Work and play in management studies: A Kleinian analysis*

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abstract

This paper takes some of Melanie Klein's ideas, which Bion (1961/1998) previously used to understand group dynamics, to analyse the discipline of management studies since its 'birth' in the United States in the late 19th century. Specifically, it focuses on the idealisation of work and play, and argues that at its inception, for idiosyncratic historical reasons, the discipline was rooted in a 'paranoid-schizoid' position in which work was idealised as good and play as bad. The paper maps out the peculiar set of factors and influences that brought this about. It then examines how and if, again following Klein, the discipline has evolved to the 'depressive' position, where the idealisations are replaced by a more ambiguous, holistic semantic frame. Seven different relationships between work and play are then described. The paper contends that the originary splitting and idealisation is foundational to the discipline, and provides an enduring basis for analysing management theory and practice. It concludes by using this splitting to map out five potential future trajectories for the discipline.

Introduction

Play is a capricious concept dragged hither and thither by its many meanings – Burke (1971) identified fifty-three different dictionary definitions of 'play' and thirty-nine of 'work'. While some authors like Huizinga (1955), Sutton-Smith (1997), and Caillois (1961) have used this ambiguity to fruitfully analyse different types of play, I instead focus on the *normative* understandings of play (and work) within the discipline of management studies. In this essay, I consider how and why this normative framework and the relationship between work and play have evolved over time. The central argument is that, at its birth, management studies has constituted work as a 'good object' and play as a 'bad object', and that this has structured the discipline's evolution. The terms 'good object' and 'bad object' are borrowed from object relations theory, in particular the work of Melanie Klein who provides a useful conceptual frame for diagnosing the discipline. The paper begins, therefore, with a brief introduction to

Klein's ideas, and argues that some of her concepts may be usefully applied to the development of management studies' identity. It then proceeds to describe how management studies, after its birth in the late 19th century, has moved from the 'paranoid-schizoid' position, where work is idealised as 'good' and play as 'bad', to the 'depressive' position characterised by more fluid understandings. The paper concludes by using Klein's perspective to assess the current and future status of the discipline.

Getting serious: A Kleinian analysis of management studies

A starting point for Klein is the notion of *phantasy* (spelled with a 'ph' to distinguish it from the word fantasy), which is the psychological aspect of unconscious instinct. Phantasy activity operates from the earliest moments and is best understood as the mental expression of the life and death instincts that Klein, following Freud, posits as primordial (Isaacs, 1948). According to Klein, the early ego – which Freud saw as the organised part of the self – lacks cohesion, and, while there is a tendency towards integration, this alternates with a tendency towards disintegration. The *death instinct* is manifest as a fear of disintegration and annihilation, which creates great anxiety. This fear is realised by the infant as fear of an *object* that is both uncontrollable and overpowering. Klein posits that the destructive impulse of the death instinct is projected or deflected outwards and is attached, through *projection*, onto external objects that must be attacked as they are dangerous and powerful. Specifically, the infant's oral-sadistic impulses towards the mother's breast indicate to Klein that the mother's breast is an early instance of this process of projection. Importantly, this 'bad breast' exists as an external object and – through a process that Klein terms *introjection* – as an *internal* object where it reinforces the fear of the destructive impulse.

But the infant's phantasy also consists of a *life instinct*, which incorporates a predisposition to suckle at the breast, which Klein sees as one of the earliest internalised objects in an infant's life. Klein hypothesises that the infant directs his/her feelings of love and gratification towards the 'good' breast and his/her destructive impulses and persecutory feelings towards that which appears to be frustrating – the 'bad' breast. Thus, the breast is 'split' – a central Kleinian concept – into 'part objects': A good (gratifying) and bad (frustrating) breast, and through introjection and projection both objects are internalised. The good breast, to which other features of the mother are soon added, provides a focal point for the emerging ego as it counters the processes of splitting and dispersal, and provides an early and primary part of the semantic scaffolding that the psyche relies on in times of stress. The infant finds security as the good aspects of the breast are exaggerated and idealised (internally) as a corollary to and protection from the persecutory, extremely bad breast. Moreover, the bad breast is not only kept apart from the good one, but its very existence is denied, which is made possible through strong feelings of omnipotence. Thus, two interrelated processes take place: 'the omnipotent conjuring up of the ideal object and situation, and the equally omnipotent annihilation of the bad persecutory object and situation' (Klein, 1984: 7).

Klein hypothesises that the healthy child moves from this 'paranoid-schizoid position' – characterised by hyper-anxiety, splitting, omnipotence, idealisation, and a hyper-anxious fear of annihilation by part-objects – to a 'depressive position' where the infant

becomes able to tolerate some of its own previously projected feelings, especially its feelings of aggression and envy. The infant begins to become self-aware, recognising its own capacity for destruction, its vulnerability and limitations, as it begins to accept rather than deny the complexity of the external world. Crucially, the process of splitting is mitigated, both internally and externally, through recognising that 'mother' is constituted by, *inter alia*, a 'good' and 'bad' breast.

Bion (1961/1998; Gould, 1997) demonstrated that Klein's theoretical architecture provides a powerful way to understand *group* behaviour, even if the concepts were originally formulated to understand the individual psyche. Following Bion, I posit that the architecture also applies if we shift the unit of analysis again, from the small group to the larger group that is the *discipline*. In the discipline's 'infancy' the same life and death instincts are at play, the same processes of splitting, introjection and projection are at work, the same phenomena of phantasy, idealisation, denial and omnipotence exist, the 'ego' is broadly equivalent to group identity, and states broadly equivalent to the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions may be identified. For instance, while he didn't use Klein's vocabulary, Strong was highlighting sociology's death instinct when he observed that 'the ordinary practitioner (of sociology) is grateful for whatever he or she can get, envious of other discipline's success and haunted by the fear that if sociology were shut down tomorrow, very few people would notice any difference' (Strong, 1979: 203).

Individuals are different from collectives and so one must be careful in extending concepts, originally developed through studying the former, to the latter. Yet, along with the work of Bion and his associates, others have found the extension to be robust and useful. For instance, Morgan (1986) refers to a range of authors who, collectively, underpin his argument that organisations are 'psychic prisons', while the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations (ISPSO) has provided an enduring forum, since 1983, for those using psychoanalytic concepts in and with organizations. And while there are differences between individuals and collectives, these differences should not be reified. As March and Olsen (1984) have argued:

> Whether it makes pragmatic theoretical sense to impute interests, expectations, and the other paraphernalia of coherent intelligence to an institution is neither more nor less problematic, *a priori*, than whether it makes sense to impute them to an individual (Kahneman, 1982; March and Shapira, 1982). The pragmatic answer appears to be that the coherence of institutions varies but is sometimes substantial enough to justify viewing a collectivity as acting coherently. (March and Olsen, 1984: 739)

One benefit of directing theories to a different unit of analysis is that it can provide new ways of seeing a phenomenon and/or turn our attention to its different aspects. Melanie Klein developed her ideas through focusing on those psychological processes that occur soon after birth, which suggests we might profitably turn to the 'birth' of management studies, if we are to understand the discipline's current state, its growing interest in play, and how it might and should evolve into the future. It is to this that we now turn.

The birth and infancy of management studies

According to Wikipedia, 'organizational studies is generally considered to have begun as an academic discipline with the advent of scientific management in the 1890s' (Wikipedia). Even if one is sceptical of Wikpedia's collective wisdom, and even if one might locate the discipline's origins in the industrial revolution, there is much evidence to suggest that the mid to late 19th century marks the birth of management studies. For instance, Barley and Kunda (1992) begin their story of the evolution of managerial ideologies in 1870, while Eastman and Bailey (1998) start their story in 1890, as does Guillén (1994) when he identified scientific management as the first management model (Taylor published his famous article on the piece-rate system in 1895). Shenhav (1995; 2000), begins his study of the (engineering) foundations of organization theory in 1879; Wren (1997: xii) notes that 'about 1880…the literature took a quantum jump as a result of the workshop management movement'; the first business school (the Wharton School of Finance and Economy) was founded in 1881; while Towne (1886), one of the first engineers to see management as a new social role for engineers, published his influential article, *The Engineer as an Economist*, in 1886. Significantly, all of these events occurred in the United States of America, where new infrastructure was being built at an unprecedented rate and scale.

While a 'discipline' is often understood as a branch of knowledge, I use the term to describe a *group of people* who focus, in a sustained and collective way on studying, representing and analysing a phenomenon of interest. The branch of knowledge is then understood as an emergent *outcome* of the group's work, as are more tangible manifestations, such as educational programs, journals, academic positions and institutions. In the case of management studies, the evidence indicates that, while earlier writings and practices provided a rich background, the discipline first came to be in a specific time and place, namely the (mainly north-east) United States in the late 19th century. The discipline, at that time, consisted of a self-selected group of various spokespersons, philosophers, practitioners, opinion leaders, and apologists for the managerial class, mostly working in larger firms, consulting houses, research institutions, trade associations, employer groups, government agencies, think tanks, publishers, business schools and universities. Guillén's (1994) comparative study of the emergence of management models in different countries makes it clear that the discipline originated in the United States, with its ideas and methods spreading subsequently to other countries. What distinguished the United States in the late 19th century was the development of large-scale enterprises, the concomitant emergence of a new managerial class and a new 'managerial ideology'. In contrast, even though the industrial revolution of the 18th century was centred on Great Britain and had its own 'entrepreneurial ideology', British managers turned their backs on their entrepreneurial history – probably because of aristocratic contempt for commerce and industry – and rejected American scientific management until well into the twentieth century (Bendix, 1956/1963: 25-33; Guillén, 1994: 208). In Germany, the social sciences remained weakly institutionalised before 1929, while 'industrial bureaucratization in Spain was some thirty or forty years behind in terms of the American, British or German levels' (Guillén, 1994: 164). In Russia, the emerging managerial class was subjected to, not only the contempt of the landowning aristocracy, but also the strictures of government control (Bendix, 1956/1963: 199-206). Thus, a unique set of circumstances enabled a

managerial class – that is, a group of individuals – to emerged in the late 19th century in the Eastern United States, and, having originated the discipline, the Americans have continued to dominate the field right up to the present, as evidenced by current business school and journal rankings.

While there has been a long and ancient debate about the relationship between labour and leisure, work and non-work, the peculiar setting of the United States in the mid to late 19th century conspired to produce a quite idiosyncratic idealisation of work and play. Specifically, the discipline adopted a 'paranoid-schizoid' position where work was idealised as a 'good object' and play as a 'bad object'. In the next section, I will outline the more important influences.

The idealisation of work as good…

The legacy of the Protestant Reformation (1517-1648) provided the first and probably most influential take on work. Central to Calvinist and Lutheran thinking was the idea that hard work (and a frugal lifestyle) were at the heart of an individual's calling and success. Work was virtuous, not only because of its social and material benefits, but also because it marked out the individual as one who was predestined to be saved by God. Thus, since the sixteenth century, Protestants have been attracted to the qualities of hard work and frugality.

As Max Weber (1930/2002) has well demonstrated, capitalism was fundamentally influenced by Protestantism (in its various forms), and so it is no surprise that it also influenced the nascent discipline of management studies, which was centrally concerned with analysing the practice of capitalism. While Weber was interested in tracing the link between Protestantism and capitalism, our focus is solely on the influence of Protestantism on particular conceptualisations of work and play. Here, it is important to recognise the enduring influence of Puritan ideas across the various forms of Protestantism in the United States, up to the present day. As de Tocqueville presciently observed in 1835: '…methinks I see the destiny of America embodied in the first Puritan who landed on those shores, just as the human race was represented by the first man' (De Tocqueville, 1835/2003: 230). While Puritanism, as a coherent set of beliefs and practices, went into decline in the 18th century, we are only concerned with the Puritan beliefs about work and play which permeated most if not all forms of Protestantism in the United States during the 19th century.

For the Puritan, work is important, sacred even, because of the 'ancient ascetic justification of labor as a means of giving the "inward" man control over his body. Labor is therefore a special instinct implanted in Adam by God before the fall, which he has followed "solely to please God"' (Weber, 1930/2002: 59). This followed Martin Luther's idea that work is both a service of love given to one's neighbour *and* a duty of gratitude owed to God for His grace. This Lutheran belief in work as a sign of salvation was especially prominent in the period c. 1450-1730. For instance, Weber documents the influence of the English Puritan Richard Baxter (1615-1692) who asserted:

> …if he is to be sure of his state of grace, man must 'do the works of him who sent him, as long as it is day.' According to God's unambiguously revealed will, it is only action, not idleness and

indulgence, that serves to increase his glory. Wasting time is therefore the first and most serious of all sins. (Weber, 1930/2002: 106)

For Baxter, work was not only a robust protection from temptation, but it was the end and purpose of life as commanded by God. Even wealth does not exclude one from the ethical duty of labour: God's command, which everyone must follow, is that each individual must work for His glory. In the eighteenth century, the German theologian Zinzendorf – who met Benjamin Franklin in Pennslyvania in 1741 – proclaimed much the same message: 'We do not work merely to live, but we live for the sake of work, and if we have not more work to do, we suffer or pass away' (quoted in Weber [1930/2002: 182]). In his parallel study on religion and the rise of capitalism, Tawney also stressed the place that work held in the Puritan ethos:

> …the Puritan flings himself into practical activities with the daemonic energy of one who, all doubts allayed, is conscious that he is a sealed and chosen vessel. Once engaged in affairs, he brings to them both the qualities and limitations of his creed, in all their remorseless logic. Called by God to labour in his vineyard, he has within himself a principle at once of energy and of order, which makes him irresistible both in war and in the struggles of commerce. (Tawney, 1926/1954: 229)

The Bible provided a primary and enduring basis for this Puritan ethos, most especially St Paul's directive that 'he who does not work, neither shall he eat' (Second Thessalonians 3:10) and the Old Testament description of a wife of noble character as one who 'watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness' (Proverbs 31:27). The Puritan interpretation of the Pauline principle – that an unwillingness to work is symptomatic of the absence of the state of Grace – was a clear departure from medieval Church doctrine. In particular, it ran counter to the interpretation of Thomas Aquinas, who saw work as necessary only

> for the preservation of the life of the individual and the community. Where this purpose is missing, the validity of the command ceases along with it. It applies only to mankind in general, not to each individual. It does not apply to anyone who can live off his possessions without having to work, and similarly, of course, contemplation as a spiritual form of work for the Kingdom of God is outside the scope of the command in its literal interpretation. (Weber, 1930/2002: 106-7)

More broadly, the Catholic interpretation of Aquinas was that asceticism is properly contained (within, say, the monastic context) and that it need not be extended into all aspects of everyone's everyday life.

While Puritanism and Protestantism originated in Europe, it never became hegemonic on that continent because of the mix of religious beliefs. (It is notable that industry and Calvinism both flourished in Scotland during the 18th century.) In contrast to Europe, various forms of Protestantism – each influenced, to a greater or lesser degree by Puritan and Lutheran views on work – were hegemonic in the United States from the time the first colonies were established in the 17th century until the religious milieu was diluted by new waves of immigration in the late 19th century.

The emerging managerial class in the late 19th century appropriated and promulgated a limited set of Protestant beliefs that did not include theological and doctrinal beliefs about the Bible, God, salvation, hell, Church authority and the like. Thus, it is necessary to distinguish a *secular* Protestant belief system, and within this we are solely interested

in beliefs about work and play. Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) both influenced and manifested this transition to secular beliefs. Franklin's father converted to Puritanism in the 1670s, and while Franklin moved away from much of the Puritan dogma during his life, he retained a commitment to the more secular aspects of Puritanism, most notably its commitment to hard work. Franklin profoundly influenced not only subsequent generations of Americans, but also Karl Marx who posited that human identity is founded on work, based on Franklin's definition of man as a tool-making animal (Marx, 1867/1992: 286). And while workers began to organise in England in the 1860s and 1870s, in the US such organisation only began to happen in the 1890s, by which time a new managerial class had emerged (Bendix, 1956/1963).

When the theological aspects are decanted out of Protestantism, what remains is an ethic that celebrates thrift, respect for enquiry, individualism tempered by a willingness to subordinate personal interests to a concept of the greater good, and an enthusiasm for mechanical and managerial skills. Not only did this ethic create the conditions for American business success, but, as Hopper and Hopper (2007) describe in their historical study of the link between Protestantism and American managerial culture, it infused the discipline of management. This infusion occurred not least because the vast majority of the US population was Protestant at that time. For instance, in 1850, only 5% of the US population was Catholic, while there are only 3 Catholics among the 204 individuals commonly identified as the 'Founding Fathers of the United States' (Anon, 2005).

Chandler (1965) identifies the US railway industry in the mid-19th century as an early and primary site of management innovation, and he also identifies Daniel Craig McCallum (1815-1878) as one of its first management pioneers. McCallum is commonly credited with inventing the multidivisional corporation and was an early proponent of organization charts and other management innovations. Born in Scotland, his Calvinist beliefs found expression in his understandings of work and management: two of his Six Principles of Management 'sounded like something from the Shorter Cathechism of the Calvinist Church of Scotland' (Hopper and Hopper, 2007: 68). He was, at all times, 'a dour Calvinist' (*ibid*. p. 69), and when he retired, he continued to celebrate self-abnegation and the work ethic in his poetry ('work on while yet the sun doth shine, thou man of strength and will').

The workshop management movement was a second important site of management innovation in the late 19th century, and its focus on eliminating waste sat easily with a Protestant ethic that advocated thrift as an important virtue. Frederick Taylor (a Unitarian from Quaker stock) was the leading figure in this movement, and one indication of his focus is the fact that the word 'work' (and its variants) occurs 798 times in his foundational text, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (Taylor, 1911/2010), while the word 'play' occurs only four times.

And play as bad…

Thanks to Max Weber, there is a well-developed understanding of the Protestant work ethic and its connection with capitalism. What is less explored is the parallel disdain for

play that became embedded, especially in late 19th century America, in the collective psyche of the emerging discipline of management studies. At one level, it is clear that if work is good, then its opposite, play, must necessarily be bad, but the longer history of this idea warrants analysis. This history goes at least as far back as Plato who considered that play was a distraction from the real world of forms and was therefore inappropriate for the ruling elite. In his *Ethics*, Artistotle routinely lumped children – the quintessential players – with brutes and animals, as indeed did Thomas Aquinas in the late 13th century when he observed, 'But children and dumb animals, in whom there is no virtue, seek pleasure: whereas the man who is master of himself does not' (Aquinas, 2006: Q.34). And the long history of contempt for not working is also captured in the proverb, 'An idle brain is the devil's workshop' which goes back to at least Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee* in the 14th century.

The idea of resting from work has a long history, as illustrated by the institutionalisation of a rest day in many religions, based on the idea that recreation was needed to rejuvenate the body and soul. However, by the 16th century there was a growing disdain for play (as distinct from rest). In 1559, the Spanish Franciscan Francisco de Alcocer attempted to forbid or at least limit pastimes and such attempts became more prevalent as Puritan ideas took hold (Burke, 1995). In 1583, the English Puritan Philip Stubbes railed against most forms of game-playing and pastimes, especially those taking place on the Sabbath. In 1628, the English Puritan minister John Robison stated, in a frequently cited manual on childrearing, that,

> there is in all children, though not alike, a stubbornness, and stoutness of mind arising from their natural pride, which must in the first place be broken and beaten down; that so the foundation of their education being laid in humility and tractableness. (quoted in Daniels [1991: 19])

As Tawney put it:

> Conscious that he is but a stranger and pilgrim, hurrying from this transitory life to a life to come [the Puritan] turns with almost physical horror from the vanities… Amusement, books, even intercourse with friends, must, if need be, be cast aside; for it is better to enter into eternal life halt and maimed than having two eyes to be cast into eternal fire. (Tawney, 1926/1954: 166)

Specifically, the Puritans disapproved of activities that were exclusively aimed at providing or enhancing enjoyment, such as sports, acting and theatre, which they considered sinful (Brailsford, 1975; Scitovsky, 1978). Thus, by the 1640s and 1650s, theatres and playhouses were being closed across England. In America, the influence of the Puritans was especially strong, as de Tocqueville observed:

> The Puritans who founded the American republics were not only enemies to amusements, but they professed an especial abhorrence for the stage. They considered it as an abominable pastime; and as long as their principles prevailed with undivided sway, scenic performances were wholly unknown amongst them. These opinions of the first fathers of the colony have left very deep marks on the minds of their descendants. (De Tocqueville, 1835/2003: 454)

At the same time, the Puritans did not equate all enjoyable actions with sin, as long as such actions

> remain subordinate to their utility; they become reprehensible as soon as they are practiced for their delectability alone. The people of God are free to use the things of this life... for their

> convenience and comfort ; but yet he hath set bounds to this liberty, that it may not degenerate into licentiousness. (The Puritan Minister Joshua Mood [1633-1697] quoted in Daniels [1991: 13])

Or, as the Quaker William Penn (1644–1718) put it, 'The best recreation is to do good' (Penn 1682/2001: 155). This concern about putting limits on play and non-work is a common theme underpinning temperance movements of all sorts. For instance, writing in 1892, Engles observed that

> Next to intemperance in enjoyment of intoxicating liquor, one of the principal faults of English working men is sexual licence….[T]he working-men, in order to get something out of life, concentrate their whole energy upon these two enjoyments, carry them to excess, surrender to them in the most unbridled manner. (Engels, 1845/2009: 128)

The implication of this is that non-working time, or play-time, should be properly regulated and controlled. Specifically, sexuality had to be eradicated from the workplace, and indeed it was (Burrell, 1984). One collateral effect of these efforts was that play, which is semantically linked with sexuality, was also expelled, making work 'deludified' as well as desexualised.

While the Puritan strict aversion to play diminished somewhat during the nineteenth century, a common Victorian understanding was that play, if it wasn't sinful, was certainly not good. For instance, Yale banned all forms of football in 1860 with Harvard following suit in 1861, while Schiller (1875) considered play 'to be the aimless expenditure of exuberant energy' (quoted in Linder et al., 2001: 2). This contempt for play was also consistent with the rise of utilitarian philosophy during the nineteenth century which took the view that '[o]nly useful activity is valuable, meaningful moral. Activity that is not clearly, concretely useful to oneself or to others is worthless, meaningless, immoral' (Kerr, 1962: 52). Play, in this frame, sits properly in the latter category. In *The Decline of Pleasure*, Kerr (1962) attributes the rise of utilitarianism to the usual suspects like Bentham and Mill, but also to people like William Stanley Jevons who, in 1862, crystallised the philosophy that 'value depends entirely upon utility' (Kerr, 1962: 48). Of course utilitarianism was resisted by the likes of Oscar Wilde who declared that, 'We live in an age of the overworked, and the under-educated; the age in which people are so industrious that they become absolutely stupid' (Wilde, 1891/2004: 85). But, in Kerr's view, 'These flashes of bravado are rockets fired by the damned as they cheerfully go down with the ship' (Kerr, 1962: 93).

The notion that work was good and play bad was reinforced during the 19th century as industrialisation worked to separate work and play into opposing categories, or 'splitting' to use Klein's language. As Burke put it:

> The modern distinction between the ideas of work and leisure, like the regular alternation of work and leisure, was a product of industrial capitalism…and so the very idea of a history of leisure before the industrial revolution is an anachronism. (Burke, 1995: 137)

Separating work and non-work (whether this be leisure or play) continued throughout the nineteenth century and indeed into the twentieth. And the emerging discourse of management played its part in this labour of division, with Frederick Taylor (1911/2010: 68) famously saying that, 'It is a matter of ordinary common sense to plan working hours so that the workers can really "work while they work" and "play while

they play," and not mix the two.' Even in 1922 Henry Ford still felt it necessary to assert the division:

> When we are at work we ought to be at work. When we are at play we ought to be at play. There is no use trying to mix the two. The sole object ought to be to get the work done and to get paid for it. When the work is done, then play can come, but not before. (Ford, 1922/2006: 106)

Ford's distinction between play and work reflected wider bourgeois attitudes of the time, and indeed the distinction pops up in other domains around this period. For instance, writing in 1905, Freud distinguished between the 'pleasure principle' (the notion that people seek pleasure and avoid pain) and the 'reality principle' (the suspension of gratification and the endurance of pain because of the obstacles of reality) and, crucially, identified play with the former and work with the latter. For him, play was wish fulfilment through fantasy, and while this was necessary during childhood, in his view it was inappropriate for adults (Freud, 1905/1952; Riesman, 1950).

Thus, what we find it the late 19th century, and most specifically in the Eastern United States where the discipline of management was emerging, was the idea of work being idealised as a 'good object' with its opposite, play, idealised as a 'bad object'. In effect, this became at least analogous to Klein's 'paranoid schizoid' position. Importantly, Klein saw this position as an essential feature of the young child's life, but which was present at all times thereafter and might be reactivated at any time. Similarly with the group, in this case the group of individuals that constitute the emerging discipline of management studies: Their paranoid-schizoid position is centred on idealising work as good and play as bad, and continues to influence long after the discipline's 'birth'. As Greer put it in discussing the Protestant Work Ethic, 'We have been brainwashed into believing there is a split between work and play. Work is productive and good; fun accomplishes nothing and is often evil' (Greer, 1975: 165). Just as the 'normal' child moves, over time, from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position, so it is with disciplines. The next section examines how this move was manifest in the case of management studies.

Moving to the depressive position

If the 'paranoid-schizoid' position is characterised by hyper-anxiety, splitting, omnipotence, and idealisation, in the 'depressive position' the child comes to tolerate some of its own previously projected feelings, especially its feelings of aggression and envy. As self-awareness emerges, the infant comes to recognise her own capacity for destruction and her own vulnerabilities. Instead of a world that is split into good and bad and within which omnipotent forces roam, the depressive position is characterised by an acceptance of the complexity and ambiguity of the external world. Most importantly, the infant comes to understand the 'mother', both internally and externally, as constituted by a loved 'good' and a hated 'bad' breast. And with the loss of omnipotence, comes a different set of anxieties; for instance, while the paranoid-schizoid state is powered by destructive urges, the depressive position is built on feelings of guilt. The term 'position' is important, because it emphasises how these states are not phases or stage, but are instead the primary bases for the psyche and the individual will oscillate between both positions throughout life. The theory also

provides an understanding of some mental 'illnesses' as an abnormal pre-disposition to one or other of the positions.

Bion used Klein's work to present an original and perceptive understanding of how *groups* work. His 'basic assumption' theory posits three different modes of group behaviour: Fight/Flight, Dependency, and Pairing. Gould (1997) takes this a step further, arguing that Fight/Flight corresponds with the paranoid-schizoid position, Dependency with the depressive position, and Pairing with the Oedipus Complex. This opens the intriguing possibility that these positions and modes of group behaviour also provide an insightful way of thinking about the nature and evolution of disciplines (which of course start as small groups and then become bigger groups). Thus, Klein's two positions presents an interesting take on how the discipline of management studies engaged with the work-play dichotomy since its birth in the late nineteenth century. Specifically, the depressive position is characterised as a move away from the idealisation of work as good and play as bad, to a more nuanced, ambiguous understanding of the concepts.

This more nuanced view drew in part on classical understandings of work, going back to the ancient Greeks, who distinguished between physical labour, which was demeaning and servile, and thinking work which was valuable and valorised. For instance, Aristotle makes it clear that it would be 'degrading' for the master to perform or even know how to perform the menial duties of 'handicraftsmen, who, as their name signifies, live by the labour of their hands' (Aristotle, 2008: 1277). This disdain for manual work is also evident in the etymology of the Greek word for work, *ponos*, which also means 'pain', while the Greek god, Ponos, is the god of hard labour and toil. Likewise, the Judaeo-Christian tradition depicts work negatively as something that humans are condemned to do to atone for Adam's sin: 'cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life' (Genesis 3:17). These ancient themes re-emerged in the Enlightenment, during which reason and cognition – thinking work – again came to be celebrated, implicitly, in opposition to manual work, which was associated with toil and pain. Moreover, if utilitarianism depicts humans as pleasure-seeking and pain-avoiding creatures, then work must be, according to Locke (1632-1704) 'against nature' (quoted in Thomas, 1999: 10), or, as Bentham put it in the seventeenth century, 'In so far as *labour* is taken in its proper sense, *love of labour* is a contradiction in terms' (Bentham, 1843/2005: 214, original emphasis).

These ideas also ran through the influential writings of Marx and Engels, who condemned the brutalizing and alienating nature of factory work in the mid-19th century. Building on Hegel and Franklin's thinking, Marx posited that human identity is founded on work: 'The use and fabrication of instruments of labour, although existing in the germ among certain species of animals, is specifically characteristic of the human labour-process, and Franklin therefore defines man as a tool-making animal' (Marx, 1867/1992: 286). Man, for Marx, is *homo faber*, man the worker (retaining the gendered language for consistency). Building on this position that labour is foundational to human identity, he then argues that it is experienced as a torment under the capitalist system, which alienates the worker from the product of his or her labour. Work can and should be fulfilling, but capitalism turns work into something that is unwanted, and because of this work comes to be interpreted in instrumental ways, as merely a (painful)

means to an end rather than an end in itself. Under capitalism, the product of the worker becomes 'alien to him and ... stands opposed to him as an autonomous power. The life which he has given to the object sets itself against him as an alien and hostile force' (Marx, 1844/1964: 123). Moreover, this process of alienation has a significance that goes far beyond merely signifying his oppression. Rather, this process degrades the very thing that separates us from animals; dehumanizes us, degrades us to the depths of our souls. For Marx, this subordination to the object destroys man's spiritual life, serving to

> mutilate the worker into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy the content of work by his agony, and alienate him from the spiritual potentialities of the labour process. (Marx quoted in Giddens, 1971: 57)

However, while Marx's writings were influential in Europe, they made little if any impact on the emerging discourse of management studies, and, if anything, were seen to be in opposition to the discipline's core beliefs.

Marx wrote very little about play and non-work, and indeed the general disdain for play is evidenced by the paucity of writing about it in the early twentieth century. Yet, play's foundational importance is a theme that appears in the writings of some of the major figures in twentieth century sociology, such as Simmel, Mead and Goffman. Even though Simmel didn't expound at length on the topic, he did see the primary process of society as, what he terms, 'sociability', which he argues is most manifest in play and in art. Sociability, he says, is the 'play-form of association' and like play 'sociability in its pure form has no ulterior end, no content, no result outside itself' (Simmel and Hughes, 1910/1949: 255). Sociability is the seemingly 'idle', 'pointless' interaction for its own sake. It is society 'idling' in the very important sense of 'ticking over': It is its ground tone; its basic, normal running order. Far from being a trivial or superfluous phenomenon, sociability turns out to be the very essence, the irreducible principle of society as such. George Mead, another major figure in twentieth-century sociology and a contemporary of Simmel, also centred his understanding of the social world on play and games. For him, when a child plays she is observing and taking different adult roles, whether this be police officer, nurse, teacher, doctor or robber (Mead and Morris, 1934/1974: 150–60). In play-acting, the child is imagining herself as if she was another, and through doing so builds an understanding of both self and other and the relationship between both. This evolves further in the 'game stage' where the child develops a more sophisticated understanding of the self, as she comes to understand the network of relationships and roles that exist simultaneously, and, perhaps more importantly, those potential roles that exist asynchronously in her world of fantasy and imagination. Crucially, the game requires her to imagine playing the possible roles of a network of players and to play out, in her mind, the potential narrative that might, or might not, come to pass. Mead very much influenced Erving Goffman who built on the idea that play is at the very foundation of organization in his classic study, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1956). In Goffman's dramaturgical paradigm, organizations are the institutionalized performances of actors engaged in dramatic roles. The individual person learns to assume a mask, or masks, that correspond to various social and organizational parts that they play. A carpenter – who is also a soccer coach, a father of five, the chairman of a tenants' association, a Samaritans volunteer and a weekend homosexual – wears these different masks, and many others besides. The anthropological universality of this is evidenced even etymologically, in that the word

'person' is derived from the Latin word *persona,* meaning 'mask'. The organization with its numerous roles – managerial, professional, service and functionary – is already prescribed for the performance, in terms of its settings, expressive apparatus, scripted roles, and the organizationally competent member is the person who, once appropriately socialized and rehearsed, enacts the performance by playing his or her part.

However, perhaps the most influential text on play was written by Huizinga who, in his seminal book *Homo Ludens,* argued against Victorian understandings of play and instead made the case that play was central to understanding culture and indeed necessary for civilization. Rather than seeing play as trivial, Huizinga argued that we should treat play seriously, because, at heart, it is elementary to the human (and animal) condition; for him, war, religion, sports and the arts are all forms of play. Huizinga begins his book with the bold statement that play is older – and hence more fundamental – than culture because animals also play. Play, for Huizinga, is essential, primordial and foundational: 'Play cannot be denied. You can deny, if you like, nearly all abstractions: justice, beauty, truth, goodness, mind, God. You can deny seriousness, but not play' (Huizinga, 1955: 3). More recently, Brian Sutton-Smith, another major scholar of play, argues that play is primordial because advanced mammals use play to prepare and rehearse for complex future social scenarios (Sutton-Smith, 1997).

What is important about each of these contributions is that they problematise the notion that work is good and play is bad, substituting a more ambiguous, confused understanding of these categories. As Wilensky put it in 1960, 'whatever split between labour and leisure industrialisation brought in the past, modern society moves now toward a fusion of the two: work, it is said, is becoming more like play, and play more like work' (Wilensky, 1960: 546). However, when we turn to the field of management studies, we find that the social theory writings on play have had relatively little impact, at least until recently. For instance, Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* was only cited twenty-seven times by articles in Management, Business or Economics, out of a total of 939 citations (ISI Web of Knowledge search, November 2010). Indeed, up until relatively recently, management studies has had little time for play, which we can attribute to the enduring valorization of work and the discipline's paranoid-schizoid position. This lack of interest is perhaps symptomatic of Rehn's (2008) observation that 'an important part of the management scholar's self-identity is the capacity to position his or her research in a way that conveys seriousness, austere scholarship and the most po-faced interpretations possible of organizational events'. If this is the case, then the study of play is largely off-limits for management academics, whose work involves the study of work (not play).

But management studies has certainly taken a turn towards play in recent years. For example, there has been a move from hierarchical, rationally organized management structures to more informal and playful forms. Some organizations have institutionalized play times and fun times, while others, like Southwest and IDEO, have identified 'play' or 'nonwork' as central to their organizational culture (Costea, et al. 2005). This is how the design consultancy, IDEO, puts it on its website:

> At IDEO, we believe in the power of play. It is an essential part of our approach: We use playfulness to design fun, inspiring experiences for kids (toys, games, and digital entertainment)

and to bring elements of delight to more "serious" experiences for adults (cars, food, health, finance, and more). (IDEO, n.d.)

Google is also well known for infusing play into the work of 'Googlers', where the work environment includes: 'foosball, pool tables, volleyball courts, assorted video games, pianos, ping pong tables, and gyms that offer yoga and dance classes' (Google, n.d.). Google's '20% time' scheme (a variant on a similar scheme operated by 3M in the 1950s) allows employees to spend one day per week working on projects of their own choosing. Other organizations operate similar 'free time' schemes where employees are encouraged to play with new ideas or turn work projects into play. This is especially the case in the huge gaming industry where it is common to hire employees whose passions and hobbies match the business endeavour (Kelley and Littman, 2001), creating a 'labour of fun' where the meaning of work and play is changed to the point that they 'may soon become indistinguishable from one another' (Yee, 2006: 68).

The observation that animals stop playing if they are unwell provides one rationale for infusing play into work. From this perspective, the absence of play may be a symptom of a 'sick' business: If all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, then it's not what we want for GE either. A more cynical interpretation is that bringing play into work is but a further instance of the colonization of the 'life world' by the instrumental rationality of bureaucracies and market forces (Deetz, 1992; Habermas, 1989). Accordingly, the inclusion of leisure and non-work elements in the workplace is little more than a corporate device to keep employees at work for longer. Thus, the traditional divide between work and non-work is especially problematic in those organizations that are 'greedy' for employee commitment, where, as Fleming and Spicer (2004: 75) found in their study of such contexts, 'you can checkout anytime, but you can never leave'. Of course employees are awake to this logic, which is why clumsy managerial attempts to make work more playful may be seen through and prove to be counter-productive (Fleming, 2005). Paradoxically, we find that play emerges in even the most inhospitable and unsavoury work environments, as Roy (1958) illustrated in his seminal study. Roy quotes Henri de Man, who, in 1927, observed that even in Taylor's factory system it was 'psychologically impossible to deprive any kind of work of all its positive emotional elements…the instinct for play and the creative impulse' (Roy, 1958: 160).

The importance and value of play is a recurring theme in management writings about creativity. Here, the intellectual tradition goes back at least far as Schiller's (1759-1805) notion of *Spieltrieb*, the play drive that unifies form and substance through artistic beauty, as well as to his enduring aphorism that 'Man only plays when in the full meaning of the word he is a man, and *he is only wholly Man when he is playing*' (Schiller, 1794/2004: 80, original emphasis). Similarly, Freud's exploration of the connection between children's play, phantasy and creativity in his short essay, *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming* (Freud, 1908) has been influential in forging an intrinsic link between imagination and play, because new forms of identity and collective behaviour can – and indeed must – be imagined in play. This link between imagination and play is developed most explicitly by Vygotsky who posits, in *Mind in Society*, that 'play seems to be invented at the point when the child begins to experience unrealizable tendencies' (1978: 93). The psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi also studied the link between play and creativity, and emphasized the autotelic nature of play and

creative/artistic activity, where the direction of behaviour is completely inwards, onto the very essence of the activity itself. He introduced the term 'flow' to describe these playful, creative experiences and, in due course, produced a large number of publications on the topic, most notably *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990/2008) and *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety: Experiencing Flow in Work and Play* (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). In time, this stream of research and writing influenced the creativity literature in management studies, usually through making the argument that productive, creative workplaces should be fun and playful. Typical of this body of work are books such as Schrage (2000), *Serious Play: How the World's Best Companies Simulate to Innovate*, Pinault (2004), *The Play Zone: Unlock Your Creative Genius and Connect with Consumers*, and Dodgson et al. (2005), *Think, Play, Do: Technology, Innovation, and Organization*, which argue that corporations should make extensive use of play, toys, models, prototypes and simulations to stimulate creativity. This growing literature has prompted and reflected the incorporation of fun, frivolity and play into everyday working life, as exemplified by the popularity of team-building exercises, away days, dress-down days, office gyms, etc. While this literature has certainly grown, it is theoretically light, probably because play is such an elusive and ambiguous concept, and because the literature relies on 'several untheorised and untested assumptions' (Owler et al., 2010: 348).

Shifting positions

The depressive position is characterised by a blurring of the paranoid-schizoid idealisations, as what were seen as opposites come to be understood in a more nuanced, ambiguous way. This focuses our attention on the evolving *relationship* between the concepts of work and play, especially in more recent conversations within the discipline of management studies. In this section of the paper I map out seven different modes through which this relationship can be seen.

First, play is understood as an *extension of work*. Here, the idea is that the values and practices of work should be extended into the domain of play. Play, then, should be serious, and it is proper to extend the work ethic of the factory to ludic domains, like professional (and indeed amateur) sports. Play, even recreation, should be organised, managed and subject to the managerial technologies and aspirations that diffuse out from the world of work. This category also includes the 'work hard/play hard' culture where the boundaries of work and play are blurred, but where play always serves the values of work (Fleming, 2005; Meyer 2010).

Second, play is understood as *relief from work*. Here, the division between work and play, which was a product of industrialisation, is retained, with play being understood as recreation *qua* rejuvenation. The extensive literature on work-life balance sits easily within this category. If work is idealised as good and play as bad in the paranoid-schizoid position, then this mode draws on an alternative view of work as an unpleasant, painful toil (a view that was excluded from early management discourse).

Third, play is understood as *resistance to work*. We find this perspective in Roy's (1958) seminal study of 'banana time', where workers use play to subvert the monotony

of factory work. Similar to the second mode, work is seen as unpleasant and painful, but in this case play occurs *within* rather than outside of work. In this mode, workers use play to reclaim and assert their identity when work works to diminish meaning. In this mode, play can also be an important form of organizational misbehaviour (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999).

Fourth, play is understood as the *usurpation of work*. Here I draw on Sørensen and Spoelstra's (2012) insight that play can perform an element of what would usually be considered the job of the organisation, but without the (formal) organisation's consent. In such situations, play usurps work at the limit of work's ability to organise, and through doing so it exposes the inabilities of the formal work organisation. In ways, this is similar to the notion of play as an extension of work, with the crucial distinction that it occurs outside of formal managerial discourse.

Fifth, play and work may be understood as *autonomous categories*. Play is an autotelic activity, meaning that the direction of behaviour is completely inwards, onto the very essence of the activity itself. Play is a form of activity engaged in solely for its own sake; it has no end other than itself, or meaning exterior to itself, or ulterior motive outside of its own terms of reference. Play, then, is axiomatically incommensurable with work. From this perspective, attempts to integrate work and play – such as Stadler, et al.'s (2009) notion of 'serious play' – are flawed because the two concepts are categorically distinct.

Sixth, play and work may be understood as *integrating categories*. In this case, while the distinction between work and play is retained (play focusing on emotions and process, work focusing on effectiveness and end product), these categories are integrated in the work setting. For instance, using MacIntyre's (1981/1984) language, practices involve both internal goods (associated with the performance or play dimension) and external goods (associated with the measured or work output). Alternatively, the ceremonial aspects of work may be seen as manifestations of play (building on Turner's [1969] link between ritual and play) (Dandridge, 1986).

Seventh, work may be understood as an *epiphenomenon of play*. The enduring and foundational nature of the paranoid-schizoid position within managerial discourse, means that work is good and play is, if not considered bad, evaluated in terms of its potential usefulness to work. This final mode inverts that logic, privileging play and seeing work as a necessary activity but always within an autotelic world of play, where the play logic, or the play ethic (Kane, 2005), is primary. A good example of this is Christo and Jeanne-Claude's 'Running Fence' project, which consisted of 39 km of 5.5m high fencing erected in northern California in 1976 and which was removed, as planned, only 14 days after it was completed. As a significant construction project it required work, organisation and management, but these were at all times conducted within the play logic that underpinned the endeavour.

Each of these modes (except, perhaps, the fifth mode) questions and problematises the paranoid-schizoid idealisation of work and play within the discipline of management studies, and thus are best seen as articulations of the depressive condition.

Endings: Dying to play

This paper has used Melanie Klein's concepts of the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive positions, as developed by Bion, to frame our understanding of the evolution of management studies as a discipline/group, with a particular focus on the evolving relationship between the concepts of work and play. This perspective provides a useful and playful alternative to other histories of the discipline, such as the well-known accounts by Barley and Kunda (1992) and Eastman and Bailey (1998). While I have drawn loosely on Klein's ideas, there is much scope to use her and Bion's wider conceptual frames to analyse the group dynamics of this and other disciplines.

It is my contention that the originary splitting and idealisation of work=good and play=bad is foundational to the discipline, and therefore provides a deep and enduring basis for analysing management theory and practice. Looking forward, we can decipher at least three possible trajectories. First, as discussed above, the old notion of work=good and play=bad has been problematized in contemporary writings about organizations, indicating that the discipline has moved from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position where categories and understandings are more blurred and ambiguous. A second trajectory is that the contemporary engagement with play has reached the point where we now have a radical reversal of the original position; in short, work=bad and play=good. A third trajectory takes the opposite tack, arguing that the contemporary interest in play is fragmented and marginal, and that the paranoid-schizoid position remains the discipline's default position. Using Klein's language, we can say that the paranoid-schizoid position continues to dominate, and ongoing attempts to rescue play, or to bring play back in, are always filtered through this primary semantic frame.

There are also two other possible trajectories. The fourth one recognises that while Klein's framework can be usefully applied to groups and disciplines, this is inherently limited, principally because groups can fragment in a way that is impossible for individuals. Thus, it is possible, indeed probable, that the discipline of management studies splits, or has split, into different sub-disciplines with each following a different trajectory. For instance, a 'European' and an 'American' tradition in management and organization studies can be distinguished (for discussion on these traditions, see the papers in *Organization Studies* 2010, 31(6)) and indeed different traditions within Europe can also be identified (Üsdiken, 2010), though epistemology or methodology usually provide the basis for differentiating between these traditions, rather than different understandings of work and play.

Finally, a fifth trajectory applies another psychoanalytic concept, the idea of the 'death instinct', to the discipline itself. Here, the argument is that the only way to truly escape the paranoid-schizoid state is to, well, die. And indeed there are signs that the discipline's death instinct is coming to the fore: Witness Jacques observation that 'the last period of great vitality in organisation studies was the 1950s, stretching into the late 1960s. What has followed has increasingly been, to borrow an image from Yeats, the rattle of pebbles under a receding wave' (Jacques, 2004: 62). Similarly Davis and Marquis, in their review of the field of organisation theory, observe that

> With corporations, there is no there there – they are simply legal devices with useful properties for raising science… By some accounts, the imposing objects of organization theory have evaporated. No longer queen, organization theory may be more like the phrenology of the social sciences. (Davis and Marquis, 2005: 332)

Like Jacques (and Lounsbury and Ventresca [2002] and Levinthal [2010]), they look back with fondness to the sociological approach to organisations of the 1950s, when organizations were seen as sites of power struggles rather than objects of theory in their own right. Jones and Böhm's (2004) take this the next step and assert that 'Organization Studies Does Not Exist', and that the scholars that now constitute the discipline hide

> a deeper fear of actually confronting the thing that is perhaps most in need of theoretical reflection, which is, that the very thing they hope to speak of has reached the point of no return. After Burrell and Morgan, and others, had opened it up, organization studies was burst asunder (with a little whimpering here and there as it gasped for its last breath). (Jones and Böhm, 2004: 2)

Wishing for the end of one's discipline sounds like turkeys voting for Christmas. But Christmas does happen and the lives of turkeys, individuals and disciplines do end. And if disciplines are largely defined by their beginnings, it is important that we, the inheritors, now contemplate its end. Then, perhaps, we can truly play (and work).

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