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**WHY JERRY MAGUIRE SUCCEEDS BUT NOT
WILLIAM LOMAX: MANAGEMENT, CULTURES
AND POSTMODERNISM**

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ABSTRACT

Postmodernism has been widely used and abused in contemporary analyses within the social sciences. In management sciences, it has made some inroads but in the main, postmodernism has been seen as an esoteric exercise. This paper starts with a discussion of the concept of postmodernism and how it has been used in organisational and managerial analyses. The paper moves onto a discussion of contemporary discussions of the 'new manager', in particular, its relationship with cultures and new work practices. The paper argues that culture has been appropriated and pressed into the service of a new 'neo-liberal' discourse of individualism. The paper suggests that adopting a postmodernist approach enables cultures and differences to be re-examined; more importantly, it provides an alternative basis to further develop management theory and practices, where 'differences' are not simply tolerated but also appreciated.

WHY JERRY MAGUIRE SUCCEEDS BUT NOT WILLIAM LOMAX: MANAGEMENT, CULTURES AND POSTMODERNISM

I INTRODUCTION

The movie, *Jerry Maguire* begins with Maguire (Tom Cruise) clinching deals, marking him as an extremely successful business man. While at a convention, Maguire suddenly discovered a higher mission - quality customer servicing - and promptly circulated it to his peers. The following morning, he tried to retrieve his 'vision' but was unable to do so. On his return, Maguire found himself the subject of 'retirement'. Leaving the 'heartless and soulless' company, Maguire, with a female office junior, reworked their careers and along the way, found success after, predictably, some failures. What is significant is not that Jerry Maguire relives the American Dream; that it is. It resurrects the heroic and entrepreneurial individual (with, of course, his woman), peps it up with an almost invisible subtext of the new postmodern business practices. The script may not appear to be that remarkable -we always know Maguire will succeed and find 'true' love. Nonetheless, its subtext weaves and merges work with the market and with personal relationships, along the way, the man found work can be fun, playful and even leads to love.

Jerry Maguire is both a prop and a symbol in the new business literature. It accompanies the rediscovery and revival of the new rugged managerial evangelicalism. 'Downsizing', 'business reengineering', 'visioning', 'habits' and 'cultures' became buzzwords dominating our business presses and everyday language. All hold out the promise of providing complete solutions to our management conundrums. And yet underlying this boom, there is the growing but unacknowledged recognition that these are all diverse offerings. Whilst the (re) discovery of diversity conjures up images of plurality and suggests that there is no one best way of managing, diversity in itself does not mean the end of managerial orthodoxy [Scott, 1985]. Mainstream management theorists argued that these approaches lacked systemic and rigorous application and implementation of scientific principles and techniques [Donaldson, 1995]. In his critique of this view, Gareth Morgan suggests that diversity should be celebrated. It offers 'the possibility of obtaining new insights and understanding' of organisations and their practices' [Morgan, 1993: 13].

Morgan's postmodern injunction recognises a fragmented world where ambiguity, uncertainty, irrationality and complexity as ways of characterising relationships and of paradoxes and conflicts within social systems are dominant. It has as many proponents as its detractors. In this paper, the author seeks to take up Morgan's cue. It seeks, in particular to examine the relationship of the new discourse of culture within the 'new' organisation.

In this paper, the author seeks to examine changing global conditions and their impact on new work practices. It has been argued that they have led to new organisational practices and 'new' organisations. Termed postbureaucratic, postfordist and even, postmodern, they embrace 'culture' as the central signifying organiser. Culture, in the new organisation acts as both the organisation's glue and its *raison d'être*, imbuing the organisation with the will to innovate, change, evolve and to excel.

The paper starts off with a discussion of the postmodern condition, continues with an examination of the 'new' cultural discourses surrounding the 'new' organisation and its attendant managerial practices. It concludes that these seemingly different and new practices are, however, revamped tools employed to sustain and extend an essentially modernist project. The paper does not pretend to offer an exegesis on postmodernity nor does it seek to present itself as how a postmodernist analysis must be constructed but rather to provide a critique of culture as articulated in contemporary management. Again, critiques of culture abound but there have been very few studies dealing with the relationship between management, cultures and postmodernism.

II THE POSTMODERN CONDITION AND THE STUDY OF ORGANISATIONS

Postmodernism has become the enfant terrible in the social sciences. It is the subject of heated discussions in the social sciences, in the popular press and the only consistent theme appears to be a lack of consensus and/or clarity on the nature of postmodernism and postmodernity. Nevertheless, in general, it can be contended that postmodernism is characterised by the celebration of skepticism, irony, playfulness, paradox, style, spectacle, self-referentiality and above all, by hostility towards 'the grand narrative' (i.e. the assumption of rational and general overall explanations). It, as Lawson observes, reflects a crisis of our truths, our values and our most cherished beliefs [Lawson, 1985]. The postmodernists argue that we should accept and rejoice in the ephemerality, contingency and diversity of the physical and human worlds as we experience them, be comfortable in the absence of certainty, learn to live without definitive explanations and recognise that the modernists' project is utopian and unattainable.

Organisational analysis has, in the main, been concerned with the articulating of theories which purports to accurately describe how organisations' function. Form, purpose and determinacy, argues the organisational theorists, provide the rational key to a better world. Underlying this 'hard' logic is the assumption that organisational theories reflect realities and can thus be authoritatively known, planned for and manipulated accordingly. It takes as given the unproblematic ontological status of organisations. These propositions have been challenged by many, including the postmodernists, who argue that modernists' discourses and practices are arbitrary, self-defeating and ultimately counter-productive. They also point out the modernists' obsession with and privileging of technical reason and rationality marks the triumph of 'the ideology of representation' [Woolgar, 1988]. Overlooked is the figural, metaphorical and contested nature of language and represented reality. In insisting upon the necessity to explain how modern knowledge structures our thinking processes, the postmodernists enable us to see theories of organisations as institutionalised modes of thought which are themselves outcomes of our own actions and making [Calas and Smircich, 1992:223].

In the postmodernist frame, theories of organisations are better understood as products of 'disciplined imagination' with their own intelligible narrative. 'Postmodernism', thus, writes Robert Chia, '[Is] characterised by the insistent 'turning back' of organisation theory upon itself so as to reveal the tensions and contradictions embedded in the representationalists' truth assertions' [Chia, 19967]. This 'turning back' invites play, dialogues, experiences and is largely seen by modernists as promoting anarchy, chaos, hedonism and relativities. These tendencies have manifested themselves in contemporary discussions of management; some strands of postmodernist discourse have, unwittingly, been selectively appropriated and pressed into the service of management.

III THE WORLD HAS TURNED: SEARCHING FOR MANAGEMENT

'We have firmly based scientific knowledge of what a job needs to provide if a person is to develop greater self-reliance and self-respect and achieve a sense of dignity. The job must provide optimal variety, opportunity to learn on the job and go on learning, adequate scope for decision-making, mutual support and respect from coworkers, a meaningful task, and the opportunity for a desirable future. It is precisely these things that are negated by a bureaucratic organisation. Optimal variety is knocked on the head by standardisation of effort; continued learning is defeated by job simplification; elbow room on the job is restricted by shifting all possible controls to supervisors and staff planners; mutual support and respect are replaced not by the impersonality with which bureaucracies are usually charged, but by invidious interpersonal comparisons as individuals seek to ease or improve their personal lot and by self-serving cliques that form to improve their lot vis-a-vis their coworkers; meaningfulness of the individual's task tends to disappear in the interest of job simplification and the centralisation of responsibility for 'whole tasks' in supervisory hands; the desirable future of job security and promotion that the industrial and administrative bureaucracies hold out to middle-level and lower-level employees becomes in fact something of a Pilgrim's Progress - a life of endless vicissitudes on the Way to Heaven'.

In this striking passage, Fred Emery [1974:9] pre-empt the prescriptions of contemporary management gurus but has largely been ignored. Now, the central tenets of his arguments are critical elements in

contemporary management practices, albeit with little acknowledgment of his profound insights or work. The world has indeed change and today, large corporations seek to introduce new work practices to meet the challenge of changes within the global economy.

These changes globally saw the rise of 'East Asia' as a competitor. As new sources of mass production which could compete on equal technological terms but with drastically lower labour costs, East Asia provides challenges to the over-bureaucratized and standardised mass-producers of Europe and North America. Then, there was the rise of networks of small and medium-sized enterprises which compete with the large corporations; they also open up market opportunities that had lain dormant. Such networks arose in Italy, Japan, Germany, Taiwan and other East Asian economies providing a counterfoil to the large corporations. Large bureaucratic corporations thus find their markets invaded from both 'above' and 'below'. The coup de grace, of course, came from Japan with its alternative management and production system delivering superior quality, superior market responsiveness, superior levels of innovation and the commitment of multi-skilled staff to productivity enhancement and efficiency improvement. These challenges prompted a reexamination, a rethink, a redrawing and a mapping out of new business and management strategies to compete with and defeat their competitors.

The old management model premised on 'the most efficient possible use of labour by codifying craft knowledge and deciding by scientific means the one right way to do a particular job', as Piore and Sabel [1984:236] point out was simply not tenable. Management now has to implement strategies geared to the production and sales of products and services for specialist 'niches' rather than for general markets; the adoption of smaller wholly-owned subsidiaries and 'strategic business units'; achieving profits through consolidating and contracting trading activities through investment rather than growth and the introduction of new technology at the work place [Boyer, 1990; Drucker, 1993; Lipietz, 1994; Hirschhorn, 1997]. Commenting on this general trend, Hammer and Champ thus observe: 'Advanced technologies, the disappearance of boundaries between national markets, and the altered expectations of customers who now have more choices than ever before have combined to make the goals, methods, and basic organising principles of the classical [organisation] sadly obsolete' [Hammer and Champ, 1993:11]. They went on: 'change has become both pervasive and persistent. It is normality. Moreover, the pace of change has accelerated. With globalisation of the economy, companies face a greater number of competitors, each of which may introduce product and service innovations to the market. The rapidity of technological change also promotes innovation. Product life cycles have gone from years to months [ibid:24]. Elsewhere, Peter Drucker similarly notes the transient nature and destabilising nature of the 'new' organisation. According to him, the 'new' organisation must accommodate and be prepared for constant change [Drucker, 1993: 52-3]. Organisations, if they are to be successful, need to build in within themselves a new culture which could accommodate the forces and currents of flexibility, adaptability and responsiveness.

IV THE POSTBUREAUCRATIC/POSTFORDIST/ POSTMODERN ORGANISATION?

These new trends have engendered some reflexivity and some 'puffery'. Management gurus and academics peddle cures like total quality management, 'the learning organisation', downsizing and reengineering, as total solutions to management and productivity problems and crises. Mainstream management academics proclaim the birth of the post-bureaucratic organisation [Bennis, 1989; Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994]. In this construction, the new organisation embraces new patterns of work, new systems of control, new practices in management and a new drive to establish a 'trust culture' breaking down the barriers between management and workers. Work roles are no longer clearly defined but broadly determined, according to their contribution to the accomplishment of specific objectives. Channels of communication are deliberately encouraged to be 'open', 'flexible' and informal; there is also a greater emphasis placed on individual creativity and the ability to cope with ambiguity and change. Managers and workers are expected to be psychologically immersed in their jobs and it is for this reason that so much importance is attached to fostering appropriate organisational cultures since it is through these rather than through explicitly stated rules and regulations that involvement is obtained [Peters and Waterman, 1982; Boyett and Conn, 1992].

This new sort of management means the removal of older forms of hierarchy [Hirschhorn, 1997:2-3]. Workers gained autonomy and infused with responsibility, become decisionmakers in the name and interests of the firms. Chains of command are replaced by the 'market' as a motivating force and employees are promised the benefits of flexibility, skills enhancement, job enrichment and multiskilling. No longer subject to and responsive to external commands, workers now act as if they are the business; they identified with the organisation and internalised its organisational ideal [Schwartz, 1990; Peters, 1994].

This identification of employees with the organisational ideal is deemed to be the defining characteristic of the 'new' organisation. More importantly, the old divisions of the 'private' (the 'personal life', values and beliefs of employees) and 'public' (the 'impersonal' demands of corporations for greater productivity) are effaced. This totalising tendency 'is a central aspect of restructuring itself...[It] redefine the terms in which the social relations of work and employment are imagined. For, unless people identify with and become subjects of a new conception of 'work', 'business' or 'society', it is unlikely that it will emerge' [du Gay, 1991:55; Robbins, 1991:24-5; Bennis et al., 1994; Crosby, 1994].

V THE MANAGER AS BRIAN THE MESSIAH

Like all good discourses, the 'new managerialism' elaborates a tale of the failings of the old and their dire consequences. The new manager was born out of a climate of crisis and disillusionment - the failings of the West vis-a-vis the industrialising and dynamic Asian-Pacific nations. The state was over-regulated; corporations bloated; social, family and economic values were perverted and the will to enterprise, compete and to succeed was missing. The 'new' manager's role was to enliven and revitalise the life of the economy and hence, society.

In its practices, the 'new manager' aims to break away from traditional conceptions of managers as organisational functionaries/bureaucrats valuing rules-following above innovation [Whyte, 1957; Swann, 1988; Clarke, 1991]. By contrast, 'new managers' are open, dynamic, practical, playful, creative - in charge of their own destinies [Rose, 1989: ch. 10]. They embody the commitment to 'transformational' rather than 'transactional' leadership [Hunt, 1991]. The new managers lead through ideals and by example. They articulate a sense of purpose or mission for the organisation which enthuses and inspires its staff. As Tom Peters puts it: 'The boss...is constantly out 'campaigning' - campaigning for the support, energy and wholehearted participation of everyone in the organisation' [Peters, 1989: 406]. The objective is to replace control with commitment, creating the motivational conditions to mobilise all staff in the enterprise.

Unlike the old-style management which was obsessed with status, the new manager seeks to integrate the potential contribution of everyone in the organisation. The new manager talks 'of cultures and networks of teams and coalitions, of influences and power rather than control, of leadership not management' [Handy, 1989: 71]. It marks a shift from mechanistic to organic models of organisational life. Staff motivation is no longer simply an instrumental equation (realised through monetary rewards) but involves less other rational component - a sense of recognition, belonging and self-actualisation. In privileging such a shift, it inadvertently implies that organisational cultures can be created. An integrative community, encouraging participation and even fun, can, therefore, be built [Peters and Austin, 1985:292]

Thus, the new managerialism proposes that traditional rule-bound organisations are ossified dinosaurs and repress, rather than harness, creativity. For the organisation to compete in the 'brave new world', there is the need for 'loose-tight' organisations - where structures are 'looser' but there is 'tight' integration through commitment to the corporate mission. Visions, missions, leadership by example, intensive communication processes and thorough attention to the realm of symbols are the mechanisms for creating the cultural conditions which mobilise and harness the enthusiasm and energy of its members. The fortunes of the individual manager, the corporation and the nation thus became conjoined [Crosby, 1994]. Commenting on this development, Rose observes: 'Economic progress, career progress and personal development intersected upon this new psycho-therapeutic territory' [Rose, 1989: 115]. The new managerialism promises liberation for managers from their current oppressions. Liberation is achievable through self-transformation from

bureaucratic time-server to inspirational leader. Companies are 'turned around', 'transformed' and tales of managerial wisdom, exploits and heroism lauded.

VI THE CLONING OF CULTURE: SEARCHING FOR SUCCESS

The 'new' work organisation is based on the design, production and marketing of 'high quality' goods and services for now saturated markets. Economic survival is now contingent on selling newer and ever more perfect(ed) customised goods and services to niche markets i.e. to groups of people who come to define and change their identities by the sort of goods and services they consume. The emphasis now is on the (active) knowledge and flexible learning need to design, market, perfect and vary goods and services as symbols of identity, not on the actual product itself as a material good. And thanks to technological and social changes, this sort of 'quality' competition is now fully globalised. The winners design customised products and services on time/on demand faster and more perfectly than their global competition does or they go out of business. The end result is the creation of the most 'lean and mean' quick and efficient, customer-pleasing and customer creating businesses possible at ever faster rates.

The new manager promises a management equipped to take advantage of the changing internal and external environments of organisations, ready to match the pace of external change with

internal dynamism. The new manager attempts to create a shared vision which promotes a homogenous and a shared culture binding all workers to the pursuit of corporate objectives [Peters and Waterman, 1982; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Senge, 1990; Trice and Beyer, 1993]. More importantly, it channels personal aspirations into an internalisation of the organisation's vision. [Senge, 1990; see also Peters and Waterman, 1982; Crosby, 1994].

This vision does not naturally evolve. It must be created, shared, consolidated, dispersed, grafted and cloned within the organisations. It requires a deliberate collective effort. As Trice and Beyer put it: 'founders and other organisational leaders cannot create a culture of their own. They need lieutenants and other followers'. Furthermore, leaders 'need to select and recruit people who share their views or via processes of socialisation to create a single, coherent culture' [Trice and Beyer, 1993: 416; 150-4]. Once articulated, this 'new' culture needs to be embraced and replicated by every person at every task at every moment. This 'new' workplace culture is worked out through the dynamics of teams and teamwork and via osmosis, permeates and impregnates the organisation. This sameness provides the organisation with a vision, a mission, a sense of commonality, sharing and cultural homogeneity, binding people to the organisation and its purpose.

Why might employees embrace corporate culture? While material considerations are salient, protagonists of corporate culture warn that such a focus would be self-defeating. Employees would not work with 'imagination', 'resourcefulness', steadily and be sensitive 'to the marketplace' [Champy, 1995:58]. They argue that corporations today provide meaning to employees at all levels in the firm. The rites, rituals and ceremonies and symbolism contribute to the elicitation of sentiment and emotion and keep the eyes of all participants fixed on the same goal and concurring in the same faith [Durkheim, 1973:48, 161]. Advocates of corporate culture even recognise the dualism of human nature which Durkheim identified [ibid: 158]. Employees want, on the one hand, to be unique and stand out yet, on the other, desire cession to the whole. This seeming paradox is resolved by strong-culture companies. In this way, both the collectivist and individualistic aspects of people might be reconciled. So long as employees are induced, participate, inducted and submit to the organisational values, the organisation is able to promote 'loyalty, enthusiasm, diligence and even devotion to the enterprise' [Ray, 1986: 289]. Corporate culture thus provides the 'moral involvement' by participants in organisations [Etzioni, 1961; Wuthnow, 1994]. As Rose cogently puts it: 'The new vocabulary of teamwork, quality consciousness, flexibility and quality circles thus reconciles the autonomous aspirations of the employees with the collective entrepreneurialism of the corporate culture' [Rose, 1989:117].

The Confluence of Work and the Postmodern?

The new managerialism has prompted a reconsideration of some management practices, principles and forms. It has also provided a new and distinctive language of management which has played a significant role in legitimating claims to both organisational and social leadership. Such claims concern not only the exercise of power within the firm but also intrude into the community, especially into the realm of culture. It has seek to be expansive and increasingly, the businesses of culture and the culture of business are becoming part of everyday discourses.

Organisations, by their very definition, privilege some order, some coherence. In pursuit of such an intent, modern organisations set about disembedding [Giddens, 1991] individuals, giving them the benefit of an absolute beginning, setting them free to choose the kind of life they choose to live, and to monitor and manage their lives in the framework of rules spelled out by the market-driven constructs of the economy and the corporation. This extremely modern project [Berman, 1983] promised to free the individual from inherited identity. Yet, it did not take a stand against identity as such, against having an identity, against having a solid, resilient and immutable identity. The identity of the individual was cast as a project, to be erected systematically. The construction calls for a clear vision of the final shape, careful calculation of the steps leading towards it, long-term planning and seeing through the consequences of every move (most cogently embraced and encapsulated in business strategic plans). Thus, in the organisation's imagination, for order to prevail and success attained, there needs to be a tight and irrevocable bond between social order as a project and individual life as a project; the latter was unthinkable without the former. Cultures, market and work, thus coalesce and are fused intently to foster and create 'new' organisations and 'new' work practices. These new forms have been called postmodernist and/or postfordist organisations [Clegg, 1990; Mathews, 1994].

According to Clegg, the postmodern organisation 'would tend to be small or located in small subunits of larger organisations; its object is typically service or information, if not automated production; its technology is computerised; its division of labour is informal or flexible; and its management structure is functionally decentralised, eclectic and participative, overlapping in many ways with nonmanagerial functions. [Clegg, 1990: 17] The new diversity is also held together by a combination of strong cultures and information networks.

There is no denial that these 'new' features signifies critical differences but as Paul Thompson points out, this view of the postmodern management is 'entirely consistent with current thinking in pop-management' [Thompson, 1993: 185; see for example, Naisbitt, 1984; Sproull and Keisler, 1991]. In equating the 'new' work organisations with postmodernist organisations, Clegg and other similar writers misreads the ontological significance of culture and differences. This is a point well made by Cope and Kalantzis. According to them, in the older (fordist) organisation, 'where the emphasis was on mechanism, technical definitions of role and formal systems thinking, differences were not so important. Differences could be disregarded, forgotten, forced into invisibility or, at their most useful, employed as a divide-and-rule tactic' [Cope and Kalantzis, 1997:115]. The 'new' (postfordist/postbureaucratic/'postmodern') organisation, on the other hand posits culture as its central metaphor. [ibid: 117]. While welcome, the postfordist/postbureaucratic notion of work culture-as-sameness is limiting and self-defeating. A cursory examination of the realities of markets and the realities of globalisation demonstrates the poverty of this discourse of culture-as-similarity. They both privilege differences. The reality of markets is differentiation that requires flexible specialisation; the reality of globalisation is effective intervention and negotiation of cultural differences sensitively.

Viewed this way, 'postfordist' ideas on culture(s) in and of management do not meet the realities of markets and globalisation. 'Culture' which is inherently 'wild' and dynamic is rather wished away or ignored; its delineating and generating force promoting differences, resistance and conflicts are glossed over. They are instead subverted, domesticated, reborn and given an instrumental end - culture-as-sameness - then naturalised and replicated within organisations. Culture, thus, becomes a permanent ahistorical, essentialist fixture where differences (characteristics) can then be catalogued and 'binarised'. Inherent in the postfordist project is a latent commitment to 'liberalism'. As Anna Yeatman points out: 'It becomes clear that the

liberal conception of the group requires the group to assume an authoritarian character: there has to be a headship of the group which represents the homogeneity of purpose by speaking with the one, authoritative voice. For this to occur, the politics of voice and representation latent within the heterogeneity of perspectives and interests must be suppressed' [Yeatman, 1994: 81]. She went on to point out that this liberal impulse displace 'the domain of public, political action...(and) reasserts the principles of private property in ways which respond to and co-opt the politics of difference. Difference is homogenised within the category of consumer preference, and rendered a function of privately oriented and self-regarding action' [ibid: 91]. 'Postfordist' analyses, however radical their intent, now become 'proper technology' to differentiate, to catalogue and to manage differences [Bauman, 1991:3]. This has been borne out by numerous critiques of the 'new enchanted workplace'. Boyett and Conn point out that workers rarely have any real influence or control. They point out the ends (corporate culture) are often predetermined and there is a semblance of an enforced conformity akin to 'a kind of high-touch coercion' It is, therefore, 'easily vulnerable to abuses of power and [to] the elaborate manipulation of people and values'[Boyett & Conn, 1992:114-5]. Others have suggested that these new work practices are simply redefining and introducing new forms of control systems [Garson, 1989; Cope and Kalantzis, 1997; Fuller and Smith, 1991; Fieldes and Brambles, 1992].

The Postmodern and Differences

Traditionally, the worlds of the market, work and culture were separated. Outside of work, the culture of the market was a culture of mass consumption, of buying the same basic products as everybody else. And as the tentacles of modernity crossed national borders, this was very much a matter of cultural imposition. Postmodernists argue that this reading of cultural discourses is no longer sustainable. They point out as the world became modern and conditions became global, the first response - the response of the 'old' classical colonial and industrial capitalism - was to attempt to claim universality and 'correctness for 'western' culture and its values - to colonise the rest of the world, to attempt to homogenise other cultures in the image of the western middle class. It is this response that critics of capitalism and westernisation have attacked but as Bauman points out, the 'new' capitalism has found virtue in diversity. As he puts it:

Contrary to the anguished forebodings of the 'mass culture' critics ... the market proved to be the arch-enemy of uniformity. The market thrives on variety; so does consumer freedom and with it the security of the system. The market has nothing to gain from those things the rigid and repressive social system of 'classical' capitalism promoted: strict and universal rules, unambiguous criteria of truth, morality and beauty, indivisible authority of judgment. But if the market does not need those things, neither does the system. The powers-that-be lost, so to speak, all interest in universally binding standards[Bauman, 1992:52]

These trends not only sweep away the possibility as well as the desirability of a fixed social order; they also link up the market (commodity exchange) with the individual [Giddens, 1991]. Individuals find themselves shunted into the constant search for the experiential and the new; in the world of work, 'the product now in demand is neither a staple nor a machine: it is a personality' [Riesman, 1961: 46]. This constant search for 'newness' engenders a tentative, restless and heightened anxiety, fuelling constant changes and lifestyle choices. Because identities are in flux, constituted and re-constituted [Simmel, 1991:120; Giddens, 1991:81], they call into question the nature and the stability of categories of our social and political communities. They subject them to 'ways which both destabilise any appearance of a consensualist...tradition and brings to light the historically changeable artifice by which such traditions are constructed' [Yeatman, 1994:90].

It is apparent that both Bauman and Yeatman celebrate differences. They are however, wary of totalising claims, even those which herald and promote allegedly non-authoritarian distributed systems in our workplaces, governments, communities and our lives. While the market seemingly promotes choice and agency, in principle and in practice, the market is indifferent to the substantive nature of individual desires and cultural values. Both are left to the preference of individuals in the present, and these preferences are beyond social control or judgment. Market principles, in particular, liberalism, as Yeatman reminds us, has the potential and resolve to reinvent itself; in its embrace of differences, many of the themes of the traditional critique of centralised power and hierarchical system are co-opted, refined, given a new lease of

life and pressed into the service of a 'new' assimilationist 'hypermodernist' capitalism. It is this resonance between 'nihilistic' postmodernism (or the postmodernism of reaction [Foster, 1985]) and neo-liberalism which potentially could render the critical insights of postmodernism into 'new technologies of control'. The analysis of the postfordist/postmodern organisation ala Clegg offers one such example where potential radical insights may also express conservative tendencies.

CONCLUSION

Marked as it is by confusion, a lack of clarity, consensus, anarchy and play, the postmodern approach enables and facilitates new insights into organisational changes and responses. In polarising binary opposites, postmodern engenders reflexivity and offers the potential to revitalise critique. They rightly trekked changing global condition and proclaimed the birth of a new work and cultural order, where work, cultures and identities could be conjoined in a world of plural, malleable, playful identities ruled over by image, desires, style and signs. Postmodern analyses enable us to demonstrate that forms of subjectivity are produced and are 'a central target for authorities' [Rose, 1992: 143] to be managed 'at a distance' [Burchill, 1991:127].

With this in mind, a postmodern reading of the discourse of the 'culture' into the practices of 'new' organisations, including postfordist and/or postmodern organisations, should not merely be confined in mapping out empirically the contours of the postfordist/postmodern organisation but to also, problematise such mapping. Nor should it blind us to the fact that while playful and seemingly anarchic injunctions appear appealing, some postmodernist impulses are simply 'nihilistic'. They are clever interrogations and offer us the 'stars' (excellent companies) and the 'romance and theatre of managing together' [Vaughan, 1996]. But as Eddie Vaughan elaborates, the performances 'are staged and performed very badly, (the) scripts are unimaginative...spoiled by familiar smooth jargon and vaporous pieties, and the acting lacks the passion and imagination required for credibility [Vaughan, 1996: 35-6]. The 'stars' (in this case, the basic structures of ownership and control of business) remains [Thompson, 1993].

It has been argued that an informed and engaged postmodern practice allows us to generate a greater awareness of the limits of modernist projects without losing sight of how postmodern practices may be mobilised to strengthen existing power/knowledge relations that routinely privilege the modernists' values of purpose, determinate and rationality. It also calls upon us to reflect on equating the postfordist with the postmodern; the discourse of culture is clearly more problematic and cannot simply be ignored. In devising the logic of the new work order where workers will be transformed into committed 'partners' who engage in meaningful work, fully understand and control their jobs, supervise themselves and actively seek to improve their performance through communicating clearly their knowledge and needs, postmodern writers must not lose sight that their prescriptions may act as 'fatal remedies' in our already ecologically catastrophic pace of global modernist economic development.

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