



Vita Contemplativa

A Life in Part

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Abstract

Life, art and science are irremediably intertwined: how, where and with whom one shares the brief moments of existence necessarily affect what one thinks, how one writes, and what one will address. Being a scholar is a vocation, as Weber knew only too well, in which science, ethics and art blend; sometimes seamlessly, sometimes not. None who live an intellectual and public life are immune to the normal glosses of the sociology of knowledge and this paper provides glimpses, through a personal lens, of what such a gloss might see. It is a glimpse of a life still living and lived; an artist still at work, an agenda still being developed, frozen like a snapshot of an instant – and just as representative. Can a snapshot capture an essence? Sometimes. Whether this does is left to others to judge.

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Prologue: A Life in Miniature

Born and raised in 1947 in Bradford, in the shire known then as the West Riding of Yorkshire, the only son of Joyce and Willie Clegg; grew up in the same shire in the small mill-town of Elland and attended Elland Grammar School, then went to Aston University. Graduated in 1971 and married Lynne Bowker and did a PhD at Bradford University, graduating in 1974. I worked briefly at Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham, leaving to become the European Group for Organization Studies (EGOS) Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in early 1975; in mid-1976 I was facing unemployment at the end of the contract. There were few jobs in the British system, as a result of monetary cuts supervised by the IMF: seemingly too management for the sociologists and too sociological for the management types, I got none of them. Out of the blue I received a cable asking me to apply for a job in the School of Humanities at Griffith University in Brisbane. The job was offered; I accepted and on 16 November 1976 started a new life in Australia. I have stayed there, more or less, ever since, although I have moved around a bit. Lynne and I had two sons in Australia, Jonathan and William, one born in Queensland and the other in New South Wales, which makes life interesting when State of Origin Rugby League series are played. (I support Queensland – it is my state of origin as

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an Australian.) I founded and developed the Asian Pacific Researchers in Organization Studies (APROS) as a non-hierarchical and networked mimesis of EGOS and ended up working in Sydney at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). I have made some great friends, as well as a few enemies, worked with some really interesting colleagues, and written a few books and articles. I haven't died at the time of writing.

Learning the Craft

I try to be a craftsman, remain a sociologist, and practise in management and organization theory. To associate terms such as 'craftsman', 'sociologist' and 'practice' is to think immediately of C. Wright Mills, whose essay 'On Intellectual Craftsmanship' (1959) made a profound impact on me when I first read it as an undergraduate student at Aston, at the behest of Colin Fletcher, my sociology tutor. In fact, much of my theoretical development can be traced back to significant reading that I did while an undergraduate at Aston and a postgraduate at Bradford.

I was extremely fortunate in the degree that I read – and in the fact that I read for it. The mode of assessment was quite conventional – Part One of Finals at the end of the second year, an honours thesis in the third year, the 'sandwich' year, and Part Two of Finals at the end of the fourth year. One great benefit of this was to allow me, as a student, to read widely in those things in which I was interested. I was not on the treadmill of continuous assessment as many students are today. I was able to read widely with great gusto, especially in the 'sandwich' year.

My sandwich placement was with a research project that had been ongoing in the East Birmingham Midlands Hospital Group of the Regional Hospital Board. I use the past tense advisedly. When I arrived, about four years into the project, the research director was just leaving for a better job elsewhere, in Hospital Administration, and there were no other researchers there. No one seemed too bothered. I was paid a clerk's wage and given more or less *carte blanche* to do some 'useful' research.

My research question was framed in terms that David Hickson had introduced in a 1966 *Administrative Science Quarterly* article on 'A convergence in organization theory'. Essentially, he noted that the literature seemed divided on whether role prescription was a good thing. I thought that this sounded interesting and decided to test it out in the Hospital Group, by constructing a matched sample of people who had job descriptions and a sample that did not. I constructed an independent variable of the degree of role specificity, in which job descriptions played a role, and had as my dependent variable the notions of role conflict and role ambiguity. Were these greater or lesser with more or less prescription?

I constructed scales and fielded a survey. But I had also been reading Glazer and Strauss (1967) on *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, and so I included some more open-ended questions as well. This was fortunate as the survey results were somewhat inconclusive. However, using the qualitative data and

a grounded analysis and, inspired by Schutz's (1967) notions of the importance of the 'future perfect', I was able to make some sense of the data and write a thesis that was well received by the external examiner, Bob Hinings.

I was a marked man from that point – a Social Science Research Council scholarship seemed the next logical step to my mentors and a PhD the next qualification. I wasn't sure what these things were but when I found out they seemed like a good idea. You got paid to be a student for three more years!

The only decision that remained was where to do the PhD. The people at Aston had no doubt where I should go: back to Bradford. The reasons why Bradford might be a good idea were several. First, David Hickson was there. I had already used David's work as the frame for the honours thesis. Also, I had become interested in 'uncertainty' after reading Crozier (1963), and I knew that David Hickson was working on power and uncertainty. Second, he was a member of the famous Aston School and the staff at Aston all seemed to think it would be a good idea to follow him there. Third, I was born in Bradford. As a young man I clearly suffered from sentimentality and the idea of returning to my Yorkshire roots appealed to me (I think I am cured now). Well, to be utterly honest, it was not just about Bradford: my parents and my wife's parents also lived within about half an hour's drive of the city. That seemed a positive as well.

During the summer of 1971 Lynne and I got married after I had worked as a labourer on a construction site, the proceeds of which enabled us to place a mortgage on a near derelict pair of small cottages. Armed with the little bit of practical craft that I had picked up from the construction site and retained from woodwork lessons at school, the renovations began. The autumn passed and slowly faded into wintertime before the renovations were complete. I worked on them nearly every day and most evenings. Not a lot of thesis work was being done.

I had several assignments from David Hickson during this period. One was to go out and interview managers in a brewery to replicate the Alberta study of 'strategic contingencies and power' that he and Bob Hinings had done in Canada (Hickson et al. 1971). The exercise was interesting. Two weeks after the interviews were completed the brewery was taken over – none of the questions probed for this and none of the respondents mentioned it – as one might expect – although it did have some bearing on power. I was also asked to write a paper on structuralism. David Hickson didn't tell me what it was because he probably assumed that I knew. Unfortunately, what I knew and what he knew as structuralism were different. It was the first of a number of occasions when we thought the same term meant very different things. He really meant Aston while I thought of French structuralism, such as was to be found in Lane (1970). It was a portent of things to come – wherever there was a well-ploughed intellectual furrow in management and organization theory I usually didn't see me there. I preferred to explore the edges of the paddock, looking at what was going on in neighbouring fields.

My thesis topic had settled as 'power in organizations'. I began to acquire new knowledge, from political science mostly. The community power debate was the central focus and so I began to become familiar with a set of

sophisticated debates in political science. These were intellectually ahead of comparable debates in organization theory. The focus was on non-decisionmaking, mobilization of bias, and non-issues: things that didn't happen. Also, I was still reading my way through the sociological canon. One way to connect with the debates in political science might be through seeing power as structuring motives (Mills 1940). Basically, if people had the motives that you wanted them to have, then it wasn't necessary to exercise power over them in a mechanical, positivistic and observable way. And that meant that in the absence of movement, mechanism etc, there might still be power – but one had to break out of the positivist framework to see it. Blum and McHugh (1971) had written jointly on 'The social ascription of motives', critiquing Mills, so I was able to use their ideas as well.

One of the things that I had enjoyed about the earlier Blum and McHugh work had been the use of Wittgenstein's (1968) ordinary language philosophy. Mike Hall used to run intense tutorials at Aston discussing Winch's (1958) *The Idea of a Social Science*. We read this almost line-by-line. Wittgenstein was the ghost in the machine, the fly in the fly bottle, of Winch's concerns. So I had started to read Wittgenstein after seeing the use to which Blum and McHugh put him. But then I met and talked with McHugh who told me that they had moved on – they were now 'into Heidegger'. I don't think I'd any acquaintance with or context for understanding Heidegger. Nonetheless, I tried. However, mastering *Being and Time* (1962) and achieving the practical accomplishment of my thesis seemed an unlikely combination. Something had to give and I'm afraid it was Heidegger. I threw Heidegger away. I understood enough about his ideas to relish the subtle irony of this gesture.

I joined a regular set of seminars by the young phenomenologists at Goldsmiths College, University of London, at the invitation of Paul Filmer and David Silverman. These were held in the evenings at various flats and houses around London, on 'stratifying practices', in preparation for the BSA annual meeting that was to be held the following Easter in 1973. The seminars were puzzling. They didn't seem to be about sociology, at least not as I understood it. (Later, as became clear at the BSA meeting, they were not about sociology, as most British sociologists understood it, either.) Parmenides, the pre-Socratics, and the auspices of their theorizing were the agenda. I would drive back up the motorway to Yorkshire listening to the seminars on tapes that I had made, feeling stupider and stupider.

I had to do fieldwork and I knew about construction sites, so, after some hesitation, that seemed like the place to study. So sometime early in 1973 I started to try and make sense of such a site. Had there been an ethics committee they might not have liked my approach. I told the site managers that I wanted to study management in everyday life in organizations in order to write improved theories and train students better. Well, this was true. But it was what I didn't tell them that was important – I didn't say that I was researching power because, frankly, I thought that it might put them off and they would deny me access.

At this stage I had thought that I would use ethnomethodological conversation analysis (CA) to analyse the data that I collected through tape-recording

snatches of conversation on the site. There was a lag between the conception of this idea, the data collection, and my getting to grips with CA resources. The more that I read up on CA, the more that I realized that it would not work for what I wanted to do, other than in a fairly trivial way: who interrupts, who switches topics, and so on. This was a bit of a blow. I had no methodology.

Driving north from London one day, after a particularly mystifying meeting of the Goldsmiths seminar, my methodology began to take shape. I would use fragments of data from the site and ask what makes possible the lay theorizing occurring there. Rather than interrogate the texts of the pre-Socratics I would interrogate the texts of project managers in a real-time study of people doing project managing, captured through the talk that I was recording on site. With Wittgenstein (1968) I would think of these texts as comprising language games. With Garfinkel (1967) I would treat everyone as a practical theorist. My task would be to decode these language games, show what assumptions and auspices made them possible, grasp their underlying rules and modes of rationality, and embed them in their 'form of life'.

Ethnomethodology and Wittgenstein shared a certain obsession with the text of life as sufficient in itself. Wittgenstein's (1972) builders enter *The Blue and Brown Books* bereft of any social or descriptive particulars, much as did Garfinkel's (1967) characters, such as Agnes. I was pretty sympathetic to this aspect of the programme – I think my interest in French structuralism had already disposed me to it. Thus, the PhD thesis ended up being probably the least ethnographic ethnography ever written. *Let the text do the talking* was my motto. As long as I focused resolutely on the text then my sources were all evident and visible in the data appendices that I was laboriously constructing. I transcribed the limited number of tapes that I had available to me so that I could re-use them the next day. Some of the work was done by candlelight as the three-day week was in full swing and power cuts were the norm. But I was a man with a mission to finish my thesis before the SSRC money ran out, and wouldn't be deterred. I used to work into the early hours of the morning transcribing, reading and writing. I looked up the regulation for what constituted a successful PhD. It should be of publishable quality. So I decided to try and outflank any potential objections on this score. If I could secure a contract to publish the thesis before it was examined wouldn't that prove the work was good enough? I contacted A. D. Peters, Writers Agents, in the Strand in London, and to my surprise they took me on. Within a short period of time we had agreed a pecking order of desirable publishers to approach and we both thought that the list should start with Routledge & Kegan Paul's *International Library of Sociology*, edited by John Rex. A couple of months later I had a contract from them to write what became my first book, *Power, Rule and Domination*, and had secured an advance of £750 – half as much again as my annual SSRC studentship!

All I had to do now was write it. So, with renewed vigour I applied myself to the task at hand, completed it and accepted the offer of an appointment as a lecturer in sociology at Trent Polytechnic, in Nottingham.

The book was published in 1975 and received an appreciative review by Randall Collins in the *Administrative Science Quarterly*, a year or two after

the book appeared (by which time I was already out of management and organization theory and out of England). Most books, as one learns with experience, sink like a stone, and, if you are lucky, their ripples touch one or two other souls and, if you are very fortunate, bounce back to remind you that you made a difference for someone, some time, usually much later.

An EGOS Interregnum

I was offered an EGOS Post-Doctoral Research Fellowship, which rescued me from the intense pressures of teaching in the Poly. The only problem was that I had been hired to write up research on European work on power. I realized that one contemporary area of concern that I had not really explored was Marx's work. For 18 months I collected and read contemporary materials, developed an argument, and sought to extend it to what I knew of power and organization theory, as well as organizing a small EGOS workshop on power at Bradford.

The EGOS money was running out and I was back looking for a job again. But the International Monetary Fund had just made it harder. It lent the UK £3.5bn to tide it over the 1976 balance of payments crisis. A pound of flesh was required in return. Public spending had to be cut. The universities made an easy target. Sociology was especially unpopular, being identified with student radicalism. Posts were frozen and few were advertised. I had interviews for four jobs. Two were in sociology and two were in management. I didn't, deservedly I suspect, get any of them. I was too management for the sociologists, they thought (if only they had really known!), and I was clearly too sociological for the management people. Britain's crisis was fast becoming my crisis.

Emigration

Returning home in the summer of 1976 after a brief research trip to Berlin, where my financial sponsors were located, I received a cable asking if I wished to be considered for a lectureship at Griffith University in Brisbane. An interview was arranged through the Institute of Commonwealth Universities, with interviewers who had actually read what I had written and seemed to like it. All this was novel. The job was mine, I accepted, and in November 1976 Lynne and I flew to Brisbane via Bangkok and Singapore. Our Old English sheepdog, Dazzle, came out separately and directly into three months' quarantine. It cost us more to fly him than it cost the university to fly us.

Humanities at Griffith University

Griffith was a new interdisciplinary university set in the bush on the top of a small hill in a suburb of Brisbane, and it was to be my intellectual home for the next eight years. It was an amazing place in those days. People were

semioticians, post-structuralists, Marxists, feminists, humanists, film critics, did Australian Studies, were historians of the Italian City State, philosophers and art historians, students of Russian literature, and these were just the ones I thought I could figure out. We were all in one School of Humanities, teaching interdisciplinary programmes, largely to undergraduate students. It was a quite a dramatic shift from the Organizational Analysis Research Unit at Bradford Management Centre. Not only was it much more heavily populated, it was also full of many disciplines and it buzzed with ideas.

Brisbane is situated in a near-tropical zone. Moving there was like being born again, obliterating all the old cold days. I learnt a new literary, musical and film landscape. I learnt to body surf and enjoy the beach. I learnt to be on radio, working as the Jazz announcer for a station called 4ZZZ. I learnt a new political history and made new political allegiances. I learnt new skills and taught new subjects. I became Australian, slowly losing my pining and allegiance for the other country, the other continent. I learnt about administering things, making and keeping appointments, sitting on standing committees, as well as a great many other committees – Griffith ran on them. I learnt about new intellectual figures that were significant in Australia but largely unknown to most Europeans. I learnt about debates in the humanities around emergent concerns, such as postmodernism, which had not yet percolated into sociology or management. I learnt, slowly, about new species of flora and fauna, a new landscape, and a new sense of distance. I learnt about new pests such as possums, mosquitoes, and white ants. The spaces were vast after the small, overcrowded place I came from, and I learnt, in the words of the poet, ‘to love a sunburnt country’.

There was only one problem. Nowhere in the School were there any organization theorists. Nor were there in the Sociology Department at Queensland University, and neither university had a business school at that time. In fact, I don’t think there were any organization theory types in the state of Queensland, a state twice the size of France and Germany put together. So it was evident that my intellectual life would have to flourish in areas other than those that I had been used to. In this respect, the reading that I had done in philosophy and in Marxism, both of which were capable of transdisciplinary application, proved extremely valuable.

There was one project that travelled with me: David Dunkerley and I had become friendly before I left Yorkshire and he had asked me to edit a book with him. This was to become *Critical Issues in Organizations* (Clegg and Dunkerley 1977). We took the proposal to Peter Hopkins at Routledge. He took us to lunch, which is what publishers usually do. We went to a Japanese restaurant where he plied us with sake and seduced us with talk of money. Yes, he said, he’d publish *Critical Issues*, but only if we wrote him a ‘new criminology’ of organization theory. *The New Criminology*, by Paul Walton, Ian Taylor and Jock Young (1973), was Routledge’s best-selling text. Basically, it was a review of orthodoxy and the proposal of a Marxist political economy alternative. We agreed to do it for what seemed like a significant cash advance. I left for Australia, after we had put together the material for *Critical Issues* but before we had had a chance to do anything for the ‘big book’.

I arrived at Griffith without having written much of the EGOS post-doctoral report. Still, I had a subject on 'Power and Organizations' to teach and I was able to write the lectures for this and use them to form the chapters of the book that was eventually published as *The Theory of Power and Organization* (Clegg 1979). (The title was a subtle homage to David Silverman.) While *Power, Rule and Domination* had been incipiently structuralist, this one was full blown structuralism, with a Gramscian twist. At least it was largely European-oriented so I had fulfilled my commitments to EGOS. It also gave me an opportunity to address the work of Giddens (1979) and Lukes (1974) that had been published since I wrote the thesis. And it provided the template for what became *Organization, Class and Control* (Clegg and Dunkerley 1980), the eventual title of the 'big book'.

What was most interesting in *Organization, Class and Control* owed very little to the organization theory literature, even if it was making a contribution to it. The main innovations were derived from various Marxist sources that, at the time, were not well known among organization theorists. The framework was essentially driven by the idea of organizations as composed of arenas in which different modes of rationality competed (which came directly from the neo-Weberian influences in *Power, Rule and Domination*). The idea of differing modes of rationality was coupled with the structuralist notion that organizations should be seen as historically sedimented, with distinct selection rules at each layer of sedimentation. Above all, the book was framed by the notion of contextualizing organization functioning within both the state and the analysis of political economy. These were concerns shared by a small number of friends in Brisbane, who organized a conference around them at Griffith University, which led to another book (Clegg et al. 1983) and the founding of APROS.

The Blue Mountains and APROS

In 1982, arising from the earlier conference at Griffith University, a small number of people met at the Hydro Majestic Hotel in the Blue Mountains to found what became APROS. The key people were Jane Marceau and me, although Lex Donaldson and David Knights were also there. (David later told me that it was this meeting that served as the inspiration for the UK Labour Process Conferences.) Initially, APROS stood for Australian Pacific Researchers in Organization Studies. It was a clear piece of institutional isomorphism for which the template was EGOS. A while later, after meeting Gordon Redding in Hong Kong when flying back from a trip to the UK, I knew it was time to switch 'Australia' for 'Asia', to produce a Pacific Rim equivalent to the geographical spread of EGOS. We held our first re-badged APROS International Conference in Hong Kong in January 1985, and with variable frequency, have held ten since.

APROS differs considerably from EGOS. There are no super-EGOS. There is no membership list or dues. There is no administrative structure. Anyone who wants to can organize an APROS meeting. It is a virtual organization and a virtual brand that will live just as long as people want it to.

APROS exposed those of us involved in it to an incredible diversity of Asian cultures and organizations. It helped me extend my thinking about modes of rationality to much more comparative and institutional frames than might otherwise have been the case. These were themes that I explored in several works through the 1980s and into the early 1990s (Clegg, Dunphy, and Redding 1986; Clegg and Redding 1990; Clegg 1990; Clegg et al. 1990), broadening my interests out from the political sociology and class analysis themes that had preoccupied me (Clegg 1989a). Later it developed into work on Japan (Kono and Clegg 1998; 2001; Clegg and Kono 2002).

Sociology in Armidale at the University of New England

Being in Humanities at Griffith was a great experience but not a sustainable career move if I wanted to be either a sociologist or a management scholar. The former, not surprisingly, given the lack of recent experience, won out over the latter. I had edited the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* and it was in part because of this institutional work that I was offered the chair of sociology at the University of New England (UNE). UNE was a great environment for writing – most of the students were distance learners and I could write course notes that became books. This is how *Frameworks of Power* (Clegg 1989b), my third book-length extension into the power literature, was developed. I published a number of papers in *Organization Studies* (Clegg 1989c), one of which, ‘Radical Revisions’, was the impetus for writing *Frameworks*. This was a departure: previously I had written books and then maybe turned out an article from them. Now I was writing journal articles first.

‘Radical Revisions’ began life as a hastily composed paper for a meeting of European and US organization theorists in The Hague in 1987 where its ideas were studiously ignored by most of the eminent EGOS and US identities there. While this was not an unusual experience at least a more distinguished class of person was snubbing me. The crux of the paper was to build a synthesis around the concern with relations of production and relations of meaning. If my earliest work had focused on the latter, my later work had focused on the former. I had resolved to try and unify the concerns. I saw it as pulling together the separate threads of the earlier work that ended up as *Power, Rule and Domination*, and the later, more structural work that followed it, as I had sought an audience and interest through connecting with Marxism. Also, it was work done after Foucault (1979) and away from Griffith, where there were so many Foucauldians that it was easy to feel intimidated. The central idea was that power should be thought of in terms of a series of circuits and flows. Rather than think of power in terms of structural levels it seemed better to think of it as a series of interlocking circuits, in which a part of the architectonics of power would be the capacity to limit or extend the circuitry within which power moved. The influences were apparent: I had been reading a lot of post-structural material, or material closely influenced by this stream of work, as well as Bhaskar (1975; 1979:

reading reflected in Clegg 1983), and Harré and Secord (1972), and finally, Foucault (1979), together with closely related work by Callon (1981) and Laclau and Mouffe (1985). Additionally, I was toying with the sociology of postmodernism, largely under the influence of Zygmunt Bauman (1987), which was also explored from a different, still Bauman-influenced direction in the book that I wrote immediately afterwards, on *Modern Organizations* (Clegg 1990).

My views of power – the central concept that laces together just about everything I have ever written – have hardly shifted from this time. Indeed, in some essentials they were already in place in *Power, Rule and Domination* (1975). Discourse is central; power is not a thing but a relation of flows; we are all practical ethnomethodologists seeking to enrol, translate and otherwise socially construct the people, places, things and situations that matter to us – but they are doing it too. Resistance is normal. Politics are irremediable. Management and organization theory that neglects this is non-realist. The resources that we can bring to bear on the task are hugely uneven, but the mere possession of superior resources does not ensure the desired outcomes. It's much harder to get others to do things than mechanistic accounts suggest; Marxist accounts are not convincing in the mechanisms specified; arguments about the importance of surveillance are important but hardly adequate in themselves, nor do they really capture the important things that Foucault had to say about power in passing in his work. Organizations are not necessarily 'rational' in any one way: rationalities are plural, contradictory, and embedded.

Meanwhile, outside my study, Australian universities were being reshaped by powerful interests that shared none of my subtleties in the analysis of power! Economic rationalism was abroad – the one-best-wayers, with their TINA¹ tendencies and dismal profession had gained considerable hegemony in Canberra. Sociology seemed to be of declining interest. Elsewhere in Australia, business faculties were sprouting like mushrooms after a hailstorm in a country paddock. But the chances of my getting a job in one were slim. I had no MBA experience and had never had a chair in a business school. What I did have was some recognition in European organization theory circles. I thought that if I could win a job in Europe, either I would enjoy it enough to want to stay, or be able to use the experience as a basis for returning to Australia in future and taking up a carer in a business faculty. The following year, in January 1990, I joined The University of St. Andrews as Professor and Head of the fledgling Department of Management Studies.

St. Andrews

Probably the most interesting things that happened, intellectually, while I was in St. Andrews were writing a small piece on Anthony Giddens, which seemed to attract attention (Clegg 1992b), and conceiving the *Handbook of Organization Studies* (Clegg, Hardy, and Nord 1996). The Giddens review was just a straightforward sociology of knowledge piece, while the idea of doing a *Handbook* was somewhat larger: placing the field in a frame seemed

a nice way of marking my departure from St. Andrews, after a brief and miserable stay, as well as from the editorship of *Organization Studies*, necessitated by my decision to move back to Australia. As it transpired the *Handbook* was well received and has since become the model for many similar efforts in related fields and by the same and competing publishers.

Sydney

The main project in recent years has been an empirical study of project management of a piece of Olympic infrastructure in the period leading up to the Sydney Olympics in 2000. The research for this involved me getting back into fieldwork on construction sites, looking at a major and highly innovative tunnelling project (Clegg, Pitsis, Rura-Polley, and Marosszeky 2002; Pitsis et al. 2003). With this research I was able to reach back to the time before I even had any knowledge about construction and press the earliest of the intellectual resources that I had worked with, Alfred Schutz, back into service (Pitsis et al. 2003).

Other major projects have been constant during the past seven years. Some arose indirectly from the success of the *Handbook*. Bob Westwood, inspired in part by the *Handbook*, conceived a project about debates in organizations, in which he asked me to join (*Debating Organizations*, Westwood and Clegg 2003). The success of the *Handbook* led Sage to ask me to produce the eight-volume guide to the field published as *Central Currents in Organization Studies* series (Clegg 2002b–i). A second edition of the *Handbook* is now in process. These are all related projects which grew out of the *Handbook* and concern a mapping of the contours of current and past debates in organization studies.

There is a high degree of consistency between the above projects, which I would characterize as an appreciative understanding of the diversity of the main traditions, and a preparedness to engage with them critically. Closely related is a recent series of papers that I have written with various colleagues across many different substantive topics, in which the central thread is usually an essentially constructivist and ethnographic approach, one that seeks to be interdisciplinary, with a philosophical and a sociological twist, usually with an interest in power. Once one finds a niche I guess one tends to stay with it.²

Reflections on a *Vita Contemplativa*

The title of this series is *Vita Contemplativa*. Having written this partial account of an intellectual life, I can only think the title of the series ironical. It rarely happens that contemplation precedes execution – mostly I don't know what I will write until I have written it, what research angle an article will take until I start to explore the data with a task in hand. It is in the writing that the contemplation occurs. This makes it a rather robust, aggressive, energetic activity, one that is attacked, spat out in moments of concentration, rather

than a period of calm thoughtfulness. From this perspective, the contemplative life is as reflexive as it is reflective, a struggle with remembered words and ill-formed ideas and project briefs, a race between a remembrance of things past, an imperfect future, and a tense present, where the next task always crowds out the immediate flow, and where what counts, ultimately, is that 'it' gets done. Then you can move on to the next thing.

Many of the tracks of this life were laid down quite early and required little contemplation after their construction. Some were created when I did my PhD and some lain down even before this, when I was an undergraduate student. It has been a remarkably busy life. Too often I've been hurrying from one country to another, or trying to get out of one job for another, rushing to finish this book or that paper so that I can knock over the next task. And in this respect it is a life that has definitely speeded up. All those years ago at UNE, as a sociology professor, when I was able to write *Frameworks of Power*, probably my most contemplative work, life was less hurried, less harried. I even had time after finishing it to knock off *Modern Organizations* in the few months of clear space that remained! For the last ten years or so there has been scarcely any clear space or moments for reflection other than on the immediate task: this graduate thesis now, those revisions, this journal review, and that work-in-progress. There are so many of these tasks, that crowd in on a life already made busy by the normal demands of research and teaching, that precious little space is left for contemplation.

Contemplation, in the sense of deep reflection, occurs usually through constant revision. I find myself worrying about the ideas in a text, about their expression, gnawing at them like a dog with a bone. Most recently, this experience occurred with the question of how to conclude a chapter on globalization. After perhaps 50 drafts I arrived at something I was happy with. It wasn't contemplation so much as persistence and perhaps a touch of obsession that brought me back to the text, to redraft just once more, so many times. And I guess that this frantic activity of revising, redrafting, is how the contemplative life gets done. Not so much a contemplative life as a life of action, a stream of consciousness constantly made material.

To do this often means being able to pull on material and resources from a wide range of reading, not just from the formal OS canon. I think this is probably my best strength. I try to know not only what should be expected of a craftsman but also what a well-tempered person might aspire to know. Some of this is being an *intellectual craftsman*; some comes from *reading widely*, having *broad interests*, and *eclectic cultural knowledge*. Is this, perhaps, what the contemplative life means? A life lived as a magpie dredging the innermost recesses of recollection under pressure to complete this immediate project now, and try to make it interesting, attractive and aesthetic? If so, then the contemplative life is one best lived as widely, with as much intermediation, as one can manage. Then the best contemplative life would be the fullest and, by this criterion, I have been remarkably lucky.

In Conclusion

It has always riled me to be thought of as a British social theorist or organization theorist – as I sometimes see myself described in other people’s work. It is simply empirically inaccurate. I was born there but I don’t work there, don’t live there, and only use the identity as a passport of convenience when travelling in the EU. Nearly all of the work I have produced has come from my life and experience in Australia – and, perhaps, more than some other colleagues in the field, the sense of place has often fed the work.

As someone who became an Australian, I am proud of having an Australian record of achievement, above all else. Australia is a small and marginal country in many respects, an English-speaking country admittedly, but one easily overlooked. To have been able to make a career from here that has allowed so many opportunities is a source of great personal satisfaction. Without the move to Australia, and all the opportunities for learning that it entailed, I doubt that I would have written half the things that I have. Whether what I would have done would have been very different, I don’t know. I think it probably would, because the contingencies and the interests would not have been the same. There would have been no APROS for a start, and probably a lot less travel and exposure to difference. The experience of being in Australia has allowed me space and opportunities to keep on doing odd things, make quirky intellectual investments, and write unusual pieces. And I wouldn’t have wanted it any other way.

Notes

I owe the title to one volume of Andrew Field’s (1977) study of Nabokov.

- 1 *There Is No Alternative* (Margaret Thatcher).
- 2 Many recent publications explore some of these themes; see, for instance, Clegg and Kornberger 2003; Kornberger and Clegg 2004; Carter et al. 2003; Kornberger et al. forthcoming; Kornberger and Clegg 2003; Clegg 2000a; Garrick and Clegg 2000; Clegg and Ross-Smith 2003; Stokes and Clegg 2002; Clegg, da Cunha, and Cunha 2002; Cunha et al. 2002; Courpasson and Clegg forthcoming; Soliman et al. 2001; Clegg and Tantoush 2001; Tantoush and Clegg 2001; George and Clegg 1997; Bunzel et al. 2002; Porras et al. forthcoming; Ray et al. 2003; Orssatto and Clegg 1999; Orssatto et al. 2002; Clegg et al. 2000; for reflections on the trajectory, see Clegg and Rouleau 1992; Clegg and Boje 1994; Jermier and Clegg 1994; 1996; Clegg and Jermier 2000a; 2000b; Cunha et al. 2000; ten Boss and Clegg 2000.

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