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Management and self-activity: Accounting for the crisis in profit-taking

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Abstract

The crisis in measurement identified by those working in the tradition of Italian *autonomia* has consequences for the critique of accounting and management. If both capitalist work and the commodity are today communicative and overtly political, a critique that merely points to these characteristics will have no transformative effect. This paper uses the Trinidadian Marxist theorist C.L.R. James's notion of self-activity to suggest that the crisis in measurement is a symptom of the separation of work and value. The institution of forms of self-management and what might be called wars of command begin to replace the governmentality of the wage and the general equivalent in the imposition of capitalist work. In the face of these capital-state developments, critiques in accounting and management might seek out a new object in the self-activity of the future.

Keywords: *Autonomia*; Self-activity; Wars of command; Priority; Socialization; Biobargain

1. Profit-taking times

The Second Annual European Critical Accounting Conference in 2003 was rightly taken up with spectacular corporate failures like Enron, Global Crossing, and WorldCom.¹ These failures, accompanied by the runaway pay packets of corporate executives and inflated

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¹ I am also indebted to the participants of the 2005 ECAS Conference in New York City, to the organizer of that event Chris Carter, and to fellow speakers at the event, Stanley Aronowitz, Randy Martin, and Alan McKinlay,

earnings reports, were read as defeats for the accounting profession and for business ethics more generally. The structural vulnerability of the accounting firms, the ideological nature of accounting education, and the malevolent neglect of the state regulators were all blamed. Readers of this journal will be familiar with some of the best of these critiques.

But I want to suggest in this article that these pay packets, indictments, and bankruptcies may be usefully understood outside of the frame of business ethics or the sociology of the professions or even outside the framework of radical accounting critiques as they have thus far been constituted. I want to argue we are indeed witnessing a crisis in accounting, but at a more profound level than we have dared to contemplate. This crisis appears as a mere problem of legitimacy in profit-taking and its reproduction. But it signals deeper transformations in capitalist measure itself, and in the practices of capitalist management that mobilize such measure. Moreover, with this crisis we are also faced with a comprehensive crisis in critique, and we risk being left unable to grasp what might be made of this historical conjuncture. This may appear a dramatic assertion, but I am far from the first to make it.

2. Measure for measure

Such a claim to crisis in measurement has been most famously advanced by Hardt and Negri in *Empire* and is most fully argued in two influential pieces by them in the journal *boundary 2* in 1999. There Negri writes of the historical socialization of both labour and capital. As labour is thrown together by capital it becomes more complex, more interdependent, more collective, more intimate. In turn capital responds by fleeing this formidable condition of its own reproduction, socializing itself as finance. The antagonism of labour and capital is thus intensified over time as both feel the power of immense production repeatedly slipping from their grasps. Measure as social activity is not outside these processes of socialization but part of them, and with every advance in the antagonism it grows more contradictory and more overtly political. Hardt in turn specifies this latest socialization of labour as one increasingly impervious to any measure, dominated by affect and dispersed and recombined by cybernetics. The rise of affective labour for Hardt comes from the further socialization of the realm of the private. The importance of cybernetics comes from the growing dominance of what Marx called the *General Intellect*, that collective and interdependent development of science and knowledge that we who are academic workers have always made our chief means of production. Hardt and Negri go further than I will in this article, and they maintain that these intensifying socializations have produced a condition of immeasurability. But their work certainly provokes at least a crisis in confidence about measure and its management, and with it, I will argue, a crisis in critique.

I have previously explored in this journal one of the symptoms of this crisis in measurement, the proliferation of management throughout social life as an indication of the superfluity of potential labour-power now directly available throughout social life (Harney, 2005a). This demotics of management is most evident in the explosion of popular

where I presented a revised version of part of this article, and especially to Tony Tinker who challenged me to 'go beyond the politics of refusal' and provoked much of the present discussion of self-activity in this article. I remain solely responsible for any defects in the discussion.

management texts whose authors hope to capture some of the self-directed labour that advanced capitalist socialization has wrought. But this deep socialization of labour is only one aspect of a more complex moment that also includes the current crisis in the reproduction of profit-taking, the rise of permanent wars, the further socialization of capital, and the topic of this article, the resulting crisis in accounting and management critique.

3. Quantification and socialism

George Caffentzis (2005) has raised two objections to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's thesis on immeasurability. First he argues that Marx effected a transvaluation of value not to question the possibility of accounting for value but to question the way value was accounted under capitalism. He makes an interesting argument for the importance of value discourse in Marx's time along the way. As importantly he argues that no socialist project is possible without a measure of objectivity preserved and developed in the face of capitalist deformation of measure. From the vantage point of critiques in accounting and management, it is certainly hard to imagine dispensing with quantification of value. Much of the current critique is based on uncovering the lack of objectivity in capitalist quantification and on arguments for a better quantification liberated from the imperatives of private profit. So too do many blueprints for alternative organizational forms rely on a continued objectivity in self-management. And indeed historically socialist projects have been built on quantification, from the successes of the Cuban health care system evidenced in world rankings, to the exponential growth of GDP in the Soviet Union in its 80 years of existence.

It is also undoubtedly true that a focus on immeasurability can distract from the evident proliferation of the politics of measure afoot in the world, something to which accounting and management critiques are both response and symptom. At any rate, Hardt and Negri's thesis on immeasurability is not without its own politics. They use the notion of self-valorization to suggest that social labour can look forward to dispensing with capitalist measure in favour of a new way of valuing not dependent on quantification and retaining *singularities* that will not be entirely reduced to exchange-value.

3.1. *Autonomia*

In this sense, their challenge of measurement is in turn linked to a wider radical tradition on which they draw (and of which Caffentzis is a vital part)—*autonomia* or autonomist Marxism, a reading of Marx that refocuses our view on what was once called 'worker self-activity,' first by Marx and then most influentially by Trinidadian theorist CLR James. Steve Wright (2002) has written a very good account of this reading and praxis as it develops to full effect in post-War Italy, but like most accounts of this movement the work of James and his collaborators, predating and influencing the Italian movement, is given only scant attention. Even with the explosion of interest sparked by the work of Hardt and Negri and the independent but inter-related interest in autonomist political and organizational forms in the anti-globalization movement, much of this history remains to be written (and with it a new intellectual history of the Left in the United States which would have a number of women and African-American theorists at its heart). In the meantime, this should not

prevent an engagement with James or his insights into worker self-activity. Because in James what I take to be the two chief insights of autonomist Marxism for any attempt to reconstitute a critique of accounting and management are both evident. First is the attention to Marx's socialization thesis. Capital socializes labour (and itself) both beyond its own needs and often beyond its own control. Second is the recognition that this socialization both prefigures and configures capital. Or as Marx famously put it, 'machines rush in where there are strikes.' One need only pause very briefly to reflect on what it would mean to critical accounting and management studies to think of labour as prior, and how a whole recent tradition of scholarship based on the priority of management surveillance, control, and ideology might have to be revised to take account of how such systems are provoked and initiated.

For James this provocation and this real priority of social labour are as old as capitalism itself. Here is some of his account of slave production in the Caribbean:

'When three centuries ago the slaves came to the West Indies, they entered directly into the large-scale agriculture of the sugar plantation, which was a modern system. It further required that the slaves live together in social relation far closer than any proletariat of the time. The cane reaped had to be rapidly transported to what was a factory production. The product was shipped abroad for sale. Even the cloth the slaves wore and the food they ate was imported. The Negroes, therefore, from the very start lived a life that was in its essence a modern life. That is their history—as far as I have been able to discover, a unique history.' (1992, 72–73)

But James goes further. He says, 'the slaves ran the plantations' (1992, p. 73). He obviously does not say this to ameliorate the brutality of chattel slavery. Rather as we will see shortly he says this because of the future this priority of socialized labour gives to capitalism, and the political importance it lays on labour's self-activity for any politics of liberation, what James always called the future in the present.

These two insights of socialization and priority are most profoundly developed in Italy by the theorist Mario Tronti. In his classic essay 'The Strategy of Refusal' published as part of his book *Operai e Capitale* he writes:

... the idea that it is 'working people' who are the true 'givers of labor,' and that it is the concern of working people to defend the dignity of this thing which they provide, against all those who would seek to debase it. Untrue ... The truth of the matter is that the person who provides labour is the capitalist. The worker is the *provider of capital*. (2005, 17)

This is a remarkable assertion, and it was disturbing to me when I first read it, even though I knew the work of James well. Tronti continues, 'thus the worker provides capital, not only insofar as he sells labour power, but also insofar as he embodies the class relation.' And he notes, 'this like the inherent social nature of labour power, is another of those things acquired by the capitalist without payment.'

The idea that labour introduces the class relation that allows capital to operate, that capital is itself dead labour, and that labour comes to capital already socialized (though not finished in this respect) can be found in Marx, and in Engels, but the political implications of the insight come to the fore with Tronti when he writes, 'from the outset, the conditions

of labour are in the hands of the capitalist. And again, from the outset, the only thing in the hands of the worker are the conditions of capital' (2005, p. 17).

This is why self-activity as James conceived of it was emphatically not self-management, an impoverished idea containing none of the real wealth that James and later Tronti identified in social labour. Self-activity was neither about the dignity of labour or sharing the fruits of labour. It was not 'about the enjoyment, ownership, or use of goods.' Self-activity for James was about the seizing sociality, seizing the conditions of capital, and moving toward 'self-realization, creativity based upon the incorporation into the individual personality of the whole previous development of humanity. Freedom is creative universality, not utility' (James, 1956).

This is the tradition upon which Hardt and Negri draw, and of which the crisis of measurement is only one consequence of the conditions of capital being in the hands of the worker. With only the conditions of labour left to it, no wonder capital now appears frenzied with efforts at measurement and management of what it does not control but needs to subsume under itself. And no wonder self-activity, the production of the conditions of capital otherwise as 'the incorporation into the individual of the whole previous development of humanity' presents such a threat and such a potential.

4. Critique of interests

But can this potential be identified today through a new critique of accounting and management, one that could recognize in worker self-activity the origins of the present crisis? To get at this question, it might be useful to return to another reading of Marx, one deeply concerned with how critique might function. Louis Althusser reminds us that the act of imputing a politics to economics or an economics to politics, as so often happens in critical accounting and management, was not Marx's act, but the act of the classical political economists. Marx was doing something much more. Althusser writes in *Reading Capital* (1977):

To criticize Political Economy cannot mean to criticize or correct certain inaccuracies or points of detail in an existing discipline—nor even to fill in its gaps, its blanks, pursuing further an already largely initiated movement of exploration. 'To criticize Political Economy' means to confront it with a new problematic and a new object: i.e. to question the very *object* of Political Economy. But since Political Economy is defined as Political Economy by its object, the critique directed at it from the new object with which it is confronted could strike Political Economy's vital spot. (158)

The act of imputing interests, by contrast, merely conserves the object, a point the state theorist Peter Bratsis has made well about the discourse of corruption. He suggests the language of anticorruption is always restorative, always puts back together 'a bourgeois political ontology' that relinquishes 'the question of ought,' and he argues that 'the radical position today is to reject the categories of public and private as they are presently constituted and to expose all the questions that have been subsumed by the discourse on corruption' (2003, p. 29). Few cognitive disciplines look prepared to contemplate such a move (Harney, 2005b). And such critiques of interests are sadly widespread today from cultural studies, to

critical management studies, to blood for oil anti-war arguments. As well-meaning as they are, they do not follow Marx in positing not only a new problematic, but a new object.

This imputing of interests behind the political or the economic may be particularly limited today if we note some other more recent autonomist observations about the socialization and priority of labour. Because to impute interests, to uncover politics in the economic, or in the neutrality of management and accounting, far from being a radical act, is today the act of capital itself.

[Virno \(1997\)](#) an autonomist Marxist theorist writes of the tendencies in labour today this way:

This modulation takes place through the linguistic services that, far from giving rise to a final product, exhaust themselves in the communicative interaction that their own 'performance' brings about . . . The 'presence of others' is both the instrument and the object of labour; therefore, the process of production always requires a certain degree of virtuosity, or, to put it another way, they involve what are really political actions.

He echoes [Maurizio Lazzarato \(1997\)](#), another theorist of this movement who writes:

labour that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity . . . the first involving cybernetics and computer control (and horizontal and vertical communication) . . . the second . . . the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and more strategically, public opinion . . . the particularity of the commodity produced through *lavoro immateriale* consists in the fact that it is not destroyed in the act of consumption, but rather it enlarges, transforms, and creates the 'ideological' and cultural environment of the consumer . . . it produces first and foremost a social relationship . . . something 'material' production had hidden.

If capitalist work and the commodity are so overtly social, political, ideological, and cultural, to bring any of these categories to capitalist work and the commodity as they are presently constituted as objects cannot be critique, cannot be the introduction of a problematic, but the confirmation of a description. So much critical management writing falls down right here. How will we 'confront' capitalist work and the commodity under these conditions?

5. Work and worker

Capitalist measure and management may be uniquely defined as that which has kept self-activity at bay. Returning to a basic insight of Marxism, we might say that capitalist society is distinguished by valuing the work and not the worker. Waged work was the measure that both disembodied labour from the labourer and re-embodied the general equivalent as an organization principle of society in that labourer. By contrast management has often appeared to value the worker rather than the work. But if critical accounting and management have shown anything, it is that this attention is only a means to valuing the work. [Silvia Federici \(2004\)](#) teaches us that this separation of work from the worker begins with the

separation of body from mind, allowing in the philosophy of Descartes the development of self-management that put the body to work and made it available as a distinct and interchangeable commodity. As Federici shows, historically this required the elimination of the power of women and of magic over the body. Moreover, another feminist theorist writing in the autonomist tradition, [Fortunati \(1995\)](#) points out that this separation of work from worker must occur doubly for women under capitalism. Women are valued as the producers of labour power, but must be devalued as the producers of labour. Fortunati explains that valuing only work has the effect of making capital appear as that which bestows value (since work as use-value traded for exchange-value only exists as an operation of capital). Women thus cannot be seen to be producing value independent of capital when they produce new workers. Traditionally this meant using the mediation of men and the cover of nature to control and devalue this productivity, and any self-activity that might arise with the recognition of productivity. Men managed women, and accounted for households. And by these means men were encouraged to self-manage. Of course not by these means alone. The Fordist arrangements of trade unions, the welfare state, cold war culture, militarism and colonialism that held wage labour as an ideal, to be negotiated, organized, reproduced, fought for, and taught to others, represented a sophisticated strategy against self-activity on many fronts. And it is what the widely understood break-down of this strategy might mean for the separation of work from worker that concerns us here. This break down is beautifully narrated by [Caffentzis \(2001\)](#) in 'From Capitalist Crisis to Proletarian Slavery.'

6. A new object?

There are two aspects to this question of how work and worker are separated today. The first is related to socialization. One of the first attempts to come to grips with the advancing socialization of labour, and particularly with what was previously the privatized and devalued labour of reproduction now being socialized anew, was the autonomist conception of the social factory. The idea that all of society was at the service of capitalist production dispensed with rival and more nostalgic notions of modernity. It raised the spectre of the real subsumption of society to capital that Marx was already beginning to witness. It suggested that the social reproductive realm was also now visible as directly productive for capital. And it foreshadowed the rise of management and accounting as societal phenomena not bound by the workplace proper. But it also begged the question of what a labour process of the social factory might look like? Of what a labour process critique of society might look like? Nor has this shift been only spatial, from workplace to society.

[Negri \(2004\)](#) maintains in a recent interview,

And when I say cooperation, in reality I am saying life. Today, work and life, production and reproduction are entirely mixed together – they feed on one another. . . In other words, the material wealth of the world arises through forms of collaboration, of cooperation – not only through intellectual work: contacts, relationships, exchanges, and desires have become productive. Production is life itself.

Under such circumstances how would one measure and manage work away from the worker? No longer an effort bargain where work can be identifiable as discreet effort and

life held in reserve, the emergence of what must be called a biobargain where there is no end to what might be asked. But the biobargain is more than that. Labour became labour power, became work, by generalizing and socializing itself in exchange-value. But with the biobargain, such labour is evidently, as Tronti (1966) noted, already social, perhaps already part of another kind of general equivalent, perhaps a general equivalent of self-activity.

7. A new problematic?

And this leads us to the second aspect of the question of how work and worker might be separated today. This aspect relates to priority, and to the threat of this new composition in self-activity. Federici reads the struggle of theism of Descartes and materialism of Hobbes as a struggle for self-management, its degrees and possibilities. She writes that ‘the decentralization of the mechanisms of command, through their location in the individual, was finally obtained only to the extent that a centralization occurred in the power of the state’ (2004). In other words, Descartes self-management did not occur instead of a Hobbesian state, but rather self-management was encouraged only to the point that it did not turn to self-activity, as for instance it did with the Levellers and Diggers. At that point, centralized command returns. And in some ways we are at that point today, amidst so much self-management.

It cannot escape notice that the proliferation of leadership literature, of team-working and communities of practice, of financialization of the self, and general self-help treatise all suggest management is not just everywhere more democratic but demotic. Yet at the same time, the wars on drugs, youth, crime, welfare, corruption and terror in the developed world and the new enclosures forcing people off land, the accumulation by dispossession, and terror war in the developing world, rise with equal Hobbesian power against every Cartesian self-mastery. It seems with each accomplishment in self-management yet more command becomes necessary somewhere else.

But this is not as contradictory as it appears. If labour is more socialized than ever it should be easier to impose self-management where dispositions of race, class, gender and sexuality are susceptible to such imposition. But this same socialization makes self-activity more accomplished and compelling where such dispositions have glimpsed the social possibilities of such activity. In other words, people become either responsible or irresponsible, with us or against us as George W. Bush puts it. War enters society not for the first time but with new purpose. If the success of movements in the 1960s and 1970s was to question the link between capitalist work and what was valued in society, this insight, this priority has indeed given the state its new form. Work is imposed now without regard to value, reversing this autonomist insight, and allowing work to grow as activity precisely to the extent that measure is seen to fail (even in the act). The new *wars of command* are directed at the anti-productive. They produce a relative surplus population ready for capitalist work without the promise of value, as the price of life. This necropolitics as it has been called (Mdembe, 2003) links work with the state’s ability to let live and die, not its ability to measure entitlement. The new problematic then might be how work is separated from the worker without regard to surplus, without the governmentality of the wage, and what other kinds of measurement and management come into play (such as the measurement of responsibility which I will return to at the close of this article).

8. Reading self-activity

This contemporary combination of self-management and the wars of command in capital, resisting together the advances in self-activity of the global movements of the 1960s and 1970s, is what Virno understands as the fitfull counter-revolution of post-fordism (2004). To make a critique of this new combination as it operates today then would be to identify the self-activity it resists. And with this identification both a new object and new problematic might emerge. Such a critique would be open to the future of priority and available, at the service, of such invention. But how to identify such emerging priority and socialization and its potential in self-activity? One could do worse than take James as a guide, and so in the conclusion of this article I will suggest a tour with James through global instances of priority, socialization, and self-activity. It will be a similar, if less erudite, exercise to one he often undertook himself in public lectures around the world during a life that spanned most of the last century (Harney, 1996; Scott, 2005). This tour is not meant as a social scientific proof of priority, but a guide to where one might look for the surprises in self-activity that generate the state form and new relations of production.

The condition of life as production and production as life that Negri identifies as a tendency today, the absolute insecurity that Virno similarly identifies as a tendency, are not as new as they appear. They are the condition of women and men James writes about in his essay 'From Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro' (1982). They are the condition of the African slave in the New World. James is precisely interested in them as a tendency in humanity, its self-activity, and the state resistance it prefigures. James reminds us that the slaves of the Caribbean had to carry out commodity transactions in a number of European and African languages, and that they not only ran the machinery of sugar refinement but quickly, because of the transience or indolence of plantation ownership, became the only ones who understood how to repair it and to keep it running. They knew about transport, inventory, the sciences of storage and preservation. They knew that their clothes, food, tools were part of a global trade. There was no proletariat like this one in Europe at the time where only localized labour obtained (with the important exception of the nautical proletariat, the revolutionary Atlantic detailed by Linbaugh and Rediker (2000) and of which they were a part.

And perhaps this uniqueness helps to explain why it was their immense possibility of self-activity (culminating in the Haitian revolution) that was to be so closely studied to give the bourgeois state its future form. From 1696–1700, John Locke was an informal member of an otherwise formal committee of seven of the newly established Board of Trade and Plantation in London, which dealt essentially with codifying the social relations of the advanced plantation economies (Blackburn, 1998). Locke found time during these 4 years, despite being an informal member, to attend no less than 372 meetings of this board. What was he doing there? Or more to the point, what was he learning? One might say the slaves of Barbados were teaching Locke autonomy during those 4 years, as they had been for years before, and significantly teaching the disenchantment implied in the later religious writings (he called church a free and voluntary association—a version of self-activity). These lessons would inform the kind of practical and theoretical foundations for what would become a regime of private property and legal individualism, a governmentality that would in turn permit the rise of the regime of the factory, a factory that in

fact already existed in disavowed form among disallowed people, a global precariat of the Caribbean.

8.1. *Detroit, I do mind dying*

Something similar would happen along the Rouge River in the factories of Detroit at the end of the 1960s. Self-activity might be said to have produced globalization there as it had produced the legal and philosophical framework of capital three centuries before. And it was descendants of the slaves of Barbados and elsewhere who once again attempted to launch communism, as [Harry Cleaver \(1979\)](#) would say. Graduates of Marxist study groups with James's collaborator Martin Glaberman, tired of the racism and dangerous conditions in car plants around Detroit, rebelled against both the United Auto Workers (headed by the purported radical Walter Reuther) and against the car corporations. In an act of self-activity James specifically identified by insisting that historically workers created the organizations they needed, workers in the plants started a string of independent union movements among African American workers, grouped together in the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. The struggles in the factories, which did not revolve around wages but around what would come to be called quality of life, were linked to struggles against police brutality, housing and other issues in the communities. They argued for work that led to the free enjoyment of life by all. Dan Georgakas and others have argued that this is in fact one of the most thoroughly anti-capitalist moments in American labor history (Georgakas and Sarin, 2002). It also marks the high point of refusal and beginning of the end of certain factory regime in the Anglo-American countries.

Henceforth heavy industry could not rely on the unions and the Fordist compact with its racial, sexual, and anti-communist foundations to deliver productivity. The subsequent story of deregulation, out-sourcing, capital flight, non-union shops, energy manipulation, and the introduction of new technologies and management techniques is in this view a response to this self-activity, not an initiative of the capitalist class. The Saturn Car Company was in other words invented by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

8.2. *Centri sociali*

But it was not just these Detroit workers in the 1960s who were reading James, who had lived in Detroit in the 1940s. He was being translated into Italian in the 1960s too, where the autonomist movement was developing from a movement of wildcat factory strikes and refusals of work, to new forms of organization in the realm of social reproduction. One of the most lasting outcomes of the autonomist movement was the development of social centres, often founded by women, students, or the unemployed, and often consisting of reclaimed urban buildings that were taken over outside property laws and used for organizing, arts, community development, and living ([Mudu, 2004](#)). Only now are the rise of the *centri sociali* beginning to receive the attention they deserve outside Italy, in part in the wake of the Genoa protests. What one awaits in the Anglo-American world is the rediscovery of feminist autonomist insight that the realm of social reproduction is a site of the surplus of 'the conditions of capital' belonging to workers.

What feminist autonomists produced in these social centres was an example of this social surplus and they anticipated numerous contemporary aspects of the global city, and unfortunately precipitated much of the control to which such cities are today subjected. Most importantly the centres mobilized the renewed capitalist socialization of social reproduction in the city to instigate an 'art of city living.' Today this art has been converted into work and other commodities. It manifests itself in design, food, multiculturalism, and new family relations. But in the centres it was not directed to capitalist work but against it. Yet such centres anticipated not just the art of city living but its capitalization, the intense investment in city space and the consequent globalization of these spaces even as the investments and accompanying state apparatus appeared as localizations, even decentralizations that nonetheless co-opt this self-activity. Against the art of city living, the state thought of the global city emerged with its hateful global citizenship discourse, designed to blunt the priority of the *centri sociali*.

Self-activity continues to provoke resistance and innovation from state and capital today, and one might look especially to where regimes of self-management mix heavily with wars of command. The movements of the Global South that Eddie Yuen and colleagues (2004) have rightly noted founded the present anti-globalization movement, beginning with the IMF 'riots' of the 1980s, brought innovation particularly in the form of self-management. Governance and civil society discourse mark the spaces where self-activity gave the future its official limits.

A student activist asks the leading Indonesian Communist author Pramoedya Ananta Toer for advice on strategy after the fall of the dictatorship of Suharto. Pramoedya replies:

'You, who have been accused of not having experience, how could you have managed to bring down a dictator without the assistance of the armed forces?'

'So don't act naïve with me because you know how to do it,' he says staring into the distance and waving a clove cigarette in the air . . .

'Reformasi is just part of a bigger social revolution, just a beginning which many do not realize.' (Harney and Olivia, 2001)

Before it is even tried, civil society is surpassed in Indonesia today by a bigger social revolution. Little wonder that the wars of command have had to step in, in the form of the war on terror and on corruption.

No sooner did protesters bring down President Estrada in the Philippines through what was called EDSA II, the massive demonstrations against him named for the square where protesters gathered, but then a disallowed people attempted through EDSA III to bring down "Gloria," his replacement. The text-ing of message among 'hand' phones celebrated by globalization in EDSA II already exceeded globalization's grasp by EDSA III, months later. Technology it turned out is not in the service of accountability and openness in the de-modernized state management represented by EDSA II, but beyond the developmental state, beyond a future the Philippines was denied. After failed containment strategies in governmentality and social therapeutics, the wars of command are returning in both Indonesia and the Philippines.

Does governance, networks, civil society persist as a kind of state thought suppressing a greater interdependent social labour prepared to govern as Marx said the word of things

and leave self-activity to the realm of what James called creative universality? The revenge of self-management and the wars of command in Indonesia and the Philippines suggest something is indeed being resisted, something that a critique of accounting and management might properly consider its terrain. Such a critique must take care not to repress inadvertently the self-activity it encounters and indeed might measure itself by the free development of its object.

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