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ISSN 0906-6934

Print ISBN: 978-87-93339-36-1  
Online ISBN: 978-87-93339-37-8

WHO ARE THE POST-BUREAUCRATS?

Christian Garmann Johnsen

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**A PHILOSOPHICAL EXAMINATION OF THE CREATIVE  
MANAGER, THE AUTHENTIC LEADER AND THE ENTREPRENEUR**

PhD School in Organisation and Management Studies

PhD Series 27.2015

 **COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL**  
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

PhD Series 27-2015

# **Who Are the Post-Bureaucrats?**

*A Philosophical Examination of the Creative Manager,  
the Authentic Leader and the Entrepreneur*

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1st edition 2015  
PhD Series 27-2015

© Christian Garmann Johnsen

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# Preface

There are a number of people that I would like to acknowledge for making this PhD thesis possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, friend and mentor, Bent Meier Sørensen, without whom I would never have had the opportunity to embark upon this project. His tremendous help, support and inspiration has been imperative for completing this PhD.

I would also like to thank all my colleagues at the Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy (MPP) at Copenhagen Business School, especially Ole Bjerg, Christian Borch, Marius Gudmand-Høyer, Kristian Bondo Hansen, Rasmus Johnsen, Anders Raastrup Kristensen, Ann-Christina Lange, Lena Olaison, Pernille Pedersen, Michael Pedersen, Thomas Presskorn-Thygesen, Mette Nelund, Sverre Raffnsøe, Morten Sørensen Thaning, Lone Christensen, Steen Vallentin and Kaspar Villadsen. Many of the ideas in this thesis have emerged out of discussions with these colleagues and I can imagine no better place than MPP to write this PhD thesis, both academically and socially.

I would also like to thank Sverre Spoelstra, Nick Butler, Konstantin Stoborod, Damian O'Doherty and Stephen Dunne, all of whom have commented on various chapters of my PhD thesis. Moreover, the assessment committee, consisting of Martyna Śliwa, Richard Weiskopf and Steen Vallentin, has done a remarkable job in terms of giving me productive feedback and I really appreciate the careful and generous reading of the PhD thesis.

During my PhD, I had the pleasure of serving on the SCOS board and joining the ephemera collective. This has been not only intellectually stimulating, but also served to introduce me to an international academic community. Finally, I would like to thank my wife Sigrid, my parents Berit and Hans Christian, and my two sisters Ingrid and Elisabeth.

An earlier version of Chapter 3 has previously been published as Johnsen, C.G. (2014): 'Deconstructing the future of management: Pharmakon, Gary Hamel and the impossibility of invention', *Futures*, 68(4): 57-66. An earlier version of the argument developed in Chapter 4 is part of my Master Dissertation called 'The Metaphysical Problem of Authenticity in Organization Studies' (2012).

Christian Garmann Johnsen  
Frederiksberg 2015

# Abstract

This thesis undertakes a philosophical examination of three figures at the heart of post-bureaucratic thought – the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. While the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur share the aim of resolving the crisis of Taylorism, this thesis argues that they produce their own internal crises. They do so because the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur are inherently bound to concepts that resist transmutation into a managerial logic that would enable them to serve their functional purposes without betraying their conceptual dynamics. What philosophy offers us is not a ready-made solution to the crises of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur, but rather a point of departure for constructing concepts that enable us to explore the paradoxes embedded within these figures. Since philosophical concepts dwell in crisis, they enable the thesis to capture the paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities that inevitably accompany post-bureaucratic thought. Instead of regarding the crises in post-bureaucratic management thinking as an impasse, abyss or deadlock, the thesis shows how they can chart new ways of conceptualizing the post-bureaucratic organization. Drawing on Derrida's concept of *pharmakon*, Deleuze's concept of *simulacrum* and Zizek's concept of *fantasy*, three concepts equally marked by their paradoxical nature, this thesis opens up a philosophical critique of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. This will be done by exploring the figure of the creative manager through a reading of Gary Hamel's popular management handbook *The Future of Management* informed by Derrida's concept of *pharmakon*; the figure of the authentic leader through a reading of Bill George's semi-autobiographic self-help tome *Authentic Leadership* informed by Deleuze's concept of *simulacrum*; and the figure of the entrepreneur through a reading of Richard Branson's autobiography *Losing My Virginity* informed by Zizek's concept of *fantasy*.

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# Introduction

*No book against anything ever has any importance;  
all that counts are books for something, and that  
know how to produce it.*

- Deleuze (1967/2003: 192)

## Who Are the Post-Bureaucrats?

This thesis undertakes a philosophical examination of three figures at the heart of post-bureaucratic thought – the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. At first glance, these figures may seem like an arbitrary constellation of managerial stereotypes. But contrary to what one might suspect, they are intimately linked to each other because they serve complementary functions in prevalent post-bureaucratic management thinking. These figures embody the mission of delivering the necessary competences required to thrive in the post-industrial economy. While the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur are singular figures, they emerge against the backdrop of a wider shift in the managerial literature that has taken place since the 1960s. Viewed philosophically, this thesis considers the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur as the three cardinal psychosocial types within the post-bureaucratic image of thought.

Since they aim to succeed where previous managerial stereotypes have miserably failed, tremendous responsibility rest upon the shoulders of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. The



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creative manager is required to replace outdated management systems originating in the industrial age with innovative modes of organization that secure long term comparative advantage. The authentic leader is supposed do nothing less than to inspire ethical conduct and unearth the seeds of corporate scandal before they escalate into the tragic fate of companies such as Enron, WorldCom and Lehman Brothers. And the entrepreneur should take charge of generating radical and continuous innovation so that companies thrive rather than falling prey to the process of creative destruction that constantly shifts the playing-field of competition. Taken together, these figures have the mission of assisting companies to overcome what has been described as the crisis of Taylorism, which has rendered traditional modes of organization and management obsolete due to the changed conditions of the global economy.

While the figures of creative manager, authentic leader and entrepreneur are invented to resolve the crisis of Taylorism, this thesis argues that they create their own internal crises. This is the case because the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur are inherently bound to concepts that resist transmutation into a new managerial logic that would enable them to serve their functional purposes without simultaneously betraying their conceptual dynamics. In effect, the attempt to resolve the crisis of Taylorism by introducing the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur ultimately accelerates and intensifies the crisis of managerialism. Managerialism refers here to the idea that all organizational problems can be solved by the application of generic management technologies (Grey, 1996).

Philosophy offers a solid foundation for understanding the crises at the heart of post-bureaucratic management thinking, because

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philosophy, as Deleuze and Guattari note, 'lives in a permanent crisis' (1991/1994: 82). Philosophy lives in a permanent crisis, according to Deleuze and Guattari, insofar as it is committed to constructing concepts that push the limits of common sense and seeking paradoxes that challenge our conventional way of thinking. What philosophy has to offer is not a ready-made solution to the crises of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur, but rather a point of departure for constructing concepts that enable us to explore the paradoxes embedded within these figures. Since philosophical concepts dwell in crisis, they enable the thesis to capture the paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities that inevitably accompany post-bureaucratic thought.

Instead of regarding the crises in post-bureaucratic management thinking as an impasse, abyss or deadlock, the thesis shows how they can chart new ways of conceptualizing the post-bureaucratic organization. In order to accomplish this, I will construct three conceptual personas, namely that of the *deconstructive creative manager*, the *reversed authentic leader* and the *traversed entrepreneur*. These three conceptual personas will enable the thesis to intervene into post-bureaucratic management thinking by subverting the conventional way of perceiving the figures of creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur.

### **Critical Management Studies**

According to Fournier and Grey (2000: 11), the 'internal crisis' of managerialism, reflected in the fact that management is no longer seen as simply a *solution* to organizational challenges but also as the root of the *problem* itself (see also Parker, 2002a: 9), has constituted the condition of possibility for Critical Management Studies (CMS). As it

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develops a critical reading of three figures deeply connected to post-bureaucratic management thinking, this thesis situates itself within the field of CMS. CMS was originally founded on the premise that that ‘management is simply too important an activity and field of inquiry to be left to the mainstream thinking of management departments and business schools’ (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992: 3), and critical scholars made a case for methodological pluralism and the need to study management from multiple angles. In the first editorial of *Organization*, the editors laid out the plan to promote a ‘neodisciplinary’ approach, transgressing the conventional boundaries between philosophy and organizational theory. Through its critique of mainstream management research, CMS has contributed to establishing a platform for discussing organization and management from a philosophical point of view.

Recently, however, there has been growing frustration with the use of philosophy in CMS. According to Alvesson, Bridgman and Willmott (2009), instead of contributing to a serious critique of organization and management, the widespread use of philosophy within CMS has shifted the focus away from the genuine problems that should concern the field. What was originally a candid interest in the theory and practice of management has become an incubator for ‘esoteric’ philosophical speculation that, in turn, has ‘very limited reference to management’ (Alvesson et al., 2009: 20). Such work, they continue, ‘is idiosyncratic rather than critical’, lacking the necessary edge to challenge mainstream management research.

While their assessment may aptly characterize some of the prior philosophical work in CMS, the criticism fails to consider that it is precisely because philosophy is esoteric that it can potentially offer insights about contemporary management. Indeed, philosophy’s contribution may even extend beyond Alvesson, Bridgman and

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Willmott's concession that those 'marginalized misfits' who draw upon esoteric philosophy 'may reinvigorate CMS with fresh and challenging insights' (2009: 20). I want to argue that it is by virtue of its paradoxical nature that philosophical concepts can lead to a fresh perspective on the contradictions that inevitably occur in post-bureaucratic management thinking. However, in order to tap this potential, one must first go beyond the tendency among critical scholars to overlook the crisis revealed within popular management literature.

The critique of conventional management research by scholars within CMS has typically been based on a selective account of organizational life. While it claims to study organization objectively and scientifically, mainstream management and organization research systematically steers away from certain politically and ethically controversial issues. In response, CMS has drawn attention to those aspects of organizational life generally overlooked by mainstream management theory, such as 'disciplinary power' (Deetz, 2003), 'resistance' (Spicer and Böhm, 2007) and 'identity construction' (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). As a distinct field of research, CMS has evolved to become an 'intellectual counterpoint to mainstream management studies' (Willmott and Alvesson, 2003: 2) that draws attention to political and ethical aspects of organizational life.

We can observe the ways that critiques of mainstream management studies from the perspective of CMS have played out in practice. Analysing Peters and Waterman's international bestseller *In Search of Excellence* as an example of 'kitsch', Linstead notes that the book 'bedazzle[s] the reader on the surface while seducing them into embracing familiar but disadvantageous relations, where ideology hides in the light' (2002: 671). The smooth, eloquent and rhetorical style of management literature trivializes the complexity of the human condition,

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according to Linstead (2002). While *In Search of Excellence* sought to cover ‘pretty much everything there was to be said about behaviour in organizations’, Linstead argues that the book, in effect, neglects the concepts of ‘resistance, pluralism, contestation, power, domination, interest, or control’ (2002: 670-1).

Despite the fact that Linstead’s (2002) critique may be sharp and pertinent, his argument has at least one limitation. Linstead’s critique is based on exposing the discrepancy between what popular management literature *includes* and what it *excludes*. But by using this approach, Linstead risks overlooking those predicaments that exist purely within the confines of popular management literature (Harney, 2005). Instead of criticising popular management literature on the basis of what it excludes, this thesis will attempt a philosophical critique of the predominant conceptual figures within popular management literature. In order to do so, I will explore the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur from a philosophical perspective rather than emphasizing the other aspects of organizational life that are excluded by these perspectives. This will be done by exploring the figure of the creative manager through a reading of Gary Hamel’s popular management handbook *The Future of Management*; the figure of the authentic leader through a reading of Bill George’s semi-autobiographic self-help tome *Authentic Leadership*; and the figure of the entrepreneur through a reading of Richard Branson’s autobiography *Losing My Virginity*.

### **Encountering Popular Management Literature**

Once we enter the ‘practical’ sphere of popular management handbooks, as they promise concrete guidance for how to navigate the

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turbulent post-industrial environment, we discover is that things are not what they seem. The ten steps to success, the lessons for triumph and the recipes for advancement that these books offer lack the necessary ingredients to achieve their objectives. Upon closer reading of contemporary popular management literature, we suddenly realize that the 'practical' is actually hopelessly impractical; the ordinary is conspicuously awkward, and the concrete is strangely abstract. We enter a 'pataphysical' universe, as O'Doherty does in his review of the *Financial Times Handbook of Management*, surrounded by curious, anomalous and peculiar figures that seems even 'more devious and capricious than the simple pataphysical absurdity of Ubu' (2004: 89), the mad King of Poland in Jarry's (1986/1997) surrealist play who selfishly eats up all the delicious food that his wife has prepared before the guests arrives.

No doubt, popular management literature is riddled with bizarre personifications, illustrations, models and case-studies. And yet, these absurd pataphysical universes that we encounter in popular management literature may, following Deleuze, open up the opportunity for a 'new comprehension of phenomena' (1997: 92), one that contemplates the paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities at the heart of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. Taken its impetus from Deleuze (1969/2004: 151), a philosophical examination of post-bureaucratic organization should stay at the surface of the contradictory experiences encountered in popular management literature and resist the temptation of looking beneath or beyond their immanent logic. In effect, this thesis attempts to explore the intrinsic conceptual dynamics of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur, three figures we regularly encounter in popular management literature.

'Perhaps today, in our age of extreme individualization', Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg speculate, 'even the contradictions of capitalism have

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become individualized' (2014: 199). By engaging with the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur, we can be sensitized to the paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities that inevitably characterize post-bureaucratic management thinking. Fuglsang suggests that undertaking a critical investigation, using Deleuze's approach, not only serves to 'make a diagnosis of the states of affairs, its reconfiguration and actualization, but also to find its point of crisis, its rupture, its abysses' (2007: 76). Following Fuglsang, a crucial element of the thesis will be to locate the crises that envelop the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur.

Instead of one overarching crisis, 'our time is facing a number of crises' (Olaison, Pedersen and Sørensen, 2009: 1), making the crisis of post-bureaucratic management thinking not a single all-encompassing rapture but rather several scattered abysses. But for precisely this reason, even the concept of crisis has entered into its own internal crisis, according to Koselleck (1972-97/2006: 399), because the term lacks a singular definition that unites its various uses. Therefore, as Koselleck warns us, by evoking the term crisis, this thesis risks removing any substantive content from the term and turning it instead into an empty cliché, a mere decorative word to highlight uncertainty and ambiguity. To avoid this pitfall, one approach would be to severely circumscribe the concept to include only the particular crises that pertain to the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. But this strategy would create its own predicaments.

As Derrida reminds us, if we pin down the notion of crisis, we have already been seduced into the trap of 'economizing' (1983/2002: 71) the concept, reducing the unintelligible and unthinkable into a fixed and stable entity that can be harmoniously recognized. To do this would ultimately 'cancel out' the true logic of crisis that consists of being

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confronted by a paradox, aporia and impossibility that evokes perplexity, surprise and bewilderment. Both Derrida (1983/2002) and Koselleck (1972-97/2006) remind us that crisis and critique share the same etymological root in the ancient Greek word *krinein*, a verb that means ‘to separate and decide’ (see also Olaison et al., 2009: 2). If there is a ‘crisis’ of post-bureaucratic management thinking, it consists specifically of being forced into the position of having to seek new alternatives and different ways of thinking. But Derrida adds that every crisis carves out an unavoidable gulf between the suspension of judgement and the necessity of passing judgement. The experience of confronting unavoidable paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities is precisely what characterizes the crises pertaining to the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur.

The aim of subjecting the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur to a philosophical examination is both constructive and deconstructive. As Derrida (1987/2007a) emphasizes, the ultimate purpose of deconstruction is to think differently. Deconstruction is ‘inventive or it is nothing at all’ (Derrida, 1987/2007a: 23). Along similar lines, Deleuze (1967/2003) insists that philosophy has a constructive aim (Patton, 1996, 2003). He argues that the strength of philosophy lies in its ability to create concepts that opens up for events that show us new perspectives, experiences and ways of thinking. As Parker maintains, the real enemy threatening CMS is not mainstream management studies or the prevalent practice of management, but rather the lack of ‘radical imagination’ (2002a: 211).

Could it be that radical imagination will emerge from the very place we would least expect to find it, namely from popular management literature that is all too often hastily dismissed as unworthy of serious academic engagement? Perhaps we need a new way of engaging



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philosophically with popular management literature, one that is committed to being for something rather than being against something. Perhaps we need to entertain the positive possibilities offered by the endless series of paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities circulating in popular management literature and, paraphrasing O'Dorthey, to 'embrace its absurdity and surrealism and learn to accept that truth may be error, and fact, fiction' (2007: 840). And perhaps this is precisely the role of philosophy in CMS, to make it possible to push the limits of common sense through paradoxical concepts that give us ways of conceptualizing organization (Spoelstra, 2007). This, at least, is what the present thesis seeks to explore.

### **Outline of the thesis:**

This thesis contains seven chapters structured into three parts.

**Chapter 1** provides a broad overview of the thesis by summarizing its key arguments. The main goal of the chapter is to outline the context in which the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur emerge. Despite their intention to resolve the crisis of Taylorism, I will argue that the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur ultimately generate their own internal crises.

**Chapter 2** shows how Deleuze's idea of *encounters* can enable this thesis to develop a philosophically informed engagement with popular management literature. This will allow us to undertake a philosophical examination of the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. This chapter therefore serves as the methodological foundation of the thesis.

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**Chapter 3** engages with the figure of the creative manager. The chapter diagnoses but also challenges the prevalent assumption in popular management handbooks that it is possible to produce a manual for reinventing management. To do so, this chapter addresses the problem of reinventing management by offering a deconstructive reading of Hamel's (2007) popular management handbook *The Future of Management*. To grasp the paradox that we encounter in Hamel's popular management handbook *The Future of Management*, I make use of Derrida's concept of the *pharmakon*.

**Chapter 4** engages with the figure of the authentic leader. In this chapter, I will show how Gilles Deleuze's reading of Plato can help us comprehend and also challenge the procedure for drawing a distinction between authentic and inauthentic leaders. I will demonstrate how the concept of authentic leadership reproduces Plato's problem of *authenticating the leader* – that is, drawing a distinction between the true claimant and the false pretender. In order to show this, I offer a discussion of Bill George's (2003) book *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*.

**Chapter 5** engages with the figure of the entrepreneur. While critical work on entrepreneurship tends to either look beyond or beneath the fantasy of the heroic entrepreneur, emphasizing instead those aspects of entrepreneurship suppressed by the figure of the heroic entrepreneur, this chapter develops a complementary critical strategy. Instead of simply eschewing the fantasy of the heroic entrepreneur, this chapter will confront the fantasy itself by drawing on Žižek's idea of 'traversing the fantasy'. To do this, the chapter engages with Richard Branson's autobiography *Losing My Virginity*.

**Chapter 6** explores the political ontology of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. To do so, the chapter looks into how Derrida, Deleuze

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and Žižek's thinking enables us to subvert, destabilize and contravene the political ontology of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. In order to explore this political logic, I will show how the theoretical tensions between Derrida, Deleuze and Žižek may throw a different light on the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur.

**Chapter 7** situates the thesis within Critical Management Studies (CMS) and discusses how the findings of this thesis have opened up for a different way of engaging philosophically with organization and management. While scholars associated with CMS have argued that discourse on post-bureaucracy involves a progressive process of managerial colonization and hegemonization of everyday life, I will show that the crises at the heart of post-bureaucratic image of thought prevent the process of colonization and hegemonization from being completely successful.

# Part I

# Chapter 1:

## The Post-Bureaucratic Image of Thought

*The concept of crisis, which once had the power to pose unavoidable, harsh and non-negotiable alternatives, has been transformed to fit the uncertainties of whatever might be favored at a given moment. Such a tendency towards imprecision and vagueness, however, may itself be viewed as the symptom of a historical crisis that cannot as yet be fully gauged.*

- Koselleck (1972-97/2006: 399)

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In 1955, Randall wrote in *Harvard Business Review* that it 'is disturbing to note that, for all its tremendous potential, the movement [of scientific management] conflicts in many ways with business practices which are likely to stimulate creative thinking' (1955: 128). Despite its capacity for recuperating what Taylor had considered the tremendous wastes of 'human effort, which go on every day' (1911/2003: 162), scientific management, according to Randall (1955), was hopelessly out of joint with the task of energizing a creative work-environment that could spark change, entrepreneurship and innovation. In light of this discrepancy, Randall suggested that the 'management of a sizable business today must work hard at the task of maintaining a stimulating atmosphere for creative thinking' (1955: 128).

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Viewed retrospectively, Randall's (1955) remarks prognosticate what has later has been called the 'crisis of Taylorism' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: 218) that emerged in the 1970s and onwards (Amin, 2008). Especially since the 1980s, there has been a growing focus on assuring that firms provide continuous support for innovation, change and entrepreneurship in order to remain competitive in the post-industrial economy. This requires that creative ideas, which serve as the basis of innovation emerge not only from the external environment, but also that the process of 'creating the new' is built into the organization itself (Drucker, 1992: 97). Aspects of managing creativity and innovation that were only vaguely hinted at in the 1950s were pushed to the extreme in the 1980s, as exemplified by Peters' proclamation that innovation should become a 'way of life for everyone' the post-bureaucratic organization in order to ensure that there is 'constant innovation in all areas of the firm' (Peters, 1988: 36, 274).

The crisis of Taylorism should be understood against the backdrop of what management academics, gurus and consultants have described as a radical shift in the global economic infrastructure that has taken place since the 1970s (see Hamel, 2002; Hammer, 1990; Kanter, 1983, 1988, 1990; Peters, 1988, 1992; Prahalad and Krishnan, 2008). While firms traditionally obtained a competitive advantage by improving the production process for standardized products and services, the accelerated speed of technological progress coupled with the constant introduction of new products, services and modes of production into the global economy has made industrial management technologies and bureaucratic organizational structures obsolete. To remain competitive in the 'heightened turbulence of post-industrial environment' (Huber, 1984: 933), frequently referred to as the 'new economy' (Castells, 2010;

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Thrift, 2005; Webber, 1993), firms must become 'less bureaucratic, more entrepreneurial' (Kanter, 1988: 85).

Increasingly, critical scholars have drawn attention to this new configuration of the global economy. Although contested, there is a widespread belief that we are currently experiencing a development towards a new phase of capitalism. This transition has been given various eponyms, such as the entry into 'the new spirit of capitalism' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005), 'cognitive capitalism' (Moulier-Boutang, 2012), 'metaphysical capitalism' (Lash, 2007), 'soft capitalism' (Thrift, 1997), 'immaterial labour' (Hardt and Negri, 2009), 'network society' (Castells, 2010) and 'post-Fordism' (Amin, 2008). While these narratives differ in their nuances, they share the common basis of registering a profound shift in the capitalist mode of production and consumption taking place in the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Castell (2010) summarizes how the changed conditions of the global economy have affected the organization of the corporation in the following manner:

The corporation itself has changed its organizational model to adapt to the conditions of unpredictability ushered in by rapid economic and technological change. The main shift can be characterized as the shift from vertical bureaucracies to the horizontal corporation. The horizontal corporation seems to be characterized by seven main trends: organization around process, not task; a flat hierarchy; team management; measuring performance by customer satisfaction; rewards based on team performance; maximization of contacts with suppliers and customers; information, training, and retraining of employees at all levels. (Castell, 2010: 176)

Mobility, flexibility, networks, project management, entrepreneurship, innovation and knowledge production have become key points of reference in contemporary management literature. Among

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others, these are the capabilities that firms must acquire in order to recover from the crisis of Taylorism. It is important to emphasize, however, that Taylorism should not be conflated with Taylor's system of scientific management. Taylorism refers to a 'specific organizational form: the large corporation structured on the principles of vertical integration, and institutionalized social and technical division of labor' (Castells, 2010: 166), a form designed for the purpose of managing the industrial mass production of standardized commodities (Moulier-Boutang, 2012). The assembly line, another managerial technique commonly associated with Taylorism, was developed and implemented at Ford's (1922/2007) automobile factory but there is no historical evidence directly connecting this innovation with Taylor's system of scientific management (Wren, 2005: 264).

Nevertheless, the crisis of Taylorism has been accompanied by growing frustration with traditional modes of management and organizational structures, especially Weber's model of bureaucracy and Taylor's system of scientific management (du Gay, 2000; Parker, 2002a). In the popular management literature, Weber and Taylor frequently appear as 'straw men' against which new types of managerial technologies are formed and legitimized (Parker, 2002a: 21). In such comparisons, it is assumed that traditional modes of management and organizational structures 'were invented to solve the problems of control and efficiency in large-scale organizations' (Hamel, 2007: 250). In sharp contrast, the challenge confronting contemporary management is to cope with the difficulty of organizing change, entrepreneurship and innovation. Van de Ven calls this *the human problem of managing*: 'people and their organizations are largely designed to focus on, harvest, and protect existing practices rather than pay attention to developing new ideas' (1986: 591). Since bureaucracy and scientific management are



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geared towards optimizing existing practices rather than facilitating the generation of new ideas, they are considered antithetical to making firms innovative, flexible and able to constantly adapt to the changing conditions of the post-industrial economy (Salaman, 2005).

The crisis of Taylorism has triggered a surfeit of novel managerial technologies and organizational forms promising to fix the defects caused by traditional modes of management and organizational structures. The various solutions proposed to address the crisis of Taylorism are often grouped under the loosely defined concept of 'post-bureaucracy', denoting a 'fairly disparate hotchpotch of new management techniques' (Hensby, Sibthorpe and Driver, 2012: 814). Among these responses, De Cock and Böhm emphasize the various forms of 'cultural management, downsizing, total quality management (TQM), knowledge management, decentralization, self-organization, enterprise culture and business process reengineering (BPR)' (2007: 816). Such managerial technologies and organizational forms are intended to make firms competitive in the new economy. These techniques are promoted through what Thrift calls 'the "cultural circuit" of capitalism – business schools, management consultants, management gurus and the media' (2005: 6).

Popular management handbooks, self-help tomes and autobiographies by famous businessmen are frequently reproached for being filled with clichés, platitudes and banalities that make them unworthy of serious academic engagement. Frank, for instance, considers a popular management handbook calling for a management revolution nothing but 'bullshit on wheels' (2001: 176), claiming that the lack of intellectual standards in such literature is ridiculous. The endless streams of fashionable management techniques, self-help manuals and spectacular stories intended to inspire us to become more efficient, more creative and truer to ourselves ultimately amounts to little more than

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empty metaphors, lacking any coherent or substantial content. Yet, despite their shallowness, Frank maintains that popular management literature is influential, because it is 'helping shape the world in which the rest of us live' (2001: 177). For this reason, Frank concludes: 'Yes, the business revolution is hilarious, but it is also deadly serious' (2001: 177).

One might still question the value of a scholarly engagement with popular management handbooks, self-help tomes and autobiographies by famous businessmen. In a critical remark to Boltanski and Chiapello (1999/2005), Thompson contends that 'if you wanted to understand contemporary work and employment, popular management texts would be the last place to look' (2003: 372). While Thompson does not qualify his assertion, it is clear that he doubts the empirical significance of popular management texts because they fail to adequately reflect the current 'material conditions of production' (2003: 372). However true this may be, Thompson's dismissal of popular management texts ignores the fact that this branch of literature does not aim at an accurate representation of contemporary capitalism, but rather to establish, as Frank emphasizes, the 'political and social *legitimacy* of the corporation' (2001: 178, original italics). What is at stake in this literature is therefore the problem of constituting an 'ideology' of the corporation within the 'new spirit of capitalism' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999/2005). In light of this, I follow Newell, Robertson and Swan who claim that popular management tracts are 'worthy of investigation in their own right as examples of powerful rhetorics that shape management understandings and practices' (2001: 5).

### **The Post-Bureaucratic Organization**

Throughout this thesis, I will use the model of ‘the post-bureaucratic organization’ (Reed, 2011) to characterize these new organizational forms and managerial technologies that have emerged in response to the crisis of Taylorism. However, since the notion is inherently vague, ‘speculative and insufficiently specified’ (Alvesson and Thompson, 2006), writing about *the* post-bureaucratic organization may seem like a contradiction in terms (Hensby et al., 2012), because the term does not constitute a common denominator signifying a group of empirical objects sharing mutual characteristics. Nevertheless, I have deliberately chosen to use this term not only for pedagogic reasons but also in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994), to strive toward a philosophical exploration of the logic of post-bureaucratic management thinking.

In its pure form, the post-bureaucratic organization is often characterized as being ‘decentralized’ (Alvesson and Thompson, 2006), ‘non-hierarchical’ (Reed, 2011), ‘project-based’ (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005), ‘flexible’ (Sennett, 2006) and ‘network’ shaped (Maravelias, 2003), turning the corporation into a constellation of self-managing teams that subscribe to the logic of ‘market rationalism’ (Adler, 2001). However, there has been strong criticism against the idea that we are gradually experiencing a shift from traditional bureaucratic organizations to various forms of post-bureaucratic organizations, structured into flexible and decentred networks to allow for entrepreneurial initiatives, on the basis of its lack of ‘empirical support’ (Alvesson and Thompson, 2006). Despite their consistent focus on the transition from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy, Farrell and Morris (2003) warn that the bureaucratic principles of control and efficiency have not disappeared in contemporary society but rather assumed new shapes and forms. In

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effect, the emergence of post-bureaucratic organizations does not represent a radical break with traditional bureaucratic principles, but rather their logical extension and intensification, according to Maravelias (2003).

At an empirical level, corporations can take on a hybrid form between traditional hierarchical bureaucracy and decentralized network structure – something Courpasson calls ‘soft bureaucracies’ (2000) and Sturdy, Wright and Wylie call ‘neo-bureaucracies’ (2014). Such organizations combine bureaucratic elements with characteristics that are associated with post-bureaucracy, such as a combination of formal hierarchy and flexible networks (Reed, 2011) or centralization and decentralization (Farrell and Morris, 2003). Reed (2011) notes that many organizations that look like post-bureaucracies at first glance may prove to be neo-bureaucracies upon closer inspection. In addition, implementing post-bureaucratic structures in practice does not necessarily yield success. The global leader in hearing aid production, Oticon, for instance, developed the famous ‘spaghetti organization’, restructuring the corporation into a flat, network-structured and decentralized project-based arrangement, but eventually decided to discard the model due to what Foss (2003) explains as the lack of sufficient incentive structures.

Although scholars have done much to question and nuance the prevalent impression that we are witnessing a radical shift from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy, it is important to emphasize that the model of the post-bureaucratic organization conveyed by popular management literature is not primarily a descriptive reference to existing conditions but rather a prescriptive injunction: today’s firms *should* strive to emulate the normative ideal of the post-bureaucratic organization. For this reason, advocates of post-bureaucratic organizational forms could cite the fact that the contemporary

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organizational landscape is still dominated by bureaucratic principles as further evidence that Peters' 'management revolution' (1988) has yet to materialize, and corporations are yet to be housed by Hamel's 'gray-haired revolutionaries' (2002). In effect, disclosing the gap between the rhetoric of popular management literature and so-called 'actual' practices of contemporary organizations does not adequately negate the model of the post-bureaucratic organization. In addition, one has to question the value of the normative ideals circulating in popular management literature.

The critical strategy adopted in this thesis is not to disclose the gap between the rhetoric of popular management literature and so-called 'actual' practices of contemporary organizations. My concern here is not to explore the extent to which a managerial paradigm of control, power and manipulation is lurking underneath the seductive vocabulary of freedom, self-expression and creativity that is so familiar in popular management texts. Instead, my critical strategy will be to conduct an internal subversion of the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur by making use of what I call *tactical naivety*. Tactical naivety means to operate inside popular management literature rather than taking an outside perspective motivated by a prior ethical or political concern (Curtis, 2014). To accomplish this, I will, to borrow the words of De Cock and Böhm, 'fully assume the tenets' (2007: 828) of popular management literature. Yet, tactical naivety is not in itself naïve. What I will show is that tactical naivety lets us see the ways that the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur become engaged in their internal crisis.

If we accept the conceptual logic of popular management literature, the result is often surprising, unexpected and astonishing. Rather than arriving at a coherent portrayal of the creative manager, authentic leader

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and the entrepreneur, we discover that these figures collapse under their own weight once we, once again borrowing the words of De Cock and Böhm, ‘push these to the point of their absurdity’ (2007: 828). Thus, the method is to subvert the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur from within, by seriously examining popular management handbooks, self-help tomes and autobiographies by famous businessmen. In this effort, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994), I will use the notion of *the post-bureaucratic image of thought*, which refers to the way that the emergence of post-bureaucratic management invites us to think about the nature of organization. Let us now turn begin by examining the post-bureaucratic image of thought and see the place of the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur within its structure.

### **The Individualized Corporation**

As it dismantles bureaucratic structures and traditional modes of management, the transition toward post-bureaucratic forms of organization involves a process of progressive ‘deinstitutionalization’ (Deetz, 1992: 41), which renders obsolete the formal social structures that have traditionally tied the corporation together (Sennett, 2006). For Deleuze, we are witnessing a ‘generalized crisis in relation to all the environments of enclosure’ (1992: 3-4), a crisis triggered the inability of traditional institutions to cope with the challenges of contemporary society. As a result, sharp delineations between life-spheres (Johnsen and Sørensen, 2014), the boundaries between the organization and its environment (Fleming and Spicer, 2004) and formal organizational hierarchies (Grey, 1999) are gradually dissolving and being replaced by the imperatives of self-management (Johnsen, 2009; Pedersen, 2008,

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2009; Raastrup Kristensen, 2009). Self-management assumes that the member of the organization is an 'active subject who is both given room to self-actualize at work whilst also expected to manage their feelings, thoughts, actions and desires in productive ways' (Pedersen, 2009: 12).

According to the contemporary mantra, all members of the post-bureaucratic organizations are potential leaders (Taylor and Ladkin, 2014), managers (Grey, 1999) and entrepreneurs (Kanter, 1990). The challenge is to be capable of taking on these roles, regardless of one's official title and position. In effect, the rhetoric of contemporary management fosters an extreme form of 'individualization' (Deetz, 1992: 41) and 'personalization' (Reed, 2011: 233), because the model of the post-bureaucratic organization 'places considerable responsibility on the shoulders of individuals for their own advancement' (du Gay, 2000: 79). In today's corporations, Kanter stresses that 'individuals actually need to count for more, because it is people within the organization who come up with new ideas, who develop creative responses' (1983: 18). Even the title of Ghoshal and Bartlett's (1999) book *The Individualized Corporation* bears testimony to this development.

The spirit of individualism permeating the model of the post-bureaucratic organization is reflected in the stereotypical personifications that abound in contemporary management literature, including the figures of the creative managers, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. These idealized figures are assigned the mission to repair the defects created by traditional modes of management and to provide the capabilities required for a company to flourish in the new economy. The creative manager will invent new modes of organizing (Hamel, 2007); the authentic leader will ensure ethical conduct in the organization (Avolio and Gardner, 2005); and the entrepreneur will spark innovation and creativity in the work-place (Kanter, 1990). In this

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way, the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur are intrinsically connected to the model of the post-bureaucratic organization, because they represent the managerial stereotypes that will enable firms to flourish in the new economy.

Although the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur are associated with concrete persons, they should not be conceptualized as designating specific individuals or viewed as amalgamations of the essential characteristics of actual members of the contemporary organization. These idealized figures do not necessarily correspond to any real-life empirical examples in order to maintain their power. Quite the opposite, the strength of these figures lies in their ability to constitute normative ideals that the members of the contemporary organization should strive to emulate. No matter how idealized, fictional and mythical these figures may be, they nevertheless produce real effects by configuring modes of subjectivity. Therefore, rather than corresponding to an empirical reality, these figures contain their own ingrained reality that embodies different mode of existence.

Management technologies are often perceived as generic tools, principles and methods that can be implemented by the organization in order to enhance strategic objectives. But the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and entrepreneur should also be perceived as what Foucault (1993) would term 'technologies of the self' that allow the members of the post-bureaucratic organization to think about themselves and their surroundings in a certain manner (for discussion, see Weiskopf and Locker, 2006; Garsten and Grey, 1997). By subscribing to the figure of the creative manager, authentic leader and entrepreneur, members of the post-bureaucratic organization are able, to use Foucault's terminology, to 'modify themselves' and 'transform themselves' (1993: 203) in tune with the existential modes represented by these figures. The



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figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur belongs to the post-bureaucratic image of thought, which concentrates all of the conjectures of how one should think about oneself and the organization in the post-bureaucratic world.

### **The Image of Thought**

Traditional philosophy has striven to outline a pure foundation for thinking that does not rely upon presuppositions. Descartes, for instance, famously called into doubt ‘all things’ (1641/2008: 12) in order to gain unmediated access to knowledge. For Deleuze, however, ‘there is no true beginning in philosophy’ (1969/2004: 129), because we are always already predisposed with concepts, ideas, beliefs and convictions that guide our manner of thinking and passing judgement. The task of philosophy, therefore, does not consist of eradicating presuppositions and retrieving a pure foundation for thought, but rather to experiment with what we can think given the concepts, ideas, beliefs and convictions that we have at our disposal. In effect, the philosophical problem raised by the creative manager, authentic leader and entrepreneur is to explore the limits of our thinking as we tap into these figures. Conducting such an exploration requires us to call into question the principles that guide our way of thinking about the rhetorical figures of the creative managers, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur.

In order to inquire into the conditions of thinking, Deleuze introduces the notion of the ‘image of thought’ (1969/2004). An image of thought, according to Deleuze, operates as a diagram that guides the activity of thinking. Deleuze emphasizes that the image of thought lays down coordinates that orient thought, thereby giving thought a direction for the activities of reasoning and passing judgement. In effect, the image

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of thought determines ‘what it means to think, to make use of thought, to find one’s bearings in thought’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 37). The image of thought, according to Deleuze, organizes our concepts, ideas, beliefs and convictions according to principles and doctrines which are inscribed in its structure. An image of thought is neither a concept nor a conceptual persona, but rather the plane in which concepts and conceptual persona are situated and expressed. Similar to a map, the image of thought plots concepts and conceptual persona within a scheme that subsequently forms a pattern of reasoning and provides a structure for passing judgement.

There is no thinking without an image of thought, since thinking requires a plane in which thought can orient itself, laying out a pattern and sequence for passing judgement and drawing conclusions. The ‘image of thought’ is thus ‘pre-philosophical’, because it forms the ‘internal condition’ for thinking (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 40). But no image of thought is natural, necessary and universal, since it relies upon its own principles that are historically and socially contingent (Bryant, 2008: 16). In his own philosophy, Deleuze is interested in criticizing the ‘dogmatic image of thought’ that has dominated Western metaphysics in order to destroy its restraining boundaries and open space for a ‘new image of thought’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 66). We will look at this dogmatic image of thought in the next chapter. But in this thesis, I am interested in calling into question the image of thought that guides the model of the post-bureaucratic organization. To do so, I construct ‘the post-bureaucratic image of thought’ in order to develop a philosophical critique of the post-bureaucratic organization.

Placing the emphasis on ‘image’ in relation to ‘organization’ immediately suggests associations to Morgan’s highly innovative book *Images of Organization* (1986/2006). While Morgan and Deleuze share

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the view that images shape the way we think, their conceptions of images are profoundly different. For Morgan, images of organization are derived from metaphors, operating ‘through implicit or explicit assertions that *A* is (or is like) *B*’ (1986/2006: 4). The classic theory of bureaucracy, for instance, subscribes to the metaphor of the organization as a ‘machine’ (see Weber, 1991: 203). From the viewpoint of Deleuze’s philosophy, this understanding of image remains caught in the logic of representation, because a metaphor, following Morgan’s account, is useful to the extent that it serves to accurately portray organizational life. For instance, the metaphor of the machine is valuable for conceiving ‘how an organization is structured to achieve predetermined results’, yet this metaphor ‘ignores the human aspect’ (1986/2006: 5), preventing the metaphor from comprehensively signifying all the dimensions of an organization. While stating that no metaphor is exhaustive, Morgan presupposes the existence of an organizational reality that can be captured more or less correctly by different images.

Although the notions evoked by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) often appear as metaphors, they insist that these notions are concepts. A concept is not valuable because it corresponds to a given state of affairs, but rather to the extent that it intervenes in the conventional way of thinking. Despite their differences, Deleuze’s and Morgan’s conceptions intersect in their mutual emphasis on the performative effects of subscribing to a particular image. Every image of organization, following Morgan, suggests a specific way of thinking and acting. If managers adopt an image of organization, such as the metaphor of the machine, according to Morgan, then ‘they tend to manage and design them as machines made up of interlocking parts that each play a clearly defined role in the functioning of the whole’ (1986/2006: 6).

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It is precisely this performative aspect of the image of thought to which Deleuze wants to draw our attention in his philosophy. Once we subscribe to an image of thought, following Deleuze, we will tend to think about the nature of organizational life according to a certain pattern of thought and manner of passing judgement. So the image does not correspond to an organizational reality, as the very idea of 'organization' already implies and presupposes a specific 'image of thought' (Sørensen, 2005: 127). On a general note, what we consider social reality is *always already* invested with concepts that shape and form our daily lives (Gane, 2009). Concepts do not operate from the outside, in a theory that remains detached from actual practice, for they are invested in practice itself, and thus have real-life consequences for how we think and act. For this reason, Deleuze agrees with Foucault when he says that 'theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice' (Foucault and Deleuze, 1977: 208). A concept is practice to the degree that it arranges a specific way of thinking and acting.

Exploring the post-bureaucratic image of thought allows us to inquire into the way in which contemporary management embodies a specific mode of reasoning and thinking about organizational life. To the extent that the image of thought 'determines our goals when we try to think' (Deleuze, 1968/2001: xvi), the post-bureaucratic image of thought preconfigures the objectives, tasks, responsibilities, challenges and opportunities of the post-bureaucratic organization. For instance, the post-bureaucratic image of thought conveys the message that we should become truer to ourselves, more creative and more entrepreneurial. In order to promote these objectives, the post-bureaucratic image of thought is permeated by various concepts and psychosocial types. If we want to explore the post-bureaucratic image of thought, we need to engage with the concepts and psychosocial types that inhabit the post-

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bureaucratic image of thought. Viewed philosophically, the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur designate specific idealized '*psychosocial types*' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 67, original italics) embedded within the post-bureaucratic image of thought.

Psychosocial types are conceptual constructs that constitute different 'existential modes' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994). An existential mode organizes a modality of being that involves a specific 'style of life' (Deleuze, 1962/1983). A style of life, in turn, dictates a particular subject position marked by a distinct way of thinking about oneself and conceiving the world (Pedersen, 2009). The figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and entrepreneur represent symbolic coordinates by which the members of the post-bureaucratic organization should think about themselves and conduct themselves at the workplace. If we subscribe to the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and entrepreneur, we will be inclined to think in a certain way about the roles, purposes, tasks and responsibilities assigned to the members of the post-bureaucratic organization.

Since psychosocial types crystallize particular modalities of being, they also specify different ways of reasoning by prefiguring patterns of thought, structures of desire and manners of passing judgement. Each figure is endowed with certain inclinations and tendencies that characterize its modes of existence. Therefore, by exploring the internal dynamics and ways of reasoning circumscribed by the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur, we can comprehend the immanent conceptual logic of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. Or to put it in a slightly different way, engaging with the figures of creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur allow us to explore three modes of post-bureaucratic

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‘subjectification’ (Sauvagnargues, 2013: 44) – that is, the processes through which the individual subject is constituted by post-bureaucratic management thinking.

An example may serve to illustrate how psychosocial types encompass modes of subjectification. The figure of the authentic leader invites us to think about ourselves according to the binary opposition *authentic* (being true to the self) and *inauthentic* (being false to the self). Whereas authentic leaders are true to their selves, inauthentic leaders act contrary to their true selves. Members of contemporary organizations who subscribe to the concepts of authentic leadership will tend to evaluate their thoughts, beliefs, desires, and actions according to the symbolic coordinates ‘true self’ and ‘false self’. They will attempt to assure that their actions, beliefs, convictions, and desires resonate with their ‘true self’ and try to keep from becoming false pretenders. By exploring the process whereby the ‘authentic leader’ draws the distinction between true and false self, we subject the figure to a philosophical critique.

Consequently, philosophical exploration provides a basis for us to ‘diagnose’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 68) the psychosocial type of the authentic leader. Along similar lines, it is possible to diagnose the creative manager and the entrepreneur by drawing attention to the ‘existential modes’ that these figures designate. Making such a diagnosis not only serves to describe these figures, but also to ‘*intervene* in the world by rearranging its symptoms in thought’ (Raastrup Kristensen, Pedersen and Spoelstra, 2008: 2, original italics). By subjecting psychological types to a philosophical investigation, the thesis seeks to extract their ‘conceptual personas’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994), thereby compelling us to think differently about the model of the post-bureaucratic organization.

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Since conceptual personas can ‘incarnate themselves’ in psychological types (Dosse, 2007/2010: 458), the task of philosophy is to show how psychological types can be turned into conceptual personas that express the ‘powers of concepts’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 65) compelling thought to enter new conceptual territories. But although a conceptual persona is derived from a psychological type, the former is not reducible to the latter. This is the case because the construction of a conceptual persona based upon a psychological type always involves an active intervention that restructures, reverses or modifies the initial starting point (Kristensen et al., 2008). Hence, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that ‘Conceptual persona and psychosocial type refer to each other and combine without ever merging’ (1991/1994: 70). Ultimately, the construction of three conceptual personas, namely that of the deconstructive creative manager, the reversed authentic leader and the traversed entrepreneur, will enable the thesis to intervene into post-bureaucratic management thinking by subverting the conventional way of perceiving these psychosocial types.

### **Three Responses to the Crisis of Taylorism**

In what follows, we will look at the ways that the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur are configured to resolve the crisis of Taylorism. Before proceeding in our focus on these three major figures, it is important to note that other stereotypes are also of critical importance in the post-bureaucratic image of thought, such as the figures of the consultant (Sturdy, 1997), the extraordinarily creative employee (Spoelstra, 2010), the knowledge worker (Alvesson, 2001), the project manager (Kunda and Ailon-Souday, 2005) and the temporary employee (Garsten, 1999). We could cite other

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figures as well. Thus, the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur should not be considered as the full embodiment of the post-bureaucratic image of thought.

Measured in terms of their ability to encompass the post-bureaucratic image of thought, the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur would obviously fall short, because they cannot provide a comprehensive representation, only one that is limited at best or arbitrary at worst. This is not to downplay the fact that the figures creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur are widely celebrated in today's economy and frequently circulated in popular management literature, official documents, social media and corporations' portrayal of the ideal employee. But what makes these figures worth drawing attention to is not primarily what they signify beyond their immanent horizon.

Despite these reservations, the choice to focus on the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur is not accidental. Instead of categories of representation, Deleuze and Guattari consider concepts 'singularities' (1991/1994: 7). But as Smith (2007a: 11) emphasizes, the singular is not opposed to the general or universal, but rather to the regular or ordinary. Accordingly, a singularity transcends the distinction between the general and the particular because it relates to different symbolic coordinates. Therefore, a concept is neither a general category nor a particular instance, but rather a singularity that stands out from the normal and ordinary (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 20). In other words, concepts are irregularities that interrupt habitual patterns and disrupt conventional practices.

If we want to explore the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur as psychosocial types that populate the post-bureaucratic image of thought, we cannot merely treat



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these figures as a generalization that condenses the common characteristics of a series of particular instances. Nor can the concept be regarded as a particular instance subsumed under a universal category. Quite the opposite, the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur must be considered as singularities, each of which presents its own problems and responses. The primary reason to choose these figures as our focus is because they crystallize what I consider to be some of the crucial problems that confront the post-bureaucratic organization.

The problems evoked by the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur may well prove to have far-reaching implications, since they compel us to enter a new conceptual terrain or reconsider our common sense convictions. But we can only come to such a conclusion based upon a specific inquiry about the conceptual dynamics of the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. I will begin by conceptualizing the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur as singular responses to the crisis of Taylorism. These singular figures will be subjected to a philosophical inquiry that aims to distil the conceptual personas that can provide a basis for rethinking the model of the post-bureaucratic organization.

### **First Response: The Creative Manager**

One might expect supporters of post-bureaucracy to advocate for the removal of all traditional layers of management within the post-bureaucratic organization. To some extent, this is the case. Business process reengineering (BPR), for instance, is premised on the belief that the organization should be 'rejecting' many of its traditional

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administrative tasks and bureaucratic layers (Hammer, 1990: 105). Similar to many other post-bureaucratic management technologies, BPR 'nihilistically condemns past methods of production, past managerial techniques and past organizational forms' (Grint and Case, 1998: 564). But despite this position, exponents of BPR ironically maintain that it is the responsibility of managers to dismantle conventional models of management and ensure that the practice of management is invigorated in a fundamental way within the corporation.

Although he uses the term 'post-managerial society' to describe the pending epoch, Hamel maintains that this does not involve a 'future without managers' (2007: 254). Quite the contrary, the figure of the manager, according to Hamel (2007), must be reconfigured from Weber's (1964) figure of the diligent bureaucrat or Whyte's (1956/2002) 'organization man', committed to the collective purpose of the workgroup, into a 'change agent' (Thrift, 2000) who is able to facilitate innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. In light of this, the managers of the post-bureaucratic organization must become what Hamel calls 'gray-haired revolutionaries', devoted to the mission of 'build[ing] substantial new businesses and fundamentally transform[ing] the core' of existing ones (Hamel, 2002: 250). Along similar lines, Peters maintains that:

Following and administering rules might have been dandy in the placid environment of yesterday. Not today. Managers must create worlds. And then destroy them; and then create anew. Such brave acts of creation must begin with a vision that not only inspires, ennobles, empowers, and challenges, but at the same time provokes confidence enough, in the midst of a perpetual competitive hurricane, to encourage people to take the day-to-day risks involved in testing and adapting and extending the vision. (Peters, 1988: 401)

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The first response to the crisis of Taylorism consists of reinventing management to become a catalyst of innovation. The idea of reinventing management has been embodied in the term ‘management innovation’, which refers to the ‘invention and implementation of a management practice, process, structure, or technique that is new to the state of the art and is intended to further organizational goals’ (Birkinshaw, Hamel and Mol, 2008: 825). Underlying the concept of management innovation is the idea that the function of the manager must be fundamentally reconceptualised. ‘Management innovation’ suggests the figure of the creative manager who is constantly engaged in what Peters (1988) characterizes as the creation and destruction of new organizational worlds that spark innovation, change and entrepreneurship. However, once the post-bureaucratic image of thought offers the figure of the creative manager as a solution to the crisis of Taylorism, it is forced to negotiate the meaning of invention. The concept of management innovation thus conceals the essential question: *What is inventive management?*

In Chapter 3, we will look at the figure of the creative manager. In popular management literature, the concept of management is often assigned a curious dual function. On the one hand, management is portrayed as a ‘toxin’ that impedes innovation. But on the other hand, management is portrayed as the ‘cure’ to heal the defects that thwart innovation. Here I will engage with Gary Hamel’s popular management handbook *The Future of Management*. Although Hamel attempts to establish a clear-cut distinction between those principles of management that obstruct and those that facilitate innovation, one is ultimately left uncertain whether management is a cure or a poison for innovation. This is the case because the cure for traditional management prescribed by

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Hamel simultaneously takes on the character of what he identifies as a poison.

In effect, Hamel paradoxically reproduces the very managerial logic that he opposes. As a result, the figure of the creative manager is thrown into crisis, as the imperative to become creative itself becomes a foreclosing structure that prevents the production of novelty. I will argue that this contradiction reveals an underlying paradox in the post-bureaucratic image of thought that is caused by the attempt to incorporate transgression into its productive logic.

To grasp the paradox that we encounter in Hamel's popular management handbook *The Future of Management*, I make use of Derrida's (1972/1981) concept of the *pharmakon*. As I will argue, the paradoxical concept of *pharmakon* enables us to conceptualize the contradiction at the heart of the figure of the creative manager. But instead of viewing this contradiction as a logical barrier that stymie the process of reinventing management, I will argue, appropriating Derrida's (2003/2007: 454) formulation, that the 'conditions of impossibility' of *management innovation* paradoxically become the very 'conditions of possibility' of *management innovation*. Exploring this paradox therefore forms the basis for constructing a conceptual persona of the 'deconstructive creative manager' as a figure caught in an inescapable paradox. The conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager must necessarily operate on the condition that the new management principles created within the post-bureaucratic organization are impossible and even exceed the conceptual capacity of management innovation in its current form.

### **Second Response: The Authentic Leader**

While management innovation suggests that management should be reinvented, the concept of leadership offers a different solution to the crisis of Taylorism. Rather than reinventing the practice of management, the concept of leadership suggests that the administrative systems of the post-bureaucratic organization should be supplemented by a practice of leadership that is naturally geared towards assisting change, innovation and entrepreneurship (Kotter, 1990, 2001). According to Kotter, leadership and management are fundamentally different activities, because the ‘first can produce useful change, the second can create orderly results which keep something working efficiently’ (1990: 7). Thus, management and leadership serve complementary functions in the post-bureaucratic organization.

In Kotter’s view (2001), the key objective of management is *efficiency*: to organize, staff, delegate responsibility, and monitor performance. By contrast, the key objective of leadership is *change*: ‘communicating the new direction to those who can create coalitions that understand the vision and are committed to its achievement’ (Kotter, 2001: 4). While managers are concerned with optimizing predefined routines, functions and procedures, leaders are concerned with guiding innovation, change and entrepreneurship. No wonder management scholars have been offended by the image of the manager that is typically found in the literature on leadership (Birkinshaw, 2012). Nevertheless, George (2003) maintains that:

As organizations get larger, the natural tendency of managers is to control the business with rules, processes, and procedures. A growing bureaucracy is a huge barrier to innovative ideas and dampens creativity, no matter how much it spends in research and development. Leaders committed to

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innovation have to work hard to offset these tendencies, giving preference to the mavericks and the innovators and protecting new business ventures while they are in the fragile, formative stage. To do so, effective leaders must stay close to the innovators that create organic growth. (George, 2003: 133-134)

The second response to the crisis of Taylorism is to supplement management with leadership. Recent decades have witnessed a proliferation of novel leadership concepts, all promising to provide the necessary qualities to thrive in the post-industrial environment. Recently, there has been increased attention given to the concept of ‘authentic leadership’, especially because it is believed to secure ethical conduct within the post-bureaucratic organization. In response to the accusation that transformational leaders could be narcissistic, authoritarian and exploit their followers, Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) introduced the concept of ‘authentic transformational leadership’, which they contrasted with ‘pseudo-transformational leadership’ (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). However, once the post-bureaucratic image of thought puts forward the figure of the authentic leader as a solution to the crisis of Taylorism, it is forced to wrestle with the meaning of authenticity. Authentic leadership thus conceals the essential question: *What is the difference between authentic and inauthentic leaders?*

In Chapter 4, we will look at the figure of the authentic leader. Authentic leadership depends upon being able to distinguish between the authentic and inauthentic leader. The chapter will use Deleuze’s reading of Plato as a point of departure for a critical scrutiny of the problem of *authenticating the leader* – that is, drawing a distinction between authentic and inauthentic leaders. This will be done through a reading of the book *Authentic Leadership* by Bill George, former CEO of Medtronic.

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The chapter traces George's attempts to authenticate himself and to show that the former CEO of Enron, Jeffrey Skilling, is an inauthentic leader.

Here I uses Deleuze's (1969/2004) concept of the *simulacrum* in order to trace and also reverse the procedures that George uses to distinguish himself from Skilling. For Plato, the *simulacrum* is a 'false pretender', because it lacks resemblance to the model designating the idea of the intrinsically good. As I will argue, George's account of authentic leadership parallels Platonism because it considers the inauthentic leader a simulacrum. Skilling is categorized as an inauthentic leader precisely because he is false pretender who betrays his true inner self. While Skilling claims to be a good leader, his convictions lacks resemblance to the model George calls the 'moral compass' that designates good leadership. The 'moral compass', however, is a myth. By exposing this myth, this chapter challenges the procedure by which authentic leaders are distinguished from inauthentic leaders, a basic premise that underlies authentic leadership. In this light the figure of the authentic leader plunges into crisis because of the impossibility of distinguishing between the authentic and the inauthentic leader.

In contrast to the Platonic understanding of the simulacrum as a false pretender, Deleuze develops a paradoxical understanding of the concept through what he calls *reversed Platonism*. According to Deleuze's reversed Platonism, the *simulacrum* should not be conceived of as a false pretender but rather as a system of internalized difference, a logic that transgresses the Platonic duality between true and false claimants. I will show how Deleuze's reversed Platonism challenges the common sense assumptions about authentic leadership. While the figure of the authentic leader is meant to assure ethical conduct through commitment to values, Deleuze's reversed Platonism opens the way to a different understanding of authentic leadership that does not place faith

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in the force of values, but instead remains sceptical of the way that values are employed to legitimize decisions.

I will argue that Deleuze's overturning of Platonism provides the basis for reversing the relationship between ethics and values inherent in the concept of authentic leadership. Whereas the concept of authentic leadership assumes that a commitment to values in favour of the collective good will assure ethical conduct, Deleuze perceives the commitment to values as hindering the occurrence of ethics (Smith, 2007b). As a result, Deleuze's 'inverted Platonism' opens up an understanding of authentic leadership that is not based on values, but rather on a critique of the 'value of values' (Deleuze, 1962/1983: 1), by examining the ways in which values are employed to legitimize morally questionable actions. I construct the conceptual persona of the 'reversed authentic leader' as the one who does not unconditionally commit to values, placing his or her faith in the ethical force of the 'moral compass', but rather the one who is aware that, while values can serve good purposes, they are always potentially dangerous.

### **Third Response: The Entrepreneur**

While the first two responses either propose to reconfigure or supplement the practice of management, the third response wants to transform the post-bureaucratic organization into a privileged site for entrepreneurial activities. According to Drucker, we have experienced a 'profound shift from a "managerial" to an "entrepreneurial" economy' (1985: 1). Entrepreneurship is conventionally associated with the launching of new ventures, a process that normally takes place outside the realm of existing firms. However, Kanter maintains that the concept should be extended to also include innovative initiatives that generate



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value within corporations, so that an 'entrepreneurial career is one which growth occurs through the creation of new value or new organizational capacity' (1990: 313). The entrepreneur, Kanter continues, does not necessarily create a new business venture outside the realm of an existing firm, but rather converts 'everyone in the same organization who "stays in place" but leads the growth of the territory for which he or she is responsible' (1990: 314-315). For this reason, Kanter (1990: 318) has coined the term 'post-entrepreneurial organization' to designate a transgression of the conventional distinction between entrepreneurs and employees of established firms.

Whereas bureaucratic management is inherently preservation-seeking, entrepreneurial management is opportunity-seeking. The major concern of bureaucracy is to administer a known routine uniformly, guided by past experience, whereas the major concern of entrepreneurial organization is to exploit opportunity wherever it occurs and however it can be done, regardless of what the organization has done in the past. The post-entrepreneurial organization brings entrepreneurial principles to the established organization. (Kanter, 1990: 353)

The third response to the crisis of Taylorism is to allow entrepreneurial activities to take place within the post-bureaucratic organization. The post-bureaucratic organization should be fused with 'entrepreneurial spirit' (Kanter, 1983: 23) – that is, 'intrapreneurship', signifying the occurrence of 'entrepreneurship within existing organizations' (Antoncic and Hisrich, 2001: 495). In the post-bureaucratic managerial literature, the entrepreneur is often portrayed as the 'heroic figurehead of capitalism' (Williams and Nadin, 2013: 552), embodying 'ephemeral qualities – freedom of spirit, creativity, vision, zeal' (Burns, 2001: 1). The entrepreneur is capable of inventing new

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products, services and modes of production. However, once the post-bureaucratic image of thought offers the figure of the entrepreneur as a solution to the crisis of Taylorism, it is forced to wrestle with the meaning of entrepreneurship. The concept of entrepreneurship thus conceals the essential question: *Who is an entrepreneur?*

In Chapter 5, we will examine the figure of the entrepreneur. Despite extensive attention to the figure of the entrepreneur, studies tend to indicate that that ‘there is no “typical” entrepreneur’ (Bull and Willard, 1993: 187; see also Gray, 1998: 234). In effect, critical scholars have argued that the figure of the entrepreneur is a mythical ideological construct that serves to cover up a fundamental lack. Drawing on Žižek’s concept of *fantasy*, the chapter seeks to confront the heroic myth of the entrepreneur. To do so, the chapter taps into self-narrative of Sir Richard Branson as presented in his autobiography *Losing My Virginity*, a man who is considered one of the world’s most successful entrepreneurs.

Read as a fantasy that structures desire, Branson’s autobiography *Losing My Virginity* generates a series of injunctions that effectively tell us what to strive for, what we should try to accomplish, and what we should yearn for. I will investigate how the anecdotes in Branson’s narrative present two desires of entrepreneurship. These are the desire to surpass oneself (*transgression*) and the desire to become oneself (*authenticity*). Instead of constituting a single coherent fantasy, these two desires are inconsistent, a fact that point to a crisis within the figure of the entrepreneur. I will argue that Žižek’s concept of *fantasy* allows us to capture the contradictory logics of desire enacted by Branson’s autobiography *Losing My Virginity*.

Reading Branson’s autobiography *Losing My Virginity* provides a basis for extracting the conceptual persona of the ‘traversed entrepreneur’ as one who is caught between two paradoxical logics of

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desire – the desire to overcome oneself and the desire to be true to oneself. However, rather than suggesting that this inconsistency prevents the actualization of the entrepreneurial subjectivity, I will argue that it is precisely this crisis that supports the fantasy of the entrepreneur. While this contradiction is often resolved by claiming that the site of the true self is the ultimate source of creativity, imagination and originality, the chapter hold to the view that it is the gulf between these two logics of desire that makes the figure of the entrepreneur so attractive. But the paradox keeps returning because of the crisis inevitably confronting the figure of the entrepreneur, as the entrepreneur faces the conflict between attachment to a fixed base while simultaneously trying to go beyond every boundary.

# Chapter 2:

## What is Called Thinking?

*Thinking is what we already know we have not yet begun...*

- Derrida (1967/1998: 93)

*To think is to create – there is no other creation – but to create is first of all to engender ‘thinking’ in thought.*

- Deleuze (1968/2001: 147)

### Introduction

In *What is Called Thinking?*, Heidegger makes the provocative statement that ‘*we are still not thinking*’ (1954/1968: 6, original italics). For any reader, this assertion might at once seem bizarre given that Heidegger is standing on the shoulders of a broad philosophical tradition, spanning from the ancient Greeks to his contemporary era. Yet, Heidegger does not consider the sheer quantitative amount of philosophical speculation as evidence of genuine thinking. Although he acknowledges the great interest in philosophy of his own time, the study of ‘great thinkers’, according to Heidegger, does not ‘guarantee that we ourselves are thinking’ (1954/1968: 5). On the contrary, considerable attention devoted to philosophy may only give a false impression that we are thinking when we are merely reproducing the thoughts of past philosophers. Against this backdrop, Heidegger contends that the problem of philosophy is to make thought productive.

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Jones and ten Bos (2007) suggest a similar problem in the deployment of philosophy within organization studies. While famous philosophers are frequently cited in the field, Jones and ten Bos maintain that to draw upon philosophy in organization studies does not necessarily involve philosophical thinking. All too often, concepts derived from philosophy are applied mechanically in order to assemble a theoretically informed study of organization without sufficient concern for the ways these concepts are associated with particular problems (O'Doherty, 2007). As a result, Jones and ten Bos state that 'organizational theory has benefited immensely from philosophical insights, but the use of ideas by, for example, Aristotle, Kant and Foucault, does not make organizational theory philosophical' (2007: 1). In effect, Jones and ten Bos (2007) call for a philosophical engagement with organization (see also Spoelstra, 2007), one that not only writes about philosophy, but also subjects organization to philosophical inquiry (O'Doherty, 2007).

But what triggers philosophical thinking? According to the ancient Greeks, philosophy begins with wonder (Kaulingfreks, Spoelstra and Bos, 2011). In Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus*, Socrates remarks that it is wonder that sparks philosophical reflection. 'For this is an experience which is characteristic of a philosopher, this wondering', Socrates explains, adding that 'this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else' (Plato, 1997a: 155d). We find a similar observation in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Here Aristotle emphasizes that 'wonder' is the reason why 'men both now and at first began to philosophize' (2009: 982b).

In his posthumously published work titled *The Basic Questions of Philosophy*, Heidegger retains the ancient Greek idea that philosophy begins with wonder, but adds that genuine wonder has the capacity for revealing the *wondrous* – that is, a thing with the 'character of the

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exceptional, unexpected, surprising, and therefore exciting' (1984/1994: 135). Philosophical thinking, according to Heidegger, is sparked by phenomena that provoke and disturb thought due to their unanticipated nature. Wonder, however, is not necessarily generated by the occurrence of the extraordinary event, such as rare occasions or grand happenings, but also by the manifestation of the unexpected in the expected, the unusual in the usual, and the strange in the familiar. In wonder, Kaulingfreks, Spoelstra and Bos explain, 'the Greeks believed that even the most banal and normal things become unusual' (2011: 314). The appearance of such phenomena, in turn, provides the basis for philosophical speculation, because they provoke thought to reconsider its basic assumptions about the world.

Ironically, Heidegger maintains that what is most 'thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking' (1954/1968: 6). For Heidegger, thinking is paradoxically sparked when we confront thought's immediate incompetence and our sheer inability to genuinely think. By evoking this circular logic, which posits that thinking is triggered by provocation but yet the source of provocation is precisely that we are currently not thinking, Heidegger places philosophy in a deadlock, because any attempt to think confronts the fact that we are currently not thinking. How can we break out of this deadlock in which every attempt to think confronts us with the fact that we are not yet thinking?

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze (1968/2001) takes up Heidegger's problem of thinking (Dillet, 2013). To a great extent, Deleuze agrees with Heidegger that philosophy has put itself in a position where thinking is rendered impossible. Deleuze argues that the reason we are not thinking is the common sense conception of thought that has dominated Western metaphysics from Plato to Kant – something

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Deleuze calls the ‘dogmatic image of thought’ (1968/2001: 149). Deleuze follows Heidegger’s assertion that ‘we can learn thinking only if we radically unlearn what thinking has been traditionally’ (Heidegger, 1954/1968: 8). But whereas Heidegger (1954/1968: 244) concludes that thinking is sparked by dwelling upon the ontological difference between ‘beings’ and ‘Being’ (*Sein*), Deleuze turns his attention to the paradoxical nature of experience, which can only be grasped through an ontology of difference in itself.

As Deleuze (1986/2006) learns from Heidegger (1927/1962), history determines the horizon of thinking in the present. Our intellectual inheritance, Heidegger insists, shapes the conjecture in which thought naturally orients itself. But for precisely this reason, entering into critical dialogue with our intellectual inheritance may reveal unexplored opportunities for thinking differently. If the horizon of what we think in the present is constituted by what has been thought in the past, then engaging with the historically predominant modes of thinking with the intention of finding its points of crisis may allow new conceptual terrains to emerge. This is why Deleuze writes in his book on Foucault: ‘Thought thinks its own history (the past), but in order to free itself from what it thinks (the present) and be able to finally to “think otherwise” (the future)’ (1986/2006: 98).

In order to release the capacity for thinking, Deleuze argues that it is necessary to perform a destruction of the dogmatic image of thought that dominates Western metaphysics, once again echoing Heidegger, to ‘stake out the positive possibilities of that tradition’ (Heidegger, 1962: 44). Ultimately, destroying the dogmatic image of thought should release the possibility to think differently. Therefore, Deleuze argues that the ‘conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the

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genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself' (1968/2001: 139). Deleuze finds such a Heideggerian 'positive possibility' in Plato's dialogue *Republic*, in which Socrates shows how thinking is sparked by thought being confronted by a paradox that 'moves the soul, "perplexes" it' (Deleuze, 1968/2001: 140). Deleuze characterizes this experience as an *encounter*. An encounter 'transmits a shock' (1968/2001: 236) into the unity of the faculties, shattering what would otherwise be a homogeneous experience, thereby permitting thought to create new concepts.

In this chapter, I show how Deleuze's idea of *encounters* can enable this thesis to develop a philosophically informed engagement with popular management literature. This will allow us to undertake a philosophical examination of the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. This chapter therefore serves as the methodological foundation of the thesis. Yet, it is important to emphasize that although being analytically useful, Deleuze's idea of encounters implies denunciation of all methodology, at least in the traditional sense of the word. According to Deleuze, there is no universal formula, sequential procedure, or generic protocol for gaining philosophical knowledge. For this reason, Bryant says that Deleuze's philosophy can be characterized as 'anti-methodological because it relies on the constraints of the contingent encounter as the condition under which thought is engendered in thinking' (2008: 77).

Instead of a stringent methodology, Deleuze maintains that experience is closely connected with experimentation (Alliez, 1993/2004) and that philosophical thinking involves persistent exploration of what we are able to think given the concepts we have at our disposal (Spoelstra, 2007). By seeking encounters with the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur, the thesis explores the post-bureaucratic image of thought that dominates contemporary



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managerial thinking. Ultimately, the purpose of conducting a philosophical exploration of the post-bureaucratic image of thought is not to arrive at an accurate description but rather to achieve an *engagement* with the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur reveals in order to extract a conceptual persona that forces thought to enter a new territory.

Before proceeding, a few remarks on my way of reading philosophy are necessary in order to clarify my approach. As we have seen, Deleuze proposes a formula for reading philosophy, namely that philosophy creates concepts in response to problems. This formula indicates the way that Deleuze reads other philosophers, but it also gives us a key for deciphering Deleuze's own thinking. If we want to 'read Deleuze as he himself read other thinkers' (Byrant, 2008: xi), then we need to trace the way in which Deleuze creates concepts in response to problems. In order tap into the problems that concern Deleuze, I have taken the liberty of drawing freely on works that he quotes, including Plato, Descartes and Kant. I have not included these works in order to arrive at a hermeneutical accurate interpretation of Deleuze, but rather to retrieve the core of the philosophical problems that he confronts.

### **The Dogmatic Image of Thought**

The dogmatic image of thought, according to Deleuze (1968/2001: 149), is based upon the principle of recognition. Deleuze defines recognition as 'the harmonious exercise of all the faculties upon a supposed same object' (1968/2001: 133). This definition should be understood in the sense that the 'same object may be seen, touched, remembered, imagined or conceived' without altering its essence and substance (Deleuze, 1968/2001: 133). A faculty is a cognitive function

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that enables the subject to think and register sensations. Recognition involves unity among the various faculties that enable the subject to imagine, understand, recollect and perceive the supposedly same object regardless which cognitive function is employed. '*We sense this because we recognize it. We understand that because we recognize it*' (Williams, 2012: 118, original italics).

Without further comparison, it is important to acknowledge that the post-bureaucratic image of thought also relies upon the principle of recognition. The concepts and psychosocial types that populate the post-bureaucratic image of thought are designed to be empirically recognizable regardless of measurement instrument or analytic approach. For instance, the concept of authentic leadership takes for granted that it is possible to empirically locate the figure of the authentic leader and clearly demarcate this person from the inauthentic leader who is classified as a false betrayer. Similarly, the concept of management innovation presupposes that inventive modes of management can be empirically distinguished from the principles originating from industrialism. And finally, the concept of entrepreneurship assumes that the figure of the entrepreneur can be identified as the concrete person who is the source and driver of innovation.

Management innovation, authentic leadership and entrepreneurship share the presumption of the existence, in principle, of a correspondence between a unifying concept that defines the essential characteristics of each notion and a set of empirically recognizable phenomena that contain these traits. Here, recognition consists of making a judgement that harmoniously binds concept and object together into a coherent whole. For example, the principle of recognition underlying the post-bureaucratic image of thought might allow everyone to agree that '*This is the authentic leader*' and '*This is the inauthentic leader*' regardless

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whether the authentic and the inauthentic leader are heard, remembered, perceived or imagined. The same convergence would apply to management innovation and entrepreneurship.

While we can see how the principle of recognition operates within the post-bureaucratic image of thought that dominates contemporary managerial thinking, Deleuze shows that this principle has deep roots in Western metaphysics. The principle of recognition, according to Deleuze (1968/2001: 134), pertains to three seminal works of Western philosophy – Plato’s *Theaetetus*, René Descartes’s *Meditations* and Immanuel Kant’s *The Critique of Pure Reason*. I will briefly discuss Deleuze’s identification of the principle of recognition in each of these three works.

In Plato’s dialogue *Theaetetus*, Socrates and Theaetetus set out to inquire as to the nature of knowledge. After clarifying the problem of knowledge, Theaetetus proposes the proposition that ‘knowledge is simply perception’ (Plato, 1997a: 151e). Unconvinced by Theaetetus’ suggestion, Socrates asks: ‘when we perceive things by seeing or hearing them, we always at the same time know them?’ (Plato 1997a: 163b). Theaetetus agrees. But Socrates continues: if knowledge is perception, then it follows that memory cannot be knowledge. Yet, suppose that you perceive an apple and henceforth acquire knowledge of it, and then close your eyes and remember it. According to Theaetetus’ thesis, knowledge of apple would disappear – an implication that both Theaetetus and Socrates agree would be absurd. So Socrates concludes that perception cannot be knowledge. But for Socrates to make this argument, Deleuze points out, Plato assumes that, in principle, the faculty of remembering and the faculty of perception designate the same supposed object. Although perceiving and remembering do not necessarily amount to the same experience, they nevertheless confirm the identity of the

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supposedly same object. Deleuze therefore argues that recognition serves as the underlying principle of the dialogue.

In the *Meditations*, Descartes (1641/2008) calls into doubt everything that he believes in order to restore a sound foundation for knowledge. Among the ordinary objects that we come across in our everyday lives, Descartes explains, is a piece of wax. Descartes notices that although the wax is recognized by its shape, colour and smell, once it is brought close to the fire all of its qualities are suddenly transformed or eradicated. Descartes points out that if a piece of wax is heated, the ‘smell fades; the colour is changed, the shape is taken away, it grows in size, becomes liquid, becomes warm’ (1641/2008: 30). Despite the changed sense perceptions, Descartes nevertheless insists that the idea of the wax remains the same. Thus, he argues that:

Does the same wax still remain? We must admit it does remain: no one would say or think it does not. So what was there in it that was so distinctly grasped? Certainly, none of those qualities I apprehended by the senses: for whatever came under taste, or smell, or sight, or touch, or hearing, has now changed: but the wax remains. (Descartes, 1641/2008: 30)

Because the idea of the wax does not match his perception of the melted wax heated by the fire, Descartes concludes that his idea of the wax does not stem from the constantly changing senses impressions, but rather from the ‘inspection of the mind alone’ (1641/2008: 31). Although this particular piece of wax is a deceptive and ephemeral object that constantly changes its qualities depending on the temperature, the essence of wax remains unaffected by these fluctuating sense impressions. This is the case, Descartes argues, because it is the ‘same wax I see, touch, and imagine, and in short it is the same wax I judged it to be from the beginning’ (1641/2008: 31). But in order to make this

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argument, Descartes presupposes that all the faculties – memory, smell, perception and so forth – correspond to the same supposed object, namely the idea of the wax elucidated by the rational intellect.

As Deleuze emphasizes, recognition serves as the underlying model of thought in Descartes' philosophy, because in principle, the identity of the object remains unchanged regardless of the specific faculty employed. The fact that the qualities of the wax registered by the senses are constantly shifting only indicates that the idea of wax does not originate from the senses. On this basis, Descartes concludes that it is wrong to believe that ideas stem from unreliable and fluctuating sense impressions. Instead of the senses, the idea of the wax is derived from the rational mind. As Deleuze emphasizes, from the point of view of recognition, disagreements between the faculties can only be comprehended as 'error' (1968/2001: 148).

In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant states that sense, imagination and apperception, the three sources of cognition, ultimately culminate in the principle of recognition (1781-7/1998: A115). For Kant, sense, imagination and apperception form the three faculties of the mind. If appearances were constantly shifting and things acquired no stable qualities, continuously changing in shape and colour, according to Kant (1781-7/1998: A101), then 'no empirical synthesis of reproduction could take place' and it would be impossible to identify objects and distribute qualities among them. Therefore, experience requires consistency and unity, according to Kant. Yet, as Kant (1781-7/1998: A114) reminds us, appearances are not things in themselves but rather representations. Therefore, it is consciousness, according to Kant, that synthesizes the multiplicity of sense impressions into coherent impressions by distributing stable identities among objects.

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The constitution of objects, in Kant's view, is achieved through apprehension. Apprehension functions as the device that produces a coherent synthesis of objects from the multiplicity of sensations. But in order for this synthesis to be successful, Kant notes that the multiplicity of sensation must be connected to the form of an object. The 'unity of apperception' is therefore made possible by the 'object = X' (Kant, 1781-7/1998: A105). In other words, experience is rendered coherent by crystalizing the multiplicity of sense impressions into various objects. In this way, Kant concludes that the 'object = X is the pure form of perception' (Smith, 2012: 227).

This also implies, according to Kant, that 'the unity that the object makes necessary can be nothing other than the formal unity of the consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of the representations' (1781-7/1998: A105). In other words, the apperception simultaneously secures the unity of consciousness and appearances. So the unity of the experience is attained by the *categories* or the 'pure concepts of the understanding' – that is, the necessary constitutive conditions for all possible experience (Kant, 1781-7/1998: A771/B799). Neither 'swan' nor 'white' are categories, since they are not conditions for all possible experience. But 'substance' is a category, according to Kant, since all things appears as spatio-temporal objects with stable identities. It is worth mentioning, however, that there is one exception in Kant's philosophy, namely the occurrence of the *sublime*. Kant's concept of the sublime, according to Deleuze, 'brings the various faculties into play in such a way that they struggle against each other' (1964/1985: xi).

Nevertheless, commenting on Kant and Descartes, Deleuze argues that 'it is the identity of the Self in the "I think" which grounds the harmony of all the faculties and their agreement on the form of a supposed same object' (1968/2001: 133). In effect, the formal unity of

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experience represents the harmony of the faculties, because sense, imagination, and apperception empirically assume the supposed same object. In this way, Deleuze concludes that Kant assumes that consciousness is capable of converting the multiplicity of impressions derived from the different senses into a homogeneous and coherent experience, enabling the subject to identify objects with concepts regardless of the faculty employed. Consequently, recognition is the underlying principle of Kant's philosophy.

### **Destroying the Dogmatic Image of Thought**

Although Deleuze maintains that the principle of recognition applies equally to *Theaetetus*, *Meditations* and *Critique of Pure Reason*, three seminal work of Western metaphysics, it is important to emphasize, as Smith (2012: 137) remarks, that Deleuze is acutely aware of the profoundly different problems relating to Plato, Descartes and Kant. While Plato struggles with the apparent inability to distinguish the truth from falsehood in the Athenian democracy, Descartes (1641/2008: 22) is wrestling with the problem of uncovering deception internal to thought in fear of a malicious demon trying to deceive him. Kant, for his part, wants to 'protect the rights of reason' (1781-7/1998: Ax) against reason's inherent tendency to transgress its proper domain and produce transcendental illusions. The three essential transcendental illusions that Kant describes are the ideas of the Soul, the World and God (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 57).

Despite these differences, Deleuze suggests that the model of thought presupposed by Plato, Descartes and Kant operates upon the principle of recognition, assuming that the identity of the supposed same object remains the same regardless of the faculty employed. This

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principle, in turn, is essential for Plato, Descartes and Kant to make their respective arguments. While agreeing that the principle of recognition is necessary in order for us to meaningfully engage with the world, Deleuze still believes that the principle is problematic, because it does not permit the occurrence of novelty. His point, however, is not that the principle of recognition should be discarded altogether, but rather that it cannot provide a sufficient model of thought on its own, because recognition ultimately renders creative thinking impossible. Therefore, we should examine Deleuze's critique of the principle of recognition.

In order to understand why Deleuze finds the principle of recognition problematic it is necessary to recall his definition of philosophy as the creation of concepts (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 5). A concept, according to Deleuze, is not an empirical description of state of affairs, but rather an attempt to break with 'common sense' (1968/2001: 134). The role of philosophy, then, is to challenge our common sense convictions that we take for granted and to experiment with what we are capable of thinking given our mode of existence (Kaulingfreks and ten Bos, 2005).

To think creatively, according to Deleuze, requires that thought diverge from its habitual pattern and transgress its conventional mode of reasoning. But creative thinking is not a voluntary and self-generated activity that thought is capable of produce solitarily, because one cannot single-handedly decide to think creatively. On the contrary, creative thinking only emerges when thought is confronted by a phenomenon that forces it to deviate from its habitual pattern and to stretch beyond its conventional modes of reasoning. Deleuze calls this kind of experience an encounter with a *paradox*. Confronting a paradox is what enables thought to transgress common sense.



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The term 'paradox' is derived from the ancient Greek *paradoxon*, designating that which is contrary to or beyond (*para*) conventional opinion or common sense (*doxon*) (see Spoelstra, 2007: 26). A paradox emerges when thought is confronted by a phenomenon that cannot be adequately comprehended by conventional ways of thinking. Philosophical concepts are paradoxical in a literal sense: they extend beyond (*para*) common sense (*doxa*) (ten Bos, 2007). Seen from the point of view of common sense, paradoxes are absurd, illogical and nonsensical because they do not conform to the conventional way of reasoning. But precisely because they contravene the conventional manner of thinking, paradoxes offer an opportunity to break free of common sense. In other words, the lack of integration between paradox and common sense suggests new ways of thinking. Therefore, Deleuze argues that 'Paradox is the pathos or the passion of philosophy' (1968/2001: 227), because it allows for the creation of concepts that transgress common sense.

Common sense presupposes, according to Deleuze, the principle of recognition, because the 'employment of all the faculties on a supposed same object' (2001: xvi) allows for the formation of shared conceptions. As ten Bos explains, common sense establishes itself by capturing the 'flux of appearances and experiences [...] under one common denominator', permitting the emergence of coherent concepts expressing a sense of 'shared identities, communities and worlds' (2007: 144). The formula for common sense reads, 'Everybody knows that...' (Deleuze, 1968/2001: 129). For instance, everybody knows that the sky is blue and everybody knows that men are mortal. The same goes for the dogmatic image of thought. Everybody knows that authentic leaders are ethically responsible while inauthentic leaders are morally dubious. Everybody knows that creative managers are innovative while bureaucrats are

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unimaginative rule-followers. And everybody knows that entrepreneurs have the capacity to save the economy during the time of crisis.

Granting that common sense is required for humans to interact with each other and to make a shared community, the establishment of common sense always involves a certain amount of dogmatism, because everything that does not conform to the prevalent truth is excluded and considered irrational, stupid and ridiculous (Spoelstra, 2007: 16). Therefore, Deleuze (1968/2001) assigns philosophy the responsibility to counter common sense by creating paradoxical concepts that seek to explore what lies beyond conventional reasoning. Deleuze explains that ‘the philosopher takes the side of the idiot as though of a man without presuppositions’ (1968/2001: 130) in order to create concepts that challenge, transgress and contravene common sense convictions.

While the task of philosophy is to break free of common sense, Deleuze maintains that the principle of recognition can ‘never inspire anything but conformities’ (1968/2001: 135). This is the case because the principle of recognition fails to allow for paradox. Instead, recognition presupposes that there is harmony between the faculties, so it reconfirms preconceived ideas while judging divergence from common sense as error, irrationality or failure (Deleuze, 1968/2001: 148). In effect, the principle of recognition renders the appearance of contradictory phenomena ‘imperceptible’ (Deleuze, 1968/2001: 140). Therefore, Deleuze concludes that the principle of recognition cannot provide a model of thought that enables philosophy to challenge common sense convictions and to experiment with our mode of existence by creating new concepts.

As previously indicated, Descartes’ conception of the piece of wax is unaffected by the differences between the different faculties. He sees, touches and imagines the same wax, even if the qualities of the wax

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change depending on its temperature. The principle of recognition therefore presupposes that objects have stable identities, because they remain equivalent regardless of the faculty employed. But Deleuze insists that the image of thought based upon the principle of recognition is incapable of thinking the identity of objects in new and different ways. It becomes impossible to create new concepts that rearrange the conception and relationship between things. As Smith remarks, ‘if identity (A is A) were the primary principle, that is, if identities were already pre-given, then there would in principle be no production of the new (no new differences)’ (2007a: 1).

If the image of thought based upon the principle of recognition guides the activity of thinking, then, as Deleuze emphasizes, it ‘is left without means to realise its project of breaking with *doxa*’ (1968/2001: 134, original italics). Consequently, Deleuze argues that we need a new image of thought in order to retrieve the capacity for philosophical thinking that is defined by its ability to challenge common sense (Spoelstra, 2007). In order to enable creative thinking, Deleuze argues that philosophy needs an image of thought that tolerates paradox.

### **The Socratic Method**

As we have seen, the principle of recognition rejects everything that does not conform to the unity of the faculties and cannot be registered as a coherent phenomenon. As a result, the principle of recognition effectively keeps thought from leaving its habitual path and exploring new conceptual terrain, because everything that does not conform to the harmony of the faculties is suppressed or regarded as error, stupidity or irrationality. Deleuze praises Plato for being the ‘first to erect the dogmatic and moralising image of thought’ (1968/2001: 142) even while

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reproaching him for the confinement of dogmatic thinking. Deleuze suggests that through this polarity, Plato has paved a way to destroy the principle of recognition that inhibits thought from thinking differently.

‘In a passage from Book VII of the Republic’, Deleuze hints that ‘Plato showed how such a being transmits a shock to the other faculties, shaking them from their torpor, stirring the memory and constraining thought’ (1968/2001: 236). This event, which had to do with a confrontation with a phenomenon that ‘engenders “thinking” in thought’, is what Deleuze calls an *encounter*. An encounter is the experience of being confronted by a paradox that forces thought to think beyond its conventional conceptions, common sense assumptions and taken for granted beliefs. In the passage that Deleuze cites, Socrates and Glaucon discuss the education of military commanders. In the dialogue, Socrates explains to Glaucon:

All right, I said, I’m sure you’ll see what I mean if I say that at the level of the senses, some things don’t encourage the intellect to explore further, because the situation can be adequately assessed by the relevant sense, while other things can’t help provoking an enquiring attitude, because sense-perception fails to produce a sound result. (Plato, 1998: 523a-b)

In this passage, Socrates distinguishes between two scenarios. In the first scenario, the intellect is confronted by a phenomenon that can be adequately comprehended within normal concepts. For instance, you spot a bundle of red round objects lying in the fruit section of your local grocery store and immediately recognize them as apples. Identifying the red round objects as apples does not, as Socrates would probably say, ‘encourage the intellect to explore further’ (Plato, 1998: 523a-b). It is a straightforward procedure that connects the round red objects with the concept apple. In the second scenario, however, (the one that interests

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Deleuze), the intellect confronts a paradox that cannot be made intelligible by conventional ways of reasoning. Instead of allowing us to pass judgement, this scenario is one that Socrates describes as ‘provoking an enquiring attitude’ (Plato, 1998: 523a-b).

In order for phenomena to be thought-provoking, Socrates explains, ‘they have to produce contradictory sense-impressions’ (Plato, 1998: 523c). If we raise questions about the quality of an object (is it hard or soft? is it big or small?), then, Socrates explains, ‘the mind inevitably feels puzzled about what this sense means by hardness, since it’s saying that the same thing is soft as well’ (Plato, 1998: 523c). The mind is bewildered, because an object may simultaneously appear big and small; hard and soft, depending on the point of view and measure of comparison. A piece of wood may be hard compare to feathers, but not compared to iron. The Eiffel Tower looks small seen from the airplane passing over Paris, but enormous when you stand beneath it. Such experiences of contradictory sense impressions, according to Socrates, compel us to clarify the nature of hardness and largeness.

Although discovering the necessity of a confrontation with paradox to spark thinking in thought, Plato goes on to resolve the contradictory perceptions by divorcing the two opposing elements. Hence, Socrates claims that ‘in order to clarify the situation [of the contradictory sense-impressions], the intellect is forced in its turn to look at big and small as distinct entities, not mixed together, which is the opposite of what sight does’ (Plato, 1998: 524c). Formulating the two isolated questions ‘What is hardness?’ and ‘What is softness?’ without merging these two qualities, Plato establishes the distinction between *essence* and *appearance*. While appearances may be contradictory (the object is small and large), the *essence* is consistent (Smallness is nothing but small; Largeness is nothing but large). But for precisely this reason, Deleuze argues that

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Plato has failed to seize an opportunity to break with common sense, an opportunity that is inherent to paradoxical perceptions that perplex the mind. At this stage, Deleuze departs from Plato's Socratic method in order to discover an image of thought that tolerates the emergence of contradictory phenomena.

### **What is Creative Thinking?**

For Deleuze (1968/2001: 141), a contradictory perception is characterized by the 'coexistence of contraries', understood in the sense that a thing assumes two or more opposing qualities that occur simultaneously. Transgressing common sense begins when thought is confronted by a contradictory sense impression that cannot be adequately comprehended within the unity of the faculties. This experience is what Deleuze calls an *encounter*. An encounter is an event that takes place when thought is confronted by a phenomenon that due to its paradoxical nature arouses the experience of being astonished, surprised and amazed. Something 'in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter' (Deleuze, 1968/2001: 139). As we have seen, the logic of recognition presupposes that experience is homogeneous and permanent. In sharp contrast, the encounter reveals experience as heterogeneous and divergent (Zourabichvili, 1994/2012: 51) by allowing contradictory sense impression to manifest themselves.

The quest for encounters is vital for philosophy, because philosophy requires the confrontation with paradox in order to 'engender "thinking" in thought' (Deleuze, 1968/2001: 147). Instead of providing a coherent sense impression, the encounter sets up a problem that forces us to address the contradictory phenomena. In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze

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and Guattari explain that ‘concepts are only created as a function of problems’ (1991/1994: 16). While philosophical concepts must be ‘invented’ and ‘fabricated’, Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994: 5) argue that such acts of creation never take place in a vacuum or in isolation. Instead, philosophical concepts are only created in response to a problem uncovered by an encounter.

The encounter, according to Deleuze, is the ‘bearer of a problem’ (1968/2001: 140). The paradoxical phenomenon revealed by the encounter is intrinsically problematic because it confronts thought with a sensation that cannot be adequately comprehended within the unity of the faculties. Precisely because the encounter is imperceptible, it opens a window of opportunity for thinking differently. Since the encounter exposes a paradox, it enables the creation of concepts that operate in an equally contradictory fashion. Encountering paradox provides the basis for creating a thought that ‘groups under one concept things which you would have thought were very different, or it separates things you would have thought belonged together’ (Deleuze, 2001/2007: 214; cited in Spoelstra, 2007: 26). In effect, the encounter ‘forces thought to create’ (Sauvagnargues, 2005/2013: 13), because inventing ‘para-sensical’ concepts is the only way to conceive of the paradoxical phenomenon revealed by the encounter.

Therefore, philosophy must always seek inspiration from something located outside the realm of pure thought in order to create concepts that challenge common sense (Zourabichvili, 1994/2012). A problem forces thought to enter a new conceptual terrain that renders the unthinkable thinkable and the imperceptible perceptible. When thought is perplexed by paradox, philosophy helps crystalize the contradictory experience by creating an equally contradictory concept. However, the philosophical concept does not resolve the paradox by rearranging the apparent

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contradiction into a coherent conceptual form. Instead, philosophical concepts remain paradoxical because they connect phenomena that are conventionally considered incommensurable or reverse the normal way of thinking about a certain phenomenon.

All the same, paradoxical concepts always risk becoming absorbed by the register of common sense. One might speculate, as Boltanski and Chiapello (1999/2005) suggest, about the extent to which the common sense of contemporary capitalism has already appropriated Deleuze and Derrida's concepts. As Žižek remarks, the yuppie on the Parisian metro might well find inspiration in Deleuze and Guattari's call to 'reinvent oneself permanently, open oneself up to a multitude of desires that push us to the limit' (2004: 292). Similarly, the esteemed management guru Gary Hamel encourages managers to engage in a 'careful deconstruction of the conventions and dogma that constrain creative thinking' (2006: 76). In this way, concepts originally directed against capitalism have effectively been 'disarmed' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999/2005: 41) by a new spirit of capitalism, one that thrives on the critical theory developed in France in the 1960s.

At first glance, the apparent incorporation of philosophical concepts into the fabric of contemporary capitalism might seem to threaten the critical power of Deleuze's and Derrida's ideas. It might seem that those ideas have been ideologically neutralized by a new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999/2005: 41) that celebrates deconstruction and openness to a multitude of desires. But we should not forget that the essential lesson to be derived from Deleuze is that philosophy cannot take on a privileged position from which to dismiss common sense or reach a transcendental fixed point from which thought can reach a final truth. Philosophy cannot hide behind concepts that remain immune to appropriation by common sense; instead, philosophy constantly needs to



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forge 'new weapons' (Deleuze, 1992: 4) that enable it to challenge beliefs taken for granted and orthodox conceptions, and allow it to experiment with the prevalent modes of existence.

Deleuze and Guattari maintain that the destruction of the dogmatic image of thought does not make thinking easier, but actually renders thinking 'increasingly difficult' (1991/1994: 55). Part of this difficulty has to do with staying within the realm of immanence without recourse to transcendent principles. Another part of this difficulty is to make thought productive without relying upon transcendental principles that constitute a pre-established procedure to guide the activity of thinking. Yet, accomplishing this requires that thought constantly seeks encounters that compel us to think. If capitalism has entered into a new phase that celebrates creative the capacity of managers, calls for authentic leadership and hails the entrepreneur, then we need to seek encounters with these figures in order to experiment with their conceptual dynamics and conceive of them in new and different ways. Therefore, in what follows, we will look at the possibilities for staging encounters with these three emblematic figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and entrepreneur in order to develop a philosophical approach to understanding popular management literature.

### **False Paradoxes of Management**

Although it characterizes the nature of philosophical concepts, exploring paradoxes is far from exclusive to the realm of philosophy. Quite the opposite, it has frequently been noted that contemporary organizations and the practice of management are filled with paradoxes. For instance, Mintzberg contends that the practice of management is riddled with 'paradoxes, dilemmas, and mysteries that cannot be

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resolved' (2009: 16). A paradox, in this context, denotes the occurrence of 'contradictory yet interrelated elements' (Lewis, 2000: 760). There are two conditions that must be satisfied for a phenomenon to be paradoxical. First, the phenomenon must contain two or more elements that are contradictory in the sense of being mutually exclusive. Second, the mutually exclusive elements in the phenomenon must occur simultaneously (Quinn and Cameron, 1988). While the word of 'paradox' is widely used in organization and management studies, these two conditions are not always sufficiently satisfied.

For instance, it is often claimed that contemporary organizations have to simultaneously engage in rapid innovation (explore new possibilities) and be efficient (exploit old certainties) (March, 1991). However, exploration and exploitation, are often regarded as contradictory processes because they place conflicting demands upon the members of the firm: 'on the one hand, they are required to do things differently; on the other hand, they are required to do the same things better' (Chang and Birkett, 2004: 9). As a result, exploration and exploitation are claimed to constitute a 'paradox' (Lavie, Stettner, and Tushman, 2010: 126) because they are mutually exclusive elements that occurs simultaneously. But upon closer inspection, we can see that this is not necessarily the case.

The apparent paradox between exploration and exploitation can be resolved either by showing that it is possible to strike a balance between them in the sense of making a 'delicate trade-off' (Tschang, 2007: 1001) or that it is possible to overcome the conflict by synthesizing the contradictory elements into a productive symbiosis (Clegg, Cunha and Cunha, 2002). For instance, the organization can implement an 'ambidextrous' design in which 'separate divisions of the firm utilize different rules, norms, and incentives' (Fang, Lee and Schilling, 2009:

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626). Because the organization can separate the processes of exploration and exploitation onto different units, these two elements may not interconnect. If different divisions of the firm focus on exploration and exploitation, these elements do not occur simultaneously and thus they do not constitute a paradox. Instead, the apparently contradictory elements are kept separate from each other and are not paradoxical. So the contradiction between exploration and exploitation does not qualify as a paradox.

### **Encountering the Post-bureaucratic Organization**

In order to reveal the paradoxes in the post-bureaucratic image of thought, we need to stage encounters that allow us to philosophically explore the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. There are no a priori restrictions on what might potentially qualify as an encounter. Deleuze maintains that what ‘is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon’ (2001: 139). In his own thinking, Deleuze typically seeks encounters with movies (e.g. *Cinema I* and *Cinema II*), literature (e.g. Lewis Carroll and Marcel Proust) and art (e.g. Francis Bacon and Pablo Picasso), as well as other ‘authors whom almost no one has ever heard of (except for him)’ (Badiou, 1997/1999: 9). Perhaps the most important encounter for Deleuze was his collaboration with Guattari, a meeting that completely ‘revitalized Deleuze’ (Dosse, 2007/2010: 3). In short, encounters may take a variety of different shapes and forms. What is important is that the encounter reveals a paradox that forces us to challenge common sense and think differently.

In this thesis, I have staged encounters with three books, namely Gary Hamel’s popular management handbook *The Future of Management*, Bill George’s semi-autobiographic self-help tome

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*Authentic Leadership* and Richard Branson's autobiography *Losing My Virginity*. These are all books that you might pick up in the convenience store at any international airport, and they are in the class that Zizek would call 'airport pocketbooks' intended to help you become a better person.

In Chapter 3, I examine Gary Hamel's popular management handbook *The Future of Management* in order to stage an encounter with the figure of the creative manager. In *The Future of Management*, Hamel sets out to 'help you and your colleagues first imagine, and then invent, the future of management' (2007: 17). This future, Hamel continues, should afford 'radical alternatives to the way we lead, plan, organize, motivate, and manage right now' (2007: 17). So Hamel's handbook book portrays the figure of the creative manager who aims to invent new modes of organizing within the corporation.

In Chapter 4, I examine Bill George's semi-autobiographic self-help tome *Authentic Leadership* in order to stage an encounter with the figure of the authentic leader. On the one hand, George is a practitioner who has 'been a corporate executive for more than thirty years, the last ten as CEO of Medtronic' (2003: xvii), one of the world's leading developers of medical device technology. On the other hand, George currently holds a professorship at *Harvard Business School*. The book *Authentic Leadership* is written to 'convince current and future leaders that there is a better way to lead companies' (2003: xvii) by offering lessons derived from personal experience. As such, the book is an amalgam of an autobiographic testimonial to George's business career and a set of principles one should follow to become an authentic leader. George's answer to what makes a good leader is straightforward: 'After years of studying leaders and their traits, I believe that leadership begins and ends with authenticity. It's being yourself; being the person you were

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created to be' (2003: 11). Essentially, George's book conveys the figure of the authentic leader who is faithful to his or her self.

In Chapter 5, I examine Richard Branson's autobiography *Losing My Virginity* in order to stage an encounter with the figure of the entrepreneur. Branson is often considered as the epitome of the figure of the entrepreneur, having turned a marginal student magazine into a global enterprise. So reading his autobiography provides the basis for engaging with the figure of the entrepreneur, widely celebrated as the engine driving today's business economy. In the introduction to his autobiography *Losing My Virginity*, Branson remarks that many academics have tried to find the secret behind Virgin's success, but none of them have provided a satisfactory explanation. But Branson does not offer an answer and instead he notes, 'As for me, I just pick up the phone and get on with it' (1998/2009: 13). This sets the tone for the entire book which has little profound reflection and instead, presents various anecdotes from his life, telling the story of how he, as the blurb tells us, 'survived had fun and made a fortune doing business my way' (Branson, 1998/ 2009).

These three books that have been chosen are influential and enjoy a wide readership. For instance, Hamel's 'revolutionary rhetorics of management' have 'drastically changed', according to Clegg, 'contemporary organizations and the lives of many people in them' (2012: 64). *The Future of Management* was awarded the moniker of 'best business book' in 2007 by Amazon and garnered praise from *Business Week*, *The New York Times* and *Fortune Magazine*. Similarly, Branson's autobiography *Losing My Virginity* is an international bestseller. Branson, according to Smith and Andersen, 'needs no introduction, being known worldwide' (2004: 134). Bill George is the former CEO of Medtronics and currently a Harvard Business School professor who has

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contributed greatly to promote the concept of authentic leadership though his self-help tomes, such as *Authentic Leadership*, as well as his public appearances. In effect, the books that I engage with in this thesis may all be considered what Thrift calls ‘cultural circuits’ (2005: 6) that contributes to fuelling the ethos of contemporary capitalism.

At one level, I have chosen to engage with Gary Hamel’s popular management handbook *The Future of Management*, Bill George’s semi-autobiographic self-help tome *Authentic Leadership* and Richard Branson’s autobiography *Losing My Virginity*, because of their status and impact. But what defines ‘success or failure’ in philosophy, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994: 82), is not ‘truth’ in the sense of providing accurate representations of reality. Therefore, I neither ask whether these books provide an accurate representation of contemporary capitalism nor investigate their reception or the degree to which they have influenced their readers. Without a doubt, these questions would be relevant and interesting but they are not my principal concern here. Instead, as Deleuze and Guattari maintain, what matters in philosophy is whether or not one is able to say something ‘Interesting, Remarkable, or Important’ (1991/1994: 82). They go on to explain that if philosophical books lack importance, it is ‘because they do not create any concepts or contribute an image of thought or beget a persona worth the effort’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 82-83).

Philosophical thinking, according to Baudrillard, ‘is not as valuable for its inevitable resemblance to truth as for the immeasurable divergence that separates it from truth’ (1996/2005: 162). To think philosophically is not to provide accurate representations of reality. Instead, philosophy means to experiment with different modes of experiencing the world. In this way, philosophical thinking becomes what Alliez characterizes as a conjunction of ‘radical experimentation and

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experience' (1993/2004: 29-30). According to Deleuze, experience is not the product of a passive registration of sense data. Rather, experience demands an active engagement with our surroundings and the objects that we encounter in the world. To experience the world means to experiment with what we are capable of thinking about the world given our mode of existence. Rather than offering access to a pre-existent truth that lies behind our innate sensations, philosophy provides an opportunity to imagine different modalities of being by transgressing our common sense convictions. The method of philosophy is 'not discovery but experimentation' (Spoelstra, 2007: 25).

At the philosophical level, I have chosen to engage with Gary Hamel's popular management handbook *The Future of Management*, Bill George's semi-autobiographic self-help tome *Authentic Leadership* and Richard Branson's autobiography *Losing My Virginity* in order to construct conceptual personas to challenge the common sense conception of the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. If we want to use these books as encounters, however, we need to pay close attention to the ways that these books confront paradox. The crucial question to ask is to what extent these books are bearers of problems that produce 'contradictory sense-impressions' (Plato, 1998: 523c), thus compelling us to enter new conceptual terrain. In slightly different terms, the challenge is to be sensitive to the occurrence of paradoxes in these books that allow us to challenge common sense convictions. On the surface, these books may well appear ill suited for such a task, since they are mundane, trivial and ordinary. Yet, we should recall that it is the occurrence of the unexpected within the expected or the unusual within the ordinary that can stimulate philosophical speculation and 'engender "thinking" in thought' (Deleuze, 1968/2001: 147).

## Enacting Paradoxical Concepts

Before proceeding, a few remarks are necessary about the nature of creating concepts. Stressing its ability to create concepts, Deleuze and Guattari assign a major responsibility to philosophy for being able to invent events that facilitate alternative modes of existence (1991/1994: 28). However, the aim of this thesis is not to produce ground-breaking concepts that revolutionize our way of thinking. If the merit of philosophy were judged by its ability to create new paradigmatic concepts such as Descartes's notion of *cogito* or Plato's concept of *Idea*, this thesis would obviously fall short. Yet, even though Deleuze and Guattari stress philosophy's function to create new concepts, their own concepts often originate from other thinkers or other disciplines. Deleuze's concept of *multiplicity*, for instance, stems from Riemann's differential mathematics while his concept of *simulacrum* emerges from of his reading of Plato.

Instead of trying to invent totally new concepts, I will make use of three philosophical concepts developed by others. These are Derrida's concept of the *pharmakon*, Deleuze's concept of the *simulacrum* and Zizek's concept of *fantasy*. These concepts all have a history that extends beyond Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek. Although they are different concepts developed in response to different problems, I will show that they share a common feature of being paradoxical in the sense of going beyond common sense. Deleuze develops a paradoxical understanding of the concept of *simulacrum* in order to challenge the Platonic duality between true and false claimants. Rather than a false pretender, the simulacrum, following Deleuze's reversed Platonism, is a system of *internalized difference* that must be evaluated on its own merits.



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For Derrida, however, *pharmakon* should perhaps more accurately be described as a ‘quasi-concept’, since the very idea of the ‘concept’ itself suggests a binary opposition between *concept* and *experience*. But from Deleuze’s viewpoint, *pharmakon* is a philosophical concept because it attempts to break with common sense. At the level of common sense understanding, experience is organized into binary oppositions. These binary oppositions, in turn, confine experience to a set of predetermined categories. Based upon his reading of Plato, Derrida develops the parasensical concept of the *pharmakon* to destabilize such foreclosing structures by inventing a concept that denotes something that is simultaneously a ‘poison’ and a ‘cure’, overthrowing the common sense distinction between these two qualities. Derrida’s concept of the *pharmakon* throws together ‘poison’ and ‘remedy’, which are commonly considered opposing elements.

The paradoxical nature of *fantasy*, according to Žižek, has two sides. For one thing, Žižek’s (1989/2008) concept of *fantasy* challenges the conventional distinction between fantasy and reality. At the level of common sense, fantasy is often opposed to reality. While reality denotes the actual state of affairs, fantasy refers to a fictional realm that is detached from the factual ground of our existence. To counter this common sense view, Žižek argues that ‘fantasy is on the side of reality’ (1989/2008: 44). For Žižek, fantasy is not opposed to reality, but is instead the ‘support that gives consistency to what we call “reality”.’ (1989/2008: 44).

In addition, Žižek’s concept of *fantasy* challenges the conventional distinction between fantasy and desire. From a common sense perspective, a fantasy is an imagined scenario in which we attain the things we desire that are unattainable in real life. For example, I want to be a famous entrepreneur but I am unable to do so in my actual life, so

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therefore I dream of enjoying a life of luxury and fame. For Žižek, however, fantasy has precisely the opposite function. Rather than realizing desire, fantasy ‘constitutes our desire, provides its co-ordinates – it literally *teaches us how to desire*’ (Žižek, 2014: 14, original italics). Thus, we can see that it is fantasy that first creates the desire to become a famous entrepreneur who enjoys a life of luxury and fame.

For Deleuze, concepts are not transhistorical categories to be applied to concrete observations, but rather concrete singularities that have to be continuously reinvented into new contexts (Gane, 2009). As Gane (2009) points out, Deleuze offers a ‘new empiricism’ that circumvents the traditional distinction between purely experiential and conceptual knowledge. For Deleuze, experience is always conceptually constituted (Linstead and Thanem, 2007). But for precisely this reason, creating new concepts may allow the emergence of new modes of experience. Deleuze’s philosophy may be characterized as an *empiricism of the concept* that pays active attention to the nature of concepts in order to experiment with different ways of experiencing the world. As Massumi explains, for Deleuze and Guattari, concepts are ‘neither descriptive nor prescriptive’ (2010: 3) but instead, constructive and performative, because they intervene in our habitual way of reasoning. While remaining sensitive to the particular contexts in which the concepts of *simulacrum*, *pharmakon* and *fantasy* were created by Derrida, Deleuze and Žižek, I carefully import these concepts to the context of post-bureaucratic management thinking as a way to engage with the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur.

Echoing Nietzsche, Deleuze (1968/2011: xv) compares a concept to an arrow that is picked up from past thinkers, trimmed on our bows to be shot in a new direction. This is what I want to do with the concepts of *simulacrum*, *pharmakon* and *fantasy*, even if, as Deleuze remarks, ‘the

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distance covered is not astronomical but relatively small' (1968/2001: xv). Borrowing from Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek, I will mobilize the concepts of *simulacrum*, *pharmakon* and *fantasy* in order to engage with the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. I will attempt to show how the concepts of *pharmakon*, *simulacrum* and *fantasy* allow us to move beyond a common sense conception of the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur to experiment with alternative ways of conceptualizing them. In this way, the concepts of *pharmakon*, *simulacrum* and *fantasy* will allow us to crystalize and expose the paradoxes that we encounter in Hamel's popular management handbook *The Future of Management*, George's semi-autobiographic self-help tome *Authentic Leadership* and Branson's autobiography *Losing My Virginity*.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The table below summarizes this thesis. Using Derrida's concept of the *pharmakon*, Deleuze's concept of the *simulacrum* and Zizek's concept of *fantasy* as a method of examining Hamel popular management handbook *The Future of Management*, George's semi-autobiographic self-help tome *Authentic Leadership* and Branson's autobiography *Losing My Virginity*, this thesis opens up a philosophical critique of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. The next part of the thesis deals with the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur in three separate chapters.

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**Figure 1.1: The Post-bureaucratic Image of Thought**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Management Innovation</b>	<b>Authentic Leadership</b>	<b>Entrepreneurship</b>
<b>Psychosocial types</b>	The creative manager	The authentic leader	The entrepreneur
<b>Encounters</b>	Gary Hamel	Bill George	Richard Branson
<b>Problems</b>	What is inventive management?	What is the difference between authentic and inauthentic leaders?	Who is an entrepreneur?
<b>Logics</b>	Transgression	Authenticity	Transgression and authenticity
<b>Philosophical concepts</b>	Pharmakon (Derrida)	Simulacrum (Deleuze)	Fantasy (Zizek)

The encounters with Hamel’s popular management handbook *The Future of Management*, George’s semi-autobiographic self-help tome *Authentic Leadership* and Branson’s autobiography *Losing My Virginity* will not be pursued in isolation. Instead, they will be connected to wider critical discourses taking place in ‘critical management studies’ (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992), ‘critical leadership studies’ (Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007) and ‘critical entrepreneurship studies’ (Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers and Gartner, 2012). Previous critiques of post-bureaucratic management will therefore serve as a backdrop for exploring the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. Viewed separately, these three chapters seek to make distinct contributions to three independent yet closely connected fields. Seen more broadly, this thesis is an attempt to develop a philosophical approach that can help us to grasp the paradoxes inherent in the post-bureaucratic image of thought.

# Part II

# Chapter 3:

## The Creative Manager

*Management will remain a basic and dominant institution perhaps as long as Western Civilization itself survives.*

- Drucker (1954/2010: 2)

*Here's a thought. Maybe we need 'managers' because we have 'employees'.*

- Hamel (2007: 139)

### Introduction

As we have seen, there is a wide-spread assumption in popular management literature that innovation is indispensable for a company to thrive in the turbulent and hypercompetitive global economy and will prove to be even more essential in the future (Thrift, 2000). As a means of achieving innovation, popular handbooks written by management gurus offer tools, lessons and prescriptions that they claim will turn the organization into a creative cluster. The success of management gurus is often explained with reference to their ability to fulfil 'the need for managers to find relatively quick and simple solutions to their organizations' complex problems' (Jackson, 1996: 572).

Management gurus have been compared to 'witchdoctors' due to their promises to cure the ailments of organizations (Clark and Salaman, 1996). However, critics have charged that the writings of management

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gurus are full of 'clichés' (Harney, 2005), 'kitsch' (Linstead, 2002) and 'catchphrases' (Jackson, 2001). But even if this is true, we should not forget that management gurus have significant influence on management practices (Clark and Salaman, 1998; Huczynski, 1993; Jackson, 2001). Therefore, Costea, Crump and Amiridis (2008), Thrift (2000) and Parker (2002a) have called for serious engagement with guru literature, reading popular management handbooks as a symptom of the development of capitalism.

With the intention of undertaking a serious engagement with contemporary guru literature, this chapter diagnoses but also challenges the prevalent assumption in popular management handbooks that it is possible to produce a manual for reinventing management. To do so, this chapter addresses the problem of reinventing management by offering a deconstructive reading of Hamel's (2007) popular management handbook *The Future of Management*. Confronted with the task of organizing innovation, Hamel follows the tradition of management gurus who have called for a reinvention of the practice of management in order mobilize and energize the creative potential of the employees. Since the 1980s, Peters has called for a 'management revolution' (1988) and Hamel (2002) has likewise encouraged managers of the post-bureaucratic organization to become 'corporate rebels' and take charge of 'leading the revolution' (Sheard, 2007).

Marked by their strong scepticism towards bureaucracy (du Gay, 2000) and scientific management (Parker, 2002a), post-bureaucratic management gurus propose that future managers should strive to evoke employees' imaginative and creative abilities in the search for innovation (Thrift, 2000). Rather than taking a rational approach to productivity, managers of the post-bureaucratic organization must, in the words of Costea, Crump and Amiridis, enter into a 'Dionysian mode' that involves

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a constant strive towards innovation, play and creativity (2005: 141). They elaborate that:

It seems that, after a hundred years of apparently very rational, 'Apollonian' approaches to efficiency and productivity, management itself has entered into a kind of 'Dionysian' mode, a spirit of playful transgression and destruction of boundaries, a new bond between economic grammars of production and consumption, and cultural grammars of the modern self. (Costea et al., 2005: 141)

This progressive development towards a 'Dionysian mode' of management, which involves a continuous invention of new organizational realities, according to Costea, Crump and Amiridis, is reflected in the rhetorics of popular management literature. Following Costea, Crump and Amiridis, such literature conveys the figure of the creative manager, sharing characteristics with the ancient Greek god Dionysus who was renowned for his rebellious, chaotic, transgressive and startling behaviour. While Costea, Crump and Amiridis concentrate on literature discussing the relationship between play and work in order to map the trend towards a Dionysian mode of management, I will in this chapter look at the figure of the creative manager by reading of Hamel's (2007) popular management handbook *The Future of Management*.

Unlike previous readings of popular management literature, I will focus neither on the rhetorical style (Jackson, 1996) nor on how the ideas of management gurus are adopted in practice (Huczynski, 1993). Instead, to borrow the words of Derrida (1972/1981: 6), I will 'operate within the immanence' of Hamel's management thinking. This means that I will not criticize Hamel on the basis of what he excludes, ignores or overlooks. Quite the opposite, I will, once again following Derrida (1987/1989: 99), inquire into the 'internal logic' of the 'discourse' that



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Hamel (2007) represents. Informed by Derrida's (1972/1981) reflection on the dual meaning of the term *pharmakon*, a word that means both 'remedy' and 'poison', I will show how Hamel's attempt to reinvent the practice of management confronts a fundamental *aporia* in the sense of a 'self-engendered paradox' (Norris, 2002: 49).

While Hamel wants to revolutionize the practice of management, the cure that he prescribes simultaneously takes on the character of what he identifies as a poison. Even in his attempt to differentiate those principles of management that will spark innovation from those that will impede employee's creative potential, Hamel paradoxically reproduces the very managerial logic that he opposes. As a result, the concept of management ultimately ends up in a state of *aporia*, a place where it is unclear when management is a poison for innovation and when it is a cure against the organizational structures that traditionally has obstructed innovation.

In this respect, the concept of the *pharmakon*, as developed by Derrida (1972/1981) in his reading of Plato, is informative for engaging with Hamel's account of the future of management, because it captures the paradoxical logic that we encounter his conception of management innovation. Although Hamel is only a particular instance of what has been presented as a wider cultural development in post-bureaucratic management thinking (Maravelias, 2003), the discussion of Hamel has implications for the overall project of reinventing the practice of management. I will argue that the reading of Hamel (2007) discloses a paradox underlying what Costea, Crump and Amiridis (2008: 663; 2005: 148) have identified as the prevailing model of transgression in contemporary post-bureaucratic management thinking.

Hamel's concept of management innovation strives to capture the process of reinventing management. However, in order for a

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management invention to be genuinely novel and unique, it has to transgress management conventions of the present. Yet, the concept of management innovation ironically reduces the process of inventing novel management practices to a structured sequential procedure. In this way, the concept of management innovation operates as a foreclosing structure that arrests, confines and standardizes the production of novelty. In effect, the chapter concludes that the conceptual structure of management innovation must necessarily be transgressed in order to release novelty.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I will review Derrida's reflection on the dual meaning of term *pharmakon* in Plato's philosophy, as signifying both 'remedy' and 'poison'. Second, I will engage with the writings of Hamel, who has recently called for managers to fundamentally alter their own practice. While Plato is concerned with the nature of writing and Hamel is concerned with the nature of management, I will show how the concept of *pharmakon* can be instructive for understanding the paradoxical logic inherent in Hamel's account of management innovation. Just as Plato's philosophy leaves it ambiguous when writing is a poison and when it is a cure, so too it is indeterminate when management is a 'toxin' and when it is a 'cure' against the organizational structures that traditionally has obstructed innovation. Finally, I link the deconstructive reading of Hamel with what has been identified as a broader development in managerial discourse over the past decades. I will show how the paradox underlying Hamel's conception of management innovation provides the basis for constructing a conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager.

## **Derrida in Organization Studies**

Within organization studies in general and CMS in particular, Derrida is known for having developed *deconstruction*. Deconstruction has been used to analyse a range of organizational phenomena, including organization/disorganization (Cooper, 1986), Total Quality Management (Xu, 1999), business ethics (Jones, 2003a) and accounting (McKernan and Kosmala, 2007). Deconstruction is often described as a critical method (Hassard, 1994) that intends to expose indeterminacy between the binary oppositions (Boje, 1995; Cooper and Burrell, 1988; Feldman, 1998). As Derrida-inspired scholars have argued, management and organization studies is riddled with loaded binary oppositions, such as organization/disorganization (Cooper, 1986), wisdom/foolishness (Izak, 2013), agency/structure (Knights, 1997), West/East (Frenkel and Shenhav, 2006), masculine/feminine (Martin, 1990), opportunity/threat (Calori, 1998), decision/action (Chia, 1994) and centralization/decentralization (Cummings, 1995). Echoing Derrida, critical scholars have showed how the binary oppositions dominating management and organization studies are inherently ambiguous and indeterminate.

Jones (2003b) warns against reducing deconstruction to an analytic method because such reductive thinking fails to take into account the specific context in which Derrida develops his philosophy. Along similar lines, Kilduff maintains that deconstruction ‘cannot be summarized as a mechanical series of operations to be applied to any piece of language’ (1993: 16). In order to avoid this mistake, I will not conceptualize deconstruction as a universal method. On the contrary, I will undertake a local reading of Derrida, drawing attention to his reading of Plato in the collection of essays *Dissemination*. This book belongs to what Rorty

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identifies as Derrida's early and 'strictly philosophical' period (1996: 17). The reason for choosing *Dissemination* as the point of departure for discussing deconstruction is not only its rich illustration of Derrida's philosophy, but also its usefulness, as I will later show, for reading popular management literature. It is important to highlight, however, that it is no coincidence that Derrida engages in a deconstructive reading of Plato's philosophy. European intellectual history has often been described as a 'series of footnotes to Plato' (Whitehead, 1929/1979: 39) and the influence of Plato on Western thought is undeniable. What is at stake, therefore, in Derrida's reading of Plato is not so much a particular thinker, but rather the very basis of Western metaphysical thinking.

### **Derrida's Deconstruction of Plato**

Although citing several of Plato's works, Derrida's (1972/1981) discussion mainly centres on the dialogue *Phaedrus*, a conversation between Phaedrus and Socrates about the nature of love. The dialogue begins with Phaedrus reading a written speech by Lysias to Socrates. The transcribed speech contends that it is better to give favours to a non-lover than a lover (Plato, 1997b: 231). Socrates, however, is not convinced by the argument, noting that the speech contains various repetitions. Phaedrus therefore challenges Socrates to provide an alternative account of love. At first, Socrates is reluctant to grant Phaedrus' wish. But eventually, Socrates is persuaded to present his notion of love after Phaedrus has threatened to never speak with him again.

Socrates then tells a story conveying the message that a relationship without love is better than a relationship of love. However, Socrates immediately regrets making these comments, claiming that he was being 'foolish, and close to being impious' (Plato, 1997b: 243d). This is the case

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because love is in reality a 'divine' force, according to Socrates, and his negative portrayal has therefore been an 'offence against Love' (Plato, 1997b: 242d). Yet, Socrates insists that Phaedrus had tricked him into presenting the false story. The dishonest speech, Socrates complains, was something that 'you [Phaedrus] charmed me through your potion into delivering myself' (Plato, 1997b: 242e). Lysias' transcribed speech that Phaedrus read to Socrates, as Derrida remarks, is a *pharmakon*, a word that 'acts as both remedy and poison' (1972/1981: 70).

Despite the conviction that Phaedrus' written speech has poisoned him into conveying a false account of love, Socrates does not consider writing unconditionally harmful. On the contrary, he maintains that it is 'not speaking or writing well that's shameful; what's really shameful is to engage in either of them shamefully or badly' (Plato, 1997b: 258d). Socrates insists that there is a profound difference between good and bad writing. The problem confronting Socrates, however, is to distinguish between these two categories, namely between good and bad writing. In order to solve this problem, Derrida (1972/1981: 85) argues that Plato establishes a set of 'clear cut' distinctions between binary oppositions, such as good/evil, true/false and essence/appearance.

While good writing reports the true essence of things, according to Plato, bad writing seduces the reader by presenting a false appearance of things. For instance, Socrates remarks that no 'one in a lawcourt, you see, cares at all about the truth of such matters. They only care about what is convincing' (Plato, 1997b: 272d). In sharp contrast, good writing, Socrates maintains, requires knowledge of the subject of discourse. As Derrida remarks, good writing is 'the divine inscription in the heart of the soul' (1967/1998: 17). Thus, good writing presupposes that 'you must know the truth concerning everything you are speaking or writing about; you must learn how to define each thing in itself; and, having defined it,

you must know how to divide it into kinds until you reach something indivisible' (Plato, 1997b: 277b). In other words, good writing reports the essence of things.

### **The Ambivalence of Pharmakon**

The Platonic distinction between good and bad writing, according to Derrida, has dominated 'all of Western philosophy' (1972/1981: 149). But through a brilliant and sensitive reading, Derrida deconstructs the metaphors and rhetorical strategies that Plato employs to separate good from bad writing. Despite his resolute attempt to keep good and bad writing apart, Derrida demonstrates the persistence of a fundamental ambiguity at the heart of Plato's system (Cooper, 1986). This ambiguity is expressed through the dual meaning of the term *pharmakon*. In order to explain the nature of good writing, Socrates recounts the myth of Theuth, who originally invented the art of writing. Asked about the purpose of writing, Theuth explains that 'my invention is a recipe (*pharmakon*) for both memory and wisdom' (cited in Derrida, 1972/1981: 75).

In the English translation of *Phaedrus* by Nehamas and Woodruff the ancient Greek term *pharmakon* is rendered in this passage as 'potion' (Plato, 1997b: 274e), a word that can mean a liquid medicine or poison. Consistent with the interpretation of *pharmakon* as a poison, writing is perceived of as a toxin to wisdom and memory. As King Thamus says to Theuth: Instead of using one's natural memory, people will rely upon written text to recollect knowledge and henceforth writing will 'introduce forgetfulness into the soul' (Plato, 1997b: 257a). While one might be content with this interpretation, Derrida insists that considerable confusion remains about how to understand this passage. This is the case because *pharmakon* could equally well be conceived of as meaning

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‘remedy’, which, in turn, would give the text a totally different meaning (Derrida, 1972/1981: 97). If *pharmakon* is interpreted as remedy, then writing would be conceived of as a facilitator of memory and wisdom. As Theuth says, writing will ‘improve’ one’s memory (Plato, 1997b: 274e), because it can help you to store knowledge.

The ambiguity of the *pharmakon*, according to Derrida, is not due to incorrect translation. Rather, Derrida argues that the dual meaning of *pharmakon* as simultaneously ‘remedy’ and ‘poison’, is deeply embedded in Plato’s dialogue. As a result, Derrida says that ‘the translation by “remedy” can thus neither be accepted nor simply rejected’ (1972/1981: 99). The *pharmakon* is what we may term an oversaturated signifier, because it lacks any rigid definition that would prevent it from being interpreted as both remedy and poison. “The “essence” of the *pharmakon*’, Derrida explains, ‘lies in the way in which, having no stable essence, no “proper” characteristics, it is not, in any sense (metaphysical, physical, chemical, alchemical) of the word, a *substance*’ (1972/1981: 125-6, original italics). Instead, *pharmakon* is a ‘mixed blessing/curse’ (Linstead, 2003: 371). For this reason, *pharmakon* is perhaps best classified as a ‘quasi-concept’, since it challenges the conventional way of conceiving a concept as an coherent and stable signifier.

Plato’s account of writing is therefore dominated by an ‘aporia’ that is expressed through the dual meaning of *pharmakon* (Derrida, 1972/1981: 118). On the one hand, writing is a *remedy* that will improve one’s recollection of knowledge, because one can more accurately recall information compared to using one’s memory. On the other hand, writing is the *poison* that will make one oblivious, because one fails to maintain one’s natural faculty of memory. Ultimately, Plato has failed to achieve his objective to ensure that true and false writing are strictly

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distinguishable, because of a persistent ambiguity whether writing is a poison or remedy (Cooper, 1986).

Derrida's (1972/1981) deconstruction of Plato is a paradigmatic example of how Western metaphysics is forced into paradoxes by arresting experience within binary oppositions. The binary oppositions dominating Western metaphysics, such as the one between good and bad writing, confines experience to a set of predetermined categories (Cooper, 1989). By doing so, these restraining boundaries exclude alternative ways of perceiving the world (Norris, 2002). Deconstruction, therefore, seek to 'destabiliz[e] foreclosureary structures' (Derrida, 1987/2007a: 45) of Western metaphysics in order to release the possibility of new modes of experience (Rasche, 2011).

Through exposing the dual meaning of the *pharmakon*, Derrida manages to subvert the Platonic distinction between good and bad writing. Consequently, Derrida is able to open up a space of reflection wherein we realizes the contingencies of conceptual structures but also appreciate the opportunities laid down by deconstruction (Patton, 2003). While Derrida is concerned with the experience of writing, this chapter adopts his analytic approach towards contemporary management literature (Rasche, 2011). Having indicated the ambivalence of the term *pharmakon*, I will therefore now turn to post-bureaucratic management thinking and engage with Hamel's popular management handbook *The Future of Management*.

### **Deconstructing Management Innovation**

Hamel was ranked #15 in *Harvard Business Review's* list of the world's most influential management gurus in 2011 and *Fortune* magazine calls Hamel 'the world's leading expert on business strategy'.



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As he contributes to the academic literature, engages in consultancy and writes management handbooks, Hamel may be categorized, according to Huczynski's (1993) taxonomy, as both an 'academic guru' and 'consultant guru'. Hamel gained immense recognition for having formulated the theory of 'core competencies' in the early 1990s together with Prahalad. In recent years, Hamel, alongside Birkinshaw and Mol, has promoted the concept of 'management innovation' (see Birkinshaw, 2012; Birkinshaw et al., 2008; Birkinshaw and Mol, 2007). The deconstructive reading of Hamel will focus primarily on the book *The Future of Management*, written with Breen in 2007. This book has been chosen, because it explicitly focuses on the problem of reinventing management. The analysis will be supplemented by examples from other articles and books that Hamel has written and co-authored. The analysis also draws upon texts by other scholars in order to show how Hamel's thinking is embedded within a wider post-bureaucratic discourse.

While there have been previous attempts to use a deconstructive approach to read influential works in organization studies (e.g. Kilduff, 1993; Mumby and Putnam, 1992), one confront a peculiar enigma in attempting to deconstruct Hamel. As we have already seen, Boltanski and Chiapello indicate at a more general level that 'the new spirit of capitalism incorporated much of the artistic critique that flourished at the end of the 1960s' (1999/2005: 419). Although not citing Derrida directly, Hamel would appear to have appropriated many of Derrida's ideas. Tellingly, Hamel encourages managers to 'systematically deconstruct the existing set of beliefs' in order to pave the way for new business concepts (2007: 140).

Obviously, Hamel (2007) and Derrida (1972/1981) do not hold identical views on deconstruction. For Hamel's part, deconstruction presumably involves unravelling the underlying assumptions of

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contemporary management. For Derrida's part, as we have seen, deconstruction is 'a praxis of reading' (Critchley, 2005: 554). However, it is not my intention to position myself in opposition to Hamel's concept of management innovation by creating an intellectual distance between his book and Derrida's philosophy. As Derrida highlights, a deconstructive reading should not take as its point of departure an external perspective, but rather, as I have argued, 'operate within the immanence of the system to be destroyed' (1972/1981: 6). Just as Derrida 'does not question one kind of philosophy from the standpoint of another' (Newman, 2001: 2), one cannot question Hamel's management thinking from the standpoint of Derrida's philosophy. Instead of using Derrida as an intellectual counter-point, it is necessary to engage with Hamel by paying close attention to the problem that he strives to solve, the procedure that he employs and the conclusions that he draws.

### **Management Innovation**

The basic premise of Hamel's narrative on management is that firms must make radical innovation the core competence of the organization in order to remain competitive (2002: 14). Improving existing modes of production and perfecting current products and services is not sufficient for long term commercial success. In addition, organizations must be 'capable of self-renewal' and 'capable of continually reinventing themselves and the industry in which they compete' (Hamel, 2002: 12). Incremental improvements must be replaced by ground-breaking innovation. Radical innovation, according to Hamel, is characterized by the fact that it upends 'some industry convention, significantly changes consumer expectation in a net-positive way, drastically alters the pricing or cost structure of the industry or changes the basis for competitive

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advantage within the industry' (2002: 18). In other words, radical innovation fundamentally changes the basis for competition in a given industry. While a distinction is often made between innovation and creativity, it is worth emphasizing that Hamel, similar to many other writers, often uses the two terms interchangeably (see Spoelstra, 2010).

According to Hamel (2002; 2007), the problem is that most organizations today are not designed for innovation (see also Kanter, 1983; Peters, 1988). Therefore, we urgently need new modes of management, Hamel maintains, ones that are capable of sparking innovation. Hamel's book *The Future of Management* is written to inspire and assists companies to invent new modes of management. Thus, Hamel wants to 'give you the thinking tools that will allow you to build your *own* agenda for management innovation' (2007: xi, original italics). To do so, Hamel presents a 'formula for management innovation: commit to bold goals; deconstruct your orthodoxies; embrace powerful new principles; and learn from the positive deviants' (2007: 243). Yet, many of Hamel's concrete proposals for making an organization innovative have been circulating in the popular management literature for decades.

Alongside Peters (1988) and Kanter (1988), Hamel shares a suspicion towards bureaucracy and hierarchy, which he believes restrict the creative expressions of employees. Just like Peters (1988), Hamel maintains that the organization should be radically decentralized and structured into 'autonomous teams' (2007: 104). The organization should subscribe to what Adler calls 'market rationalism' (2001), in which the organization becomes an internal market wherein the teams compete for the most promising creative initiative. And just like Kanter (1988), Hamel believes that managers should make room for the creative expressions of the employees in order to facilitate innovation. Taking

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these precedents into consideration, one might question the innovativeness of Hamel's management thinking (Grant, 2008). As we can see, Hamel synthesizes many of the ideas that have been promoted by management gurus since the 1980s.

If there is anything new to be extracted from Hamel's management thinking, then it is his explicit focus on the necessity of innovating management itself in order to create an innovative organization. Hamel believes that this can be achieved through *management innovation*, which he defines as 'anything that substantially alters the way in which the work of management is carried out' (2007: 19). Hamel argues that the essential ingredient for achieving innovation is reinventing the practice of management. While Hamel is convinced that management can spark innovation, management is nevertheless the reason why current organizations fail to innovate. Hamel blames management for the fact that many contemporary organizations do not excel at innovation. To confront this challenge, management must therefore reconfigure itself into a remedy for the very defects that it has traditionally produced. Or to put it in slightly different manners, management must discover a cure for the very diseases that it has inflicted on contemporary organizations. Hamel explains:

To cure a crippling disease, drug researchers have to uncover the genetic flow or disease mechanisms that cause the malady. The same is true for organizational "diseases" – the incapacities that stems from our inherent management beliefs. Here, too, a painstaking analysis of first causes is essential to inventing a cure. (Hamel, 2007: 245)

Notice the way that Hamel portrays 'inherent management beliefs' as a 'disease' and 'malady' that urgently needs a 'cure'. Elsewhere in the book, Hamel describes traditional management principles as a 'toxin'

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that prevents the members of the organization from releasing their creative potentials (2007: 152). To unfold Hamel's pharmaceutical metaphors, we might say that management is a poison that pollutes the creative climate of the organization. Suspicion towards unconventional views, inability to exploit employee's imagination and top-down management are part of the 'pathologies that prevent companies from being adaptable, innovative, and high engaging' (Hamel, 2007: 189). At the same time, management is the antidote, capable of therapeutically healing the maladies that obstruct innovation.

Now, let us recall how Derrida demonstrated that writing, in Plato's account, is both a 'poison' (*pharmakon*) that impedes one's memory and a 'remedy' (*pharmakon*) that improves one's memory. While writing can make one oblivious and ignorant, it also has the advantage of accurately recollecting knowledge. In a similar vein, Hamel argues that management is simultaneously the 'toxin' that impedes innovation in the organization and the 'cure' against those very organizational structures. While management can constrain creative thinking and henceforth obstruct innovation, it also has the potential to become an accelerator of innovation by providing conditions under which novel ideas can flourish.

As we can see Hamel ascribes a curious double function to the concept of management. On the one hand, Hamel argues that management orthodoxies are poisonous for organisations because they 'constrain creative thinking' (2007: 125). Such a view is not exclusive to Hamel. As Amabile also argues, the prevailing management imperative of 'coordination, productivity, and control' can effectively serve to 'kill creativity' (Amabile, 1998: 77). On the other hand, Hamel argues that the most effective remedy to counter traditional principles of management is to engage in 'management innovation', which means 'you need to systematically deconstruct the management orthodoxies that binds you

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and your colleagues to new possibilities' (2007: 131). As Peters also argues, managers should be 'seeking out and battering down the very functional barriers that [managers] were formally paid to protect' (1988: 368).

In Hamel's words, what is required for making innovation the core competence of the firm is a 'management revolution' that engenders 'radical alternatives to the way we lead, plan, organize, motivate, and manage right now' (2007: 15-17). However, the challenge confronting Hamel (2007) is to formulate a clear-cut distinction between those principles of management that facilitate innovation and those that impedes creative processes. How does Hamel separate the managerial principles that support innovation from those that impede innovation?

### **The Shadow of F. W. Taylor**

As Parker notes, contemporary management discourse is 'a continual attempt to debate with the straw ghosts of Weber and the equally influential "scientific management" of F. W. Taylor and others' (2002a: 21). Hamel is no exception. In order to separate the principles of management that work as a 'cure' from those that work as a 'toxin' for innovation, Hamel introduces the distinction between the 'industrial-age management model' and 'the future of management' (2007: 7). Hamel associates the former with the theories of Taylor and Weber. He identifies the latter with a utopian 'dream' of organizations 'where an electronic current of innovation pulses through every activity' (2007: xi). But regrettably for Hamel, his vision has failed to materialize until now. And Hamel believes that the reason for this failure is obvious.

While the global competitive landscape has changed drastically during the course of the last century, it is evident, according to Hamel,

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that a 'great many of today's management rituals little changed from those that governed corporate life a generation or two ago' (2007: 4). As Hamel sees it, management is still caught in the paradigm of efficiency and almost 'everything we know about organizing, managing and competing comes from an age in which diligence, efficiency, exactitude, quality and control were the complete secrets to success' (2002: 24). But yesterday's secret to success has become today's chronic malady in organizations. In a previous book called *Leading the Revolution* Hamel elaborates this view:

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Frederick Winslow Taylor was the world's best-known management guru... Nearly everything we know about organizing, managing and competing comes from an age in which diligence, efficiency, exactitude, quality and control were the complete secrets to success. The management disciplines we inherited from the industrial age are the unquestioning servants of optimization. These disciplines are the product of a world where industry boundaries were inviolable, where customers were supplicants and where business models were assumed to be nearly eternal. That world may be long dead, yet optimization still regularly trumps innovation. (Hamel, 2002: 24-25)

Hamel (2007) put the blame on traditional modes of management, tied to the legacy of Taylor's system of scientific management, for causing many of the problems confronting contemporary organizations, in particular their inability to foster innovation (for discussion, see Thrift 2000). As we have seen, Hamel characterises traditional managerial technologies as 'pathologies that prevent companies from being adaptable, innovative, and high engaging' (2007, 189), because they prevent their employees from unfolding their natural creative abilities, being in close contact with consumers and realize themselves in the workplace.

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Contrary to what one might expect, however, Hamel's conception of management innovation does not exclude Taylor's model of scientific management. Quite the opposite, following the definition of management innovation as ideas that profoundly transform the practice of management, Taylor must indeed be considered the history's greatest management innovator (Hamel, 2006). Although this may be the case, Hamel still insists that it is specifically the fundamental principles of scientific management that are 'the genetic flow or disease mechanisms that cause the malady' in contemporary organizations (2007: 245). To illustrate the logic of Hamel's management thinking, we might consider Taylor's idea of the task described in his seminal book *The Principles of Scientific Management*. Here Taylor writes:

Perhaps the most prominent single element in modern scientific management is the task idea. The work of every workman is fully planned out by the management at least one day in advance, and each man receives in most cases complete written instructions, describing in detail the task which he is to accomplish, as well as the means to be used in doing the work. (Taylor, 1911/2003: 138)

The function of the manager, according to Taylor, is to provide detailed instructions to the employees, explaining how to execute a specific work-task. Under no normal circumstances should the employees diverge from the written instructions provided by management. Derived from systematic time and motion studies decomposing the work-task into its constitutive parts, the manager should map the most efficient sequence of actions necessary to perform a specific operation, calibrating the work-process to its optimal degree of efficiency. Control therefore acquires a specific sense in Taylor's system of scientific management: all decisions concerning the process of



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executing work falls under the domain of management. Worker's 'natural laziness', combined with their engagement in 'systematic soldering', predispose them to minimize their work-effort, causing, according to Taylor, a tremendous 'waste' of human resources (1911/2003: 11). The manager should therefore intervene in 'systematic soldering' among workers and thereby guide them towards a more productive manner of conduct by installing incentive structures and procedures for executing the work-task.

While being able to optimize efficiency, Taylor's basic principles of scientific management, according to Hamel (2007), ultimately foster conformity in the organization rather than sparking experimentation and novel thinking. As Amabile also argues, if 'someone tells you how something is to be done, there is obviously no room for creativity' (1995: 78). Thus, dictating the work-task has the effect of impeding innovation and creativity. The point is not whether Hamel's account of Taylor is correct or not, but rather the specific function of scientific management in Hamel's conception of management innovation. Hamel believes that humans 'have to create', because it is a 'primeval urge' by which we 'each of us assert our humanity and individuality (2007, 195). But Hamel maintains that by installing uniform 'standards and rules' in the organization, which he associates with scientific management, a manager effectively 'squanders prodigious quantities of human imagination and initiative' (2007: 8). Consequently, Hamel believes that the traditional principles of management are 'antithetical to building companies that are filled with energetic, slightly rebellious, votaries' (2007: 61).

However, because traditional modes of management operate on the basis of hierarchy, standardization and supervision, they structure the organization into a 'creative apartheid' (Hamel 2007, 189) that corrupts employees' natural potential for imagination. Hamel ironically concludes

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that the industrial age management model ‘guarantees that a company will *never* get the best out of people’ (2007, 208, original italics) by imposing a social structure that prevents its members from being innovative. Instead of being a ‘remedy’ against ‘inefficiency’, as Taylor (1911/2003: 119) characterized scientific management, Hamel describes the legacy of scientific management that still guides everyday practices in many corporations as a ‘disease’ and ‘malady’ (2007, 245).

The principles of management that will facilitate innovation, according to Hamel, stand in diametrical opposition to the ones laid down by Taylor. Instead of ensuring control, the manager should distribute ‘freedom’ to the employees (Hamel, 2007: 248). Instead of strict planning, the managers should encourage ‘experimentation’ with new ideas (2007: 179). And instead of a hierarchical relation between manager and workers, the organization should become a ‘democracy of ideas’ (2007: 190). As a result, Hamel attempts to separate management as a cure from management as a poison by installing binary oppositions between ‘freedom’/‘control’, ‘hierarchy’/‘democracy’ and ‘planning’/‘experimentation’. According to Hamel, organizations often fail to innovate due hierarchical structures and strict managerial control. In sharp contrast, the next generation of organizations should operate like a democracy in which every employee has the freedom to experiment with novel ideas.

### **The Supplement of the Obsessive Mind**

While one might be content to accept Hamel’s categorical dismissal of Taylor and his attempt to clearly separate the principles of management that will spark innovation from those of scientific management, there nevertheless remains considerable ambiguity in his

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conception of management innovation. Central to becoming a champion of innovation, as we have seen, is the ability to deconstruct management orthodoxies. But deconstructing management orthodoxies requires dedication, devotion and persistence. These attitudes and qualities, however, are precisely the ones that Taylor possessed. Thus, Hamel argues that:

As a devout Quaker, Frederick Taylor's single-minded devotion to efficiency stemmed from a conviction that it was iniquitous to waste even an hour of human labor when a task could be redesigned to be performed more efficiently. That Taylor could spend days studying the most productive ways to shovel coal was evident not only of an obsessive mind, but of a missionary zeal for multiplying the value of human effort. (Hamel, 2007: 39)

Hamel believes that it is precisely the dedication and commitment which Taylor devoted to the problem of inefficiency that is necessary in order to become a management innovator *par excellence*. Management innovators must have an 'obsessive mind' and a 'single-minded devotion' to the problem of innovation. 'Innovators are persistent!' Hamel declares (2007: 239). Hamel claims that 'faith' is essential in order to become a management innovator – that is, faith, we might presume, in the power of innovation (Sørensen and Spoelstra, 2013). On a more general level, Thrift (2006: 282) notes that there is an 'obsession' with creativity in the new economy. And in Spoelstra's (2010: 95) reading of the radical innovation literature, he finds an unquestioned bias towards innovation since the value of innovation is never questioned.

In Hamel's book *The Future of Management*, the importance of innovation appears as 'self-evident' (Spoelstra, 2010). Although he claims that innovation is the sine qua non for thriving in a hypercompetitive

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economy, this assumption is never called into question. Instead, Hamel presents a series of cases, including Google, Whirlpool, Whole Foods Market and W. L. Gore, which all are supposed to illustrate the benefits of making management innovation the core competence of the firm. In effect, the self-evident value of innovation is neither deconstructed nor systematically interrogated. Thus, innovation remains the prevailing attitude of Hamel's managerial thinking. But just as Taylor's fixation on efficiency denotes a kind of managerial orthodoxy, so, too, does Hamel's fascination with innovation also signify a kind of managerial orthodoxy. Yet, it is a managerial orthodoxy that Hamel is unable to call into question. Ironically, Hamel's call for management innovation thereby reproduces the very logic that it is meant to overcome. This is the case, because management innovation fosters a new dogmatic belief in the power of innovation.

The problem, however, is not only that Hamel's admiration for Taylor's 'obsessive mind' points to a paradox, since it implies that one must never question the value of innovation. At a deeper level, Taylor's 'obsessive mind' becomes what Derrida (1967/1998) calls a 'supplement' (Cooper, 1989) – that is, an element that is excluded but is nevertheless a necessary condition for Hamel's argument to function. Writing, on Plato's account, is 'the dangerous "supplement" which lures language away from its authentic origins in speech and self-presence' (Norris, 2002: 63). But just as Plato relied upon written text to criticize the nature of written text, so, too, does Hamel rely upon a dogmatic faith in innovation in order to criticize Taylor's dogmatic faith in efficiency.

Hamel tries to get beyond dogmatism by urging managers to call into question the inherent beliefs of management. Yet, he does so by relying on an unconditional 'faith' in the power of innovation. Contrary to his stated purpose, Hamel's version of management innovation is not

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driven by a persistent attempt to unravel the underlying assumptions of contemporary management. Quite the contrary, its primary driver is the dogmatic belief in the power of innovation. Subsequently, we can see how innovation today has become precisely the dogmatic assumption of popular management literature.

### **The Aporia of Disobeying Instructions**

The dogmatism that prevails in Hamel's book points towards an *aporia* of management innovation. An *aporia* designates, as Derrida explains, a 'self-engendered paradox – beyond which [thought] cannot press' (Norris, 2002: 49). We can see how Hamel's management thinking generates a self-engendered paradox by considering his discussion of disobeying managerial directives. As we have seen, one of the problems with the Tayloristic model of management is that it prescribes that employees should systematically follow the instructions of their managers. However, this prescription fosters conformity rather than sparking new initiatives, according to Hamel. In response, Hamel argues that employees should be permitted and encouraged to defy the managers of the organization in order to generate innovation. So Hamel states: 'However creative your colleagues may be, if they don't have the right to occasionally abandon their posts and work on something that's not mission critical, most of their creativity will remain dormant' (2007: 55).

A much more extreme version of this idea is formulated by Sutton who argues: 'If it's creativity you want, you should encourage people to ignore and defy superiors and peers' (Sutton, 2001: 100). Since compliance with rules and standards generates predictable outcomes, it is necessary for employees to sometimes diverge from the course set by

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management in order to generate creativity. In stark contrast to Taylor's view that employees must systematically follow the directives of management, managers must permit and even proactively encourage their employees to defy strategic objectives, formal rules, management directives and defined work-tasks.

The self-engendered paradox inscribed in these prescriptions is that managers should instruct their employees to disobey their own instructions. However, along the way, disobeying instructions itself becomes a demand placed upon the employees. Either the employees defy their manager's encouragement to ignore superiors and surreptitiously continue to follow management instructions or else they obey their manager's encouragement to defy superiors. In both cases, the employees are submitting to managerial instruction and do not ultimately 'abandon their post' (Hamel, 2007: 55) or 'ignore and defy supervisors' (Sutton, 2001: 100). In effect, Hamel's prescription defeats its own purpose. While Hamel (2007) and Sutton (2001) want to challenge the notion of management handing out directives, they both surreptitiously end up reinforcing the same managerial logic they are trying to oppose by advocating that management should *instruct* their employees to be creative by disobeying management.

In this way, Hamel remains trapped in the management paradigm that he opposes, because he cannot escape the notion of the manager as the one who issues directives. At one level, one could argue that we find evidence in Hamel of how, despite the claim of promoting increased freedom, post-bureaucratic management actually fosters a more sophisticated type of control – something that Fleming and Sturdy call 'neo-normative control' (2009). Beyond this, however, my point is that Hamel renders the relationship between management and employees

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inherently ambiguous. From the perspective of the employee, one must simultaneously obey and disobey managerial directives.

One might raise the objection that employees are not meant to always break the formal rules and ignore managerial directives but only when it sparks innovation. Yet, such disclaimers only postpone the problem, because now we are left to define the circumstances under which one should remain loyal to management and the circumstances under which one should defy it. At best, Hamel might say that employees should 'abandon their post' (2007: 55) if and only if it contributes to generating innovation. Yet, this answer would be purely tautological, because it amounts to saying that you become creative by being creative. So we do not escape the aporia by imposing the condition that one should only 'occasionally' defy the directives of management.

One cannot break a rule that permits its own violation. It is precisely in this way that management assumes the character of a *pharmakon*. By attempting to transform management into a 'cure' to heal the deficiencies of innovation, the poisonous character of management is surreptitiously reintroduced. While Hamel (2007) wants to sharply distinguish those principles of management that support a creative work environment from those that impede innovation, he ultimately fails to achieve his objective because his 'cure' (distributing freedom) turns out to simultaneously be a 'poison' (imposing instructions), thus making it impossible to break the rules. The fundamental obscurity dominating Hamel's conception of innovation management puts the very concept of management into an ambivalent place. Ultimately, it is unclear when management, on Hamel's account, is a cure and when it is a poison for innovation.

## **Reinventing the Creative Manager**

Rather than protecting the status quo, managers of the post-bureaucratic organization must continuously overturn the established order in their search for novel and ground-breaking ideas. In this respect, Hamel's popular management handbook *The Future of Management* is only a particular instance of what Costea, Crump and Amiridis (2008; 2005) maps as a wider managerial development. Yet, the reading of Hamel reveals a fundamental paradox inherent in the attempt to conceptualize the process of reinventing the practice of management. Thus, we are able to perceive the contradictions of Hamel's book as symptoms of the fundamental paradox underlying what Costea, Crump and Amiridis (2008: 663; 2005: 148) have identified as the prevailing model of transgression in contemporary post-bureaucratic management thinking.

Management innovation designates the process of inventing of novel management practices. According to Hamel, management innovation can be achieved by following a sequential procedure. As we have seen, Hamel's popular management handbook provides a 'formula for management innovation' (2007: 243). This formula should help managers to think beyond established management conventions and depart from what Hamel (2007) associates with management orthodoxies. On the surface, this seems to resonate with Derrida's remarks that there is no invention unless it 'breaks with convention' (1987/2007a: 1). Hamel maintains that 'true innovators are never bound by what is; instead they dream of what could be' (2007: 17). However, Derrida adds that invention has to operate on the 'condition that the invention transgresses, in order to be inventive, the status and the programs with which it has supposed to comply' (1987/2007a: 21). If the



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invention corresponds to preconceived expectations, following Derrida, then it fails to be genuinely surprising, unconventional and novel. Viewed from this perspective, the fundamental paradox of Hamel's (2007) concept of management innovation, however, is precisely that it declares itself a program that organizes the production of novel management practices.

The endeavour to reduce the production of novel modes of management to a 'formula' is inherently contradictory, because the conceptual structure of management innovation must necessarily be transgressed in order to ensure originality. We might say that the invention of new management practices, to borrow the words of Derrida, has 'to declare itself to be the invention of that which did not appear to be possible' (1987/2007a: 44). If management innovation is possible, then it remains within the locus of available opportunities. Henceforth, management innovation fails to be genuinely novel and unique.

Only by proclaiming to be impossible is the concept of management innovation able to achieve its ambition of reinventing the practice of management. This is why management innovation, on Hamel's account, runs into the paradox of reinitiating the managerial logic that it intends to contravene. Hamel insists that management innovation is possible, because it can be achieved by following a sequential procedure. However, in the act of announcing a formula of management innovation, Hamel concurrently confines invention into a conceptual structure that necessarily must be transgressed in order to release novelty.

To use Hamel's vocabulary, it is necessary to ensure that 'what could be' is not restrained by 'what is' (2007: 17). The *aporia* of management innovation stems precisely from this unavoidable gap between the possible future ('what could be') and the present condition ('what is'). Hamel dreams of an unknown future, yet his vision is narrowed by the

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conceptual structure of management innovation. The concept of management innovation conceptualizes the experience of originality while declaring that the original always exceeds the present experience. But in order to ensure that the original surpasses the horizon of our present experience, it necessarily has to transgress the conceptualization of management innovation. In other words, Hamel (2007) basically wants to say something that he cannot possibly say.

The point, therefore, is not that Hamel's concept of management innovation could gain consistency through imposing unitary structures. Quite the opposite, the point is that the very attempt to structure a sequential process for reinventing the practice of management entails a fundamental paradox. This is the case, because any attempt to capture the nature of invention within a general concept is deemed to confine the novel, original and unique into what Derrida denotes as 'foreclusionary structures' (1987/2007a: 45). Deconstruction, however, enables us to 'destabiliz[e]' (Derrida, 1987/2007a: 45) such conceptual constellations in order to show how experience can never be completely restrained within binary structures (Rasche, 2011).

Rather than radically departing from previous management paradigms, popular management handbooks calling for revolutionizing the practice of management inscribe itself in this very tradition by offering prescriptions (Peters, 1988), methods (Kelley, 2001) and manuals (Hamel, 2007). As the deconstructive reading of Hamel has revealed, popular management literature follow the lines of Western metaphysics by confining experience within binary opposition. By doing so, however, the post-bureaucratic image of thought produces inescapable paradoxes that deconstruction can make us sensitive towards. Although many management gurus suggest that managers must continuously deviate from prevailing attitudes and break down the

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boundaries that prevent creativity from flourishing within the organization (Costea et al., 2005; Thrift, 2000), we can see that this managerial imperative is inherently ambiguous.

On the one hand, the figure of the creative manager must continuously contravene the managerial conventions and orthodoxies prevailing in post-bureaucratic organization. But on the other hand, the transgression model of management itself becomes a convention and orthodoxy that the creative managers of the post-bureaucratic organization ironically have to emulate and replicate. It seems, however, that Hamel is acutely aware of the impossibility of predicting the sequence of management innovation. Thus, he maintains that 'there's no well-thumbed manual that will help your company become a serial management innovator' (Hamel, 2007: 242). Yet, the fact that Hamel simultaneously proposes a manual for management innovation and declares that a compressive manual is impossible to create only confirms the presence of an ambiguity in transgression model of management embedded in the post-bureaucratic image of thought.

### **Conceptual Persona: The Creative Manager**

By locating the *aporia* of 'management innovation', we are able to subtract the conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager from reading Hamel's popular management handbook *The Future of Management*. This conceptual persona offers us a philosophical conceptualization of one of the essential psychosocial types associated with the model of the post-bureaucratic organization, namely the creative manager. The conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager is caught in an inescapable paradox. But instead of perceiving this paradox as constituting an impasse, abyss or deadlock, I will argue,

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appropriating Derrida's (2007b: 454) words, that the very 'conditions of impossibility' of *management innovation* are simultaneously the 'conditions for the possibility' of *management innovation*.

The conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager must necessarily operate on the condition that the new organizational principles to be created within the post-bureaucratic organization must be an impossibility made possible. The conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager is embedded in social conventions that both offers resources for making the new but also restrain the scope of management innovation. The conceptual persona of the deconstructive of the creative manager must, borrowing the words of Derrida (1987/2007a: 1), insert 'a disorder into the peaceful orderings of things' while at the same time creating something that is recognized as new in order to attain the status of being an invention. Following Derrida, the conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager must necessarily confront the 'enigma of invention' which consists of the fact that the creative act 'at once requiring and unsettling protocols and rules, and at once finding something already implicit in the cultural fabric by means of which to make itself understood and bringing whole new into being' (Attridge in Derrida, 1992: 310).

The conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager acknowledges that management innovation is impossible and must necessarily remain so in order to gain force. Yet, it is precisely this impossibility that the conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager must confront and overcome. In other words, the conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager must necessarily dwell in an *aporia* designated by the possibility of doing the impossible. The conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager is required to produce novel management practices that are accepted by the post-

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bureaucratic organization. Yet, it is very social conventions that operate within the post-bureaucratic organization that the creative manager must traverse, contravene and reconfigure. Consequently, the conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager is required to make the impossible possible and surpasses even what the concept of management innovation is capable of imagining in its current form.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Past decades have seen a proliferation of popular management handbooks offering guidance for how to reinvent the practice of management in the post-bureaucratic organization (e.g. Peters, 1988; Kanter, 1988; Hamel, 2007). Popular management handbooks suggest that managers must contravene the prevalent managerial conventions and invent new modes of management in the post-bureaucratic organization. Managers of the post-bureaucratic organization must become ‘change agents’ (Thrift, 2000: 201) who enter into ‘a playful transgression and destruction of boundaries’ (Costea et al., 2005: 141).

There is no denying the fact that we are today experiencing the emergence of a new managerial vocabulary that is used to describe and prescribe the practices of the post-bureaucratic organization. The prevalent use of concepts such as creativity, authenticity and play bear witness of a shift in the grammar of management, a shift that Costea, Crump and Amiridis has characterised as a development from a ‘apparently very rational, “Apollonian” approaches to efficiency and productivity’ towards a “Dionysian” mode, a spirit of playful transgression and destruction of boundaries’ (2005: 141). Popular management literature often contends that managers must transgress the established managerial paradigm. While traditional modes of

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management were designed to resolve the problem of efficiency, many management gurus maintain that it is necessary to invent new modes of management capable of mobilizing and energizing the creative potential of the employees.

Although we today can register a shift in managerial rhetorics, we should not naively draw the conclusion that this development involves a radical departure from previous managerial paradigms. Yet, my point here is not that even though the rhetorics of post-bureaucratic management highlights the need for creativity, authenticity and play, the ‘actual’ practice of contemporary organizations nevertheless remain caught in a paradigm of control, diligence and bureaucracy. Making this argument would be precisely to go along with the rhetorics of post-bureaucratic management that contends that we should become more innovative, authentic and playful. Instead, we should recognize that the concepts belonging to the post-bureaucratic image of thought, such as the concept of ‘management innovation’, remain embedded within a conceptual dynamics that can be traced to classic management theory. This is reflected in the ambivalences that we encounter in Hamel’s popular management handbook *The Future of Management*.

On Hamel’s account of management innovation, the concept of ‘management’ is attributed a curious dual function. On the one hand, management is portrayed as the ‘toxin’ that can kill innovation. On the other hand, management is portrayed as the ‘cure’ against the organizational structures that traditionally has obstructed innovation. Through a deconstructive reading of the popular management handbook *The Future of Management*, this chapter has revealed how Hamel (2007) attempts to differentiate the principles of management that he believes facilitate creativity from those principles that he believes impede creativity. Derrida’s (1981) reflections upon the ambivalent nature of the

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*pharmakon*, a word that means both 'remedy' and 'poison', has been used to capture the paradoxical logic of management innovation. However, the deconstructive reading of Hamel discloses a fundamental ambiguity inherent the concept of management innovation. The discourse on management innovation confines the production of novel management practices to a sequential procedure expressed in the form of either a set of principles, tools or manuals. By doing so, management innovation becomes a conceptual structure that necessarily must be transgressed in order for the concept to serve its purpose.

# Chapter 4:

## The Authentic Leader

*After years of studying leaders and their traits, I believe that leadership begins and ends with authenticity. It's being yourself; being the person you were created to be.*

- George (2003: 11)

*All metaphysics is Platonism*

- Heidegger (1961/1991b: 202)

### Introduction

In the wake of a series of corporate scandals, most notably the case of Enron, there has been a growing call for authentic leadership in order to ensure ethical conduct in post-bureaucratic organizations (Cooper, Scandura and Schriesheim, 2005). Rooted in the idea of being faithful to the 'true self', authentic leadership promises to solve the 'ethical crisis' (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012) that we are currently witnessing in post-bureaucratic organizations by highlighting the importance of moral responsibility among leaders.

Prior to its fall, Enron was celebrated by management gurus, including Hamel, as a prime example of a post-bureaucratic organization based upon a 'pro-entrepreneurship culture' that had generated 'a handful of radical new business concepts' (Hamel, 2000: 211). After its fall, *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman suggested that 'trendy management theories' should perhaps be considered 'one force of evil'



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(2001). But post-bureaucratic management thinking suffered surprisingly little from the Enron scandal, although the 'brightness of Hamel's star was dimmed somewhat' (Hindle, 2008: 246).

In the post-Enron era, we still find the rhetoric of post-bureaucratic management prevalent, and Hamel maintains his vision of filling firms with 'gray-haired revolutionaries' (2002: xi). Part of the explanation is that Enron has been viewed as an unfortunate isolated incidence in what is otherwise a solid 'system' (Grey, 2003). Part of the explanation should also be sought in the moral underpinning of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. In a typical bureaucracy, ethical conduct is ensured through what du Gay calls an 'ethos' that consist of 'strict adherence to procedure, commitment to the purposes of the office, abnegation of personal moral enthusiasms and so on' (2008: 338). By contrast, the model of the post-bureaucratic organization, characterized by decentralized networks, non-hierarchical structures and flexibility-enabling entrepreneurial activities (Garsten and Grey, 1997), replaces the bureaucratic ethics with individualized 'self-responsibility' (Cock and Böhm, 2007).

This allows proponents of post-bureaucracy to view the Enron debacle as being caused by a lack of personal moral responsibility, of 'restless greed' amongst the executives (see Stein, 2007). Within the post-bureaucratic image of thought, the concept of authentic leadership can be seen as an attempt to provide a moral foundation for the model of the post-bureaucratic organization. The reason that some post-bureaucratic organizations experience corruption and fraud is, because their executives have 'forgotten or ignored [...] the lessons of authenticity' (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans and May, 2004: 818). In light of this, it is important to recognize how the post-bureaucratic image of thought converts ethics into a question of individual accountability. This

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is reflected in the concept of authentic leadership in which ethics consists of configuring a true relationship towards oneself.

The concept of authentic leadership, however, depends upon the ability to draw a distinction between authentic and inauthentic leaders. If authentic leadership is to provide a moral foundation for the model of the post-bureaucratic organizations, it is necessary to distinguish those leaders who remain faithful to their true self from those leaders who betray their true self. According to Shamir and Eliahu, authentic leaders are ‘originals, not copies’ (2005: 397). Yet, they maintain that it is ‘often difficult to distinguish the real from the copy’ (Shamir and Eliahu, 2005: 408). Leaders committed to the concept of authentic leadership are confronted with the problem of ensuring to themselves and others that they act in accordance with their true self. But how do authentic leaders manage to distinguish their true self from their false self and prove to their employees that they are originals rather than copies?

In this chapter, I will show how Deleuze’s reading of Plato can help us comprehend and also challenge the procedure for drawing a distinction between authentic and inauthentic leaders. I will demonstrate how the concept of authentic leadership reproduces Plato’s problem of *authenticating the leader* – that is, drawing a distinction between the true claimant and the false pretender. In order to show this, I offer a discussion of Bill George’s (2003) book *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*. Hansen, Ropo and Sauer (2007) emphasize that although there is a widespread call for authentic leadership, we still know little about how the process of becoming an authentic leader works. To answer the question of what separates authentic from inauthentic leaders, Cooper, Scandura and Schriesheim argue that scholars need to conduct ‘case studies of leaders who meet the current broad criteria for authenticity’ (2005: 479). They

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further add that an ‘obvious choice for a case study would be Bill George’ (Cooper et al., 2005: 479), former CEO of Medtronic. I will take up this challenge and inquire into George’s (2003) book *Authentic Leadership*, by discussing his technique for separating his true and false self.

Here I will argue that Deleuze’s (1997, 1968/2001, 1969/2004) reading of Plato’s dialogue *Statesman* can help us to more fully comprehend the procedure through which George (2003) attempts to show that he is an authentic rather than an inauthentic leader. In the *Statesman*, Plato argues that the difference between the authentic leader and the inauthentic pretender lies in their relationship to the model, designating the idea of the good leader. A model is a normative ideal from which leaders can be assessed. While the authentic leader remains faithful to the model, the inauthentic pretender is a *simulacrum* (false pretender). For Plato, the *simulacrum* is therefore a deceiving appearance that lacks resemblance to the model. I will show that we find a similar line of reasoning in George’s (2003) account of authentic leadership. In George’s narrative, he contrasts himself to the former CEO of Enron, Jeff Skilling, who is considered the incarnation of inauthentic leadership. To make this distinction, George introduces the model of the ‘moral compass’, which denotes ‘true North’. Using the criteria of the ‘moral compass’, George judges Skilling as equivalent to Plato’s conception of a *simulacrum*. George asserts that Skilling pretended to be a good leader but actually ignored his ‘moral compass’ and thus was a false claimant.

I will also argue that Deleuze’s ‘inverted Platonism’ enables us to flip the problem of authenticating the leader on its head. Deleuze’s purpose is not to simply present a clear explication of Platonism, but to perform an overturning of Platonism. For Deleuze, Platonism is a doctrine that consists of drawing a distinction between the authentic claimant and the

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inauthentic pretender (*simulacrum*) on the basis of a 'model'. In Platonism, the model serves as a moral foundation for judging whether a claimant is authentic or not. This doctrine can be found in Plato's dialogue *Statesman*, but Deleuze argues Plato's dialogue *Sophist* represents a fundamental critique of Platonism.

In the *Sophist*, Plato attempts to demarcate the true claimant from the *simulacrum* (false pretender) without recourse to the model. But in the absence of the model, Deleuze notices that the sharp delineation between the true claimant and the *simulacrum* is blurred and that Platonism enters into a crisis. This crisis, in turns, opens up the possibility for a new conceptualization of the *simulacrum*, according to Deleuze. Deleuze contends that rather than being categorised as a false pretender that lacks resemblance to the model, the *simulacrum* must be evaluated on its own merits. In this way, Deleuze finds the basis for overturning Platonism in Plato's dialogue *Sophist*.

I will show how Deleuze's overturning of Platonism provides the basis for reversing the relationship between ethics and values assumed by the concept of authentic leadership. While the concept of authentic leadership presupposes that commitment to values in support of the collective good will secure ethical conduct, Deleuze perceives the commitment to values as hindering the occurrence of ethics (Smith, 2007b). As a result, Deleuze's 'inverted Platonism' allows an understanding of authentic leadership that is not based on values, but rather involves a critique of the 'value of values' (1962/1983: 1), by examining the ways in which values are employed to legitimize decisions. This allows us to see how leaders sometimes commit unethical deeds not because they lack values but rather because they are seduced by their own value-commitments (Price, 2003).

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This chapter proposes that we need to reverse the standard commonly employed to draw a distinction between authentic and inauthentic leaders. I am not against the concept of authentic leadership. But I contend that instead of claiming that authentic leaders are good because they remain faithful to the core values, we should recognize that some leaders can use their core values to legitimize morally questionable decisions (Price, 2003). In order to construct a concept of authentic leadership that takes this into account, we need to invert the standards used to assess the authenticity of leaders. Although it is not my aim to offer a prescriptive concept that specify what an authentic leader should do, I will argue that that an reversed concept of authentic leadership should consider how ethics can occur when the authentic leader is able to critical reflect his or her own value-commitments. Being a reversed authentic leader will therefore involve being able to see how values can make oneself blind of ethical considerations. Viewed from this perspective, the difference between reversed authentic leader and inauthentic leader does not hinges on whether one remains faithful or betrays a set of values, but rather the ability to call into question one's own value-commitments.

The first part of the chapter describes how theories of authentic leadership deal with the problem of distinguishing authentic from inauthentic leaders. In this section I show how critical scholars have subjected the predominant conceptualizations of authentic leadership to critical scrutiny. The second part introduces Deleuze's reading of Plato, which can shed light on the problem of separating authentic claimants from false pretenders. The third part engages with George's *Authentic Leadership*, in which he records his personal journey to become an authentic leader and presents his advice on how to become an authentic leader. Informed by Deleuze's reading of Plato, I will trace the steps

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through which George distances himself from the former CEO of Enron, Jeffrey Skilling. The final part discusses how Deleuze's 'inverted Platonism' enables us to reverse the relationship between ethics and values put forward by adherents of 'authentic leadership'.

### **Who is the Authentic Leader?**

Although authenticity was a central theme of Bernard's seminal work on executives (Novicevic, Harvey, Ronald and Brown-Radford, 2006), the current renewed interest in the concept was sparked by frustration over the ethical foundation of traditional leadership models (Michie and Gooty, 2005). In order to meet accusations that transformational leaders could be narcissistic, authoritarian and exploit their followers, Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) introduced the concept of 'authentic transformational leadership', which they contrasted with 'pseudo-transformational leadership' (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). While the former involves commitment to strong 'ethical values', the latter is artificial: an 'outer shell of authenticity but an inner self that is false to the organization's mission' (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999: 187).

In this way, authenticity promises to fix the moral defects of previous leadership models and make leaders avoid the moral pitfalls that have caused previous corporate scandals. In recent years, authentic leadership has developed into an autonomous concept that is believed to constitute the moral 'root' of all forms of 'positive leadership' (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Authenticity consists of remaining faithful to one's inner true self (George, 2003). Authenticity, according to George, entails being 'in touch with the depth of your inner being and being true to yourself' (2003: 40). On this account, the true self is a constellation of values and passions located within the individual (Guignon, 2004). Values

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constitute principles upon which it is possible to pass moral judgement (Smith, 2007b). For instance, the value of honesty provides the basis for passing the judgement that those who tell the truth are good while those who tell lies are bad.

There is no consensus about the specific values belonging to the true self. However, in order to safeguard the ‘moral foundation’ of authentic leadership (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999), it is necessary to ensure that greed, fraud and corruption cannot be justified based upon the values embedded in the ‘true self’ (Shamir and Eilam, 2005). While some scholars refuse to perceive authenticity as intrinsically ethical (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012), most theorists retain the moral dimensions of the concept. In effect, scholars tend to link the idea of the true self to a myriad of moral virtues, such as ‘integrity’ (Ilies, Morgeson and Nahrgang, 2005), ‘trustworthiness’ (May, Chan, Hodges and Avolio, 2003), ‘honesty’ (Wong and Cummings, 2009), ‘care’ (Goffee and Jones, 2006) and ‘self-awareness’ (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). These normative standards, in turn, provide the basis for drawing a distinction between authentic and inauthentic leaders, according to exponents of authentic leadership. Authentic leaders are aware of their character, they do what they say they will do, they are honest with the people around them, and they are committed to values beyond personal interest. Inauthentic leaders, by contrast, lack the capacity for introspection and reflection, they do not necessarily do what they promise, they manipulate and lie to the people around them, and they care primarily about personal rewards.

### **Critique of Authentic Leadership**

As authentic leadership has become popular among academics and practitioners, scholars associated with ‘critical leadership studies’

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(Alvesson and Spicer, 2012; Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007) have increasingly warned against the concepts. In particular, critical scholars have contended that the prevalent procedure for dividing authentic from inauthentic leaders proves to be problematic (Collinson, 2012; Ford and Harding, 2011; Shaw, 2010; Sparrowe, 2005). As we can see, a hallmark of authentic leaders is that they have are 'morally responsible' (May et al., 2003) and engage in 'ethical behaviour' (Michie and Gooty, 2005). Accusing authentic leaders of behaving immorally is therefore impossible by definition (Spoelstra and ten Bos, 2011). By elevating the concept of authenticity to an ethically superior position, authentic leadership acquires a divine status. The authentic leader 'appears saintly' (Ford and Harding, 2011: 470) due to his or her lack of character flaws (Alvesson and Spicer, 2010; Grint, 2010; Śliwa, Spoelstra, Sørensen and Land, 2013).

Not only does this circular logic of authentic leadership make the concept immune to falsification (Sparrowe, 2005), since the concept by definition refuse to acknowledge that authentic leaders may act morally questionable. In addition, authentic leadership also risks becoming an 'empty signifier' (Kelly, 2014) – that is, a concept holding intrinsic positive connotations but lacking clear empirical references. Thus, the discourse of authentic leadership conveys the image of the leaders as 'superheroes' (Collinson, 2012). However, this idealized portrayal of the authentic leader, Collinson explains, remains 'detached from concrete organizational practices' (2012: 99). The problem here is that the idealized portrayal of the leader makes it impossible to see how actual leaders can confront conflicts of interests, irresolvable demands and dilemmas (Rhodes, 2012).

Failure to explicate the moral dimensions of authentic leadership may make the concept useless as regards the difference between



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authentic and inauthentic leaders in practice (Spoelstra, 2013). Unless the content of the moral values associated with the true self are specified, leaders may gain the false impression that they are behaving ethically simply because they subscribe to the moral virtues associated with authentic leadership (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012, 2010). For instance, a leader may use the moral vocabulary of authentic leadership 'as a device for manipulating followers into consent in the name of the collective good as it is defined by the organizational elite' (Rhodes, 2012: 1314). No one would dispute the axiom that leaders should have a 'moral character' (Bass and Steidlmeier 1999). The question, however, is how to recognize the moral character of the leader.

Here I suggest engaging with George's book *Authentic Leadership*, informed by Deleuze's reading of Plato, in order to contribute to the critical discussion of authentic leadership. While critical scholars have done much to reveal the conceptual weaknesses of 'authentic leadership', they have not yet delved into the process by which an authentic leader ensures that he or she affirms a true rather than a false self (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010). For instance, Ford and Harding argue that authentic leadership 'could lead to destructive dynamics within organizations', because the concept refuses to acknowledge human imperfection and prioritize a 'collective (organizational) self over an individual self and thereby hampers subjectivity to both leaders and followers' (Ford and Harding, 2011: 463).

While speculating that this may take place through the performative effects of leadership training courses, Ford and Harding's critique is derived from a theoretical discussion and does not offer concrete examples of leaders who are said to be authentic. Engaging with George (2003), who is widely acknowledged as an authentic leader (Cooper et al., 2005), will enable us to grasp the ways in which self-proclaimed

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authentic leaders try to convince others that they are authentic rather than inauthentic. Informed by Deleuze's reading of Plato, I will show how George's procedure for authenticating himself reproduces Platonism. In the following section, I introduce Deleuze's reading of Plato that will serve as the point of departure for inquiring into George's book *Authentic Leadership*.

### **Plato on Statesmanship**

In a posthumous notebook, Nietzsche notes that his philosophy is 'an *inverted Platonism*' (cited in Smith, 2006: 90). It was Heidegger who originally drew attention to this remark in his reading of Nietzsche, stating that 'during the last years of his creative life he labors at nothing else than the overturning of Platonism' (1961/1991a: 154). With this statement, Deleuze maintains that Nietzsche defines 'the task of the philosophy of the future' (1969/2004: 291). As we have seen, Derrida is also concerned with the problem of performing a 'reversal' of Plato's philosophy. Derrida remarks that 'deconstruction involves an indispensable phase of *reversal*' (1972/1981: 6, original italics). As we saw in the previous chapter, for Derrida, this reversal consists of revealing the *aporia* between speech and writing in Plato's philosophy which opens up for destabilizing the Platonic structures of Western metaphysics.

Unlike Derrida who focus on deconstructing the distinction between the speech and writing, inverting Platonism, Deleuze (1969/2004: 291) retains, presupposes that the underlying 'motivation' of Platonism is clarified. Here Deleuze offers a different reading of Plato that takes point of departure in the social organization of the Athenian Greek democracy. In the ancient Athenian democracy, Deleuze (1997: 137) explains, all free

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men could lay claim to truth. However, Plato saw the unrestricted contention in the city-state as deeply problematic because it blurred the division between the true and the false claimant; the one who speaks the truth and those who express false views (Smith, 2006). In effect, Plato undertakes the task of ensuring that the one who speaks the truth remains strictly apart from all those who give a false impression of possessing knowledge.

In this section, we will therefore look at how Deleuze shows how the motivation of Platonism consists of ‘distinguish pretenders; to distinguish the pure from impure, the authentic from the inauthentic’ (1969/2004: 292). Plato therefore endeavours, according to Deleuze (1968/2001: 60), to draw distinctions between those who hold the truth and those who simulate false appearances, between the true and the false claimant, between the authentic thing and the inauthentic *simulacrum*. With its strong ethical component, I will argue, following Spoelstra and ten Bos, that authentic leadership ‘stands in a long tradition that goes back at least as far as Plato’ (2011: 182), because he was the first to formulate the problem of authentication. This discussion will be used to analyse George’s account of authentic leadership.

In his reading, Deleuze draws attention to Plato’s (1997c) dialogue *Statesman*. Here the young Socrates and a stranger from Elea who is not named (henceforth, the Visitor) define the authentic statesman as the one who is the genuine *shepherd of men*. However, Socrates and the Visitor fear that there will be several claimants proclaiming to possess true knowledge of statesmanship (Deleuze, 1968/2001: 60). They even suspect that the merchant may claim to be a shepherd of men (Plato, 1997c: 290). But if everyone can pretend to know the art of statesmanship, Socrates maintains, then it is necessary to distinguish the one who is the actual shepherd of men from all the false claimants.

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Therefore, the Visitor argues that the definition of the statesman is not complete until they manage to remove those who crowd around the authentic shepherd of men, ‘pretending to share his herding function with him’ (Plato, 1997c: 268c).

In order to separate the true from the false statesman, Plato (1997c) establishes a distinction between the king and the tyrant. According to Socrates, the king is the authentic statesman. The tyrant is the archetype of the inauthentic false pretender. Thus, the tyrant is a *simulacrum* (false claimant): he proclaims to possess the characteristics of the authentic shepherd of men but in fact lacks the qualities of a true leader (Deleuze, 1969/2004). It is important to emphasize that the difficulty of separating the king from the tyrant does not occur because they are altogether different. On the contrary, as the Visitor notices, there seems to be no generic difference between the king and the tyrant according to their definition of the statesman. Both are herdsmen of humans (Plato, 1997c: 276e). But Plato refuses to accept that the king and the tyrant belong to the same category. The challenge confronting the Visitor and the young Socrates is to establish a procedure for distinguishing the true statesman from the false claimant; the authentic king from the inauthentic tyrant.

In order to separate the king from the tyrant, the Visitor tells the young Socrates a story about the God who attended human affairs in the ancient times, ensuring a state of perfect harmony in which fruits grew naturally and men had ‘soft beds from abundant grass that sprang from the earth’ (Plato, 1997c: 272b). The story, the Visitor explains, is intended to introduce the ‘figure of the divine herdsman’, a statesman that is even ‘greater than the king’ (Plato, 1997c: 275c). Here we find the ‘model of the archaic shepherd-God’ (Deleuze, 1969/2004: 61).

According to Deleuze (1969/2004: 60), the model of the divine herdsman serves a crucial function in Plato’s effort to separate the

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authentic statesman from the inauthentic pretender, because it establishes a criterion from which claimants can be evaluated. If the claimant resembles the model, then he is authentic. If the claimant lacks resemblance to the model, then he is inauthentic. While the king imitates the divine herdsman, following his ancestral costumes and laws, the tyrant's administrative system lacks any similarity to the divine herdsman's form of governance. The fundamental difference, therefore, between the king and the tyrant is that the former manages to produce an accurate imitation of the divine herdsman while the latter only 'pretends to act like the person with expert knowledge' (Plato, 1997c: 301c).

In order to distinguish the king from the tyrant, Plato (1997c) constructs a three-step hierarchy (Smith, 2006). At the top of the hierarchy is the *model*, designated by the divine herdsman, who ruled men in the age of Cronus. The model is a normative ideal that establishes a foundation which is able to sort out who is authentic and who is inauthentic. At the middle level is the *true claimant*, designated by the authentic statesman. This place is occupied by the king. The king is endorsed by his resemblance to the model, since his practice of governance resembles the one used during the age of Cronus. Finally, the lowest step on the ladder is the *false claimant* or the *simulacrum*. For Plato, the *simulacrum* is a false pretender in the sense that he resembles the true claimant but lack connection to the model. This step in the ladder is occupied by the tyrant. The tyrant proclaims to bear resemblance the model, but is exposed by Plato as a deceitful pretender.

Although Plato's philosophy is often assumed to represent the shift from *mythos* to *logos* – that is, explaining the world in terms of rational arguments instead of mythical narratives – Deleuze (1969/2004: 292) observes that Plato ironically introduces a myth of the divine herdsman in order to separate the king from the tyrant. What characterizes a myth,

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on Deleuze's account, is its 'circular structure' (1969/2004: 292) – that is, a myth is legitimized with reference to itself. The divine herdsman is good because he is defined as being so (Deleuze, 1968/2001: 62). By appealing to the myth of the divine herdsman, Plato (1997c) is able to distinguish the king from the tyrant. Plato's rational argument that the tyrant is the inauthentic statesman is only valid given the myth of the divine herdsman in the age of Cronus. The myth is therefore an integrated component in the process of selecting between different claimants, because it 'permits the construction of a model according to which the different pretenders can be judge' (Deleuze, 1969/2004: 292).

### **Authenticating Bill George**

Before looking at how Deleuze reverses Platonism, I will now show how George's (2003) account of authentic leadership reproduces Plato's procedure for distinguishing the authentic from the inauthentic leader. At this stage, the point is neither to agree nor disagree with Plato, but rather demonstrate how George's account of authentic leadership installing a three-step hierarchy between a *model*, the *true claimant* and the *simulacrum* (the false pretender) in order to prove that he is an authentic rather than inauthentic leader. However, I will argue that George's procedure is grounded in a circular myth of the 'moral compass'. After showing this, we will look at how Deleuze overturn Platonism. This overturning provides the basis for challenging George's procedure for authenticating the leader and open up for a different perspective on the relationship between values and ethics.

George is considered a practitioner due to his long experience as CEO of one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies, Medtronic (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Cooper et al. argues that George's

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leadership at Medtronic ‘exhibits a heightened sense of self-awareness, optimism, and belief in followers’ (2005: 485), all of which they claim are essential for becoming an authentic leader. At the same time, George has been praised for having ‘contributed greatly to the emergence of both practitioners and scholarly interest’ in authentic leadership (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis and Dickens, 2011: 1123). George’s book *Authentic Leadership* oscillates between an autobiographic testimony of his own professional career and a self-help tome describing how to become an authentic leader. Showing the importance of engaging with such literature, Garsten and Grey argue that popular business books ‘should not be regarded as trivial because they are expressive of important themes in contemporary life’ (1997: 22).

Importantly, authentic leadership is not only a theoretical construct, but also features in the self-description of practitioners. Here George is a prime example (Cooper et al., 2005). Analysing George’s book can therefore provide valuable insight into how ‘authentic leadership is portrayed’ (Costas and Taheri, 2012: 1196) by practitioners. These portrayals have real effects, because they influence how practitioners act and think. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari (2004) argue that words are *performative*: narratives shape and form our lives. Once a leader adopts the narrative of being authentic, then he or she will strive to behave in accordance with the true self. Since George’s book is rich in anecdotes from his own life, reading it enables us to explore the effects of subscribing to the concept of authentic leadership from the point of view of practitioners.

In *Authentic Leadership*, George literally thanks Enron for providing the necessary kind of ‘shock therapy to realize that something is sorely missing in many of our corporations’ (2003: 1). What is missing is authentic leadership – that is, ‘leaders who have a deep sense of

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purpose and are true to their core values' (George, 2003: 5). In 2006, Jeffrey Skilling was sentenced to 24 years in prison after the Enron scandal, having been convicted of, among other charges, security fraud, perjury, conspiracy and insider trading. Although there are numerous interpretations of the Enron scandal (Sims and Brinkmann, 2003; Stein, 2007), our concern at this stage is not whether George's account is accurate or not. Rather, we are concerned with the function that Skilling serves in George's account of authentic leadership.

For George, Skilling is the symbol of everything that is wrong with contemporary leaders: their focus on short term financial rewards rather than securing long term values. The legal crimes committed by the Enron executives, therefore, are only a symptom of the lack of authenticity among leaders, according to George. The challenge confronting George is to demonstrate that Skilling betrayed his 'core values', whereas he himself remained faithful to them throughout his career. How does George go about proving that he is an authentic leader while Skilling is inauthentic?

It is important to emphasize that George's problem of separating himself from Jeffrey Skilling does not emerge because they are altogether different. Quite the opposite, the resemblance between George and Skilling is striking. Both are American middle-aged white men; both received M.B.A. degrees from the Harvard Business School; both were honoured as Baker scholars for being in the top five percent in their respective classes; and both are former CEOs of huge American enterprises. Skilling shares several bibliographic characteristics with George. However, George notices that the exceptional cases of inauthentic leaders such as Jeffrey Skilling and others breaking the law in the quest for personal gain have shaken the reputation of business leaders in general, including George himself. George cites a survey in



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which most respondents stated that ‘the typical CEO is less honest and ethical than the average person’ (2003: 2). The reason why George wants to distance himself from Skilling is precisely because the two can be associated with each other.

Prior to being exposed for fraud, Enron was celebrated by business gurus such as Hamel for its innovative capabilities (Stein, 2007). Afterwards, Hamel excused himself, saying that there is a profound difference between ‘creative accounting and creative business models’ (2002: vii), and that Enron engaged in the former rather than the latter. Yet Hamel’s (2002) feeble response only begs the question why he had confused the two categories in the first place. As so many others, Hamel had obviously failed to spot the difference between ‘creative accounting’ and ‘creative business models’. He proved unable to discover the reality behind the Enron facade.

Misrecognition due to deception was also the problem that Plato saw with regard to the king and the tyrant. For Plato, the tyrant is not problematic because he is altogether different from the king. On the contrary, the tyrant is a problematic figure because he imitates the king so convincingly, blurring the separation between the two (Smith, 2006). On the surface, the *simulacrum* appears authentic. In reality, it is a false pretender. Against the backdrop of this enigma, George (2003) confronts the challenge of showing that there is a distinct difference between himself and Skilling, aside from the fact that Skilling was convicted of various crimes in the wake of the Enron scandal.

George (2003: 36) proposes ‘consistency’ as a criterion for separating the authentic from the inauthentic leader. Authentic leaders, according to George, do what they say (see also May et al., 2003; Shamir and Eilam, 2005). ‘There is nothing worse’, George declares, ‘than leaders who preach good values but fail to follow their own advice’ (2003:

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38). Authentic leaders, by contrast, practice what they preach. However, we can see upon a closer inspection that this criterion fails to achieve its objective. Are inauthentic leaders ‘inconsistent’ (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999: 187)?

This does not seem to be the case with Skilling. As George notices, a former classmate revealed that Skilling often argued in lectures that ‘the role of the business leader was to take advantage of loopholes in regulations and push beyond the law wherever he could make money’ (2003: 21). Was not this idea of breaking the law in order to gain financial rewards precisely what Skilling practiced at Enron? Skilling seems to be consistent in his behaviour, as he employed precisely this strategy. He was simply unsuccessful, leading Enron into bankruptcy and ending up in prison (George, 2003: 21).

Although consistency ultimately fails to authenticate the leader, George nevertheless believes that there is a profound difference between himself and Skilling. The difference between himself and Skilling, according to George, consists of their relationship towards what he calls the ‘core values’ (2003: 5). George also call these values the ‘fundamental values’, the ‘good values’ and the ‘true values’. The challenge confronting authentic leaders, on George’s account, is to recognize their true self, that which contains a set of inner ‘core values’. Citing a former Congressman, George contends that in “the inner circle are your core values” (2003: 16). The core values include integrity, caring, empathy and collaboration. According to George, it is essential to understand the difference between core values and personal preferences. If core values were identical to personal preferences, then the desire for money could qualify as a core value. Unlike personal preferences, core values are universal standards for ethical conduct. As George states, he believes in ‘a common worldwide ethical standard’ (2003: 131).

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For George, it is important to avoid relativizing the core values in order to retain the moral aspect of authentic leadership. For George, core values are not necessary identical to what a person believes is good. For example, if someone says – like Gordon Gecco – that ‘greed is good’, then George would not accept this statement, since lust for money cannot be ‘core value’ according to his concept of authentic leadership. Maintaining the universal aspect of the ‘core values’ is crucial for George in order to say that leaders like Skilling are inauthentic. Thus, distinguishing personal preferences from core values enables George to claim that inauthentic leaders ‘wound up sacrificing their values’ in the ‘quest for personal gain’ (2003: 1). Conversely, George tells the story that he once was offered the opportunity to acquire a company that had placed its headquarter offshore in order to avoid U.S. taxes. Nevertheless the likely financial rewards it offered, he immediately declined the proposal. ‘As I walked out of his office’, George explains, ‘I held onto my wallet and decided to cancel further talks with him’ (2003: 4).

Nothing illustrates the essentialist status of core values better than George’s discussion of feedback. According to George, Sims, McLean and Mayer authentic leaders are ‘willing to listen to feedback – especially the kind they don’t want to hear’ (2007: 102). George presents the story of Charles Schwab’s former CEO, David Pottruck, who was told that his colleagues did not trust him. Pottruck says:

That feedback was like a dagger to my heart. I [Pottruck] was in denial, as I didn’t see myself as other saw me. I became a lightning rod of friction, but had no idea who self-serving I looked to other people. Still, somewhere in my inner core the feedback resonated as true (George et al., 2007: 102; see also George, 2007: 74).

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While Pottruck absorbed the criticism, altered his behaviour and eventually gained the trust of his colleagues, George did not always respond to feedback throughout his professional career. On the contrary, in order to remain authentic, George had to ignore feedback from co-workers and supervisors, explaining that he listened ‘carefully to their advice but quietly rejected it’ (George, 2003: 30). In order to remain faithful to his inner core values, he found it necessary to dismiss the opinions of others. For George, it is crucial that leaders find their ‘own purpose instead of being buffeted by external pressures’ (Sparrowe, 2005: 421). George’s account of feedback seems to be contradictory, given that authentic leaders should both listen and ignore feedback. So how does George separate the authentic feedback from the inauthentic feedback?

The key phrase to emphasize in Pottruck’s story is that the feedback ‘resonated as true’ (George et al., 2007: 102). Although not immediately acknowledging that there was a problem, Pottruck sensed that there was a lack of correspondence between his immediate response and his core values. What separates authentic from inauthentic feedback, therefore, is the degree of correspondence between the message received and the core values located within the authentic self. If the feedback resonates with the inner core values, then it is authentic. If the feedback lacks resonance with the inner core values, then it is inauthentic. Authenticity, according to George, entails being ‘in touch with the depth of your inner being and being true to yourself’ (2003: 40).

We can note a similarity between George’s and Plato’s respective procedures for distinguishing authentic from inauthentic leaders. Recall that Plato installed the idea of the ‘model’ in order to separate the *true claimant* from the *simulacrum*, the king from the tyrant. While the king (the true claimant) imitated the divine herdsman (the model), the tyrant

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(the *simulacrum*) lacked such resemblance. The idea of the ‘model’, on Plato’s (1997c) account, provides a transcendent fixed-point from which different claimants can be evaluated (Deleuze, 1997: 137). Similarly, George introduces the idea of the inner ‘core values’ in order to separate authentic from inauthentic leaders. While authentic leaders are faithful to their inner core values, inauthentic leaders compromise them. We can see that the core values serve a crucial function in George’s view of authentic leadership. By appealing to the core values, George is able to distinguish authentic from inauthentic leaders. Failure to recognize the core values is precisely what caused the Enron scandal, according to George:

Recently I [...] described Arthur Anderson [the firm handling the auditing of Enron] as a tragedy, saying ‘you can spend fifty years in establishing your reputation and lose it in a day.’ A Dutch student challenged my characterization, ‘No, Bill, Anderson didn’t lose it all in a day. They sold their soul to their clients over the last five to ten years by compromising their values more and more, just to make money. What looks to you like a giant step in destroying documents was to them just another step in sacrificing values for greed.’ He was quite correct (George, 2003: 75, italics added).

Similar to Plato’s (1997c) idea of the ‘model’, the idea of the ‘core values’ provides a transcendental fixed-point from which George (2003) can evaluate leaders. Hence, leaders’ degree of authenticity can be assessed based upon their ability to resonate with their true self and recognize the core values. In order to attain authenticity, the actions, convictions and beliefs of the leader must be in accordance with the inner core values. Skilling is therefore inauthentic, according to George, because he sacrificed his inner core values in the ‘quest for personal gain’

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(2003: 1). The idea of the core values enables George to classify inauthentic leaders in a manner equivalent to what Plato (1997c) conceives of as *simulacra*: masters of disguise who lack any connection to the model (Deleuze, 1969/2004).

For George, Skilling is a false pretender, because he appears authentic but is actually inauthentic. On the surface, Skilling may proclaim to be a true leader. In reality, Skilling is but a deceitful pretender who sacrifices his inner core values for personal gain (George, 2003). But how do leaders identify their inner core values? How do leaders detect their true self? And how does George know that he is faithful to the inner core values? In order to answer these questions, George evokes the metaphor of a ‘moral compass’ guiding the leader towards the ‘true North’.

Leaders are defined by their values and their character. [...] These values define [leaders’] moral compass. Such leaders know the ‘true north’ of their compass, the deep sense of the right thing to do. Without a moral compass, any leader can wind up like the executives who are facing possible prison sentences today because they lacked a sense of right and wrong. (George, 2003: 20)

The metaphor of a ‘moral compass’ is widely adopted to characterize authentic leadership (see Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999; Shamir and Eilam, 2005). In a literal sense, George believes that the moral compass serves to steer clear of ethical dilemmas similar to an ordinary compass in navigation. While a navigation compass designates geographically the North Pole, the moral compass designates the ‘truth North’ of leadership decisions. The moral compass is supposed to equip the leader with an instrument capable of specifying the right choice in ethical dilemmas, of steering clear of ethical ‘reefs’ or pitfalls (see also George, 2007).

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Recall that Plato constructed the myth of the divine herdsman in order to distinguish the king from the tyrant, the true claimant from its *simulacrum*. Showing how the tyrant imitates the king but lacks resemblance to the divine herdsman, Plato is able to classify the tyrant as an inauthentic statesman. In a similar vein, George presents the allegory between the true self and the moral compass in order to separate authentic from inauthentic leaders. While inauthentic leaders imitate authentic leaders, they have no moral compass. By evoking the allegory between the true self and the moral compass, George manages to establish a foundation from which he can distinguish authentic from inauthentic leaders.

With the help of Deleuze (1969/2004: 64), however, we can see that the allegory between the moral compass and the true self is a myth because it contains a ‘circular structure’. The inner core values, with their ability to designate the morally right choice, are explained with reference to the moral compass. But the moral compass, in turn, is conceptualized by pointing towards the morally responsible decision, making the logic of George’s account circular. With the help of Deleuze’s reading of Plato (1997c), we can therefore see that George grounds the transcendent model of the true self in a myth of a moral compass.

Yet there is one crucial difference between George and Plato’s respective myths. While Plato (1997c) appealed to an *external* transcendent model designated by the divine herdsman ruling in the age of Cronus, George (2003) operates with an *internal* transcendent model designated by a ‘moral compass’ located within the leader. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw a comparison between these two myths because they serve similar functions and contain circular structures. Both myths provide a normative ideal from which leaders can be assessed and

evaluated. That is to say, both myths constitute foundations underlying George and Plato's respective procedures for authenticating the leader.

### **Deleuze's Inverted Platonism**

Having looked at George's account of authentic leadership, I will now turn to Deleuze's inverted Platonism. In his reading of Plato, Deleuze reveals not only the underlying motivation of Platonism, but also explores the possibility of overturning Platonism (1969/2004: 291). Deleuze remains sceptical of the Platonic procedure for separating the true claimant from the *simulacrum*, because it relies upon a myth. But Deleuze notices that there is one particular fragile point in which Plato's philosophy disintegrates. This takes place in Plato's (1997d) dialogue *Sophist* in which we find what Deleuze considers to be the 'most extraordinary adventures of Platonism' (Smith, 2006: 98). It is here that Plato (1997d) attempts to separate the true claimant from the *simulacrum* without appealing to a myth of the model. Deleuze (2004) notices that, in the absence of the myth, Plato is unable to tell the difference between the true claimant and the *simulacrum*. This is the case because Plato proposes a definition of the true claimant that could have been applied equally well to the *simulacrum*. In this way, Plato runs into a paradox. In effect, Deleuze argues that it was consequently 'Plato himself who pointed out the direction for the reversal of Platonism' (19868/2004: 294).

In the *Sophist*, Plato draws a distinction between Socrates and the sophist. While he considers Socrates to be the authentic bearer of knowledge, he views the sophist as a false claimant that pretends to be wise. At the end of the dialogue, he characterises the sophist as someone who 'imitates the wise' but does not possess knowledge of his own (Plato,



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1997d: 268c). The sophist is the *simulacrum*. But here, Deleuze remarks, Plato proceeds in a ‘paradoxical fashion’ (Smith, 2006: 98). Instead of reducing the sophist to a false copy, the *simulacrum* is suddenly conceptualized as a distinct person. In effect, Plato arrives at a conception of the ‘person who is really and truly a *sophist*’ (1997d: 268d, original italics) and thereby attributes to the *simulacrum* an authentic existence. By proposing this definition, the distinction between Socrates and the sophist is therefore blurred, because both have an authentic existence.

In light of this, Plato realizes, according to Deleuze, ‘that the simulacrum is not simply a false copy, but that it places in question the very notions of copy and model’ (1969/2004: 294). This insight, in Deleuze’s view, subverts the Platonic hierarchy between the model, the true claimant and the *simulacrum*. Instead of a false claimant that lacks resemblance to the model, Deleuze defines the simulacrum as a ‘system of internalized differences’ (1969/2004: 300) that should be evaluated on its own merits.

In Deleuze’s inverted Platonism, dialogue *Sophist* is of crucial importance, because it provides the basis for dismantling the Platonic hierarchy between the model, authentic claimant and the *simulacrum*. As we have seen, Platonism relies upon a hierarchy between the model, the authentic claimant and the inauthentic *simulacrum*. Yet, in Plato’s dialogue *Sophist*, this hierarchy breaks down, since the *simulacrum* is considered an authentic claimant. Consequently, the thing and the *simulacrum* cannot be evaluated based upon the resemblance to a transcendent ‘model’. This, in turn, provides the basis for a different understanding of the *simulacrum* that does not rely upon a circular myth of the model. As a consequence, Deleuze refuse to accept that different claimants should be evaluated on their degree of resemblance to a model.

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Instead, Deleuze believes that we need a different procedure for passing normative judgements.

Deleuze's 'inverted Platonism' has important implications for how to understand authentic leadership. Following Deleuze's inverted Platonism (1968/2004: 299), there is 'no possible hierarchy' in which we can categorize leaders according to the degree in which they are faithful to their core values. In line with Nietzsche, there is no 'rational foundation' of ethics (Knights and O'Leary, 2006: 132). For Deleuze, there is no true self underneath our social identities, because 'behind every mask there is not a true face, but another mask' (Smith, 2006: 104). As a consequence, Deleuze challenges us not to take values for granted by falling back on a circular myth of a moral compass. Instead, Deleuze's 'inverted Platonism' involves a stance that actively engages in a critique of the 'value of values' (1962/1983: 1). Such a critique should examine what we are inclined to do given the values that we have.

While discarding the Platonic procedure that we have seen to underlie George's (2003) account of authentic leadership, Deleuze (1997) does not dismiss the problem of selecting between claimants altogether. Deleuze's 'inverted Platonism' does not dissolve into the nihilistic stance that everything goes (Smith, 2007b). Instead, Deleuze maintains that the challenge is to develop 'completely different methods of selection' (1997: 137). Such methods, Deleuze continues, should not be based upon a circular myth that lays claim to a transcendent model, but should instead explore our immanent 'modes of existence' (1970/1988: 23). As Smith explains, Deleuze's alternative method prescribes selection based upon a 'purely immanent criterion' (2006: 115): that we pay attention to what we are inclined to do given the values that we have.

Ethics, in Deleuze's accounting, therefore does not consist of unconditional committing to moral values. Quite the contrary,

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unconditional commitment to moral values is what blocks the development of ethics in the first place, because it prevents us from calling into question the value of values (Smith, 2007). Similar to Foucault, Deleuze therefore contends that ethics ‘presupposes a *distance* from moral precepts and normative models of action and being’ that, in turn, fosters a ‘reflection of morality’ (Weiskopf, 2014: 155, original italics). Here we should be able to critical reflect on our own moral convictions and values. Consequently, Deleuze’s ‘inverted Platonism’ challenges us to provide an immanent assessment of authentic leadership rather than taking its moral values for granted. In what follows, I will argue that Deleuze’s ‘inverted Platonism’ can be used to revise the standard for judging leaders.

### **Reversing Authentic Leadership**

Deleuze’s (1969/2004) ‘inverted Platonism’ provides the basis for turning the relationship between ethics and values assumed by the concept of authentic leadership on its head. Authentic leadership presupposes that moral values, defined as those that support the collective good, will secure ethical conduct. This assumption can be found in George’s (2003) narrative, but also applies more generally to academic work about authentic leadership. For instance, Avolio and Gardner argue that authentic leaders are committed to ‘core values’ and are able to ‘align their values with their intentions and actions’ (2005: 324-5). Likewise, authentic leaders, in the view of Gardner et al., are committed to ‘core ethical values’ (2011: 1123). These scholars assume that a commitment to values that supersede self-interest will make authentic leaders ethically responsible (Michie and Gooty, 2005).

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Conversely, unethical behaviour, such as Skilling's criminal actions at Enron, is therefore considered an instance of betraying values.

Rather than assuming that values will ensure moral conduct, Deleuze holds that ethics involves critical reflection upon the 'value of values' (1962/1983: 1). The problem with assuming that values will secure ethical conduct is that it fails to acknowledge that leaders often 'behave immorally precisely because they are blinded by their own values' (Price, 2003: 67). We should not forget that many leaders throughout history have done much harm in the name of the collective good (for discussion, see Levine and Boaks, 2014). For instance, as Price emphasizes, President 'Truman almost certainly had the good of others in mind when he deviated from the general moral prohibition on killing civilians and authorized the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki' (2003: 74). While this is an extreme example, it serves to illustrate how leaders may fail to take moral decisions, because they are committed to values that supersede self-interest. Therefore, Deleuze argues that we cannot take values for granted, because they can potentially be used to legitimise unethical deeds.

This also changes how we conceive of Skilling's involvement in the scandals leading to Enron's collapse. As Levine (2005) argues, greed was not the primary motivation behind the actions of Enron's executives, but rather their fanaticism regarding the mission of reinvigorating the energy business. This mission, in turn, blinded the executives of moral considerations. The commitment of Enron's executives to a renewal of the energy industry enabled them to view 'accounting norms' as 'waiting to be manipulated and circumvented' (2005: 727). This is how Skilling could be convinced that he did 'God's work' (cited in Levine, 2005: 726). Far from considering themselves as criminals, executives of corrupt organizations often 'imagine themselves [to be] individuals of high moral

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standing' while they 'are actively engaged in work of deceiving employees and investors' (Levine, 2005: 730). Levine's observations show how a zealous commitment to a corporate mission does not necessarily ensure ethical conduct, but rather may result in devastating outcomes.

Exponents of authentic leadership may object that although corrupt leaders pretend to a high moral standing, they are actually inauthentic copies that betray their 'moral compasses' (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999). This objection, however, would be an *ad hoc* backward-looking defense. Since the 'moral compass' is conceptualized as leading to the ethically responsible decision, it can always be applied retrospectively to categorize corrupt leaders as inauthentic. But this argument fails to acknowledge that it is not in spite of values, but rather in virtue of values, that leaders often make morally questionable decisions.

My argument here is not only, as critical scholars have argued, that constructing categorical differences through metaphors such as the 'moral compass' may 'cloud our understanding' (Alvesson and Spicer, 2010: 41) of the dilemmas and controversies that normally surround leadership decisions (Rhodes, 2012: 1325). Beyond that, my point is that we should recognize that values are doubled edged swords that can be used for both good and bad purposes. On this basis, I want to challenge the common sense conviction that values secure ethical conduct embedded in the concept of authentic leadership.

Instead of dismissing Skilling as an inauthentic leader and stating that Enron overlooked the importance of authenticity, we should see that his commitment to the mission of the corporation may well have been what contributed to legitimizing his unethical conduct. While Bass and Steidlmeier (1999: 187) maintain that inauthentic leaders betray the 'organization's mission', we can see that Skilling was totally absorbed in

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Enron's mission of revolutionizing the energy industry. The point here is not to claim that Skilling was actually an authentic leader. Rather, the point is to acknowledge that we cannot draw a categorical distinction between good and bad leaders based upon generic concepts, such as the concept of authentic leadership, because moral values may potentially make leaders ignore or set aside ethical considerations. There is no doubt that leadership is 'intrinsically bound up with questions of ethics' (Eubanks, Brown and Ybema, 2012). This does not mean, however, that leaders in general or authentic leaders in particular are necessarily morally responsible (Levine and Boaks, 2014: 227).

On this basis, we can revisit George's account of Skilling. As we have seen, along with many other exponents of authentic leadership, George believes that 'core values' will ensure ethical conduct. This assumption leads George (2003) to argue that Skilling sacrificed his core values for personal gain. But instead of blaming Skilling's illegal dealings on the failure to acknowledge his 'core values', we should recognize that unconditional commitment to a corporate mission and the fanatic belief that one is doing "God's work" (Skilling cited in Levine, 2005: 726) may well be one of the reasons why leaders end up making morally questionable decisions (Price, 2003). Whereas George draws a categorical difference between authentic and inauthentic leaders based on the degree to which they are true to their core values, Deleuze's 'inverted Platonism' shows precisely why such a procedure is destined to fail, because leaders often commit unethical deeds as a consequence of being seduced by their values.

## **Conceptual persona: The Authentic Leader**

Drawing upon Deleuze, it is possible to reverse authentic leadership and construct the conceptual persona of the reversed authentic leader. The reversed authentic leader is not the one who unconditionally commits to values and places his or her faith in the ethical force of the ‘moral compass’, but rather the one who is aware that, while values can serve good purposes, they are always potentially dangerous. Such a leader knows that no leadership concept advocating a set of ‘core values’ or a ‘moral compass’ can ever guarantee ethical conduct. Instead of being a leader who consults his or her ‘moral compass’ in ethical dilemmas, the reversed authentic leader should know that such mythical metaphors cannot be trusted to make us morally responsible. Such a leader is always willing to call into question his or her own value commitments, because this is the only way that leadership can become open to ethics. The reversed authentic leader asks what he or she is inclined to do given the values that he or she holds. In this way, the reversed authentic leader becomes a *simulacrum* that must be evaluated in a way that ‘forbids the return of any transcendence’ (Deleuze, 1997: 137).

Being authentic will therefore involve being able to see how values can make oneself blind of ethical considerations. Following Deleuze’s inverted Platonism, the difference between reversed authentic leader and inauthentic leader does not hinge on whether one remains faithful or betrays a set of values, but rather the ability to call into question one’s own value-commitments. Viewed from this perspective, Skilling is not an inauthentic leader, because he sacrificed his values. Quite the opposite, Skilling is an inauthentic leader, because he failed to critical reflect on the way in which his mission of renewing the energy industry led him to

ignore accounting standards (Levine, 2005). Thus, Skilling lacked the ability to distance himself from his own value-commitments.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Leaders committed to the concept of authentic leadership confront the challenge of ensuring that they remain faithful to their true self. Through the reading of Bill George's book *Authentic Leadership*, this chapter has showed how George tries to distance himself from Jeffrey Skilling, the former CEO of Enron. While George distinguishes himself from Skilling by introducing the metaphor of the true self as a 'moral compass' pointing towards the 'true North', this metaphor for dealing with ethical dilemmas shifts the focus away from the real-life controversies, problems and dilemmas inherent in leadership practice. Instead of taking into account the inevitably incompatible demands and conflicts of interest confronting leaders, authentic leadership prompts the leaders to look inwards into their true selves, to consult their moral compasses. The metaphor of the true self as a moral compass, abstract as it is, both overshadows and suppresses the controversies that characterize leadership decisions.

The reading of George (2003) allows us to see how the concept of authenticity inscribes itself within a broader post-bureaucratic management discourse. Garsten and Grey show how the idea of a post-bureaucratic organization is based upon the replacement of a 'rule-based system of bureaucracy' by 'internalized rules of behaviour based upon common values' (1997: 214). The concept of authentic leadership operates in precisely such fashion. Ethical behaviour should not be generated by bureaucratic institutions and regulations, but rather by the individual leader's relationship towards his or her internalized 'core



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values' (George, 2003). This shift of perspective enables proponents of authentic leadership to view corporate scandals, such as Enron, not as revealing structural flaws of the post-bureaucratic organizations but as the result of flawed leaders: leaders who had ignored their moral compass.

The post-bureaucratic organization compensates for the absence of bureaucratic regulations by exerting a faith in the moral force of leadership and adherence to common values. In this respect, authentic leadership becomes a post-bureaucratic managerial technology that attempts to produce responsible conduct by configuring the true self as the ultimate basis for ethics at the expense of bureaucratic rules. In fact, George explicitly proclaims in his book that although acknowledging that some regulations were necessary to avoid a repetition of Enron, we do 'not need more laws' (2003: 5). Rather, we need authentic leaders with a 'deep sense of purpose and are true to their core values' (George, 2003: 5).

As du Gay emphasizes, in the 'aftermath of the corporate scandals at Enron, Worldcom, et al. the shine has somewhat been taken off of the tropes of revolutionary rule-breaking' (2008: 342). This rhetoric was central to Hamel's (2002) post-bureaucratic thinking. However, du Gay (2008) maintains that recent corporate scandals do not seem to have rendered post-bureaucratic thinking obsolete. On the contrary, the Enron scandal, according to Hamel (2007), shows precisely why we need visionary leaders with strong moral values. The concept of authentic leadership is designed for compensating for what would otherwise be viewed as the moral flaws of post-bureaucratic organizations.

Authentic leadership and post-bureaucratic organizational thinking go hand in hand because authentic leadership is grounded in personalized ethics that operate independently of bureaucratic and

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institutional regulations. This is why Hamel has recently called for a decentralized organizational structure that allows members to engage in entrepreneurial activities while simultaneously applauding George for demonstrating the importance of having a strong corporate ‘mission’ (2007: 171). In this way, Hamel can follow the line of thinking embedded in the concept of authentic leadership that ‘greed trumps higher-minded goals’ in Enron and retain the belief in the entrepreneurial ethos of the post-bureaucratic organization (Hamel, 2007: 171).

At first glance, the imperative that authentic leaders should consult their ‘moral compasses’ in ethical dilemmas might sound appealing (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999). Upon closer inspection, however, we can see that the circular structure embedded in the myth of the moral compass renders the concept of authentic leadership deeply problematic. The problem is that core values are no guarantee for ethical conduct. On the contrary, values may well be used to legitimize unethical conduct. Many corporate scandals, including the case of Enron, bear witness of the fact that leaders engage in unethical behaviour because they are seduced by their values and committed to a mission that exceeds their own personal interests.

Although Deleuze is sceptical of the Platonic hierarchy of the model, the true claimant and the simulacrum, his ‘inverted Platonism’ should not be considered a rejection of Plato’s philosophy, but rather a ‘rejuvenated Platonism and even a completed Platonism’ (Smith, 2006: 89). The point is therefore not to mobilize Deleuze’s philosophy as a weapon against authentic leadership, but rather to open up a discussion about the difficulty of separating good and bad leaders. Whereas the concept of authentic leadership draws a categorical difference between morally responsible and ethically corrupt leaders based on the degree to which they are true to their values, Deleuze’s ‘inverted Platonism’ shows

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precisely why such a procedure is destined to fail, because leaders often commit unethical deeds as a consequence of being seduced by their values. Therefore, Deleuze suggests as an alternative that we be aware that there is no moral foundation upon which ethics can be grounded. Instead, an evaluation of leadership must always look at what the leader is inclined to do given the values that she or he holds. In this way, the process of evaluating and selecting leaders becomes an immanent exploration of a leader's mode of existence.

In light of this, Deleuze's 'inverted Platonism' provides the basis for reversing the concept of authentic leadership. Instead of being committed to values, the reversed authentic leader is always willing to call into question his or her own values. On this basis, we can construct a conceptual persona of the reversed authentic leader who is not unconditionally committed to values defining the common good, but rather willing to call into question his or her own value commitments, because this is the only way that leadership can open up to ethics. The conceptual persona of the reversed authentic leader is therefore a *simulacrum* who must be evaluated on its own merits without recourse to transcendent values that remains scored of critical evaluation. In this way, the conceptual persona of the reversed authentic leader does not become an ready-made solution to the 'ethical crisis' that we can see in post-bureaucratic organization, but rather a basis upon which we can call into question the way in which values today converts ethics into a question of self-responsibility.

# Chapter 5:

## The Entrepreneur

*By 1983, the entrepreneur was the new culture hero.*

- Kanter (1990: 177)

### Introduction

In 1988, Gartner criticized mainstream entrepreneurship studies for asking ‘Who is an entrepreneur?’, claiming that the question was loaded with erroneous presumptions (Gartner, 1988). Traditional trait-based research had assumed that entrepreneurs share a common set of characteristics, such as the propensity for ‘risk-taking’ (Brockhaus, 1980) or a high degree of ‘self-reliance’ (Sexton and Bowman, 1985), from which one could crystalize a generic entrepreneurial personality. Empirical studies, however, tended to indicate that that ‘there is no “typical” entrepreneur’ (Bull and Willard, 1993: 187; see also Gray, 1998: 234).

According to Gartner (1988), the failure to pin down the essence of the entrepreneurial personality was due to a misguided theoretical approach. Instead of mapping the traits of entrepreneurs, Gartner suggested that scholars should pay attention to the entrepreneurial *process*, which he conceptualized as the ‘creation of organization’ (1988: 57). Using various theoretical perspectives (Steyaert, 2007a), entrepreneurship scholars have shifted to investigating the sequence of activities associated with entrepreneurship, such as the discovery, assessment and exploration of opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). This line of research has ‘done everything to draw the attention

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away from the individual entrepreneur in order to make space for understanding the complexity of the entrepreneurial process' (Steyaert, 2007b: 734).

Despite his emphasis on the importance of focusing on the entrepreneurial process instead of the entrepreneurial personality, Gartner (1988) cautiously maintains that it 'is difficult *not* to think' that entrepreneurs are 'special people who achieve things that most of us do not achieve' and that their accomplishments are 'based on some special inner quality' (1988: 58, original italics). The figure of the entrepreneur is frequently portrayed as that of a 'heroic creator' (Steyaert, 2007a) with divine capacities (Sørensen, 2008). Such heroic renderings are often criticized for being ethnocentric (Ogbor, 2000), gender-biased (Calas, Smircich and Bourne, 2009) and Westernized (Costa and Saraiva, 2012). In effect, critical scholars have laid emphasis on those aspects of entrepreneurship that are suppressed by conventional conceptions (Ahl, 2006; Verduijn and Essers, 2013; Williams and Nadin, 2013).

Although considerable critical energy has been devoted to demystifying the figure of the heroic entrepreneur (Armstrong, 2005; Jones and Spicer, 2005; Ogbor, 2000; Rehn, Brännback, Carsrud and Lindahl, 2013), the idea that entrepreneurs are unique individuals with special abilities seem remarkably resilient and continues to be widespread in social media and popular culture (Dodd and Anderson, 2007). Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers and Gartner note that in the wake of the global financial crisis, one might have expected, 'some drastic rethink of the unquestioning idealization of the entrepreneur' (2012: 531). However, this has not been the case. On the contrary, heroic images of entrepreneurs, such as Mark Zuckerberg, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Richard Branson, still seem to dominate the general perception of the entrepreneur. While particular entrepreneurs have failed (Olaison and

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Sørensen, 2014), the ‘entrepreneurial dream lives on!’ (Tedmanson et al., 2012: 532).

This chapter is about the difficulty of thinking beyond the fantasy of the heroic entrepreneur. Drucker notes that the entrepreneur is often portrayed as a ‘cross between Superman and the Knight of the Round Table’ (1985: 127). This idealized portrayal, Drucker continues, lacks correspondence to ‘real life practices’ (1985: 127). Actual entrepreneurs are ‘unromantic figures, and much more likely to spend hours on a cash-flow projection’ (Drucker, 1985: 127). But what Drucker fails to explain is why anybody would want to spend hours on cash-flow projection if not for the sake of acquiring the fame and fortune associated with the image of the Superman/Knight of the Round Table-like entrepreneur. Drucker does not consider the possibility that actual entrepreneurs might be driven by the fantasy of becoming a heroic figure that enjoys a life of luxury and fame.

According to Žižek, the particular role of fantasy is to create our drives, passions and desires. For Žižek, fantasy does not represent an imagined scenario wherein we attain the things we desire that are unachievable in real life. Rather, fantasy ‘constitutes our desire, provides its co-ordinates – it literally *teaches us how to desire*’ (Žižek, 2014: 26, original italics). I am not suggesting that all entrepreneurs are motivated by the prospect of emulating the success of Mark Zuckerberg, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates or Richard Branson. Rather, the point is to emphasize how the image of the heroic entrepreneur may operate as a fantasy that creates the desire to engage in entrepreneurial activities. While critical work on entrepreneurship tends to either look beyond or beneath the fantasy of the heroic entrepreneur, emphasizing instead those aspects of entrepreneurship suppressed by the figure of the heroic entrepreneur, this chapter develops a complementary critical strategy. Instead of simply

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eschewing the fantasy of the heroic entrepreneur, this chapter will confront the fantasy itself by drawing on Žižek's idea of 'traversing the fantasy' (2014: 30).

Traversing the fantasy, according to Žižek, does not mean to see 'through [the fantasy] and perceive the reality obfuscated by it, but to directly confront fantasy as such' (2014: 30). To do this, the chapter engages with one of the 'most famous and visually iconic entrepreneurs in the Western world' (Boje and Smith, 2010: 307), namely Sir Richard Branson. If there is a 'sublime object of entrepreneurship' (Jones and Spicer, 2005), then it is founder of the Virgin Group, who, Smith and Andersen claim, 'needs no introduction, being known worldwide' (Smith and Anderson, 2004: 134). As a way to engage with the heroic image of Branson, this chapter offers a reading of his autobiography *Losing My Virginity*, an international bestseller that has sold over two million copies worldwide.

By examining Branson's autobiography, this chapter bridges two emerging fields – narrative studies of entrepreneurship and critical studies of entrepreneurship. Narrative approaches to entrepreneurship have gained in number and momentum (e.g. Downing, 2005; Down, 2006; Gartner, 2007; Hjorth and Steyaert, 2004). As Steyaert explains, today 'there are so many stories, biographies, and myths told about and by entrepreneurs' present in society, making it fruitful to 'study them as cultural phenomena' (2007b: 743). Drawing attention to these stories has led to a 'narrative turn' (Hjorth, 2007) in entrepreneurship research. For instance, Cornelissen argues that studying biographies may provide 'new territory and new ways of theorizing about entrepreneurship' (2013: 701). This chapter intends to achieve this aim by focusing on Branson's autobiography.

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At the same time, a field of ‘critical entrepreneurship studies’ (Calas, Smircich and Bourne, 2009) has emerged, which seeks to engage with the ‘dark sides—the contradictions, paradoxes, ambiguities and tensions at the heart of entrepreneurship’ (Tedmanson et al., 2012: 532). This chapter attempts to bridge these two fields by showing how a narrative approach enables us to confront the paradoxes inherent in the concept of entrepreneurship. Following Zizek, we will achieve this by viewing narratives as fantasies that coordinate the desires that constitute the entrepreneurial subjectivity.

This chapter proceeds as follows. The first part of the chapter briefly reviews the critique directed at the figure of the heroic entrepreneur. While critics have argued that the figure of the heroic entrepreneur is an ideological construct that is marked by lack, I argue that it is better conceptualized as a fantasy that constitutes desire. The second part of the chapter shows how Zizek’s idea of ‘traversing the fantasy’ can be mobilized as a critical strategy for engaging with the figure of the heroic entrepreneur, exemplified by the narrative of Branson presented in his autobiography. The third part of the chapter analyses two anecdotes from Branson’s autobiography informed by Zizek’s idea of traversing the fantasy.

I argue that these two stories constitute different logics of desire. On the one hand, Branson’s narrative creates the desire for *transgression* (overcoming oneself). On the other hand, Branson’s narrative creates the desire for *authenticity* (becoming oneself). These two logics of desire are in opposition, and this generates a crisis in the mode of subjectivity conveyed by Branson’s autobiography. The final part of the chapter links the analysis to the broader critique of the figure of the heroic entrepreneur. I will argue that Zizek’s idea of traversing the fantasy



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opens up room for a critical strategy to confront the idealized image of the entrepreneur prevalent in social media and popular culture.

### **The Heroic Entrepreneur**

Today, we often hear that the figure of the entrepreneur embodies ‘ephemeral qualities – freedom of spirit, creativity, vision, zeal’ (Burns, 2001: 1). Entrepreneurs are the ‘heroic figurehead of capitalism’ (Williams and Nadin, 2013: 552), capable of launching new products, services and modes of production into the economy. Yet, despite such focused attention on the figure of the entrepreneur, attempts to fully grasp the entrepreneurial personality have consistently proved to be unproductive (Jones and Spicer, 2005). As a result, entrepreneurship research has been marked by a ‘lack of a conceptual framework’ (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000) and persistent inability to characterize the entrepreneurial personality (Shaver and Scott, 1991; Venkataraman, 1997). The lack of a conceptual framework has rendered the concept of entrepreneurship vague, ambiguous and abstruse.

The ambiguity pertaining to entrepreneurship has been exploited to serve ideological purposes, according to Armstrong (2001: 525), because it produces an illusionary representation of reality that effectively distorts and obscures the actual material interests and power relations between social classes. Entrepreneurship is frequently cited as a cause of economic growth. But the mechanisms putatively linking entrepreneurship to economic growth are rarely cited, leaving the internal dynamics of the concept a ‘mystery’ (Armstrong, 2005). Armstrong notices that entrepreneurship is often ‘used simply as a post hoc recognition that a new venture has been created’ (2001: 526) without specifying the actual processes taking place. This, in turn, allows the

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concept of entrepreneurship to be ascribed the positive function of creating economic value even while it remains empty and without substantive content. In effect, Armstrong point out that entrepreneurship ‘dissolves into something akin to mysticism or religious belief’ (2001: 534).

Along similar lines, Obgor argues that prevalent ‘myths about the entrepreneur’ serve to ‘reinforce the existing power structure of the dominant groups in society’ (2000: 607). In particular, Obgor maintains that the dominant discourse on entrepreneurship conveys the ‘myth’ of the entrepreneur as a ‘masculine’ white male possessing ‘super-normal qualities’ (2000: 607). This myth effectively excludes other social groups from other social classes, a different gender and ethnicity. Jones and Spicer take Ogbor’s (2000) and Armstrong’s (2001) critiques one step further and claim that the persistent failure to theorize the essence of entrepreneurship shows, following Lacan, that the ‘entrepreneur is a marker [...] of lack; the entrepreneur is indefinable, and necessary so; the entrepreneur is an “absent centre”’ (2005: 236).

Picking up on Jones and Spicer (2005), Kenny and Scriver elaborate the view that the entrepreneur is an ‘empty’ or ‘floating signifier’ (2012: 619). In their understanding, concepts have no intrinsic meaning disconnected from their social and historical embeddedness. In the Irish setting, Kenny and Scriver observe the presence of partially fixed empty signifiers of entrepreneurship. Instead of regarding the signifier of the entrepreneur as consistently remaining empty, their discourse analysis of entrepreneurship in Irish policy documents shows that ‘meaning can be partially fixed in ways that effectually support hegemonic discourses in particular empirical contexts’ (Kenny and Scriver, 2012: 628). Along similar lines, Costa and Saraiva (2012) show that the discourse on

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entrepreneurship takes on a hegemonic structure that restrains the signifier.

### **The Fantasy of the Heroic Entrepreneur**

Drawing on Žižek (1989/2008), Jones and Spicer (2005) argue that entrepreneurship constitutes a 'sublime object'. Žižek defines a sublime object as 'a positive, material object elevated to the status of the impossible Thing' (1989/2008: 77). At a distance, the sublime object appears to possess divine and extraordinary qualities. But once directly encountered, the sublime object loses its aura and dissolves into an ordinary thing, because its seductive appearance can only be sustained through distance. 'If we get too near [the sublime object]', Žižek explains, then 'it loses its sublime features and becomes an ordinary vulgar object' (1989/2008: 192). Thus, Žižek connects the sublime object with the Lacanian Real, because it designates the 'embodiment of the lack in the Other, in the symbolic order' (1989/2008: 192).

Jones and Spicer suggest that famous entrepreneurs are paradigmatic examples of sublime objects. The public image of Microsoft founder Bill Gates, for instance, tends to elevate him to a 'heroic status as if there is something unique to his psyche that is the ultimate cause of his economic success' (Jones and Spicer, 2005: 237). But if we had the chance of actually meeting Gates in person, Jones and Spicer speculate, then we would 'find that Bill Gates is just an ordinary human being with perfectly normal and human neuroticism' (2005: 237). Most of us, however, never have the opportunity to meet famous entrepreneurs in person. And if we do, we are often placed at a distance that keeps us from getting close to them. Instead, we read about famous entrepreneurs in

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newspapers and see their portraits on television. Such distance effectually preserves the sublime aura surrounding entrepreneurs.

Jones and Spicer are acutely aware that the sublime features of entrepreneurs are rarely relinquished, so they emphasize that the 'entrepreneurship discourse clearly does exist' and that it 'offers a narrative structure to the fantasy that coordinate desire' (2005: 237). The role of fantasy, according to Zizek, would thus be 'an attempt to overcome, to conceal this inconsistency, this gap in the Other' (1989/2008: 139). Kenny and Scriver maintain that 'as an "empty" signifier [entrepreneurship] can be (almost) whatever one desires it to be' (2012: 617). I would suggest, instead that we reverse this formula: The figure of the entrepreneur is not an empty shell that can be manipulated through desire, but rather a fantasy that 'coordinate(s) desire' (Kosmala, 2013: 4).

Viewed from this perspective, narratives by famous and successful entrepreneurs circulating in popular culture and social media may reveal the fantasies constituting their desire to become entrepreneurial. In this way, Zizek (1989/2008) reverses the way that we normally regard the relationship between desire and fantasy. The role of fantasy is not to image the realization of desires that we cannot fulfil in reality, but rather to make us capable of desiring in the first place. Zizek argues that:

To put it in somewhat simplified terms: fantasy does not mean that, when I desire a strawberry cake and cannot get it in reality, I fantasize about eating it; the problem is, rather, how do I know that I desire a strawberry cake in the first place? This is what fantasy tells me. The role of a fantasy hinges on the fact that "there is no sexual relationship," no universal formula or matrix guaranteeing a harmonious sexual relationship with one's partner: on account of the lack of this universal formula, every subject has to invent a fantasy of his own, a private formula for the sexual

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relationship - for man, the relationship with a woman is possible only inasmuch as she fits his formula. (Zizek, 2006: 40-41, original italics)

Zizek's reversal of the conventional relationship between desire and fantasy allows us to address the question 'who is an entrepreneur?' without recourse to an essentialist mode of thinking. Although previous research seeking the essence of the entrepreneurial personality has proved to be unsuccessful, Steyaert (2007a) maintains that asking the question 'who is an entrepreneur?' is not without its merits. However, the question should not be formulated on the basis that there exists a generic entrepreneurial identity. Rather than assuming that the entrepreneurial personality can be characterised by set of unified traits, Steyaert (2007a) contends that the question should be approached from a narrative point of view, showing how the 'the stories that people tell' (Gartner, 2007: 613) constitute different modes of subjectivity.

If we adopt a narrative approach, reading Branson's autobiography enables us to explore the development of entrepreneurial subjectivity based on the stories he presented in the book. The subject, which for Zizek is characterized by a fundamental 'lack' (Johnsen and Gudmand-Høyer, 2010), requires symbolic identification to form a coherent identity. The point, therefore, is not only that subjectivity is produced discursively, but also that subjectivity emerges from the imaginary attempt to escape the traumatic real through symbolic structures. In this way, Zizek shows that the role of fantasy is 'not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel' (1989/2008: 45). In turn, the 'core of subjectivity is a void filled in by fantasy' (Böhm and De Cock, 2005: 283).

According to Zizek (1989/2008), fantasy should not be equated with what we normally associate with illusionary and false perceptions,

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because it provides the necessary support for the subject to relate to social reality, enabling us to integrate with other people and desire objects. Desire does not belong to the inner realm of the subject, but rather pertains to the 'realm of the symbolic Other, the relational structure of language that makes up society' (Böhm and Batta, 2010: 355). While proposing this structure of desire, Žižek argues that the subject's symbolic identification can never be complete, because it always involves a 'misrecognition' in which the subject mistakes the fantasy of a coherent whole self with its ontological lack (Hoedemaekers, 2010; Jones and Spicer, 2005; Roberts, 2005).

Just as the subject is marked by lack, the symbolic order by means of which the subject attempts to construct a coherent identity is similarly marked by ontological impossibility, symbolic aporia and a traumatic void (Driver, 2013; Jones and Spicer, 2005; Sköld, 2010). Thus, the subject's attempt to identify with his/her symbolic identity is destined to fail because the symbolic order never can provide sufficient support for the constitution of an identity. As part of the social fabric that provides fantasies, Branson's autobiography becomes a 'privileged site for the drama of subjectivity itself' (Johnsen and Gudmand-Høyer, 2010: 340). The point, therefore, is not to dismiss Branson's autobiography as a fantasy as opposed to actual reality. Instead, Žižek's (2006) formulation of fantasy enables us to read Branson's autobiography as literary instruction that teaches us how to desire, as we attend attention to the injunction it creates. Rather than looking at the text as merely a descriptive account of Branson's life, this shift of perspectives lets us focus on how the book constitutes a logic of desire in relation to entrepreneurial subjectivity.

## **Traversing the Fantasy of Richard Branson**

Before turning to his autobiography *Losing My Virginity*, it is important to note that a series of unauthorized biographies of Branson has been published in past decades, including Bower's two books *Branson* (2000) and *Branson: Behind the Mask* (2014) and Jackson's *Virgin King: Inside Richard Branson's Business Empire* (1998). What these unauthorized biographies share in common is their tendency to reveal the dark secrets behind the popular perception of Branson. These books paint a completely different picture of Branson than the one we find in *Losing My Virginity* (1998). Informed by Bower (2000) and Jackson (1998), Armstrong (2005: 88) argues that while Branson is widely celebrated as 'the iconic entrepreneur of our times', the reality behind Branson's success is anything but admirable.

Rather than being viewed as the driver of innovation at Virgin, Armstrong (2005) claims that Branson would be better characterized as a 'parasite' on the creative people associated with the company. Branson's ability to use 'tactical empathy' – that is, establishing trusting personal relationships that he could later exploit for his own advantage – enabled him to gain control of the company and thereby cash out the profit from what had actually been generated by a collective effort. Underneath the glamorous surface of Branson's public image hides a story of manipulation, greed and power struggle. Branson's public image is therefore an ideological construct – in the classical Marxian sense – that effectually distorts the actual social circumstances that have made Virgin a multinational corporation. In effect, Armstrong argues that 'the mode of entrepreneurship outlined here [through analysing Branson], is not the Schumpeterian engine of innovation at the heart of the capitalist

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economy, but a social and economic pathology to which that economy is chronically vulnerable' (2005: 103).

At first sight, demystification of Branson may seem like an efficient strategy for debunking the fantasy of the heroic entrepreneur. But upon closer inspection, we can see that there is a major limitation to Armstrong's critical strategy. Armstrong's critique is derived from disclosing the gap between the popular perception of the entrepreneur as the source of value creation and the realities of Virgin's success, implicating Branson's character as an 'emotional con-artist' (2005: 102). Armstrong's critique is to expose that Branson does not possess the qualities normally ascribed to him by the prevailing popular myth. On the contrary, he takes all the glory for initiatives that actually emerged from the collective around Virgin.

By exposing the gap between the normative ideal and the actual reality, Armstrong attempts to annihilate the Schumpeterian idea of the entrepreneur as the engine of innovation. Yet, despite this intention, this conclusion is not logically warranted. What Armstrong does show is that Branson fails to fulfil the qualities of the Schumpeterian ideal of an entrepreneur and maybe casts doubt on whether Branson should be considered an entrepreneur at all. But this does not mean that entrepreneurship as such should be seen as an 'economic pathology to which that economy is chronically vulnerable' (Armstrong, 2005: 103). To the contrary, Armstrong's analysis shows that Branson may not be legitimately considered a heroic entrepreneur. But the *fantasy* of the heroic entrepreneur remains operative. Ultimately, the Schumpeterian idea of the entrepreneur as engine of innovation is scorned from critical scrutiny.

Therefore, instead of looking at the reality behind the fantasy of Branson, this chapter proposes to confront the fantasy itself. While



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Bower suggests in his recent biography that the ‘challenge is to discover the truth behind the mask’ of Branson (2014: xvi), this chapter wants to call into question the mask itself. To do so, the chapter will take Branson’s autobiography *Losing My Virginity* at face value and inquire into the fantasies that it creates. Although the stories in by Branson’s autobiography may be phantasmic narratives, they may nonetheless produce ‘real effects’ (Zizek, 2012: 69) as they circulate in popular and social media and help fuel the prevalent injunction to become entrepreneurial. Considering the biographies that have questioned Branson’s personal account, such an approach may seem unreasonable. But this is precisely the point. As De Cock and Böhm argue, a ‘Zizekian reading of popular management discourse would by definition be “unreasonable”; it would fully assume the tenets of the discourse and push these to the point of their absurdity’ (Cock and Böhm, 2007: 828).

Instead of demystifying the phantasmic narratives that we regularly encounter in social media with the intention to ‘liberate us from the hold of idiosyncratic fantasies and enable us to confront reality the way it is’, Zizek (2012: 689) proposes the opposite strategy: To fully equate the fantasy with reality and then spell out all the radical implications that follow. This critical strategy is what Zizek calls ‘traversing the fantasy’ which basically ‘means, paradoxically, to fully identify oneself with the fantasy—with the fantasy which structures the excess that resists our immersion in daily reality’ (2012: 689). The point of undertaking such a reading is to confront the fantasy as such rather than eschewing it.

In broad strokes, Branson’s autobiography tells the story of how he managed to transform a student magazine into a global business empire while simultaneously engaging in various attempts to break records, such as flying a hot air balloon across the Pacific or reclaiming the blue ribbon for fastest ferry across the Atlantic. While being a businessman and doing

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extreme sports may seem vastly different, for Branson, these activities actually followed the same logic, since they posed challenges he felt deeply motivated to overcome. The book, which is structured chronologically oscillated between telling anecdotes about how he managed to turn Virgin from a mail order service to a global company and reporting the details of his extravagant lifestyle, hanging out with celebrities, vacationing at his private island in the Caribbean, speed boating and flying hot-air balloons.

In what follows, we will focus on two anecdotes from the book. The first tells about Branson's childhood memory of learning to swim while the second is about a tax scam that he orchestrated to save Virgin at an early stage of its development. These stories have been chosen because they illustrate the 'drama of subjectivity' (Johnsen and Gudmand-Høyer, 2010: 340) played out in the book. Although the book is an autobiography, it should be read in relation to Branson's other books that are explicitly aimed as he states in one of their subtitles, at revealing the 'secrets they won't teach you at business school' (2012). These books make use of many of the same stories that are told in Branson's autobiography, but turn them into explicit lessons that the reader should follow in order to become a successful entrepreneur. As Branson states, entrepreneurship is 'the core of everything that I have done for the last forty-plus years' (2012: 2). Instead of challenging such claims, we will fully accept that this is the case and inquire into what they reveal about his entrepreneurial subjectivity.

### **Learning to Swim: The Desire for Transgression**

In his seminal work on entrepreneurship, Schumpeter talked about the entrepreneur as someone who is 'swimming against the stream' (cited

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in Boje and Smith, 2010: 308). One of the memories Branson recounts from his childhood is his experience of learning to swim. Around the age of four or five, Branson made a bet of ten shillings with his aunt Joyce that he could learn to swim within two weeks. At this time, Branson spend his holidays with his aunt and uncle in Devon, approximately a twelve-hour drive from his home. Despite countless efforts, Branson was unable to coordinate his body and learn the right technique. Branson recalls that he 'spent hours in the sea trying to swim against the freezing-cold waves, but by the last day I still couldn't do it' (Branson, 1998/2009: 16). Every attempt ended up with Branson being dragged beneath the surface and swallowing water. At the end of the vacation, Branson's parents came to drive him home. Branson had still not learned to swim, but his aunt reassured him that the bet was still on for next year. As Branson drove home with his parents and his two aunts, he spotted a river along the road.

'Daddy, can you stop the car, please?' I said.

This river was my last chance: I was sure that I could swim and win Auntie Joyce's ten shillings.

'Please stop!' I shouted.

Dad looked in the rear-view mirror, slowed down and pulled up on the grass verge.

'What's the matter?' Aunt Wendy asked as we all piled out of the car.

'Ricky's seen the river down there,' Mum said. 'He wants to have a final go at swimming.'

'Don't we want to get on and get home?' Aunt Wendy complained. 'It's such a long drive.'

'Come on, Wendy. Let's give the lad a chance,' Auntie Joyce said. 'After all, it's my ten shillings.' (Branson, 1998/2009: 16-17)

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Branson's father agreed to stop the car, so Richard could get a final chance to prove his ability to swim. While the river must have looked calm from the distance, it proved to have a strong current. Yet, Branson was determined to show that he could swim, even if it meant crossing the dangerous stream.

I pulled off my clothes and ran down to the riverbank in my underpants. I didn't dare stop in case anyone changed their mind. By the time I reached the water's edge I was rather frightened. Out in the middle of the river, the water was flowing fast with a stream of bubbles dancing over the boulders. I found a part of the bank that had been trodden down by some cows, and waded out into the current. The mud squeezed up between my toes. I looked back. Uncle Joe and Aunt Wendy and Auntie Joyce, my parents and sister Lindi stood watching me, the ladies in floral dresses, the men in sports jackets and ties. Dad was lighting his pipe and looking utterly unconcerned; Mum was smiling her usual encouragement. (Branson, 1998/2009: 17)

At first, Branson struggled to swim, as he had done so many times before. But he was determined to cross the river. 'I had to win that ten shillings' (Branson, 1998/2009: 17).

I braced myself and jumped forward against the current, but I immediately felt myself sinking, my legs slicing uselessly through the water. The current pushed me around, tore at my underpants and dragged me downstream. I couldn't breathe and I swallowed water. I tried to reach up to the surface, but had nothing to push against. I kicked and writhed around but it was no help.

Then my foot found a stone and I pushed hard. I came back above the surface and took a deep breath. The breath steadied me, and I relaxed. I had to win that ten shilling.

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I kicked slowly, spread my arms, and found myself swimming across the surface. I was still bobbling up and down, but suddenly felt released: I could swim. (Branson, 2009: 17)

On the surface, Branson explicitly proclaims in one of his books entitled *Screw It, Let's Do It: Lessons In Life* that it is important to 'have faith in yourself', 'believe in can be done' and 'never give up' (Branson, 2006: 1). These imperatives resonate nicely with Branson's childhood memory of learning to swim. Despite repeated failures, he retained his faith in himself, believed that he could learn to swim and never gave up. Eventually, Branson succeeded. But this story actually conveys a much stronger message. As the story makes clear, Branson is not a naturally talented swimmer. On the contrary, he struggled immensely to win the bet. Moreover, he experienced fear once he stepped into the river. Despite these challenges, his mind remained determined to learn to swim. So Branson's physical dispositions and psychological inclinations are only boundaries that he has to overcome in order to succeed. Read as a fantasy, the story describes a subject that desires transgression in the sense of overcoming boundaries hindering achievements. This point is further reinforced by another story in the autobiography.

As Branson explains, he suffers from dyslexia, a condition that was considered a sign of either stupidity or laziness at the time he was growing up (1998/2009: 31). However, Branson did not avoid situations where he was exposed to his lack of skills in writing and spelling. Quite the opposite, Branson voluntarily signed up for an essay competition that he eventually won and subsequently founded a student magazine that he later developed into his first commercial business. The entrepreneurial subject, following this logic, demands: Not only should you have faith in yourself, you should have faith that you can overcome yourself. Not only should you believe that it can be done, you should believe that everything

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can be done. And not only should you never give up, you should be willing to sacrifice everything, even if it involves risking your life, in order to ensure that you succeed.

On this point, the desire for transgression is radically different from the conventional wisdom expressed by Drucker that you should 'improve your strengths' while evading your 'weaknesses' (2005). Rather, the underlying message in Branson's story is that you should turn your weaknesses into strengths. The entrepreneurial subject projected in Branson's autobiography is an 'entrepreneur of the self' (du Gay, 1994). Entrepreneurs shape 'their own lives through the choices they make among the forms of life available to them' (Rose, 1999: 230). Thus, the entrepreneurial subject is expected to be continuously 'transcending social constraints' (Sköld, 2010: 371) and to overcome his/her own limits. The entrepreneur should not only challenge the prevalent assumptions of the organization, but also constantly challenge him- or herself. The desire for transgression is therefore the entrepreneurial subject's prime driver. We can situate the desire for transgression within a wider social development.

As Žižek notices, 'permanent transgression already is a key feature of late capitalism' (2012: 332-333). The important point is not only, as Marx and Engels observed over a century ago, that 'bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production' (1848/1998a: 10). For Marx and Engels, capitalism advances by constantly replacing old modes of production with new ones. This was later described by Schumpeter as a process of 'creative destruction', which designates the way that capitalism 'revolutionizes the economic structure *from within*, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one' (1942/1994: 83, original italics). But there is an

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important difference between the processes Marx and Schumpeter describe and the idea of ‘permanent transgression’ (Zizek, 2012: 333).

According to Schumpeter, capitalism can operate under two fundamental conditions, namely ‘circular flow’ and ‘creative destruction’ or what he elsewhere terms ‘adaptive response’ and ‘creative response’ (1989: 222). Creative destruction, following this logic, occurs when the steady rhythm of ‘circular flow’ is disrupted, and subsequently gives rise to a ‘new combinations’ of products, services or modes of production that were not previously available. A creative response takes place ‘whenever the economy or an industry or some firms in an industry do something else, something that is outside of the range of existing practice’ (1989: 222). However, Schumpeter’s theory hinges on the assumption that the economy can operate under either ‘static’ and ‘dynamic’ conditions (Schumpeter, 1942/1994: 103). However, the rhetoric of post-bureaucratic management thinking challenges this assumption, arguing that stability is ‘a thing of the past’ (Peters, 1988: 9).

Echoing Benjamin, Thrift says that today’s capitalism has entered into a ‘permanent stage of emergency’ where ‘emergency becomes the rule’ (Thrift, 2000: 674). The entrepreneurial subject engages in a continuous ‘transgression and destruction of boundaries’ that, in turn, generates ‘a new bond between economic grammars of production and consumption, and cultural grammars of the modern self’ (Costea et al., 2005: 141). Permanent transgression is not a dialectic movement between a stable and unstable condition of the economic system that, in turn, drives economic growth. Rather, permanent transgression is a continuous creative response that requires firms to overcome the boundaries that impede change, development and innovation.

However, there is a fundamental impossibility that lives at the core of the desire for transgression. This impasse stems from the *aporia* of

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pushing limits. As Branson explains, his ‘interest in life comes from setting myself huge, apparently unachievable, challenges and striving to raise above them’ (1998/2009: 194). It does not fundamentally matter whether these challenges are swimming across a river, launching a new business or flying an air balloon. What is important is to transgress boundaries. By doing so, Branson seeks to ‘live life to the full’ (1998/2009: 194). But one can never completely achieve a full life according to this logic, because there are always new challenges that have not yet been accomplished. Branson wants to ‘push myself to my limits’ (1998/2009: 212). But limits are only hindrances that have not yet been transgressed. As he puts it: ‘I firmly believe that anything is possible’ (Branson, 1998/2009: 258).

But if anything is possible, then it is impossible to live a full life because there is no limit against which one can reach wholeness. Only that which is finite can be complete. Everything else remains potentially open. At age forty, Branson faced a crisis because he lacked motivation for new challenges. Having turned Virgin into a successful business and crossed the Pacific by air balloon, he felt that he had ‘run out of purpose in my life’, having ‘proved myself to myself in many areas’ (Branson, 2009: 293). Failure to permanently transgress boundaries is therefore a constant threat. Every time ‘we feel sure that we have fulfilled a desire, we find out that there is something missing still. We want more. We want something else’ (Driver, 2009: 410). His escape from this impasse was to organize for a Virgin plane to travel to Bagdad in the midst of the Golf conflict to rescue hostages in return for medical supplies. This enabled Branson to find a new spark of life as he entered a territory of challenges that he had never encountered before.

However, this story also bears witness to the paradoxical fact that achieving a full life can only be accomplished by living a life that always



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remains incomplete as one is exposed to tasks that seems unachievable and must overcome further obstacles that limit one's opportunities. Consequently, Branson seeks fullness, yet is intrinsically unable to achieve finitude. But this is precisely the point: the 'realization of desire does not consist in its being "fulfilled," "fully satisfied," it coincides rather with the reproduction of desire as such, with its circular movement' (Zizek, 1991: 7). What drives the desire for transgression is precisely the impossibility of finitude. There is only one limit: death. As Branson remarks ironically, 'death and taxes are the only sure-fire things in life' (2013: 137).

### **The Tax Scam: The Desire for Authenticity**

In the 1960s, Branson went from being editor of the magazine *Student* to selling records by mail. The company was called *Virgin Mail Order*, a name invented by one of the female employees at *Student* magazine to signal that they were 'completely virgins at business' (Branson, 1998/2009: 77). At first, the business was successful. But in the spring of 1971, the business started recording deficits. Although sales were rising, *Virgin Mail Order* had problems generating any profits. Branson recalls that 'all in all we were gradually losing money, and before long we were £15,000 overdrawn' (1998/2009: 92). On one occasion, Branson received a large record order from a client in Belgium. He decided to load a van with records and deliver the order himself. Because the records were not intended for sale in the UK, Branson was allowed to buy the records from the publishers without paying tax.

At the French border, papers were stamped stating that Branson was carrying exported goods. Unlike the Belgian authorities, however, the French authorities charged tax on records. When Branson arrived in

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France, he tried to convince the French authorities that the records were intended to be sold in Belgium. The French authorities were not convinced and demanded that he pay import tax on the records. In effect, Branson was forced to return to the UK without being able to deliver the order to Belgium. But when he arrived in the UK, Branson realized that:

... I was now carrying a vanload of records that had apparently been exported. I even had the customs stamp to prove it. The fact that the French customs had not allowed me through France was unknown. I had paid no purchase tax on these records, so I could sell them either by mail order or at the Virgin show and make about £5,000 more profit that I could have done by legal rout. Two or three more trips like this and we would be out of debt. (Branson, 1998/2009: 93)

By coincidence, Branson had discovered a way to get Virgin out of debt. Branson was well aware that he was breaking the law and committing a felony. But he decided to repeat the con until he had raised enough money to pay all of Virgin's outstanding bills. Besides, Branson was accustomed to bending the rules to achieve his objectives. He explains that: 'It was a criminal plan, and I was breaking the law. But I had always got away with breaking the laws before' (Branson, 1998/2009: 93).

Not surprisingly, Branson was not the only one who had conceived of this plan and before he knew it, the authorities were investigating Virgin. On the evening before the Customs and Excise officers was planning to raid one of Virgin's stores, Branson received a warning from an official who was sympathetic with the company. This gave Branson the chance to move all the records that were marked with a fluorescent E stamp, indicating that the records were intended for export, to another store, thus making it impossible for Customs and Excise officials to

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corroborate Virgin's illegal activities. But on the day of the raid, the officials decided to investigate all of Virgin's stores and eventually came upon the marked records. Branson was arrested.

I couldn't believe it. I had always thought that only criminals were arrested: it hadn't occurred to me that I had become one. I had been stealing money from Customs and Excise. It wasn't some great game about me getting one up on the Customs and Excise office and getting off scot-free: I was guilty. (Branson, 1998/2009: 99-100)

Branson had to spend the night in prison. As he was lying in his bed in his prison cell, Branson had a revelation that he describes in the following manner:

That night was one of the best things that has ever happened to me. As I layed in the cell and stared at the ceiling I felt complete claustrophobia. I have never enjoyed being accountable to anyone else or not being in control of my own destiny. I have always enjoyed breaking the rules, whether they were school rules or accepted conventions, such as that no seventeen-year-old can edit a national magazine. As a twenty-year-old I had lived life entirely on my own terms, following my own instinct. But to be in prison meant that all that freedom was taken away. (1998/2009: 100)

As Branson realized, breaking the law had the consequence of depriving him of his freedom. With this insight, Branson 'vowed to myself that I would never again do anything that would cause me to be imprisoned' (2009: 100). Bail was set to £30,000. But the company did not have any money. Instead, Branson's mother decided to mortgage her house to pay the authorities. When Branson met his mother outside court, they both started crying.

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‘You don’t have to apologise, Ricky,’ Mum said as we took the train back up to London. ‘I know that you’ve learnt a lesson. Don’t cry over spilt milk: we’ve got to get on and deal with this head on’ (Branson, 1998/2009: 101)

Branson’s former school master had predicted that he would ‘either go to prison or become a millionaire’ (1998/2009: 49). Ironically, it was a short stay in prison that made Branson determined to become a millionaire. What Branson realized in the prison cell was that he ‘needed to work twice as hard to make Virgin a success’ (1998/2009: 102). This was not just related to the fine he had to pay to Customs and Excise, but instead, was an entire ethos of work that had become embedded in him to such an extent that he finally states: ‘avoiding prison was the most persuasive incentive I’ve ever had’ (Branson, 1998/2009: 102). By learning this lesson, the same lesson his mother cites, Branson turned the moment of claustrophobia in the prison cell into ‘one of the best things that has ever happened to me’ (2009: 100). To redeem the wrongs that he had committed, risking the whole company and placing his family in debt, Branson swore an oath in his prison cell. Since he was isolated from his social surroundings in the prison cell, he did not make the promise to his family or his company. Instead, Branson swore an oath to himself, taking on the commitment to abide by the law as a self-reflexive relationship that would serve to maintain authenticity.

Branson’s earlier story conveyed the desire to continuously transgress boundaries. Unlike the desire for transgression, the second story operates according to a completely different logic of desire. Rather than challenging himself, Branson makes the promise to remain ‘true to oneself’ (Garsten and Grey, 1997: 222) by staying committed to the promise he has sworn. The theological references are clear. The prison cell resembles a monastic cell. Lying at night staring at the ceiling becomes an epiphany in which he is called to repay for *the rest of his life*

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the guilt acquired through the import tax scam. In a Weberian sense, Branson commits to a secularized work ethic that requires him to pay back his debt through hard work (Garsten and Grey, 1997). As we can see, the story resonates with a more general desire for authenticity, offering ‘access to an inner moral voice of conscience, an intuitive feeling or sentiment that gives us moral guidance as to how we should act’ (Guignon, 2008. 278).

The self is presented here as a ‘source of continuity and trust’ (Garsten and Grey, 1997: 218) that at the same time is seen as the locus of dynamic and reflexive practices. Insight into one’s ‘inner voice’ (Garsten and Grey, 1997: 225), triggered by the experience of claustrophobia in the prison cell, becomes the hallmark of how ‘true’ one is to the self one has propagated. Branson realizes that he has to assume responsibility for staying in ‘control of my own destiny’ (1998/2009: 100). According to this line of reasoning, ethics is grounded neither in social relations nor bureaucratic regulations, but rather in personal responsibility (Cock and Böhm, 2007). The imperative of ‘just be yourself’ (Fleming and Sturdy, 2009) is premised on continuous self-examination and self-evaluation, a fact that opens the self to become the site for interventions and local tactics. As with Branson’s promise to abide by the law, ‘integrity of the self comes from creating a personal belief system’ (Garsten and Grey, 1997: 223).

However, the belief system that Branson enacts stands in sharp contrast to the desire for transgression. Branson wants to remain true to the self while at the same time wishing to transgress boundaries, a process that often involves breaking the law. According to Žižek, the fantasy haunting the modern subject is not that we are estranged and alienated from our true selves, but on the contrary, that there is a ‘real self hidden beneath our ‘phantasmic identities’ (Žižek, 1999/2009: 330).

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Stripped of its phantasmic support, the subject is only a void marked by lack. For Žižek, the search for a 'true self' can only result in a 'identity crisis', because what the subject will find once it is isolated from its social surroundings is nothing but a 'void of idiocy pure and simple' (1999/2009: 373). Yet, the processes that Branson undergoes are more than solely spiritual experiences.

### **Conceptual Persona: The Entrepreneur**

Reading two anecdotes from Branson's autobiography, the chapter has identified two fantasies that designate contradictory logics of desire. According to the logic of transgression, the entrepreneurial subject seeks to transgress boundaries. Here the figure of the entrepreneur considers boundaries as potential obstacles that must be overcome. Yet, the logic of transgression is characterized by a paradoxical structure. While transgression is intended to arrive at a state of fulfilment, its own logic suggests that this ideal is unattainable. According to the logic of authenticity, the entrepreneurial subject seeks to remain within the confines of the true self and stay loyal to its intentions. In this logic, the figure of the entrepreneur considers the true self as an inner moral voice that provides the basis for ethical behaviour. As a result of being caught between two contradictory logics of desires, the entrepreneurial subject dwells between the desire to overcome oneself (transgression) and the desire to stay true to oneself (authenticity). In this light, the entrepreneurial subject is doomed to an existence characterized by permanent crisis that results from of being constituted across contradictory logics of desire.

From a common sense perspective, one might consider the impossibility of overcoming oneself (*transgression*) and becoming

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oneself (*authenticity*) as holding back the actualization of the entrepreneurial personality. Following this line of argument, becoming a successful entrepreneur, as described in Branson's public narrative, can only take place after one has simultaneously overcome oneself (*transgression*) and become oneself (*authenticity*). With Žižek, however, we can turn this relationship upside down. Rather than obstructing the actualization of the entrepreneur, it is the impossibility of transgression and authenticity that fuels the desire for entrepreneurship. To put it in slightly different terms, the impossibilities inherent to the figure of the entrepreneur are precisely what make the figure appealing. Based on this description, we can construct the conceptual persona of the 'traversed entrepreneur'. Unlike the heroic figure of the entrepreneur, the conceptual persona of the traversed entrepreneur is constituted on a circular production of desire. The impossibilities of transgression and authenticity are the conditions under which the heroic figure of the entrepreneur gains its appeal and durability.

The conceptual persona of the traversed entrepreneur is not a normative ideal that one should strive to emulate. Instead, the conceptual persona of the traversed entrepreneur allows us to understand why the heroic figure of entrepreneur is so attractive in the first place. In other words, the conceptual persona of the traversed entrepreneur gives us an indication of how the post-bureaucratic image of thought installs structures of desire, which operate on the premise that they can never be fully attained. Here the impossibilities of overcoming oneself (*transgression*) and becoming oneself (*authenticity*) become the fundamental conditions under which the desire of entrepreneurship is produced. Therefore, the failure to identify the true entrepreneurial personality does not imperil the popularity of the heroic figure of the entrepreneur, because this figure maintains itself as a phantasmic

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symbol producing desire only on the condition that transgression and authenticity can never be fully manifested.

Describing the conceptual persona of the traversed entrepreneur allows us to see that the persistent failure to answer the question ‘Who is an entrepreneur?’ is not a weakness of the post-bureaucratic image of though but rather its strength. The crises resulting from the impossible ideals within the shared fantasy of entrepreneurship create a logic of desire that enhances rather than detracting from the attractiveness of the figure of the entrepreneur. They help the figure of the figure of the entrepreneur rise into an unattainable ideal in the mundane setting of everyday life. But it is precisely because this figure cannot be actualized that it continues to be idealized despite the persistent failure to specify the true nature of the entrepreneur.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Critical entrepreneurship studies have long questioned the fantasy of the heroic entrepreneur that is so prevalent in popular culture by exposing its ideological functions and lack of empirical support. Building on the critique of Ogbor (2000) and Armstrong (2001), Jones and Spicer argue that the notion of the entrepreneur should be considered as an ‘empty signifier, an open space or “lack” whose operative function is not to “exist” in the usual sense but to structure phantasmic attachment’ (2005: 235; see also Kenny and Scriver, 2012). While Jones and Spicer (2005) emphasize that the figure of the entrepreneur lacks substantive content, this chapter has shown that the popular image of the entrepreneur, as exemplified by the autobiography of Richard Branson, operates as a phantasmic support to structure the entrepreneur’s desire.



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The figure of the heroic entrepreneur is not primarily marked by lack, but is instead a fragmented fantasy that has been continuously fuelled and refuelled by public images, media stories, autobiographies and other cultural expressions. This fragmented fantasy, in turn, constitutes desire. Branson's autobiography functions as a 'phantasmic attachment' (Jones and Spicer, 2005) that serves to instruct the reader about how to desire entrepreneurship. The lack at the heart of entrepreneurship is effectively concealed by the endless stream of cultural expression that shapes the modes of entrepreneurial subjectivity.

Scholars associated with critical entrepreneurship studies have often attempted to expose the 'dark sides of entrepreneurship' (de Vries, 1985) by showing the sharp contrast between the glamorous image of the heroic entrepreneur and the reality of entrepreneurship, which can involve fraud, failure and tragedy (Olaison and Sørensen, 2014). Based on Zizek's (2014; 2012) idea of traversing the fantasy, this chapter has tried to develop a complementary critical strategy to reveal the internal logic of the fantasies directing Branson's narrative. Instead of accepting the prevailing figure of the heroic entrepreneur in popular culture and social media, this chapter has shown that the popular image is fraught with 'contradictions, paradoxes, ambiguities and tensions' (Tedmanson et al., 2012: 532).

Reading Branson's autobiography, it is apparent that we do not have to contrast the heroic images of entrepreneur with social reality in order to expose its problematic nature, because the nature of the heroic image of the entrepreneur is inherently fraught with paradox. Although Branson tries to convey a heroic story of his life, showing how he has managed to turn a student magazine into an international global firm while simultaneously engaging in extreme sports, the chapter has shown the inherent contradictions, paradoxes and ambiguity of his narrative.

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The point, however, is not to dismiss prior critical work that aims to uncover the reality lurking behind the image of the heroic entrepreneur (Armstrong, 2005), but rather to supplement this critique with an analytic strategy that subjects the fantasy itself to serious critical scrutiny.

Therefore, this chapter has asked what the entrepreneur wants, desires, wishes and needs according to the injunctions created by Branson's autobiography. On the one hand, we have seen the fantasy that constitutes the desire to transgress boundaries. According to this fantasy, the entrepreneurial subject seeks to overcome every limit in order to live a full life. Yet, it is impossible to achieve a full life according to this logic, because every stage presents the potential for exploring new challenges, and this launches the transgressive subject on an endless hunt for new boundaries to overcome (Costea et al., 2005). On the other hand, we find the fantasy that constitutes the desire for authenticity. The entrepreneurial subject conceptualizes a true self as a safety-break to ensure ethical conduct and prevent violation of the law (Garsten and Grey, 1997).

The public portrayal of Zuckerberg, Jobs, Gates and Branson is part of a social reality we encounter every day, and it affects the way we perceive entrepreneurship and think about the role of the entrepreneur in society (Dodd and Anderson, 2007). Rather than contrasting the image of heroic entrepreneur with social reality, we should directly confront these underlying fantasies and ask what these fantasies ask of us and how they shape our desire. This approach enables us to transverse the fantasy of the heroic entrepreneur by spelling out the absurd implications of entering their modes of subjectivity and by showing that these images are inherently contradictory, paradoxical and ambiguous.

# Part III

# **Chapter 6:**

## **The Political Ontology of Post-Bureaucracy**

*Philosophy is not the owl of Minerva that takes flight after history has been realized in order to celebrate its happy ending; rather, philosophy is subjective proposition, desire, and praxis that are applied to the event.*

- Hardt and Negri (2000/2009: 48-49)

### **Introduction**

Ethics is often considered the basis of politics. For instance, social contract theory views the establishment of the political realm as the result of a consensus reached by the future members of society. However, this theoretical view presupposes that ethical decisions can take place in an apolitical sphere that exists prior to the formation of any social alliance. Conversely, this conception of the relationship between ethics and politics fails to realize that ethical decisions are always made within a political configuration that predetermines the range of conceivable, imaginable and viable alternatives. If we ask the classical Kantian question of ethics, “What shall I do?”, this question is always formulated within a specific social arrangement that constitutes different modes of existence and modalities of being, leading us to think about the nature of the good deed in a specific manner. Contrary to the orthodox view that

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ethics grounds politics, we should rather consider that it is politics that is the basis of ethics, because every ethical decision takes place within a political sphere.

While one might pursue this line of argument, Deleuze and Guattari offer a much more radical thesis. According to them, not only does politics precede ethics, but ‘politics precedes being’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1970/1987: 203). What Deleuze and Guattari allude to here is that ontology, understood as the basic determination of the structure of being, cannot simply be taken as foundational to politics, because the formation of an ontological order is in itself the expression of a political constellation. Therefore, no ontological foundation can provide a definitive basis for politics, because every determination of being already contains an intrinsic political dimension. Consequently, Deleuze and Guattari turn ontology itself into a political problem, opening up what Patton calls ‘political ontology’ (2000: 9). Following this line of thought, politics is not only tied to a distribution of power and coordination of interests, but also involves a concern for how ontology is produced. The radical implication of this view is that every determination of being must be conceived as a political configuration.

Platonism can serve as an example. As we saw in Chapter 4, the categorization of being into a metaphysical hierarchy consisting of the transcendent ‘model’ (*Idea*), the ‘thing’ (authentic claimant), and the *simulacrum* (inauthentic claimant) provides the basis for passing normative judgement. While the authentic claimant is deemed ‘good’ by virtue of its resemblance to the model, the *simulacrum* is dismissed as a ‘bad’ due to its lack of resemblance. The metaphysical hierarchy of Platonism represents a political configuration that enables us to make value-laden judgements. As I have previously argued, this Platonic logic is pertinent to the concept of *authentic leadership*. The figure of the

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authentic leader is considered the good leader because he or she is faithful to the *model* of the ‘moral compass’ (George, 2003). In sharp contrast, the inauthentic leader is the bad leader, or unworthy of the title of a leader at all, since he or she betrays the core values in favour of self-interest. The categorization of leaders according to their degrees of authenticity, therefore, implies a political logic that provides the basis for making moral assessments.

We can also find a political logic at work in the post-bureaucratic concepts of *management innovation* and *entrepreneurship*. These concepts convey different modes of existence and modalities of being, expressed through the psychosocial types of the creative manager and the entrepreneur, which define the basis for conducting moral evaluations. For instance, the figure of the creative manager is characterized by his or her desire to produce new modes of organization and to depart from the orthodox management paradigm. The concept of *management innovation* divides the organizational landscape into a normative distinction between the ‘poisonous’ traditional modes of management and the ‘cure’ for this poison, which is to produce radically new modes of management that spark creativity, change and innovation within the organization (Hamel, 2007). As for the figure of the entrepreneur, we found a tension between the desire to transgress boundaries and the desire to ‘overcome oneself’ (*transgression*) and to ‘be oneself’ (*authenticity*).

By evoking the concepts of the *pharmakon*, the *simulacrum* and *fantasy* in response to the respective problems raised by the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur, this thesis has engaged with the post-bureaucratic image of thought in an attempt to destabilize its structure and invent alternative conceptual personas. Herein lies the political significance of Deleuze and Guattari’s

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(1991/1994) conception of philosophy as the vocation of creating concepts in response to problems (Patton, 2000). What philosophy can do, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is to intervene in our modes of existence by creating paradoxical concepts that subvert, destabilize and contravene our habitual logic of reasoning, thereby setting the scene for imagining alternative ways of thinking. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994), philosophy evolves not only by creating totally new concepts but also by reinventing old concepts in response to new problems. Therefore, according to Patton, the value of concepts is ‘determined by the use to which they can be put, outside as well as within philosophy’ (2000: 6).

By means of staging encounters with Gary Hamel’s popular management handbook *The Future of Management*, Bill George’s semi-autobiographic self-help tome *Authentic Leadership* and Richard Branson’s autobiography *Losing My Virginity*, this thesis has generated three conceptual personas. These conceptual personas challenge the common sense portrayal of the psychosocial types of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur. Instead of committing to a sequential procedure to reinvent management, the conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager paradoxically views the *conditions of impossibility* for invention as the *conditions of possibility* for invention. Instead of remaining true to his/her ‘inner values’, the conceptual persona of the reversed authentic leader questions the *value of being faithful to core values*. Instead of representing a heroic figure, the conceptual persona of the traversed entrepreneur reveals the *circular* and *impossible* structures of desire represented by the logics of transgression and authenticity.

These conceptual personas of the deconstructive creative manager, reversed authentic leader and the traversed entrepreneur should not be

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considered external to post-bureaucratic management thinking. To the contrary, these conceptual personas reflect three internal subversions within the post-bureaucratic image of thought that allow us to reconceptualise the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. Consequently, this thesis has strived toward an immanent reversal of the post-bureaucratic image of thought by exploring the paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities that confront the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur. In this way, this thesis has not only provided a diagnosis of the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur, but also '*intervene[d]* in the world by rearranging its symptoms in thought' (Raastrup Kristensen et al., 2008: 2, original italics).

In this chapter, we will look further into the ways we can use the concepts of Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek to subvert, destabilize and contravene the political ontology of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. The aim of this chapter is not to situate the model of the post-bureaucratic organization within a broader neo-liberal structure. While it is evident that post-bureaucratic management belongs to what Dean calls the 'neoliberal regimes and rationalities of government' (2014: 159), we should recognize that the managerial concepts and psychosocial types populating the post-bureaucratic image of thought contain their own immanent political logic. In order to explore this political logic, I will show how the theoretical tension between Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek (see Buchanan, 2011; Patton and Protevi, 2003) can cast a different light on the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur.

Up to this point, the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur have been investigated from three different



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perspectives. But what happens if we allow the philosophical differences between Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek to play out in relation to the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur? How does the deconstruction of the creative manager relate to the immanent reversal of the authentic leader? In what way does Deleuze's view on the creative force of being influence Derrida's emphasis on the impossibility of invention? And will the traversal of the fantasy of the entrepreneur be affected by Deleuze's emphasis on the productive nature of desire?

Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek are often viewed as representatives of incommensurable theoretical positions. Establishing such categorical divisions, however, denies the fact that Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek borrow considerably from each other and that their philosophical positions are intimately linked. Therefore, we should recognize that one reason that there is a strong urge to divorce Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek is precisely because they owe so much to each other. Yet, we should also acknowledge that there are substantial theoretical tensions between Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek and be aware of how their ideas suggest conflicting views on certain questions. In this chapter, my aim is neither to contrast Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek to each other nor to establish a harmonious constellation between them. Instead, my aim is to show how we can profit intellectually from combining Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek (see Patton, 1996, 2003; Sørensen, 2004). In effect, this chapter preserves the differences between Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek while simultaneously mobilizing their concepts for the shared purpose of inverting the post-bureaucratic image of thought. My goal is therefore to think with Derrida AND Deleuze AND Zizek (Styhre, 2002).

## The Metaphysics of Management

It is often noted that Derrida and Deleuze hold different positions regarding ‘metaphysics’ (Smith, 2003). For his part, Derrida (1982: 12) was concerned with the question of the ‘closure of metaphysics’, a problem that was inspired by Heidegger’s (1973) reflections upon the ‘end of philosophy’ (Critchley, 1999). Here metaphysics consists of determining the relation between *transcendence* and *immanence*. Transcendence refers to that which lies *beyond experience* – ‘a world behind the world’ (Adorno, 1965/200: 3). By contrast, immanence refers to that which lies *within experience* – the sensible and empirical world. According to Heidegger (1961/1991b: 7), metaphysics has dominated Western thought. Platonism, for instance, insists on the existence of the ‘supersensuous’ (*essence*) that forms the doctrine of ‘true being’ and stands in opposition to ‘sensuous’ experience (*appearance*) (Heidegger, 1961/1991a: 162). The problem of metaphysics consists of determining the relationship between *essence* and *appearance*, between the *universal* and the *particular* and between the *supersensuous* and the *sensuous*.

Against this backdrop, it is no wonder that philosophy and management research are commonly kept apart. While philosophy deals with abstract metaphysical problems having to do with the ontological structures of being, management research is believed to be occupied with studying the mundane and everyday affairs of monitoring, delegating and supervising work processes within organizations. But as this thesis has shown by engaging with the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur, contemporary management thinking is loaded with metaphysical presuppositions, as reflected in the conceptual apparatus of popular management handbooks, self-help tomes and autobiographies of famous businessmen.

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Within the post-bureaucratic image of thought, we find a series of binary oppositions, such as the ones between the ‘new’ and the ‘old’ (*management innovation*); the ‘true self’ and the ‘false self’ (*authentic leadership*) and the ‘transgression’ and ‘authenticity’ (*entrepreneurship*), which are inherited from Western metaphysics. With the increased focus on innovation, change, authenticity and entrepreneurship in post-bureaucratic organizations, contemporary management has become increasingly metaphysical (for discussion, see Lash, 2007; Raastrup Kristensen, 2009).

This metaphysical turn in management thinking is not exclusively tied to the post-bureaucratic image of thought, but also pertains to Critical Management Studies (CMS), according to du Gay and Vikkelsø (2013). Thus, CMS has become progressively ‘metaphysical’ through its reliance on the transcendental concept of ‘the full human being’ (du Gay and Vikkelsø, 2013: 266). The metaphysical construct of the ‘the full human being’, in turn, provides the basis for a condemnation of the post-bureaucratic management technologies employed in contemporary organizations because of their dehumanizing, colonizing and alienating effects. But parallel to this turn of events in critical and mainstream management thought, the post-Heideggerian tradition, including Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek, has been marked by a strong critique of metaphysics. du Gay and Vikkelsø also offer a critique of metaphysics. Taking issue with the metaphysical turn in organization studies, du Gay and Vikkelsø maintain that the field should go beyond transcendental concepts by returning to what they call ‘pragmatic empirical organizational analysis’ (2013: 275).

Here du Gay and Vikkelsø (2013) draw a distinction between the ‘metaphysical stance’ and the ‘empirical stance’ in organization studies. While the former involves scepticism about experience and commitment

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to high theory, the latter involves scepticism about high theory and commitment to empirical experience. They find support for the ‘empirical stance’ in classical management theory, which remains dedicated to the task of conducting empirical studies of formal organizations. In order to counter the metaphysical stance, du Gay and Vikkelsø suggest that organization studies should refrain from transcendental speculation that morally privileges change, entrepreneurship and innovation, and instead develop ‘precise “empirical concepts” that have a clear and pragmatic reference to organizational reality’ (2013: 252).

What du Gay and Vikkelsø (2013) overlook is that the distinction between the ‘metaphysical stance’ and the ‘empirical stance’ is itself a *metaphysical opposition* that relies upon a set of conceptual distinctions, such as the distinction between theory/practice and concept/experience. As Adorno notes, whether ‘one is *for* metaphysics or *against* metaphysics, both positions are metaphysical’ (2002: 9, original italics). Accordingly, we cannot escape metaphysics by merely being *against* the ‘metaphysical stance’ in organization studies. So instead of following du Gay and Vikkelsø’s (2012) recourse to pragmatism, I will reflect on the difficulty of ‘overcoming metaphysics’ and show that this philosophical problem has important implications for the political ontology of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. Everyday language, including the terminology we commonly use to describe organizations, does not merely provide an innocuous account of the current state of affairs, but instead carries with it ‘presuppositions inseparable from metaphysics’ (Derrida, 1982: 19). For this reason, we need to be careful to avoid the naive belief that we can simply free ourselves from metaphysics and arrive at a neutral conceptualization of organization.

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For Heidegger, the 'end of philosophy' does not have to do with the completion or lack of continuation of metaphysics, but rather, in line with Nietzsche's *reversal of Platonism*, signals that all the '*essential possibilities* of metaphysics are exhausted' (Heidegger, 1961/1991b: 148, original italics). According to Heidegger, metaphysics culminated in Nietzsche's doctrine of *will to power* which defines the 'innermost essence of being' (Heidegger, 1977: 79). For Heidegger, Nietzsche's doctrine of *will to power* neither privileges the 'supersensuous' over the 'sensuous' nor the other way around. Instead of viewing it as naturally given, Nietzsche regards the opposition between the 'supersensuous' and the 'sensuous' as the expression of a historically contingent *will to power* – that is, a specific determination of being. So Heidegger maintains that Nietzsche was the '*last metaphysician* of the West' (1961/1991b: 8, original italics), for he tried to short-circuit Platonic metaphysics. With Nietzsche, metaphysics reaches a deadlock that thought is unable to move beyond. But this limit does not prevent the continuation of metaphysics in the domains of science and technology (Critchley, 1999).

Unlike Heidegger and Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari insist that 'the death of metaphysics or the overcoming of philosophy has never been a problem for us' (1991/1994: 9). Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the closure of philosophy is far from complete. Deleuze, according to Smith, operates '*strictly immanent* to metaphysics' (2003: 50, original italics) by forging new concepts and formulating alternative problems that reinvent metaphysics in new domains of thought. While Deleuze (1997) attacks the idea of transcendence, a doctrine which he believes was initiated by Plato, his thinking does not reject the idea of metaphysics as such. Instead, Deleuze deems it necessary to invent a new kind of metaphysics that goes beyond the Platonic duality between *true being* (supersensuous) and *false being* (sensuous) by circumventing the

distinction between transcendence and immanence. To accomplish this, Deleuze's immanent ontology refuses to subordinate immanence to transcendence, suggesting that immanence is 'immanent only to itself' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 45). In this way, Deleuze commits to 'the ontological proposition: Being is univocal' (1968/2001: 35).

Arguably, Deleuze and Derrida cannot be contrasted along the trajectories of *immanence* and *transcendence* (Patton and Protevi, 2003: 6). Although Derrida is concerned with the problem of overcoming metaphysics, he is aware that this Heideggerian quest itself is a strictly *philosophical problem* that is trapped within the domain of metaphysical speculation (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1993: 38). Derrida elaborates on this enigma. On the one hand, Derrida (1982: 12) emphasizes that the 'end of philosophy' designates a *transgression* that moves beyond the conventional paradigm of metaphysics premised on the distinction between *transcendence* and *immanence*. But on the other hand, this very *transgression*, according to Derrida, reinscribes itself within the paradigm of metaphysics by representing an act of philosophical speculation. What Derrida is alluding to here is an ambivalence about the problem of overcoming metaphysics. Thus, Derrida stresses that the 'closure of metaphysics is a moving limit that restores each transgression and transgresses each restoration' (Critchley, 1999: 80).

### **Transcending the New**

Notwithstanding the fact that both Derrida and Deleuze offer compelling critiques of Platonic metaphysics and its insistence on a sharp distinction between transcendence and immanence, it is important to emphasize that their philosophical approaches suggest two profoundly different ways of theorizing two concepts embedded in the post-

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bureaucratic image of thought, notably the concepts of creativity and authenticity. The concept of creativity can provide a point of departure for illustrating the differences between Derrida and Deleuze. As we have previously seen, there is an obsession with 'creativity' in the new economy (Thrift, 2005). Creativity is usually defined as the 'production of new and useful ideas' (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby and Herron, 1996: 1155) and the term is commonly associated with the 'novel', 'unique' and 'unexpected' (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999: 3).

In this light, creativity must be considered a 'metaphysical concept' (Bröckling, 2006), because it does not refer to an empirical state of affairs or what lies within experience, but rather designates that which *transgresses* or *lies beyond* our current horizon of experience. For this reason, creativity has traditionally been associated with the transcendental, such as the divine and sacred sphere of God (Pope, 2005). On this note, Plato is also held to represent a 'mystical' (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999) approach to creativity, reserving the capacity for producing genuine novelty to the supremacy of a divine being. In this view, the creative person is merely 'an empty vessel that a divine being would fill with inspiration' (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999: 4). As Heidegger acutely observes, in modern times, creativity and the ability to produce the new have been rehabilitated in the form of a human capacity that can even be activated in corporations to improve innovation. Heidegger writes: 'Creativity, previously the unique property of the biblical god, becomes the distinct mark of human activity. Human creativity finally passes over into business enterprises' (1977: 64).

As part of this conversion, organizational and management theorists have been preoccupied with demystifying creativity by depriving the concept of its spiritual and theological connotations (Bilton, 2007). In order to do so, they turn creativity into an 'operational concept' that

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corresponds to 'novel' and 'useful' human activities that can be empirically studied by means of social scientific methods (Amabile, 1996; Amabile et al., 1996; Oldham and Cummings, 1996). Here, creativity assumes the 'function of the employee's personal characteristics, the characteristics of the context in which he or she works, and also the interactions among these characteristics' (Shalley, Zhou and Oldham, 2004: 935). Rather than being exclusively reserved to a transcendent God or a set of privileged geniuses, we are currently witnessing a 'democratization of creativity' (Bilton, 2007) wherein all people in principle have the ability to produce novel and useful ideas (Kampylis and Valtanen, 2010). The post-bureaucratic image of thought converts creativity into a human attribute and quality.

This demystification of creativity must be situated within a wider process of secularization in modernity. According to the secularization thesis, modernity is characterized by the elimination of metaphysical baggage, mythical narratives, and theological niceties in order to clear the way for a purely objective and naturalized worldview (see Adorno and Horkheimer, 1947/2007). This development is stimulated by scientific and technological progress. The metaphor of the enlightenment reflects the image of illuminating the dark corners of the world by means of reason. In this context, Weber talked about the 'disenchantment of the world' (1991: 155). Paradoxically, as Adorno and Horkheimer (1947/2007) argue, modernity has not effectively substituted truth for myth, but instead replaced one myth with another. For Adorno and Horkheimer (1947/2007), enlightenment, with its belief in rational calculability, scientific progress and utility, has become the prevalent myth that dominates our way of thinking in modern society.

Echoing Adorno and Horkheimer's (1947/2007) critique of enlightenment, Agamben (2007) demonstrates that the process of



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secularization in modernity has not succeeded in eradicating the metaphysical and theological presuppositions inherent in Western thinking, but rather blended the *sacred* (the divine sphere) and the *profane* (the earthly sphere) to such an extent that today, they are nearly impossible to keep apart. For Agamben, secularization is ‘a form of repression’ (2007: 77) of the sacred. Yet, the sacred, according to Agamben, remains contained within modernity without necessarily being recognized. As a result, Agamben concludes that we are caught in a ‘zone of indistinction’ between the *sacred* and the *profane* that leaves us unable to clearly distinguish between these two spheres. Despite being suppressed, theological metaphysics resurfaces in popular notions of leadership and entrepreneurship. Sørensen (2008) shows how the portrayal of the entrepreneur takes on the character of a ‘divine creator’ who remains deeply wedded to theological metaphysics and Grint (2009) argues that leadership operates on the basis of separation, sacrifice and silence, all of which are associated with the sacred (see also Śliwa et al., 2012).

According to Derrida, it is ‘impossible to take up a concept and not, at the same time, remain bound to the implications that are inscribed in its system’ (Figal, 2010: 226). Accordingly, once we subscribe to the concept of creativity, we are forced to enter a conceptual domain that is heavily burdened by metaphysical baggage, mythical narratives and theological niceties. The consequence of trying to suppress these metaphysical presumptions can have highly paradoxical outcomes. For instance, in order to manage creativity, organizational scholars have argued that it is necessary to theorize the nature of these concepts, including the ‘new’, ‘unique’, ‘original’ and the ‘unexpected’ (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999), by giving them rigid and generic definitions. Yet

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Rickards and De Cock (1999: 239) see an 'ontological paradox' in the attempt to determine the essence of these notions.

As a consequence of constructing a theory of creativity, the post-bureaucratic image of thought seeks to represent novelty as part of a general model. Yet, the novel, by its constitutive nature, is that which did not exist before or that which has not yet arrived in experience. But paradoxically, a generic theory of creativity would strive to convey the nature of novelty within a confined and restrained framework, thereby reducing creativity to a pre-conceived conceptual formation. Only phenomena that corresponded to this prior conceptualization would be recognized as creativity while anything genuinely original that transgressed and contravened the theory would either be ignored or classified as uncreative. Ironically, such a theory would necessarily reduce the novel into the expected, the new into the old, and the original into the unoriginal, consequently defeating its own purpose (see Osborne, 2003; Rehn and De Cock, 2009; Rickards and De Cock, 1999).

The result of constraining creativity in a prefigured conceptual construction can be counter-productive, because the discursive formation operates as a disciplinary mechanism that ultimately standardizes the creation of the new (Prichard, 2002). Drawing on Deleuze, Jeanes argues that the 'pre-given important of creativity, and the way we think about creativity, actually prevents us from being truly creative' (2006: 129). The dominant conception of creativity turns into a discursive formation that ironically 'normalizes' (Prichard 2002: 266) the production of novelty and thus hamper genuinely imaginative thinking. Consequently, Rehn and De Cock argue that the concept of creativity challenges us to 'think creatively about creativity' (2009: 223) in order for the concept to retain its originality, genuineness and novelty. In this context, Deleuze and Derrida provide us with resources for thinking

creatively about creativity. Yet, their manners of doing so are profoundly different.

### **The Impotence of Creativity**

Deconstruction seeks to push thought to the margin of what we can think. This margin always involves an ambivalence that is designated by the *aporia* between binary oppositions. While Derrida contends that deconstruction should ultimately enable us to move beyond our present horizon of experience and transgress into a new domain of thought, this transgression always trembles at the edge between the possible and impossible. For Derrida, the *aporia* between the 'possible' and 'impossible' is therefore the constitutive principle by which the new can enter into experience. Rather than 'destroying the oppositions' between binary oppositions, Rasche explains that Derrida attempts to highlight that by 'acknowledging their mutual dependence one can create something new' (2011: 255). Transgression is always caught in the gulf between what is possible and what is impossible. In terms of our purposes here, deconstruction allows us to construct a conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager who does not create within a preconceived pattern, but instead stays committed to the impossible task of transgressing the dominant conceptions of the new.

Conceptualizing the creative act as an impossible event, Deleuze's immanent ontology provides the basis for developing a critique of the Derridian conceptual persona of the deconstructive creative manager. From the perspective of Deleuze's immanent ontology, the formula that states that 'the only possible invention would be the invention of the impossible' (Derrida, 1987/2007a: 44) effectually elevates invention to an unreachable ideal which, to borrow the words of Smith, would

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‘separate me from my capacity to act’ (2007b: 68). While Derrida emphasizes that this impossibility is the only possibility of invention, Smith insists that the impossible invention risks becoming a transcendent principle that renders the production of novelty unattainable. Drawing on Deleuze, Smith elaborates that:

From the [Deleuzian] viewpoint of immanence [...] transcendence, far from being our salvation, represents our slavery and impotence reduced to its lowest point: the demand to do the impossible (a frequent Derridean theme) is nothing other than the concept of impotence raised to infinity. (Smith, 2007b: 68)

What Smith alludes to here is that Derrida’s call for doing the ‘impossible’ places an intolerable burden upon the process of creating the new. As a result, deconstruction raises concepts, such as novelty, invention and creativity, to unattainable ideals that leave us unable to perform the function of creating the new in practice. In effect, deconstruction installs creativity as a transcendental principle that keeps us from actually producing the new under ordinary circumstances. As a consequence of elevating the concept of creativity into an impossible act, to follow Smith, the creative manager is rendered incapable of creating new forms of organization; because there is no way that the production of the new forms of organization can actually be achieved in the mundane setting of everyday life. The *impossibility of invention*, in other words, is nothing but the *impotence of creativity*. Every attempt to create the new inevitably confronts an impossible challenge that, Smith concludes, will only culminate in the experience of incapability, powerlessness and incompetence.

## **The Aporia of Immanence**

As an alternative conception of creation, Deleuze's ontology of immanence provides the basis for conceiving being itself as an intrinsically creative force (Hallward, 2006). As Smith states, Deleuze advocates the following ontological doctrine: 'Being = Difference = the New' (2007a: 3). Here the fundamental link between being and creativity forms the essential principle of Deleuze's univocal ontology. But being, according to Hallward, is not always allowed to release its natural creative potential. Instead, Hallward (2006: 55) elaborates that being itself tends to generate a set of 'internal obstacles' that prevent the world from realizing its inherent creative potential. These impediments, in turn, do not originate from external sources, but rather are immanent elements in the structure of being itself. So, in order to realize the creative potential of being, it is necessary to minimize this effect or even to completely remove the ontological conditions preventing the creative capacity of being to unfold within the world, according to Hallward.

If being itself is intrinsically creative, following Hallward, then optimizing the process of creation consists of eradicating the conditions that impede the production of novelty. More specifically, Hallward explains that these 'primary obstacles' include the transcendental principles of 'Personality, identity, subjectivity, consciousness, signification' (2006: 91). Conversely, Hallward holds that an 'adequate vehicle for creation must therefore become: impersonal or anonymous; unconscious, or asignification; anorganic, or "unlived"' (2006: 91). As Hallward emphasizes, features traditionally presumed as natural properties of the human being, such as subjectivity, individuality, personality, consciousness, and identity, are the key obstacles to optimizing creativity. Echoing Nietzsche, Deleuze stresses the need for

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‘constant self-overcoming’ (Hallward, 2006: 3) – that is, a process where being take on an impersonal force that continuously re-invents, transforms and changes itself. So by reaching beyond categories associated with the human, such as subjectivity, individuality, personality, consciousness and identity, being can retrieve its genuine capacity to generate radical novelty.

According to Smith (2003), Deleuze would consider Derrida’s insistence on the *impossibility of invention* as a transcendental principle that must be overcome in order to reach a state of creative imagination. Rather than being committed to the impossible act, the conceptual persona of the Deleuzian creative manager, following this perspective, should need to become, to borrow Hallward’s words, ‘impersonal or anonymous; unconscious’ (2006: 91) by striving for constant ‘self-overcoming’. Here, the conceptual persona of the creative manager has to resist attributes associated with human subjectivity, such as personality, identity, consciousness, in order to become receptive to the creative capacity of being. Seen in this way, the ‘creative act’, as Linstead and Thanem explain with reference to Bergson, ‘takes the form of *creative evolution*, which effectively decentres both the individual and the organization’ (2007: 1494).

The obvious deconstructive strategy that could be employed against this Deleuzian critique of Derrida was to look closely at the rhetorical strategies employed by Hallward (2006) to draw a distinction between the ‘personal’ and the ‘impersonal’, between ‘identity’ and ‘anonymity’, and between the ‘conscious’ and the ‘unconscious’. A deconstructive approach could uncover the paradoxes, aporias and double-binds inherent to the attempt to establish clear-cut divisions between these binary oppositions in Deleuze’s immanent ontology, such as the distinction between the ‘personal’ and the ‘impersonal’, between ‘identity’

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and ‘anonymous’, and between the ‘conscious’ and the ‘unconscious’. A deconstructive approach could doubtless show that Deleuze’s entire philosophical corpus is founded upon the binary opposition between ‘immanence’ and ‘transcendence’ in which the former takes precedence over the latter. Moreover, Derrida would help us expose the innate difficulties involved in the attempt to escape the metaphysically loaded concepts of ‘personality’, ‘identity’, and ‘consciousness’ by drawing attention to the mutually constitutive nature of the *personal* and the *impersonal*, of *identity* and *anonymity*, and of *conscious* and *unconscious*.

Here Derrida could help us show that the concept of the ‘impersonal’ secretly presupposes the idea of the ‘personal’, since these contrasting notions are defined in opposition to each other. Instead of subscribing to the logic of ‘*either/or*’ – either the ‘personal’ or the ‘impersonal’ – deconstruction would bring to light how identity, subjectivity, and consciousness remain repressed within the categories of the impersonal, anonymous and unconscious. On this basis, we could acknowledge that the idea of the ‘impersonal’ takes on the characteristics associated with ‘personality’, since it subscribes to the idea of a fixed identity that stands in opposition to other notions and can be clearly demarcated from contrasting concepts, such as the personal. In effect, the ‘impersonal’ paradoxically takes on an autonomous ‘personality’. The reason to embark on such a deconstructive endeavour, however, is not to disclose the inconsistencies in Hallward’s (2006) version of Deleuze’s philosophy of creation. Rather, the point would be to reveal the difficulty of reaching a place where being has been freed from its inherent impediments that obstruct creation, and henceforth the difficulty of escaping traditional metaphysics.

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If Deleuze invites us to depart from the personal, identity and consciousness in order to enter into the creative modus of the impersonal, anonymity and the unconscious, Derrida instead dwells on the irresolvable duality of personality and impersonality, identity and anonymity, and consciousness and unconsciousness. If Deleuze seeks to arrive at a purely *immanent ontology*, Derrida ponders on the insurmountable gap between *transcendence* and *immanence*. If Deleuze is ready to announce the ‘overcoming of Platonism’ through the reversal and re-conceptualization of the *simulacrum*, Derrida meticulously discloses the danger of ending up with a ‘naïve’ form of ‘anti-Platonism’ (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1993: 5) that secretly reintroduces what it opposes by substituting one formal structure of transcendence for another (Lane, 2011). Derrida’s ‘quasi-concept’ of the *pharmakon* – ‘quasi’, since the very idea of the ‘concept’ itself suggests a metaphysical distinction between *concept* and *experience* – is designed specifically to destabilize the metaphysical dualisms of Platonism by being ‘*simultaneously either/or*’ (Derrida, 1982: 43, original italics). And if Deleuze wants to overcome the metaphysics of authenticity, Derrida reflects on the ‘undesirability between authenticity and inauthenticity’ (Bearn, 2000: 459).

And yet, we should be careful not to hastily dismiss Deleuze as a naïve believer in the creative capacities of being. While Smith (2003) claims that Derrida’s idea of ‘impossibility’ is nothing but a *transcendent principle* that restrains the scope and possibility of engaging in creative activities, it is worth noting that Deleuze actually maintains that a ‘creator is someone who creates her own impossibilities, and who creates from the possible at the same time’ (1995: 133). Similar to Derrida, Deleuze seems to suggest that the impossibility of creation is precisely the condition for the possibility of creation. Rather than dismissing the



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Derridian theme of impossibility, Deleuze argues that any creation ‘is thus produced through impossibility’ (Sauvagnargues, 2013: 99).

Moreover, we should not forget that Derrida remains committed to the problem of performing an inversion of Platonism, since ‘deconstruction involves an indispensable phase of *reversal*’ (1972/1981: 6, original italics). This reversal consists of countering the ‘homogenizing political effects’ of Platonism in order to ‘show that there is a “space” at the interior of the tradition which provides an opening to that which lies beyond it, to that which is to come’ (Zuckert, 1996: 252). For both Derrida and Deleuze, ‘reversing Platonism consists in destroying the hierarchy of the image and original’ (Lawlor, 2003: 68). In this light, we might well appreciate that Derrida and Deleuze may be more closely aligned than one might have suspected. For this reason, Patton holds that there is a ‘strange proximity’ (1996) between Derrida and Deleuze which is reflected in their mutual commitment to destabilize traditional metaphysics in order to make thought creative. In their own ways, both seek ‘to question and challenge what is currently accepted as self-evident in our ways of thinking and acting’ (Patton, 2003: 67).

### **Between Authenticity and Inauthenticity**

For Deleuze, the critique of Western metaphysics and consequent devaluation of transcendence have important ethical and political implications. One might suspect that the elimination of the transcendental principles in favour of a purely immanent ontology would result in a nihilistic stance that rules out any normative evaluations, since it leaves us lacking a solid foundation from which to pass moral judgement. But surprisingly, Deleuze draws the opposite conclusion from the same premises. With a transcendent God, Deleuze (1981/2005: 7)

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contends in his book on Francis Bacon, everything is permitted because God ensures that, in principle, all acts can be morally and aesthetically justified. But without a transcendent God, Deleuze maintains that we take on the burden of moral responsibility for our own actions. Since we cannot rely upon values and principles derived from a transcendent instance, we are required to consider any judgement as the expression of a normative principle.

For Deleuze, the loss of transcendence opens up the space for ethics. In his earlier book on Spinoza, Deleuze (1970/1988: 23) draws a fundamental distinction between *morality* and *ethics*. Morality, Deleuze explains, involves the enactment of normative verdicts on the basis of ‘transcendent values’ (1970/1988: 23). In other words, morality assesses actions, convictions and practices from the point of view of elevated values, such as the idea of the Good, the Just or the Righteous. Conversely, ethics refers to a critical assessment of ‘the value of values’ (Deleuze, 1962/1983: 1) by exploring how values constitute different *modalities of being*. Instead of taking as the point of departure a transcendent value, ethics develops a ‘typology of immanent modes of existence’ (Deleuze, 1970/1988: 23) by exploring what we are inclined to do given the values that we have at our disposal.

In Chapter 4, we saw how the concept of authentic leadership takes on the form of morality rather than ethics. This is the case because the concept of authentic leadership performs normative evaluations based upon the values embedded in the true self. Within this ‘true self’ resides a set of transcendent values. A leader is considered ‘good’ if he or she remains loyal to the true self while a leader is considered ‘bad’ if he or she betrays the true self. Following the logic inscribed in the concept of authentic leadership, Bill George was a ‘good’ leader, since his leadership was based on a commitment to the ‘true self’ that contained a set of

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transcendent values. In sharp contrast, Jeff Skilling is considered a 'bad' leader, since his leadership betrayed the true self. Here the true self attains the status of a higher instance that remains outside the scope of experience, since the true self can only be accessed by carefully listening to the 'inner voice' (Garsten and Grey, 1997: 225). As illustrated by the story of David Pottruck, the true self is revealed when one is in contact with one's 'inner core' and can sense to what extent one's actions and convictions resonate as being 'true' (George, 2007: 74).

The problem with morality, Deleuze contends, lies in the fact that the transcendent values that are the basis for making normative evaluations are never called into question. In other words, morality presupposes an intrinsic connection between values and normativity that leaves no opportunity to interrogate this relationship. The Kantian critique, for instance, is 'brought to bear on all claims to morality, but not on morality itself' (Deleuze, 1962/1983: 89). In this way, Deleuze holds that morality is essentially *conservative*, since it refrains from criticising existing values. Conversely, morality fails to allow for questioning of the *value of values* because it does not subject the principles that provide the basis for normative evaluation to being examined themselves.

Based upon Deleuze's *reversed Platonism*, I have argued that an adequate ethics of leadership must not only be subject to normative evaluation, but must also explore and expose the potential dangers of being committed to such normative concepts as authentic leadership. In this way, the concept of authentic leadership is no longer considered a normative ideal, but rather a *mode of existence* that must be called into question on its own merits. The ethics of leadership should ask: 'Who evaluates the leader and from what perspective?' Seen from Deleuze's perspective, the idea of authenticity and its dogmatic imperative 'Be faithful to the true self!', represent a transcendent value that *ethics*

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should subject to a critical assessment. Instead of accepting the normative distinction between the 'authentic leader' (*good*) and the 'inauthentic leader' (*bad*), Deleuze's immanent ontology invites us to think beyond this metaphysical duality and settle for a purely immanent ethics that remains free of transcendent principles.

As Deleuze learns from Heidegger's (1961/1991: 154) reading of Nietzsche, a successful *reversal of Platonism* should not simply substitute the 'authentic claimant' (*the thing*) who is imbued with resemblance to the model with the 'inauthentic pretender' (*the simulacrum*) who lacks resemblance to the model by considering the former 'Bad' while the latter 'Good' (Smith, 2006). Such an operation, Heidegger shows, involves a 'mechanical exchange of one epistemological position for another' (1961/1991a: 160). The result would be to preserve the metaphysical structure of Platonism which consists precisely of drawing a categorical distinction between true being (*essence*) and false being (*appearance*). Instead of reversing Platonism, we would merely come to a modified form of Platonism where the *simulacrum* is praised as true being and 'the thing' is considered as false being. Ultimately, Heidegger thinks that Nietzsche falls prey to the very Platonism that he opposes, since he remains 'caught in metaphysics' by holding that the 'sensuous' is the 'true world' while the 'suprasensuous' is the 'false world' (1973: 92).

In order to avoid making the same mistake, Deleuze set out to avoid the Platonic distinction between the 'authentic claimant' (*the thing*) and the 'inauthentic pretender' (*the simulacrum*) by refusing to consider either of the two entities superior to the other. Rather than drawing a categorical distinction, Deleuze subverts the Platonic hierarchy between the model, the thing and the *simulacrum* by viewing the latter as an autonomous phenomenon. 'Everything', according to Deleuze

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(1968/2001: 69), should therefore be viewed as ‘simulacra’ which comprise *systems of internalized differences*.

Following Nietzsche, Deleuze maintains that philosophy should imagine and invent ‘new values’ (1983: 85) that go beyond the current state of affairs and exceed our present horizon of thinking. Yet, Deleuze’s insistence of the importance of *creating new values* begs the question of how he legitimizes this normative principle. In other words, what is the motivation behind the idea creating ‘new values’? Or to put it in slightly different terms, what is the *value of creating new values*? According to Patton, Deleuze’s ‘overriding norm is that of deterritorialisation’ (2000: 9). This norm consists of drawing *lines of flight* that allows for new modes of thinking. The criterion from which Deleuze extracts his source of moral authority, according to Patton, is the normative idea of transgressing our current social configuration by allowing thought to enter new conceptual territories and explore unforeseen events. On this basis, Deleuze is able to perform a critique of existing values insofar as they constitute transcendent principles that prevent us from inventing new modes of existence and modalities of being.

As Smith acutely notes, this is a ‘somewhat paradoxical norm’ (2012: 347). On the one hand, Deleuze calls into question all transcendent standards in order to arrive at a purely immanent mode of thinking. But on the other hand, Deleuze installs an unconditional principle in the very sphere of immanence that holds that the ultimately normative aim of thinking is transformation. While condemning Platonism for introducing a transcendent ‘model’ (*Idea*), Deleuze jeopardizes his immanent thinking by elevating ‘deterritorialisation’ into an unconditional value and thereby clandestinely installs the ‘transcendent within immanence itself’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 49). However, Smith tries to resolve the paradox by arguing that Deleuze basically rejects the idea that

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normativity must be grounded on universal and transcendent values. Instead, 'What "must" always remain normative', Smith elaborates, 'is the ability to critique and transform existing norms: that is, to create the new' (2012: 347).

As Derrida sees it, we cannot escape transcendence so easily. What we encounter in Deleuze's thinking is precisely the *impossibility of immanence*, a type of paradox, aporia or double-bind to which deconstruction draws our attention. But rather than deconstructing Deleuze's normative principle, we should acknowledge that Derrida also wrestles with a somewhat similar problem in his philosophy but offers a different solution. In Derrida's work, we can find two apparently contradictory principles. On the one hand, Derrida holds that 'deconstruction is invention or it is nothing at all' (1987/2007a). Here, Derrida suggests that deconstruction consists of departing from orthodox conceptions and exploring new terrains of thought. On this point, deconstruction seems to be closely aligned with Deleuze's thinking (Patton, 1996). On the other hand, Derrida maintains that deconstruction has 'done nothing but to address' (1990: 935) justice and therefore remains committed to the idea of justice as what Smith would call a 'paradigmatic concept of transcendence' (2007: 68). As Critchley emphasizes, deconstruction has a 'foundational commitment to justice as something that cannot be relativized' (2009: 102). Therefore, on this point, Derrida radically departs from Deleuze (Smith, 2003).

At first glance, one might suspect that Derrida's two principles are mutually exclusive, since 'justice' places restraints on the scope of possible action while 'invention' means to transgress boundaries. So one could argue that deconstruction places two contradictory demands on us that cannot conceivably be reconciled in any productive manner. Yet, upon closer examination, we can see that this is not the case. For

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Derrida, commitment to an unconditional idea of justice does not restrict the scope of possible transformation, but rather safeguards political and ethical progress. In order to see why this is the case, we need to grasp the difference between Derrida's deconstructive idea of justice and the Platonic view on the 'Good' as it is reflected in the concept of authentic leadership.

The concept of authentic leadership relies on a distinction between the Platonic 'model' of the true self that contains a set of ethical values and the actual manifestation of these values in different leadership practices (George, 2003). This metaphysical distinction provides the basis for assessing leadership practices. While the authentic leader realizes these ethical values by aligning his or her convictions and actions with the true self, the inauthentic leader fails to do so and is therefore morally corrupt. In this way, the authentic leader claims to be the just leader, as he or she incarnates, personifies and embodies the core values in practice. Following Derrida, such an attempt to restrict the idea of justice to a set of concrete leadership practices would betray the very idea of justice. Derrida remarks categorically that one cannot 'thematise or objectivize justice, say "this is just" and even less "I am just," without immediately betraying justice' (1990: 935).

If we accept that a leader perfectly exemplifies and represents the idea of justice, we have in principle excluded the option of calling this leader 'unjust' and we have deprived ourselves of the opportunity to call into question the ethical merits of his or her form of leadership. This is the case because the leader is *per definition* ethically responsible (see Spoelstra and ten Bos, 2011). For this reason, Derrida wants to preserve justice as a transcendent impossibility in order to retain the option of questioning the various manifestations of justice that we encounter around us. Therefore the difference between a Platonic commitment to

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transcendent values and Derrida's deconstruction of justice relates to their willingness to accept the manifestations of justice in concrete concepts and practices. The reason for being willing to do so is to keep open the future option for 'political reformation, transformation and progress, opening up a future of political possibility' (Critchley, 2009: 100). Thus, Derrida's idea of justice does not block the invention of new concepts and practices. Quite the opposite, Derrida insists that it is because no state of affairs can fully encompass the idea of justice that political and ethical progress is necessary.

According to Jones, the deconstruction of business ethics should be 'neither "for" nor "against" business ethics' (2003a: 241). Instead, Jones maintains that 'the goal of a deconstruction of business ethics would be to open it to the aporias that infect the purity of its concepts' (2003a: 241). To follow this line of reasoning, a deconstruction of authentic leadership should neither be 'for' nor 'against' the concept of authentic leadership, but rather destabilize the distinction between an authentic and an inauthentic leader by uncovering the paradox, aporia, and double-bind inherent in distinguishing between the 'good' and the 'bad' leader. The reason to engage in a deconstructive endeavour of this kind is not to counter the concept of authentic leadership, but rather to demonstrate the impossibility of constructing a leadership concept that fully encompasses the idea of justice and allows to us crystallize and channel justice into concrete leadership practices. Yet, this deconstructive endeavour would insist on the importance of connecting leadership to justice by reflecting in the undecidability that occurs when one is faced with conflicting demands (Rhodes, 2012). In this way, deconstruction would allow for the experience of the impossibility of authentic leadership as a condition for the possibility of leadership justice.



## **The (Im)possible Real**

Zizek's relationship to Derrida and deconstruction is complicated by his elusive manner of writing. At several places, Zizek expresses an unconditional rejection of what he calls 'post-structuralism deconstructionist', 'postmodernist-deconstructionist' and 'deconstructionism' (see, for example, Zizek, 2012: 295; 1991: 125). In *Looking Awry*, Zizek strongly emphasizes that Lacanian psychoanalysis is 'radically incommensurable' with 'poststructuralist deconstruction' (1991: 125). On the surface, this statement would give the impression that Zizek has no sympathy with Derrida's deconstructive thinking. But upon closer reading, we can see that Zizek actually distinguishes between Derrida and what he calls post-structuralism deconstructionist, postmodernist-deconstructionist or deconstructionism. These three latter labels, Zizek explains, should not be confused with Derrida's own writings, but rather relate to 'the American (mis)reception of the French theorists' (2012: 211), including such diverse thinkers as Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault and Lyotard, which are wrongly categorized together. Derrida's deconstructive thinking, as Zizek sees it, should not be equated with post-modern/structural deconstructionism.

Before turning to the aspects of Derrida that Zizek appreciates and actively draws upon in his own thinking, it is important to emphasize that Zizek has had an equally complicated relationship with Deleuze. At the heart of the quarrel between Deleuze and Zizek stands the question of the ontological status of the Lacanian Real and desire. In Zizek's writing, we can find seemingly inconsistent accounts of the Real. Sometimes Zizek characterizes the Real as 'that which resists symbolization' (1989/2008: 74). At other times he calls the Real an

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‘impossible/traumatic kernel’ that revolves ‘around a central lack’ (1989/2008: 137). According to Bjerg, these apparently contradictory accounts are themselves a ‘symptom of the impossibility of conceptualizing (symbolizing) the real’ (2014: 23). In Zizek’s view, the Real is characterized by a fundamental lack and impossibility that evades symbolization and conceptualization. The Real only shows itself as a crack, rupture or impasse within discursive formations. For Zizek, the Real not only marks the subject, but also pertains to the symbolic structure (2008: 137, original italics).

In their book *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari offer a famous reversal of the Lacanian conception of the Real. Here Deleuze and Guattari remark that the ‘real is not impossible; on the contrary, within the real everything is possible, everything becomes possible’ (1972/1983: 29). In this way, Deleuze and Guattari depart from standard Lacanian psychoanalysis by refusing to conceive of the Real as lack and impossibility. Taking a contrary position, Deleuze and Guattari perceive the Real as pure potentiality, a place where ‘everything is possible’ (Smith, 2004: 664). Rather than impasse, abyss and rapture, the Real, Deleuze and Guattari continue, is marked by excess, overproduction and surplus. In this way, we can see how the theories of the social presented by Deleuze and Guattari, on the one hand, and Lacan and Zizek, on the other, are grounded in conflicting ontologies. If Zizek and Lacan locate an *ontological deficit*, marked by a fundamental lack and impossibility, within the symbolic order, then Deleuze and Guattari stress the *ontological surplus*, marked by excess and possibility, within the social fabric.

Deleuze and Guattari’s reconceptualization of the Real has important consequences understanding the concept of desire. Once again, Deleuze and Guattari reject the standard Lacanian conception of

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desire which Zizek adopts. For Zizek, 'desire' is constituted by 'lack' (1991: 8). In this view, desire is stimulated by fantasizing about the things we do not possess, making desire the contiguity between the subject and the object. For example, I fantasize about becoming a famous entrepreneur precisely because I am unable to do so. Thus, desire is created by the lack of being a famous entrepreneur. In this context, the function of fantasy is to stage desire so that we are able to want the things that we do not possess. In this view, narratives of famous entrepreneurs who enjoy a life in fame and fortune would function as fantasies that enable us to desire entrepreneurship.

Since desire is constituted by lack, desire can never be fulfilled, according to Zizek. This is the case, because we cannot attain the things we desire without those same objects losing their attractiveness. Desire itself is ontologically premised on impossibility, since it requires lack to function efficiently. The object of desire, according to Zizek, is therefore a 'sublime object': At a distance, the object of desire is appealing. But when encountered closely, the object of desire disintegrates. As we saw in the previous chapter, famous entrepreneurs, such as Mark Zuckerberg, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Richard Branson, following Jones and Spicer (2005), are the sublime objects of entrepreneurship, since their projections in popular culture are part of what makes entrepreneurship desirable. But if the object of desire is obtained, according to Zizek, then desire immediately dissolves into oblivion. Consequently, every time we actually obtain the 'object of desire, we are nevertheless necessarily somewhat disappointed; we experience a certain "this is not it"; it becomes evident that the finally found real object is not the reference of desire even though it possesses all the required properties' (Zizek, 2008: 100-1).

As Zizek infers, the inability to fulfil desire is the condition under which desire is produced. In other words, desire is paradoxically caused

by the inability to fulfil desire. This was exactly what we saw in Branson's narrative. The goals that Branson wants to achieve in his life – living a full life, transgressing every boundary and being true to the self – are impossible, since they can only be achieved by being unfulfilled. Yet, it is the impossibility of living a full life, transgressing every boundary and being true to the self that produces the desire for these objectives. From here we reach the Lacanian formula of desire: 'What desire desires is desire itself' (Jones and Spicer, 2005: 237). This circular logic is the injunctions that we find in Branson's narrative. So it becomes apparent that the mode of existence of the figure of the heroic entrepreneur reflected in Branson's narrative operates according to a paradoxical logic of desire.

The Lacanian approach to psychoanalysis, as Deleuze and Guattari recapitulate, considers desire to be equal to 'a lack of an object' (1972/1983: 26). But in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari propose a diametrical opposite thesis. For them, desire is not marked by lack, but rather designates 'what connects: desire is connections, to desire is to produce connections' (Sørensen, 2005: 123). Deleuze and Guattari claim that desire 'does not lack anything; it does not lack its object' (1972/1983: 26). Instead of viewing desire as the lack of an object, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that desire is a 'machine' that yields connections. 'Everything is machine' and 'everything is production' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972/1983: 2-3). According to Deleuze and Guattari, desire produces objects rather than lacking them. As Smith (2004) asserts, the aim of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* is to look at desire-production from the point of view of the Real. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, the 'objective being of desire is the Real in and of itself' (1972/1983: 26). This shift of perspective enables Deleuze and Guattari to look at the Real as a process of desire-production.

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For Deleuze and Guattari, the mistake of associating 'desire' with 'lack' stems from an inability to distinguish between 'desire' and 'needs'. On a phenomenological level, we experience various needs, such as the longing for things, experiences and possessions. However, according to Deleuze and Guattari, these needs are not based on lack, but are instead by-products of the positive force of desire. Deleuze and Guattari explain that 'needs are derived from desire: they are counterproducts within the real that desire produces' (1972/1983: 27). So Deleuze and Guattari understand desire as a connective force that creates the social. They hold that 'desire produces reality, or stated another way, desiring-production is one and the same thing as social production' (1972/1983: 30). Since desire constructs reality, the product of desire must not be dismissed as illusionary, false or ideological, because it defines reality itself and must therefore be considered real. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari argue that: 'If desire produces, its product is real. If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality' (1972/1983: 26). Deleuze and Guattari contend that social production and desire-production should not be considered as two isolated processes, but instead as being intrinsically connected because the 'social field is immediately invested by desire' (1972/1983: 38).

The political problem of desire, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is neither one of restraining the overflow of desire in society nor revealing the ways that desire is oppressed by the structures of society. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari maintain that the political problem is that we tend to invest desire in our own oppression. Therefore, we should ask: 'Why do men fight for their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972/1983: 38) Following Reich, Deleuze and Guattari believe that we cannot fully comprehend the emergence of fascism without answering the question of how we can

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desire our own repression. For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is never released in an unmediated form, but always organized through ‘mechanic assemblages’ that ‘form individual perceptions, attitudes, expectations and ways of speaking’ (Patton, 2000: 69). As Deleuze and Guattari emphasize, desire is paradoxically codified, arranged and organized in society to work against itself. Rather than juxtaposing desire against society, Deleuze and Guattari therefore find an immanent political contradiction in the very structure of desire that organizes society.

We can see how the Lacanian conceptualization of desire as a ‘fundamental lack’ stands in diametrical oppositions to Deleuze and Guattari’s view on the constructive and productive nature of desire (Buchanan, 2011: 17). Žižek is acutely aware of the irreconcilability of Deleuze’s and Lacan’s concepts of desire. As he notes, ‘for Deleuze, desire at its purest stands for the free flow of the libido, while the Lacanian drive is constitutively marked by a basic insoluble deadlock—the drive is an impasse, which finds satisfaction (“passe”) in the very repetition of the impasse’ (Žižek, 2012: 620). However, according to Žižek, these conflicting notions of desire are radically incommensurable. Ultimately, Žižek find Lacan’s take on desire more convincing than Deleuze’s view. In light of this, it is perhaps no surprise that Žižek holds that *Anti-Oedipus* is ‘arguably Deleuze’s worst book’ (2004: 21).

Although reversing the logic of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Smith (2004) notes that Deleuze and Guattari were not opposed to psychoanalysis. On the contrary, they wanted to invert psychoanalysis from within. What Žižek fails to appreciate, according to Smith, is that Deleuze and Guattari provide a reversal of psychoanalysis purely within the Lacanian framework of the Real, Imaginary and Symbolic. It is important to note that Deleuze and Guattari do not reject the concept of fantasy, but they do contend that fantasy should not be regarded as a

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personal possession that remains detached from the social sphere. Quite the opposite, individual fantasies, according to Deleuze and Guattari, are directly ‘plugged into the existing social field’ (1972/1983: 82). Consequently, Deleuze and Guattari develop the concept of ‘group fantasy’ in order to lay emphasis on the social and intersubjective dimension of fantasy. On this point, Deleuze and Guattari do not radically diverge from Žižek, who also maintains that fantasy is not simply a private delusion or deception, but rather as residing within the very fabric of social reality.

As Smith emphasizes, Deleuze and Guattari want to situate desiring production at the level of the Real and thereby show how it constitutes a domain in which ‘everything is possible’ (2004: 664). In contrast, as we have seen, it is often claimed that the Lacanian Real constitutes an ‘impossible/traumatic kernel’ (Žižek, 2008; see also Jones and Spicer, 2005). From this perspective, the difference between Žižek and Deleuze partly hinges on the dichotomy between the *possible* and the *impossible*. While for Žižek, the Real is impossible, for Deleuze, the real is pure possibility. Yet, to contrast Žižek and Deleuze alongside the trajectories possible/impossible would ignore the fact that Žižek does not accept this dualism. To see why, we need to return to Žižek’s reading of Derrida.

Despite remaining critical to deconstruction (Parker, 2004), Žižek frequently borrows Derrida’s insight that ‘the conditions of impossibility’ are simultaneously ‘the conditions of possibility’ (see Žižek, 2012: 838; 2000: 94; 1993: 2; see also Derrida, 2007a). For Derrida, the possible and the impossible are basically the ‘same thing’ (2007a: 445), since they are mutually constitutive. What we normally take to be possible, for Derrida, is always confined and restrained by the alternatives that are considered plausible, imaginable and available within a specific social

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arrangement. As I have argued, this is also the case for the post-bureaucratic image of thought.

Although contemporary management lays emphasis on the importance of ‘innovation’, ‘creativity’ and ‘invention’, these categories are always arranged in a certain pattern that preconfigures what is considered possible. For this reason, one must transgress what is commonly accepted as possible in order to allow genuinely new possibilities to emerge. To do so, following Derrida, means to challenge what is viewed as ‘impossible’ or what remains outside the scope of the possible. If an invention is possible, for instance, then it is not inventive. Conversely, the ‘only invention possible is the invention of the impossible’ (Derrida, 2007a: 451). Consequently, the impossibility of invention is equivalent to the possibility of invention, according to Derrida.

Viewed from this perspective, the question of whether the Real is possible or impossible dissolves into a false opposition, since it is simultaneously possible *and* impossible. Or to put it slightly differently, it is precisely because the Real is impossible that it opens the future for new possibilities. In this way, Žižek basically conceptualizes the Real as what Derrida calls an *aporia* – that is, a self-imposed paradox. If Derrida finds the paradoxical *aporia* as the rupture that destabilizes metaphysical closures, then Žižek locates an *impossible void* within the symbolic structure that provides the basis for subverting the current social configurations. It is the impossibility of the Real, according to Žižek, that ensures that the new can emerge.

In a Derridean manner, Žižek argues that a real inventive act is strictly speaking ‘*impossible* – it changes the very parameters of what is considered “possible” in the existing constellation’ (2009: 199, original italics). Taking Žižek’s lead, we should consider the post-bureaucratic



image of thought as a symbolic order. And the Real is precisely the crack within this symbolic order that enables us to subvert, destabilize and evade the post-bureaucratic image of thought. Ultimately, we end up where we started, with Derrida's insistence on doing the impossible as the fundamental condition of possibility.

### **Concluding remarks**

In this chapter, we have used the theoretical tensions between Derrida, Deleuze and Žižek to subvert, destabilize and contravene the political ontology of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. To do so, I have shown that Derrida, Deleuze and Žižek offer resources for challenging the present structures of the managerial concepts and psychosocial types populating the post-bureaucratic image of thought. With the emergence of the post-bureaucratic image of thought, we have seen that contemporary management thinking has become increasingly metaphysical.

While the post-bureaucratic image of thought attempts to rid its concepts of their metaphysical, mythical and theological connotations and turn them into operational notions with clear empirical references, we can see that the attempt to do so has paradoxical consequences. Instead of suppressing the metaphysical dimension of concepts such as creativity, authenticity and invention, the tradition after Heidegger, including Derrida, Deleuze and Žižek, provides a point of departure for reflecting on the problem of overcoming metaphysics.

Rather than naively believe that we can strip concepts such as creativity, authenticity and invention of their metaphysical, mythical and theological connotations, we should recognize the paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities involved in conceptualizing them. From a philosophical

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perspective, the political ontology of the post-bureaucratic image of thought is bound up with the problem of determining the ontological nature of creativity, authenticity and invention.

This chapter has opened up the path toward a 'political ontology' (Patton, 2000) of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. Reflected in the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur, the post-bureaucratic image of thought attempts to confine various concepts, such as creativity, authenticity and invention, to an operational logic that allows them to serve purely functional purposes. But we have to deny the post-bureaucratic image of thought any monopoly on conceptualizing notions such as creativity and authenticity. These concepts are too important to be left merely to the post-bureaucratic image of thought. Here the ideas of Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek can be mobilized for the purpose of subverting, destabilizing and contravening the post-bureaucratic image of thought.

While we need to be careful not to underestimate the theoretical differences between Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek, this chapter has shown that these three thinkers share a common aim of making thought creative. Of course, their ways of approaching this aim are profoundly different. Nevertheless, it is particularly the tensions between Derrida, Deleuze and Zizek that open up the possibility for a philosophical engagement with the political ontology of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. Such an engagement includes both a critical and constructive dimension. Importantly, we need to find 'paradoxes' (Deleuze), 'aporias' (Derrida) and 'impossibilities' (Zizek) in the post-bureaucratic image of thought that allow us to escape its dogmatic structures, restraining boundaries and symbolic closures. The paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities within the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and entrepreneur mark the crises of the post-bureaucratic image

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of thought. But beyond such criticism, it is important to carve out a space where we are allowed to philosophically experiment with concepts such as creativity and authenticity.

# Chapter 7:

## Beyond Colonization

*The critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles.*

- Latour (2004: 246)

*Thinking, therefore, is not valuable for its inevitable resemblance to truth as for the immeasurable divergences that separate it from truth.*

- Baudrillard (1996/2005: 162)

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, we looked at the pathways philosophy opens up for exploring the political ontology of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. What remains to be clarified are the implications of this thesis for the field of Critical Management Studies (CMS). In this concluding chapter, I will situate this thesis within the field of CMS and discuss how the findings of this thesis have opened up a different way of engaging philosophically with organization and management. Within CMS, the emergence of post-bureaucratic forms of organizations has predominantly been received with scepticism and suspicion.

While some authors have issued a '*carefully qualified* welcome' (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996: 130, original italics) to the promise for increased autonomy and self-expression, most critical scholars have warned against the darker sides of post-bureaucratic management

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(Casey, 2002; Fleming and Spicer, 2004; Fleming and Sturdy, 2010; Grey, 1999; Willmott, 1993). In particular, scholars associated with CMS have held that the model of the post-bureaucratic organization installs more refined and sophisticated forms of control within the work-place, such as 'normative control' (Kunda, 1992/2009) and 'neo-normative control' (Fleming and Sturdy, 2009), which seek to regulate employees' subjectivity rather than enlarging their space for self-determination.

Inspired by the Frankfurt School version of Critical Theory, scholars within CMS have gone on to argue that the discourse on post-bureaucracy implies a progressive process of managerial colonization of everyday life (Casey, 1999; Deetz, 1992; Grey, 1999; Hancock and Tyler, 2004). Here, they accuse post-bureaucratic management of institutionalizing an economic performance imperative into all aspects of the social sphere without regard for the ensuing social pathologies and existential predicaments.

While agreeing that this always remains a possibility, I will show that a crisis exists at the heart of the post-bureaucratic image of thought that prevents the process of colonization from ever being completely successful (Harney, 2005). This crisis opens up a space for a philosophical engagement with post-bureaucratic management thinking. I will discuss the possibility of a philosophically informed engagement with organization and management that exploits paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities to serve as a window of opportunity for creating concepts that evade and circumvent common sense.

### **Managerial Colonization of Everyday Life**

Henry Ford is reported as having said: 'Why is it that whenever I ask for a pair of hands, a brain comes attached?' (cited in Spoelstra, 2009:

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377). Ford perceived the worker as a 'productive body' (Rose, 1999: 57) that enters into the production process along with other factors of production. The value of labour, for Ford, is primarily derived from the physical strength of the worker, making the human body a vital component of the production process. Applying the assembly line to car manufacturing, Ford was able to divide the fabrication of automobiles into distinct sequences of operations and thereby calibrate the highest degree of efficiency possible. The assembly line also allowed for regulating the immanent pace of the production process by adjusting the pace of the assembly line. Since the operations performed by employees had to be synchronized with rhythm of the entire production process, the pace of the workers' movements could be regulated by adjusting the velocity of the assembly line.

However, utilizing the intellectual, imaginative and creative capacities of the employees was not vital for Ford's managerial system to work. On the contrary, departing from the standardized procedures would merely interrupt the steady flow of the production process. Therefore, it was important that employees mechanically followed the instructions they received from management. Along similar lines, Taylor also stresses that his system of scientific management presupposes that the worker, as he tells the German immigrant Schmidt, 'does just what he's told to do' (1911/2003: 142) without diverging from the instructions received by management. On a general note, as Kärreman and Alvesson explain, 'industrial mode managerial activity is typically focused on designing and supervising work processes that minimize the (intellectual) effort and skill necessary for the worker to carry out his or her work' (2004: 150).

Following the transition to the post-industrial economy, corporations have increasingly sought to extract value from 'positive

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externalities' (Moulier-Boutang, 2012) associated with human subjectivity, such as knowledge, creativity, autonomy and communication. As a result, Handy writes that 'the organizations of today are more and more places for brains not muscles' (1991: 71). As knowledge, information, creativity and authenticity enter the productive domain of work, the process of labour, according to Lazzarato, integrates 'a series of activities that are not normally recognized as "work" – in other words, the kind of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashion, tastes, consumer norms, and more strategically, public opinion' (1996: 133). In light of this shift, the post-bureaucratic image of thought offers technologies designed to mobilize not only the human body but also the human mind in the service of producing, distributing and consuming commodities and services.

Geared towards utilizing the creative, imaginative and intellectual capacities of its members, post-bureaucratic forms of organization are therefore characterized by the fact that they incorporate human subjectivity into their logic of production (Lazzarato, 1996; Moulier-Boutang, 2012; Thrift, 2006). To accomplish this, the work-place has been configured into a privileged site of 'self-realization and self-actualization' (Costea, Crump and Amiridis, 2008: 670) by allowing everyone in the organization to 'just be yourself' (Fleming and Sturdy, 2009), engage in playful activities (Sørensen and Spoelstra, 2011) and make jokes among themselves (Butler, 2015). Open networks, decentralized structures, constellations of self-managing teams, flexible boundaries and flat hierarchies are intended to ensure that post-bureaucratic forms of organization activate the entrepreneurial potential of their members and facilitate the invention of new ideas. Dahle suggests that when 'you turn work into a place that encourages people to

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be themselves, have fun and take risks, you unleash their creativity' (cited in Thrift, 2000: 683).

Various aspects of our social and private lives that have traditionally remained separate from the productive realm of work have been inscribed today within a managerial logic because they are vital sources for value creation in the new economy. While the industrial age was characterized by a sharp distinction between work and leisure, the members of contemporary organizations are encouraged to '[put] their "lives" to "work" in the creation of value for the company' (Land and Taylor, 2010: 395). In this scenarios work not only requires the professional effort to skilfully perform a certain productive function but also encompasses the investment of one's entire existence ("the whole person"), including private sentiments, personal opinions and inner convictions, into the domain of work (Pedersen, 2008). In effect, the post-bureaucratic organization blurs the boundaries between work and life (Johnsen and Sørensen, 2014).

Play may serve as a paradigmatic example here. Taylor and Ford agreed that work should be sharply distinguished from play. Ford states that when 'we are at work we ought to be at work. When we are at play we ought to be at play. There is no use trying to mix the two' (1922/2007: 37). Similarly, Taylor notes that managers should 'plan working hours so that the workers can really "work while they work" and "play while they play," and not mix the two' (1911/2003: 166). Ford and Taylor's both agree that play disturbs and impedes the production process by shifting the focus away from the employees' essential work tasks (Costea, Crump and Holm, 2006). But since 1980s, play has been reconceived as an unexplored resource that can yield, in the words of Costea, Crump and Holm, 'management's most precious commodities – creativity, innovation, motivation, commitment, and knowledge' (2006: 173). Since



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play generates unexpected events, sparks improvisation and uncertainty, it has the effect of supporting change and innovation. Therefore, today's management uses various technologies to turn the workplace into a productive playground that activates the creative, imaginative and entrepreneurial potential of the employees. 'Lego Serious Play' is only one instance of this.

In the course of this development, critical scholars have warned against the negative effects of 'managerializing' the cultural, social and private spheres of our lives. Adorno (2001) critically scrutinized the tendency toward economic imperialism in modern society – referred to by the term 'culture industry' – that was the sign of a dangerous conjunction between culture and administration. For Adorno, the concept of 'culture industry' is a contradiction in terms, because 'culture is opposed to administration' (2001: 108). In the culture industry, Adorno complains that cultural activities that had traditionally been kept safely separated from managerial administration are rationalized, with the undesirable effect of depriving them of their spontaneous, imaginative and creative aspects. As a result, the 'autonomy of work of art', Adorno maintains, is effectually 'eliminated by the culture industry, with or without the conscious will of those in control' (2001: 99).

As the culture industry strives to commercialize cultural expression, art is converted into a saleable product that is assessed according to its exchange value on the open market, according to Adorno. The culture industry only recognizes the monetary value of art, reducing cultural expression to a mere commodity. Since the industry itself does not produce these cultural expressions but rather profits from artistic creation, Adorno continues, the culture industry 'lives parasitically' on the artists' creativity. Yet, as Boltanski and Chiapello (1999/ 2005: 441) showed, Adorno's diagnose of the 'massification' and 'standardization' of

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capitalist consumer society, echoed in his critique of the culture industry, was rapidly countered by the 'new spirit of capitalism', which tried to transmuting the criticism itself into an engine for business. 'Capitalism's response to the intense demand for differentiation and demassification that marked the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s', Boltanski and Chiapello note, 'was to internalize it' (2005: 441) by celebrating the unique, authentic and spontaneous qualities of artistic expression.

Nevertheless, the tendency towards managerial colonization of everyday life evoked by Adorno in his critique of the cultural industry is still valid, according to critics associated with CMS. Yet, the basis of this critique has changed. As the members of contemporary organizations are offered increased opportunities to express themselves and take personal initiatives in the workplace, one might expect that this development would humanize the workplace. But critical scholars have warned against the hegemonic rhetoric of the post-bureaucratic management. On the surface, post-bureaucratic forms of organization promise its members increased freedom, autonomy, flexibility and self-determination. But underneath this normative vocabulary resides a managerial paradigm of control, domination and surveillance (see Casey, 2002; Fleming and Spicer, 2004; Fleming and Sturdy, 2010; Grey, 1999; Willmott, 1993). What might at first glance appear as the expansion of worker's autonomy actually represents the advancement of new managerial technologies designed to govern and monitor human subjectivity.

From the outset, critical theory has been devoted to the normative agenda of emancipating the members of society from social ties that curtail the scope of their self-expression, autonomy and self-actualization. But in contemporary society, according to Honneth (2004), the concern for self-expression and self-actualization has taken a

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paradoxical manifestation. While the process of individualization in contemporary society promises its members increased autonomy, Honneth notes that ‘self-realization’ is gradually ‘made into an institutional demand’ (2004: 472), requiring individuals to constantly express themselves in different social life-spheres. In effect, Honneth argues that authenticity has been converted into an imperative that ironically *obligates* the modern subject to remain true to itself. Honneth goes on to say that the ‘creation of biographical originality has become something required of individuals themselves: more and more the presentation of an “authentic self” is one of the demands placed upon individuals’ (2004: 467). The consequence of being subjected to this institutional demand is that the modern subject is unable to distinguish ‘between a real and a fictitious self-discovery’ and ultimately has the experiences of ‘inner emptiness, of feeling oneself to be superfluous, and of absence of purpose’ (2004: 467, 463).

Studying a call centre, Fleming and Sturdy (2010) show how this institutionalized demand for authenticity plays out in practice. In the organization they study, Fleming and Sturdy identify a culture constituted upon the principle that the employees should be themselves. This principle, they further elaborate, resonates neatly with Peters’ (1992) revolutionary management rhetoric in *Liberation Management*. But despite its promise, the cultural principle ‘just be yourself’ does not entail a departure from managerial control, but rather ‘reinforces control’ in the workplace, according to Fleming and Sturdy (2010: 189). This is the case because members of the organization are required to share their personal lives with their co-workers and managers. So far from undoing the traditional managerial paradigm of power and governance, the rhetoric of post-bureaucratic organization that celebrates play, creativity and authenticity must instead be regarded as a more refined and

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sophisticated form of managerial control – what Fleming and Sturdy (2009) call ‘neo-normative control’, which regulates the projection of self-identity in the workplace.

Although evangelists of managerial revolution, such as Peters, Kanter, and Hamel, express strong scepticism towards traditional modes of management, they hold onto the idea that ‘the key to successful organizational management is itself the rational and systematic management of all aspects of one’s own life’ (Hancock and Tyler, 2004: 631). Hancock and Tyler (2004) charge that such concern for creativity, knowledge, authenticity and self-expression does not represent a departure from the managerial paradigm, with its performance imperative and logic of accumulation, but rather its natural extension and intensification. In post-bureaucratic forms of organization, managerialism is installed into various social domains that have traditionally been protected and shielded from professional governance. The steady development toward post-bureaucratic forms of organizations, according to Hancock and Tyler, must be perceived as the ‘managerial colonization of everyday life’ (2004: 625; see also Casey, 1999; Grey, 1999).

The concept of ‘colonization’ was developed by Habermas, who claims that capitalist modernization is characterized by the progression of an economic rationalization that ‘penetrate[s] ever deeper into the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld’ (1984: 367). From this perspective, the emphasis on creativity, self-expression and authenticity in contemporary management ultimately results in the ‘colonization of all human activities by casting them in terms of management’ (Grey, 1999: 578). Within the managerial paradigm, the activities of play, humour, fun, self-expression and creativity are only valuable to the extent that they contribute to the corporation’s bottom line and can generate profit.

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Although post-bureaucratic management may be critical toward traditional forms of management, Grey argues that ‘the demise of management does not imply an end to the co-ordination and control of human activities: rather, it installs this co-ordination and control in an even-wider set of activities’ (1999: 578).

### **Subverting the Post-Bureaucratic Image of Thought**

Post-bureaucratic management thinking has been the object of serious critical scrutiny in Critical Management Studies (CMS). We have seen that the type of critique developed within CMS is closely aligned with the Frankfurt school version of critical theory, accusing modernity of installing economic rationality into all spheres of society. Despite the fact that the CMS critique reveals some of the darker sides of post-bureaucratic management thinking, I will argue that CMS’s critique is not radical enough. Scholars in the CMS world, propelled by critical theory, reproach post-bureaucratic management thinking for colonizing human subjectivity and trying to control and govern all aspects of our lives. In so doing, these critics are accepting the notion that the post-bureaucratic image of thought has successfully been able to domesticate the qualities associated with human subjectivity, such as imagination, creativity and authenticity. The problem with this account, however, is that the post-bureaucratic image of thought is unable to colonize these concepts without at the same time violating their conceptual dynamics. I will argue that when concepts such as creativity and authenticity are forced to obey a managerial logic, they dissolve into empty clichés and ultimately defeat their own purpose.

According to Harney, popular management literature should not be read ‘as the colonization of the lifeworld, but rather as a kind of desperate

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prospecting' (2005: 587). What Harney is alluding to here is that the attempt to inscribe concepts such as creativity, authenticity and self-expression into a managerial logic often results in what is best characterized as a series of pathetic clichés. These clichés, in turn, serve the strategic purpose of covering up a more acute crisis in contemporary management thinking. While management has traditionally been premised on the belief that all aspects of work can be adequately measured in quantitative terms, Harney (2005) demonstrates that immaterial labour, as it relates to knowledge, subjectivity and communication, cannot be adequately captured by contemporary management technologies. In effect, management seeks reassurance in the cliché, which provides a surface for management to sustain its image despite the fact that it cannot adequately manage immaterial labour.

According to the colonization hypothesis, post-bureaucratic forms of organization are prefigured by a managerial logic that progressively penetrates all aspects of our social and private lives. However, this idea presupposes that the objects of colonization constitute a coherent whole that can be adequately symbolized and registered within a managerial logic. Yet, as popular management literature takes an interest in creativity, play, invention and authenticity, it becomes compelled to negotiate the meaning of these terms. Either popular management literature uses these concepts as shallow buzzwords – rendering them inoperative but still serving the ideological purpose of preserving the status quo – or the literature must actually take authenticity and creativity seriously, and then deal with the content of these concepts. In effect, the post-bureaucratic image of thought finds itself forced to enter a territory traditionally reserved for philosophical speculation.

The system of critique used by proponents of CMS who draw on Frankfurt School/critical theory fails to take into account that there is a

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counter-movement in opposition to colonization that is inherent in the post-bureaucratic image of thought. Such a counter-movement inevitably arises because the concepts that post-bureaucratic thought seeks to domesticate are inherently fraught with paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities, and necessarily must remain so if they are to maintain their strength and internal logic. Ironically, the concepts frequently featured in post-bureaucratic management thinking, such as creativity, play, invention and authenticity, refuse to be circumscribed by the managerial paradigm, and attempts to domesticate them ultimately end up depriving them of the internal dynamics that give them their meaning and power.

For example, the concept of play operates according to its 'autotelic nature' (Sørensen and Spoelstra, 2011) that cannot be forced to align with the functional goals of an organization. Instead of viewing the emergence of post-bureaucratic management thinking as a progressive process of colonization, we should explore the crises that occur when concepts such as creativity, play, invention and authenticity encounter the post-bureaucratic image of thought.

When post-bureaucratic management thinking takes an interest in creativity, play, invention and authenticity, it ends up dealing not with homogeneous entities, but rather with intrinsically problematic concepts. In Chapter 3, we saw that Derrida's concept of the *pharmakon* could be used to destabilize attempts to constrain the process of creating new modes of organization and allow for a different way to perceive management innovation. No structure is totalizing, according to Derrida (1967/2001), because it always contains a space of play. This space of play is facilitated by the disruption resulting from the unavoidable paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities that materializes inside every attempt at metaphysical closure. Similarly, we saw in Chapter 4 that Žižek argues

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that the 'symbolic order itself' contains a 'fundamental impossibility' (1989/2008: 122), marked by a 'central lack', that simultaneously represents the 'conditions of possibility' (see also Derrida, 2003/2007: 454).

In this thesis, I have shown that the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur are marked by paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities, thereby preventing them from becoming coherent managerial stereotypes that can be fully colonized by the post-bureaucratic image of thought. Instead, these figures are riddled with predicaments that block them from operating according to a consistent managerial logic. Rather than suggesting that the crises of the post-bureaucratic image of thought represent impassés, abysses or deadlocks, this thesis has shown that they afford new ways to conceptualize the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur.

The crises emanating from the encounter between post-bureaucratic management and concepts that have been traditionally excluded from the corporate realm open a space for philosophical thinking. It is precisely this void emerging in the encounter between philosophy and management this thesis has strived to explore with the aim of not only 'diagnosing' the post-bureaucratic image of thought through a 'symptomatic reading' (Harney, 2005), but also 'rearranging its symptoms' (Raastrup Kristensen et al., 2008: 2) by drawing 'lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1970/1987).

The 'lines of flight' emanating from the paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities that we have encountered in the figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur have provided the basis for extracting conceptual personas that compel thought to enter new conceptual territories. These conceptual personas, in turn, are not



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normative ideals, but rather performative constructs that can be used to interrupt and thereby destabilize the post-bureaucratic image of thought. With regard to this reversal, a line of flight, according to Deleuze and Guattari, does not mean to desert the initial starting point, but rather to return to it from a new angle and with a fresh perspective so we can think differently. Deleuze and Guattari go on to explain that:

Lines of flight, for their part, never consist in running away from the world but rather in causing runoffs, as when you drill a hole in a pipe; there is no social system that does not leak from all directions, even if it makes its segments increasingly rigid in order to seal the lines of flight. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1970/1987: 204)

As Deleuze and Guattari emphasize, every social configuration contains cracks, ruptures, fractures and short-circuits that open up possible alternative ways of thinking. These cracks, ruptures, fractures and short-circuit are often hidden within the social fabric because the system conceals its own lines of flight. Lines of flight emerge once one locates the deficiencies and points of breakdown in a social configuration and employs them as a springboard to create new modes of existences that exceed and destabilize our habitual modes of thinking and conventional ways of passing judgement (Weiskopf and Steyaert, 2009: 199). This thesis has deliberately sought to explore the cracks, fractures and short-circuits in the post-bureaucratic image of thought in order to draw 'lines of flights' that allow us to circumvent the prevalent common sense assumptions in contemporary managerial thinking (Sørensen, 2005).

As Deleuze and Guattari (1970/1987: 9) cautiously remind us, a line of flight does not necessary improve the current situation, since it carries no assurance of ethical or political progress. In itself, the line of flight is

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beyond the moral dualism of good and bad. Nor does the line of flight necessarily escape the common sense assumptions of the image of thought from which it springs, because there is always the ‘danger that you will reencounter organizations that restratify everything’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1970/1987: 9) and thereby fail to think differently or let allow new conceptions to emerge. In this case the original image of thought which we sought to reverse is merely reinstated. But only a specific investigation can determine whether the line of flight arrives at a new image of thought or merely reproduces the old. In other words, philosophy must actively explore the extent to which a line of flight carries us toward a different image of thought. The recurrent problem for philosophy is the condition for thinking otherwise within a given social configuration.

Despite their many differences, Derrida, Deleuze and Žižek’s philosophical endeavours share a mutual commitment to performing an internal subversion of the limits of their object of analysis. As a practice of reading, Derrida’s deconstruction consists of operating within the ‘immanence’ of a system of thought to explore its ‘internal logic’ (see Chapter 3). For Derrida, deconstruction must remain ‘impossible’ in order to avoid ‘the danger of becoming an available set of rule-governing procedure, methods, accessible approaches’ (1987/2007a: 15). By sharp contrast, the post-bureaucratic image of thought attempts to reduce richly nuanced concepts such as creativity, play, invention and authenticity to phenomena that are accessible to rule-governing procedures and generic methodological approaches. Deconstruction allows us to destabilize the ‘foreclusionary structures’ that confine thinking in order to release the possibilities of new modes of existence.

Similarly, Deleuze holds that philosophy should not seek reassurance in a ‘transcendent’ perspective, but instead remain within

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the realm of 'immanence' (see Chapter 4). Doing so requires that we explore different modalities of being by questioning the concepts, ideas and beliefs that we encounter in our daily lives. Here the process of thinking, according to Deleuze (1970/1988: 23), should not be restrained by 'transcendent values' (*morality*), but rather strive toward producing a 'typology of immanent modes of existence' (*ethics*) that determines what we do in view of the values that we have at our disposal. In a similar manner, Žižek's idea of 'traversing the fantasy' does not mean to counter the fantasy with what we claim to be 'actual' reality, but rather to explore the immanent logic of the fantasy as such (see Chapter 5). This approach enables us to explore the contradictions and absurdities hidden within the fantasies that circulate through popular culture.

In this thesis, I have used Derrida's idea of *deconstruction*, Deleuze's idea of *reversed Platonism* and Žižek's idea of *traversing the fantasy* to undertake internal subversions of the three figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur that populate the post-bureaucratic image of thought. Derrida's idea of 'deconstruction', Deleuze's idea of 'reversed Platonism' and Žižek's idea of 'traversing the fantasy' allow us to explore the immanent logic of the post-bureaucratic image of thought by means of encounters with a popular management handbook by a famous guru, a self-help tome by a former CEO, and an autobiography of a renowned entrepreneur. I have not sought to counter the post-bureaucratic image of thought from an external perspective, but rather to subject it to an immanent exploration. This immanent exploration, in turn, has revealed that the post-bureaucratic image of thought is riddled with paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities, allowing us to extract conceptual personas that avoid the pitfalls of common sense portrayals of the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur.

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To accomplish this, I have evoked three philosophical concepts, all of them marked by their paradoxical nature, namely the concepts of the *pharmakon*, the *simulacrum* and *fantasy*. These concepts have been shaped within the post-bureaucratic image of thought in order to respond to the problems revealed by our encounters with the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur. These concepts have been constructed with the intention of ‘counteractualizing our present’ (Sørensen, 2005: 120). The point has not been to mobilize the concepts developed by Derrida, Deleuze and Žižek against post-bureaucratic management thinking, but rather to construct these concepts from within the post-bureaucratic image of thought with the purpose of internally subverting the figures of the creative manager, authentic leader and the entrepreneur. Parker (2002a: 162) is right when he says that nobody needs philosophy in order to be against management. Opposing management can be done perfectly well without recourse to philosophical concepts. So philosophy should serve a different function in CMS, namely to carve out a space for imaginative thinking within the heart of the organization (Sørensen, 2005).

### **Organizational Philosophy**

Based on the analysis conducted in this thesis, I would like to propose a philosophical engagement with management and organization that proactively seeks encounters that provide the basis for constructing paradoxical concepts. Following Spoelstra (2007), these paradoxical concepts should strive to transgress, circumvent and avoid the common sense assumptions that dominate management and organization thinking (see also Sørensen, 2005; Kaulingfreks and ten Bos, 2005; ten Bos, 2007). This approach would subject the conventional concepts,

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ideas, beliefs and convictions that prevail in organizational and management theory and practice to a philosophical critique that opens the way for experimentation with new modes of thinking. In this proposal, the thesis has contributed to the ongoing project of merging philosophy and organization studies that began over three decades ago (Cooper and Burrell, 1988; Jones and ten Bos, 2007; O'Doherty, 2007; Spoelstra, 2007). Of course, this thesis does not claim to have exhausted the opportunities from a philosophical analysis of the post-bureaucratic image of thought.

Much more philosophical exploration is needed regarding contemporary management and organizational thinking. But nothing is gained from merely paying no attention to the post-bureaucratic image of thought, since this would imply a failure to understand the current configuration of managerialism. Instead, we should make ensure that the post-bureaucratic image of thought does not have a monopoly on concepts such as creativity, play, invention and authenticity. With the help of philosophy, we should continue to experiment with new concepts and invent new ways of thinking. Spoelstra tells us that philosophy 'offers a breath of fresh air that allows us to think or see things differently: a philosophical concept of organization makes us think and see organization in ways we hadn't before' (2007: 26).

Unfortunately, this creative, imaginative and playful aspect often gets lost in the reception of philosophy in the field of CMS. As O'Doherty (2008) emphasizes, CMS scholars often mechanically apply the Frankfurt School's version of critical theory to conduct a social critique of capitalism that exposes its hegemonic and colonizing tendencies. However, this operation does not take into account that the philosophers who originally developed critical theory practiced a form of imaginative and playful thinking to proactively subvert the dominant capitalist logic

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of hegemonization and colonization. For instance, O'Doherty notes that Adorno often used a 'difficult and seemingly abstruse style of "suspended" or "self-cancelling" writing', because he thought it was 'only form of thinking and writing that evades the disciplinary norms that reproduce hegemonic thinking and interpretation' (2008: 451). As Adorno notices, philosophy contains a 'playful element' (1966/2007: 14). Yet, this creative aspect of Adorno's philosophy, O'Doherty continues, is completely overlooked in the effort to reduce critical theory to a social critique of capitalism.

Rather than conceiving philosophy as a conceptual tool to be mobilized against management, we should use philosophy as a source of creative imagination that makes possible the exploration of new modes of existence, the creation of paradoxical concepts, and the development unorthodox conceptual personas (O'Doherty, 2007; Sørensen, 2005; Spoelstra, 2007). In order to accomplish this task, we need to be attentive and sensitive to the paradoxes, aporias and impossibilities that inevitably characterize the post-bureaucratic image of thought. As I have argued, thought cannot produce such creations in solitude, because nobody can single-handedly decide to think creatively. On the contrary, to parallel Deleuze (1968/2001: 147), creative thinking only emerges when thought is confronted by a phenomenon that forces it to deviate from its habitual pattern and stretch beyond its conventional modes of reasoning. I suggest that a philosophically informed engagement with organization and management should seek moments of paradoxical encounter that enable thought to transgress common sense.

Instead of taking as our point of departure an external perspective motivated by a pre-defined ethical and political concern, we should look at the ethical and political questions that are already at stake in the current configuration of managerialism. Following Curtis, a

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philosophical engagement with organization and management should refrain from committing itself to transcendent values and universal truths, and rather acknowledge that ‘universalistic notions and ideals’ are ‘contingent normative features, that guide and shape our participation in organizational life’ (2014: 2), opening the space for an *immanent critique*.

Engaging philosophically with organization and management means to refuse to accept that the post-bureaucratic image of thought is necessarily capable of imprisoning concepts such as creativity and authenticity in its logic of accumulation and performance. Colonization and hegemonization always remain a threat, since every social configuration tries to conceal its ruptures, cracks and fractures by creating an eloquent surface on which to maintain the illusion of smoothness. But to respond to this threat, a philosophical engagement with contemporary organizational and management thinking must carve out a space where thought has the opportunity to confront its margins, encounter its impossibility, dwell in its aporia, and thereby transgress into new conceptual territories. Within this space, the managerial process of colonization and hegemonization will never reach full closure, because there are always *lines of flight* available that enable us to subvert the common sense assumptions underlying the post-bureaucratic image of thought.

Following Nietzsche, Weiskopf and Steyaert suggest that entrepreneurship studies should undergo a ‘metamorphosis’ to move from the stance of the critical ‘lion’ preoccupied with debunking ideological presumptions in the direction of an image of the creative ‘child’ who conceives of the entrepreneurial process as ‘a form of social creativity that changes our daily practices and our ways and styles of living’ (2009: 193). Critical entrepreneurship studies in particular and

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CMS in general have been marked by strong scepticism toward the essentialism, representation, and naturalization of managerialism (see also Fournier and Grey, 2000), but Weiskopf and Steyaert insist that ‘critique is not a goal by itself’ (2009: 192). Instead of becoming stuck at the level of critique, we must also appreciate the possibilities emerging from destabilization and denaturalization of the essentialist concepts and logics of representation that dominate contemporary management thinking, according to Weiskopf and Steyaert. In this way, philosophical thinking can situate itself to be a concrete practice that aims to facilitate, borrowing the words of Weiskopf and Steyaert, ‘(self-)formation and (self-)creation’ by ‘*giving form* to one’s life’ (2009: 199).

The question of thinking philosophically about organization and management is not detached from the real world and so-called ‘actual’ practice. On the contrary, Deleuze and Guattari note that ‘thinking takes place within in the relationship of territory and earth’ (1991/1994: 85), signalling the substantial aspect of thought. Deleuze and Guattari continue to remind us that thinking ‘consists in stretching out a plane of immanence that absorbs the earth’ (1991/1994: 87) to the extent that thought gains a material significance by becoming a form of *practice*. In this light, our thinking should not be abstracted from the concrete environment where thinking manifests itself, because thought always stands in a relationship with its earthly territory. More specifically, the business school itself, the institution in which this thesis is written, constitutes the specific territory where this thesis seeks to perform its effects. Being able to ‘think otherwise’ (Deleuze, 1986/2006: 98) puts at stake the institutional conditions for doing philosophy at the business school, with regard to organizational research, business teaching, and outreach in society.



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As CMS has become more institutionalized, critical thinking has acquired an important position in the business school, supported by journals, handbooks and study programs that offers students and academics the opportunity of participating in this critical project (Parker and Thomas, 2011). Naturally, there have been some cautions regarding the dangers of this development, since the free exercise of critical reasoning may be threatened by mainstreaming and the establishment of specialized fields of research that constrain the ability to cross disciplinary boundaries and open up alternative ways of looking at organization and management. But rather than condemning the institutionalization of CMS for diminishing the prospects for critical imagination, one should instead view CMS as an institution that itself needs continuous reinventions. CMS can only thrive if new problems are continuously formulated and different ways of thinking are constantly developed. In this context, the strength of philosophy lies not only in its ability to create concepts, but also to formulate new problems that are not yet being discussed, thereby opening up new conditions for conducting organizational research, performing business teaching and contributing to outreach in society.

It is often assumed that in the interests of making theory relevant, we urgently need to 'bridge the gap' between organizational research and practice (Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006). However, the problem of relevance is more complex. The bridge-spanning approach assumes that research only becomes relevant when we minimize its distance from practice. In this view, research has to take up practical problems, adopt practical terminologies, and emulate practical methodologies in order to establish productive collaboration. Following this approach, research and practice would function in close proximity rather operate in remote isolation from each other. But the irony here is that if research perfectly

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conforms to practice, it no longer has anything to offer practice that was not already available before. Conversely, it is only by virtue of the gap between research and practice that the former is relevant for the latter. So we should acknowledge that what ultimately makes research relevant is its ability to generate ideas that diverge from practice rather than simply representing the existing state of affairs. Still, relevance requires proximity, because new ideas can only emerge in an encounter with something that is outside of pure thought. Thus, relevance simultaneously presupposes distance and proximity.

If today's organizations demand creativity, invention, playfulness and imagination, then the only way to become relevant is to offer fresh perspectives, new modes of thinking and imaginative concepts. And if philosophical thinking is relevant, it is not because philosophy provides an accurate representation of the existing state of affairs, but rather because it enables the creation of paradoxical concepts that offers us new images of thought. For Adorno, the distance between theory and practice is ultimately what makes the former legitimate and important. Without discrepancy between theory and practice, Adorno suggests, 'there would be no changing the practice that constantly calls for change' (1966/2007: 143). For this reason, we should think of philosophy as an activity that is relevant, not because it stays in close proximity with practice, but rather because it counteractualize the present by creating concepts that challenges common sense (Sørensen, 2005, Spolestra, 2007).

### **Thinking beyond Colonization: Utopia**

In order to explore the possibility for alternate forms of organization that challenges orthodox institutional arrangements, Parker suggests that critical organizational and management scholars should deal to

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engage in utopian thinking. For Parker, *utopia* designates a ‘no-place’ or ‘nowhere’ that remains outside the horizon of present managerial thinking. Thus, Parker defines utopian thinking as the ‘systematic investigation of alternative principles of organization’ (2002b: 217). Viewed from this perspective, the idea of colonization and hegomonization implies *dystopia*, since the horizon of experience is restrained by a managerial logic that can be found ‘everywhere’. But if the process of managerial colonization and hegomonization can never reach full closure, as I have argued, then there is in principle the possibility of imagining heterodox way of thinking about organization that does not remain trapped within the current configuration of the post-bureaucratic image of thought. Utopia therefore entails thinking beyond colonization.

Parker (2002b), however, locates a paradox in utopian thinking today. On the one hand, utopian thinking is threatened by the fact that all statements have to stand the test of empirical validity. Since utopia is grounded on the idea of imagining alternative futures (‘nowhere’), it is often dismissed as speculative and insufficiently grounded. But if utopian thinking is required to stand the test of empirical validation, then it is ironically denied its utopian dimensions, since it has to be ‘somewhere’. On the other hand, there seem to be a proliferation of utopian thinking within contemporary managerialism. As we have seen in this thesis, with the celebration of figures of the creative manager, the authentic leader and the entrepreneur within contemporary management literature, the post-bureaucratic image of thought is indeed the expression of utopianism.

Such heroic portrayals are dismissed by Parker as being the expression of a ‘conservative utopianism of market managerialism’ (2002b: 218). Therefore, critical organizational and management scholars, according to Parker, should engage in a type of utopian thinking

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that challenges the conservative utopianism of market managerialism by providing democratic models of organization that does not necessarily presuppose managerial interference. While I am sympathetic to Parker's project, he seems to suggest that these alternatives should mainly be generated by looking at forms of organization that can be found outside the confines of the contemporary configuration of managerialism. But as I have argued, we should also be looking for alternative ways of thinking *within* the current configuration of managerialism.

Yet, despite the fact that Parker (1997; 2002a) distances himself from the utopianism of market managerialism, he nevertheless shows how alternate principles of organization can be extracted from conducting immanent readings of mainstream management literature. For example, Parker retains that taken at its face value, much literature on 'corporate citizenship' implies a democratic model of organization that evades managerialism, since it presupposes that the members have 'rights' and that they have the opportunity of participating in decision-making. In the organizational model proposed by Parker, managers must be reconfigured from 'aristocrats' to 'democrats' and encourage 'cooperation' with employees (1997: 87). Thus, although taking several precautions, Parker maintains that if the ideas circulating in post-bureaucratic management literature are taken 'seriously, then this might require a radically different way of organizing' (1997: 75).

Although Parker has received considerable criticism for his immanent endeavour with post-bureaucratic management literature (see Grey, 1999), his analysis serves to illustrate how it is possible to subvert contemporary managerialism by way of its own means. Radical imagination, however, should not only be conceived in terms of envisioning alternative principles of organization, but also encompass the process of inventing new ways of thinking about the figures

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embedded in the post-bureaucratic image of thought. For this purpose, it is necessary to activate utopian thinking to invent new conceptualizations and subversive lines of reasoning that undermines the common sense assumptions embedded in the post-bureaucratic image of thought. Here, philosophy has an important function to play, since the philosophical concept contains a utopian dimension in virtue of its attempts to think beyond the present horizon of thought.

Utopia, on Deleuze and Guattari's account, 'stands for absolute deterritorialization' that connects 'with the present relative milieu', but also activates and intensifies the 'forces stifled by this milieu' (1991/1994: 100). As we saw in the previous chapter, deterritorialization consists of transgressing our current social configuration by allowing thought to enter new conceptual territories. Indeed, 'Deleuze's most utopian idea', as Buchanan emphasizes, 'is that one can think differently' (2000: 117). While admitting that it is perhaps not 'the best word', utopia designates a conjunction between the philosophical concept and the 'present milieu', according to Deleuze and Guattari. If the 'present milieu' of managerialism can be seen as constituted by the post-bureaucratic image of thought, then the philosophical concepts should be used to displace and circumvent its orthodox presuppositions. In this way, philosophy can explore new ways of thinking that lies latent within the post-bureaucratic image of thought. A utopian engagement with organization and management motivated by philosophy should therefore activate the concept as a vehicle that can shape new perspectives, unveil new images of thought, and permit new conceptual territories to emerge.

While drawing upon three different philosophical perspectives, this thesis has remained dedicated to Deleuze and Guattari's (1991/1994) idea that philosophy consists of creating concepts in response to problems by demonstrating their relevance for organization and management. Yet,

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critics have questioned the usefulness of Deleuze's thinking. Hallward, for instance, argues that 'Deleuze offers few resources for thinking the consequences of what happens within the actual existing world as such' (2006: 162). Although it is a fascinating metaphysical *tour de force*, Deleuze's philosophy ultimately 'amounts to little more than a utopian distraction' (Hallward, 2006: 162) and fails to provide the conceptual tools for understanding or changing contemporary society.

In his harsh critique of Deleuze, Hallward ignores the scholars who have actually managed to use Deleuze's philosophy productively in different disciplines, and he also fails to grasp the complex relationship between exploring the world and the problem of making thought creative. Deleuze's message is that we understand the world by experimenting with what the world can do. While he rejects the idea that society is defined by its contradictions, Deleuze remains deeply Marxian, but with a twist. In *Theses On Feuerbach*, Marx and Engels famously proclaim that 'philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it' (1845/1998b: thesis eleven). However, Deleuze circumvents the relationship between interpretation and transformation by contending that it is precisely through experimenting with the world that we are able to understand our surroundings (MacKenzie and Porter, 2011: 37). In this light, philosophy becomes a conjunction between 'radical experimentation and experience' (Alliez, 1993/2004: 29-30), in which thought lends itself to creating concepts out of paradoxical encounters.

As Deleuze learns from Spinoza: 'We do not know what the body can do...' (1988: 17). Therefore, we have to continuously experiment with the body's capacities in order to explore its potentials and determine what it is capable of accomplishing. Similarly, we do not know what our concepts of management and organization can do before we have experimented

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with their capacities and internal dynamics. Therefore, this thesis will therefore not claim to reach a firm conclusion or a final stage, but rather will suggest that we need to continue to seek new encounters and seek ‘encounters with encounters’ in order to keep thought open for what Derrida would call a future yet to come. To do so, philosophy should not be reduced to a theory to be mechanically applied in the discipline of CMS, but instead should be appreciated as an activity that encounters the paradoxical phenomena that provide the basis for creating new concepts and conceptual personas.

We do not reach this place effortlessly. On the contrary, as Derrida carefully teaches us, the moment in which thought confronts its margin is also the moment in which thought is forced to wrestle with its impossibilities, and to confront its inherent limitations and unavoidable aporias. And we should not forget that for their part as well, Deleuze and Guattari do not claim that commitment to immanence makes thinking easier, but rather ‘increasingly difficult’ (1991/1994: 55). But thinking philosophically about organization and management becomes all the more important as observe today’s post-bureaucratic image of thought attempting to utilize, capture, operationalize and naturalize vitally important concepts such as creativity, invention, authenticity, play. Here philosophy, understood as the vocation of creating concepts, ‘extract[s] an event from things and beings’, so that thought is allowed to invent a ‘new image of thought’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994: 33, 66).

## Danish summery

Denne afhandling foretager en filosofisk undersøgelse af tre figurer der står i centrum for den post-bureaukratiske tænkning; den kreative leder, den autentiske leder og iværksætteren. Mens den kreative leder, den autentiske leder og iværksætteren har det fælles mål at løse krisen i taylorismen, hævder denne afhandlingen, at disse figurer producerer deres egne interne kriser. Dette sker, fordi den kreative leder, den autentiske leder og iværksætteren er bundet til begreber, der ikke kan transformeres til en erhvervsmæssig logik, uden at de forrådes deres konceptuelle dynamik.

Hvad filosofi kan tilbyde os i denne sammenhæng er ikke en færdig løsning på kriserne der karakteriserer den kreative leder, den autentiske leder og iværksætteren, men snarere et udgangspunkt for at konstruere begreber, der gør os i stand til at udforske de paradokser der er indlejret i disse figurer. Da filosofiske begreber lever i kriser, gør de det muligt for afhandlingen at indfange de paradokser, aporia og umuligheder, der uundgåeligt ledsager den post-bureaukratiske tænkningen. I stedet for at betragte kriserne i den post-bureaukratiske tænkning som en blindgyde, afgrund eller stilstand, viser denne afhandling, hvordan de kan åbne op for nye måder at begrebsliggøre den post-bureaukratiske organisation.

Med udgangspunkt i tre begreber der er præget af deres paradoksale natur; Derridas begreb om *pharmakon*, Deleuze begreb om *simulacrum* og Zizek begreb om *fantasi*, åbner denne afhandling op for en filosofisk kritik af det post-bureaukratiske billede af tanken. Dette sker ved, at udforske figuren om den kreative leder gennem en læsning af Gary Hamels populære ledelseshåndbog *The Future of Management* analyseret ud fra Derridas begreb om *pharmakon*, en undersøgelse af figuren om den autentiske leder gennem en læsning af Bill Georges semi-selvbiografiske selvhjælps håndbog *Authentic Leadership* analyseret ud fra Deleuzes begreb om *simulacrum* og endelig en undersøgelse af iværksætteren som figur gennem en læsning af Richard Branson selvbiografi *Losing My Virginity* analyseret ud fra Zizek begreb om *fantasi*.



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