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‘I’m as much an anarchist in theory as I am in practice’: Fernando Pessoa’s Anarchist banker in a management education context

Brigitte Biehl-Missal and Raymond Saner

Abstract

The performance of Fernando Pessoa’s novel *The Anarchist Banker* serves as an example for critical management education and allows for further insights into how anarchist theories may be reflected upon and practiced in a business school context. We explore elements of an ‘anarchist aesthetics’ that are created through dramaturgy, narration, and collective production and reception. *The Anarchist Banker* fits well with arts-based education in business schools and efforts to learn lessons for leadership through the use of drama. The literary source encourages to rethink salient issues in today’s global and finance-dominated capitalism and offers opportunities to search for alternative forms of organizing society and the economy by questioning charismatic leadership and managerial rhetoric in favor of collective reasoning. Elements of an anarchist aesthetic include the deconstruction of the hero and authoritarian discourse, dialogue and polyphony, collectivity and obstructionism that are at play artistically and socially, integrating anarchist theory and practice in content and form. The topic links to new forms of resistance, with critical artists opposing the business world and academics attempting to play out the ‘banker’ versus the ‘anarchist’.

Introduction

‘You mean to say, then, that you are an anarchist in exactly the same way as all those people in workers’ organizations are anarchists? You mean that there’s no difference between you and the men who throw bombs and form trade unions?’

‘Of course there’s a difference, of course there is, but it isn’t the difference that you’re imagining. Do you perhaps doubt that my social theories are different to theirs?’

‘Ah, now I see! In theory; you’re an anarchist, but in practice...’

‘I’m as much an anarchist in practice as I am in theory. Indeed, in practice, I’m much more of an anarchist than those other people you mention. My whole life proves it.’ (Pessoa, 1997 [1922]: 88)

The Anarchist Banker presents in its title both a mystery and a contradiction in terms, that resonate with the *ephemera* special issue on anarchism and management. Whether this provokes a bewildered reaction or a puzzled rejection of one term in relation to the other, Fernando Pessoa’s novel serves as a starting point to comment on how the study of management and the practice of management education can explore, integrate and negotiate an anarchist aesthetic and radical political thought in ways that differ from traditional business school approaches.

In this paper we discuss a theatrical staging of *The Anarchist Banker* by Fernando Pessoa (1997 [1922]), entitled *The Anarchist Banker for Four Actors*, at a gathering of artists, philosophers and management scholars in Zadar, Croatia in 2010, organized by The Université Nomade¹. The adapted play also can be enacted in business schools or as a stand-alone theatrical performance. Considered by Fernando Pessoa as a ‘conto de raciocínio’ (tale of reasoning), the text is abound with references to philosophy that are opposed, interwoven and negotiated in a way that is supported and enhanced by the aesthetic situation of the theatre performance. We argue that the performance serves as a compelling example for critical management education and allows for further insights into how anarchist theories may be reflected upon and practiced in a business school context. We also argue that such a theatrical performance constitutes a critical intervention that encourages people to rethink salient issues in today’s global and finance-dominated capitalism in the search for alternatives.

We link this potential to an ‘anarchist aesthetics’ in the sense of sensually perceptible forms of (‘cultural’) products and performances whose production process and content embodies and expresses libertarian principles. Loosely related to the quote in the title which refers to being an ‘anarchist in theory as

¹ Adaptation written, directed and played by Raymond Saner together with three Croatian actors Jure Aras, Milan Miocic Stocic, and Miro Pucar. The Université Nomade came about through the co-operation of several individuals active in the European Cultural Parliament and organizations such as the Abo Akademi University in Finland and the Cittadellarte-Fundazione Pistoletto. http://www.nuope.eu/people_text.html.

At this point, it may be worth mentioning a coincidence that one of the reviewers has pointed out: Zadar, or Zara in the past, at one point in time was the place where Luca Pacioli taught; Pacioli is credited with inventing double-entry bookkeeping and thus laying the foundations for finance capitalism.

well as in practice', this means that the actual theatre performance with its form and content, including its production and staging or *mise-en-scène*, share some characteristics that resonate with anarchist theory and practice. This includes ideas of working towards fuller freedom and autonomy, an egalitarian community, and liberating practices that deconstruct authority and suppression and encourage collective, polyphone visions.

The interplay between art and anarchy has been discussed from different perspectives, including from a literature perspective (Jeppesen, 2011; Leighton, 2011; Rosa, 2012), focusing on artists' imaginative and creative capacities to transforming social realities (Amster, 1989; Antliff, 2011). In our discussion of the novel and the performance of *The Anarchist Banker*, we explore elements of an anarchist aesthetic that relate to the following elements: the deconstruction of the hero and authoritarian discourse, dialogue and polyphony, collectivity, and obstructionism. These elements seem particularly relevant in a context of mainstream and positivist management studies (Spicer et al., 2009), while other elements of an anarchist aesthetic, such as anarchic gambling and rejection of rules, have been discussed with reference to other economic situations and political epochs (Gourianova, 2011).

An understanding of anarchist aesthetics that includes a critical stance towards many sensually perceptible relations is deemed useful in the management area where control and power are exerted increasingly indirectly and via subtle aesthetic influence and manipulation (Warren and Rehn, 2006). An aesthetic, visual and emotional mode of communication has been found to be part of new forms of resistance towards the capitalist economy that are driven by critical artists, from theatre makers to painters, to social activists who use theatrical means for their social interventions (Biehl-Missal, 2012; 2013; Chong, 2013). This form of artistic resistance goes beyond extant critical discourse about organizations, because its form provides an aesthetic experience, and conveys both intellectual and embodied forms of knowing in fuller, richer and stimulating ways. Similar to critical artists who question the current business world, critical academics may want to use artistic methods to encourage reflection also.

The quest for an anarchist aesthetic in the sense of performative practice addresses questions such as whether anarchism can be found and used in business schools, in teaching, or in artistic student projects that work with *The Anarchist Banker*. A historical literary text such as Pessoa's deals with issues of leadership and the topic of how ideals have been taken over by managerialism, greed and selfishness. This complements today's reflection and practices echoed by the manifold protests around the globe such as the 'Occupy Wall Street'

movement, questioning corporate capitalism and searching for alternative forms of organizing society and the economy. The openness of the artistic realm and an anarchist aesthetic's interruption of the dominant image machinery (Jeppesen, 2011) allows many revolutionary dimensions of our existence to be addressed, reminding participants that they, too, are creators.

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section, we situate *The Anarchist Banker* as a literary source of high contemporary relevance in an arts-based education context in business schools. In order to sketch some elements of an anarchist aesthetic, in the following sections we address a range of issues. Starting from a subversive presentation of the protagonist and hero, with reference to the text of the novel and the staging of the performance, we elaborate on dialogue and polyphony made possible through dramaturgical choices. We discuss the role of collectivity in the process and the attitude of obstructionism as another general aesthetic principle. Finally we consider even more unstructured, postdramatic, theatre forms and their potential in an anarchist endeavor. In the conclusion, we reflect on our case and future business school projects and implications.

Arts-based education and Pessoa's novel

We witness an increase in creative methods and use of the arts for management education in business schools. This trend can be seen as an answer to calls for new social, creative and communication skills following increasing social inequalities (Saner, 2010), scandals in banking, the media and the public sector, which have exposed limitations of current management practice and education (Adler, 2006). Some business schools include theatre performances, reading of literature and other practical projects to account for human dialogue and sustainable perspectives in management. For example, though in a more positivist way, Badaracco (2006) aims to 'illuminate the heart of leadership through literature'. It is commonly suggested that artistic contemplation and agency can increase personal reflection as an inspiration for new approaches to the business world (Adler, 2010). This complements a growing number of courses on ethics and sustainability, with management scholars pleading for more equitable growth and more sustained development that include triple bottom lines of social, ecological and economic development.

The Anarchist Banker situates itself very well in this context, showing obvious relevance for management education today. The financial crisis of 2008 and the consequent Occupy Wall Street movement in many parts of the world centered around issues such as perceived greed, unjustified bonus systems of major

corporations and unequal distribution of wealth in industrial and developing countries. *The Anarchist Banker* was written in a time of economic, financial and political upheavals where logic, stability, trust and principled rule based economic activity drifted into opportunistic, manipulative and high rent seeking behavior. The character of the banker thus can be perceived as an appropriate object of study.

We suggest that there is a need to go beyond moralizing and debates about ethical principles of good management behavior and to get closer to the rationalizing and self-justification of managers engaging in excessive profit maximization. Little is known about how a manager engaging in greedy behavior thinks, feels, and interacts with others. Mainstream management literature leaves little space to feeling and failure (Mangham, 2001) which, in their sensual and aesthetic, non-rational nature, may be played out perfectly in the space of theatre. Pessoa's play provides an excellent opportunity to make an experimental in-depth visit into the psychological realm of a senior manager.

From a management studies perspective, the character of the 'anarchist' banker is worth analyzing and performing in a theatre production, also with students. Such an endeavor would situate itself in a stream of theoretical and practical interest in heroes in the drama. *The Anarchist Banker* can be seen as a source for lessons for management studies. Drama as an acknowledged source of learning in a management context can provide critical and inconvenient lessons about social and economic interaction (Biehl-Missal, 2010: 289). Leaders are the archetype of drama and for thousands of years stages have made clowns of kings, capitalists and communists rather than praising them. Theatre has been used as an inspiration in management education for a long time. A premise for this approach is the nature of much management literature that presents frameworks and models but falls short of many increasingly-relevant issues in business revolving around human interaction, responsibility and ethics. Critical issues brought to the foreground by a theatrical performance can draw an audience's attention directly to crucial issues such as manipulation of followers, the abuse of power, the dark side of leadership and personal guilt, tormented feelings and other topics that do not feature prominently in biographies of successful leaders of today. We argue that the aesthetic form of a play's content as well as of the performance itself opens up an even stronger potential, also by embodying some anarchist principles.

Performing *The Anarchist Banker*

Plot of the novel

Fernando Pessoa, aka Fernando António Nogueira (1888–1935), was a Portuguese poet, writer, literary critic, translator, publisher and philosopher, one of the most significant literary figures of the 20th century and one of the greatest poets in the Portuguese language. *The Anarchist Banker* is one of the few short stories published before Pessoa died. It appeared in 1922 during a period of great instability in Portugal with growing fiscal deficits, hyper-inflation and forty-five changes of government between 1910 and 1926. Following the exile of King Manuel II of Portugal in 1910, reactionary monarchist powers, republican and anarcho-syndicalist groups clashed violently (Wheeler, 1978: 3). In 1921, another radical revolt in Lisbon ended up in the ‘Bloody Night’, where some of the most influential figures of the Republic were murdered. Further armed clashes between republican, clerical-conservative and monarchist parties lead to a military coup d’état in 1926 starting a long period of fascist-authoritarian regimes which only ended with the carnation revolution of 1974 that brought about democracy and the end of colonialism. Portugal’s First Republic (1910–26) became, in the words of historian Douglas L. Wheeler (1978), ‘midwife to Europe’s longest surviving authoritarian system’.

Pessoa rejected these ideological acts of violence and the ‘spiritual corruption’(Wheeler, 1978: 4) of the nation. Emphasizing individual freedom that does not subject itself to any person or ideology, Pessoa opposed self-righteousness of majorities that do not value differences but violate individuals’ positions and rights (Werner, 1992).

The Anarchist Banker situates itself in this historical and personal context. Pessoa’s short story features two characters, a senior and wealthy banker, a cigar smoking monopolist, and a junior banker in the early stages of his career. Following a dinner in the home of the banker, the guest inquires: ‘I know what I’ve been meaning to ask you. Someone told me a few days ago that you used to be an anarchist’ (Pessoa, 1997 [1922]: 88). The senior banker replies that he still is: ‘There’s no “used to” about it, I was and I am. I haven’t changed in that respect, I still am an anarchist’ (*ibid.*: 88), engaging in a long monologue that lines up different arguments, which however only on the surface portray capitalism as the logical development to a free society (Werner, 1992). Pessoa lets the senior banker present himself to the admiring yet unperceptive junior banker as someone who in his youth tried different radical social movements. He presents his life as a process of moving from being an enthusiastic but simplistic follower of social movements, developing step-by-step from a young revolutionary anarchist to being the only true and consistent anarchist: a self-centered and self-justified wealthy banker whose only motive is to stay rich and be independent of needs and social constraints. The junior banker tries to question the senior banker but is not able to catch up with his shrewd sophistry

and at the end lets the senior banker conclude on a triumphant note of self-congratulation. The story is an exercise in sophisticated sophistry twisting facts around glib arguments similar to what we would call today a spin-doctor. The story unfolds in the form of a Socratic pseudo-dialogue and, in Pessoa's 'diabolical capacity for reasoning', exposes the reader 'to an astonishing and versatile exposition of logic. Sophism, subversion, and subterfuge are called to the service of truth, which is but another player in the malleable rhetoric of life' (Jackson, 2010: 108). This story ranks thought higher than action and finds irrationality in logic, challenging the reader to discover flaws in the shocking twist of the wealthy banker's reasoning, by playing out what we consider in the following sections to be an anarchist aesthetic.

The deconstruction of the hero and of authoritarian discourse

With regard to aesthetic principles, we start our discussion with the protagonist and his subsequent deconstruction. As he puffs his cigar, the wealthy banker explains to his naïve after-dinner companion the argument that he is, in fact, the only real anarchist. He shows himself as a coherent character: 'What I mean is that between my theories and how I lead my life there is no divergence at all, but absolute conformity' (Pessoa, 1997 [1922]: 89). In a lengthy process, he transforms himself from an obvious *contradictio in adiecto* (the 'anarchist banker') into a heteronym that embodies many contradictions of Western culture. First of all, the character of *The Anarchist Banker* is different from typical figures in anarchist literature that often embody resilient counter-cultural roles of the nomad, tramp, vagabond or hobo, being constantly on the road to live the anarchist challenge to borders and other forms of oppression (Jeppesen, 2011: 200). The motif of a journey is prevalent in a more utopian way in anarchist literature, so that a typical character 'both reflects and produces a model for the project of becoming an anarchist, a literary expression of the always-incomplete permanent anarchist revolution' (*ibid.*: 189). The anarchist banker, who remains nameless, is the absence of all this, operating from an adverse yet still aesthetically-powerful position of stagnancy and standstill, assessing and evaluating the intellectual twists and turns that accompanied his decisions in life.

Protagonists in drama have been used for some time now to learn lessons for management. For example, the famous plays of Shakespeare offered a range of ideas for scholars and popular management writers of how to improve leadership (Mockler, 2002; Stevenson, 1996). Yet still, some of these analyses are criticized as being positivist and instrumental (Mangham, 2001; Biehl-Missal, 2010). Whitney, Packer and Noble (2000) for example learn from *Macbeth* that one of the worst leadership strategies is to strive for power simply for the purpose of winning more power. This insight does not question much of the system in

which today's managers operate and thus constitutes a superficial critique, instrumentalizing much of the political impact a play can convey. At least it would be hard for positivist management literature to ignore the subversive nature of *The Anarchist Banker*, which lends itself to a critical approach. With regard to *Henry V*, management scholars (Burnham et al., 1999) develop implications about how to excel as a leader, using symbols and stories to persuade people. Mangham (2001: 301) has criticized such approaches for lacking depth of interpretation, finding that the drama's character lacks morality and integrity, being a master dissembler able to play many roles, and thus questions entire systems of hierarchy, rule and suppressive order.

This applies to Pessoa's anarchist banker who does not present an ideal of career success but exposes us to an anti-hero, to a character who acts suavely and self-assuredly yet covers up contradictions and a problematic personality. Pretending that he is an 'anarchist in theory as well as in practice', the senior banker displays an errant character and provides for the play many heroic calls for freedom from injustice, which are, however, superficial and full of twisted logic, half-truths and straightforward lies, thus creating a subversive impact.

It has been discussed that theatre in general does not provide us with examples of ideal or charismatic leaders but, quite the opposite, teaches us about contentious and problematic heroes (Mangham, 2001): by exposing heroes' weaknesses, the constraints of role-playing and the fact that appearances are deceiving, theatre can encourage audiences to question and possibly reject powerful men and the social, organizational or legal systems that surround them (Biehl-Missal, 2010). This element also works towards an 'anarchist aesthetic'.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that Pessoa is a pen name of the author Noguera, who invented a total of 81 different heteronyms which appeared in most of his novels creating a web of multiple interactions between his different personas. The choice of 'Pessoa' which means 'person' may be seen as an expression of his personal life-long reflection of the complexity of human consciousness and elusiveness of identity.

The anarchist banker can be seen as an example of interrupted social identity formation involving issues of self-betrayal and the subsequent moral impasse. From a literature studies perspective, it has been analyzed how Pessoa's novel revisits major treatises on European economic, moral, and political philosophy to eventually unmask the illogic of the philosophical foundations of our political systems (Jackson, 2010). In the philosophical density of his rhetoric, Pessoa's character reviews and distorts major works in the European tradition by deconstructing many of the essential logical processes that originate in antique

philosophy. Pessoa playfully undermines many of the founding texts of political Enlightenment (Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Malthus, Rousseau, Smith, and Spinoza), as well as making a devastating critique of revolutionary psychology and of 1917 Bolshevism. For example, the banker's triumphant conclusion that he has freed himself, starts from a distortion of anarchist theory:

What does the anarchist want? Freedom – freedom for himself and for others, for humanity as a whole. He wants to be free from the influence and pressure of social fictions; he wants to be as free as he was when he was born, which is how it should be; and he wants that freedom for himself and for everyone. (Pessoa, 1997 [1922]: 96)

At a later stage, this recurring argument is countered by one of the few objections of the junior banker:

The conditions of your course of action were, as you yourself proved, not only to create freedom but also not to create tyranny. You did create tyranny. As a sequestrator, as a banker, as an unscrupulous financier – forgive me, but you yourself used such terms – you created tyranny. You've created as much of a tyranny as any other representative of the social fictions which you claim to fight. (*ibid.*: 112)

In his reply, the senior banker emphasized that he 'did not create any tyranny' and did 'not add to it', but has followed the only possible anarchist option, which is: 'I freed myself' (*ibid.*: 113). While Jean-Jacques Rousseau presumes that men is naturally good, and John Locke has suggested the image of mind that comes into being as a blank slate, Pessoa's character, more in accordance with Thomas Hobbes' Leviathanian concept of man as the selfish animal, argues in favor of inequalities, rejecting the idea of a transcendental or universal mankind (Jackson, 2010: 110). The banker attacks Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* which suggests that self-interest leads to public good, provided that markets function undisturbed, by emphasizing a remaining egoistic drive (Jackson, 2010: 111). This is linked to the senior banker's later statement that the 'best way to gain freedom for the whole of humanity (is by) destroying all social fictions'. In this attempt, other philosophical ideas are refuted, for example Marxist views and the failure of revolutions that are interpreted as the final failure of political utopias:

So what emerges from a revolutionary dictatorship – and will emerge more fully the longer that dictatorship lasts – is a dictatorial warrior society, that is, military despotism. It couldn't be anything else. (Pessoa, 1997 [1922]: 94)

Revolutionary systems for the senior banker simply are dictatorships, an idea that resonates Pessoa's rejection of consensus that is forced upon other individuals (Werner, 1992). These rhetorical pirouettes and philosophical trips however lead to the assessment of interchangeability of political ends, where utopias do not

have a place and history is failure. This argument brings the banker to abandon organized anarchist structures in favor of individualistic actions: 'We should all work for the same end, but separately' (Pessoa, 1997 [1922]: 105). However, as theorists on anarchism have pointed out, while the blunt rejection of any organization may well be a form of individualistic anarchism, many others have formed effective groups and federations that are non-hierarchical, non-bureaucratic and decentralist and work towards the shared goal (Stowasser, 2006: 135). The protagonist however connects to a line of thinking that is also related to Spinoza's treatise on the superiority of the super individual (Jackson, 2010: 111). The image of the ideal hero is perpetuated by the senior banker who, at several instances, refers to 'the logic of a clear-thinking man (that) has to examine all possible', carrying 'the idea of justice (...) here inside' himself:

As I was saying, I was, by nature, clear thinking and I became an anarchist. Now what is an anarchist? He is a person in revolt against the injustice of people being born socially unequal – that's basically what it is. From that springs his rebellion against the social conventions that make that inequality possible. (Pessoa, [1922]1997: 91)

In full faith of his 'clear' intellect, the banker does not question his judgment and rarely reveals humble moments towards social movements and utopias. Jackson's (2010: 114) analysis ends in the assertion that 'the short story, then, presents the case of the authoritarian, individualistic, rationalizing tendencies of logic, thereby constituting a parody of deductive logic of socio-political concepts summarized and satirized in the banker's maximum conclusion "I freed one man"'.

With regard to a critique of heroism and leadership, as in many other dramas, the character of the anarchist banker provides a view into the dark side of human thinking and existence, which makes him an object of interest in a management context. A dark side is not present in the world of management where managers in their speeches for example typically use rhetorical devices to create a controlled, reassuring and 'balanced' impression (Biehl-Missal, 2011a: 639). On a broader level, management textbooks and popular entrepreneur biographies promote an idea of leadership as rational and self-confident and this discourse colonizes our everyday life, forcing us to re-enact an unemotional ideology of efficiency (Hancock and Tyler, 2004). All this is driven ad absurdum in this anarchist banker's speech.

Similar to many classical dramas, the novel questions systems, structures and social power by encouraging the audience's reflective interpretation through satiric and distorted logic in the protagonist's rhetoric. There are abundant examples of paradoxes in the banker's rhetorical and socio-political exposition.

For example he consents to the existing bourgeois system, which he as a believer in natural society should reject like other social fictions. He reasons about the way to overcome another 'social fiction':

The most important, at least in our day and age, is money. How could I subjugate myself to money, or to be more precise, to the power and tyranny of money? (Pessoa, 1997 [1922]: 109)

The answer is to acquire it in such quantity that he is beyond its influence. In the end this inversion of meaning leads to the very existence of someone considering himself to be an 'anarchist banker'. Immersing into capitalist accumulation, an anathema to an anarchist, the banker has separated his acts from his morals. This eventually replaced his ideals by a coherent capitalist ideology which then became identity. With the banker hiding behind logical argument and self-deception, Pessoa questions the façade of logic and related strings of arguments that may cover many other social and political relations. The anarchist banker's mode of reasoning encourages audiences to think on their own, abstractly and almost artistically, to create their own view on the topic, and potentially their own vision of something else.

With regard to anarchist literature, Jeppesen (2011: 201) argues that it has as its task a 'radical break with conventional perceptions, revealing their constructedness and simultaneously experimenting with form and content with the goal of creating something new, extending the limits of the possible'. *The Anarchist Banker* indeed goes some way to deconstruct, obstruct and recombine philosophical thought. The performance can deconstruct a discourse of persuasive creation of meaning by showing that an authoritarian discourse, here driven by the 'anarchist' banker, imposes answers and thereby constructs opinion and order in ruthless and shrewd ways. This is another aesthetic principle that we see as part of an 'anarchist aesthetic'.

The anarchist banker, with his theatrical self-confidence and the exercise of effective rhetorical control in the conversation, presents an image of himself that is quite revealing and, in its exaggerated nature, may affect *our perception* of many bankers and business leaders that we encounter today among the leaders of the global economy. Many of the theatrical techniques of leaders in particular have been reflected in detail in studies of impression management to explain how they exert power and hierarchy, increasing subordinate compliance and faith in them, building follower belief and commitment in pursuit of a vision (Leary and Kowalski, 1986). Less prominent though are studies that emphasize not only their manipulative potential but opportunities for negotiation and change in a co-created encounter with the audience (Biehl-Missal, 2011), or draw on theories of acting to provide explanations for how people behave in organizations, also

outlining the pressure to perform roles at high emotional and psychological cost (Höpfl, 2002). With regard to Pessoa's *The Anarchist Banker* this is driven ad absurdum, because he obstinately adheres to his point of view and consistently follows this paradoxical vision in a crescendo leading to a point where the entire endeavor appears in its dark and tormented form, revealing the logical disorientation in thinking. This leaves spectators to draw their own, unpleasant and potentially anarchist conclusions about how personalities, for example in the finance industry, are able to hide behind a sleek façade of impression management and rhetorical argument.

Dialogue and polyphony

The elements of anarchist aesthetics mentioned so far (the deconstruction of a seemingly logical but in reality authoritarian order, and a hero exposed in his ideological contradictions) are played out in the situation of a theatrical performance, which adds more elements of anarchist aesthetics in form and content.

For the purposes of the performance, the short story *The Anarchist Banker* was amended in Zadar by Raymond Saner by adding two more roles to the original dialogical pair of senior and junior banker, calling the adapted version *The Anarchist Banker for Four Actors*. These two additional characters function as alter egos in the script which provide more space for the audience to deepen their understanding of the senior banker's sophisticated arguments and self-serving re-interpretation of history.

As a dramaturgical choice the polyphony aims to emphasize the distorted nature of the argument. Several key statements spoken by the senior banker are used in the performance. These statements represent central *Versatzstücke* (originally: 'movable pieces of scenery' in theatre practice. The notion often is transferred to describe central 'concepts-beliefs' and motifs that originate from the text and that can be used in different instances and in other contexts as well). During the Zadar performance, the movable pieces of text were written on flip chart paper, then hung up on a grid symbolizing the looseness and instrumental use in the logic of the senior banker's narrative. Examples are:

I'm as much an anarchist in practice as I am in theory.

There is no divergence between how I live my life and my theories.

An anarchist is a person in revolt against injustice of people born socially unequal.

True evil are social conventions and fictions super imposed on natural realities.

Any system based on desire to abolish a fiction is also a fiction.

The more money I acquire, the more I'm free of its influence.

Social fictions are not people that one can shoot.

The objective is to bring to the actual scenic and narrative foreground the statements of the senior banker to help the audience see and hear the core of his circular arguments. The two alter egos can step down from their high chairs onstage, go over to the flip charts, point at any of the key statements with a pointer or stick and interject a short lecturette about the statement, providing arguments to either support or reject the statement in some kind of impromptu lecture. During such interventions of the alter egos, the senior-junior actors remain in a freeze and let the two alter egos debate the senior bankers' statements. Once an alter ego stops the reflection and sits back on the high chair, the senior and junior banker come out of their freeze and continue their dialogue within the script.

Polyphony emphasizes that the characters and their situation are complex and ethically sophisticated, which is undoubtedly the case in *The Anarchist Banker for Four Actors*, to allow for a range of choices and alternatives that require profound ethical assessments. In an analysis of anarchist aesthetics in literature, Jeppesen (2011: 203) argues that 'polyphony emphasizes what is an important value to anarchists – free will – and thereby demonstrates the heightened potential of every decision we make to influence the direction of the future world'. In the situation of the performance actors can actually embody this anarchist principle.

An alternative option is for the pair of senior and junior bankers to replay the previous few statements to get back to the text and allow the audience to focus again on the textual foreground. Actors can use the printed script and read or improvise from script or memorize text. Both options are viable. Reading from the script could give more perception of depth, that is, give the audience space to see the play as a form of *mise-en-scène* of a written text which sometimes helps the audience to keep intellectual distance rather than be drawn into the acting dynamics and personalities played up by the actors. This technique of alienation and distance has some history in socialist theatre practice and is known as the Brecht's (1970) *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect). It is used to show not individual but some overarching collective view of social relationships and to prevent identification, allowing actors to step out of their role so as to encourage spectators to reflect and to practice self-reflection. Walter Benjamin (1977) put this in relation to a specific kind of heroes, so-called 'untragic' heroes, who are full of personal incoherencies and contradictions in character, as is the self-

deluding senior banker. This dramaturgical choice further works towards an anarchist aesthetic.

Theatre impacts spectators not only on the intellectual level but also strongly influences their perception on the aesthetic, the sensually-perceptible dimension. A theatre performance unfolds its impact not only intellectually via spectator reception of the underlying dramatic text, but in the actual aesthetic situation of the performance, which is co-created by the audience through co-presence in the materiality, light, sound and atmosphere of theatrical space (Lehmann, 2006; Biehl-Missal, 2011). The performance in a subtle fashion can touch and irritate audiences when it conveys self-doubt and insecurity via fragile voices, trembling hands and unsteady gaze. It has been suggested that it is 'precisely the reality of theatre, playing with meanings, aesthetic experiences and emotional states, which predestines it for aesthetic training – preferably via non-instrumental appreciation, visiting or participating in performances in the context of theatre-based training, or extensive readings of plays' (Biehl-Missal, 2010: 289). This is another reason why a staging of Pessoa's text seems a more holistic and critical approach to management education which remains largely positivist and mainstream rather than polyphone, for example as an actually experienced and embodied exercise in free will.

Collectivity

Developing this idea of the actual embodiment of thought leads us to another element that is commonly referred to as characteristic for an anarchist aesthetic: collectivity. Collectivity is emphasized in anarchist literature with a collective or an affinity group being an important space for the production and distribution of anarchist literature, including practices such the rotation of tasks, consensus decision-making, resource-sharing and skill-sharing (Jeppesen, 2011: 192). This process of organizing creative work recreates anarchist horizontal grass-roots practices that stand for the essential political aspiration to create the world we want to live in. The production of theatre (the planning process of the *mise-en-scène* and the actual performance) in particular lends itself to this approach, with uncountable enthusiastic (e.g. Pollesch, KulturanthropologInnen, Kanak, TFM-StudentInnen, 2001) and persistent practices and by now many failed attempts to organize theatre collectively, for example the 1970s Schaubühne in West Berlin (Iden, 1979). Efforts to bring about anarchic social organization were also strong in American event-based art practices of the 1960s that created temporary non-hierarchical collectivities (Shea, 2011).

These collective and anarchist approaches challenge the common celebration of the individual virtuoso artist that is reproduced in the widespread practice of

hierarchical modes of production with one dominant director in the theatre. We find these practices in contemporary forms of artistic resistance in diverse Occupy movements and in other theatrical groups of resistance (such as The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army) that do not have a leader but have shared forms of organization. We encounter similar notions of 'shared leadership' in contemporary management practice (Pearce and Conger, 2003), which however aim to source knowledge trans-individually to increase corporate efficiency. Resistant theatrical collective processes reject the principle of economic performativity, and instead work towards cultural efficacy that may challenge and change cultural norms in ways that are not foreseen. This fits with the guiding principle of anti-performativity in critical management studies (Spicer, Alvesson and Karreman, 2009). Also in this sense, the use of arts-based methods in a business school may constitute a subversive approach.

The staged production of *The Anarchist Banker* had one director but made collective dramaturgical decisions during the process involving all four participants. There are however more opportunities of an anarchist aesthetic and collectivity in the course of the performance.

In a tradition of socialist and critical theatre, collective creation has been heralded as a means of empowerment and political action in real life. For example, the forum theatre (Boal, 1979) actively encouraged participants to freeze the action in a staging that typically dealt with daily practices of suppression, to jump in and improvise a performance that then could be recreated as an emancipated action in real-life. Emphasizing the embodied nature of agency and decision making, theatre pedagogics and political theatre, including Bertolt Brecht's (1970) *Lehrstücke* or learning plays, use playful situations to practice, amend and change text spoken in social encounters, and to train the necessary emotional and aesthetic strength within actors. Other approaches such as Erwin Piscator's (1986) Agitprop Theatre in the 1920s also relied on the aesthetic impact of a situation that made rational arguments but used emotional components as well to better reach spectators. This idea is mirrored in contemporary approaches to arts in management education that emphasize that impact resides in the aesthetic experience of the situation, for example in the embodied experience of drawing and reflection, performing and sensing, singing and feeling (Barry & Meisiek, 2010). In this sense, *The Anarchist Banker* could be staged as a forum theatre with students, as a participatory event that reconnects embodied experience to social experience (Shea, 2011) and simultaneously exposes the authoritarian structure that dominates our society.

The dramaturgical choices in *The Anarchist Banker for Four Actors* offer much opportunity to involve the audience, for example as understudies that substitute

the alter egos, or as interjections commenting on the movable pieces of text. The performance itself emphasizes improvisation and offers opportunities for a collective narrative situation that is generated by the contribution of different voices, articulating a multiplicity of minds and ideas that is accessible and undetermined. This aesthetic form performs and reinvokes anarchist ideas of collective generation and utopian openness. Thereby it challenges the position of a singular spiritus rector of ideas, as denoted by the phrase the 'death of the author' by Roland Barthes (2001 [1968]). Barthes argued against the limited approach of drawing on individual information such as biography and views of the author to understand the meaning of a text, rather assigning intertextual authority to all recipients opening up its multiple layers and meanings. While the historical context of its creation adds to the potential of *The Anarchist Banker for Four Actors* in contemporary management education, on an in-built dimension, the narration itself expresses this anti-author(itarian) principle as ideas of philosophers are drawn on, combined, and, in an almost postmodern sense, combined anew.

This postmodern recombination by the senior banker exposes his distorted logic that heavily argues against collective work processes that the banker had experienced in his earlier anarchist days:

We would all work towards the great social revolution, we would work for a free society (...) we worked together for the anarchist ideal. (Then) I discovered something else. Something happened within the group (...): a tyranny was created. (...) Some gave orders to others and made the latter do whatever they wanted them to do; some imposed themselves on others and obliged them to be whatever they wanted them to be; some used cunning tricks and devices to lead others into areas into which they did not want to be led. (Pessoa, 1997 [1922]: 100)

This leads the senior banker to conclude: 'Working separately, we cannot create a new tyranny because no one has influence on anyone else'.

The aesthetics of this narrative structure hence also expresses the moral of the story. The on-going singular person's dominating monologue, only timidly interrupted by the junior banker, eventually leads to the philosophical breakdown showing the result of a missing collective reflection. 'If only he had not worked through this thoughts completely separately!', a spectator might exclaim.

More than a novel, the whole situation of a theatrical performance has the power to expose, via its aesthetic atmosphere, the true nature of what he is saying. The mere presentation of the authoritarian, unobstructed flow of philosophical destruction that dominates the stage, all the time, governs the sound, and taints the atmosphere. This addresses another preeminent aspect of collectivity that consists in the shared aesthetic situation, namely the performance, which is co-

created by spectators and audience members and is reciprocal through some sort of aesthetic feedback loop (Biehl-Missal, 2011: 622). The dramaturgical choice of collective polyphony supports this experience in order to actively obstruct and oppose the individual's errant performance. This may suggest 'enacting' a more utopian, collective interpretation and writing of philosophical history and future.

Obstructionism

The Anarchist Banker for Four Actors, via its authoritarian narrative atmosphere and the dramaturgical choices that emphasize discourse and challenge, touches upon another principle of anarchist aesthetics that is referred to as 'confrontational politics' (Jeppsen, 2011: 202): a confrontational politics is almost inevitable in anarchist creative ventures, as they attempt to become 'direct action interventionist representations that interrupt flows not just of capitalism and governmentality, but also of sexism, racism and heterosexism – the normative images and textual representations of our time'. This idea of 'antiauthoritarian insubordination' as a function of anarchist aesthetics has been found in studies of literature (Cohn, 2007) and is actively enacted in approaches to forum theatre and in all kinds of theatrical activism and contemporary artistic resistance (Biehl-Missal, 2013).

As we discussed earlier with regard to the protagonist in the theatre, dramaturgy often reveals the preposterousness of heroes and their world. The text of the novel deconstructs the senior banker's self-deluding and self-aggrandizing attempt to cover up his blatant greed and misanthropic philosophy of life. For example, by constructing the 'civilized' versus the 'uncivilized' and the 'strong' versus the 'weak':

How could I make myself superior to money? The simplest way was to remove myself from its sphere of influence, that is, from civilisation; to go into the country and live off roots and drink spring water; to walk around naked and live as the animals live. But this, apart from the obvious difficulties involved, would not be combating a social fiction; it would not be combating anything, it would be running away. It's true that anyone who avoids joining in a fight also avoids being defeated by it. Morally, though, he is defeated, precisely because he did not fight. There had to be another way, a way that would involve fighting not fleeing. How could I subjugate money by fighting it? How could I shrug off its influence and tyranny over me without avoiding contact with it? There was only one way forward, I would have to acquire money. (Pessoa, 1997 [1922]: 110)

The character of the anarchist banker is dramaturgically and performatively obstructed, not for sarcastic reasons but to open up opportunities to imagine how the world could be, particularly with regard to today's figures of bankers, the financial crises and the elites' socially and economically harmful behavior that excludes the remaining 99 percent of the population. While only a small portion

of these 99 percent actively opposes wealth, the dream of financial success is strong for many, who, again may find that they share some of the features mirrored in the hero's text and his preposterousness.

Discussion

Taking into account elements of anarchist aesthetics such as character deconstruction, dialogue, polyphony, collectivity and obstructionism in co-present performance brings to mind even more experientially radical forms of theatre such as so-called 'postdramatic theatre'. This is a form of theatre that goes beyond the classical drama. It emphasizes the overall experience constituted by the interplay of sound, voices, silence, movement and the materiality of performers, rather than (like in classical drama) by the representation of linear, dramatic plots (Lehmann, 2006). Dominant principles of postdramatic theatre are the fragmentation of narration, the deconstruction of authorship, the non-hierarchic, chaotic, yet congruent situations that have the potential of stimulating utopian envisioning. This aesthetics reflects poststructuralist approaches to anarchy and power (Antliff, 2007) and many other contemporary anarchist processes of production that do without copyright and clear structures in the media and social life with nonlinear circulation and a rearrangement of ideas, collectivity and polyphony.

In management studies these ideas are reflected as a model for contemporary organizations (Boje, 1995). In this vein, postdramatic theatre has also been used as an inspiration for management and innovative forms of consulting, as its fragmented form encourages a shift away from linear problem-solving to empowering people to deal with never-ending complexity (Saner, 1999; 2000). Developing this suggestion of aesthetic awareness and creative agency, it since has been argued that a postdramatic form of artistic intervention is, in the present era of organizational aestheticization, particularly suitable for unfolding a critical and transformational potential (Biehl-Missal, 2012). This may be achieved by not exposing organizational issues onstage via the use of a dramatic, linear format. Rather than presenting answers and solutions and the view of a single author, which can be seen as an affirmation and imposition of ideas, postdramatic aesthetics can perform the anti-order, the exception, and thereby open up divergent perspectives. This would resonate with Amster's (1989) view on a contemporary anarchist aesthetics that argues for the abandonment of the textual space and for more realist approaches that may enact revolution beyond the textual space.

In a way, some of the aesthetic principles may be achieved by staging *The Anarchist Banker for Four Actors*, because many of its elements are explicitly obstructivist, polyphone and collective. Its narrative approach still seems useful because there is a need to go beyond moralizing and debate about ethical principles of good management behavior and to obstruct ubiquitous narratives of rationalizing and self-justification by managers who engage in excessive profit maximization. As many forms of socialist theatre that aimed at social impact (Piscator, 1986) relied heavily on narration, the production and deconstruction of narratives remains necessary for a critical management studies discourse that also involves students.

Quite how this message may reach the world of finance is a moot point. The impact of theatre may include change on the individual and group level that is brought about by dramatic re-enactment of emancipatory ideas and their performance in everyday-life (e.g. Brecht, 1970; Boal, 1979). Arts-based, theatrical forms in an organization may also have an impact on the group level through uncontrollable narratives and polyphony and divergent interpretations by participants (Barry and Meisiek, 2010). Artistic critique may also affect society indirectly, as we have seen throughout history. *The Anarchist Banker for Four Actors* has not been tested with multiple audiences and it remains to be seen what feedback emerges when it is staged with different participants, for example students from different levels and maybe also executives, for example in the context of arts-based management development.

Conclusion

Faithful to the preceding motto of being 'as much an anarchist in theory as in practice' we have argued that a theatrical re-enactment of Pessoa's novel can generate important insights into philosophical thought as well as practical implications for everyday agency. We have discussed how Pessoa's historical novel touches on issues that are very much relevant for leadership in today's global economy. The play situates itself in an extant stream of research that is concerned with learning lessons from drama and literary heroes, and with active creative agency. The elements of anarchist aesthetics such as deconstruction of the hero, dialogue and polyphony, collectivity, and obstructionism come to the fore in the performance of the text and through dramaturgical choices. These elements are also relevant for earlier stages of the production process in terms of shared work and collective discussion. Future management students engaged in such a project may benefit from enacting collective processes that differ from those in conventional management textbooks (which emphasize leadership directed towards maximizing organizational efficiency) and instead learn to

appreciate shared leadership oriented towards cultural efficacy. The process that we have described asks for dialogue and collective mindfulness, for debate and understanding, in a playful form that is characterized by, to use Kant's philosophic words, purpose without purpose. In other forms of anarchist aesthetics, forms of play such card playing and gambling, are advocated in place of labor, since they are neither a duty nor an obligation, but an ultimate and ephemeral fulfilment without 'special purpose' (Gourianova, 2011: 77).

We thus suggest that a performance based on Pessoa's novel *The Anarchist Banker* not only generates reflection on leadership, success and the capitalist system but also enhances the aesthetic awareness of issues such as self-presentation strategies, impression management and leadership that is created interpersonally. In the end, the impact and effectiveness of hierarchical leadership in organizations depends on the followers and on their willingness to give credit and follow, or perhaps, with a bow to the anarchist endeavor, not to do so.

Policymakers and business leaders of many countries are calling for more investment in the creative industries so as to face better the challenges of continuous technological change and globalization. Creativity is indeed crucial for the future of countries and enterprises. However, the best and surest road to creativity is cultural expression and the application of aesthetics to industry, management and society. This understanding can help to legitimize the use of arts and anarchist aesthetics in a business school, though it is exposed to the danger of further instrumentalization of the case that has been described as a negotiation of anarchist aesthetics. We are confident that the challenging nature of the aesthetic form makes it hard to misinterpret texts such as *The Anarchist Banker* without making a fool of oneself.

As a possible exercise in a business school, this extends beyond standard classroom learning by connecting with practices of artistic resistance and anarchist aesthetics that are seen as 'illegalities': This may involve some alternative or independent press production and reclaiming spaces with community art and creative redecoration, with imagery and culture jamming of billboards or guerrilla poetry (Jeppesen, 2011: 197). Combining artistic expression with direct action, these protests are directly democratic, interventionist and participatory rather than the mainstream or repenting attitudes and approaches used in universities in the 1960s and by the recent protest movements. Instead, we suggest that, in hierarchical and efficiency-driven business schools, there should be implemented some exercises in philosophical thinking so as to discuss with students (fee-paying or otherwise) the qualities of freedom, liberated will, play versus labor, unpredictability versus determinism, purposeless fulfilment

versus efficiency, the 'actor' versus the 'accountant' and the anarchist versus the banker, in theory as well as in practice.

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the authors

Brigitte Biehl-Missal is a professor for business studies and communication at Business School Berlin Potsdam, Germany, and a visiting researcher at Essex Business School, University of Essex. She holds a doctorate in theatre, film and media studies and has been involved in a number of socio-political artistic projects and performances. Her research interests emphasize the aesthetic side of organizations, and the relationship of art and management.

Email: brigitte.biehl-missal@businessschool-berlin-potsdam.de

Raymond Saner is Titular Professor at the University of Basel's department of economics and management studies, visiting professor at Sciences Po, Paris in the programme Master in Policy Analysis and co-founder of CSEND, a Geneva based research NGO. He has written radio plays, reported on experimental theatre from New York City for Swiss Radio and has written on the historical linkages between the arts, politics and societal developments. One of his research interests is application of sociodrama and theatre to management education.

Email: saner@csend.org