Deconstructing the future of management: Pharmakon, Gary Hamel and the impossibility of invention

Christian Garmann Johnsen *

Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

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ABSTRACT

There has been a growing tendency to argue that the practice of management must be reinvented in the future in order to energize the creative potential of employees. However, the discourse on 'management innovation' attributes a curious dual function to the concept of management. On the one hand, management is portrayed as the 'toxin' that can impede innovation. But on the other hand, management is portrayed the 'cure' that will heal the defects that prevents innovation. Informed by Derrida's reflection upon the dual meaning of pharmakon, a word that means both 'remedy' and 'poison', the paper engages with Hamel's popular management handbook The Future of Management. Although Hamel attempts to establish a clear-cut distinction between those principles of management that obstruct innovation and those that facilitate innovation, one is ultimately left uncertain whether management is a cure or a poison for innovation. This ambivalence points to an underlying paradox of contemporary post-managerial thinking that is characterized by incorporating transgression into its productive logic.

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1. Introduction

There is a wide-spread assumption in popular management literature that innovation is indispensable for a company to thrive in the turbulent and hypercompetitive global economy and will prove to be even more essential in the future of capitalism (Thrift, 2000). As a means of achieving innovation, popular handbooks written by management gurus offer tools, lessons and prescriptions that they claim will turn the organization into a creative cluster. The success of management gurus is often explained with reference to their ability to fulfil 'the need for managers to find relatively quick and simple solutions to their organizations' complex problems' (Jackson, 1996: 572). Indeed, management gurus have been compared to 'witchdoctors' due to their promises to cure the ailments of organizations (Clark & Salaman, 1996). However, critics have charged that the writings of management gurus are full of 'clichés' (Harney, 2005), 'kitsch' (Linstead, 2002) and 'catchphrases' (Jackson, 2001). But even if this is true, we should not forget that management gurus have significant influence on management practices (Clark & Salaman, 1998; Huczynski, 1993; Jackson, 2001). Therefore, Costea, Crump, and Amiridis (2008), Thrift (2000) and Parker (2002) have called for serious engagement with guru literature, reading popular management handbooks as a symptom of the development of capitalism.

With the intention of undertaking a serious engagement with contemporary guru literature, this paper diagnoses but also challenges the prevalent assumption in popular management handbooks that it is possible to produce a manual for

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* Tel.: +45 27501297.
E-mail address: cgj.mpp@cbs.dk

reinventing management. To do so, this paper addresses the problem of reinventing management by offering a deconstructive reading of Hamel's (2007) popular management handbook *The Future of Management*. Confronted with the task of organizing innovation, Hamel follows the tradition of management gurus who have called for a reinvention of the practice of management in order mobilize and energize the creative potential of the employees (McDonald, 2011). Since the 1980s, Peters has called for a 'management revolution' (1988) and Hamel (2002) has likewise encouraged future managers to become 'corporate rebels' and take charge of 'leading the revolution' (Sheard, 2007). Marked by their strong scepticism towards bureaucracy (du Gay, 2000) and scientific management (Parker, 2002), these gurus propose that future managers should strive to evoke employees' imaginative and creative abilities in the search for innovation (Thrift, 2000). Rather than taking a rational approach to productivity, future managers must, in the words of Costea, Crump, and Amiridis, enter into a 'Dionysian mode, a spirit of playful transgression and destruction of boundaries' (2005: 141).

Unlike previous readings of popular management literature, I will focus neither on the rhetorical style (Jackson, 1996) nor on how the ideas of management gurus are adopted in practice (Huczynski, 1993). Instead, to borrow the words of Derrida (1981: 6), I will 'operate within the immanence' of Hamel's management thinking. This means that I will not criticize Hamel on the basis of what the he excludes, ignores or overlooks. Quite the opposite, I will, once again following Derrida (1989: 99), inquire into the 'internal logic' of the 'discourse' that Hamel (2007) represents. Informed by Derrida's (1981) reflection on the dual meaning of the term *pharmakon*, a word that means both 'remedy' and 'poison', I will show how Hamel's attempt to reinvent the practice of management confronts a fundamental *aporia* in the sense of a 'self-engendered paradox' (Norris, 2002: 49). While Hamel wants to revolutionize the practice of management, the cure that he prescribes simultaneously takes on the character of what he identifies as a poison. Even in his attempt to differentiate those principles of management that will spark innovation from those that will impede employee's creative potential, Hamel paradoxically reproduces the very managerial logic that he opposes. As a result, the concept of management ultimately ends up in a state of aporia, a place where it is unclear when management is a poison for innovation and when it is a cure against the organizational structures that traditionally has obstructed innovation.

In this respect, the concept of the *pharmakon*, as developed by Derrida (1981) in his reading of Plato, is informative for engaging with Hamel's account of the future of management, because it captures the paradoxical logic inherent in his conception of management innovation. Although Hamel is only a particular instance of what has been presented as a wider cultural development in post-bureaucratic management thinking (Maravelias, 2003), the discussion of Hamel has implications for the overall project of reinventing the practice of management. Thus, I will argue that the reading of Hamel (2007) discloses a paradox underlying what Costea, Crump, and Amiridis (2008: 663, 2005: 148) have identified as the prevailing model of transgression in contemporary post-bureaucratic management thinking. Hamel's concept of management innovation strives to capture the process of reinventing management in the future of capitalism. However, in order for an invention to be genuinely novel and unique, it has to transgress management conventions of the present. Yet, the concept of management innovation ironically reduces the process of inventing novel management practices to a structured sequential procedure. In this way, the concept of management innovation operates as a foreclosing structure that arrests, confines and standardizes the production of novelty. In effect, the paper concludes that the conceptual structure of management innovation must necessarily be transgressed in order to release novelty.

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

2. Derrida in management and organization studies

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

Jones (2003b) warns against reducing deconstruction to an analytic method because such reductive thinking fails to take into account the specific context in which Derrida develops his philosophy. Along similar lines, Kilduff maintains that deconstruction 'cannot be summarized as a mechanical series of operations to be applied to any piece of language' (1993: 16). In order to avoid this mistake, I will not conceptualize deconstruction as a universal method. On the contrary, I will

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

2.1. Derrida's deconstruction of Plato

Although citing several of Plato's works, Derrida's (1981) discussion mainly centres on the dialogue *Phaedrus*, a conversation between Phaedrus and Socrates about the nature of love. The dialogue begins with Phaedrus reading a written speech by Lysias to Socrates. The transcribed speech contends that it is better to give favours to a non-lover than a lover (Plato, 1997: 231). Socrates, however, is not convinced by the argument, noting that the speech contains various repetitions. Phaedrus therefore challenges Socrates to provide an alternative account of love. At first, Socrates is reluctant to grant Phaedrus' wish. But eventually, Socrates is persuaded to present his notion of love after Phaedrus has threatened to never speak with him again. Socrates then tells a story conveying the message that a relationship without love is better than a relationship of love. However, Socrates immediately regrets making these comments, claiming that he was being 'foolish, and close to being impious' (Plato, 1997: 243d). This is the case because love is in reality a 'divine' force, according to Socrates, and his negative portrayal has therefore been an 'offence against Love' (Plato, 1997: 242d). Yet, Socrates insists that Phaedrus had tricked him into presenting the false story. The dishonest speech, Socrates complains, was something that 'you [Phaedrus] charmed me through your potion into delivering myself' (Plato, 1997: 242e). Lysias' transcribed speech that Phaedrus read to Socrates, as Derrida remarks, is a *pharmakon*, a word that 'acts as both remedy and poison' (1981: 70).

Despite the conviction that Phaedrus' written speech has poisoned him into conveying a false account of love, Socrates does not consider writing unconditionally harmful. On the contrary, he maintains that it is 'not speaking or writing well that's shameful; what's really shameful is to engage in either of them shamefully or badly' (Plato, 1997: 258d). Socrates insists that there is a profound difference between good and bad writing. The problem confronting Socrates, however, is to distinguish between these two categories, namely between good and bad writing. In order to solve this problem, Derrida (1981: 85) argues that Plato establishes a set of 'clear cut' distinctions between binary logical oppositions, such as good/evil, true/false and essence/appearance. While good writing reports the true essence of things, bad writing seduces the reader by presenting a false appearance of things. For instance, Socrates remarks that no 'one in a lawcourt, you see, cares at all about the truth of such matters. They only care about what is convincing' (Plato, 1997: 272d). In sharp contrast, good writing, Socrates maintains, requires knowledge of the subject of discourse. As Derrida remarks, good writing is 'the divine inscription in the heart of the soul' (1998: 17). Thus, good writing presupposes that 'you must know the truth concerning everything you are speaking or writing about; you must learn how to define each thing in itself; and, having defined it, you must know how to divide it into kinds until you reach something indivisible' (Plato, 1997: 277b). In other words, good writing reports the essence of things.

2.2. The ambivalence of pharmakon

The Platonic distinction between good and bad writing, according to Derrida, has dominated 'all of Western philosophy' (1981: 149). But through a brilliant and sensitive reading, Derrida deconstructs the metaphors and rhetorical strategies that Plato employs to separate good from bad writing. Despite his resolute attempt to keep good and bad writing apart, Derrida demonstrates the persistence of a fundamental ambiguity at the heart of Plato's system (Cooper, 1986). This ambiguity is expressed through the dual meaning of the term *pharmakon*. In order to explain the nature of good writing, Socrates recounts the myth of Theuth, who originally invented the art of writing. Asked about the purpose of writing, Theuth explains that 'my invention is a recipe (pharmakon) for both memory and wisdom' (cited in Derrida, 1981: 75). In the English translation of *Phaedrus* by Nehamas and Woodruff the ancient Greek term *pharmakon* is rendered in this passage as 'potion' (Plato, 1997: 274e), a word that can mean a liquid medicine or poison. Consistent with the interpretation of *pharmakon* as a poison, writing is perceived of as a toxin to wisdom and memory. As King Thamus says to Theuth: Instead of using one's natural memory, people will rely upon written text to recollect knowledge and henceforth writing will 'introduce forgetfulness into the soul' (Plato, 1997: 257a). While one might be content with this interpretation, Derrida insists that considerable confusion remains about how to understand this passage. This is the case because *pharmakon* could equally well be conceived of as meaning 'remedy', which, in turn, would give the text a totally different meaning (Derrida, 1981: 97). If *pharmakon* is interpreted as remedy, then writing would be conceived of as a facilitator of memory and wisdom. As Theuth says, writing will 'improve' one's memory (Plato, 1997: 274e), because it can help you to store knowledge.

The ambiguity of the *pharmakon*, according to Derrida, is not due to incorrect translation. Rather, Derrida argues that the dual meaning of *pharmakon* as simultaneously 'remedy' and 'poison', is deeply embedded in Plato's dialogue. As a result, Derrida says that 'the translation by "remedy" can thus neither be accepted nor simply rejected' (1981: 99). The *pharmakon* is what we may term an oversaturated signifier, because it lacks any rigid definition that would prevent it from being

interpreted as both remedy and poison. 'The "essence" of the *pharmakon*', Derrida explains, 'lies in the way in which, having no stable essence, no "proper" characteristics, it is not, in any sense (metaphysical, physical, chemical, alchemical) of the word, a *substance*' (1981: 125–126, original italics). Instead, *pharmakon* is a 'mixed blessing/curse' (Linstead, 2003: 371). Plato's account of writing is therefore dominated by an 'aporia' that is expressed through the dual meaning of *pharmakon* (Derrida, 1981: 118). On the one hand, writing is a remedy that will improve one's recollection of knowledge, because one can more accurately recall information compared to using one's memory. On the other hand, writing is the poison that will make one oblivious, because one fails to maintain one's natural faculty of memory. Ultimately, Plato has failed to achieve his objective to ensure that true and false writing are strictly distinguishable, because of a persistent ambiguity whether writing is a poison or remedy (Cooper, 1986).

Derrida's (1981) deconstruction of Plato is a paradigmatic example of how Western metaphysics is forced into paradoxes by arresting experience within binary logical oppositions. The binary logical oppositions dominating Western metaphysics, such as the one between good and bad writing, confines experience to a set of predetermined categories (Cooper, 1986). By doing so, these restraining boundaries exclude alternative ways of perceiving the world (Norris, 2002). Deconstruction, therefore, seek to 'destabiliz[e] foreclusionary structures' (Derrida, 2007: 45) of Western metaphysics in order to release the possibility of new modes of experience (Rasche, 2011). Through exposing the dual meaning of the *pharmakon*, Derrida manages to subvert the Platonic distinction between good and bad writing. Consequently, Derrida is able to open up a space of reflection wherein we realizes the contingencies of conceptual structures but also appreciate the opportunities laid down by deconstruction (Jones, 2003b; Patton, 2003). While Derrida is concerned with the experience of writing, this paper adopts his analytic approach towards contemporary management literature (Rasche, 2011). Having indicated the ambivalence of the term *pharmakon*, I will therefore now turn to contemporary popular management thinking.

3. Deconstructing management innovation

Hamel was ranked #15 in *Harvard Business Review's* list of the world's most influential management gurus in 2011 and *Fortune* magazine calls Hamel 'the world's leading expert on business strategy'.[1] As he contributes to the academic literature, engages in consultancy and writes management handbooks, Hamel may be categorized, according to Huczynski's (1993) taxonomy, as both an 'academic guru' and 'consultant guru'. Hamel gained immense recognition for having formulated the theory of 'core competencies' in the early 1990s together with Prahalad. In recent years, Hamel, alongside Birkinshaw and Mol, has promoted the concept of 'management innovation' (see Birkinshaw, 2012; Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008; Birkinshaw & Mol, 2007). The deconstructive reading of Hamel will focus primarily on the book *The Future of Management*, written with Breen in 2007. This book has been chosen, because it explicitly focuses on the problem of reinventing management. The analysis will be supplemented by examples from other articles and books that Hamel has written and co-authored. The analysis also draws upon texts by other scholars in order to show how Hamel's thinking is embedded within a wider post-bureaucratic discourse.

While there have been previous attempts to use a deconstructive approach to read influential works in management and organization studies (e.g. Kilduff, 1993; Mumby & Putnam, 1992), one confront a peculiar enigma in attempting to deconstruct Hamel. Boltanski and Chiapello indicate at a more general level that 'the new spirit of capitalism incorporated much of the artistic critique that flourished at the end of the 1960s' (2005: 419). Although not citing Derrida directly, Hamel would appear to have appropriated many of Derrida's ideas. Tellingly, Hamel encourages managers to 'systematically deconstruct the existing set of beliefs' in order to pave the way for new business concepts (2002: 140). Obviously, Hamel (2007) and Derrida (1981) do not hold identical views on deconstruction. For Hamel's part, deconstruction presumably involves unravelling the underlying assumptions of contemporary management. For Derrida's part, as we have seen, deconstruction is 'a praxis of reading' (Critchley, 2005: 554). However, it is not my intention to position myself in opposition to Hamel's concept of management innovation by creating an intellectual distance between his book and Derrida's philosophy. As Derrida highlights, a deconstructive reading should not take as its point of departure an external perspective, but rather, as I have argued, 'operate within the immanence of the system to be destroyed' (1981: 6). Just as Derrida 'does not question one kind of philosophy from the standpoint of another' (Newman, 2001: 2), one cannot question Hamel's management thinking from the standpoint of Derrida's philosophy. Instead of using Derrida as an intellectual counter-point, it is necessary to engage with Hamel by paying close attention to the problem that he strives to solve, the procedure that he employs and the conclusions that he draws.

3.1. Management innovation

The basic premise of Hamel's narrative on management is that firms must make radical innovation the core competence of the organization in order to remain competitive (2002: 14). Improving existing modes of production and perfecting current products and services is not sufficient for long term commercial success. In addition, organizations must be 'capable of self-renewal' and 'capable of continually reinventing themselves and the industry in which they compete' (2002: 12).

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[1] Harvard Business Review's list of 'The 50 Most Influential Management Gurus' (http://hbr.org/web/slideshows/the-50-most-influential-management-gurus/15-hamel).

Incremental improvements must be replaced by ground-breaking innovation. Radical innovation, according to Hamel, is characterized by the fact that it upends 'some industry convention, significantly changes consumer expectation in a net-positive way, drastically alters the pricing or cost structure of the industry or changes the basis for competitive advantage within the industry' (2002: 18). In other words, radical innovation fundamentally changes the basis for competition in a given industry. While a distinction is often made between innovation and creativity, it is worth emphasizing that Hamel, similar to many other writers, uses the two terms interchangeably (see Spoelstra, 2010).

According to Hamel (2002, 2007), the problem is that most organizations today are not designed for innovation (see also Moss Kanter, 1983; Peters, 1988). Therefore, we urgently need new modes of management, Hamel maintains, ones that are capable of sparking innovation. Hamel's book is written to inspire and assists companies to invent new modes of management. Thus, Hamel wants to 'give you the thinking tools that will allow you to build your *own* agenda for management innovation' (2007: xi, original italics). To do so, Hamel presents a 'formula for management innovation: commit to bold goals; deconstruct your orthodoxies; embrace powerful new principles; and learn from the positive deviants' (2007: 243). Yet, many of Hamel's concrete proposals for making an organization innovative have been circulating in the popular management literature for decades. Alongside Peters (1988) and Moss Kanter (1988), Hamel shares a suspicion towards bureaucracy and hierarchy, which he believes restrict the creative expressions of employees. Just like Peters (1988), Hamel maintains that the organization should be radically decentralized and structured into 'autonomous teams' (2007: 104). Thus, the organization should subscribe to what Adler calls 'market rationality' (2001), in which the organization becomes an internal market wherein the teams compete for the most promising creative initiative. And just like Moss Kanter (1988), Hamel believes that managers should make room for the creative expressions of the employees in order to facilitate innovation. Taking these precedents into consideration, one might question the innovativeness of Hamel's management thinking (Grant, 2008). Indeed, as we can see, Hamel synthesizes many of the ideas that have been promoted by management gurus since the 1980s.

If there is anything new to be extracted from Hamel's management thinking, then it is his explicit focus on the necessity of innovating management itself in order to create an innovative organization (McDonald, 2011). Hamel believes that this can be achieved through *management innovation*, which he defines as 'anything that substantially alters the way in which the work of management is carried out' (2007: 19). Thus, Hamel argues that the essential ingredient for achieving innovation is reinventing the practice of management. While Hamel is convinced that management can spark innovation, management is nevertheless the reason why current organizations fail to innovate. Indeed, Hamel blames management for the fact that many contemporary organizations do not excel at innovation. To confront this challenge, management must therefore reconfigure itself into a remedy for the very defects that it has traditionally produced. Or to put it in slightly different manners, management must discover a cure for the very diseases that it has inflicted on contemporary organizations. Hamel explains:

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

Notice the way that Hamel portrays 'inherent management beliefs' as a 'disease' and 'malady' that urgently needs a 'cure'. Elsewhere in the book, Hamel describes traditional management principles as a 'toxin' that prevents the members of the organization form releasing their creative potentials (2007: 152). To unfold Hamel's pharmaceutical metaphors, we might say that management is a poison that pollutes the creative climate of the organization. Suspicion towards unconventional views, inability to exploit employee's imagination and top-down management are part of the 'pathologies that prevent companies from being adaptable, innovative, and high engaging' (Hamel, 2007: 189). At the same time, management is the antidote, capable of therapeutically healing the maladies that obstruct innovation. Now, let us recall how Derrida demonstrated that writing, in Plato's account, is both a 'poison' (*pharmakon*) that impedes one's memory and a 'remedy' (*pharmakon*) that improves one's memory. While writing can make one oblivious and ignorant, it also has the advantage of accurately recollecting knowledge. In a similar vein, Hamel argues that management is simultaneously the 'toxin' that impedes innovation in the organization and the 'cure' against those very organizational structures. While management can constrain creative thinking and henceforth obstruct innovation, it also has the potential to become an accelerator of innovation by providing conditions under which novel ideas can flourish.

As we can see Hamel ascribes a curious double function to the concept of management. On the one hand, Hamel argues that management orthodoxies are poisonous for organizations because they 'constrain creative thinking' (2007: 125). Such a view is not exclusive to Hamel. As Amabile also argues, the prevailing management imperative of 'coordination, productivity, and control' can effectively serve to 'kill creativity' (1998: 77). On the other hand, Hamel argues that the most effective remedy to counter traditional principles of management is to engage in 'management innovation', which means 'you need to systematically deconstruct the management orthodoxies that binds you and your colleagues to new possibilities' (2007: 131). As Peters also argues, managers should be 'seeking out and battering down the very functional barriers that [managers] were formally paid to protect' (1988: 368). In Hamel's words, what is required for making innovation the core competence of the firm is a 'management revolution' that engenders 'radical alternatives to the way we lead, plan, organize, motivate, and manage right now' (2007: 15–17). However, the challenge confronting Hamel (2007) is to formulate a clear-cut distinction between those principles of management that facilitate innovation and those that impedes creative processes. How does Hamel separate the managerial principles that support innovation from those that impede innovation?

3.2. The Shadow of F.W. Taylor

As Parker notes, contemporary management discourse is 'a continual attempt to debate with the straw ghosts of Weber and the equally influential "scientific management" of F. W. Taylor and others' (2002: 21). Hamel is no exception. In order to separate the principles of management that work as a 'cure' from those that work as a 'toxin' for innovation, Hamel introduces the distinction between the 'industrial-age management model' and 'the future of management' (2007: 7). Hamel associates the former with the theories of Taylor and Weber. He identifies the latter with a utopian 'dream' of organizations 'where an electronic current of innovation pulses through every activity' (2007: xi). But regrettably for Hamel, his vision has failed to materialize until now. And Hamel believes that the reason for this failure is obvious. While the global competitive landscape has changed drastically during the course of the last century, it is evident, according to Hamel, that a 'great many of today's management rituals little changed from those that governed corporate life a generation or two ago' (2007: 4). As Hamel sees it, management is still caught in the paradigm of efficiency and almost 'everything we know about organizing, managing and competing comes from an age in which diligence, efficiency, exactitude, quality and control were the complete secrets to success' (2002: 24). But yesterday's secret to success has become today's chronic malady in organizations.

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

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

The function of the manager, according to Taylor, is to provide detailed instructions to the employees, explaining how to execute a specific work-task. Under no normal circumstances should the employees diverge from the written instructions provided by management. But Taylor's basic principles of scientific management, according to Hamel (2007), ultimately foster conformity in the organization rather than sparking experimentation and novel thinking. As Amabile also argues, if 'someone tells you how something is to be done, there is obviously no room for creativity' (1995: 78). Thus, dictating the work-task has the effect of impeding innovation and creativity. The point is not whether Hamel's account of Taylor is correct or not, but rather the specific function of scientific management in Hamel's conception of management innovation. Hamel maintains that by installing uniform 'standards and rules' in the organization, which he associates with scientific management, a manager effectively 'squanders prodigious quantities of human imagination and initiative' (2007: 8). Consequently, Hamel believes that the traditional principles of management are 'antithetical to building companies that are filled with energetic, slightly rebellious, votaries' (2007: 61).

Taylor ([1911] 2003: 127) was concerned about 'natural laziness' but more importantly the 'systematic soldiering' among workers. Taylor assumed that workers had agency, but management should provide the right incentives and instructions for work. Hamel operates on the assumption that humans have a 'primeval urge' for creation (2007: 194). However, traditional management structures often constitute a 'creative apartheid' that prevents change (Hamel, 2007: 189). Hamel (2007: 14) is perhaps more focused on 'control', but precisely because control often prevents employees from exploring new opportunities. Nevertheless, Hamel is convinced that management should not be abandoned, but rather reinvented into a catalyser for innovation. The principles of management that will facilitate innovation, according to Hamel, stand in diametrical opposition to the ones laid down by Taylor. Instead of ensuring control, the manager should distribute 'freedom' to the employees (Hamel, 2007: 248). Instead of strict planning, the managers should encourage 'experimentation' with new ideas (Hamel, 2007: 179). And instead of a hierarchical relation between manager and workers, the organization should become a 'democracy of ideas' (Hamel, 2007: 190). Thus, Hamel attempts to separate management as a cure from management as a poison by installing binary oppositions between 'freedom'/'control', 'hierarchy'/'democracy' and 'planning'/'experimentation'. According to Hamel, organizations often fail to innovate due hierarchical structures and strict managerial control. In sharp contrast, the next generation of organizations should operate like a democracy in which every employee has the freedom to experiment with novel ideas.

3.3. The supplement of the obsessive mind

While one might be content to accept Hamel's categorical dismissal of Taylor and his attempt to clearly separate the principles of management that will spark innovation from those of scientific management, there nevertheless remains considerable ambiguity in his conception of management innovation. Central to becoming a champion of innovation, as we have seen, is the ability to deconstruct management orthodoxies. But deconstructing management orthodoxies requires dedication, devotion and persistence. These attitudes and qualities, however, are precisely the ones that Taylor possessed. Thus, Hamel argues that:

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

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

In Hamel's book, the importance of innovation appears as 'self-evident' (Spoelstra, 2010). Although he claims that innovation is the sine qua non for thriving in a hypercompetitive economy, this assumption is never called into question. Instead, Hamel presents a series of cases, including Google, Whirlpool, Whole Foods Market and W. L. Gore, which all are supposed to illustrate the benefits of making innovation the core competence of the firm. In effect, the self-evident value of innovation is neither deconstructed nor systematically interrogated. Thus, innovation remains the prevailing attitude of Hamel's managerial thinking. But just as Taylor's fixation on efficiency denotes a kind of managerial orthodoxy, so, too, does Hamel's fascination with innovation also signifies a kind of managerial orthodoxy. Yet, it is a managerial orthodoxy that Hamel is unable to call into question. Ironically, Hamel's call for management innovation thus reproduces the very logic that it is meant to overcome. This is the case, because management innovation fosters a new dogmatic belief in the power of innovation.

The problem, however, is not only that Hamel's admiration for Taylor's 'obsessive mind' points to a paradox, since it implies that one must never question the value of innovation. At a deeper level, Taylor's 'obsessive mind' becomes what Derrida (1998) calls a 'supplement' (Cooper, 1986) – that is, an element that is excluded but is nevertheless a necessary condition for Hamel's argument to function. Writing, on Plato's account, is 'the dangerous "supplement" which lures language away from its authentic origins in speech and self-presence' (Norris, 2002: 63). But just as Plato relied upon written text to criticize the nature of written text, so, too, does Hamel rely upon a dogmatic faith in innovation in order to criticize Taylor's dogmatic faith in efficiency. Hamel tries to get beyond dogmatism by urging managers to call into question the inherent beliefs of management. Yet, he does so by relying on an unconditional 'faith' in the power of innovation. Contrary to his stated purpose, Hamel's version of management innovation is not driven by a persistent attempt to unravel the underlying assumptions of contemporary management. Quite the contrary, its primary driver is the dogmatic belief in the power of innovation.

3.4. The aporia of disobeying instructions

The dogmatism that prevails in Hamel's book points towards an aporia of management innovation. An aporia designates, as Derrida explains, a 'self-engendered paradox – beyond which [thought] cannot press' (Norris, 2002: 49). We can see how Hamel's management thinking generates a self-engendered paradox by considering his discussion of disobeying managerial directives. As we have seen, one of the problems with the Tayloristic model of management is that it prescribes that employees should systematically follow the instructions of their managers. However, this prescription fosters conformity rather than sparking new initiatives, according to Hamel. In response, Hamel argues that employees should be permitted and encouraged to defy the managers of the organization in order to generate innovation. So Hamel states: 'However creative your colleagues may be, if they don't have the right to occasionally abandon their posts and work on something that's *not* mission critical, most of their creativity will remain dormant' (2007: 55). A much more extreme version of this idea is formulated by Sutton who argues: 'If it's creativity you want, you should encourage people to ignore and defy superiors and peers' (2001: 100). Since compliance with rules and standards generates predictable outcomes, it is necessary for employees to sometimes diverge from the course set by management in order to generate creativity. In stark contrast to Taylor's view that employees must systematically follow the directives of management, managers must permit and even proactively encourage their employees to defy strategic objectives, formal rules, management directives and defined work-tasks.

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

In this way, Hamel remains trapped in the management paradigm that he opposes, because he cannot escape the notion of the manager as the one who issues directives. At one level, one could argue that we find evidence in Hamel of how, despite

the claim of promoting increased freedom, post-bureaucratic management actually fosters a more sophisticated type of control – something that Fleming and Sturdy call 'neo-normative control' (2009). Beyond this, however, my point is that Hamel renders the relationship between management and employees inherently ambiguous (Johnsen & Sørensen, 2014). From the perspective of the employee, one must simultaneously obey and disobey managerial directives. One might raise the objection that employees are not meant to always break the formal rules and ignore managerial directives but only when it sparks innovation. Yet, such disclaimers only postpone the problem, because now we are left to define the circumstances under which one should remain loyal to management and the circumstances under which one should defy it. At best, Hamel might say that employees should 'abandon their post' (2007: 55) if and only if it contributes to generating innovation. Yet, this answer would be purely tautological, because it amounts to saying that you become creative by being creative. So we do not escape the aporia by imposing the condition that one should only 'occasionally' defy the directives of management.

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

4. Discussion: reinventing management in the future of capitalism

Past decades have witnessed a proliferation of popular management handbooks offering guidance for how to reinvent the practice of management in the future of capitalism (e.g. Hamel, 2007; Kelley, 2001; Moss Kanter, 1988; Peters, 1988). Popular management handbooks suggest that managers most contravene the prevalent managerial conventions and invent new modes of management in the future of capitalism. Future managers must become 'change agents' (Thrift, 2000: 201) who enter into 'a playful transgression and destruction of boundaries' (Costea, Crump, & Amiridis, 2005: 141). Rather than protecting the status quo, future managers must continuously overturn the established order in their search for novel and ground-breaking ideas. In this respect, Hamel's popular management handbook *The Future of Management* is only a particular instance of what Costea, Crump, and Amiridis (2008, 2005) map as a wider societal development. Yet, the reading of Hamel reveals a fundamental paradox inherent in the attempt to conceptualize the process of reinventing the practice of management in the future of capitalism. Thus, we are able to perceive the contradictions of Hamel's book as symptoms of the fundamental paradox underlying what Costea, Crump, and Amiridis (2008: 663, 2005: 148) have identified as the prevailing model of transgression in contemporary post-bureaucratic management thinking.

Management innovation designates the process of inventing of novel management practices. According to Hamel, management innovation can be achieved by following a sequential procedure. Indeed, as we have seen, Hamel's popular management handbook provides a 'formula for management innovation' (2007: 243). This formula should help managers to think beyond established management conventions and depart from what Hamel (2007) associates with management orthodoxies. On the surface, this seems to resonate with Derrida's remark that there is no invention unless it 'breaks with convention' (2007: 1). Indeed, Hamel maintains that 'true innovators are never bound by what is; instead they dream of what could be' (2007: 17). However, Derrida adds that invention has to operate on the 'condition that the invention transgress, in order to be inventive, the status and the programs with which it was supposed to comply' (2007: 21). If the invention corresponds to preconceived expectations, following Derrida, then it fails to be genuinely surprising, unconventional and novel. Viewed from this perspective, the fundamental paradox of Hamel's (2007) concept of management innovation, however, is precisely that it declares itself a program that organizes the production of novel management practices.

The endeavour to reduce the production of novel modes of management to a 'formula' is inherently contradictory, because the conceptual structure of management innovation must necessarily be transgressed in order to ensure originality. We might say that the invention of new management practices, to borrow the words of Derrida, has 'to declare itself to be the invention of that which did not appear to be possible' (2007: 44). If management innovation is possible, then it remains within the locus of available opportunities. Accordingly, management innovation fails to be genuinely novel and unique. Only by proclaiming to be impossible is the concept of management innovation able to achieve its ambition of reinventing the practice of management. This is why management innovation, on Hamel's account, runs into the paradox of reinitiating the managerial logic that it intends to contravene. Hamel insists that management innovation is possible, because it can be achieved by following a sequential procedure. However, in the act of announcing a formula of management innovation, Hamel at the same time confines invention into a conceptual structure that necessarily must be transgressed in order to release novelty.

To use Hamel's vocabulary, it is necessary to ensure that 'what could be' is not restrained by 'what is' (2007: 17). The aporia of management innovation stems precisely form this unavoidable gap between the possible future ('what could be') and the present condition ('what is'). Hamel dreams of an unknown future, yet his vision is narrowed by the conceptual structure of management innovation. The concept of management innovation conceptualizes the experience of originality while declaring that the original always exceeds the present experience. But in order to ensure that the original surpasses the

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

Rather than radically departing from the previous management paradigm, popular management handbooks calling for revolutionizing the practice of management inscribe itself in this very tradition by offering prescriptions (Peters, 1988), methods (Kelley, 2001) and manuals (Hamel, 2007). As the deconstructive reading of Hamel has revealed, popular management handbooks follow the lines of Western metaphysics by confining experience within binary logical opposition. By doing so, however, popular management handbooks produce inescapable paradoxes that deconstruction can make us sensitive towards. Although many management gurus suggest that managers in the future of capitalism must continuously deviate from prevailing attitudes and break down the boundaries that prevent creativity from flourishing within the organization (Costea, Crump, & Amiridis, 2005; Thrift, 2000), we can see that this managerial imperative is inherently ambiguous. On the one hand, future managers must transgress the managerial conventions and orthodoxies prevailing in contemporary organizations. But on the other hand, the transgression model of management itself becomes a convention and orthodoxy that future managers ironically have to emulate and replicate. It seems, however, that Hamel is acutely aware of the impossibility of predicting the sequence and outcome of management innovation. Thus, he maintains that 'there's no well-thumbed manual that will help your company become a serial management innovator' (Hamel, 2007: 242). Yet, the fact that Hamel simultaneously proposes a manual for management innovation and declares that a compressive manual is impossible to create only confirms the presence of an ambiguity in transgression model of management.

5. Conclusion

Popular management handbooks often contend that managers must transgress the established managerial paradigm. While traditional modes of management were designed to resolve the problem of efficiency, many management gurus maintain that it is necessary to invent new modes of management capable of mobilizing and energizing the creative potential of the employees. In the discourse on management innovation, however, the concept of management is attributed a curious dual function. On the one hand, management is portrayed as the 'toxin' that can kill innovation. On the other hand, management is portrayed as the 'cure' against the organizational structures that traditionally has obstructed innovation. Through a deconstructive reading of the popular management handbook *The Future of Management*, this paper has revealed how Hamel (2007) attempts to differentiate the principles of management that he believes facilitate creativity from those principles that he believes impede creativity. Derrida's (1981) reflections upon the ambivalent nature of the *pharmakon*, a word that means both 'remedy' and 'poison', has been used to capture the paradoxical logic of management innovation. The deconstructive reading of Hamel discloses a fundamental ambiguity inherent the concept of management innovation. The discourse on management innovation confines the production of novel management practices to a sequential procedure expressed in the form of principles, tools and manuals. By doing so, management innovation becomes a conceptual structure that necessarily must be transgressed in order for the concept to serve its purpose.

Acknowledgements

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