

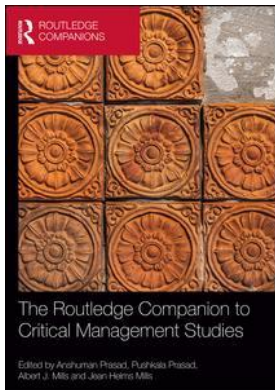
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 27 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Companion to Critical Management Studies

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Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315889818.ch7>

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Published online on: 08 Sep 2015

How to cite :- Janet L. Borgerson. 08 Sep 2015, *Humility and the challenge to decolonize the “critical” in Critical Management Studies from: The Routledge Companion to Critical Management Studies* Routledge

Accessed on: 27 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315889818.ch7>

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Humility and the challenge to decolonize the “critical” in Critical Management Studies

Janet L. Borgerson

In an essay written for *Al Jazeera* entitled, “Can Non-Europeans Think?,” U.S.-based Iranian scholar Hamid Dabashi explored the possibility that, even as popular lists of important contemporary philosophers continue to include only European and U.S. names, the so-called West is slowly being forced to surrender the parochial view that the resources of Western versions of reason and the interpretative depth of the related vision are enough to make sense of the entire world (Dabashi, 2013). In other words, Dabashi’s discussion exposes a *geography of reason*. As those who are attempting to “shift” this geography have shown, attributed and apparent distinctions between global hemispheres grant legitimacies to some societies, rather than others, as well as within societies (e.g., Comaroff, 2011; Gordon, 2006; Henry, 2005; Mignolo, 2013). Mapping geographies of reason offers insight into the particularities, potentialities and limitations of – as well as bias against – epistemic and logical forms that emerge from specific locations, eras and groups of people. Franz Fanon’s observation that “when a black man enters the room it is as though reason walks out” provides a devastating example (Gordon, 1995a).

Attending to the geography of reason that animates Critical Management Studies (CMS) may reorient assumptions around the apparent neutrality of familiar theory (e.g., Connell, 2007) or genealogies of theory. Moreover, engaging theorists who are specifically attempting to “shift the geography of reason” may allow us to confront essentializing Eurocentricism that creates conceptual and theoretical worlds that fail to reflect upon and alter their own universalizing and generalizing tendencies – in effect, ironically distorting the potential of critical work.

This chapter adds to a stream of analytical research, interrogating the notion that relevant manifestations of the “critical” emerging from European intellectual traditions are capable of decolonizing the “critical” in CMS and arguing that approaching CMS via postcolonial conceptions can help shift the CMS geography of reason. I follow feminist critical theorist Drucilla Cornell’s call to attend to black philosophies of existence, including the work of philosopher Lewis Gordon, regarding possibilities for decolonizing the “critical” in critical theory, which I argue has implications for Critical Management Studies. I develop Gordon’s contributions, particularly in relation to a fundamental position for *humility* that Cornell finds in Gordon’s thought.

I have drawn upon Gordon’s work for over a decade, bringing his critical race theory and existential phenomenological reworkings of W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre to bear on research in organization studies, critical marketing and business ethics (Borgerson, 2011;

Borgerson & Rehn, 2004; Borgerson & Schroeder, 2008). This research has included analyses of the “packaging of paradise” (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2012). “Packaging paradise” describes the ways in which the historical archive of marketing representations of Hawaii and Hawaii’s indigenous people reveals the transformation of Hawaii and Hawaiian natives into geographical and human “exotic others,” subordinated by advertising images’ epistemic and ontological closures and consumed as “difference” by white Western viewers (Borgerson & Schroeder, 1997, 2002). Mobilizing Gordon’s understandings of concepts such as “bad faith,” “anonymity” and “typicality” helps us comprehend the ways in which these closures happen (Gordon, 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2000).

In pursuing a path to shift the CMS geography of reason, I discuss Dabashi’s essay on postcolonial realism and film that further contests notions around a universal Western aesthetic engagement. Dabashi emphasizes that the “decisive confrontation” with modern technological culture will take place not in the realm of art, as philosopher Martin Heidegger argued, but in the lived realities of the colonized (Dabashi, 2004). To further comprehend a CMS geography of reason, I explore an influential and oft cited rendition of the development of CMS (e.g., Alvesson, 2008), which included the call to avoid so-called performative research (Fournier & Grey, 2000). My own work on related understandings of performativity from philosopher Judith Butler suggests that this early directive was theoretically and practically shortsighted, yet resulted in more recent suggestions to think the performative “critically” (Spicer, Alvesson, & Kärreman, 2009; Borgerson, 2005; Butler, 2010), with the potential to impact management and organization practices, as well as aspects of management pedagogy, positively (Alder, 2002; Gabriel, 2009; Zald, 2002).

Accepting the contributions of black philosophies of existence

Critical intentions will deliver and reveal nothing beyond the colonized other if theory, as mobilized by CMS, fails to open up to the other’s value creation role. In the context of what Gordon conceives of as *disciplinary decadence*, scholarly disciplines may become idealized, reified or cut off from the work and existence of others (Gordon, 2006). Some researchers in CMS have noted the weaknesses in their field created by Eurocentric perspectives (Jack & Westwood, 2006; Jack, Westwood, Srinivas & Sardar, 2011; Long & Mills, 2008; Mills & Mills, 1999; Peruvemba, 2001; for review see Prasad, 2012). *Eurocentricism* relates to theoretical lapses that include the universalizing of European reason, aesthetics and affect, as well as a tendency to generalize related individual human and societal concerns, desires and goals. Cornell (2008) points out that “it is not European ideas and culture that are being resisted in the battle against the dominance of Eurocentrism. Instead, it is a resistance against the attempt to turn an idealized Europe into the only cultural reality” (p. 132). Evading responsibility for the implications, outcomes and arrogance of universalizing – yet at the same time parochial – aspects of scholarly theory and attendant potential actions, continues the effortless colonizing of the very entities, environments and research subjects that CMS has sought to engage. As the colonizing agent takes up a sovereign perspective, or appropriates the God’s-eye view of theory, what hope do the colonized have to be able to say, “Here I am in the world with you”?

CMS scholars should be interested, then, when Cornell (2008) argues that the critical in critical theory might be “decolonized” by attending to the challenge of black philosophies of existence (p. 105). Black philosophies of existence and related notions of Africana phenomenology make the moment of transcendental reflection, or reflection upon the conditions of possible experience, “the confrontation with the searing force of racism” and the “problem of blackness” rather, Cornell (2008) writes, “than in Husserl . . . the crisis of European reason” (p. 106). Gordon writes, “Whereas for Husserl there was a nightmare of disintegrated reason, for Fanon there

was the nightmare of racist reason itself” (1995b: 8). This is a kind of reason that, in its relation to humanity, refuses human status and value creation to the racially othered.

Racist essentialism in critical work appears as a denial of sociality, even as critical work asserts superiority, as critically, socially concerned and aware. Rather than accepting the Other as part of who the Self becomes, there is an arrogance, a refusal to accept humbly one’s place among others and a denial of the Other’s crucial role in the existence and meaning of the Self. Denials of the Other’s contribution to the Self and to intersubjective existence mark the need for a profound transformation of understanding and indeed a move from a substance-based to a relational metaphysics (Gordon, 2003). Mapping geographies of reason often unveils a narcissistic focus and fantasies of Self generation: moreover, an inconsequential, unrecognized or replaceable Other results in a lack of meaningful engagement or ethical context. Here, “ethical” invokes *not* moral notions of “should” or good but rather the notion of ethical as it pertains to modes of relation, cocreation, intersubjectivity and sociality. An essentialized, substance-based understanding of the Self tends to deny cocreative and, in this sense, ethical relations.

The Hawaii example mentioned earlier highlights contexts of image and meaning making. In Hawaii-focused marketing communications, conflicts emerged between picturing human potential and contingency and the contrasting oppressive repercussions of designating and picturing essentialized, or naturalized, qualities that carry negative meanings or designation of value in the context of racism. Gordon’s work helps make sense of such instances: subordinating not only pictured individuals but the entire geographical location of the fiftieth state invoked a racializing, subordinating discourse that delivered up exotic islands and “natives” alike for marketing and consumption (Borgerson, 2011; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2012). Attending to designations of racial difference, Gordon (1995a) writes:

[E]ventually, blackness and whiteness take on certain meanings that apply to certain groups of people in such a way that makes it difficult not to think of those people without certain affectively charged associations. Their blackness and their whiteness become regarded, by people who take their associations too seriously, as their essential features, as, in fact, material features of their being.

(p. 95)

Bringing contingency into understandings of human existence disrupts essentialized associations and epistemological closures around possibility and potential that are particularly active in racist contexts. This is important as determining apparent differences from others becomes “a matter of evaluative determinations.”

Gordon notes that from a Sartrean perspective we seek our own identity, our sense of Self, by way of negating, or “freezing,” that of Others. An attempt to escape the freedom of human existence, crystallized in Sartre’s analysis of bad faith, emerges in a solidifying of the other’s nature, a completing of the Other’s being, that makes the Other and sometimes Oneself into an object. Processes of epistemic and ontological closures – in other words, placing narcissistic limits around possibilities of knowing and being – lead to the belief that others are known or understood completely. This assumption of knowledge denies the other status as a human being – in that a human being escapes from complete and final definition – mutes the cocreative role of others in our lives and erases the possibility for human relationships (Borgerson, 2011: 230).

Indeed, these closures tend toward creation of a recognizable identity while knowing next to nothing “about the typical Other beyond her or his typicality” (Gordon, 1997: 81). Knowing the other as typical refers to an abstracting and condensing of characteristics that create a familiar identity or pattern for beings and occurrences of a kind. A further concern arises around a

phenomenon of absence through presence, or appearing to be absent, or invisible, even when present, that is manifested as an *anonymity* through which anyone might stand in for anyone else of a certain kind or type (Gordon, 1997: 80).

In Gordon's reworking of bad faith, Cornell (2008) finds a way to begin thinking "of what kind of struggle we must take on if we are to actually change forms of oppression that are so pervasive that they almost become unnoticeable and, due to their pervasiveness, demand radical transformation of all of us in our day-to-day activities and the depth of our being" (p. 118). Gordon argues for a critical ontological role for the concept of bad faith, allowing for understandings of "human *beings* in the face of the rejection of human *nature* and a reductive view of history" (1995a: 136). Gordon attends to Sartre's denial "that there is a transcendent intersubjectivity: a beyond that is presupposed" (Cornell, 2008: 128), and Cornell attributes to Gordon a reintegrating of intersubjectivity as a basis for the possibility of experience in the world.

These are key points for Cornell (2008): Gordon's analysis of the "beyond of intersubjectivity" that Sartre apparently left behind and the reworking of phenomenological existentialism – "an exploration of the implications and the possibility of studying the phenomenon of beings that are capable of questioning their ways of being" (p. 126, citing Gordon, 2000: 119). "Questioning their ways of being" here might mean accepting or denying various situations that make possible the world in which we live. Gordon places bad faith into an intersubjective context, or a context of sociality, wherein being in bad faith fails to acknowledge this context – that is, the reality of others and of all that is not Self, and their cocreation of our existence. In short, in a narcissistic gesture, bad faith denies the foundational context of sociality, reducing the role of others to cartoonish fantasies.

Such a denial demonstrates an arrogated perspective that veils the contribution of others and demonstrates a lack of *humility*. Cornell (2008) asserts that Gordon's work entails humility, or finding oneself "just another human being who must come to terms with other people as capable of transforming the world in accordance with their own perspective" (p. 129). Moreover, Gordon compels us to remain awake to the irreplaceability of the human and thus the irreplaceability of the experience of others in the world (Borgerson, 2008; Gordon, 2003). Such an approach inspires us to recognize "the ways in which we are enabled to act by a sociality that is beyond us" (Cornell, 2008: 129). Gordon's contribution allows us to highlight the roles that others play in our coming into being in the world. Moreover, there is an emphasis on our daily life, our actions and engagements with others, which include research and work, enabled by intersubjective contexts. In this sense, then, the conditions of intersubjectivity and the ethical relation enact human engagements that necessitate the collapse of the colonial project and its debilitating, devastating practices and outcomes.

What this analysis suggests is that the ethical is misappropriated through colonialism and the affiliated inhuman conditions and attitudes that continue to create contexts of being and knowing: "the very opening of the ethical will have to be reasserted against its fundamental violation by colonial conditions and obviously implicit racism" (Cornell, 2008: 107). In other words, with humility we might witness sociality as intrinsic to our human being. Where previously was anonymity, nothing, we find a point of view and a transformer of value and the world. The incompleteness, irreplaceability, and openness of the human thus appear in the black, in the non-European, in the colonized, in a position made to appear through struggle to become the Other and a limit in an ethical relation.

Cornell (2008) reminds us that in black philosophies of existence, reinterpretation of phenomenological "perspectives," black persons see "themselves being looked at but also develop a second sight where they, too, can envision how the whites are seeing them as less than human" (p. 105). To be positioned as white in these circumstances is also a denial of humanity. For both,

then, there is the question of not only who or what one *is* but, as Gordon writes in his focus on liberation, “what we *ought* to become” (Cornell, 2008: 107). In this, intersubjectivity and sociality are foundational.

As might be expected – and regardless of Eurocentric narcissistic oversight – marginalized, “peripheral,” and colonized populations have voiced critical responses to encounters with Western reason (Smith, 2012), which would include experiences with “management.” Management practices and techniques manifested in conjunction with colonialist strategies of bureaucracy and audit that played out in Britain’s central role in European colonial expansion (Connell, 2007: 45–47; Diks, 2006; Nechtman, 2010) and further as part of the East India Company – arguably one of the earliest organizations engaged in management rooted in colonialist practice – in the development of organizational structures (Litvin, 2004; Sen, 1998; Wild, 1999). These populations’ often invisible and inaudible – but also simply unperceived, unread and uncited – contributions provide the conditions of possibility for Critical Management Studies and serve as provocations for decolonizing the “critical” in CMS. Does CMS perceive, acknowledge and abide by the value-creating role of the Other in a world that emerges through cocreated social existence? Can the challenge to decolonize the critical in CMS inspire an attitude of humility as, rather than move to appropriation, we accept the Other’s value as an epistemological and ontological limit?

Postcolonial realism: Remapping the “decisive confrontation”

During a recent visit to a university in Southern Thailand, I was asked to lead a conference workshop on publishing in international journals. I faced my Thai colleagues and the Thai graduate students who had come from around Southern Thailand to participate in the day’s events and felt the geography of reason’s full force. Some of the faculty present had returned to Thailand after earning PhD degrees in the U.K.: they had published articles that I highly valued in English language journals, yet their expertise was not being highlighted. A short seminar earlier in the day made clear that most of the university’s PhD students were far from fluent in English. Nevertheless, all successful careers were said to depend upon writing dissertations in English, as well as publishing in relentlessly ranked journals from the Euro-American world, even while the lack of viable English language support networks seemed insurmountable. These are impossible demands, and the impossibility becomes clearer, there, in the context of the realities of these geopolitical locations.

A program of unveiling realities as lived has seemed important particularly in cases to which attention might be brought in order to dwell with those whose invisibility maintains suffering and ossifies their future possibilities. Drawing upon an illustrative example of contesting a Eurocentrist perspective with the resources of postcolonial realism does offer insights into the ways in which CMS might shift its “geography of reason.” Dabashi’s (2004) attention to philosopher Martin Heidegger in this section does not intend to suggest that Heidegger stands in for all instances of the colonizing “critical.” However, acting upon the realities of intersubjectivity – as well as valuing often denied points of view, agencies and thought in the world – suggests a way to address the continued colonizing potential of the “critical” in CMS.

Critical Realism as a theoretical approach may contest both positivist and purely subjectivist approaches to questions of what we can know and what is, as well as emphasize an understanding of social relations and structures and a “transformational conception of social activity” (Bhaskar, 2011: 2–3). Critical Realist approaches to management and organization studies have addressed ontological assumptions that maintain an unsustainable capture of reality, or the Real (Contu & Willmott, 2005). Attempts to remain reflective upon understandings of existence – and the apparent foundations of that which is said to exist – offer a challenge in coherent management

research, whereas realism in film has long been treasured and censured as a way of showing conditions that might otherwise remain hidden, sometimes intentionally.

For example, in an essay on Iranian cinema and technological modernity, Dabashi argues that realism in cinema offers access to change, and Dabashi illustrates this. He traces transformation in Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf from self-colonizing Islamist ideologue to one who attends to *realities* “that in both their enduring miseries and their hope of redemption have the ring of truth that no ideological movement in contemporary Iran has addressed, let alone changed” (Dabashi, 2004: 142). In lieu of empty, abstract platitudes or mystification, attention to the realities of domestic conditions, daily experiences and the individual lives of colonial subjects provides the impetus for “real” art.

As theoretical orientation, Dabashi takes the “colonized perspective” on Heidegger’s understanding of technology as dehumanizing. Dabashi places colonized subjects “where we are, at the receiving end of the project, at the colonial site of Capitalist Modernity, at the tropical outposts of the polar centers of the European Enlightenment” (Dabashi, 2004: 118). Here the relevance of Self/Other relations, particularly in the form of colonizer and colonized, comes to the fore, where colonizing is understood as a Self-raising/Other-lowering project, and the European particular becomes the reigning global universal. “Colonialism is the essence of technology,” Dabashi argues, the site of the human reduced to use value. He writes, “For us, technology did not come from the Greek *techné* but out of the long and extended barrels of European vernacular guns” (p. 117). Dabashi rejects Heidegger’s Eurocentric notion that “essential reflection” upon technology and “decisive confrontation” with it must happen in a realm of *art* (p. 119). The decisive confrontation takes place in “the sub-Saharan continents of colonial catastrophes that Technological Modernity entailed” (p. 119).

Drawing upon these insights, Dabashi marks Makhmalbaf’s transformation – the “exorcising of his demons” through film – from “Manichean determinism in the bifurcation of Good and Evil” to realism, as crucial to creating his later, truly great work (Dabashi, 2004: 132). Dabashi sees this transformation as important not simply because Makhmalbaf made better movies but because Islamism as a form of resistance to colonialism and technological modernity “is itself the most effective form of self-colonization” (p. 122). In other words, “an anti-colonial ideology is a colonial ideology” (p. 123), which sheds doubt on Islamism as an effective source of resistance to subordination and other undermining processes and practices. Focusing on “a solid material base in Iranian realities that defies the counter/colonial constitution of all revolutionary ideologies,” Makhmalbaf brings out the true “danger” of the (post-)colonial artist, as he moves away from “mystical” abstractions and the “psychopathological impotence to face the real,” especially in explicating the lives of women after the revolution (Dabashi, 2004: 141). Dabashi argues that the theorized exclusive European access to various aesthetic ideals kept aspects such as the *sublime* at a distance. Art at the site of (post-)colonial contexts raised the possibility of “creative revolt.” In short, Dabashi calls for a geographical shift in understandings of the decisive confrontation. “Europe, except in its moments of crisis, is *not* that site; the serious site can only be the colonial realm, its categorical denial, its civilizational Other” (p. 119). The challenge put forward here requires denizens of Eurocentricism to become aware of denials, exclusions and convenient but delusional universalizing.

Echoing the phenomenological insights more generally, Gordon (1995b) has argued that it is crucial to pose “the question of the questioner: the very investigation is possible only by virtue of a being that can not only question its own being, but may also deny its involvement in the questioning” (p. 16). The problem of bad faith, or fleeing from the conditions of involvement, suggests the danger in the continued failure in CMS to take on the cocreative responsibility and task of decolonizing the critical. It may be interesting, then, to follow a narrative of Critical

Management Studies’ contextualized emergence from the United Kingdom’s soil and soul, allowing reflection upon aspects of the geography of reason. As we shall see in the next section, there has been a call for a move from criticism of, and disdain for, “performative intent” to practices of implementation in line with potential alternatives and disruptions that have managerial implications – or, in other words, a move toward the possibility that CMS would help create better management, less devastating work environments and a more just world.

Becoming CMS

Management always has been as much a colonialist practice as anything else, and perhaps it should not have taken the New Right in the U.K. to reveal this aspect to, and trigger response from, critically minded U.K. business academics, even if some were newly transferring their attentions from other social science disciplines. In an early influential reflection on the development of CMS, Valerie Fournier and Chris Grey (2000) outline the conditions within the U.K. that made an emergence of CMS possible. They argued that shifting management styles and techniques demonstrated varying contexts and perspectives that went beyond singular, or universal, approaches in management science. That CMS was born from such anti-universalizing insights bodes well for a decolonizing project; however, the conditions of emergence are not the same as the research approaches and perspectives that then engaged the CMS field: indeed, one might note the idealization and universalizing of the CMS project itself in the years that followed.

Articulating conditions of possibility for CMS, Fournier and Grey argued that management gained new status in the U.K. in the 1990s, legitimated upon ontological, epistemological and moral grounds relevant to a particular situatedness of that era’s social and political shifts. Managers and managerialization attempted to bring forth the “real world,” offer “input knowledge” and intervene for “greater justice, public accountability, democracy and quality in public services” (Fournier and Grey, 2000: 11). The resulting changes, welcomed by some, made the non-natural nature of administrative techniques newly visible. Beyond infamous influences of U.S. management practices, the authors argue that a further stage of management empowerment flowed from Japan, demonstrating new and sometimes contradictory fashions; indicating the “fragmented and unstable” field of management science; and providing clear targets for critical study. The evident changeability and lack of coherence and confidence in the future of management science “makes managers and management researchers if not receptive to critique then at least mindful of the deficiencies of their own knowledge base” (Fournier and Grey, 2000: 13).

CMS arose strongly in the U.K. based upon an apparently amenable critical and intellectual tradition lacking, for example, in the U.S., which according to the authors still exhibits the impact of positivism, McCarthyism, and the Cold War. In the U.S., many social science disciplines, as well as humanities disciplines, such as philosophy, continue to rally around positivist certainty with a concomitant disavowal of phenomenology and its suspect heritage (for a related discussion regarding U.S. philosophy’s continental and analytical divide, see Maldonado-Torres, 2006). The U.K. apparently experienced a “fragmentation of the social sciences,” revealing competing perspectives and an influential position for postmodernism and “a recognition of the socially constructed nature of social arrangements” (pp. 13–14). Such non-natural “social arrangements” clearly included instantiations of management and organization practices and principles.

Fournier and Grey (2000) argue that social scientists, whose departments and research opportunities were facing financial difficulties, appeared most ready to take advantage of the pragmatic and theoretical opportunities brought about by the advancement of U.K. university business schools. This category of migrants included many who became engaged with CMS. The authors do not mention that humanities departments also were experiencing fund cutting

and departmental closings – and these displaced academics would have had similar impetus to find another university location for research and funding. Perhaps, at least initially, methodologies from these fields seemed less suited to research and publication based in business schools. However, some in humanities disciplines may have underestimated a compelling prospect given the number of social science and business-trained academics who have gone on to utilize philosophical thought and theory, if not methodologies, from humanities traditions to make sense of diverse contexts of management studies (See e.g., Czarniawska & Höpfl, 2002; Guillet de Monthoux, 1993; Jones, 2003; Karamali, 2007; Lim, 2007; O’Doherty, 2007; De Cock & Böhm, 2007; Rehn & Sköld, 2012; Sköld, 2010). Whether philosophers and literary theorists generally felt less at home or simply less attracted to business school environments is uncertain. Nevertheless, patterns of publication have shown the flow of a number of related theoretical and scholarly resources, including existential phenomenology, poststructural philosophy, and postcolonial studies, into business school disciplines.

Anti-performative research or perlocutionary performativity?

In their genealogy, Fournier and Grey (2000) consider what is meant by “critical,” discerning “an anti-performative stance and a commitment to (some version of) denaturalization” (p. 8). They attend as well to the politics of CMS, which consists – in their rendering – of two positions, neo-Marxism and poststructuralism. It is worth noting that the discussion reflects a postmodern poststructuralism, which can be understood to have “an ideological framework against certain narratives” that goes beyond poststructural analysis per se (Gordon, 2006: 48). In short, the tools and insights available from poststructural analysis do not necessitate the attending postmodern ideologies, for example, regarding grand narratives. An analysis of this distinction in relation to CMS research could prove fruitful but will not be undertaken here. However, this rendering of the “politics” of CMS invokes ideologies that may obscure the decolonized potentials of the critical. For example, a decolonized “critical” may take issue with a commitment to an “anti-performative stance” (see interview with Gordon, this chapter).

Performative research is perceived as a key problem for CMS. “Performative research” indicates research that points out and develops implications that support performance of productive management. In their rendering, “performativity” marks efficiency with an economic motive that “subordinates knowledge and truth” (Fournier & Grey, 2000: 17). In other words, even if undertaken with concerns critical of mainstream business goals, performative research could be considered complicit with managerial intent, demonstrating the subordination of learning and research to other goals. In turn, the anti-performativity of the “critical” guides CMS observation, analysis and theorizing in what otherwise might be a field of unquestioning striving for, or achieving, aims unexamined by any but the most limited of economic sense.

Oddly, this is a rendering of the “performative” that lacks a poststructural lens: a brief discussion of this matter here will aid us in the following section on care. In line with a poststructural understanding, “performativity” describes manifestations of iterative gestures with the potential to produce diversities of identity, subjectivity and possibility (e.g., Borgerson, 2005; Butler, 1993). The kind of Austinian performative most readily adaptable to CMS research is *perlocutionary*. The perlocutionary performative “characterizes those utterances from which effects follow only when certain other kinds of conditions are in place” (Butler 2010: 147). In other words, “the perlocution implies risk, wager, and the possibility of having an effect, but without any strong notion of probability or any possible version of necessity” (p. 151). This mapping marks incompleteness and the potential for alteration, including shifts that contribute to processes unfolding without fixed, essential, or “natural” ends. Perhaps engaging with this version of the performative would alter

the judgment the authors make regarding “performative research” in the sense that performativity marks not a matter of ways in which certain outcomes and insights can be operationalized but rather a further opportunity to engage the power relations embedded in declarations of the natural and essential that lead to management techniques and practices that further oppression and inequality. Perlocutionary performativity manifests disruption of essentializing, naturalizing and colonizing tendencies, marking failure in iterative gestures that opens possibilities for new emergences. A less compelling alternative would be for the CMS researcher to work with the *illocutionary* performative, speaking as a sovereign voice, constructing authoritative realities with utterances (Butler, 2010).

It has been argued that by raising questions and noting alternatives around various “imperatives,” CMS has the potential to interrogate organizational reality, including illusions of the “naturalness” of relations and the way things just are, for example, around behaviors and attitudes often stereotypically associated with specific gender-demarcated groups (Maclaran, Miller, Parsons & Surman, 2009). Fournier and Grey (2000) write that the debates within CMS have

led CMS writers to question the grounds for critique, their rights and ability to offer critique, and have alerted them to the paradoxical and even preposterous nature of their position as academic writers, condemned to provide critique that effaces or appropriates the voices of those in the name of whom they claim to speak.

(p. 21)

It is disturbing to reflect upon the notion that CMS researchers would “claim to speak in the name” of their research subjects, even as they recognize their roles in “effacing or appropriating” processes. Nevertheless, the authors imagine an attempt to pursue research that does not harm and suggest a desire to decolonize the theory, the research practices and the positions and voices often drawn upon to fuel work in CMS (see also Alvesson, 2008). Surveying much of the CMS work published since 2000, however, suggests that this is far from a reality.

To summarize, then, Critical Management Studies attempts to “unmask power relations around which social and organizational life are woven” (Fournier & Grey, 2000: 19), raising tensions around outcomes of scholarly engagement or disengagement (pp. 22–26; Fournier, 2002). This includes attempts to draw upon emerging insights and principles to change the relations and situations of individuals enmeshed in them in less than flourishing ways. One of the most important insights around the potential of CMS is that those who study and pursue the course of management should understand that there are alternatives, diversities and points of cocreation that “mainstream management theory has treated as either irrelevant to the analysis of organizations or as a set of resources and constraints for the pursuit of performativity” (Fournier & Grey, 2000: 27). In other words, without the investigations and resulting understandings of CMS, much in the realm of management remains unaddressed and outside mainstream interest and consciousness, assumedly leaving the power relations and related oppressions and exploitations unexamined and in place. The turn to concerns for teaching and learning in management education (e.g., Beverungen, 2009; Grey, 2007; Willmott, 2006) – with notions of teachers and students communicating ideas and sharing the potential for insights – marks an opportunity to engage what has been characterized as an ethics of care in contrast to an ethics of criticism (Gabriel, 2009).

Is caring critical?

Human relations that emerge from an ethos of care may manifest qualities needed to offer new possibilities in a world of complex, often damaging interactions that support diverse aspects of social organization. Work in care ethics has highlighted the characteristics of subordinated

groups, finding virtue in responses that support generous, nurturing or other-centered interactions and that also allay danger and retribution in oppressive relations. Related observations reveal semio-ontological links between marginalized identities and subject positions, such as blackness and femininity, and suggest a critical place for an ethos often reserved for the variously colonized (Borgerson, 2001). This is not to raise a call for adopting subordinated perspectives because there is something virtuous about doing so but rather to recognize the power in alternative versions and visions of the world even if we currently observe them functioning in less than optimal situations. For example, the humility perceived by Cornell that emerges in black philosophies of existence arises in part from lived realities of racism and struggle but at the same time proposes the necessity of positions of openness to the fully human and value-creating status of others – including those previously rendered invisible in the face of arrogant, colonizing fantasies of superiority.

Care ethics, favorably viewed, demonstrate attention to relationships and responsibility (Borgerson, 2007) and moreover a sense of acknowledging others' value in the world, in contrast to arrogance and defensiveness that block potential for intersubjectivity and generosity. Care ethics may engage an alternative to a narcissism that gauges everything in relation to oneself. The ethics of care were recently invoked as a balance against management studies' critical activities that arguably threaten to provoke a slide into academic cynicism, disciplinary irrelevance and irresponsible pedagogy (Gabriel, 2009).

Yiannis Gabriel opens a number of possible conversations regarding the future of CMS and critical reflective methods and moreover the meaning of, and distinction between, terms such as "criticism," "critique," and "critical reflection" (Gabriel, 2009: 381–382; Parker, 1995). The suggestion he puts forward might be analyzed in several directions: however, here the focus follows various potentials of Gabriel's call for the discipline and the disciples of critical management studies to engage with so-called care ethics, as well as his attempts to clarify and deepen notions involved in such an engagement. An analysis of "an ethic of criticism" rendered in terms of Gordon's work may suggest a "reconciliation" intrinsic to the possibility of education and hence pedagogy generally, thus implicating the future of management and organization at all levels.

The ethics of care also appear in an argument for "critical performativity" that contests the notion that CMS should remain disengaged and without performative intention (Spicer, Alvesson & Kärreman, 2009). Much of the potential for alteration discussed in Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman's work would arise in conjunction with the notions of performativity previously put forward, that is, an understanding of the way in which iterative gestures continue to alter and shift over time, cocreating new possibilities and outcomes. This includes instances of iterations that, intentional or not, seemingly significant or not, slip continuously away from a sense of the natural or essential structure or way of doing things.

The authors offer several characteristics for their perspective on critical performativity, including an affirmative stance, optimistic focus on "micro emancipations," and a role for an ethic of care. According to the authors, an ethic of care involves "asking practical questions which care for participants' views at the same time as seeking to challenge the same participants" (Spicer, Alvesson & Kärreman, 2009: 547). In other words, CMS researchers assume an attitude of care that includes the need to "challenge" some aspect of the so-called participants' perception of the world.

Whereas the "challenging" aspect of the interaction might be supposed to enlighten the researchers, the tension between caring and challenging suggests that Critical Management Studies researchers know better than their participants, raising the problem, as they note, of "arrogance and elitism" in revealing instances of false consciousness – though this is not a term used in the article. The alternative, they argue, would be to "accept and legitimate" the social order, apparently represented by what emerges from the unchallenged research Other. The article presumes

researchers who see truth and reality and whose thinking represents for them a global, universal vision (Dabashi, 2013). These researchers believe themselves to be in a position of responsibility to choose whether to attempt to interpret alternative perspectives for the participant – for example, the ignorant manager or the mainstream researcher. I do not intend to denigrate the difficulty of the quandary acknowledged here; nevertheless, decolonizing the “critical” may require an approach to this setup that is not considered here. Let us look a bit more closely.

Referring to the notion of “loving struggle” from philosopher of existence Karl Jaspers, the authors offer an image of a relationship that might allow a negotiation between researcher and participant that fosters CMS’s potential for engagement, care and critical performativity:

It involves recognizing the right of the other person to exist, and a simultaneous commitment to pushing, questioning and extending that other person in a way which encourages them to stretch their sense of who they are and might become.

(Fleming & Spicer, 2007, cited in Spicer, Alvesson & Kärreman, 2009)

The Other person – here, the research participant – is conceived of as capable of altering and being altered in an exchange. Whereas recognizing “the right of the other person to exist” cuts somewhat below notions of the other as a source of value creation, the indeterminacy, openness and incompleteness that constitute being human is gestured to implicitly, and the theoretical implications of perlocutionary performativity are reasserted, again implicitly. The authors carry this forward by suggesting a “mystery-led approach,” an “openness” to the unexpected, and an ability to connect with “local conditions” that may disrupt fondly held assumptions or the “theory-led protocol that dominates CMS” (p. 549). In sum, if CMS researchers are also willing to be “extended” and “stretched,” then the contexts of being and knowing in which they are working, as well as the people with whom they engage, may disrupt broader CMS ideologies and universalizing tendencies brought into the field of investigation.

It is interesting to consider how close these statements of “caring” for the views of the other and “recognizing the right of the other person to exist” come to the notion of “humility” put forward by Cornell as crucial to the project of decolonizing the critical, and yet how extensive is the difference between these when brought into closer inquiry. In short, the caring relationship here becomes instrumental based upon the agentic perspective and sovereign desire of the CMS researcher, through which the notion of cocreation – or an ethical relation in a Levinasian sense of the absolute Otherness of the Other, unappropriated by the self-same – fades. Moreover, “openness” becomes an ideal methodological approach regarding research assumptions or theoretical frameworks, not an understanding of the irreplaceability of the participant or research subject.

Caring in CMS might need to become less of the so-called white man’s burden to challenge the masses yet to come to consciousness, and more – attempted with an attitude of humility – a welcoming of the full humanity and realities of those with whom we share research interactions. A more carefully articulated and comprehended notion of care ethics – as well as reference to diverse related models of intersubjectivity and sociality – would help clarify and deepen the recommendations suggested by Spicer, Alvesson & Kärreman (2009). Moreover, a more thoughtful drawing out of the proposition might highlight the potential ontological implications that map onto colonizing backgrounds of critical theory.

It may be that a developed notion of care ethics in this context could intersect productively with the aspects of humility. Indeed, it was this impulse that led to the particular form of this chapter. Surely, CMS as a field must take responsibility for its own ignorance and arrogance, as well as for the reorientation and revisioning in hopes of broadening and animating ethical relationships. In short, postcolonial organization studies calls upon mainstream CMS to be reflective

upon the implications of its own geography of reason, its illocutionary impulses, its parochialism, its ideologies and its racism.

Conclusion

In exploring the missions of Critical Management Studies and attending to claims of geographical grounding in a U.K. genealogy, this chapter has discussed scenarios around the devaluing and dehumanizing conditions of colonized relations to shed light on struggles to decolonize the “critical” in CMS. Can CMS researchers decolonize their research and theory and, in turn, address and reflect upon their own universalizing fantasies that deny epistemic limits in marking, idealizing or in other ways essentializing others? How might CMS participate with others, engage with others – as the colonized “find a way to meaningfully assert themselves as an epistemic limit to the imposition of white fantasy on who they can be in the world” (Cornell, 2008: 122)?

Hopes for decolonizing the critical in CMS reside in attending to the sociality of possible practices, guarding against anonymity and typicality with critical good faith, focusing on the potential of perlocutionary performativity and continually abdicating a delusional arrogated perspective in favor of humility that opens to the full humanity of others. One of Cornell’s arguments is that by turning to the accounts of black philosophies of existence, we may grasp and act upon processes of “creolization” that sociologist Paget Henry defines as “a process of semio-semantic hybridization that can occur between arguments, vocabularies, phonologies, or grammars of discourses within a culture or across cultures” (Henry, 2000: 88, cited in Cornell, 2008: 132). Through creolization, critical management theorists and practitioners find themselves incomplete, decentered and, indeed, able to acknowledge their own human powers, and endure other, without flight into defensive attitudes, postures and positions. Multiplicities of being intertwine with the incompleteness of the human and defeat essentializing ontological and epistemic closures that impact upon the lived existence of colonized human beings, and others, in the world.

Despite performing situatedness and context in attempting to characterize CMS as born of U.K. conditions, including intellectual traditions, does some part of CMS desire, perhaps inadvertently, an idealization both in terms of genealogies and practices? In what way does challenging research participants to perceive their misunderstandings of the world in line with the theorizing, caring perspectives of CMS researchers make room for “the existence of the other”? As the traditions and resources of black existential philosophies, Southern Theory and other postcolonial thinking engage more explicitly with business school concerns, we see that new questions, critical positions and particular others address the arena of CMS. Indeed, approaching from alternative routes, we have reason to question that the relevant notion of *critical* necessarily emerges from European intellectual and academic traditions to the exclusion of those manifesting from elsewhere, including insights from colonial management and related racism that have been iterated and reflected upon in the experience and philosophy of the colonized.

And so we might ask, in what contexts CMS has had the opportunity to acknowledge, relate to and engage the Other? In the discipline of CMS, where might others typically appear in research, work life and global understanding? There are others as scholars and others as subjects of research whose life experiences and realities contest arrogated sensibilities and demand a rereading and revising regarding taken-for-granted universalized values, approaches and perspectives. In this sense, there are others whose potential as cocreative, intersubjective, epistemological and ontological limits require on the part of CMS a humility of perception and practice. Possibilities of inclusion emerge in this sense from attending to an already existing relation, debt and

responsibility to these others from which some mainstream CMS academics over even the last decade have hidden.

It may be said that CMS has been more successful in addressing the inequalities of class than in confronting racism and the meaningful inequalities of global position and distribution – what has been called the global basic structure (Buchanan, 2004). A key move would be to engage the knowledge, expertise and conceptual sophistication of othered thinkers and practitioners: as authors – in many languages – whose work we read, draw upon and reference in our own publications; as scholars whom we invite to speak in our university seminar series and mentor our PhD students; and as colleagues whom we include in our edited books and with whom we write.

Perceiving agency, value and humanity in the world beyond CMS as usual is an initial step to decolonizing the critical and embodying a humility that offers understandings in the face of the broader world as we shift the geography of CMS reason. If situations of cocreation are understood to be not chosen, not “acceptable” perspectives, but rather the necessary conditions for being in the world, then CMS might begin to decolonize the critical in CMS by engaging the others that have participated in cocreating the identities and realities that CMS recognizes as its own. In other words, a self-satisfied Eurocentric perspective, including dogmatically universalized Marxist interpretations, refuses the cocreative contexts without which notions of Europe, Britain and CMS would not exist. If CMS is unwilling to decolonize the critical in CMS, none of this will change.

What Gordon says about disciplinary decadence offers positive analysis generally for CMS, in the sense that CMS attempts to recall its “birth” and by so doing allows contestation of founding myths, hypothesized roots and universalizing narratives. By maintaining an openness to alteration and shifting iterations and regenerations, as well as a questioning relationship to generalization and idealization, CMS may escape the “monstrous” existence that Gordon finds in human disciplinary creations that aspire to the eternal. An attitude of humility, then, in accepting the fact of coming into and going out of existence and the sociality of human processes – even those we would most like to claim as uniquely, autonomously conceived – may release CMS from the colonizing impulse toward a cocreative, coagentive understanding of critical management in an expanding and contracting world.

An interview with Lewis Gordon

JB: Cornell is gesturing to a Levinasian sense of “ethical” when she refers to your contribution concerning “humility” and attributing value and contribution to others in the world. Would you think of your approach to relationships and responsibility as intersecting with or being influenced by concerns similar to those of Levinas?

LG: I’ve been very critical of Levinas for many reasons. First, there is his Hellenizing of Judaism. The tendency to seek a Greek past is, as I see it, a legacy of Aryanism. The Germans liked the myth of Nordic tribes heading to the Mediterranean and inaugurating, through a mixture with Southern Mediterranean peoples, the Classical Age. (Ironic for an ideology of purity, no?) Second, there is the analytical structure of Levinas’s argument. I wrote a long paper on deontic logic when I was a graduate student in which I raised the problem of the form of obligation versus the obligation of form. In effect, I was putting in logic terms what turns out to be Levinas’s insight about ethics, where one could ask about the ethical implications of ontological commitments instead of the ontological status of ethics. I think he is right in that regard. Where I have a problem is the structure of how he sets up the question of the Other. It leads to so much inwardness that one ignores the social circumstances through which one could afford such ethical and moralistic luxury. An interesting comparison is Mulana Karenga. He, too, prioritizes the

ethical. But for him, that leads to the obligation of engaging the social and historical world. The ignoring of black humanity was possible, e.g., through ignoring those realities. The Other, for Karenga, is not a demand that leaves one smitten and subordinated but instead *active*. This, too, is an insight I see from Frantz Fanon. If a colonized person looks at a colonizer as The Other to whom to *defer* and, echoing Derrida, *differ/defer*, then we are left simply with the maintenance of an unjust status quo. Philosophers of liberation and decolonial theorists such as Enrique Dussel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and others have posed such questions to Levinas (and also, in the context of critical theory, with communicative ethics) and to Habermas, and these extraordinary white men simply ignored them, while they reached out so much to their white counterparts in North America. It seems some others have a greater ethical demand than others. We see here the structure of the point raised by Fanon in *Black Skins, White Masks* and in *Les Damnés de la terre*: ethics ultimately requires equality instead of asymmetry. Political action is needed to rectify *that*. I think Drucilla Cornell shares this insight. She was a strong proponent of deconstructive approaches to the study of law and feminism, which led her to Levinas's thought. Her concerns as a labor organizer and jurist led her, however, to take seriously the convergence of class and gender in race and eventually into the question of thinking through justice in *political terms* and the demands of critical thought on race and Africana philosophy of existence in the *Ubuntu* work in South Africa and problems of culture raised by rethinking symbolic form or structure. Cornell has taken on the crucial question of the meaning of the human in the assertions of ethical, legal, and political life. This has led, in a word, to a saturated or thick conception of social reality and human agency. It makes Levinas insightful but woefully limited.

JB: Some argue that science should not become advocacy. This might mean not applying research insights and outcomes to advocate for particular applications or policies. Critical Management Studies has often tried to avoid contributing to research with managerial applications: they have said that CMS shouldn't result in better forms of oppression. Can a discipline maintain integrity, even when its insights are so closely related to dubious practical applications? Some have argued, sometimes in contrast, that in order to offer education for future management practitioners and academics, the outcomes and implications of CMS research *must* be articulated and moreover taught to students. Does philosophy have any similar concerns right now?

LG: Philosophy has similar concerns precisely because academic philosophy faces a similar problem. Analytical philosophy claims to be pursuing truth, but it does so in ways that are patently ethnocentric and preserving of the status quo – especially of elite institutions. One could argue, using Gramsci, that analytical philosophy is the organic philosophy of Anglo-liberalism and then neoliberalism. Although there are “left” analytical philosophers, the reality could be born out when methodological assumptions or presumptions are under critique: one finds a response not different from the Taliban. Continental philosophers collapse, often, into a form of Eurocentrism that makes them organic to the *cultural* maintenance of Euro-modernity. These two are not, however, the only alternatives, and in my book *Disciplinary Decadence*, I offer a critique of this false dilemma. In the end, I argue that both, in a failure of more rigorous metacritique, often fail to deal with reality. This is not an absolute claim, but my point is that those who are willing to go beyond their (ethnocentric) methodological dictates – i.e., going beyond analytical philosophy and continental philosophy – find themselves in a teleological suspension of disciplinarity for the sake of reality. There is incredible pressure in the study of management and business to be complicit with what is no less than market fundamentalism. The task is to achieve a proper level of self-critique. The other extreme, for instance – *anti-management* – fails to see that standards, rules, organization, and the variety of critical questions raised by management are *necessary*, especially where the institutions at work are large, complex, and modern. A decadent model turns away, however, from the multiple or diverse possibilities and resources from which to draw on ideas for

the proper function of the institutions at hand. Here, then, the *critical* in Critical Management Studies must come to the fore.

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