



Reviews Section

Knowledge Sharing Review

The Use of History in Business and Management, and Some Implications for Management Learning

Socializing Capital: The Rise of the Large Industrial Corporation in America

W.G. ROY. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997. 338 pp. £40 (hbk), £11.95 (pbk). ISBN 0691043531 (hbk), 069101034X (pbk)

Region and Strategy in Britain and Japan: Business in Lancashire and Kansai 1890–1990

D.A. FARNIE, T. NAKAOKA, D.J. JEREMY, J.F. WILSON and T. ABÉ (eds)

Chapter 8, 'Management Education in Japan and the United Kingdom: Regional Dimensions'

J. F. WILSON and T. NISHIZAWA. London, Routledge, 2000. 352 pp. £65 (hbk). ISBN 0415203171

The Americanisation of European Business

M. KIPPING and O. BJARNAR. London, Routledge, 1998. 235 pp. £60 (hbk). ISBN 0415171911

Birth of the Multinational: 2000 Years of Ancient History

K. MOORE and D. LEWIS. Copenhagen, Copenhagen Business School Press, 1999. 341 pp. £29 (hbk). ISBN 8716134680

'[H]istory and anthropology are enough to show that there are no unwobbling pivots, and that seeking objectivity is just a matter of getting as much intersubjective agreement as you can manage.' (Rorty, 1992: 149)

'[I]t is essential for historians to defend the foundations of their discipline: the supremacy of evidence. If their texts are fictitious, as in some sense they are, being literary compositions, the raw material of these fictions is verifiable fact.' (Hobsbawm, 1997: 271–2)

Introduction: History and Learning

In 1999 the then Reviews Editor of *Management Learning*, Elena Antonacopoulou, described three new aspects to the reviews section of the journal. These categories were *knowledge-sharing*, *reflective* and *revisiting* reviews. My purpose here is chiefly knowledge-sharing, in that the review will demonstrate that the 'seemingly distant' topic of history can 'provide new ways of articulating and understanding the learning process and its outcomes' (Antonacopoulou, 1999: 83). In addition, however, as reviewing books often confronts the reviewer with new and different ways of seeing, this review will also include some reflection. As will become apparent, this seemingly disparate and unassuming collection of economic/business history texts has taught me much. It has not come from what the books

are about necessarily (the birth of corporations, Japanese and British management education, the American influence on European business practices and management education, and ancient economies), but more from the different academic approaches to history demonstrated within them. Hopefully some of this personal learning will be instructive in exploring how we consider the history of management and learning in organizations, and the choices involved in adopting historical approaches to organizations more generally, in order that we might better educate our students.

In attempting this I will first discuss some contemporary historiographical issues in order to position various approaches to history within general social science debates (which also take place in our own fields). These different approaches to the history of business, management and organizations can be classified for the purposes of this essay into three 'types' (business and economic, management ideas and education, general use in business and management). The books are then reviewed, and in addition briefly assessed in relation to their 'type' and their historiographical positions. Given the 'knowledge-sharing' purpose of the review—working with the assumption that things historical are not well known to the majority of *Management Learning* readers—the classification scheme and the historiographical debate are only intended as indications of the scope of the various debates and approaches. In the concluding section I construct a brief argument, partly drawing upon the 'postmodern' themes introduced in the historiographical section and the review books, which suggests that a de facto colonization of history by business studies may be taking place. Some implications for management educators are finally considered.

Different Aspects of the Use of History in Business and Management

There are various areas of historical scholarly work which focus upon business, management and organizations. These can be crudely catalogued for the purposes of this review into (a) economic/business history, (b) the history of management, management ideas and management education, and (c) other general uses of 'history' in business and management, including critical management and organization studies. The aim of this brief survey is not comprehensiveness, but merely to outline a map of the territory. Before considering how these different fields approach history it is worth spending a moment considering some broader historical debates. An outline of these debates is necessary given that in the conclusion I argue that some of the aspects of post or late modernity (for instance, increasing specialization of knowledge, and academic and professional fragmentation) might contribute to a proliferation of differentiated, conflicting, but 'gated' views of the past. Moreover, and as I explore further in the conclusion, given the growth and strength of business studies, the histories it produces (as demonstrated in the book reviews) might succeed in these conflicts and hence may 'colonize' the past, replacing other histories.

*Historical Turns*¹

History is essentially divided and joined together by the same epistemological and ontological debates prevalent in most of the humanities and social sciences. It is

not surprising therefore that many of the arguments about postmodernism² in history journals such as *Past and Present*, *History and Theory* and *Social History* (collected in Jenkins, 1997) should have also influenced organizational and management studies (Cooke, 1999 and Rowlinson and Procter, 1999 are just two examples). From even a cursory glance at postmodernism's own historical travels and turns, it would seem that along with art, architecture, literary and cultural studies, the theory of history seems to be a key disciplinary site of origin. Key thinkers such as Barthes, Foucault, White and Rorty have all discussed the past in their philosophies.

Grayling has recently demonstrated the controversy that these writers have generated among historians by asking the following question: 'But what is history? There is ambiguity in the very name. "History" can either mean past events, or writings about past events. But what if the former is a creation of the latter? The past, after all, has ceased to exist' (*Guardian*, 15 January 2000). That is, that there is no real objective past, only what is said in the present about the past. Chief of the postmodern history theorists is Keith Jenkins (1991, 1995, 1997). Jenkins has succeeded in distilling a wide range of philosophical and historiographical writing. The central themes of the postmodern critique of history he espouses are that both the upper-case Histories of the ideological meta-narratives and the lower-case 'objective' and 'neutral' histories cannot be seen as anything more than particular interpretations which exist among many others.

Like the *Historikerstreit* (the historian's controversy, or 'Battle of the Historians', over the 'uniqueness and comparability of the Holocaust') of the mid-1980s, postmodernism can be seen as 'indicative ... of new modes of attempting to assimilate the past to present political consciousness' (Fulbrook, 1991: 305). Both debates have been 'characterized by a high degree of acrimony, mud slinging, misrepresentation and misquotation' (p. 305). The *Historikerstreit*, which produced both invective and a resurgent dynamism in history, was the product of a politically and economically resurgent Germany. Similarly, the political and economic failures of meta-ideologies of Marxism and neo-liberalism (Hobsbawm, 1994: 563–4) may have been a driving force behind the tendency to postmodernism in history. Thus in this light postmodernism is itself a meta-narrative of sorts, and similarly a product of its time (Evans, 1997: 13).

Much of what passes for debate between the proponents and opponents of postmodernism seems to Evans to be a 'dialogue of the deaf' (1997: 11). Moreover, the aggressiveness of this non-debate is aptly described by Eley and Nield, who suggest that 'A theoretical *hauteur* instructs a redoubt of methodological conservatism, and the latter shouts defiantly back. Between the two lies silence, a barrier that in these tones cannot be crossed' (1995, cited in Evans, 1997: 8; and Jenkins, 1997: 367). Having read the unusually strident and evangelical Jenkins, he would appear to be the *hauteur* in question (balance and reasonableness of course being words in the language of objectivist discourse). For my part, I agree with Evans when he implies that whatever the impossibilities of attaining truly objective knowledge are, 'to surrender to the hyper-relativism of the postmodernists' is self-defeating (1997: 231). Alvesson (1995) has also noted the impossibility of writing anything intelligibly if all sense of objectivity is abandoned. Nevertheless, Evans notes that the debate between historians and theoreticians has begun to bear fruit. The return of the narrative voice, prompted in part by

dissatisfaction with History and history (i.e. the recognition of the limitation of objectification and ideologies), is healthy and should be added to the other voices more traditionally heard.

Economic and Business History

Some of these voices can also be heard in the different fields that look at the history of business and management. Some historical business scholars effectively bury their heads in the sand hoping that theoretical controversy will disappear. The narrowness and lack of contextual theoretical sophistication in some economic history and business history has long been commented upon. *Economic history* has a long provenance and is a mature discipline which has tended to underplay particular aspects of business, change and the real world, in favour of economic universalism and theoretical integrity (Hobsbawm, 1997). However, this is not to say that economic history has nothing to offer the management scholar.

Business history has much in common with economic history, except of course that it usually limits the unit of analysis to businesses rather than economic activity as a whole. In principle, therefore, it has more affinity with organizational studies. Business history also has much to offer management scholars, and has brought us the work of Alfred Chandler, among many others. But it has also been criticized for being at its worst, uncritical, non-integrative and superficial corporate hagiography (Rowlinson and Hassard, 1993; Rowlinson and Procter, 1999; Thomas, 1995, 1999). Similar criticism has also been made even from within the discipline (Coleman, 1987; Hannah, 1983 cited in Thomas, 1995). Thomas also notes the discipline's failure, in the UK at least, to live up to the promise of Chandler's seminal work *Strategy and Structure* (1962). It is worth noting, however, that significant progress has been made since the 1980s. This can be seen in Godley and Westall (1996), who borrow the 'culture concept from sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and organization studies to elucidate business history' (Walck, 1999: 95). It is also apparent in the development of the *Routledge Studies in Business History* series, of which two publications provide the material for this review essay (Kipping and Bjarnar, 1998; Wilson and Nishizawa, 2000).

History of Management, Management Ideas, and Management Education

There is also a palpable growth in historical consciousness within management studies. The American-based *Journal of Management History* is an important expression of this consciousness. Now in its sixth year the journal has examined inter alia the works of management and organizational writers such as Barnard, Deming, Drucker, Fayol, Follett and Taylor, and special topic issues have considered history and public policy, rationality and organizational scepticism/postmodernism, and Enlightenment philosophers such as Smith and Bentham. There is also historical interest among a wide range of journals that have looked at the historical formation of particular management or organizational ideas. Management ideas and their theorists are discussed in historical detail in journals in order to stem the 'banalisation and degradation' (Bourdieu, 1993: 74) which they have suffered as a result of popularization (see for example O'Connor, 1996; Cullen, 1997; Cooke, 1999; Colville et al., 1999; O'Connor, 1999). One key text in this type of approach

has been Roy Jacques' masterful and radical analysis (1996), which suggests that management and organization studies fail spectacularly in their 'struggle of memory against forgetting'. Jacques demonstrates how the emancipatory and critical aspects of the work of the likes of McGregor and others have been reduced to totem-like chants in support of the status quo. Martin Parker (2000) also includes a historical overview of organizational thought in his recent book on culture.

There has also been recognition of the importance of history in respect of management education. Even the instigation of 'revisiting reviews' as a new review category in *Management Learning* suggests a greater recognition of the importance of understanding the past. Various issues have emerged in this literature: why history matters, or ought to matter, to managers and management educators and, more substantially, histories of the institutions and ideologies of management education (Amdam, 1996; Locke, 1989; Gibson et al., 1999; Kantrow, 1986).

General and Eclectic Use of History

This classification or reader and audience categories might in practice reflect subtle academic and publishing divisions rather than any rigid taxonomy, and considerable overlap exists. Many academics use history and historical themes in their work. Sociological, historical and industrial relations journals also regularly publish work looking at the history of management, organizations and business. As noted above, in the critical approach to management and organizations there has recently been a discernible and general growth in historical themes. This reflection on the foundations of management and business studies may be a case of millennialism, reflect continuing insecurities in management thought, or more positively, reflect a desire to assess disciplinary progress.

The general uses of history in management research might be loosely grouped into the following types of work. First, authors who look at specific past events or histories, and/or use a historical methodology in order to address a contemporary issue or topic to inform the organizational and managerial present (Kieser, 1998; Lammers, 1995; Rowlinson and Hassard, 1993; Barron, 1998; Hannan, 1997). Second, there are the formation-of-ideas historical studies described in the previous section (Cullen, 1997; Cooke, 1999; Colville, Waterman and Weick, 1999; O'Connor, 1999). And finally, studies which look at the historical construction of academic fields—particularly business history—in business and organizational theory itself and/or call for greater use of historical analyses in their own fields (Kieser, 1994; Thomas, 1995; 1999; Rowlinson and Procter, 1999).

The Books

After this brief outline of the variety of approaches to the history of business, management and organizations, I now turn to the review books. After briefly elucidating the basic point of each book, I will explain the way in which each of the authors approaches the study of history (commenting on the position historiographically and also with reference to the above classification). In each review I will also draw some conclusions about the relevance of the text to

management educators. In choosing these particular books I have attempted to present an example of each of the classifications described above. It is in the nature of classifications, however, especially where the purpose is merely illustrative, that the books themselves can span different categories. In part, the choice also reflects my desire to review history books that would in themselves be of interest to *Management Learning* readers.

The Birth of Corporations

Socializing Capital: The Rise of the Large Industrial Corporation in America is a very good book. Beginning with a historical analysis of the very dawn of the American economy, Roy answers the question of 'why socially capitalized industrial corporations, which virtually did not exist in 1890, came to dominate the economy by 1905' (p. 221). He does this through the use of historical sociology. The corporation is viewed as the dominant institution of our times, and Roy offers an answer to the above question based, not on efficiency theory, functional logic and a managerial perspective, but on historical logic and an institutional/power perspective. He argues that power is the 'degree to which the behavior of one actor is explained in terms of another actor's behavior' (p. 259), and that power is chiefly articulated by property relationships between the state and the economy. Technology is not treated deterministically and individuals and groups have real, as opposed to aggregate, impacts upon those relationships in historical events. Moreover, the social structures within which agents have to contend are real and impact upon outcomes. Roy exposes the halfway house of institutional economics, which feels obliged by reality to accept that hierarchies and institutions need to be explained, but markets do not (p. 269).

Roy convincingly explains that the process of corporatization, which early in US history had promised to marry state and private interests in an exchange of investment capital for public accountability, actually brought about a solidification of capitalist class interests despite the dispersal of capital that socialization implies. In other words, private capitalists found that corporatization was the best option in an increasingly industrialized economy, to avoid the perceived dangers of 'destructive competition' where less socialized and informal options, such as trusts, were politically and ideologically inconvenient. The outcome, at the beginning of the last century, is also referred to throughout as historically specific. Roy states that 'Capitalism is not a state of nature . . . [it] is a historically specific system' (pp. 284–5). He also emphasizes the myth of the 'free' economy, by carefully demonstrating the historical interdependence between the state and economy.

I do have some reservations about Roy's book. There should have been a more aggressive engagement with contemporary efficiency theorists throughout the text rather than just in Chapter 2. In addition, Chandler is rather an easy target in many respects (Wilkins, 1998, suggests that Roy sets him up as a 'straw man'), and rather than tackling a frontiersman of business history, Roy might have engaged more fully subsequent followers. In addition, if he had the wit of Schama (1989) his book might have been a little less 'scientific' than it occasionally was. Those readers who disagree with sociological perspectives on economics are not likely to be convinced, 'scientific' or not.

In terms of the classification of history discussed above, Roy's book is perhaps most closely aligned to economic and business history. However, the sociological basis of his analysis and the wide range of sources he draws upon mean that the text is not narrow in that regard, and should have much general appeal. In regard to history, Roy sees it moving 'like a boat sailing upstream. Each fork closes off possible destination points, decreasing contingency and increasing determinacy.' He suggests further that 'we emphasize the alternatives ahead of us, but not those we have rejected. . . . In history the tributaries are not set in advance, but constructed as we go [and] we never reach the final destination. . . . History waits for no one' (pp. 282–3). As such, Roy's orientation is both an upper-case History where power provides the underlying meta-narrative, and a lower-case history in that Roy is wedded to the objectivist mode of inquiry. But this begs the question of what else there is. Roy's interpretation is certainly one among many, but I am not sure what a gender or aboriginal perspective, for instance, on American corporatization would add to his argument. I am sure, however, that a greater sense of the individual's stories (which are engaged with, but to a limited degree) would have improved the book. But then Roy's purpose is explicit and specific: he attempts (successfully, in my mind) to refute the meta-narrative of functionalism and efficiency theory.

There is not much in this book that is about management learning per se, but a lot can be learned from the book, not least of which is how, in concrete examples of specific industrial development, both structure and agency produce social and economic outcomes. This book taught me a great deal. As a result of this book I find myself leaping about with more confidence when talking to students about the formation of corporations being a particular, as opposed to a 'natural', event. The treatment of technology (especially in Chapter 8) in particular is especially useful in a classroom context, showing that organizations do not follow technological innovations sheepishly but that choices are made. However, perhaps the most important lesson for management educators and their students is that in understanding the past, the present becomes more explicable. By understanding the historical contingency and chance involved in the formation of corporations, which have come to dominate contemporary capitalism, students should be able to perceive the lack of inevitability of present-day developments which arguably are similarly situated in structurally changing times.

Comparative Management Education: Britain and Japan

Wilson and Nishizawa's chapter in *Region and Strategy in Britain and Japan* (Farnie et al.) compares the regional details of British and Japanese management education. It adds to the work of the close-knit, eclectic and international group of scholars who collaborate on a growing body of comparative literature on the history of management education (Amdam, 1996; Gourvish and Abé, 1997; Kipping and Bjarnar, 1998). Wilson and Nishizawa first set out the pre-1940s development of educational/academic (in universities), professional (external) and corporate (internal) management education. Thus, we find that in Japan senior business managers were more likely to be graduates of universities than in Britain, where the notion that managers were born, not made, was the prevailing ideology. After the Second World War Japan's educational system underwent US-

inspired change. Previously the educational system was functionally and vocationally oriented and played an economic 'catch-up' role. This education system was replaced with a mass university infrastructure based on a reflective, self-conscious and academic ideal. In management education, however, the US business school system was rejected and the system was based mainly around vocationally oriented internal training, as industry reacted to the void it felt the 'academicized' universities had created.

Postwar UK developments in management education, in contrast, were characterized by pressure from academic, government and some business leaders (and a largely conservative corporate inertia or reluctance) to enhance 'academic' training for managers via the establishment of the US-inspired business schools, which started to emerge in the 1960s. Wilson and Nishizawa suggest that the 'deep suspicion of the British business community . . . raised the question of whether Britain ought to have followed the American fashion of using business schools in which to train managers' (p. 241).

Importantly, the authors are sensibly disinclined to blame British managerial weaknesses solely on the lack of formal management education. The Japanese rejected business school formalism for professional and corporate training to develop management talent. Wilson and Nishizawa highlight the limits and complexities inherent in the debate about the 'extent to which formal education impinges on economic development' (p. 227). Nevertheless their comparative analysis does provide management educators with a historical context in which to think about different educational systems. A key factor in that context and a key influence on the form and content of management education in both the UK and Japan has been the influence of American management thought. The Japanese may not have been impressed with the experiential format of business schools, but they were certainly influenced by American management ideas. In contrast, British industry on the whole rejected both American ideas and business schools.

American Imperialism?

Kipping and Bjarnar's book *The Americanisation of European Business* provides even more detailed evidence. The story they (and the other contributors to the collection³) tell is similar to Wilson and Nishizawa's. The cold light of 'objective' history (both Routledge books might be described as largely lower-case history) helps to dispel some of the totalizing rhetoric of US domination of the intellectual terrain in early Cold War Western Europe. And, as Kipping and Bjarnar make explicit, a sophisticated integration of structure and individual and organizational agency can also be usefully applied to contemporary debates about knowledge transfer. They then elaborate on a conceptual framework for the book. This separates knowledge transfer into the *channels* or *conduits* used in the transfer, the actual *transfer process* (the roles of sender and receiver, and their institutional circumstances), and the manner in which the knowledge was *translated* or *transformed* as it was put into practice and adapted to local needs. Management education is an important part of this process, but it is not the whole story.

The papers in this book focus on a 'much wider range of institutions, channels and actors involved in the possible Americanisation of European business, and . . . study the response to the US management models in a number of cases' (p. 4).

Kipping and Bjarnar are also explicit in noting that it is 'crucial in the analysis of the transfer process to go beyond anonymous institutions and structures and include the study of informal personal relationships and contact' (p. 5). Overall, the book shows that existing conditions in the recipient nations influenced the extent to which US models were selectively adopted or rejected. Moreover, institutional conditions in the US meant that the knowledge being exported was by no means homogenous or consistently articulated. The influence of social relations between key individuals and specific organizations would often play a greater role in the actual transfer process, than the 'imperialism' argument allows for. Consequently Kipping and Bjarnar conclude that the 'real struggle over Americanisation took place at the transformation stage' (p. 7): that is, where the individual businessmen and administrators, businesses and departments of recipient nations assessed, applied, adapted or rejected the various models being espoused.

In Chapter 4 Kipping discusses the minutiae of an initiative called 'Operation Impact', which involved inviting European business leaders to the US for a tour of cities and factories. The story told is of how the initiative—targeting business leaders—emerged out of the failure of previous programmes aimed at middle managers, technicians and workers. It tells of how the US 'message and messengers' were selected, and of how European business leaders, despite appearing open-minded, ultimately remained unconvinced as to the 'superiority and applicability of the US management model' (p. 56). In part this failure was due to the way in which both Europeans and Americans 'massaged' their messages to present favourable images of their management and organizational activities. The 'friendly rejection' of the American message was largely due to the European perception that the Americans did not really understand the cultures and institutions in Europe. The chief lesson for the contemporary educator is that both internally and externally sourced knowledge is clearly and profoundly influenced by individuals, cultures *and* institutions. The major historical lesson in both Wilson and Nishizawa's and Kipping and Bjarnar's work is that there *is* magic in the detail, especially when the detail illuminates the actual individual and group interactions.

The book as a whole draws upon a sophisticated array of historical and organizational references, and is 'good' history by any standard. Both Wilson and Nishizawa's chapter and Kipping and Bjarnar's collection address their topic matter from an economic and business history stance. Therefore, given the topic matter of management education, both texts straddle the two classifications discussed above. In respect to the historiographical approach, as the source material seems to be largely text, texts of speeches, or texts about texts, the approach is largely objective/neutral. However, the sophistication of the analysis, and a sympathetic treatment of the culture, context and meaning of the sources, suggest a good understanding of why this historiographical approach has been adopted. More generally, both Wilson and Nishizawa's chapter and Kipping and Bjarnar's book could have been more interesting in respect to the presentation of individual stories. Kipping comments upon the way in which European business leaders were entertained by American industrialists in their own homes. More detail on this, I am sure, would produce historically interesting results. As Robert Darnton (1985) and Natalie Davis (1983) have shown in their investigations into French cultural and social history, the 'experience' of the past does not need to be

buried under the dull weight of totalizing objectivity. Kipping and his colleagues have produced important and interesting studies, but a lighter, less 'scientific' touch might have made them more exciting.

Ancient Economies

We turn finally to the book that negatively inspired this essay. Moore and Lewis's *Birth of the Multinational: 2000 Years of Ancient History* charts the ebb and flow of market capitalism in ancient worlds from an international business perspective. The book, though interesting and quite fun, is overly particular and theoretically flimsy. To base a history of the majority of economic development on a theory which goes no further back in the history of political economy than Michael Porter's famous book (1990), gives ammunition to those who feel that business studies are pseudo-disciplines (e.g. Hobsbawm, 1997: 96). Whereas the supporters of international business theory feel confidence in their particular abstraction of economics, I do not, especially when applied to history in this manner. This review therefore is ultimately based upon choosing one set of interpretations about economic development and historiography over a different set.

One of these sets emphasizes continuity over change. Thus, though trade and commerce has existed throughout history, the specific economic, cultural and social organizational form has varied significantly. Human nature may also be consistent: people always want to make a fast buck, but not necessarily in circumstances of their own choosing. And, even if human nature has not changed very much over time, social organization has. Social organization of socio-economic systems may be based on fundamental evolutionary behavioural characteristics, but the ways in which individual and collective genetic predispositions (and other core attributes) are organized into institutions such as markets and economic systems like capitalism are not: capitalism is not 'natural'. For most of history people have been engaged in food production—this is different from capitalism. The current triumphalism and domination of capitalist ideologies, where there is no alternative to the way things are, is a distortion of the past *and* the present. Whereas some Marxist historians *have* arguably under-emphasized the continuities with past economic organization,⁴ this is not the same as claiming that 'there is nothing new under the sun' (as Moore and Lewis assert: pp. 2, 269). The past and its histories are key elements in the ideology of the present. If ever a history reflected the concerns of today through the lens of today, Moore and Lewis's book does. The book unfailingly assails the reader with the language of corporate capitalism and we are asked to believe that most, if not all, economic organizations are forms of capitalism.

I am by no means a scholar of ancient history, and feel slightly embarrassed in criticizing their undoubted scholarship in bringing together much recent research into ancient economic organization. However, it did not take much other reading about ancient economies to find that, despite Moore and Lewis's own implied claims to neutral objectivity,⁵ there were other competing views on their subjects that were not engaged. In particular the views of Finley (1985) were absent.⁶ Finley's scholarship might be older and perhaps out of date, but *History Today* feels that his work still merits investigation (Monte, 1993: 57). Finley's explanation of ancient economies recognizes the inherent domination of politics over economics,

and does not accept that a concept or language of market rationality existed (1985: 21):

Of course they farmed, traded, manufactured, mined, taxed, coined, deposited and loaned money, made profits or failed in their enterprises. And they discussed these activities in their talk and their writing. What they did not do, however, was to combine these particular activities conceptually into a unit, in Parsonian terms into a 'differentiated sub-system of society'.

It is not the purpose of this review to engage in the argument between Greek scholars. The point is that there must be some criteria or reference point by which to judge texts, and the reference points in Moore and Lewis's case are shallow.

Even if we accept Moore and Lewis's claim that new archaeological discoveries have meant that more is known about the economic organization of these societies, it does not mean that ancient Greek enterprises can be described as multinational enterprises (MNEs).⁷ What Finley also does is engage with the wider literature of political economy in discussing the ancient economy. On just two pages (20, 21) Schumpeter, Smith, Quesney, Marshall and Hume all appear. As noted before, *Birth of the Multinational* remains wedded to Michael Porter's 1990 text and a generally atheoretical, or at least theoretically impoverished, approach. The broad sweep of this approach is 'a mere antiquarian listing of discrete data' (p. 182): of lower-case history. Regardless of the nuances of the debate, competing claims and 'revisionist' claims, it is significant enough that Moore and Lewis ignore Finley and other scholars.

Their book is not unscholarly; I learned a good deal about ancient economies. The book does not ignore the obvious failings of the 'end of history' view, and in this superficial sense the book offers some caution against asinine and triumphalist rhetoric. The authors are quite explicit in their warning to Alan Greenspan that it is naive to think that the Anglo-American model of capitalism has somehow 'won', and is the only way to success and prosperity. There is plenty of evidence in the ebb and flow of the trade, commerce, market and more planned economic activity that they present, to show that market and enterprise economies were not the only game in town. And this is putting aside any objections to whether these concepts *do* adequately describe ancient economies. It is even more surprising, then, that they continue to structure their whole argument about economic history through the lens of individualist, market capitalist thinking. It seems in essence that Moore and Lewis's argument is that, since societies emerged out of pre-history, all Eurasian societies have exhibited various forms of capitalism (they do not discuss South America, the Far East or Asia-Pacific). This is not necessarily incorrect; after all, some structurally inclined world systems authors hold similar views (Frank, 1990).⁸

This debate, however, need not be engaged any further. What I find most strange and indefensible is their conflation and association of *specific* forms of social and economic organization, in claiming that MNEs existed in antiquity. Even in using the conceptual framework of international business theory (which they outline in Chapter 2), elements of modern capitalism and MNEs in particular—the tendency for corporations to exhibit market-creating as well as market-seeking behaviour, for instance—are missing in this account of the ancient economy.

They could, no doubt, defend and reject my criticisms by claiming political bias on my part, lack of knowledge of the original sources, misunderstanding of their suggestive, rather than definitive aims, etc. etc. These differences are not likely to be resolved. In terms of the classification I set out in the introduction, *Birth of the Multinational* is very much at the superficial end of business history and the general use of history. The real issue here of course is why books like this are able to leap-frog centuries of relevant political economic debate: why they continue to forget. I have accused Moore and Lewis of marketizing history, of turning their backs on intellectual history (Rorty, 1992), of privatizing the imagination (Hobsbawm, 1998: 300). This suggests that Moore and Lewis, and perhaps by implication business studies more generally, may be described as colonizing the past. However, this proposed colonization process is by no means explicit, and it is to exploring this alleged use or usurpation of the past that I now turn.

Conclusions

Colonization

History is important for various reasons, not least of which is the continuing expansion of business and management studies (Amdam, 1996: 2). As I have already suggested, a less positive colonization of the past is arguably also taking place. This is most clearly illustrated by the Moore and Lewis book, which chooses to create a new version of the past, rather than engage or refute previous scholarly work. In attaching a largely objective/neutral historical approach to theories of international business, they are re-telling the past through a dominant business studies perspective. If this approach is adopted by enough people working in business studies, then one might speak of colonization, or at least a forgetting. Nevertheless, the other texts reviewed demonstrate that traditional academic approaches can and do produce good histories, whether they are from a largely structural, upper-case Historical, or neutral, lower-case historical approach.

Furthermore, by way of elaboration on the idea of colonization, I would like to suggest that in order to ensure the credibility and provenance of many business studies publications, increasing use of, and claims about, the past development of business, management and industrial development are likely to be made. The growth and variety in the discipline is healthy and to be encouraged, but if expansion is at the expense of a genuinely historically informed appreciation of present economic and organizational realities, then the discipline will remain impoverished. In particular, I would argue that a sophisticated use of history in management learning is important. Much of management education is based on assumptions about how the past is viewed.

However, certain shifts in the demography of academic habitation and the technology of knowledge, have meant that a colonization may be occurring by default rather than design. It is worth stressing that the colonization I am writing of is largely an unintended consequence of normal—if not particularly historically sensitive—scholarly activity. The word ‘colonization’ seems apt to me, if only as a metaphor, but it is difficult to avoid unsubtle usage of such ideas: I kept on picturing mainstream business academics throwing grappling hooks over the

gunwales of passing history department ships! This both ignores the ability of historians to defend their professional rights to their subjects and overemphasizes the colonial intentions of business and management scholars. I am suggesting, as Kipping and Bjarnar do of American cultural 'imperialism', that something is taking place which means that more and more academic disciplines are turning to producing their own histories.

There are many reasons why history *might* be becoming increasingly popular in business studies.⁹ Business studies might be described as a divergent community discipline, in that it accommodates a catholic, 'diverse and loosely knit' population (Becher, 1989). Business studies is therefore open to incomers and keen to engage with other disciplines. History faculties have arguably suffered disproportionately in the process of marketization undergone by many western tertiary education systems. Therefore, many scholars who may have previously ended up working in history faculties may now 'do' history in business faculties, as business schools absorb more of the financial cake (Becher, 1989). This expansion of business interest in history might also simply be the result of a general explosion of popular interest in historical monographs and fiction. The 'intellectualizing dynamic' of professionalization could also be a contributory factor to the increasing inclusion of history in business schools (Blume, 1985, cited in Becher, 1989), in that histories can help to legitimize status claims.

In addition to these reasons, a further rationale (described by Eco in relation to broader social change; see David et al., 1999), is how the Internet may contribute to increasing specialization of knowledge. This process can also be applied to the trend towards specialization in academia (Becher, 1989),¹⁰ the suggestion being that each subdiscipline might create its own history. Rather than a supposed linear expansion of knowledge as a result of cyberspace, Eco proposed an increase in the tendency towards a 'loss of historical memory' (David et al., 1999: 189). This disquiet at the ahistorical nature of much about modern life has been applied to management and organization theory. Cooke (1999) and Jacques (1996) both argue that the zeitgeist of our studies into organizations lacks a perspective on the past: we live in what Hobsbawm has called a 'permanent present' (1994: 3).

Eco, however, suggests that it is quite normal for knowledge to be forgotten. The forgetting filters and makes manageable social and cultural identity formation. Nevertheless, Eco suggests that the Internet impinges upon collective identity formation by creating more scope for the creation of individual and specialized identities. Thus, business/management, economic, social and anthropological historians (to say nothing of the spectre of the histories of Quality, TQM etc. ad infinitum, ad nauseam) will all have their own identities and their own histories of the past, much as Moore and Lewis have theirs in *Birth of the Multinational*. Eco described this potential influence of the Internet as '*à la carte* history', where 'everyone would produce his or her own criteria for selecting information' (David et al., 1999: 196). As a reflection of the dominant mode of scholarly historical inquiry, as the majority of the books reviewed demonstrate, the spectre of 'gated' histories is thankfully a futuristic fantasy. The different branches of history currently talk to each other via the greater collective of academic life. The danger, however, may be that as information, specialization and fragmentation grow, so too will various 'gated' histories, and there will be a failure of generalization and

synthesis (similar concerns about the impact of increased specialization have also been voiced within history: Burke, 1991).

If the Internet facilitates the technological environment for increased specialization, postmodernist thinking might create an intellectual environment for the possibilities of legitimate historical inquiry. Postmodernist writers who live up to the promise of discipline mixing or 'de-differentiation' (Alvesson, 1995: 1052, 1054), may paradoxically produce integrating, Enlightenment-like historical generalization in the face of the overall 'process of heterogenization' (Daudi, 1990: 286, cited in Alvesson, 1995: 1054). All the books reviewed manage to mix at least some disciplines and are stronger for it. However, Moore and Lewis demonstrate the dangers of superficiality from so doing.

Finally, I now discuss some implications for those management educators who wish to take a more explicitly historical approach to their writing and teaching.

Some Implications for Management Education

In a recent departmental meeting I was unable to convince a staff member that business studies would benefit from being taught from a historically informed point of view. His argument was that business managers simply do not have the time to think about the past. My view is not that business executives and management educators need to be historians, or even to learn history. Rather, my point is that all people involved in organizational activities base their interpretations and decision-making on analysis of past events, however recent. These interpretations might be related to what Watson (1994) has called 'theories in use', or lay theorizing. This is the process whereby people make sense of their world by constructing associated sets of ideas, concepts and words to explain them. Watson has argued elsewhere (1996) that management educators need to pay attention to cases when the 'real world', as articulated through 'theories in use', is not easily explained by shrink-wrapped, hermetically sealed management theories. Motivation, for example, should be seen as an aspect of organizations, not just a collection of emblematic and closed-off theories to be processed at the surface level by the student. The development of management ideas, such as motivation, needs to be engaged historically and critically in order for the student to learn at a deeper level. Students should be accumulating meaning not content.¹¹ Our task as management educators is to ensure that we encourage deep-level learning and activate 'theories in use'. Historical analysis can help do this in a variety of ways.

Kieser (1994) has explored the question of what historical analysis can add to organization theory, and why it should, in some depth. He offers four reasons why it could enhance our research. First, the 'structures of and behaviours in present organizations reflect culture-specific historical development', and therefore can only be explained if 'the historical dimension is included'. Second, by comparing current organizational trends and fashions with similar developments in the past we can 'identify and possibly overcome [ideological] prejudices that characterize the presentation of these trends'. Third, historical analysis emphasizes the contingency of organizational outcomes. And finally, historical analysis can provide a stiff test for some theories of organizational change, in that they are based on very short-run organizational developments and data (pp. 609–12). The first three of these points can be applied to more pedagogic ends, and also demonstrate the

usefulness of so doing. Others have also reflected on these benefits in less technical language. Some emphasize the need to collect 'an established set of facts . . . which one has to interpret', and others the way in which historical thinking 'helps teach people to accept ambiguity' and about the 'complexity of things' (McDonald, McCraw and Chandler respectively, as reported in an interview by Kantrow, 1986: 82, 84, 85).

I have argued that historical analysis is important and useful to management educators. It might also be popular in a broad educational context. History is usually an excellent teaching vehicle with which to show students the realities of organizational activities, after the persuasive potency of contemporary business rhetoric fails to convince. History is relevant because it illuminates the realities of the present. Does this mean we should jump on a history bandwagon? If this means the creation of 'gated' or à la carte histories, then no. To loosely paraphrase Kundera, if our histories are kitsch, or light, then there is nothing that returns from the past to help us understand the present: 'everything is pardoned in advance and therefore everything cynically permitted' (1984/1999: 4), including any old history, however banal. Similarly, the extremes of lower-case business history are unlikely to add a great deal to our understanding, or to interest students. These approaches would add very little to the study of organizations or to the learning of managers. A critically informed use of the various historical approaches described in this article and highlighted in the books reviewed here would, however, be a useful pedagogic vehicle for management educators.

Notes

1. McDonald, (1996).
2. Notwithstanding Alvesson's objections to the overuse of the term (1995). Here, the objective is to, like Alvesson, discuss others' treatment of 'pomo'.
3. I make no attempt to summarize each contribution, instead conveying the essence of the book and looking at one chapter in particular. Chapters include those on the transferral of US management models and technical knowledge; European transferral agencies; US government propaganda initiatives; and various country specific cases (UK, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Germany, France and Italy again).
4. Some structuralists, as exemplified by the authors published in *Review* (edited by Immanuel Wallerstein), deal with the extent to which capitalism has existed in pre-modern and ancient economies or 'world systems' (see Straussfogel, 1998, for an outline of the debate). This body of literature paradoxically perambulates and theorizes at the other extreme to Moore and Lewis's under-theorized procession of facts, but Frank (1990) similarly sees common features in the last 5000 years of world system history. Weber is more useful in recognizing these continuities of capitalism, while nonetheless acknowledging the fundamental development of an 'ethos' which made 'capitalism the central institution of society' (Jacques, 1996: 36; Weber, 1989/1930: 52; Weber, 1976/1896). I am also indebted to Al Rainnie for pointing out the work of de Ste. Croix (1981) in *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*.
5. In a bibliographical comment on the different-forms-of-capitalism debate, which they engage in the conclusion, they imply that the 'thoughtful media' such as 'the *Economist*, *The Financial Times*, *The Times* of London, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*' are not polemical, and that other 'not so thoughtful media . . . tend to be more

polemical in nature' (p. 301). This crass projection of neutrality complements their failure to engage the literature of scholars who dispute their views.

6. de Ste. Croix places Finley within the Weberian historical school (1981: 91).
7. Finley does not claim that they did not keep records, nor does he rule out the challenge of new information (1985: 189).
8. Jacques has pointed out how both critical/Marxist and managerialist/functionalist stories are progressive and teleological, and play by the same 'common framework' despite their difference (1996: 15).
9. There is some limited empirical evidence for my claim: Gibson et al. (1999), in a survey on the extent and role of management history in the management curriculum in the US, concluded that both explicit and implicit coverage of history may be increasing. My suggestion is different in that it does not rely on a (probable) growth of interest, but an increase in specialization and the expansion of management education as a whole (Amdam, 1996: 2). The aforementioned institutionalization of management history in the form of the *Journal of Management History* suggests at least some increased significance.
10. Hobsbawm describes how the 'unprecedented expansion and size of the academic profession and the growing specialisation of each discipline and its multiplying sub-disciplines tend to increasingly turn academic thought inwards upon itself' (1997: 138; Alvesson, 1995, makes a similar point).
11. Cullen's (1997) article on the development of Maslow's thinking is a good place to consider the meaning of motivation in organizations in its historical context rather than solely imparting the content of the hierarchy of needs.

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