What has been happening in organization theory and does it matter?

Hugh Willmott
Manchester School of Management, UMIST, Manchester, UK

Introduction

Organization theory can seem somewhat distant from the territory of personnel specialists, especially when their work is represented in terms of administering or developing systems of recruitment, training, appraisal, etc. Yet, on reflection, the design and operation of such "human resourcing" systems is dependent on ideas about organizing and organization; and their operation has consequences for the maintenance and transformation of how work and employment are organized.

Developments and debates in organizational theory are, arguably, of considerable relevance for personnel specialists whose *raison d'être*, it has been suggested,

> is one of keeping the organization as a whole going on a long-term basis through maintaining the staffing resource and coping with the conflicts and contradictions which arise wherever and whenever people are employed[1, p. 154].

Personnel specialists routinely invoke and apply common sense as well as textbook understandings of organizing and organization[2]. Personnel professionals aspire to acquire and apply knowledge of how human resources are organized, including current developments and debates in organization theory. It is by developing this knowledge, as Marchington[3] has observed, that practitioners can better appreciate what is taken for granted, yet is problematical about the theory and practice of organizing and organizations – including the advocacy of new employment practices associated with TQM, JIT, MRP, BPR and a plethora of other buzzwords[3-5]. Gaining recognition of "professionalizing" claims is not simply a matter of acquiring and applying discrete chunks of knowledge about organizing and organizations. Rather, it involves an appreciation of the construction of this knowledge that makes it possible to analyse situations, exercise informed judgement and act in the light of a critical awareness of the assumptions and limits of available ways of knowing organizing and organizations.

Before proceeding further, a word of caution is in order. Commonsense continues to encourage the belief that theories of organization are necessarily or

properly concerned with developing more adequate or rigorous ways of conceptualizing the "actual" structure and functioning of organizations; and that these theories can or should yield some practical insights into how they might be "better" organized. It is important to note the quotation marks around these terms because recent developments in organization theory have been less inclined to take their commonsense meanings for granted. While much organization theory remains wedded to established ways of framing its purpose and contribution, there have been a number of theoretical developments within the field of organization theory during the past 25 years or so (many of them pioneered by UK academics) which depart from what may be loosely termed an "objectivist" framing of the purpose of organization theory[6]. Bernstein[7, p. 9] has summarized the modern conception of objectivism as:

> An acceptance of a basic metaphysical or epistemological distinction between the subject and the object. What is "out there" (objective) is presumed to be independent of us (subjects), and knowledge is achieved when a subject correctly mirrors or represents objective reality.

Instead of striving to correct the distortions of commonsense beliefs by providing factual information about the (contingent) design of organizations and its effect on performance, etc. the "new" organization theorizing seeks to problematize and enrich our (commonsense and scientific) ways of making sense of the practice and theory of organizing without claiming to be more accurate or objective. Instead of claiming, or aspiring to discover and report what the structures and processes of organization (definitively) are, there is now a more modest, and some would say postmodern, concern to appreciate the diverse ways in which organizational practices are practically accomplished and represented. This does not imply that there can be no debate about what organizing "is" or what organizations "are". Rather, it means that accounts of structure or goals, for example, are acknowledged to be claims that are based on, or follow from, specific sets of assumptions about (how we know) the world. These accounts are understood to be contingent rather than more or less factual ways of accounting for, and shaping, organizing activity.

In case it should be thought that these postmodern departures take organization theory away from contemporary management issues, it is worth noting that they have stronger resonances with Tom Peters, a leading management guru, than they have with, say, Taylor, Mayo or Simon. As Peters has declared:

> There's little doubt that the times are crazy and getting crazier - whether you're a banker, software producer, restaurateur, or public official...*our principal organizational problem today is lack of craziness. In short, we're trying to use sane organizations to cope with an insane business world*[8] (emphasis added).

The contemporary business world seems to be increasingly insane because it is sensed that it no longer corresponds with old, classical views of this world. Management gurus have dubbed the new world "postbureaucratic", and have commended avowedly innovative ways of organizing which, for example, demand that an axe or a machine gun be taken to the established ways of organizing[9] (for

a critical appraisal, see[10,11]). The new theorists of organization, in contrast, have generally abstained from prescribing how organizing should be changed, preferring to expose the limitations of established thinking and/or to enrich our ways of making sense of contemporary developments.

Clegg, in particular, has been a major innovator and disseminator of new organizational theorizing. He has contributed a stream of books[12-14], including two major textbooks[15,16] and a number of edited volumes[17-19] which, in diverse ways, have challenged and problematized old, objectivist ways of representing organizations and organizing practices. In this article, I focus on his work precisely because it has been central and influential in the development of new organization theorizing. The article is organized as follows. I begin by sketching some key developments in organization theory, focusing on those which have radically challenged, rather than simply re-invented or embellished, established thinking. The arrival of "things postmodern" is then considered, where attention is directed to the manifestation of the postmodern turn in Clegg's *Modern Organizations*[16]. Finally, I assess the coherence and desirability of Clegg's formulation of this turn. This turn, I will suggest, is marked by a return to objectivism and a dilution, if not a rejection, of a commitment to organizational analysis which aspires to be "an enlightened social science" insofar as it contributes to "the critical analysis and evaluation of institutionalized power in modern societies"[20, p. 40]. Informing my analysis is a belief that current developments in organization theory should be more widely disseminated and debated because, at the very least, they can enrich our ways of understanding; and, potentially, by problematizing the authority of taken-for-granted ways of organizing, can contribute to the development of knowledge which fosters less irrational, divisive and destructive organizational practices[21].

Developments in organization theory

All our knowledge and theory of organizations and organizing is framed by the meaning attributed to the particular concepts – such as "structure", "role", "process" – which are invoked to describe and analyse what they purport to represent[22]. This observation is important because it draws our attention to the otherwise easily overlooked way in which our experience of the world is communicated through the (selective) medium of the particular concepts that we use. In organization theory (and other domains of the social sciences), there has been a strong tendency, that lingers on today, to think and act as if established concepts, such as "structure", "role", etc. provide us with "unmediated access to the world"[22, p. 169]. However, a moment's reflection serves to remind us of how communicated knowledge about the world relies on the "language game" through which such knowledge is constituted, articulated and realized. The forgetting of this knowledging process has perhaps been most complete among theorists who suppose that some version of systems theory presents a credible means of modelling and mapping the world. In contemporary organization analysis, the shift from old objectivist to new reflexive ways of thinking about organization was most clearly signalled and promoted by Silverman[23].

Meaning and power in organizations
Reviewing the state of organization analysis in the late 1960s, Silverman[23, pp. 216, 218-9] made the following assessment.

> A large proportion of organization analysis has been concerned to look for explanations in terms of *the impersonal mechanisms through which Systems secure their stability.* Beginning from the problems which threaten the security of organizations, and primarily concerned with the relative efficiency of certain processes and structures...*this way* (of considering organizations) *ignores the nature of social life and excludes...the manner in which the social-world is socially constructed and sustained* (emphasis added).

Prior to the 1970s, comparatively little attention was given by analysts of organizations to the question of how the "reality" of organizations is practically constructed and sustained by organizational actors or, relatedly, to the question of how the enactment of such processes is mediated by power relations[24,25]. To illustrate this point, it is relevant to note how Clegg[12], in the preface to his *Power, Rule and Domination*, recalls that his own interest in power developed as an undergraduate in the early 1970s when he took a course in the sociology of organizations – "an area in which its (i.e. power's) absence was perhaps the most striking feature"[12, p. viii]. In this preface, Clegg also acknowledges a major debt to Silverman's *The Theory of Organizations*[23] which, for many UK organization academics has been of key importance for questioning the adequacy of the established systems thinking as it pointed to the existence and relevance of alternative intellectual traditions that could shed some light on the question of how organizing is practically accomplished[26].

In *The Theory of Organizations*[23], Silverman commended what he termed an "action frame of reference" (AFR) for the analysis of how organizing work gets done. In the AFR, such commonly used terms as "goals", "rules", or "norms" are no longer regarded as mirrors of what exists "out there". Instead, these terms are analysed as more or less shared symbols whose plausibility and force is conditional on the capacity and willingness of organizational members "to perceive organizational goals (or rules or norms, etc. HW) towards which they orient their actions...Viewed in this light, then, goals may be placed in the category of *cultural objects which members use to make their actions accountable*"[23,27-30] (emphasis added).

Instead of assuming that goals or rules are what an organization has, Silverman invited his readers to understand them as cultural artifacts that are ascribed by organizational members in the process of making sense of their world. Moreover, Silverman noted that these artifacts generally carry with them a degree of normative force – as when, for example, members of organizations are routinely expected to behave in ways which are broadly consistent with the roles they are deemed to perform. Once it is perceived that commonsense terms, like "structure" and "role", exert a strong, if not compelling, influence over human behaviour, "it becomes necessary...to take account", as Berger and Luckmann[31] put it, of the fact that "He who has the bigger stick has the better chance of imposing his definitions" (p. 101 cited in Silverman[23, p. 138]). In turn, this understanding problematized the political neutrality of goals and norms that is widely assumed in systems theoretic formulations of organization.

The generation of organization theorists influenced by Silverman's work[32-34] has been more mindful of how concepts like "structure" and "technology" are cultural artifacts that provide particular ways of representing human organization and of rendering members accountable for their actions in terms of compliance with, or even commitment to, such artifacts. The capacity to define and institutionalize particular ways of making sense of organization is understood to be of critical importance for analysing organization. In turn, this understanding has given a major boost to the study of power: as it draws attention to how power is exercised through the use of particular concepts, and ways of thinking, to represent the reality of organizations and, thereby, to control behaviour. It was precisely this kind of insight that inspired much of Clegg's work – from the ethnomethodologically oriented *Power, Rule and Domination*[12], through the Marxian influenced *The Theory of Power and Organization*[13] to the magisterial *Frameworks of Power*[14].

An explosion of theorizing
Since its release from the confines of systems theory, the analysis of organization has became increasingly diverse and more self-consciously political. This development is evident in the dismay of a leading North American commentator who has suggested that the burgeoning domain of organization theory is "coming to resemble more of a weed patch than a well-tended garden"[35, p. 17]. Running parallel to the theoretical developments championed by Silverman in the UK, and in Weick's[36] *The Social Psychology of Organizing* across the Atlantic, the profuse growth of the "weed patch" has coincided with an increasing sense of disillusionment with classical (e.g. bureaucratic) methods of organizing – methods which are increasingly viewed and vilified as inflexible and ineffective. In the late 1970s and through the 1980s, "old" organization theory found itself caught in a kind of pincer movement as doubts about the practical relevance of established thinking were compounded by an emergent appreciation of how our knowledge of organization is inescapably conditioned by the organization of our knowledge[6,37]. Different paradigms and metaphors of analysis, it was argued, are equally coherent and credible. Or, at least, reasons for denying the contribution of diverse approaches have proved unpersuasive. Of greatest political significance for new organization theory is the fact that increasing attention was paid to how silent or blind commonsense thinking and academic theorizing, including Silverman's work, was to issues of class and gender. As Clegg[38, p. 2], in the introduction to *Critical Issues in Organizations* declared:

> Sexism, power, capitalist development, the historical interpenetration of state and capital are not yet found in the indexes of most texts on organizations.

Clegg and Dunkerley sought to correct the neglect of class in *Organization, Class and Control*[15] and in a companion book *Class, Politics and the Economy*[39]. In these books, the analysis of organizations is firmly located in a meta-narrative of exploitation and oppression in which their structures and

processes are understood to be the medium and outcome of the (class) relations and institutions of the modern capitalist state. However, the concerns articulated within these texts have subsequently been displaced, and perhaps eclipsed, by postmodern analysis. Depending on one's point of view, the postmodern turn in organizational analysis is seen to temper the excesses or deaden the impact of radical agendas advanced in the early 1980s (see[40]).

The arrival of things postmodern
Two broad strands in postmodern[41-43] thinking can been identified (see[44-46] for discussions)[47-50]. The first strand is preoccupied with problematizing how "reality" is represented, especially the (unreflective) use of "grand narratives" (e.g. systems theory, population ecology, marxism) to depict its (alleged) contours. Touched on earlier, this (epistemological) strand addresses the discourses which enable us to believe in the empirical reality of organizations. Instead of striving to say what is really going on in organizations, or attempting to study how this might be changing, this strand seeks to recall how knowledges of organizing (e.g. discourses on corporate strategy) are not simply embedded in, but also constitutive of, social relations. In short, this strand of postmodern thinking operates to deconstruct the ways in which seemingly authoritative claims about empirical reality are made[51]. The second strand deploys the term postmodern to characterize aspects of the reality of organizational practices or putative shifts in organizational forms. As we shall see shortly, Clegg[16] uses the term "postmodern" in the latter sense to describe avowedly innovative organizational practices that are emergent, or are becoming more widespread. When making this claim, Clegg elects to disregard the relevance of the first strand of postmodern thinking.

Clegg argues that a focus on epistemological concerns – the identification and exploration of diverse paradigms, metaphors and language games, etc. – presents "a fascinating object in its own right" but doubts its relevance for studying "the empirical issues canvassed in organization studies"[16, p. 15]. Clegg's assertion that empirical realities "are neither imaginary nor whimsical: they cannot be side-stepped"[16, p. 5], suggests a belief in the possibility of standing outside, or above, power/knowledge relations so as to provide an authoritative reading of the emergent, postmodern, organizational forms. A connection can be made here between Clegg's attentiveness to these forms and Reed's[20] complaint that the analytical approach commended by another leading organization theorist, Gareth Morgan, invites the readership to become "myopically fixed on the minutiae of the language games in which organization theorists are engaged – irrespective of their connections with material conditions or historical movements in the wider society"[52,53]. In Clegg's *Modern Organizations*[16], the focus is on the minutiae of avowedly postmodern organizational forms rather than language games, but there is a comparable abstraction from the material conditions of the wider society. Reed's critique of Morgan is founded on a stout defence of established "meta-narratives" of organizational analysis (e.g. those initially formulated by Marx

and especially Weber). Central to these narratives, Reed[20] observes, is an aspiration to develop "an enlightened social science of organizations concerned with the critical analysis and evaluation of institutionalised power in modern societies"[20, p. 40] – a view which also underpins Clegg and Dunkerley's position[15]. However, in *Modern Organizations*[16], Clegg largely abandons such concerns as he directs his attention to the diversity and distinctiveness of what are termed "postmodern" organizational practices and forms.

From emancipatory warrior to postmodern newshound

(The title of this section is an allusion to Reed's[20] review of Gareth Morgan's work.)

In common with Burns and Stalker's classic text *The Management of Innovation*[54], Clegg's[16] examination of postmodern forms of management and organization interprets these developments in relation to a discussion of contextual variables[55]. Like Burns and Stalker, Clegg focuses on the (technical) issue of the fit between modern/postmodern forms of organization and the contexts of their development. In doing so, he omits consideration of the avowed existence and organization of these forms as a medium and outcome of the historical development and dynamics of capitalist development or the value of such forms for the quality of life of those who enact them. In effect, technocratic thinking is embraced as a concern with ethics – which was central to *Organization, Class and Control*[15] – is suppressed as a category of life. The earlier espousal of an ethico-practical concern with issues of domination and exploitation is subordinated to a technical interest in developing a more comprehensive, "bricolage"[16, p. 69] conception of contingency theory of organization: the adoption of so-called postmodern practices is understood to be conditional on the specificities of a nation state, a sector or even a company, depending on the degree of support they receive from the institutional and power variables.

In *Modern Organizations*[16], Clegg's earlier Marxian focus on issues of exploitation and domination is superseded by nebulous notions of "power". Organizations and environments are now described as arenas where "differentially valued resources are competed for by differentially powerful agencies, exercising differential control of these resources, in complex games with indeterminate rules"[16, p. 85]. Talk of "complex games", "indeterminate rules" and the like conveys the impression that power in organizations is widely diffused and that the development of modern organization is pretty open-ended. At one level, Clegg's proposal to analyse organizations as "sites of power built from the bricolage of whatever materials may be at hand" is valuable in highlighting the negotiated nature of organizational order and development. It also helps to correct tendencies to deny or ignore factors and influences which do not fit neatly into simplistic or deterministic schema. However, at another level, there is a danger of becoming fixated on the institutional specificity of organizations and even nation-states in a way that excludes, rather than enriches, examination of pressures and contradictions that condition diverse processes of change, and which encompass

(ironically) the putative shift from modern to postmodern organizational forms. With regard to nation-states, for example, it is not difficult to accept that their trajectories of development rarely follow a common or predictable pattern; and therefore that accounts of development produced by Chandler, for example, cannot serve as a basis for general theory[16, p. 87]. However, it is quite another matter to imply that the dynamics of organizational development within different nation-states are unconnected, or that the pattern of development is uninfluenced by similar contradictory forces for change[59].

The difficulty recurs in Clegg's discussion of the development of bureaucratic governance structures. Clegg does not interpret the shift to these structures as a necessary condition of developing new forms of work organization (e.g. Taylorism) that once promised to produce major increases in the productivity of labour as a means of more effective capital accumulation. Instead, he interprets this shift principally as a means of containing the transaction costs associated with recalcitrant contract labour, or what Taylor dubbed "systematic soldiering". Like Williamson[60], Clegg focuses on the (postmodern) control of the worker rather than the opportunity afforded by bureaucratic governance to redesign work – or "re-engineer processes", as the contemporary jargon might express this point, in an effort to raise the productivity of what Marx[61] terms "the collective labourer"[62,63]. Or, again, consider Clegg's[16] brief discussion of industrial and social policy in Japan and Sweden in which he seeks to illuminate the connection between the specific form of postmodern practices and the national contexts of their adoption. Clegg associates the observation that the use of flexible manufacturing systems (FMS) is greater in Sweden than any other country except Japan with "the conjunction of power/institutions that has made Swedish labour amongst the most powerful and expensive in the world"[16, p. 213]. My difficulty with this observation is not so much that here, paradoxically, Clegg fails to explore the specificities of the contemporary Swedish situation when seeking to explain why the Swedes were induced to make this strategic choice. (He says that there is not space to do this, although he seems to find plenty of space to do many other things.) Rather, my concern is that in his brief discussion of this link, an opportunity is missed to expand on the suggestion that "Swedish employers have ample incentive to minimize the cost of labour in their enterprises"[16], given that labour in Sweden is comparatively expensive and powerful. Clegg implies – yet fails to acknowledge or to incorporate into his analysis – a reliance on the understanding that, above all else, the imperatives of capitalist political economy deeply condition (but do not determine) managerial decision making. All things being equal – which they frequently are not, for reasons that Clegg highlights – the dynamics of capitalist development operate to increase pressures on labour to be more productive for capital. The agents of capital (i.e. managers) then turn, more or less eagerly and effectively, to postmodern ways of organizing and managing if these are believed, or calculated, to provide a viable means of increasing the value-added produced by labour.

The crucial point, which gets marginalized in Clegg's[16] discussion of the selective and contextually specific adoption of organic or postmodern forms of

work organization, is that the imperative of capital accumulation fuels the interest in such organizing practices and prompts their selective adoption and development in preference to, or in combination with, other strategies (e.g. acquisition of competitors). Of course, precisely how so-called postmodern forms of organizing are adopted and applied does indeed depend on the local and national institutional frameworks, including ethnic and gender relations, through which their relevance and contribution is assessed and implemented. For example, as Clegg[16] indicates, a national institutional framework which embodies and safeguards the values of social democracy is more likely to nurture and defend practices which secure productivity gains by enhancing levels of skill and workplace participation (although not necessarily levels of employment), than it is to promote a cheapening-of-labour strategy which involves deskilling and casualizing work (although not necessarily reducing the levels of employment). In turn, the creation of a large pool of highly skilled labour may influence future patterns of capital investment as access to this labour is identified as a key condition of expansion or relocation.

This formulation allows that strategic decision making is mediated by what Child[34] characterizes as the "ideological values" of the members of the dominant coalition within organizations who themselves are under pressure to interpret and enact what I have termed the imperatives of capital. It also allows that so-called "self-interested" concerns with career, cultural values and many other political considerations shape and influence decision-making processes [64]. Nonetheless, when taking full account of the range of contingencies which condition processes of strategic decision making, there is a danger of becoming distracted by the minutiae and organizational politics of decision making or the specifics of institutional frameworks so that the broader picture – the patterning of processes of economic and organizational development – fades into the background or, at best, becomes very blurred[65,66].

Critical reflection suspended
Much of Clegg's work has contributed to, and indeed has spearheaded, a process of questioning and subverting established thinking about organizing and organizations. However, *Modern Organizations*[16] marks a reversal of this process. Critical reflection on the methodological and ideological assumptions underpinning orthodox organization theory is largely suspended in favour of an effort to provide an authoritative map of postmodern forms of organization.

The issue of grounding critique (epistemology)
It is possible to reach this conclusion without disagreeing with Clegg that:

> One can no more explain the politics of all organizations in terms of general theories of exploitation than one can in terms of their rationality. For one thing, too much which hinges on other aspects of identity than those of membership or exploitation is left unconsidered…[16, p. 105] (see also[67,68]).

Modern Organizations[16] certainly takes more adequate account of cultural traditions and aspects of identity than the approach advanced in *Organization,*

Class and Control (see especially[16, pp. 204-5]). However, in the process it dissolves to the point of invisibility the critical and emancipatory intent of the earlier work, seemingly on the grounds that:

> I don't think it's possible to proceed with a critique that assumes that it knows the answers before the questions have been posed…I think it is very difficult to argue that there is ever any transcendental ethical or moral purpose for achieving a principled way in which the social scientist, qua social scientist, should prescribe a stance towards the big issues of life[69, p. 5].

Here Clegg makes the apparently incontrovertible case that no one has a right to tell anyone else what they should think or do. However, there are problems with this articulation of such a view. First, there is a simplistic equation of critique with a closed-minded approach to enquiry whereas, arguably, critique can be (almost) as committed to reflecting critically on its own authority as it can be to problematizing other discourses and practices. To take the example of Marx, it can be seen how he repeatedly subjected his own thinking to critique, whatever assessment may be made of the fruits of his efforts. The same goes for Foucault. Of course, in order to proceed, any claim, including the claims of critique, necessitates a suspension of doubts about the foundations of critique as it proceeds, otherwise it never gets started; and for this reason, the caveat "almost" (see above) must be entered. However, it is absurd to dismiss the emancipatory intent of critique by arguing that it "is so often a claim to speak from some ground of privilege"[69] – not just because to speak at all inescapably involves making such a claim but because critique can be reflexive about the precarious basis of its "transcendent ethical or moral purpose" and the provisional nature of the answers which it provides. It may well be the case that such a transcendental purpose does not exist. However, this should not stifle or inhibit a process of debate in which critique plays a crucial role in identifying and clarifying the big issues of life without necessarily prescribing what should be done about them.

The brute facts issue (ontology)
In *Modern Organizations*[16, p. 5], debate is unnecessarily stifled when Clegg declares that postmodern empirical realities are not imaginary and "cannot be side-stepped". Saying this, he fails to heed, or prefers to forget, the epistemological insight, sketched earlier in the discussion of Silverman's work, that seemingly objective, empirical facts are cultural artifacts. It is simply unconvincing to claim that empirical realities *sui generis* can ever serve "as an embarrassment to certain generalizing and universalistic tendencies in organization analysis"[16, p. 5] (see also[70, p. 105]). Such a view assumes that access to reality is unmediated by theory – theory which necessarily rests on partial and contestable assumptions. By appealing to brute empirical fracts, Clegg avoids the trap of "anarchical relativism" into which Morgan[37] falls[71]. However, in *Modern Organizations* – subtitled *Organization Theory in the Postmodern World* – the (seemingly uncontrovertible) empirical evidence of things postmodern is marshalled to discredit the analytical claims of established metanarratives rather than to renew or revitalize their central concerns. As Hassard[72, p. 132] has remarked of *Modern Organizations*, "the tangible

description of postmodern organizational structures – ones which can be distinguished from the classical modernist form of the bureaucracy – defines this work". As we noted earlier, any concern to nurture an enlightening social science is marginalized, if not entirely abandoned, and in its place Clegg offers a contingency analysis of the global diversity of (postmodern) organizational forms.

Against Clegg's "postmodern turn" in organization theory, I want to argue that our knowledge of empirical reality, whether of organizations or of texts, is irremediably the product of value-laden interpretations and unavoidably subject to contestation. In my view, this standpoint does not discredit or deny the logic of making interpretations and debating their plausibility. Contra Clegg, the plausibility of any particular account is not tested by the existence of brute facts that cannot be side-stepped. Rather, it is inescapably mediated by power/knowledge relations[73] which condition how truth is assigned to, or withheld from, particular accounts which claim to describe the empirical world. It is these power/knowledge relations that cannot readily be side-stepped, although they are rarely, if ever, totalizing or devoid of tensions and contradictions; and, for this reason, they are vulnerable to challenge. This viewpoint, I suggest, is most consistent with the promotion of vigorous debate in which efforts are made repeatedly to mobilize and shift power/knowledge relations – preferably, I would submit, in a direction that is (deemed to be) consistent with what Reed [20, p. 40] has termed "an enlightened social science of organizations", though precisely what counts as "enlightened" must itself be a matter of recurrent deconstruction and debate[74].

The ethico-political issue
Against this assessment of *Modern Organizations*[16], it might be claimed that shifts in Clegg's thinking – from the materialist structuralism of *Organization, Class and Control*[15], via the heady but nonetheless instructive *Frameworks of Power*[14] (see[75] for an extended critique) to the resigned neo-Weberianism of *Modern Organizations* – is indicative of a searching and fertile mind that is receptive to new ideas. However, there is a lingering impression of new ideas being ardently embraced whilst others are forcefully discarded or neglected, without the benefit of a continuing process of assimilation and integration. In *Modern Organizations*[16], the baby – the symbol of enlightened analysis and the hope for emancipatory change – seems to have been flushed away with the bathwater.

The existence and importance of this "baby" in Clegg's earlier work is clearly articulated in the concluding sentences of *Organization, Class and Control*[15] where he suggests that:

> The contradictory role of both successfully maintaining accumulation and simultaneously retaining legitimacy, without producing a crisis of practical reason, appears almost impossible. As we enter into the last years of this century it will be surprising if this possibility can be achieved without a massive shift in the balance of overall, systemic hegemonic domination, either to a genuine legitimacy of rule or an intolerable burden of repression. We hope for the former, but fear for the latter[15, p. 555].

My assessment of the loss of this ethico-political perspective in *Modern Organizations* is paralleled by Burrell's[76] evaluation of the work of the new, postmodern gurus of management (e.g. Tom Peters, Rosabeth Kanter), with which *Modern Organizations* has some remarkable affinities[44]. Burrell accepts that postmodern thinking can bring fresh insights into the theory and practice of management. However, he also castigates theory that lacks epistemological reflexivity as it assumes a "naive empiricism"[44, p. 311] and/or focuses on the surface features of change without sufficient attention to underlying structural continuities[44]. Against the direction for organizational analysis now favoured by Clegg[16], I can do no better than reiterate Burrell's[76] judgement that:

> For the sake of argument, let us admit that post Modernism is reflective of changes underway within "advanced capitalism". Of course, it does not represent a transcending of capitalism but rather post-Modernism is part of Jameson's new "cultural logic of capital". It is the expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas.

In *Organization, Class and Control*, Max Weber is castigated for his despair – a despair that is associated with the lack of anything equivalent to the Marxian concept of contradiction – the concept which discloses how politico-economic systems contain within them the seeds of their own transformation. These remarks can now be redirected to summarize the position reached by Clegg in *Modern Organizations*[16] in which analysis "begins and ends at the level of cultural values"[15, p. 41] and, more tellingly, where Clegg is "unable to offer any systematic analysis of the process (of) transformation"[15, p. 81]. Clegg[16] certainly pays some attention to the political economy of capitalism (as does Weber). However, his analysis is dominated by discussions of institutions and power whose reproduction and transformation are largely abstracted from the dynamics of capitalism which are of critical importance for analysing their development. The class reductionism found in *Organization, Class and Control*[15] is exchanged for an indeterminacy compounded by a loss of ethico-political intent. Neo-Weberianism, unhelpfully represented as Foucauldianism[77,78], is incapable of detecting or exploring the contribution of postmodern ideas either to the "legitimacy of rule" or to the "burden of repression".

The contradictory conditions of postmodern de-differentiation
A major challenge for analysts of contemporary organizations is to acknowledge and appreciate institutional diversity and contrasting processes of development within different nation-states, including the emergence of so-called "organic" or "postmodern" organizational forms and management practices, without losing sight of their common participation in, and conditioning by, a globalizing capitalist system of production. Postmodern processes of dedifferentiation "smarten" and intensify the use of labour but at the cost of increasing dependence on employees who, as members of self-directing process teams, are less readily substituted than the executors of fragmented tasks.

Labour productivity thus remains a vital basis for competitive advantage and, thus, capital accumulation.

Consider the case of business process re-engineering which prides itself on obliterating bureaucracy[79]. To achieve the dramatic productivity improvements touted by its leading advocates – such as the possibility of "taking 78 days out of an 80-day turnaround time, cutting 75 per cent of overhead, and eliminating 80 per cent of errors"[80, p. 112] – full co-operation must be gained from employees who must also accept that "career paths, recruitment and training programs, promotion policies" must be "revised to support the new process design"[80]. The gurus of BPR assume that any resistance to change can be overcome so long as senior managers are fully committed to the vision of re-engineering work, and that sufficient resources are invested to ensure their realization[81]. However, in highly competitive and turbulent markets, where there are pressures to minimise long-term commitments especially to staff, it is highly questionable whether many nations or organizations have the resources required to build employment relations necessary to support a level of co-operation sufficient to maximize the potential of re-engineered systems.

Of course, this is what human resource management strives to accomplish by, for example, encouraging staff to expand the range of their skills rather than being concerned with their jobs; or by seeking satisfaction from completing projects when, post-delayering, there are fewer opportunities to be promoted up extended hierarchies. However, employment relations remain the Achilles' heel of postmodern management practices. Or, to translate this thesis into less mealy-mouthed terms, there remains a conflict between the buyers and sellers of labour power – that is, between capital and labour. This conflict can be varnished by diverse postmodern efforts to transform the identities of employees into loyal and committed servants of the corporation[10,82]. However, it repeatedly meets its limits whenever an expectation of even a minimal sense of fairness and reciprocity between employer and employee, acquired and sustained outside of the sphere of work, is impugned[83]. There is little likelihood of making "fast change and dramatic improvements" without relying on coercive measures which are corrosive of the conditions necessary for co-operation. However, in that case, the iron fist of top management control shows through the velvet glove of employee empowerment, thereby inducing additional cynicism which compounds the difficulty of overcoming employee resistance through "strong" leadership.

I have no difficulty with Clegg's concern to identify and analyse the "new management thinking" and "new organizing practices" – such as corporate culture, TQM and BPR – which are deemed to depart from the modernist process of rationalization anticipated by Weber. However, there are at least two dangers associated with the execution of this project. First, there is the danger of failing to grasp the degree of continuity between these developments and Weber's ideas about the domination of instrumental reason that underpin his writings on bureaucracy[10]. As a consequence, there can be a blindness to how the design and implementation of so-called "post-bureaucratic" organizational

elements are guided and legitimized by instrumental reason. Arguably, these developments are less postmodern than "hypermodern" in their attempted colonization of previously unrationalized aspects of work organization[44,75,79,84-86]. The arrival of these elements, such as the much vaunted idea of employee empowerment, rarely arises from any value-commitment by employees to extend their autonomy and responsibility. Rather, it is usually bestowed, or imposed, by managers in the hope or calculation that some competitive advantage (e.g. in relation to quality, customer responsiveness, wage cost) can be secured.

A second, and related, danger is of failing to appreciate the recurrence, and indeed the intensification, of contradictions within such moves towards postmodern organization[87]. The disappointment that so often accompanies failed efforts to translate postmodern visions into practical realities is routinely ascribed, by leading management gurus at least, to the incompetence of managers and/or the inadequate resourcing of change programmes. Clegg's[16] analysis is an advance on this insofar as it diagnoses such disappointment in terms of tensions between the requirements of postmodern prescriptions and the specificities of the prevailing institutional framework of organizations in which diverse agencies are understood to exercise control over a variety of resources including skill, information, ownership, networks and information as well as capital. However, above all, the articulation and application of new thinking and practices is conditioned – enabled and constrained – by the imperative for capital accumulation. It is also this imperative that is so deeply corrosive of the conditions which are most favourable for the fully effective implementation of postmodern practices, such as teamworking and empowerment. Security of employment is the most tangible evidence of reciprocity and the most potent nurturer of trust, especially where labour is otherwise treated as a disposable commodity to be bought and sold in shifting markets. Yet it is precisely this security that, in a condition of turbulence and flux, few organizations are able to provide.

In *Modern Organizations*[16], Clegg invites us to focus on the complexity and contingency of organizational practices (which is fair enough). However, this invitation is extended without an exploration of how postmodern practices, and the discourse developed to identify and legitimize such practices, are the medium and outcome of a larger picture – a picture which must incorporate an appreciation of how new organizational forms are a product of the (contradictory) effort to maintain and expand capital accumulation while simultaneously retaining a viable degree of legitimacy. It is one thing to suggest that there are signs of de-differentiation in organizations which are not adequately recognized or addressed by established (e.g. Weberian) forms of analysis. It is quite another to hinge organizational analysis around a distinction between modernist and postmodernist forms or elements of organization, as is done in *Modern Organizations*[16] (see also[44]).

Concluding remarks

Taking Clegg's work as its focal point, this article has provided a critical exploration of new thinking about organizing and organizations. This thinking has drawn attention to the central role of meaning and power in organizations. Initially, the constitution of meaning and power was abstracted from the structuring of social relations, including employment relations, by class and gender. This deficiency was then corrected, at least in respect of class, at the expense of an appreciation of how these relations are always mediated by institutional frameworks which serve to interpret and evaluate the meaning of these relations. In *Modern Organizations*[16], the key role of these frameworks is recognized but sight is lost of how employment relations are organized and governed, first and foremost, by the imperative of capital accumulation.

It has been argued that the demands of capital accumulation, rather than, say, those of social movements, best account for contemporary interest in notions of corporate culture, empowerment and teamworking: all of which promise to deliver more flexible and effective ways of increasing the surplus extracted from the productive activity of human resources. To the extent that personnel specialists rely on theories of organizing and organization that detach specific practices – whether modern or postmodern – from the politico-economic and institutional contexts of their generation and reproduction, they are ill-equipped to appreciate how these practices are shaped and enacted. To the extent that these contexts of personnel practice are disregarded, unanticipated difficulties will be encountered in developing and implementing what are assumed to be rational systems of recruitment, training, appraisal, etc.

At the heart of the new thinking about organization is the question of how to address the (poststructuralist) insight that class, gender and ethnicity do not exist "out there" but, rather, offer ways of representing how organizing practices are socially constituted through asymmetrical relations of power – relations which these practices act to sustain or transform. When assimilating this insight, it is no longer plausible to appeal to "empirical realities…that cannot be side-stepped"[16]. Instead of asserting their empirico-scientific validity, it is necessary to address and develop thinking about organizations and organizing practices by debating the ethico-political pros and cons. In principle, post-objectivist organization theory can enable practitioners to reflect critically on what we self-evidently know about organizations and organizing, with a view to participating in the development of organizing practices that are less irrational, divisive and destructive.

Notes and references

1. Watson, T., *Management, Organization and Employment Strategy,* Routlege, London, 1986.
2. What managers (and others) know about organizing comprises a fluid mixture of commonsense understandings derived from the lived experience of everyday life and elements of organization theory acquired through formal education, training courses, mentoring, etc. There is both continuity and tension between these components of their knowledge. Developers of theories are obliged to employ commonsense understandings

(e.g. about organizations, motivation, teamwork, etc.) even as they question elements of received wisdom; but, equally, to the extent that theories based on the questioning of established truths are (selectively) adopted and institutionalized, they become (albeit temporarily) part of the new wisdom or truth.

3. Marchington, M., "Fairy tales and magic wands: new employment practices in perspective", *Employee Relations*, Vol. 17 No. 1, 1994, pp. 51-66.

4. The emergence of HRM discourse, for example, has acted to discredit, or at least stretch, established conceptions of personnel management and, thus, potentially constitutes an alternative sense of identity and purpose for personnel specialists. Established personnel management, it has been suggested, "had as its primary objective the routine maintenance of organizational stability"[5, p. 36]. HRM, in contrast, has focused attention on the strategic development of contextually appropriate and innovative employment practices[5]. While exercising a degree of caution and scepticism in relation to the hype surrounding talk of HRM, some degree of reflection on established thinking has been prompted as old ideas and routines have been challenged by new (e.g. Japanese) ways of organizing human resources. However, of course, such challenges can also provoke a redoubling of efforts to defend the authority and preserve the existence of established wisdoms and work practices.

5. Hendry, C. and Pettigrew, A., "Human resource management: an agenda for the 1990s", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 1990, pp. 17-44.

6. Burrell, G. and Morgan, G., *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis*, Heinemann, London, 1979.

7. Bernstein, R.J., *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1988.

8. Peters, T., *The Tom Peters Seminar: Crazy Times Call for Crazy Organizations*, Macmillan, London, 1994.

9. Hammer, M. and Champy, J., *Reengineering the Corporation: Manifesto for a Business Revolution*, Nicholas Brearley, London, 1993.

10. Willmott, H.C., "Strength is ignorance; slavery is freedom: managing culture in modern organizations", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 30 No. 4, 1993, pp. 515-52.

11. Grey, C. and Miter, N., "Re-engineering organizations: a cultural appraisal", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 24 No. 1, 1994, pp. 6-18.

12. Clegg, S., *Power, Rule and Domination*, Routledge, London, 1975.

13. Clegg, S., *The Theory of Power and Organization*, Routledge, London, 1979.

14. Clegg, S., *Frameworks of Power*, Sage, London, 1989.

15. Clegg, S. and Dunkerley, D., *Organization, Class and Control*, Routledge, London, 1980.

16. Clegg, S., *Modern Organizations: Organization Studies in the Postmodern World*, Sage, London, 1990.

17. Clegg, S., Dunphy, D. and Redding, S.G. (Eds), *The Enterprise and Management in East Asia*, Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 1986.

18. Clegg, S. and Redding, S.G., *Capitalism in Contrasting Cultures*, de Gruyter, Berlin, 1989.

19. Clegg, S., *Organization Theory and Class Analysis*, de Gruyter, Berlin, 1990.

20. Reed, M., "From paradigms to images: the paradigm warrior turns post-modernist guru", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 19 No. 3, 1990, pp. 35-40.

21. Alvesson, M. and Willmott, H.C., *Making Sense of Management*, Sage, London, (in press).

22. Cooper, R., "Organization/disorganization", in Hassard, J. and Pym, D. (Eds), *The Theory and Philosophy of Organizations*, Routledge, London, 1990.

23. Silverman, D., *The Theory of Organizations*, Heinemann, London, 1979.

24. There were, of course, exceptions which were pushed to the margins of organization theory. For a review of this work, see[25].

25. Elger, T., "Industrial organizations: a processual perspective", in McKinlay, J.B. (Ed.), *Processing People: Cases in Organizational Behaviour*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, London, 1975.

26. Clegg, S., "Power relations and the constitution of the resistance subject", in Jermier, J.M., Knights, D. N. and Nord, W.R. (Eds), *Resistance and Power in Organizations*, Routledge, London, 1994.

27. This idea is elaborated, with a strong ethnomethodological spin, in Silverman[28]. The influence of ethnomethodology is also present in Clegg's early work, especially the variant developed by Blum and McHugh[29] but was subsequently rejected by Clegg on account of its nihilism[30].

28. Silverman, D., "Accounts of organizations: organizational 'structures' and the accounting process", in McKinlay, J.B. (Ed.), *Processing People: Cases in Organizational Behaviour*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, London, 1977.

29. Blum, A., Foss, D., McHugh, P. and Raffel, S., *On the Beginnings of Social Inquiry*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1974.

30. Clegg, S., "Power, theorising and nihilism", *Theory and Society*, Vol. 3, 1976, pp. 65-87.

31. Berger, P.L. and Luckmann, T., *The Social Construction of Reality*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966.

32. Hassard, J. and Parker, M. (Eds), *Towards a New Theory of Organizations*, Routledge, London, 1994.

33. Notably Child's[34] highly influential work on strategic choice, albeit that Child sought to reformulate Silverman's argument by identifying the "ideological values" of members of the dominant coalition within organizations as a variable that had been omitted from the systems thinking of contingency theory.

34. Child, J., "Organization structure, environment and performance: the role of strategic choice", *Sociology*, Vol. 6, 1972, pp. 1-22.

35. Pfeffer, G., *Organizations and Organization Theory*, Pitman, London, 1982.

36. Weick, K., *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA, 1969.

37. Morgan, G., *Images of Organization*, Sage, Beverley Hills, CA, 1986.

38. Clegg, S. and Dunkerley, D., *Critical Issues in Organizations*, Routledge, London, 1977.

39. Clegg, S., Boreham, P. and Dow, G., *Class, Politics and the Economy*, Routledge, London, 1983.

40. Cooper, R. and Burrell, G., "Modernism, postmodernism and organizational analysis: an introduction", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 9 No. 1, 1988, pp. 91-112.

41. The phrase "things postmodern" is used intentionally to signal the difficulty in defining this highly slippery area of discussion. Elsewhere, I have sought to define what I mean by it, arguing that it is a movement/argument that is distinguished by a suspicion of attempts to remove ambivalence from human existence, including our understanding of postmodernism[42]. However, it is also worth noting that other commentators have found my refusal to assign a standardized meaning to postmodernism unacceptable on the grounds that it is impossible to speak of postmodernism without having some stable notion of its meaning[43]. In my view, this objection fails to take account of the context-dependent nature of meaning – a concern which, I believe, is of central importance to so-called postmodernist thinking but is by no means exclusive to it. What I mean by "things postmodern" will therefore have to emerge in the course of reading this article and, in any case, will depend more on how it is read than on any definition which I might provide as indeed is the case for all kinds of other concepts which are used but undefined in this article.

42. Willmott, H.C., "Postmodernism and excellence: the de-differentiation of economy and culture", *The Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 5 No. 1, 1992, pp. 58-68.

43. Alvesson, M., "The meaning and meaningless of postmodernism", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 16, 1995, forthcoming.

44. Parker, M., "Post-modern organizations or postmodern organization theory?", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 13 No. 1, 1992, pp. 1-17.

45. Thompson, P., "Fatal distraction", in Hassard, J. and Parker, M. (Eds), *Postmodernism and Organizations*, Sage, London, 1993.

46. Hassard, J., "Postmodern organizational analysis: toward a conceptual framework", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 31 No. 3, 1994, pp. 303-23.

47. The two strands of the postmodern debate in organization theory (and elsewhere) are not unconnected (see [42,46]). Unless organizational analysts are to dispense with the study of organizations – either as their empirical site and/or as the theoretical focus of investigation – the relevance of the first strand would seem to reside in its contribution to a more reflexive approach to analysis. It may be useful to sketch my own thinking in relation to assessments of the epistemological and ontological claims of postmodern theory. I am not in sympathy with those who are unequivocally dismissive of the use of the term "postmodern" to describe either what they regard as familiar, or at least unremarkable, empirical phenomenon or to signal an epistemological departure from established, modernist conceptions of knowledge (e.g[43,45]). However, equally, I am not convinced by those who unreservedly stress the freshness of its insights (e.g. [40,48]). Instead, I feel greater affinity with those who accept the value of postmodernist ideas in problematizing conventional wisdoms, yet retain a concern to participate in debates about what may loosely be termed "the real world" of organizations[49,50]. Within this third orientation, the inherently precarious and incomplete nature of our accounts about the world is acknowledged. Nonetheless, the world is understood to be patterned as well as indeterminate and there is a belief in the possibility of rendering this patterning "intelligible via rational enquiry"[49, p. 649]), although it is accepted that there will inevitably be heated exchanges about the adequacy of the accounts which are developed (see also[42]).

48. Daudi, P., "Conversing in management's public place", *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, Vol. 6 No. 4, 1990, pp. 285-307.

49. Tsoukas, H., "Postmodernism, reflexive rationalism and organization studies: a reply to Martin Parker", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 13 No. 4, 1992, pp. 643-9.

50. Parker, M., "Getting down from the fence: a reply to Haridimos Tsoukas", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 13 No. 4, 1992, pp. 651-3.

51. Knights, D., "Changing spaces: the disruptive impact of a new epistemological location for the study of management", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 17 No. 3, 1992, pp. 514-36.

52. Tinker, A.M., "Metaphor or reification: are radical humanists really libertarian anarchists?" *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 24 No. 3, 1986, pp. 367-82.

53. Jackson, N. and Willmott, H.C., "Beyond epistemology and reflective conversation – towards human relations", *Human Relations*, Vol. 40 No. 6, 1987, pp. 361-80.

54. Burns, T. and Stalker, G.M., *The Management of Innovation*, 2nd ed., Tavistock, London, 1966.

55. The remarkable similarity between Clegg's modern/postmodern distinction and Burns and Stalker's distinction between mechanistic and organic systems of management has been noted by a number of commentators (e.g[44,45]) but, strangely, appears to have escaped Clegg's notice. When this point was put to him in a seminar given on the book immediately prior to the publication of *Modern Organizations*[16], this connection was firmly dismissed.

56. In Burns and Stalker[54], the emergence of organic-type management systems is related primarily to the way "production and the market have moved into a fundamentally unstable relationship"[57, p. xviii]). Clegg[16], see especially chapter 8) broadly accepts contingency theory but extends it to take account of how institutions intersect with power relations in ways which delimit the development of more organic/postmodern-type forms of organization and management ([16] see especially, chapters 5 and 6). For example, when

discussing the adoption and use of flexible manufacturing systems, Clegg cites the work of Kenney and Florida[57] who report that US companies used FMS to produce relatively standardized parts (on average, ten) whereas Japanese companies used FMS to produce high volumes of a wide range of parts (on average, 93). Clegg also cites the research of Shaiken *et al.*[58] who found that FMS has been used in the USA to further diminish shopfloor responsibility for planning whereas, in Japan, it has been used to extend it.

57. Kenney, M. and Florida, R., "Beyond mass production: production and the labour process in Japan", *Politics and Society*, Vol. 16 No. 1, 1988, pp. 121-58.

58. Shaiken, H., Herzenberg, S. and Kuhn, S., "The work process under more flexible production", *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 25 No. 2, 1986, pp. 167-83.

59. It is curious that Clegg[16] acknowledges the role of these contradictory forces when reviewing historical changes in the organization of work but he then seems to forget about them when he analyses contemporary developments. He notes how, for example, the decline of the internal contract system – in which an employer hired a number of internal subcontractors to provide the requisite number and quality of goods – was hastened by moves (e.g. the innovations distilled by Taylor in his principles of scientific management) to redesign the manufacturing process in a way that raised the productivity of labour. The dependency of capitalists on internal contractors to organize the labour process (and thus the productivity of workers) was reduced by replacing market regulation of subcontractors with bureaucratic governance structures which "internalized transactions, reduced their costs and thus, from the capitalist point of view, increased efficiency"[16, p. 67]. As Clegg usefully notes, this was only one way in which capitalists responded to pressures and opportunities: they also bought out competitors, suppliers and so on.

60. Williamson, O., *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism*, Free Press, New York, NY, 1985.

61. Marx, K., *Capital*, Vol. 1, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1976.

62. Many considerations and influences enter the process of negotiating contracts and managing change[12]. Williamson's transaction cost analysis is clearly too schematic and simplistic to appreciate these complexities[12, pp. 68-9; 63]. On the other hand, in attempting to correct Williamson's economism, there is a danger of focusing on the institutional complexity without relating it to patterns and trends in the development of work organization.

63. Ezzamel, M. and Willmott, H.C., "Corporate governance and financial accountability L: the new public sector", *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal*, Vol. 6 No. 3, 1993, pp. 109-32.

64. Whittington, R., "Putting Giddens into action: social systems and managerial agency", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 29 No. 6, 1992, pp. 693-712.

65. As Warhurst[66, p. 7] has indicated, similar problems are encountered by "the neo-institutionalism of Whitley (that) degenerates into a contingent theory for the 1990s".

66. Warhurst, C., "Agency, organization and structure and an example from the management of communal socialist industry", paper prepared for presentation at the Action, Structure and Organization Workshop, Paris, May 1995.

67. Knights, D. and Willmott, H.C., "Power and subjectivity at work: from degradation to subjugation in social relations". *Sociology*, Vol. 23 No. 4, 1989, pp. 1-24.

68. Knights, D. and Willmott, H.C., "Power and identity in theory and practice", *Sociological Review*, Vol. 33 No. 1, 1985, pp. 22-46.

69. Jermier, J.M. and Clegg, S.R., "Critical issues in organization science: a dialogue", *Organization Science*, Vol. 5 No. 1, 1984, pp. 1-13.

70. Clegg, S., "Radical revisions: power discipline and organizations", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 10 No. 1, 1989, p. 97-115.

71. His realist antidote to relativism is fundamentally empiricist rather than structuralist in conception.

72. Hassard, J., *Sociology and Organization Theory: Positivism, Paradigms and Postmodernity,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993.

73. As Knights[51] has argued, "it is important to disclaim any aspirations to truth in critical knowledge since to do so is immediately to welcome incorporation by prevailing power-knowledge regimes and thereby to produce the very "truth" that it would otherwise seek to disrupt".

74. Foucault, M., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, Gordon, C. (Ed.), Harvester Press, Brighton, 1980.

75. Willmott, H.C., "Theorising agency: power and subjectivity in organization studies", in Hassard, J. and Parker, M. (Eds), *Towards a New Theory of Organizations,* Routledge, London, 1994.

76. Burrell, G., "The absent centre: the neglect of philosophy in Anglo-American management theory", *Human Systems Management*, Vol. 8, 1989, pp. 307-12.

77. Although it is implausible to refer to authoritative readings of Foucault with which Clegg's work fails to comply, there are good grounds for questioning the extent to which Clegg has immersed himself in Foucault's shifting problematics. Clegg is more inclined is to draw selectively on Foucault to augment his own project than he is to reflect on the relevance of Foucault's work for the coherence of this project in a way that might lead him to recognize its divergence from Foucauldian concerns (compare, for example[26,78]. It also allows him to represent Foucault as Weberian, despite an acknowledgement that Foucault rejected this interpretation of his work (see[69, p. 3]).

78. Knights, D. and Vurdubakis, T., "Foucault, power, resistance and all that", in Jermier, J.M., Knights, D. and Nord, W.R., (Eds), *Resistance and Power in Organizations,* Routledge, London, 1994.

79. Willmott, H.C., "Business, process reengineering and human resource management", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 23 No. 3, 1994, pp. 34-46.

80. Hammer, M., "Re-engineering work: don't automate, obliterate", *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 1990, pp. 104-12.

81. "One factor" alone, Hammer[80, p. 112] proclaims, "is necessary for reengineering to succeed: executive leadership with real vision". Tellingly, employee resistance is not interpreted as a rational response to the fear or prospect of redundancy, job insecurity or work intensification. Rather, resistance is interpreted as a residue of previous change programmes that have engendered cynicism among employees by promising much, delivering very little and then fading away.

82. du Gay, P. and Salaman, G., "The cult(ure) of the customer", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 29 No. 5, 1992, pp. 615-33.

83. The horrors of modern European history, to say nothing of the wealth of anthropological evidence, confirms that human beings are capable of believing in all kinds of visions, given sufficiently compelling conditions and strong leadership. However, to repeat, it is necessary also to recognize the historical and cultural context in which these visions gain plausibility. For example, it is widely accepted that a condition of possibility for the rise of National Socialism in Germany in the 1930s was its desperate economic plight induced, above all, by the punishing terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Likewise, the successful implementation of a programme dedicated to the obliteration of bureaucracy is contingent on conditions which extend well beyond the fanatical leadership of senior managers. In particular, success is conditional on employment relations conducive to the securing of cooperation in changing "job designs, organizational structures, management systems – anything associated with the process".

84. Others prefer the term "high modern"[85] or "late modern"[86]. While these terms indicate the continuity of new "empower-and-facilitate" ways of organizing with old "command-and-control" methods, they do not allude to the rapid intensification of the commodification of labour which is now occurring as all kinds of work is increasingly casualized, individual contributions to value-added are more closely monitored by

information and communication technologies, and strenuous efforts are being made to harness and subordinate "craft" and professional ethics to commercial pay-offs and values.

85. Reed, M., "Expert power and organisation in high modernity: an empirical review and theoretical synthesis", mimeo, Department of Behaviour in Organization, Lancaster University, Lancaster, 1995.

86. Giddens, A., *Modernity and Self-identity,* Polity, Cambridge, 1991.

87. Tellingly, whereas 14 references to contradictions are listed in *Organization, Class and Control*[15] there are none in *Modern Organizations*[16].

Further reading

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