, resentful and loving struggle outlined above, although these types of struggle do appear in their exploration of cases. Part 2 of *Contesting the Corporation* then deals with forms of resentful struggle. Fleming and Spicer had characterised this form of struggle as one in which those involved "do not give up on the possibility of resistance or aim to annihilate their foe utterly. Rather, they seek to show their unhappiness at being dominated, to express their dissatisfaction and drag their feet. In short, they want to show their resentment." (2007: 63). Fleming and Spicer also note that this kind of struggle represents attempts to make domination more tolerable, and perhaps opens up small spaces of freedom, but "ultimately locks these self-same resistors into a kind of sick dependence upon the dominant group" (ibid.). Those involved in resentful struggle, according to

Spicer and Fleming, "are patently unable to effect fundamental change to the kinds of politics they are involved in" (ibid.).

The forms of resentful struggle explored in Part 2 of *Contesting the Corporation* revolve around cynicism, sex and space. In the chapter on cynicism (2007: 69-88), Fleming and Spicer draw in particular on the work of Sloterdijk (1987) and Žižek (1989) to read various ethnographic studies of workplaces in which cynical subjects appear, such as those of Kunda (1992), Collinson (1992), Casey (1995), du Gay (1996) and Ross (2004), and follow much of their earlier analysis (e.g. Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Fleming, 2003). Fleming and Spicer suggest that the concept of struggle helps them to see "how it is always the case that the resisting subject is already deeply implicated in the power that he/she is endeavouring to escape" (2007: 88), and in that context they suggest cynicism is not simply to be written off as a form of struggle in organizations.

> As a dominant mode of struggle in today's work organizations, we do feel that it is important not to write off cynicism and resentment *in toto*, as researchers have tended to do in the past. Although cynicism does not overthrow capitalism, or even glean higher wages, it might have some kind of 'bounded' efficacy in the context of corporate controls that aim to colonize the selves of workers. (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 88)

For Fleming and Spicer, then, cynicism and resentment are forms of struggle that have a limited efficacy, and one of their limits is capitalism. Fleming and Spicer do not specify in what ways capitalism functions as a limit, however. So while Fleming and Spicer clearly acknowledge capital as an object of theory, and as

something that imposes a certain logic and limit to resentful struggle, they do not specify how capital imposes these limits.

In the chapter on sex and desire (2007: 89-107), Fleming and Spicer once again note that the contemporary workplace is marked by a "displacement of traditional forms of conflict", and that "it is not only the labour/capital divide that animates organizational struggle (although that it still an important catalyst) but, rather, a complex admixture of concerns relating to dignity, gender, sexuality and so forth" (2007: 89). Fleming and Spicer go on to explore sex and desire as concerns of a struggle in the workplace other than the capital/labour relation, and these concerns are inscribed in a dynamic of struggle; they are not related to the capital/labour relation. Fleming and Spicer argue that sexuality is a site of multi-levelled combination of power and resistance; and their case example shows that "sexuality is an aspect of managerial control, a site of empowerment and an object of resistance" (2007: 106). They also suggest that these struggles involve both questions of recognition and redistribution, following Fraser (1997); Fleming and Spicer's reading of Fraser on justice will be explored shortly.

Where the chapter on sex and desire explores these as struggles around control in the workplace, and does not explicitly relate these struggles to capital, Fleming and Spicer's discussion of the politics of space in the following chapter (2007: 108-127) is more explicitly concerned with capital. They refer to Marx's study of dark satanic mills, and note how "the physical concentration of wage labourers under a single roof was driven by the capitalist need to discipline and monitor

the execution of work" (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 111). They also make reference to other Marxist authors, such as Harvey and Jameson, to account specifically for the way in which work and space are being rearranged in postmodernity (2007: 113). Nonetheless, Fleming and Spicer do not clearly develop an understanding of how capital influences struggles over work and space, instead suggesting that "newly emerging work forms involve struggle around the meaning and utility of space" (2007: 108) and that "a significant expression of power in contemporary workplaces is not only the control of space inside the organization but also the positioning of the very boundary delineating the inside from the outside" (2007: 110). Struggle, in this case over space, is therefore still conceptualised without explicit reference to capital.

An important twist in the argument developed in the chapter occurs when Fleming and Spicer turn to Hardt and Negri (1994) to suggest that they offer an understanding of how production is now not merely situated in the factory or the office, but how the "space of production becomes abstracted from a fixed and isolatable area to cover the entire social body" (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 125). This version of the social factory thesis (see also Tronti, 2010), one which Fleming and Spicer consider a variant and development of Deleuze's (1992) societies of control thesis, is one that clearly builds on a Marxist analytic of real subsumption, where the spatial organization of work and life is itself subsumed under the imperatives of capital accumulation. Fleming and Spicer, however, distance themselves from the pessimism entailed in this analysis, suggesting instead two different ways of thinking about struggles around workspace: first, "struggle works in the sense of impeding or subverting the powerful

geographical imaginary that is being imposed on existing social relations", and two, the "configuration of domination that we see emerging on the spatial dimension in contemporary organizations… is an incomplete admixture of power and resistance, which worker struggles have determined to some extent" (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 126, 127). Fleming and Spicer here distance themselves from the social factory thesis, and from an analysis in terms of capital accumulation, at least insofar as they consider struggles around work and space to be determined by struggle entailing a dynamic that is not clearly subsumed under capital. How specifically capital figures in Fleming and Spicer's analysis therefore also remains unresolved here; their reading of Hardt and Negri will be explored further later.

In the chapters on resentful struggle, therefore, the status of capital in the analysis provided by Fleming and Spicer remains unclear. In Part 3 of *Contesting the Corporation* Fleming and Spicer proceed with an exploration of overt, organized and collective struggle, with chapters covering struggles around globalization, justice and the common. In the first chapter (2007: 131-149), Fleming and Spicer explore discursive struggles by unions and social movements around globalisation in a public broadcaster (see also Spicer, 2004). Fleming and Spicer find that "resistance groups play an important role in restructuring public sector organizations in a manner that can transform the discourse of globalisation" (2007: 148). In the next chapter (2007: 150-165) Fleming and Spicer explore struggles for justice by "wharfies, queers and capitalists", and analyse these struggles with reference to Fraser's theory of justice (1997; 2005). In the two remaining chapters (2007: 166-182; 183-191) Fleming and Spicer do

not focus on any more cases, but instead develop a conceptual argument around struggle with regards to justice and the common. It is these conceptual developments in the last part of *Contesting the Corporation* that provide some responses to how Fleming and Spicer deal with capital in their conception of struggle.

The first thing to note is that the inclusion of a part of the book on overt, organized and collective struggle is itself a critique of existing work on power and resistance in critical management studies. In particular, Fleming and Spicer suggest that the dominant focus on micro-politics in critical management studies, for example in the work of Thomas and Davies (2005), ignores struggle around organizations that takes place outside the organization or the workplace. Fleming and Spicer argue that to "draw an accurate image of struggle in organizations, we must recognize the obstinate existence of publicly voiced dissent that haunts the contemporary corporate world and its auxiliary power" (2007: 131). Here Fleming and Spicer respond implicitly to earlier criticism of labour process theory which was accused of ignoring collective struggles (Martinez Lucio and Stewart, 1997), as well as to some criticisms levelled at critical management studies itself, already discussed in chapter 7, noting that it is built on a political failure of the left (Hassard et al., 2001). Fleming and Spicer are also aligning themselves with other work in critical management, such as Böhm (2006), which attempts to reposition organization theory by engaging it with political movements (see also Spicer and Böhm, 2007; Böhm et al., 2008). Here Fleming and Spicer are also close to Parker, insofar as they similarly look

for existing critiques of management and capital in discourses of the political sphere.

There are at least three aspects to this move towards a consideration of overtly political struggles that are worth exploring, since they represent a development in Fleming and Spicer's work that allows it to take a more explicit account of capital. First, Fleming and Spicer conceptualise their turn to overt political struggles in terms of the post-Marxism and neo-Gramscianism of Laclau and Mouffe (2001). In chapter 7 I already noted how Willmott (2005; Contu and Willmott, 2005), amongst others (e.g. Böhm, 2006; Contu, 2002), had turned to Laclau and Mouffe both to reach a particular position vis-à-vis Marx and on politics and ethics. Here Fleming and Spicer read Laclau and Mouffe (2001) not so much for their post-Marxism, as will become evident shortly, but rather for their analytic of power. Fleming and Spicer draw on such concepts as "logic of equivalence" and "logic of difference", and of course "hegemony", to analyse and describe the constitution of political subjectivities and positions in the discursive struggles they explore. Whether or not the concept hegemony entails a normative critique or not (cf. Critchley, 2002; Laclau, 2002), Fleming and Spicer here use it simply as a political analytic, not as a normative critique of the political situation at hand. And, as already discussed in the previous chapter with regard to Willmott, Laclau and Mouffe's work on hegemony does not offer a theory of capital, either. Fleming and Spicer, then, insofar as they remain with Laclau and Mouffe, offer only a political analytic of these overt, organized and collective struggles. In the same way in which the discussion of power and resistance in later labour process theory and in critical management studies was

largely conducted without reference to capital, Fleming and Spicer reproduce this same form of analysis at a different level.

Recall, however, that one of the criticisms levelled at Clegg by Fleming and Spicer (2005) was that his work did not offer a normative theory. It is to the normative theory of Nancy Fraser (1997; 2005) that Fleming and Spicer turn in their own work. They discuss it in detail in chapter 8 of *Contesting the Corporation*, and suggest that this focus on justice provides a further level of analysis of struggle in organizations, one often neglected by an analytical focus on "technical features of micro-struggles" (2007: 166).

> In each chapter of this book we have sought to explore how struggle lies at the heart of organizational life. We have tried to uncover some of the ways that people struggle against and with managerial initiatives. These struggles are sparked by a whole range of situations, including antagonistic structural positions between workers and employers, attempts by employees to build dignified identities, the persistence of subcultures of opposition in the workplace, and so forth. We propose that almost all these flash points of struggle seem to point to some elemental concern for a fair distribution of resources, the recognition of oneself as a dignified and meaningful person, and the right to make decisions within the organization. In other words, animating many struggles in organizations is the issue of *justice.* (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 150)

Here, then, Fleming and Spicer propose to introduce Fraser's work on justice to reinterpret all the cases of struggle previously encountered, which are now all to be understood as about certain kinds of justice. The quote above already points to the tripartite division of justice provided in Fraser: redistribution ("fair

distribution of resources"), recognition ("recognition of oneself as a dignified and meaningful person") and participation ("the right to make decisions within the organization") – the latter category only entering Fraser's work later (Fraser, 2005). The "sparks" of struggles here for Fleming and Spicer are of secondary importance, and they do not offer an analysis of them; instead, what interests Fleming and Spicer is exploring how the struggles in organizations encountered in the book can be understood in terms of these different claims to justice. They suggest that claims, at least in the analyses performed in the three small cases they refer to, "were never present in an isolated form" (2007: 164), and further suggest that certain justice claims could be linked in chains of equivalence, leading political groups to gain greater support (ibid.). Fleming and Spicer's argument therefore implies a supplementarity between Laclau and Mouffe and Fraser. Where Laclau and Mouffe provide a political analytic, Fraser provides a moral grammar.

> Fraser's work provides us with a 'moral grammar' to identify and describe the various injustices that people suffer. But, perhaps more importantly, her approach helps us to see how struggles result from low participative parity in matters of recognition, redistribution and representation. Struggles at work can therefore be framed as an attempt to amend and/or redress patterns of misrepresentation, maldistribution and misrecognition. (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 154)

Fleming and Spicer therefore develop a political analytic and a moral grammar for the study of struggle in organizations. Structurally, then, their work is close to that of Parker (2002), who also explored discursive struggles around managerialism (not unlike Spicer and Böhm, 2007), and turned to humanism as a

moral grammar. In chapter 8 I demonstrated how in Parker this led to the emergence of capital as a symptom that was unaccounted for in Parker's text. There is, however, a further and final element to the theoretical framework that emerges in Part 3 of Fleming and Spicer's book, one that is not present in Parker (2002).

As already mentioned, Fleming and Spicer argue that "many analyses of resistance have overemphasized the technical features of micro-struggles... with little mention of the quest for justice underlying such actions" (2007: 166-167). Fleming and Spicer suggest that when "we do study the issue of justice in the context of workplace struggles, we see specific contestations that draw upon wider narratives regarding the society we ought to live in" (2007: 167). They suggest that because of a split between politics and economy many of these public struggles have been excluded from the private space of work organizations, and that "struggle in organizations today involves an attempt to reconfigure the private world of work into a public space of politics where justice can be pursued more widely" (ibid.). They propose "to discuss how we can conceptualize struggle as the creation of a common ground between ostensibly diverse protest groups" (ibid.). Fleming and Spicer proceed to explore three ways in which this common ground between diverse struggles could be created.

With reference to Žižek (2000), the first option they explore is the assertion of new universals. Fleming and Spicer suggest that asserting universal claims for justice "represents a fundamental and thoroughgoing challenge to other

universals quietly taken for granted by both managers and activist in organizations (e.g. 'managerialism', 'marketization', 'globalization', etc.)" (2007: 172). They suggest that any new universal would have to "craft equally universal ideals with regard to different modes of organization", and would involve a radical political intervention a "fundamental break with existing universals, such as global marketization, which currently structure the horizon of possibilities" (ibid.). Fleming and Spicer here identify a danger for the powerful insofar as claims by activists may be far more universal than "the technocratic claims of managerial effectiveness, the necessity of marketization or the inevitability of global corporatization" (ibid.). Here the figures of management, the market and the corporation appear as immediate targets of a potential universal assertion of the common. Fleming and Spicer, however, do not develop an argument as to why these might be privileged targets for such political action.

Fleming and Spicer proceed to explore a second option to create a common ground for struggles. They suggest that Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) logic of hegemony, already encountered above, provides one way of thinking of common ground in terms of the creation of an empty universal of organizational justice. For Laclau and Mouffe a hegemonic act is always one where a particular stands in for a universal; where the universal is an empty place, particularities can temporarily fill this space through a hegemonic articulation. For Fleming and Spicer, however, such a conception of common ground is doomed to fail since it "runs the risk of effectively erasing what is unusual, particular and radical in each struggle, that which is in excess of a universal", and because some struggles

see universality itself as "irrelevant, dangerous and perhaps colonizing" (2007: 177-178).

Fleming and Spicer therefore turn to a third way of conceptualising common ground. They turn to the work of Hardt and Negri (2000; 2004), in particular to explore the concept multitude. Fleming and Spicer explore this concept by noting how the multitude "is a group of singularities that exist and act in common", where the focus is on "common habits shared by different groups – emotions, patterns of communication and 'affinities' that bond resistance groups" (2007: 178). Contra a discursive understanding of the common, Fleming and Spicer remark that in many of the struggles explored there are no overarching criteria in which struggles are articulated, but nonetheless "very diverse peoples are acting in common when they dissent and experience dissatisfaction", and Fleming and Spicer suggest that this "subterranean sociality often goes unobserved" (2007: 179). What produces a common ground, then, are common practices, common patterns of affect, and common modes of communication (ibid.). Here Fleming and Spicer return to their concept of struggle developed earlier (2007: 57), where struggle is understood to be productive of a certain identity, sociality and communication. Fleming and Spicer proceed to ask, reflecting on the three ways of conceiving of common ground for struggles:

> What would a common revolution in workplace politics look like? It is obvious that it would not simply involve introducing some kind of absolute rupture where a despised universal was replaced by another more desirable one (cf. Žižek, 2000). Nor would it involve the courageous but ultimately doomed quest by particular struggles to lay claim to an empty universal (cf. Laclau, 2000). Rather, a revolution of the commons would be one

that simply embellished current day-to-day practices. Such a revolution would not be about trying to arrive at a utopian future, for it would be realizing the common space *that already exists between us*, which is currently used to fuel the vibrancy of the global capitalist system. (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 180-181)

Here Fleming and Spicer endorse Hardt and Negri's (2000) concept of elemental communism and the claim that it is this spontaneous communism "that capitalism and its overarching structures of organizational domination *depend* upon for their own survival, innovativeness and flexibility" (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 181). It is this commonality that Fleming and Spicer see as a "latent yet already existing potential that provides a common ground regarding the justice of organizational life" (ibid.).

In the concluding pages of *Contesting the Corporation*, then, capital finally appears as an object of theory that Fleming and Spicer directly address, and which they make out as the potential target of the struggles for justice at work explored in their book. It is also at this point only that the political analytic and the moral grammar already explored above is supplemented with a communist politics (see also Fleming, 2008). And it is also at this point that Fleming and Spicer turn not towards the post-Marxism of Laclau and Mouffe (2001), but to the autonomist Marxism of Hardt and Negri (1994; 2000; 2004). It is remarkable that after their conceptual work around struggle in organizations consistently grappled with capital as an object to be accounted for, while capital still consistently escaped their conceptual work and struggle was theorized abstractly without direct reference to capital, capital finally is addressed in

Fleming and Spicer's text. In their critique of the "cult of the subject" in critical

management studies, they also criticise that the "thematic of capitalism is

downplayed as irrelevant in these new times of work relations", and they suggest

that "more needs to be said about capitalism, wealth distribution and class

relations since they have been so underplayed in much of the so-called critical

management studies literature" (2007: 187).

In contrast to Parker (2002), Fleming and Spicer acknowledge the emergence of

capital as a symptom that is not accounted for in their text, and they do

commence to address it. As such they point to new work in critical management

studies that once again attempts to read capital, and turns to Marx and Marxism

to do so.

A thousand Marxisms in the business school?

Chapter 3 discussed the heterogeneity of the texts of Marx in terms of three

reasons – the sheer number and diversity of texts, Marx's self-criticism, and the

fall of Soviet dogma. It was also suggested that as long as there was really

existing socialism, Marxism was split into orthodoxies, of the Soviet or Chinese

variety, and various heretical Marxisms. As was shown in this thesis, many of

these heretical Marxisms, in particular structuralist Marxism and critical theory,

and also some orthodox Marxisms, found their way into the business school.

Chapter 3 also suggested that the fall of really existing socialism had as a

consequence not the withering away of Marx and Marxism, but instead of a

multiplication of Marxisms. There are now a thousand Marxisms (Tosel, 2008). Have these thousand Marxisms found their way into the business school?

As much as at the very beginning, the business school turns to Marx as it reads capital. A recent example here is Adler (2007). Adler laments the favouritism post-structuralism has enjoyed in the business school as much as he laments the "insufficiently Marxist foundations" of labour process theory (2007: 1313). Adler proposes to "take one step back with the hope of taking critical management studies two steps forward" (ibid.), and he proposes to do so by reintroducing a paleo-Marxist reading of Marx which relies mostly in a Marxism of the Second International, and a view of capitalist history as determined by the contradiction between socialization and valorisation, between "the progressive 'socialization' of the labour process and the persistence of capitalist 'valorization' constraints" (ibid.). Adler proposes a critique of labour process theory that will advance critical management studies. After identifying two perceived impasses of labour process theory, namely that work has actually become more complex under capitalism – contradicting Braverman's deskilling thesis – and that furthermore a decline in work autonomy should be considered not as a regression but as progressive change, he introduces his proposed reading of Marx as follows.

> I argue that LPT has been led into this impasse by a one-sided reading of Marx. This essay proposes an alternative, more dialectical reading of Marx that may help us better understand both increasing complexity and declining autonomy as progressive tendencies driven by the 'laws of development' of capitalism. Following Hobsbawm (1995), I call my reading 'paleo-Marxist'. The term 'paleo' is not meant to signal any pejorative connotation – on the contrary, I will argue that it is the more fruitful interpretation – but simply to

signal both (a) a certain 'retro' quality to the simplicity of the associated theory and (b) the

fact that this theory was common before World War I but was subsequently eclipsed by

neo-Marxism of which LPT is an exemplar. (Adler, 2007: 1314)

Adler proceeds to suggest that labour process theory, in its recent analyses, excludes the possibility of a long-term skills upgrading (2007: 1316), and provides evidence for precisely such a trend. Alder also proposes to see lower worker autonomy positively in terms of new forms of interdependence and socialization, which might later be appropriated by labour. What is of interest is how Adler proposes to read Marx. Adler proposes not to understand class struggle as the motor of history, but instead enlists the more traditional paleo-Marxist reading of Marx which "sees the basic contradiction at a deep layer of causality, in the relation between the forces and relations of production (Adler, 2007: 1319). Adler's argument is that this view allows us to understand changes in skill in terms of complexity and interdependence as "a reflection of the deepest contradictions of capitalism" (2007: 1329).

This viewpoint allows us to grasp the contradictions that beset capitalist management, and

to grasp them in a surprisingly intuitive way: on the one hand, management needs and

cultivates the productive power of the collective worker; on the other, management limits

this development due to pressures of corporate profitability; and over the long term, the

former dominates the latter, progressively intensifying the fundamental contradiction, and

thereby opening prospects for change. (Adler, 2007: 1329)

Adler's argument demands a reading of Marx in the business school. And it is a

reading that does not shy away from also returning to earlier texts of Marxism,

which is a manoeuvre challenging the way in which the reading of Marx in the business school can be contested. However, two questions must be raised in response to Adler. First, Adler in one sweep reverses all of the work performed by critical studies of management which sought to properly define management as an object of theory. Management here appears once again as wholly determined by capital, as a mere epiphenomenon of capital. Such a conception of management is difficult to sustain today, considering the limits of the rudimentary theory of management to be found in Marx that were pointed out in this thesis, and considering also that Adler does not offer any account of this determination of management by capital. Second, Adler also denies or ignores the arguments put forward by Althusser and Balibar (1970) and others (e.g. Burawoy, 1979) concerning the complexity of the conception of history to be found in Marx, and their conception of the mode of production as a structure in dominance. Alder here ignores all reservations about understanding history as teleology and as driven by a fundamental contradiction, and simply reintroduces these elements of a philosophy of history.

Considering these questions, Adler's position is difficult to sustain in the business school, insofar as he does not provide a reading of critical studies of management that would challenge the positions on these issues prevalent in the field. It is therefore rather easy for his critics writing out of critical studies of management (e.g. Thompson, 2007; Knights and Willmott, 2007) to counter his argument. This perhaps most prominent call for a return to the reading of Marx in the business school, then, is unsuccessful insofar as it ignores the history of the reading of Marx in the business school. Furthermore, it oddly argues for a

return to a reading of Marx based on an earlier paleo-Marxism. What is really proposed here is then not a return to a reading of Marx, but a presentation of a pre-reading of Marx that has already been performed elsewhere. Here, then, it is not a case of the thousand Marxisms entering the business school, but of a return to an earlier orthodox Marxism. Again, it is a pre-reading of Marx, several of which I identified in previous chapters, e.g. that of Laclau and Mouffe (2001), rather than a return to a reading of Marx, or to a reading of contemporary Marxisms, which would take the responsibilities involved in inheriting Marx seriously (cf. Derrida, 1994).

There are, however, plenty of further examples where some other readings of Marx and other Marxisms are adopted. One further prominent example is the interest in a heretical Marxism, the workerist and autonomist Marxism emerging out of Italy, most clearly associated with the proper names Tronti and Negri, and popularized by the Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2000). I already noted Fleming and Spicer's turn to Hardt and Negri above. Oddly this tradition was present during the founding moments of labour process theory. The first pamphlet published by the Conference for Socialist Economists (CSE) in 1976 was entitled *The Labour Process and Class Strategies*, and contained essays by workerists such as Bologna, Panzieri, and Tronti, who all at various points worked with Negri on such journals as *Quaderni Rossi* and *Classe Operaia* (see Wright, 2002). At the same time, the first issue of *Capital & Class* opened up with some foundational texts for labour process theory (Brighton Labour Process Group, 1977; Friedman, 1977). Yet, apart from a few scattered comments on workerism and autonomia in Thompson (1989), there are few traces of an engagement with this tradition in

the business school. For Thompson, while this strand of Italian Marxism "helped to create the conditions for the development of labour process theory" (2005: 75), it can now safely be considered part of the "important and independent prehistory" of labour process theory (Thompson and Smith, 2001: 41-2). The recent re-engagements with this heretical Marxism challenge such an assessment. While Thompson (2005) is dismissive of Hardt and Negri (2000), this and related work has found an inroads into the business school (Mandarini, 2005). For example, it has been used to consider the character of affective and immaterial labour (e.g. Dowling et al., 2007); the relevance of culture for contemporary capitalism (e.g. Böhm and Land, 2009); and the prospects of work, emancipation and a worker's society (e.g. Fleming and Mandarini, 2009).

Third, after Alder and Hardt and Negri, there are also other Marxisms that are finding their entry into the business school, such as that of Žižek (see Böhm and De Cock, 2005), the post-Marxism of Laclau and Mouffe (e.g. Contu, 2002; Contu and Willmott, 2005; Willmott, 2005), the "practical deconstructivist feminist" Marxism of Spivak (Jones, 2005), or a certain critical realist Marxism (see Brown et al., 2002). Here It must also be noted that a reading of Marx in labour process theory continues to happen, so that the work of Ackroyd, Thompson, Smith and others continues to evince certain traces of a reading of Marx. In particular, some of the earlier criticism of labour process theory (Rowlinson and Hassard, 1994; 2001) are being rearticulated against critical management studies (Armstrong, 2008; Rowlinson, 2008), again with Marx.

While it would be an exaggeration to suggest that this represents an entry of the thousand Marxism in their heterogeneity into the business school, it does support Derrida's arguments that after the fall of really existing socialism the spectres of Marx have been set free, and that this now also applies to a certain extent to the business school. In different ways, all of the authors mentioned above recognize the poverty of management as an object of theory considered in isolation from capital, and they develop theorizations of management that are integrated into a Marxist problematic, in whatever shape. These readings of Marx therefore challenge the contemporary constitution of critical management studies, in particular its independence from a Marxist problematic and its study of management independently of capital. The emergence of capital as a symptom, here explored in Parker (2002) and Fleming and Spicer (2007) is a first moment in a return of Marx and capital to critical management studies, and the readings of Hardt and Negri in Fleming and Spicer are some of the first steps towards re-establishing a study of management within a Marxist problematic. However, none of these inheritances of Marx are to be taken for granted – the inheritance of Marx is contested, and any symptomatic reading of critical studies of management, as I perform it here, also entails a certain intervention in this inheritance of Marx, the contribution of which will be assessed in the concluding chapter.

10 CONCLUSIONS: MARX IN THE BUSINESS SCHOOL

> It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing
>
> deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of
>
> late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our
>
> imaginations.
>
> (Jameson, 1998: 50)

Directions

This thesis posed the question "wither Marx in the business school?" This question involved asking where Marx is taking the business school and where Marx is being taken in the business school. It was approached via a symptomatic reading of critical studies of management reading Marx. Chapter 2 established that the business school itself struggles to establish management as its object, and stands in an undecided relationship to the university. It was suggested that the business school faces a choice between performativity and critique. Critical studies of management were explored as an instance of the recovery of the remainders of critique in the business school. Marx was read in the business

school as it tried to read capital. In early labour process theory, in particular the work of Braverman and Burawoy, a Marxist study of management was constructed which understood management as an object subordinate to capital. Management was seen to be determined by capital, and was considered a managerial function. Where Braverman characterized management as the destruction of subjectivity, Burawoy insisted on the importance of the production of hegemony in the factory, and characterized management as the organization of consent. While Braverman and Buwaroy wrote outside the business school, labour process theory entered the business school on the wave of Bravermania. Once it established itself in the business school, it was split into at least three different fractions, and also very quickly distanced itself from Marx. Core labour process theory established a certain dominance in the field, one which was based on the loose definition of a core theory. This core theory offered certain axioms for the study of management and the labour process, which however left labour process theory's relation to the critique of political economy, and the relation between capital and management undecided. While management was understood to be necessarily about control, exploitation, revolution and antagonism, a more concrete definition and characterization of management were left to empirical work, which consequently abounded.

In labour process theory, parts of Marx and Marxism were read closely, and where in Braverman and Burawoy labour process theory was to a certain extent identified with or considered an extension of the critique of political economy, once labour process theory entered the business school a certain dissociation from Marx took place. Nonetheless, certain spectres of Marx, and traces of a

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certain reading of Marx and mostly heretical Marxism, entered the business school. Split labour process theory in the business school left at least three questions unanswered: the determination between capital and management; the role of subjectivity not only for making labour productive but also in making the manager a functionary of capital; and finally the concrete characterization of contemporary management.

Critical management studies, as a second instantiation of critical studies of management and the reading of Marx in the business school, inherited these open questions from labour process theory, and also read Marx through it. Early critical management studies confronted Marx through the pre-readings not only of labour process theory but also of Burrell and Morgan, which reproduced a division between a humanist and a structuralist Marx, and of postmodernism, which were considered to provide a certain rejection of Marx. This work was characterized by dissatisfaction with Marxist studies of management, and with the definition of management as merely a capitalist function. In its reading early critical management studies highlighted the limits of a reading of Marx on management. Willmott's work represented attempts to come to terms with these limits, and to construct a critical management studies also through a reading of Marx, where however the relation between management and capital remained undecided, as did management itself as an object. In contrast, Clegg, with his postmodernism, rejected Marx and established management as an object characterized by polyphony. Where management was only awarded a relative autonomy in the work of Thompson and Willmott, Clegg et al. awarded

management absolute theoretical autonomy, which also implied that no account of the determinations between capital and management is provided.

The effects of these readings of Marx and constructions of management in early critical management studies were traced in two key texts of late critical management studies. The work of Parker was shown to include an ambiguous reading of and relation to Marx. Here as in much of the earlier work considered, a critique of structuralist Marxism was articulated, and a turn towards a humanist Marxism was completed, even if its status within the text remained unclear. Parker's work presented a certain conceptual promiscuity with regards to the object of study and critique, which emerged precariously out of a reading of various discourses as a market managerialism at home in the corporation. Where Parker performed an ideological struggle against this market managerialism, management itself as an object of study remained largely undefined. In Parker's text capital emerges as one of many terms of critique, yet one which is excluded and is only related ambiguously to the main object of theory. Capital here emerged as a symptom, a term which Parker's text could not account for, a state of affairs which could partially be accounted for by the distance taken to Marx, but one which also served as an index of a new text.

A symptomatic reading of Fleming and Spicer also revealed that capital appeared as a symptom. Where Fleming and Spicer sought to limit a study of power, resistance and struggle to the corporation, their work reveals an excess which pointed towards capital. The corporation was therefore found not to be a sufficient object of theory, but instead was contaminated by capital. These

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readings of late critical management studies revealed that as soon as these discourses attempted to define their specific object of study, be it management or the corporation, this object was found to be insufficient, and capital emerged as a supplementary term that these texts could not account for. At that point Fleming and Spicer, and many others in critical management studies, turned to a reading of Marx and contemporary Marxism, to once again read capital through Marx, and to attempt to establish a critical study of management within a Marxist problematic. While this represents a certain reopening of the business school to Marx and Marxism, it does not amount to the thousand Marxisms entering the business school. The inheritance of Marx in the business school remains contested.

The symptomatic reading of critical studies of management and their reading of Marx in the business school can thus be summarised very schematically. As the business school attempts to define itself around management as an object, it comes into contact with capital as an object. As management studies reads capital, it also comes to read Marx. Marx and the object capital are therefore already present in the business school from its very start. Yet the business school is first defined by attempts to integrate it into the university through professionalism and the liberal arts. Once the university finds itself in crisis, the business school has to choose between performativity and critique. Labour process theory and critical management studies represent attempts to construct a critique of management, also and at first most prominently through a reading of Marx. The history of labour process theory and critical management studies is marked by certain readings of Marx and mostly heretical Marxisms, which

however are largely abandoned in critical management studies. Labour process theory and critical management studies seek to construct a critical theory of management, yet management as object of theory is never established in the last instance, as it is always found to be insufficient. In the same way in which the early business school found itself dealing with capital, so labour process theory and critical management studies notice that management is always already contaminated by capital. At this stage however capital appears as a symptom in the texts of late critical management studies, a symptom these texts cannot account for, but also one which points to a different text of critical management studies.

Consequences

A few consequences of this symptomatic reading of critical studies of management, and answers to the question "whither Marx in the business school?" must now be outlined. First, it is difficult to assess where Marx has taken the business school. While early labour process theory in the work of Braverman and Burawoy read Marx closely and explicitly identified with his project, Marx is already read through certain heretical Marxisms, and is immediately supplemented. Partly this suggests that Marx has not taken the business school very far, and that the rudimentary account of management in Marx has forced critical studies of management to look elsewhere for directions. Yet Marx has been read in the business school even after the founding moments of critical studies of management, and the reading of Marx, and Marx's reading of capital, has served as a reminder to critical studies of management that management itself as an object is insufficient and that capital lurks behind it as

another object of theory. So the fact that critical studies of management has found management as an object to be insufficient and contaminated by capital suggests that here traces of readings of Marx remain in effect. Therefore, it seems that while critical studies of management have attempted to break away from Marx, they have in many ways remained with Marx, at the beginning of the construction of critical studies of management. The way in which some readings of Marx performed by critical studies of management have been questioned and challenged in this thesis also suggests that a return to Marx and to a reading of Marx would provide different directions, and that in many ways such a return to a reading of Marx, to the beginnings of critical studies of management, necessarily recurs.

Second, and inversely, it is equally difficult to assess where the business school has taken Marx. Reading always also involves a taking elsewhere, a transformation. The reading of Marx in the business school, as accounted for in this thesis, however, a reading of Marx through various heretical Marxisms and other commentators on Marx, was shown to have come to a halt in critical management studies. So while early labour process theory, particularly in Braverman and Burawoy, sought to construct a critical studies of management out of Marx, and therefore sought to take Marx into the business school and his text towards management, critical management studies by and large gave up on taking Marx along, no longer directing the Marxist text towards management, but constructing a critical studies of management with reference to writers other than Marx. While it would be an exaggeration here to speak of the withering away of Marx in the business school, the account outlined above of critical

studies of management reading Marx in the business school does point to a critique of the way in which Marx was rejected and disavowed in particular ways in particular texts. This critique suggested that it is possible to read Marx differently, and therefore to keep him alive for longer in the business school, to direct his text differently towards management, and to consequently also let him offer different directions to critical studies of management. That critical studies of management ultimately so far have not succeeded in constructing management as an object of theory, and have found this object to be contaminated by capital, suggests that a return to a reading of Marx – one, as will be shown shortly, is already at work in the business school – will also ensure that Marx does not completely wither away in the business school.

Thirdly, the epigraph by Jameson above points to one major consequences of the reading of Marx in the business school by critical studies of management. Not much has been said here of the spectres of Marx, and very little attempt has been made to characterize these; only where readings of Marx were challenged in the text were some different directions that can be taken from Marx gestured at. There is however one particular aspect of the spectres of Marx, that of the messianic promise, which is affected here. Derrida writes apropos the revolutionary promise in Marx:

> Well, what remains irreducible to any deconstruction, what remains as undeconstructible as the possibility itself of deconstruction is, perhaps, a certain experience of the emancipatory promise; it is perhaps even the formality of a structural messianism, a messianism without religion, even a messianic without messianism, and idea of justice – which we distinguish from law or right and even from human rights – and an idea of

democracy – which we distinguish from its current concept and from its determined predicates today... (Derrida, 1994: 59)

Derrida here suggests that this messianic without messianism, this certain experience of the emancipatory promise remains undeconstructible. Derrida identifies this promise of the future-to-come in Marx's work, which allows him to argue that there will be "no future without Marx, without the memory and the inheritance of Marx" (1994: 13). Elsewhere, Derrida also notes that "the messianic is always revolutionary, it has to be" (1994: 168). What however happens in the reading of Marx in the business school, and in the construction of critical studies of management, is that this revolutionary messianic is lost. Where in the work of Braverman and Burawoy a change in the mode of production is still conceivable, in later labour process theory – at least core and subjectivist labour process theory – and most of the texts of critical management studies considered, the focus on management entails a rejection of the possibility of a change in the mode of production. The target and aim of much of the critique developed in these texts is a change in the forms that management takes, not in the social relations of production.

However, this revolutionary messianic is not completely muted in critical studies of management, and in the texts of Parker and Fleming and Spicer, as well as elsewhere (e.g. Böhm, 2006), while such a change is considered unlikely, the horizon of possibility remains. And as already mentioned, the state of critical management studies, and the discovery of management as contaminated by capital, has already led to a return to Marx and a new reading of Marx in the

business school. It is to this work of inheritance of Marx in the business school that this thesis contributes.

Contributions

The reading of Marx in the business school is not performed solely to develop a critical studies of management; or, rather, any development of a critical studies of management already has implications for the university-based business school as an institution. Therefore it is worth exploring here some of the ways in which a reading of Marx in the business school is appropriated to shape the business school. The discussion of Chapter 2 will therefore be picked up here.

A sign of the business school drawing closer to the university is the critical and philosophical turn within business schools. As we mentioned above, in a way the business school dealt with its undefined status within the university by internalizing some of the conflicts that Kant mentioned – this brought the business school closer to the core of the university, closer to the faculty of philosophy (including the liberal arts and the humanities). And some commentators on the business school took this a step further by opening up the business school wholly to the university. What goes under the name "critical management studies" can in some specific ways be understood to be exactly such a move. We have already mentioned a few authors who demand the teaching of liberal arts and such particular topics as ethics in the business school, and others are even more explicit in their demand for the business school to be rethought. Such authors as Grey (e.g. 2002; 2004; 2007; Grey & Mitev, 1995), Parker (e.g. 2002a; 2002b; Parker & Jary, 1995; Dunne, Harney & Parker, 2008) and others

(e.g. Bridgman, 2007; Jones and O'Doherty, 2005; Willmott, 1995) have in some ways embraced a certain critical philosophical tradition that was, in the Kantian scheme, institutionalized in the lower faculty of philosophy. Spoelstra (2007: 9) even goes so far as to suggest that this signifies an attempt to "re-institutionalize critique in the highest faculty" which, in consequence, is paramount to turning the business school from a higher into a lower faculty in Kantian terms.

> What explains the possibility of a critical business school? It seems that the business school, because of the revenues it draws as the highest faculty, can afford to be critical. It is not dependent, or at least less dependent than the traditional lower faculties, on the good will or financial backing of the state. Academics at the business school can themselves (of course in varying degrees, depending on the country) encourage and nurture a critical environment. For this reason critical management studies, or critique at the business school, is not a strange idea at all. (Spoelstra, 2007: 9)

The business school is re-inventing itself as a lower faculty, or at least it is internalizing the conflict between lower and higher faculty within itself (ibid.). This is possible because it has certain revenue streams that mean it can afford the kind of material independence that Kant's faculty of philosophy, and the modern university throughout it's history, could only hope for. At the same time something more is happening here. Rather than recognizing or acknowledging that the university is in ruins, this movement reaffirms and builds upon the critical tradition that in many ways is in shatters. Here it is not apparent at all that the meta-narratives referred to in Lyotard (1984) are in fact dead, even though there is a lot of discussion within these critical business schools also regarding the death of grand narratives and the changing fortunes of the

enlightenment (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 1995). This is then an attempt to recover what is left of the modern university and the critical tradition that was institutionalized in it, in order to reinvent the business school along critical lines (see also Dey and Steyaert, 2007).

It is in this context that the spectres of Marx appear in the business school, and the work of inheriting Marx is performed in the business school. There are at least three ways in which my symptomatic reading of critical studies of management above contributes to such a work. First, it is a first moment in a reconfiguration of the history of critical studies of management. My symptomatic reading demonstrates the ways in which particular readings of Marx in the business school are intimately intertwined with the emergence of critical studies of management, its theories or problematics, and within that, management as an object of theory. My symptomatic reading points to the possibilities and limits of these discourses, and the ways in which they have managed to appropriate management as an object of theory, and have succeed in establishing a critical theory of management. While I have only pointed to potential challenges to some moments in the reading of Marx, a symptomatic reading provides a different interpretation of the history of critical studies of management in relation to the reading of Marx, and thus provides a first step in a project which can then move on to challenge and question the readings of Marx performed in the business school. Since the reading of Marx and the establishment of a critical theory of management are so closely related, this will bring forth different critical management studies.

Second, and related, my symptomatic reading has also pointed to the way in which Marx was often not read directly but how a reading of Marx was often mediated by certain pre-readings of Marx. In the same way in which my symptomatic reading allows a consequent challenge to the reading of Marx in the business school, it also points to instances of pre-readings of Marx vital to critical studies of management, which can equally be challenged. So, such a project would carefully demonstrate the ways in which the work of authors such as Derrida, Foucault or Lyotard has been read and appropriated in the business school, often also against Marx. It is therefore vital for a work of inheriting Marx that such readings are also challenged. Such a project is in many ways already under way. For example, Jones (2004) considers the inheritance of Derrida in organization theory, and notes in particular that Derrida's work on Marx – which this thesis has drawn on heavily – has been neglected in organization theory, and how in many ways Derrida resists an appropriation of his work against Marx. Or, Jones (2002) considers the inheritance of Foucault in organization theory, and points to open questions regarding the relationship between Foucault and Althusser – again, work this thesis drew on heavily – and the way in which Foucault might not so simply be suited to a project leading to a blanket rejection of all aspects of Althusser's Marxism. Similar re-readings of key moments in the inheritance of Marx in the business school can be found in O'Doherty (2007) with regards to the reading of Marx in labour process theory, and in Böhm (2007) with regards to the reading of critical theory in critical management studies.

Third, to approach critical studies of management through a symptomatic reading is also to propose, with Jameson (2004), that symptoms are for theory and not of theory. It is to insist on theory as a "theoretical kind of symptomatology" (Jameson, 2004: 407). On the one hand, this involves analysing and dealing with symptoms of organizations (Kristensen et al., 2008; Butler, 2008). It is also to insist that, contrary to some positions against theory or Theory, as witnessed in Parker or Clegg, that it is theory that is required to account for the way in which management and capital work. My symptomatic reading of critical studies of management is also therefore a proposal to consider the ways in which a critical theory of management and capital could be constructed, as essential both for understanding management and capital and to develop a politics. My symptomatic reading therefore intervenes in critical studies of management with a challenge to develop a theory of management and capital. And it proposes that the inheritance of Marx is indispensible in this endeavour.

Finally, as the context for critical studies of management is the university-based business school, it is here that the struggle over the inheritance of Marx will play itself out, and leave its marks. The discussion in chapter 7 of Hassard et al.'s (2001) critique of the positioning of critical management studies has already pointed to some of difficulties of the position of critical scholars within the business school, and of a critique addressed at managers. A different proposition for a Marxist politics in the business school comes from Harney (2007). The first thing Harney points out is that the business school is not full of managers, and can thus not serve the socialization of managers. This had been the fundamental

assumption of the professional school model, and even that of much of the critical management literature (e.g. Parker, 2002: 131), as Harney shows. Once we abandon the project of a professionalization of management, and open up the question of what the social function of management or business might mean, the questions that must be answered within the business school change drastically. Capital emerges as an object of analysis. And capital, Harney suggests, might then emerge as the object of critique within the business school, as "*the restraint on wealth-making capacities of a society of associated labour*" (2007: 141; emphasis in original). Harney's suggestion is that once the business school abandons its allegiance to capital, the question of socialization is one that is not only asked in relation to capital but also in relation to labour. This difference between labour and capital is allowed to emerge in the business school, and what Harney suggests is that this leads to an analysis of business as impoverished and labour as wealthy (Harney and Oswick, 2006: 106-107; Harney, 2005). "Business" thus is effectively discounted as something detrimental to economic well-being.

Rowlinson and Hassard (2008) challenge such a conception of a Marxist politics in the business school. Already earlier (Hassard et al., 2001), they had noted that while labour process theory is politically reformist and analytically managerialist, at least its position in the business school is not anomalous insofar as their discourse might at least interest managers (Hassard et al, 2001: 354). For critical management studies, however, which has embraced the new social movements, as well as postmodernism and critical theory, and has subsequently abandoned a focus on work, its position in the business school makes little sense (ibid.). And those who still adhere to a Marxist study of management, and who

struggle against this "internalized political defeat" in the business school, must "try to steer a path between tempering our radicalism so much that it becomes risible and committing transgressions that might undermine toleration of our very presence"; and all that in the hope that at one point a dialogue with Marx might again be required, since the "continuing desire to bury Marx is evidence that there is still live in his views" (Hassard et al., 2001: 357). Contra Harney, Rowlinson and Hassard (2008) emphasise the moment of the defeat of critique as a condition for the position of critical scholars in the business school, and they point to the discomfort and contradictions to be experienced in the business school. They accuse Harney of a "radical elitism, whereby critters end up criticizing the business schools for the very characteristics, such as the expansion of undergraduate programs, that have opened up a space for critters" (2008: 2).

Such disputes point to the contested nature of the inheritance of Marx in the business school, and to the difficulties of developing both a Marxist theory and a Marxist politics in the business school. Harney, Hassard and Rowlinson here are taking part in a wider discussion regarding the future of the business school, as was noted above, and there are also others who develop Marxist positions, such as De Angelis and Harvey (2009), who develop a Marxist understanding of our own labour in the university. It is these struggles over the inheritance of Marx in the business school that will influence the direction of the business school of tomorrow, and to which this thesis seeks to contribute. It is these inheritances of Marx that keep the question "whither Marx in the business school?" open.

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