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Digging deeper towards capricious management: 'Personal traits become part of the means of production'

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Abstract

What follows examines the shifting nature of work to argue that we need to look beyond the employment relationship and the work organization to understand labour. It suggests one tendency in capitalism is to generate 'all labour as productive of value' (Harvie, 2005: 161), so that we subsume life to work. The article also suggests that, rather than being new, this development is an intensification of the past. Indeed, by returning to early management writers, it asserts that we can see the scale of management's political ambition to subsume life to work. As such, to understand labour we need to comprehend the broader issue of capitalism's social reproduction and the manner in which it recalibrates the subject as a 'subject of value'.

Keywords

co-creation of value, free gifts of sociality, immaterial labour, personality market, social reproduction, subsumption

This article interrogates the early management literature examining the use of subjectivity within the circuit of capital. More recently, much scholarship also analyses subjectivity and analysing aesthetic, affective, experiential and immaterial labour within production. This work often emphasizes subjectivity as a new form of work and the experiential content of the commodity (Lazzarato, 1996; Mumby, 2016; Vercellone,

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2007; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). What follows contributes to this literature by highlighting the emphasis on experience and subjectivity within earlier management thought. As such, it argues that some of the features of capitalism today that are seen as contemporary are actually rather old because in different ways Bloomfield, Mayo, McGregor and Maslow, and organizations such as Macy's and Ford, also focused on these issues.

This early management attention aimed to modulate the subject. Using Deleuze, I deploy the concept of modulation to reflect a 'society of control' characterized not by disciplined enclosure in contained institutions – factory, family, school – but by flows across spheres so that control never finishes nor is it simply pre-determined. Deleuze (1992: 7) depicts modulation as a cityscape wherein one's electronic pass enables travel through the barriers of the city. In this environment, where one travels can be chosen, but because it is controlled remotely these routes can be locked to individuals. We can choose, but such choices are made within an environment of control, and because decisions can be punished or rewarded we come to prefer certain choices. That is, the subject's behaviour is modulated but not pre-determined.

What follows argues that the goal of management is to modulate individual choices and behaviours into valorizing choices and behaviours. It suggests that by focusing on desire, empathy, skill, the creation and management of new routines, and the developing of work organizations as the primary socialization mechanism, early management thought sought to modulate subjects and thus societies. Central here is the work organization that enabled management produce routines, social relations and political values in ways that resonate today (Böhm and Land, 2012). In this, production and consumption are intertwined; for example, the routine of the assembly line influenced emotions, aesthetics, desires, affects, consumption patterns, subjects and ways of living. This implies two things. Firstly, the emphasis on subjectivity in contemporary work is an intensification of elements of the past rather than a radical break with it, and secondly, an examination of earlier management theorists is insightful for understanding the contemporary organization, production and subjectivity. Earlier writers chronicle the potential of future management and allow us to outline management's political ambition. As such, treating these as historic figures is ideological because it misinterprets their ambition and downgrades their intervention into a politically contentious process (on history as ideology, see Susman, 1984: 27–38).¹

In making this argument, the article addresses the capitalist tendency to totally subsume life to work by generating 'all labour as productive of value' (Harvie, 2005: 161). In doing so, it argues that to understand labour we need to understand the broader issue of capitalism's social reproduction within the wider 'community' – the other half of organization and exploitation (Dalla Costa and James, 1972: 11). This takes us away from orthodox Marxist, labour process and critical management positions, which emphasize paid employment as the centre of production, towards feminist and workerist analyses of social reproduction beyond paid work.

Because subjects are increasingly formed as prepared employees (and consumers) and are (re)created as (un)prepared subjects of value or non-value (Skeggs, 2011, 2014), the article further argues that the pursuit of total subsumption creates ever more market-focused subjectivities by limiting the potential for alternative social relations. In different ways, management writers like Mayo, Maslow and McGregor, social theorists like Mills

and Kracauer, and organizations like Macy's or Ford were inching towards the subsumed subject as a harbinger of the new 'cultural content' (Lazzarato, 1996) needed for emotional, aesthetic, affective or immaterial labour. As we shall see, an analysis of the creation of such cultural content through new routines highlights the beginnings of 'the even more totalitarian' management of our contemporary division of labour (Lazzarato, 1996: 136.6) – a totalitarianism located in the concept of the gift of sociality.

The gift of sociality

Central to this analysis are Marx on cooperation and feminist analyses linking female reproductive labour to the broader reproduction of capitalist accumulation (Dalla Costa and James, 1972; Weeks, 2011). Both argue that labour's sociality presents capital with gifts – its shared skills of language, affect, perception or cognition. It is these gifts with which the individual is born and in tandem with which he or she constructs their subjectivity. In cooperation, labour's sociality enhances its productivity by creating new meanings, connections, affects, forms of commons and an 'ethical surplus' (Arvidsson, 2005; Böhm and Land, 2012). This collective capacity is central to experiential transactions – transactions that are growing today; for example, the hospitality industry (Dowling, 2007; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007), call centre work (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002), or models of production based on a privatized form of open innovation – for example, the clothes company *Threadless* (Ettlinger, 2014). However, although expanding, these gifts are not new.

Importantly, cooperative capacity is a gift because capital hires the 'individual' but reaps the value of cooperation necessary to the individual's socialization. Because of this, capitalist social relations must be managed in the space beyond paid work to ensure the correct forms of socialization. This is done by modulating subjectivity, so although the outcomes of social relations are not determined, they are inflected to ensure that some actions and responses are made preferable to others. For example, brand managers manipulate responses to brands, or hospitality firms manage autonomy so that it is 'structured' to guarantee that employees opt for the 'correct' behaviour and react differently to clients depending on gender, age, image of business and so forth (Arvidsson, 2005; Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Dowling, 2007; Hochschild, 1983; Mills, 1951). Here, management ensures that subjects act conservatively by limiting the range of possible social relations (Arvidsson, 2005: 252). This calibration of subjects is the central focus of the article. Pivotal to it is the establishment of 'command over subjectivity itself' (Lazzarato, 1996: 134.5). One way the achievement of this was attempted in the early 20th century was through work routines. Indeed, Mayo (1937: 829–830) explicitly argued that the work organization should create new routines, practices and behaviours to overtake the nuclear family as the primary socialization unit. As such, alongside the family and education, the work organization assumes the (moral) role of developing everyday individual 'social discipline' and prepares the subject for selection into employment through which they can consume. This created new cultural content and hence new subjectivities and forms of living, which were valorized and then fed back into work; for example, a person recognized the importance of the automobile as a mode of transport, a status symbol and something to be afforded through work (on this today, see Lazzarato, 1996: 146.6).

The article is divided up across a number of themes. Firstly, it examines how early in its ascendancy capital managed spheres of social reproduction beyond direct production. It then analyses how the gifts of social reproduction were planned and captured for valorization. This process develops 'new' skills located in aesthetic, emotional, affective and bodily arenas, which necessitates the deployment of an intrusive planning of subjectivity. The article develops this to argue that skill is no longer technical but largely fostered and created beyond the work organization in social reproduction, and with this come more capricious forms of management. My final conclusion then follows.

Early management and social reproduction

Early 20th-century life was a struggle over production and consumption, and central to this was altering the subject's view of the good life (Lears, 2000; Susman, 1984). This struggle shaped new capitalist social relations that made dispersed knowledge in society about what the good life was important to organizations. In light of this, education, management planning and science were deployed to develop particular affective, aesthetic and cognitive skills in the workplace (Illouz, 2007, 2008; McGregor, 1985: 68; Mayo 1923a, 1923b). For example, deskilling reshaped worker knowledge of production processes and created new systems of worker socialization (Braverman, 1974). Accompanying this, education and training were reconfigured to establish new routines and modes of thinking that allowed capital access workers' subjectivities through new practices and discourses (Illouz, 2007; Kracauer, 1998: 75; McGregor, 1985: 68; Mayo, 1937). Stone (1973), through a detailed archival analysis, argues that a key example of this conjoining of the inside and outside of the organization is the US steel industry, which became the template for the ensuing corporate form. Steel created new methods of recruitment, training and promotion designed to select and develop different skills from those of craft (Mills, 1951; Stone, 1973). These changes redesigned workers' relationships to work so that, rather than being a way of life as in the 'Artisan Republic' of 19th century crafts (see Wilentz, 2004), work became a means to an extrinsic end (Mills, 1951: 237). In response to the loss of work as intrinsically valuable, meaningless skill differences inculcated new extrinsic ideas of progress, career, promotion, savings, pensions, loyalty and attachment to the bureaucratic organization. Furthermore, college-trained recruits were hired to middle management positions because they had no affiliation with the shop floor and so could be trusted to make the correctly modulated organizational decisions (Stone, 1973). Finally, amongst the elite, the Dean of Harvard Business School Wallace Donham (1927a, 1927b), the executive Chester Barnard (1938/1968), President Herbert Hoover (1922) and Elton Mayo (1933, 1949) all argued that senior managers needed (re)educating so they could take up the leadership roles necessary to securing corporate legitimacy.

In a different register, Illouz (2007: 16–24) – using employment statistics, Mayo, Freud, the rise of the feminist movements, and the growth of self-help literatures – argues that the early corporation made communication and emotional control central sources of authority. Management used communication to capture and shape workers' cognitive, aesthetic and affective skills. For example, through employment regimes and media forms, management emphasized attractiveness, empathy and communication to instil

new values of exchange, new routines, new desires, new ambitions, new loyalties and new consumption patterns. These were used to modulate the circuits of the emerging service economy, to reattach the worker to work that was inherently meaningless through motivation (Maslow, 1998: 55–66; Sievers, 1986), and to enable capitalism to reproduce itself (see Barnard, 1938/1968; Bernays, 1928; Kracauer, 1998; Lears, 2000; Lippmann, 1914/1961, 1922; Reisman, 2001). These changes entailed the shaping of dispersed knowledge to ensure capitalist valorization by generating particular desires, forms of performativity, motivations, schooling and socialization (Aglietta, 2000: 152–169; Harvey, 1989: 3–39; Meadows, 1947: 363–364; Sievers, 1986).

Thus, ways of thinking were recognized as a battleground for the future, and management became concerned with them. Indeed, Mills (1951: 161–188) highlights the importance of aesthetics, affect and the body in ‘The Great Salesroom’, wherein your appearance acts as an embodied representation of the company; employee self-disciplining of the body is also highlighted in Kracauer’s discussion (1998: 33–39) of ‘selection’ in Weimar Germany, wherein candidates are selected on their appearance and disposition; and ‘enlightened management’ divided labour into separate groups to be managed differently because, although “‘feeble-minded” girls find themselves quite comfortable in these mechanistic and repetitive industrial situations’ (Maslow, 1998: 63), other employees need alternative management practices. Ways of living, through greater attention to its management, were made more supportive of capitalist reproduction and accumulation – that is, particular behaviours and beliefs were fostered (see Smith, 2013; Vercellone, 2007: 26–28). Thus, although it is true that the cultural content of communication, affect, aesthetics and cognition are more important today, this is not new.

Planning social reproduction, cooperation and sociality

As suggested, to understand the importance of this early accessing of affect, aesthetics, cognition or emotion, it is useful to return to Marxist and feminist concepts of cooperation (Dalla Costa and James, 1972; Marx, 1976). Marx centralizes antagonism within capitalist cooperation (Marx, 1976: 439–454). Because capitalist social relations are driven by the disciplining necessity of valorization, the organizing authority of cooperation emerges to enable capital increase as capital. In this process, cooperation and authority are external to workers because they are organized by capitalist (and management) expertise (Clawson, 1980; Marx, 1976: 449–450). Cooperation in the labour process becomes particular capitalist cooperation because it is organized for the valorization of capital.

Central to cooperation is the transforming of individuals into enhanced potentialities through collective production. However, individual contribution to collective potentiality cannot be left ungoverned because labour’s capacity to refuse means that workers have to be managed more as capital expands (Braverman, 1974; Federici, 2004: 133; Virno, 2004: 81–84). It is through cooperation that ‘individual’ labour is at its most productive because it enables the worker to strip ‘off the fetters of his individuality and develop the capability of the species’ (Marx, 1976: 447). In this process, capital receives the gift of sociality.

But cooperation is not confined to the work organization. Feminist scholars demonstrate how capitalism reproduces itself through the invisibility of domestic labour

(Weeks, 2011: 124). They argue that the community is a hidden abode of surplus labour that capital exploits as a gift. This surplus labour is the other half of capitalist organization. Using these ideas, feminists developed the concept of the 'social factory' wherein the outside of paid employment is managed to enhance valorization and to reproduce the labour potential upon which capital depends (Dalla Costa and James, 1972: 11). Here, all life is labour because women 'were always on duty, for the machine doesn't exist that makes and minds children' (Dalla Costa and James, 1972: 29). The gift of social reproduction is put to work for capital. In building these arguments, feminists reject productivist interpretations wherein only particular types of paid work create value. Instead, they claim that activities outside of paid employment, work organizations and direct capitalist production processes generate value (Dalla Costa and James, 1972; Harvie, 2005; Weeks, 2011).

In these accounts, it is labour's cooperation and its gift of sociality that is the productive agent because labour arrives at work as a social form. This preparedness generates value for capital beyond that possible from the individual worker. In short, cooperation and sociality come to capitalists as a 'public good' (Virno, 2004: 37) that structures present and future subjectivities, social relations and social reproduction. We see this in the 'free gift of caring' (Skeggs, 2014: 12), or the way families rear children and present them as 'public goods' (Weeks, 2011: 141), or equality and diversity programmes that enhance organizational performance by accessing difference (McKenzie, 2001: 65–70), or the way prepared social, aesthetic, affective and communicative skills are vital to the call centre (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002) or hospitality industries (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007; Witz et al., 2003). In these examples, skills and knowledge developed beyond the organization are central as control flows from one space to another in a continuous fashion; for example, from the family to employment (Deleuze, 1992: 5). But this also means that capitalist planning cannot simply be located in work because it has to privatize skills from beyond the organization. To do so, management accesses the diffused knowledge of society (Lears, 2000; Lury, 2004; Susman, 1984; Willmott, 2010).

When planning accesses subjectivity

In his discussion of the general intellect, Marx (1973: 704–712) suggested that the prioritizing of planning, technology and science advances objectified knowledge. This increases productivity so that paid labour becomes an ever-decreasing element of production as capital escapes living labour through the use of science and technology (Tronti, 1965: 4). This development means that the 'social individual' emerges as 'the foundation-stone of production and of wealth' and social life comes under the increasing control of the general intellect through fixed capital. Autonomist theorists later altered and expanded this insight to argue that the social individual – made up of people within each of whom is a collectively formed pre-individual (shared language, social cooperation, affect, aesthetics, perception or cognition) and the individuated elements of the actual person – becomes the means of production (Virno, 2004: 80). In this amended rendition, people become 'fixed capital' (Marx, 1973: 712) and come under the (incomplete) control of the general intellect through beliefs, knowledge, taste, experiences,

feelings and routines. Here, socialization into practices, beliefs, affective reasoning, and so forth, is part of the preparing of the means of production – a kind of perpetual training (Deleuze, 1992: 5; Marx, 1973: 707). This means that the outside of direct production becomes a battleground for valorization because life is penetrated by a valorization logic that changes the subject and hence social reproduction.

Central to this alteration of subjectivity is the fact that labour (as the source of value) develops its potential beyond production and training to reinsert itself into production as a different subject. This development is collective because through communicating with living and dead labour we are recreated as subjects and reinserted into production and the social individual as transformed subjects (Virno, 2004: 80). In so doing, workers' subjectivities are enhanced as a means of production outside of direct production. One example is emotional labour wherein the work form is partly located in the worker's subjectivity, which acts as the 'technology' for producing the (human) service (Böhm and Land, 2012; Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Dowling, 2007; Harvie, 2005; Hochschild, 1983; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007; Witz et al., 2003). This means that our subjectivities and social relationships are accessed, transformed, captured and harnessed as valorizing forms.

Here, the skills required for capitalism emerge beyond the factory – in the gifts of sociality such as communication, affect, aesthetics, emotion and experiences – wherein 'personal traits become part of the means of production' (Mills, 1951: 225). This shapes management's relationship to subjectivity, cooperation and sociality; for example, Maslow's (1998) entreaty to see work as play in order to foster it as the source of our happiness. In so doing, capital/management shape and recreate political values and social relations (Böhm and Land, 2012). Value becomes increasingly located in generic skills captured outside and inside the factory, and 'the measure of wealth is then not any longer, in any way, labour time but rather disposable time' (Marx, 1973: 708). Disposable time – time beyond paid work – reshapes the subject so that his or her potential to valorize capital relies on skills generated in subjectivity that are necessarily modulated to the requirements of the economy. In contrast to the arguments of some theorists (Pasquinelli, 2009; Vercellone, 2007), management here cedes little real autonomy to social reproduction because, although non-paid activities are not planned, they are modulated and made ready for valorization. We can see this in the co-creation involved in branding (Arvidsson, 2005; Lury, 2004), the capturing of value through design in open innovation (Ettlinger, 2014), the dependence of hospitality industries on embodied, emotional, aesthetic and affective skills (Dowling 2007; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007), the necessity of social and communicative skills in call centres (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002), and in a range of other industries from hairdressing to sex work (Böhm and Land, 2012).

An early sign of this transformation is the generation of services and the 'personality market' (Mills, 1951: 161–188). Here, subjectivity is managed and modulated because it is a source of value and it is as a product of social reproduction that the individual personality is created (Virno, 2004: 37). One increasing feature of the 20th century was capital's accessing of this public good. The emphasis on emotional control and the shift from a subjectivity located in an unchanging 'character' to viewing subjectivity as a bundle of desires, emotions and motivations to be modulated as a consuming and productive resource for capital is one manifestation of this transformation (Illouz, 2007,

2008; Lears, 2000; McGregor, 1957; McKenzie, 2001; Susman 1984). But so are McGregor's Theory Y (1957) or Maslow's (1998: 43–44) self-actualized employee, wherein the employee is inspired to constantly empathize, desire, understand, improve, up-skill, create, produce or transform so that, like a mother, they are 'always on duty' (Dalla Costa and James, 1972: 29). Indeed, Maslow (1998: 39) explicitly references a mother's love for a child in his discussion of the potential for routine work to allow for self-actualization. In this sense, management was already concerned with producing future subjectivities, social relations and political values (Böhm and Land, 2012: 231). Management sought to turn the general intellect into a particular valorizing subset of ways of thinking (Arvidsson, 2005; Smith, 2013). Managing subjectivity highlighted the future to capital – namely a vanguard economy based in experience, affect, aesthetics, cognition and personality. Subjectivity had to be modulated, and this heralded new forms of management.

Creating the self-disciplined capitalist subject

This emerging division of labour meant the factory, office and store became more rationalized, managed and bureaucratized with lengthening lines of authority and a desire to fracture labour through grade differences and divisions (Edwards, 1979; Mills, 1951; Stone, 1973). The displacement of labour in the factory helped create the rise of services, which required a different set of management techniques and worker skills because, as one early management theorist noted, 'Business may be essentially impersonal but it is highly personal in services' (Bloomfield, 1915: 124). The personal experiential nature of services created new management priorities. Mills (1951: 215–238) argues that workers were now different from craft workers because the mass industrial subject separated work and life, did not understand (nor care) about the whole production process, worked in different settings, and was certified even though such certification was unnecessary to the task (see Kracauer, 1998: 42; Mills, 1951: 161–189; Stone, 1973). Nevertheless, despite workers' desire to separate production and consumption, the two strongly overlapped. For example, life outside of work was heavily influenced by the factory, as Adorno and Horkheimer's (1997) analysis of the repetition involved in the culture industries highlighted. Kracauer (1995: 75–88) demonstrated this link through the dance routines of the 'Tiller girls',² and in a different but related way the market segmentation strategy pioneered by General Motors also mirrored this by tying your role in the division of labour to your car. The deadening routines of work helped create the consuming subject in search of release or status. This meant that some statuses, releases, routines or behaviours were privileged over others – modulation in action.

Furthermore, service economies need managed bodies and personalities (Bloomfield, 1915). If firms were to eliminate randomness in services, as they attempted to do in manufacturing, they would need more rigorous selection, hiring and training. Services became the future of the economy and acted as the form that created tomorrow. Bloomfield (1915) edged towards subsuming the subject by arguing for new forms of rationalization – the rationalization of attitude (see also Mills, 1951: 180; for today see

Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Ritzer, 1993). Personality could not be left to chance because it represented the organization – people's bodies and minds were becoming the material of the product (Mills, 1951: 183).³ Selection and training became paramount in the pursuit of the ideal, self-controlled, worker-personality who had the correct cognitive, affective and aesthetic skills to perform in a rationalized valorizing manner (Callaghan and Thomson, 2002; Kracauer, 1998: 38–39; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). Paredness for work through the management of the general intellect would ensure subjects of value.

In this process, education, behavioural sciences, public opinion, propaganda and the stressing of consumption were deployed to generate new subjects (Barnard, 1938/1968; Bernays, 1928; Donham, 1927a, 1927b; Lears, 2000; Lippmann, 1922; Mayo, 1919; Scott, 1992). Accessing such subjects and making them cooperate become a management priority because emotion, affect, aesthetics and cognition were central to production. Hence, subjectivity needs to be 'manipulated' (Mills, 1951: 110). This was the task that management set itself from the 1920–1930s onwards – it wanted to access the workers' 'total situation' so that it could accommodate them to their new role (Mayo, 1924b: 255). This could not simply be left to workers themselves because they would potentially refuse capital's plan. Gramsci (1971: 294–297) points to this desire to create paredness for work when he asserts that prohibition and the sexual question were not moral issues in 1920s America. Rather, they were production issues because Fordism needed new subjectivities. These struggles created the new cultural content and ways of being necessary for Fordism. This content is what Ford was generating through its classes for immigrant workers – classes on 'Buying and Using Stamps', 'Pay Day', 'Going to the Bank', 'Building a House', 'Beginning the Day's Work', 'Shining Shoes', 'A Man Looking for Work' and 'Finishing the Day's Work'. Workers were not simply learning about production. They also learned 'self discipline through regular habits of saving and work. They learned to invest in and to purchase property and to become responsible citizens' (Meyer, 1980: 75). Routines, values and ways of living delivered this cultural content through the 'totalitarian' organization (Edwards, 1979: 148). This created new subjectivities and fed into society's diffused knowledge as modulation.

Hence, the general intellect, where individuals emerged from interaction, was 'scientifically' modulated to ensure that the skills it generated were capitalist skills and the social relations it produced were capitalist social relations. This is evident in McGregor's (1985: 68) Theory Y, where modulated employees know 'that the acceptance of responsibility (for self-direction and self-control) is correlated with commitment to objectives'. Depending on the capacity of these modulated choices to assist valorization, subjectivities were deemed responsible 'subjects of value' (or not) in ways that resonate with contemporary economies (Skeggs, 2011: 501–503). A person's subjectivity, body, disposition and attitude determine whether or not they are a subject of value whose labour is productive (Harvie, 2005) or a subject of no value whose labour is unsuitable for capitalist valorization. This happened inside paid employment (e.g. one had ambition) but also outside of paid employment (e.g. one arrived prepared and cognizant of the fact that business was 'highly personal'). New subjects were not born, they were created. Modulating subjectivity was an early necessity.

Management and irrational workers in ‘the factory of smiles and visions’⁴

Reflecting the need to construct this subject, Mayo argued that labour’s lack of cooperation highlighted its irrationality. To access labour’s full potential, workers needed to be managed away from irrationality towards the new corporate capitalism. He suggested that people are not naturally sane (Mayo, 1923b: 122) and that the wrenching of the 19th century left some unable to cope with the newly required individual–societal relationship, and this expressed itself as irrationality, that is, as poorly modulated subjects (see also Donham, 1927a, 1927b; Lippmann, 1914/1961, 1938; Maslow, 1998: 43; Scott, 1992). Such irrationality was stoked by left political ideas, which were:

...obviously subversive of morale; it is impossible to find interest or to take pride in his work if he believes himself to be deluded and enslaved. If these doctrines gain ground our civilisation cannot live. We must solve the problem of industrial peace or be crushed by circumstance. (Mayo, 1922: 16)

As such, management’s core task was convincing workers that capitalism was good. To achieve this it shaped political values and social relations into particular forms. By so doing, the worker is recreated as a rational subject of value who embraces the new society, consents to its form and works cooperatively – that is, to see capitalist cooperation as the natural form of cooperation. If cooperation is to be valorized, command of worker subjectivity becomes paramount. Indeed, he (Mayo, 1924b: 258) accused Taylor of only focusing on the body, whereas management needed to understand the ‘emotions and ideas imposed’ on labour by education and work. Management must dig deeper to further access the subject through new organizational routines (Mayo, 1937).

Other early management writers also developed these links. For example, Maslow (1998: 42) argued for the creation of B-values (perfection, playfulness, self-sufficiency etc.). He prioritized the work organization as a mechanism to deliver the life of the artist, of peak experiences, and of creativity to the worker. This would absorb workers’ subjectivities into organizations and transcend any tension between the worker and capitalism, thereby making the worker healthy (Brouillette, 2014; Maslow, 1998: 37–42). The well managed work organization would give the unimportant worker a role, health and self-esteem (Maslow, 1998: 27). Furthermore, to be alienated from oneself was to have a neurotic relationship with society. A healthy individual was ‘flexible and realistic’ (Maslow, 1998: xxiii) and moved easily between growth and defensive motivation. Maslow argued that organizations needed better management to ensure safe, autonomous routines that produced a modulated healthy subject-citizen who would not be enticed by communism (Brouillette, 2014: 69). The well-managed work organization delivers a controlled subject who contributes within and beyond the organization. A virtuous circle of individually modulated subjects, organizations and diffused knowledge would enable society escape conflict. Equally, Kracauer (1998: 35–36) noted that German management scholars also advocated taking a ‘total view’ of employees within and beyond firms. Early management writers attempted to break down the barrier between work and non-work in order to shape the general intellect in particular ways.

In this view, the unreconciled worker is pathological – incapable of capitalist cooperation. Such subjects should be recreated and modulated into a form that willingly offered gifts ‘from beyond the point of production’ (Willmott, 2010). The job of management is to re-educate and reconcile workers to their roles so they willingly present ‘spontaneous cooperation’ (Mayo, 1949: 120) to their co-workers, employers and customers and, through sharing the goals of the organization, achieve self-esteem (Maslow, 1998: 64). These willing subjectivities would thereby give the (now safely capitalist) gift of sociality. They would create profit through their creative, emotional, aesthetic and affective willingness, all of which would draw on the knowledge of the general intellect. By modulating potentiality, the foundations of today’s economy were laid in a previous era.

Mayo (1924a) advocated studying workers inside and outside factories to better shape the conscience, to educate, and to accommodate them to their cooperative position in organizations. The creation of new routines located in the sub-conscious was needed, so people behaved in an unthinking (capitalist) fashion. For Mayo (1937: 829–830), work organizations should be society’s major socializing institutions. The routines of work organizations would save us because:

It must be insisted that the intelligent development of civilisation is impossible except upon the basis of effective social collaboration and that such collaboration will always be dependent upon semiautomatic routines of behaviour made valuable by personal association and high sentiment. The most intelligent adaptation will remain ineffective until transformed from logic and the abstract into the human and actual routine with deep emotional attachment. Here then is the problem for the sociologist and administrator that I propose to illustrate as best I may from personal experience. (Mayo, 1937: 336)

Maslow (1998: 1–2), too, saw managed work organizations as tools of ‘utopian and revolutionary technique’ capable of delivering subjects who could see meaning in menial tasks because they allowed individuals to participate in a project bigger than themselves (Maslow, 1998: 39). Mayo and Maslow were altering the cognitive and affective maps of both the specific worker and the social individual through ‘deep emotional attachment’. Through the worker, management sought to shape the social individual so that cooperation altered from many varied potentials to become many capitalist potentials. Management theory attempts to make the general intellect the capitalist general intellect. Mayo and Maslow understood that the modulated society – the total subsumption of society to capital – needed to pay attention to preparedness, socialization and the beliefs of the ‘community’ (Dalla Costa and James, 1972: 11). Here, the worker could be accommodated to work, capitalist cooperation a (subservient) role in society and consumption, so that management could ‘conquer the still vacant territory of the employees’ souls’ (Kracauer, 1998: 78).

Mayo (and others, Barnard, 1938/1968; Donham, 1927a; Hoover, 1922; Lippmann, 1914/1961; McGregor, 1957; Maslow, 1998) sought to collapse the distinction that workers had created between work and life, that is, the thing the Taylorist division of labour had encouraged workers to generate as a protective coating. By ignoring this transition in capitalism we underplay the extent of the political reach of early management. Although Mayo is the most explicit, he is by no means alone – for example, McKenzie

(2001) highlights how from the 1930s onward a variety of management schools of thought attempt to access the employee's interiority. Through work, early management thinkers sought to modulate the skills created in the general intellect and thereby feed into the general intellect, shape it and further shape social reproduction.

The personality market, total subsumption and capricious management

The managed routines of work organizations were important to social reproduction because 'personality' was rationalized in and out of the workplace to deliver a better, more predictable service. Here, new norms of work were created and regulated, and workers – as consumers themselves – were made to see that particular market potentials were better than others (for today, see Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Dowling, 2007; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). In this economy, an unmanaged life could lead to unpredictability in the 'factory of smiles and visions', thereby threatening valorization. This need to screen out non-capitalist logics gave rise to early management's rationalizing of the 'total situation' of production and reproduction.

In light of this, the general intellect was shaped for value extraction because the personality market required its skills if it was to be profitable. In this rendition, the attitudes, values and skills learned in cooperation 'inside' and 'outside' of work are central as a gift to capital (Maslow, 1998: 42; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). However, this cannot arrive as unmanaged potential because it may be dangerous. Prior learning enhances the gift of cooperation by preparing people for work and lessening the need for training into valorization processes (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Maslow, 1998: 20–42; Warhurst and Nickson 2007). Here, the general intellect is modulated to unleash more of the excess of cooperation. As such, capitalist social relations mould this gift by prioritizing some of labour's different potentials over others and reinforcing those potentialities that serve the acquisitive drive of possessive individualism (Arvidsson, 2005). As with learning to consume in particular ways in the branded market place, labour learns how to work before it performs work. As such, management and selection feed back to the general intellect through this foregrounding of certain potentialities. After all, this is what selection is about because 'it is not enough to feel the call, you must be chosen' (Kracauer, 1998: 33).⁵

However, selection, training and promotion also become more capricious when the division of labour is located in personality and is hence arbitrary (Virno, 2004: 40–41). In the personality market there are increasingly no objective technical criteria as to why John and not Mary should be on reception today, organize the welcoming for the international clients tomorrow, and attend a training course the following day. Here, professionalism, craftsmanship and specific skills are redundant because in this work setting '[a]ll workers enter into production in as much as they are speaking-thinking' (Virno, 2004: 41). Because everybody can communicate and everybody has a personality, the reasons for choosing X rather than Y become a problematic management question – the contemporary concern with 'lookism' as a form of discrimination reflects this (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007: 104). In short, although we all have speech, cognitive, aesthetic and affective capacities, few of us are surgeons or mechanics. In this market economy, the sharing of the cognitive, affective, aesthetic and communicative abilities of the general

intellect undermines a division of labour located in specific-technical skill (Lazzarato, 1996).⁶ Furthermore, this market is founded on accumulation located in the sharing and expanding of collective ties, but it only achieves its accumulative effects after individualizing collective knowledge through competitiveness, the commodity form and the mode of reproduction located in individual private property.

At the core of this market is the fact that sharing increases personal vulnerability (Kracauer, 1998; Mills, 1951; Virno, 2004: 41; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). The vehicle for selection, promotion or redundancy is subjectivity – a subject that ‘needs to be chosen’ as a subject of value. But when the product is no longer separated from the producer it takes on the appearance of ‘servile labour’ (Virno, 2004: 68); think of eating out or a hotel visit – the way you are served helps determine the ‘quality’ of the experience (Dowling, 2007; Warhurst and Nickson 2007). This ‘servile’ work shares similarities with craft work; for example, the product and producer are inextricably linked, both sets of workers express and develop themselves at and through work, and consumption and production are often simultaneous (see Mills, 1951: 220–24; Witz et al., 2003). However, the personality worker is not protected by specific skill. The craft refusal to share knowledge strengthens the division of labour and hence limits vulnerability (Nelson, 1995: 126–135). In short, specific skill protects workers. The personality market, which today drives much of western work, undermines such protection.

In this sense, Fleming (2014: 36–39) is right to suggest that the rise of the general intellect, the weakening of the division of labour and the increased emphasis on sociality create ‘surplus regulation’. Today, in contrast to the concept that we are beyond measure (Hardt and Negri, 2000), this means that the individual is obsessively micromanaged, measured and regulated because the person and the job become one and your subjective ‘aura’ is central to service delivery. One can see this in the scripts of the call centre (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002) or the (self) policing of the body in hospitality industries (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). This makes management capricious in its search for ways to regulate the subject from which it wants so much contradiction – tailoring one’s self-actualizing personality to company routines whilst being your ‘unique’ self; being proactive and knowledgeable but accepting of orders and hierarchy regardless of knowledge; sharing knowledge yet thinking individually; or being loyal to the firm whilst embracing the precarity of labour markets and the priority of firms over oneself. In ways similar to the co-creation of the brand (Arvidsson, 2005), when personality – itself a product of the general intellect – is the co-creative force, it is necessarily shaped in asymmetrical power relations with management (Dowling, 2007; Lury, 2004: 1–16).

This is not new. We see this vulnerability in the early and mid-20th century. Kracauer (1998: 38) highlights the importance of looks, of joining in, of appearance, of emotion, of affect, and of how employees seek to give off the right impression (for the equivalent in the USA, see Bloomfield, 1915; Mills, 1951). This is intensified today as social and communicative skills, aesthetics, or equality and diversity located in age, gender, race, sexuality, class, disability, accent, attractiveness, empathy or warmth are evaluated and made to perform or not (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; McKenzie, 2001; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007; Witz et al., 2003). But this is capricious because personality traits today may not be valued tomorrow, market assessments of readiness today may not be those of tomorrow, or management demands today may not be the same tomorrow. All of this

creates uncertainty, anxiety and compliance in the labour force, or what Maslow (1998: 39) praised as ‘creative insecurity’. Such management is about shaping future political values and social relations (Böhm and Land, 2012).

However, it is true to say that, although these tendencies existed in the past, one’s ‘skills’ were also made redundant more slowly. Technological, organizational or social change was less rapid in a society built on the ‘myth’ of expertise (Harvey, 1989; Susman, 1984: 7–27). In contemporary social reproduction taste may make one’s personality redundant, in demand, and redundant again with increasing rapidity (Graw, 2010; Lucas, 2010). When the universal skills of the general intellect overtake the specific skills of particular work processes, they asymmetrically deliver to labour personal precarity, and to capital the free gift of the social individual.

Conclusion

What the article presents is a rather bleak picture of a contemporary world without resistance. This is not true – resistance exists today (e.g. education, hospitality or transport may hold the future of refusal and struggle: Dowling, 2007; Silver, 2003). Rather, the article’s point is that today’s economy is an intensification of elements of the past, and this retrospective glance allows us speculate about what the future might hold. Unfortunately, it speculates that subjectivity will be pushed towards ever greater endorsement of capitalist social relations. As we saw, when the general skills of diffused knowledge move centre stage, the division of labour appears more arbitrary and more asymmetrical. Thus, although there is choice and agency – to be, and often to willingly be, this or that subject – these are heavily channelled in particular directions. Importantly, the shift from specific technical skills to the universal skills of the general intellect increases labour’s servility. As personality becomes our source of livelihood it is reshaped to suit the market. In an environment of economic speed-up, increased obsolescence and faster changing organizational processes, management becomes more capricious. By stressing some potentials and not others, management shapes the subject in ever more invasive ways to indirectly mould the general intellect itself. Society faces the paradoxical situation wherein ever increasing collective and diffused knowledge is shaped and accessed as a gift by capital, and this in turn makes individuals more vulnerable. Thus, a rise in overall knowledge – perhaps even a knowledge economy – leads to very different and unequal experiences of work and reward depending on a seemingly arbitrary division of labour (in the advanced economies). In sum, rather than being positive, collective expanding knowledge emerges as negative.

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Notes

- 1 Of course, not all management scholarship does this. For an important instance of a piece that examines management history as political, see Hassard (2012).
- 2 For a visual depiction of the meeting of work/play/production/consumption, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JIZeyndTBfc> (accessed 18 July 2015).

- 3 For this with today's customers, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Be5fCPohYEU> (accessed 18 July 2015).
- 4 Taken from C Wright Mills (1951: 167).
- 5 We see this perhaps with our students, who are understandably eager to volunteer, take an internship or act as a champion of the degree, the department or the university in a bid to demonstrate this preparedness for work. Nevertheless, as precarity has become the norm for large elements of the population, their need 'to feel the call' has waned, which has given rise to renewed media and government emphasis on the moral necessity of work. In short, there may never be any work for 'you', but 'you' must still desire work, however degraded, if you are to be a productive human being (Skeggs, 2011).
- 6 This is not to say that technical skill no longer exists. However, increasingly in the advanced economies it is located in science, professions, technology, procedures, routines or rules rather than the general population.

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