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The Troubadours of Knowledge: Passion and Invention in Management Education

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Abstract. *This paper argues that current management education works primarily with an instrumental, reified and fragmented conception of knowledge that ignores the connection between knowing and passion. To propose a learning process that is less dispassionate and disembodied and that conceives of knowledge as invention, we first exemplify the current crises of (management) education and reflect on its implied concepts of knowledge and learning along Lyotard's principle of 'performativity'. We further probe the relationship between passion and knowledge through Derrida's idea of the 'unconditional university' and illustrate its merit for both critical reflection and affirmative invention. Instead of a nostalgic re-evocation of ancient pedagogies, we reflect critically upon the possibilities of a deconstruction-based pedagogy in contemporary management education and propose Serres' figure of the 'troubadour of knowledge' as a conceptual persona that can guide us in developing learning practices that incorporate and combine the value of critique and invention. **Key words.** invention; management education; passion; performativity; troubadour of knowledge; unconditionality*

Thus, with his whole body, all his passion, his anger, and his strained liberty, whoever wants to create resists the power of knowledge, both the works that have already been made and the institutions that feed on them. (Serres, 2000: 98)

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The aim of this paper is to contribute to the discussion on the aims and practices of learning and education in university business schools by presenting ideas from educational philosophies that establish a more affirmative connection between passion and knowledge. Our main objective is not to question and criticize the educational practices in business schools as such, since a surfeit of such criticism already exists (Nord, 2005; Shepherd, 2005). Instead, we intend to propound the type of epistemologies and learning practices that has been rendered illegitimate in an era where the primary imperative of business schools is performance. Invoking philosophical concepts by Lyotard, Derrida and Serres, we will argue that knowledge creation and learning can no longer be understood under the spell of a rationalistic, programmatic and instrumental paradigm. Rather, it must be enlivened by an understanding of knowledge and learning that establishes a nexus with passion and permits a more holistic perspective which highlights knowledge as an embodied and fully concentrated process. This inquiry into the 'raison d'être' of the business school of tomorrow does not aim at completely overthrowing the current heritage of management education, but instead strives to strike a balance between the pragmatic, economic demands of management education and the possibility of genuine invention (Derrida, 1989). Thus reaffirming the connection between desire and knowledge (Gherardi, 2003), we claim that our investigation represents a 'truly' philosophical endeavour since philosophy—meaning the love of wisdom—embraces this relationship between passion and knowledge, invention and understanding at the 'heart' of its conception. We thus aim to destabilize those forms of education that regard reference to desire and passion as inappropriate and that thrive on what Lyotard has called the principle of performativity. In addition, we propose a viable alternative to the predatory space of corporate culture (Giroux, 2005) by exploring Derrida's notion of the unconditional university and Serres' figure of the troubadour of knowledge. Both concepts inform our reflection on the politics and practices of management education.

The argument of our writing will proceed as follows. First, we inquire how knowledge and learning are construed in the current debate on management education and indicate that prevailing discourses are based on an educational philosophy which favours an instrumental and fragmented conception of knowledge and learning and which is axiomatically legitimated by Lyotard's principle of performativity. Second, we enlarge the scope of this debate by means of a wider examination of the social and politico-ethical function of universities through Derrida's writings on the unconditional university in order to show how this notion combines deconstruction with critical reflection and affirmative invention. We thereby argue that to reap the rewards of unconditionality and to reclaim a space for invention, we need to establish a culture of questioning which constantly dissects and challenges education's assumed certainties. In the third section, we consider the possibilities of a deconstruction-based pedagogy in contemporary management education and elaborate on the

figure of the troubadour of knowledge to 'imagine and embody' this conception of learning as invention.

Fast-Food Knowledge or the Spectre of the Performativity Principle

The McDonaldization of Business School Education

Management education seems to have entered the next stage in a series of crises. This crisis is evident in, if not to say caused by, the works of those critics who have scrutinized the role of business schools and their educational premises (Grey, 2004; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). One work which has made a significant contribution to the latest crisis is Mintzberg's controversial book *Managers not MBAs* (Mintzberg, 2004) which targets MBA programmes in particular. In part, Mintzberg recapitulates a long-standing debate (Mintzberg, 1992). However, the polemics surrounding education programmes seems to be symptomatic of and interwoven with several other amendments and expressions of distrust that have surfaced in the wake of recent corporate scandals (Bartunek, 2002), with arguments ranging from frontal attacks on 'bad' management theories (Ghoshal, 2005) to proclamations that university business schools are in a state of emergency (Jones and O'Doherty, 2005).

Taking the debate being evoked by Mintzberg's *Managers not MBAs* (2004) and the polemics it has engendered [see special issues in *Academy of Management Learning and Education* (2005, 4/2) and in *Organization Studies* (2005, 26/7)] as our point of departure, it becomes obvious that the critique predominantly addresses the current conception of knowledge in management education. Mintzberg's main point of criticism with regard to the university business school in general and MBA education in particular is that knowledge is reified, fragmented and de-contextualized and, most importantly, that it ignores experience. The conceptualization of knowledge that Mintzberg criticizes is thus aptly expressed in those accounts which have objected that knowledge at universities and other knowledge centres increasingly resembles the fast-food culture of McDonald's where '[e]verything is straightforward, linear, in neat text boxes, supported by simple examples: an orderly world which is easily digestible' (Höpfli, 2005: 67).¹

Even though we consider Mintzberg's critique both necessary and courageous, it is arguable that the scope of discourses implied in his assessment as well as the debate it has provoked is rather limited, or rather that it is not radical enough. That is, it scratches the surface, so to speak, in that it only points out the symptomatic manifestations of the flaws of knowledge creation and management education. Instead, we find it necessary to scrutinize the philosophical and aesthetic as well as the political and ethical premises implied in management education. To this end, we want to make the point that the current impasse of management education is related to the broader problems affecting education as a whole. In other words, the shift towards education's instrumentalization and commodification (Jacob, 2003)

is not limited to the realm of management education but must be seen as a sign of a larger societal transformation. With respect to the overall argument pursued in this paper, it is worth recalling Illich's (1973: 2) conviction that education had ceased to be an 'end in itself' since 'the pupil is "schooled" to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new'. The view that Illich's claim undeniably applies to management education is supported by those scholars who contend that degrees are increasingly seen (by both students and business schools) as mere qualifications for the job market (Feldman, 2005; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002) and that learning is reduced to a consumerist approach which ultimately is of little educational value for the student (Jones and O'Doherty, 2005). However, to seek for culprits—that is, either the disinterested student who has 'neither the "zest for business" nor the "will to manage"' (Feldman, 2005: 218) or the enterprising academic whose activities are largely measured against the 'capacity to transact and consume' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000: 306) and who takes great efforts to entertain his class and to sell 'his services [...] to his clients' (Hatcher, 2001: 5)—in our view is a futile enterprise. After all, the notion of culpable individuals fails to take into account that the views and perceptions of both MBA students and business school teachers are informed [or interpellated to use Althusser's (1984) term] by discourse and that people, consequently, are always both effect and object of a conceptually structured environment. In addition, such a 'pursuit of suspects' would lead us further and further away from the objective of gaining an understanding of the political processes which naturalized and normalized the current construal of management education in the first place. That said, it is precisely the intriguing question 'how come' that needs to be asked if one is to gain a deeper understanding of the current *modus operandi* of business schools: what are the premises and legitimizing practices that have made possible the current crisis of business schools?

The Legitimization of Knowledge Through the Performativity Principle

Arguably, in a climate where students are transformed into customers (Chia, 2005), where the rankings in 'Business Week' determine business school's education curricula (Feldman, 2005; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002), where 'Bildung' is (de)legitimated through accreditation procedures such as AACSB or EQUIS (Dey, 2007) and where international competition and the idea of excellence have become the central leitmotifs of business schools (Lauer, 2002), it is anything but surprising that these trends fundamentally affect the signification of knowledge and learning. Importantly, the point to be made here is that these changes did not occur overnight, but have been the result of distinct political and economic investments. The current limitation of educational philosophies in management education is thus not an accidental event, but the result of particular rationalities and identifiable historical conditions of possibility. Since it is mandatory to grasp, however

preliminarily, the wider social and historical context in which management education is practiced, we posit that the current crisis of management education all too easily conceals that various educational philosophies have been active before and that alternatives could emerge in the future. It is helpful in this context to bear in mind that the commodification of higher education and academic capitalism² (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997) are by no means new phenomena, but originated when universities started establishing links with the business community. Regarding the US context, for instance, it was Etzkowitz (2003: 111) who mentioned that university-based research groups already resembled 'quasi firms' in the late 19th century and that it was only their lack of a 'direct profit motive' that distinguished them from real companies. Whereas Etzkowitz (2003) highlighted that universities passed through different academic revolutions in the course of which the ties between the academic community and the industry were increasingly intensified, we are reminded by Slaughter and Leslie (1997) that higher education in Australia, Canada, the UK and the US is increasingly perceived as a means for raising national competitiveness. What becomes clear from these observations is that the quest for economically useful knowledge has not always been as pronounced as today, and that the tendency towards the market-sensitive 'corporate university' (Aronowitz, 1998) or 'entrepreneurial university' (Clark, 1998) has been rapidly proliferating over the last decades. This shift towards the commodification of knowledge and the establishment of the McUniversity, however, was anticipated almost three decades ago by Lyotard (1984: 4) who claimed that:

[t]he relationship of the suppliers and users of knowledge to the knowledge they supply and use is now tending, and will increasingly tend, to assume the form already taken by the relationship of commodity producers and consumers to the commodities they produce and consume—that is, the form of value. Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange.

One of the most important merits of Lyotard's (1984) *Postmodern Condition*³ is that it has convincingly revealed that in computerized (i.e. post-industrial or advanced) societies, knowledge is legitimated not according to its potential for social emancipation, but on the basis of its use and/or exchange value (Jacob, 2003). Lyotard called this legitimizing practice performativity, thereby emphasizing that knowledge is for the most part no longer based on abstract principles, but on its capacity to achieve desired outcomes effectively, as well as its ability to generate returns. In view of the marketization, or 'mercantilization' (Lyotard, 1984), of higher education, it is evident that knowledge ceases to be an end in itself and business schools have become 'big business' hooked by the question whether the pursuit of knowledge is financially lucrative or not.

Lyotard, at the time of his report in 1979, predicted with much foresight that the 'performativity criterion' would proliferate and that it would sooner

or later penetrate most advanced countries. It appears that his dystopia provides a compelling assessment of the contemporary business school. Taking into account, for instance, that business schools are increasingly submitted to a set of 'Tayloristic principles of standardisation, measurement and control' (Höpfel, 2005: 65) where both teaching and research are judged on the basis of their input-output ratio (Dey, 2007) and where both positions and courses are created or discontinued according to the returns they generate (Feldman, 2005), it is beyond doubt that performativity has become the ruling dogma.⁴

What we find alarming about performative knowledge is that it seems to postulate a particular understanding of education as the universal model for any kind of management education. In line with this observation, we believe that there are more secrets and hence inventions that haven't even been considered as yet, largely because they are not conceivable so long as our imagination is restricted by the performativity principle which dogmatically keeps asking 'is it saleable?' (Lyotard, 1984: 51). The previous retrospection, however, must not be mistaken as a nostalgic attempt to re-establish a bygone educational philosophy. Novel openings rather than a misty-eyed view of the past is called for. In concrete terms, this means that we need alternative principles for judging and qualifying knowledge. In particular, we are called upon to search for a kind of knowledge that resists the terror of the performativity code⁵ and instead puts passion and invention back on the agenda of (management) education. To this end, it is helpful to recall Lyotard (1984) once again who suggested 'paralogy' as a loophole for bypassing the restrictions of the performative principle through a continued search for new moves which challenge established truisms and which give expression to 'evolutionary possibilities' (Czarniawska, 2001: 14). With its genuine care for heterogeneity and difference, then, paralogy was conceived not only as a concept for counteracting the performativity principle but also as a tool that 'refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable' (Lyotard, 1984: xxv). Yet, is this in itself cause for optimism? Invoking Lyotard again for an answer we can say '[y]es, if the limits of the old institution are displaced' (Lyotard, 1984: 11). We shall thus focus on the displacement of the limits of both education and knowledge in the next part.

Deconstruction in the Unconditional University

Lyotard's assertion that the inception of new language games presupposes distance from the current canon makes it necessary to elaborate on philosophical concepts that will enable us to claim a space beyond performativity or, more precisely, a space that permits invention *from within*. To this end, we will first discuss the operation and possibilities of Derridean deconstruction so as to sketch a kind of reflective practice that is both critical and affirmative. Second, we will delineate the relations between deconstruction and Derrida's unconditional university in order to delineate

unconditionality as a space of 'impossible possibilization' (Spivak, 2005: 166) where invention is played out at the interface between performativity and impassionate knowing.

Deconstruction as Critical Reflection and Affirmative Invention

To begin our excursion into (educational) philosophy, it can reasonably be argued that the 'age of deconstruction' (Nealon, 2003) has dawned more in the sphere of research than in management education. Despite the observation that 'deconstruction' has become the umbrella-term for a heterogeneous collection of critical endeavours, we still regard the concept as useful, since it seems to evoke a concern for a different future and to express, similarly to Foucault's (1996: 305) musing on curiosity, 'a readiness to find our surroundings strange and singular; a certain relentlessness in ridding ourselves of our familiarities and looking at things otherwise; a passion for seizing what is happening now and what is passing away; a lack of respect for traditional hierarchies of the important and the essential'. As this allegoric comparison with Foucault shows, deconstruction rests on a double condition: it is at once conceivable as a force of resistance vis-à-vis the limiting effects of performativity and as a possibility of affirmative, passionate invention.

In terms of resistance it needs to be mentioned at the outset that Derrida conceived deconstruction as a counter-force to the restrictive influence of end-orientation (i.e. performativity). This means that Derrida saw deconstruction as a means for addressing the increasingly corporatized institutions of higher education, and notably those educational and research premises that give 'rise to institutional constructions regulated by profitable applications, and therefore by technical schemas' (Derrida, 2004: 59). Notwithstanding the observation that deconstruction has been defined by some as a 'provocation to the long-standing codes of the *Universitas*' (Trifonas, 2000: 1; emphasis in original), it would be misleading to equate deconstruction with the singular purpose of revolutionary defiance of educational authorities and doxas, since this would compromise the double-purpose at the heart of deconstruction: the identification of the margins of knowledge through a genealogical analysis of its history and interpretations (Patton, 2003) and the adumbration of a 'passage toward the other' (Derrida, 1992: 341). Since we construe deconstruction as a critical reflective practice (Reynolds, 1999), which probes the ostensible stability and univocity of prevailing knowledge (Peters and Trifonas, 2005), it needs clarification that this signification advocates a kind of inquiry that both looks into the past and the future. In view of Derrida's claim that a heritage is not something that is passively received, but a deliberate move that requires a 'willingness to assume [one's] legacy' (Ega-Kuehne, 2005: 38), we would like to pursue this line of thought so as to draw an image of deconstruction that opposes performativity not by overt force, but by constantly questioning, rethinking and re-evaluating its assumed certainties. Looked

at from that perspective, deconstruction becomes the practice which tries to get intimately familiar with the available heritage in order to ask 'what can I see [tomorrow], and what can I say today?' (Deleuze, 1988: 119). Working from within (rather than outside of) a given tradition (Critchley, 1999), deconstruction on the one hand points at the boundaries of a given domestic economy, politics or ethics while on the other hand alluding to what lies (or could lie) beyond or outside those margins. In other words, deconstruction, by calling into question accepted modes of thinking, sets in motion a gradual and thorough 'intensification [yet not progression] of the [...] maturation of the states of theory' (Trifonas, 2000: 2). We believe that it is on the basis of deconstructive reflection, conceived as intimately engaging but also breaking with tradition (Ega-Kuehne, 2005), that one is able to undercut the 'sacred' and to stimulate transgression by staging a passage towards the other, non-performative and increasingly passionate knowledge.

Provided that deconstruction is generally said to work as a kind of parasite (Hillis Miller, 2004) that undermines performative knowledge by virtue of relentless interpretation, and keeping in mind that we have presented deconstruction as a fundamentally critical undertaking, this does not mean that deconstruction represents a hostile endeavour, but rather a passion for potentialities so far unrecognized or, as Jones (2004: 54) put it, 'a persistent and radical experience of *possibility*' (emphasis in original). Thus in contrast to those who have depicted deconstruction as a subversive endeavour which provides nothing to replace that which it has destroyed (Habermas, 1987), Derrida repeatedly emphasized that deconstruction was not similar to destruction, since the latter term 'too obviously implied an annihilation or a negative reduction much closer perhaps to Nietzschean "demolition" than to the Heideggerian interpretation or to the type of reading that I proposed' (1985a: 1). In view of Critchley's telling observation that deconstruction is characterized by a tension between 'belonging and the breakthrough' (1999: 70), it also becomes clear that deconstruction is less '*a demonstration of lack, negativity or neutralization*' (Nealon, 2003: 163; emphasis in original) than a matter of critical intimacy that is 'situationally productive through dismantling' (Spivak, 1993: 146). Keeping in mind that Derrida deconstructed only those texts and works he genuinely loved (Derrida, 1985b), we would like to go even further than those who have emphasized the affirmative trajectory of deconstruction (Cohen, 2001; Critchley, 1999; Patton, 2003) and proclaim that deconstruction represents a passionate undertaking that points to a different future and thus provides a sense of direction without being directive. We claim that deconstruction points to the future in that it highlights 'the ever-present possibility of invention, reconfiguration or transformation in our existing, historically conditioned and contingent ways of understanding' (Patton, 2003: 18). Invention, we believe, is thus made possible by providing new means of description and therefore new ways of understanding and

acting upon the world. Being concerned with possibilities, openings and changes, deconstruction in no way seeks invention by neutralizing existing 'violent hierarchies' (Derrida, 1981: 41). Rather, deconstruction fosters invention by identifying and counteracting possible closures and by promoting entirely unprecedented understandings. However, since the future of education cannot simply rely on an elusive promise but must instead count on an active promotion of the right to question long-established certainties, the following section will probe these issues against the backdrop of Derrida's unconditional university.

The Heritage of the Humanities: The Space without Condition

In Derrida's thoughts on the 'faith in the university' he used deconstruction to refer to 'an unconditional right to ask critical questions not only to the history of man, but the history even of the notion of critique, to the form and the authority of the question, to the interrogative form of thought' (Derrida, 2001a: 235). It follows from this unconditional right to ask whatever can be asked 'that the university itself should at the same time reflect, invent and pose', and take on 'the tasks of deconstruction, beginning with the deconstruction of [its] own history and [its] own axioms' (2001a: 235). Derrida also stressed that the new university would not only have to propose new things to be done, but would also be obliged to carry out a 'theoretico-institutional analysis' so as to bring to light its own forms and effects of censorship and nonlegitimation (Derrida, 2004). What we hence would like to emphasize is that deconstruction was postulated by Derrida as a duty of the university to constantly reflect, question, and reformulate its operational premises. Consequently, the unconditional university establishes a 'culture of questioning' (Giroux, 2005: 64) in which censorship and competing stakes are (or must be) subjected to critical analysis, thus revealing the aporia of what is both within and beyond its very rationality.

Arguably, Derrida's remarks must appear quite counter-intuitive to those who accept the performativity principle *prima facie* and who claim that academics already enjoy (justifiably or not) a state of academic freedom (hence 'crisis, what crisis?'; Critchley, 1999: 130). Be that as it may, we strongly agree with Derrida's view that the university of the future must go beyond mere professionalism—and hence beyond the performative professor, so to speak (Peters, 2004). The operations of the university of the future must even be inspired by literary fiction as well as the unconditional freedom of speech which it presupposes. This freedom goes beyond what is more generally coined as academic freedom or academic autonomy since it denotes a state of unconditionality which is based on the idea of change or, following Derrida (2001a: 233), the 'faith in the university [...] of tomorrow'. Freedom of speech, which Derrida explicated on behalf of 'the 'ideality of the literary object',⁶ entails the 'implacable obligation that gives

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the writer the duty of non-response or non-responsibility, that is, a refusal in the name of, on the authority of, a greater responsibility' (Hillis Miller, 2001: 68). As these explanations show, Derrida's idea of unconditionality can be used in the context of the current argument to probe the limits of censorship and the possibility of escaping the confines imposed by the administrative demands of the state and/or the orthodoxy of the market (Peters, 2004). Since Derrida (2001a) developed his ideas in connection with the Humanities, this permits at least two conclusions. First, there are reasons to believe that the Humanities, or, more specifically, the ideas, concepts and practices they have brought forward, can serve as a source of inspiration not only with respect to the generation of fresh methodologies, but also in terms of the politico-ethical analysis of their own institutional premises and the inquiry into what is allowed and what is forbidden within its limits. Although Derrida assigned deconstruction to the analysis and reclaiming of the future of thinking within the Humanities, we contend that deconstruction can similarly be used for questioning, critically yet affirmatively (Derrida, 1992), the institutional foundations of other academic disciplines, that is, their mode of composition, fictions, preferred genres of representations and discourses, as well as their truths. The observation that deconstruction has worked as a 'philosophical project of genealogical excavation' (Peters and Trifonas: 2005: 7), while each time retaining its ties with the possibilities and limits of the present, can become exemplary for a sort of pedagogy which not only tries to instruct others, but constantly calls into question its own operation and rethinks the certainties of where and how such education should take place, and where it should lead. Deconstruction, we believe, is pivotal for bridging the given (the heritage) and the secret (of the future), and hence significant for all sorts of pedagogies that strive for invention. In the words of Peters and Trifonas (2005: 7), '[d]econstruction is always already implicated in the perennial question of [...] pedagogy and the responsibility to acknowledge the difference of the Other'. The second conclusion based on the observation that Derrida developed his thought in connection with the Humanities is this: although he clarified that resistance is not only a task of the Humanities (i.e. philosophy and literature) but equally called for in 'political studies, even theology sometimes, biogenetics, or outside the university' (Derrida, 2001b: 255), it appears that there was a reason behind his choice, for he described the Humanities as being somewhat less 'in the service of economic goals and interest of all sorts' (Derrida, 2001a: 236). This statement can clearly be seen as a warning as well as an invocation, since it expresses that unconditionality is less likely yet more needed in the sphere of business school teaching.

We see the main value of Derrida's eloquent and compelling account of the university without conditions in the numerous inspirational, though unsettling and at times counter-intuitive, ideas it contains for future education. Most important for our present argument, Derrida postulated

a new responsibility for the university and its professions that is no longer regulated according to the logic of supply and demand and which instead takes into consideration that 'higher education is a vision, not a calculation' (March, 1996). It must be reiterated in this context that the 'duty of irresponsibility' (Derrida, 1992: 38), that is, the right to say everything without being held responsible, always means 'to break out of prohibitions' (Derrida, 1992: 36). Derrida's appeal to 'search just for the sake of searching, and try for the sake of trying' (2001b: 249) powerfully expresses the pleasures of 'useless' sensation and the desire for knowledge which has no immediate practical purpose or value. Unconditionality thus denotes a space beyond performativity, a philosophical and literary space that can accommodate passion and play beyond restriction and punishment. What Derrida said elsewhere about invention (1989) and about the secret (1995) helps us to envisage a sort of knowledge and knowing which is propelled by passion. To begin with, while one normally assumes that a secret, in principle, is discoverable, Derrida made clear that a true secret cannot possibly be revealed. In contrast to performative learning where everything is neatly prepared and ready to go, Derrida's idea of the secret introduces an image of a different kind. That is, instead of perceiving the secret as a threat to unadulterated knowledge, it is this very secret that 'impassions' us. Although one can never know with certainty whether or not there is a secret at all, the fact that something remains provides a 'chance of saying everything without touching upon the secret' (1995: 23). As Derrida insisted, 'when it is the call of this secret [...] which points back to the other or to something else, and holds us to the other, then the secret impassions us' (1995: 29). In other words, it is the wholly other ('le tout autre') which is at the origin of non-performative knowing, and which constitutes the 'call' that 'impassions us'. Playing with the two meanings of passion, that is, suffering and desire, Derrida's work implies that education needs to be impassioned 'by the call of the secret to find out the secret' (Hillis Miller, 2001: 73), which further entails that learning needs to thrive on a desire to both embrace and enact alterity. It is the mysterious secret, as that which is beyond the reach and control of pedagogic codes, that inspires our imagination and evokes our passion.

It might be objected that our suggestions border on the unrealistic. However, this is ineluctable, since 'the only possible invention is invention of the impossible' (Derrida, 1989: 60). Hence, Derrida's remark that the space of unconditionality does not yet (and will probably never) exist (Derrida, 2001b) means that the unconditional university is not necessarily a teleological end-point one can finally reach, but a hyperbolic image that simultaneously works to keep us thinking, and makes us aware that performativity is not all there is. In consequence, we would like to establish unconditionality as a sort of utopia (lowercase letter; see Jones et al., 2005) which capitalizes on the tension between dream and reality and which invites passion, dedication and play and seeks transformation without

enforcing it, so that one is always prepared for the other and ready to accept that 'what arrives arrives' (Derrida, 2001a: 247). All this, we believe, must be practised simultaneously 'regardless of the mainstream of a "good conscience" of the unreflective opinions and beliefs [one may] alienate along the way' (Trifonas, 2000: 3) and in full awareness of the weakness and vulnerability of unconditionality. To accentuate these points, we would now like to pursue Derrida's (1992: 337) claim that deconstruction is 'inventive or it is nothing at all' in the realm of management education.

Troubadours of Knowledge in the Unconditional University Business School

On the basis of the above arguments, we will now analyse the implications—including both possibilities and impossibilities—for a pedagogy of the business school to come. We will argue that the future of the business school requires pedagogical interventions, that is, interventions which on the one hand equip citizens with the requisite 'knowledge and skills to participate in public life, [and to] question institutional authority' (Giroux, 2005: 53) and which allow 'for resistance, a space of translation, and a proliferation of discourses' (Giroux, 2005: 64). In the course of this analysis we will try never to lose sight of the fact that all pedagogical instructions run the risk of suppressing invention. First, we will consider the possible traps of working with a deconstruction-based pedagogy in order to fine-tune and temper possible expectations towards yet another 'brand new and grand' pedagogy. Second, we will turn to those current proposals in management education that can be used as potential entry points to develop learning practices which work on the boundary of impassionate knowing. Finally, we will propose the figure of the troubadour of knowledge as a guiding image for all those who feel encouraged to work with learning endeavours that allow students to be critical towards received views of knowledge and to explore new forms of participation in learning and knowledge creation.

Prolegomena to a Derridean Pedagogy

By combining knowing with passion, Derrida provides the space for a critical, yet inventive pedagogy which makes us look in the direction of learning practices that combine and balance critical reflection with possibilities for inventive thinking and imaginative learning. In our attempt to look for such alternative modes of existence and learning practices that exemplify some of the above Derridean principles, we would like to discuss some prolegomena to a Derridean pedagogy while simultaneously pointing out several 'traps' we should try to avoid. We will then conclude that contrary to expectations, the spirit of the times might in actual fact be conducive to such an endeavour.

One trap to avoid is that of formulating a programmatic 'new' didactics or general pedagogy of deconstruction and invention (Crowley, 1989;

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Trifonas and Peters, 2004) and to use deconstruction as a general guideline of do's and don'ts which would contribute to the false impression that deconstruction represents a matter of 'methodological repeatability' (Attridge, 1992: 21). Such a pedagogy with a finality (Trifonas, 2003) would go against a Derridean intuition and undermine the undecidability, that is, open-endedness of such a pedagogy where risks of invention, issues of power and foci on difference and alterity need to 'be dealt with' in the contextualized, spatial and embodied practices of teaching and learning. Although '[t]he relation of both Derrida and deconstruction to pedagogy is as clear as it is fundamental', since it 'offers an active interpretation, resistance and re-evaluation of humanist pedagogy, of forms of pedagogy based on the sovereign subject—which is to say, the predominant forms of pedagogy existing today that structure our pedagogical institutions, theories and practices' (Peters, 2003: 215), some caution is required when opening up the ethics of deconstruction for the politics and practices of education. It is also important to note that existing investigations into the pedagogic/educational consequences of a Derridean thinking remain at the level of principles rather than practices in as much as they provide little guidance on how we might develop (conditions for) learning practices (Peters and Trifonas, 2005; Trifonas and Peters, 2004). While an all-encompassing programme of Derridean pedagogy is out of the question, a second trap lies in not going 'far enough' and in somehow emphasizing the critical above the inventive side, or the other way around. We would argue that both the act of raising unsettling questions as well as that of responsible affirmation must, in some practical way, be accentuated more. Our emphasis on passion, invention and aesthetics may be seen as reminiscent of humanist liberalism, as a naïve attempt to provide the philosophical foundations for the numerous calls for 'more creativity' in business life, or as a form of unprofessional, light-headed and risky experimentation. On the other hand, a critical pedagogy might be effective in dismantling prevailing orthodoxies from an external vantage point, though by the same token it could leave both teachers and students with little indications on how to proceed (differently). The point according to Derrida would indeed be to connect memory and chance, to think at one and the same time the landscape (and how it came to be constituted) and the abyss itself (Derrida, 2004), to both safeguard and renew the legacy (Egée-Kuehne, 2005). A third trap, finally, lies in trying to find 'proof' in some unique or distinguished examples of (past) learning practices, as such exemplifications quickly become too narrow, too idiosyncratic or even too banal. Our idea is also not to create some unreachable Utopian model but to emphasize that there are *already* many attempts and fragments on which we can build. The most pressing task is to remember and reinvent them—to give them a new legitimacy because they have been unnoticed, marginalized or even expelled under the axiom of performativity.

Introducing Deconstruction to Management Education

The above cautions we discussed might be seen as a cause for pessimism regarding the chances of a deconstruction-based pedagogy. On the face of it, this view is reinforced by the wide gap separating ideas of deconstruction from the current and overwhelming presence of performativity. However, we nevertheless believe that there are enough factors that can positively influence the transition to an alternative conception of the university business school that is (in)formed by the idea of unconditionality and by balancing deconstruction and invention. The crisis of the university, which is connected to a crisis of democracy and of youth, has been pictured by some critics as an almost insurmountable impasse (Giroux, 2005; see also *infra*) which requires an arousal of 'a powerful minority to focused outrage' (Aronowitz, 2005: 117) to bring about changes. In our own view, the current context provides enough elements to start to question the current politics and practices of education and to experiment with alternative ones in the university business schools. When we say there are promising elements, we are not principally referring to the numerous corporate scandals and the endless debates on the wages of top managers which typically create outrage at first but do not engender any structural changes. Rather, we are thinking of those little, yet affirmative signs which pave the way for new discourse and practices of education and which collectively contribute to the formation of an unconditional university business school. In the spirit of paralogy, we advocate little interventions rather than revolutionary changes, since we believe that management education does in no way operate outside the strictures of performativity and, second, that the space for deconstruction is never pre-ordained. There is thus no reason to expect that deconstruction will enable some pristine space of pure pedagogy, since deconstruction is always practised within existing economic and other ideological limits. However, this should not be understood as a barrier or limit but rather as a call to investigate further and create the practical conditions for critical reflection and invention. Among the encouraging signs we notice is a critical pedagogy which has in the last decennium emerged in management education and which operates along lines similar to those that a deconstructive pedagogy sets out. In addition, there is an emerging view of knowledge in organization and management studies which associates knowledge with desire, connects passion and imagination with embodied and aesthetic learning practices, and probes the secret and the mystery of knowing the Other. We believe that, rather than inventing some new pedagogy, these ideas and practices can form anchor points and delineate possible routes, and hence make Derridean pedagogical ideas more palpable.

Given the radical and critical potentiality of introducing deconstruction to management education, learning practices should aim at countering one of the main threats from the performativity principle, namely that it renders a particular kind of knowledge natural, so natural that it becomes inescapable. The task for deconstructive learning is therefore to confront

management learning with Cooper and Law's (1995: 239) assertion that it hinges on a way of thinking which is limited to 'what is preconceived, what appears already constituted and known, what is simplified, distilled' and to make the point 'that management always need to be taught in ways that explicitly acknowledge the political, ethical and philosophical nature of its practice' (Grey, 2004: 180). As part of our plea to introduce deconstruction to business schools we seek to re-claim a space for critical resistance which runs counter to the blind acceptance and effortless consumption of the legacy of management knowledge and instead fosters committed and courageous decisions as to what kind of knowledge one wants to accept or reject. The type of critical and deconstructive reflection we would like to see emerge within business school curricula is thus related to the objective of enabling management students or scholars to excel (de Beer, 1998), not in the sense of the excellence criteria of business magazine rankings, but in the original sense of the term, that is, to go beyond (ex) the confines of prevailing knowledge (cell).

It is one of the strengths of Mintzberg's (2004) critique and alternative MBA model that it not only cogently argues that MBA programmes fail to produce competent managers since education curricula favour analytical skills over of reflective practice. In addition, it also suggests a (not *the*) well-defined programme that encourages students to reflect upon the different contextual and relational mindsets through which concepts such as organization and self are produced. What is thus implied in Mintzberg's re-appraisal (as well as the alternative he provides) forms a starting point for an emerging group of proposals designed to foster the kind of reflective trajectory Grey (2004) generally promoted under the heading of 'critical management education'. 'Critical management education' argues that if it is recognized that the performativity principle makes critical thinking unlikely (or unwanted; Fuller, 2006), this is not in itself a good enough reason to surrender. Despite, indeed because, the economic premises of the entrepreneurial university limit the role of universities in providing critical knowledge, we would like to align a deconstructive practice with the contours of such an emerging critical pedagogy (Dehier et al., 2001; Prasad and Caproni, 1997; Willmott, 1994). For instance, Fournier and Grey's (2000) central tenets of a critical management education—consisting of anti-performativity, de-naturalizing mainstream management theory and reflexivity—can, in our view, be seen as realizable guidelines for a deconstructive endeavour. Notwithstanding the possibilities arising from a combination of deconstruction with experiences from critical management education, we must not forget that deconstruction is not necessarily welcomed by the business school community with open arms, unconditionally, so to speak. Again, experiences from critical management education are telling as they show that attempts to introduce critical thinking to MBA programmes quite often meet with strong opposition (Reynolds, 1999). Since no space of knowledge production works independently of conventions or can be 'disembodied from public image

and representation' (Polan, 1993: 47), it has to be stressed again that the possibility and liberty of deconstruction is not self-evident, but must be actively stated and protected.

While critical management education is 'rather cautiously limited to question-raising' (Fenwick, 2005: 32), it contextualizes management knowledge beyond the contours of success and efficiency. Instead, it positions it amidst societal and ethical currents, its main focus being that of raising the degree of complexity (Grey, 2004). We argue that there is simultaneously a need (for learning practices) to go beyond questioning, that is, they must be able to accommodate the notion of the other and the possibility of invention. As Giroux (2005: 77) convincingly argues:

[a] pedagogy that simply promotes a culture of questioning says nothing about what kind of future is or should be implied and how and what educators teach; [...] it is also imperative to create the conditions in which forms of agency are available for students to learn how to not only think critically but to act differently.

Although there is, in our assessment, no emerging inventive pedagogy that one can resort to (unlike critical management education), we still see encouraging signs in management and organization studies: knowledge is being complexified (Blackler, 1995) and suggestions for an inventive education are being developed (Chia, 1996). Not only is the field beginning to seek an understanding of knowledge along the lines of Gherardi (1999), that is, a kind of knowing in the face of mystery based on experiential immersion and passion, but there is also a broader movement of scholars that return to the Humanities to rethink and re-invent the possibilities of management education (Gagliardi and Czarniawska, 2006). While this fits well with Derrida's thoughts on the Humanities in general and the secret in particular, we hold the more pragmatic belief that connecting with the literary and aesthetic repertoires of learning is potentially very beneficial. The benefits to be reaped in this contexts are offered by the current return to the Humanities and aesthetics, since it expands the process of knowing beyond its cognitive limits to all senses, reintroducing 'the body, the emotions, the affective mode of understanding, intuition, receptiveness, empathy, introspection and aesthetic understanding' (Gherardi, 1999: 110). As a result of the aesthetic turn, there is a plethora of creative and aesthetic tools and practices that have entered the management education classroom—such as video, movie, drama, dance, diary writing, role play, games, painting, novels—which can potentially increase inventive learning. We are especially in favour of those practices that combine inventive approaches and critical engagement with ontological and epistemological issues (Chia, 1996; Hardy and Palmer, 1999). For instance, in her investigation of the impact of bodies in management education, Sinclair (2005) focuses on issues of power and gender in normalizing processes of (dis)embodiment in the classroom. In addition, she 'seeks to confront, experiment with and subvert rigid and oppressive body norms' (Sinclair, 2005: 99) in order to give form to bodily

innovation in her everyday pedagogic practices (including, for instance, teaching a yoga class at the business school).

Invention and the Troubadouresque

Having arguably raised more questions than answers (which was, however, our purpose), we would like to conclude this paper by proposing the conceptual persona⁷ of Serres' (2000) troubadour as a guide for developing learning practices that incorporate and combine the value of critique and invention. The troubadour thus acts as a philosophical figure that expresses the kind of presuppositions or ethos that we have tried to adumbrate in the course of our investigation. Given that the conceptual persona does not contain a physical substrate (hence troubadouresque), it becomes more of an index of personal style and sensibility which expresses, in an exaggerated and idealistic manner, what we regard as good business school teaching and what we believe business school teaching should be doing in the 'space' of education. In analogy with Derrida, Serres' troubadour implies a belief in the potency of imagination and invention that subverts fixed knowledge, and notably university (business school) curricula. In addition, the troubadour also encourages transitions without any teleological (economic) purposes (Zembylas, 2002). On the face of it, the troubadouresque is not and cannot be the epitome of a new pedagogy, *stricto sensu*, inasmuch as pedagogy is based on instruction and concerned with programmable knowledge. Rather, the troubadouresque suggests an anti-pedagogy since it claims a space beyond instruction:

the goal of instruction is the end of instruction, that is to say, invention. Invention is the only true intellectual act, the only act of intelligence. The rest? Copying, cheating, reproduction, laziness, convention, battle, sleep. Only discovery awakens. Only invention proves that one truly thinks what one thinks, whatever that may be. I think therefore I invent, I invent therefore I think. (Serres, 2000: 202/203)

Aware of the radicality and ostensible impossibility of this claim, we enjoy Serres' auxesis, first, because it counters the tendency to present the university business school and its professions against the background of 'expertise' and 'competence' and, second, because it reminds us that our primary task (not only as philosophers, but, as we believe, also as teachers and researchers in business schools) is 'to produce ideas' (Huyghe, 1993: 7). The imperative of invention and imagination thus works as an antidote to '[t]he institutions of culture, of teaching, or of research [...] [that] surround themselves with a mass of solid artifices that forbid invention or break it, that fear it like the greatest danger' (Serres, 2000: 93). Arguably, the troubadouresque borders on the polemic in as much as it tends to disqualify all educational practices whose aims are not as deep as those of philosophy or as high as those of art. It also tends to dismiss all educational practices which do not succeed in establishing an 'atmosphere of excitement' (Whitehead, 1932: 139) and in releasing the spirit of the

epicurean learners that combine adeptness with passion. On the other hand, however, the troubadouresque shows that strong views are needed and thus stresses that management education requires both the cultivation of entrepreneurial imagination and risk-taking, quite apart from a genuine love for wisdom.

With respect to the former, entrepreneurial imagination and risk-taking, we must emphasize the transformative aspect of management education implied in the image of the troubadouresque. It is important to realize that the troubadouresque runs counter to the fast-food metaphor explained in the critique of higher education insofar as it suggests an understanding of knowledge or knowing which more resembles crossing a river, entering the middle position, or the 'third space', in order to accommodate new ideas and concepts. Accordingly, entrepreneurial imagination is the practice by which one loses ground and support so as to become changed and transformed. The person who wishes to learn, be it the student or the business school teacher, must therefore embark on a voyage from the familiar to the unfamiliar. This voyage implies that learning is uncertain and risky in that it invariably represents an encounter with the incalculable other. Learning, by extension, is therefore not the simple appropriation (i.e. consumption) of knowledge, but permission for the other 'to come' (which is markedly different from 'making it come'; Derrida, 1999). This again represents the invention of the impossible, meaning that 'you can never know beforehand what will happen or whether anything at all will happen' (Hillis Miller, 2001: 69). Or, as Serres asserted in this context,

when something is learned a third person is produced [...]. The moment you acknowledge otherness, learning has this modifying effect [...]. We are talking about the educated third person begotten by the encounter between the self and the other. (Huyghe, 1993: 6)

The implication of the troubadouresque we regard as particularly attractive and valuable here is that knowing is envisaged as a process through which one multiplies oneself by the transgressive force of learning. With respect to management education, we find this image revealing, since it stresses practical learning that is not formal in nature and hence not programmable from scratch, but requires, not to say demands, the learner's imagination and creative potential. In our view, there is, then, much merit in ignoring the performative consequences of education (job offerings, titles, status, etc.) and instead concentrate on how one is transformed by one's knowledge and reflect on one's 'metamorphosis' as an aesthetic experience (Foucault, 1997). Since the troubadouresque encourages experimentation with otherness, we believe that it is through a truly entrepreneurial mindset that hitherto unrecognized potentialities of becoming can be realised.

This juxtaposition of entrepreneurial imagination and aesthetic practice brings us to the second point, the love for wisdom. The most important point to be made here is that the troubadouresque implies—in accordance with Mintzberg who deplored that the main emotion 'learned' at business

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schools is 'arrogance' whereas it should actually be 'humility' (Mintzberg, 2004: 74)—that business schools can become a hotbed of passion as well as a springboard for a kind of management education that does not consider learning as restricted to (unidirectional) faculty teaching in the classroom. Given that learning occurs in unlikely ways and at unexpected moments, it follows that the virtue of wisdom fostered by the image of the troubadoursque is about holding back rather than subscribing to the one and only solution. Serres argued that thought and tolerant wisdom only begin 'when the desire to know is purged of any compulsion to dominate' (2000: 121). Serres thus talks about learners that are not arrogant but reserved and that keep some reserve for whatever might come up: '[t]he sage thus disobeys the single law of expansion, does not always persevere in his being and thinks that elevating his own conduct to a universal law is the definition of evil as much as madness' (2000: 119). On the face of it, rather than soaking in a bath of arrogance, troubadours of knowledge are athletes of the affect (Thrift, 2004) who have both feet firmly on the ground and work hard, in the same way that artists work on their 'oeuvre'. Evidently then, passion goes beyond the idea of objective knowledge and revisable truth; it lies at the interface of knowledge and the secret. Passionate learning therefore must exceed the limits, or limitedness, of pre-established business school curricula and cultivate both patience for knowing and a sense of playfulness. This is, however, not to suggest that prevailing business school pedagogies must be dismissed lightly, but that one 'needs to leave room within the programme, at the border of the programme, for the unprogrammable, for the uncalculable' (Derrida, 2001b: 259). The troubadoursque preoccupation with passion thus implies that the business school becomes a space of potentiality as 'you can study without waiting for any efficient or immediate result [...]. So there is a possibility of what I would call playing. It's perhaps the only place within society where play is possible to such an extent' (Derrida quoted in Etchemendy, 2000).

As we believe, the passion for knowing as well as a profound openness for admitting the other are as yet all too often dismissed or set aside for whatever economic or pragmatic reasons. However, it is precisely this passion and this openness which must be seen as the unique (though still oblique and fragile) domain and responsibility of the business school to come.

Notes

- 1 Höpfl's account conjures up the metaphor of the McUniversity (Hayes and Wynyard, 2002) which comprises both a parody and political critique of the increasing instrumentalization of higher education as a result of which knowledge is seen as something (literally some thing) that one can order, prepare and provide much in the same way that one serves up ready-made meals.
- 2 Academic capitalism describes market behaviour or market-like behaviours of universities and university staff.

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- 3 Lyotard's report on the state of knowledge in the late 20th century, a report commissioned by Quebec's University Council, is probably best remembered for its 'incredulity against metanarratives' (1984: 105).
- 4 Regarding the hierarchies engendered by performativity, it becomes conceivable that academia has established and come to rely on a dividing line between economic or commissioned and so-called disinterested research (Etzkowitz, 2003). A similar distinction is made at the level of teaching: those grades and disciplines which are deemed 'useful' because they lend themselves to practical applications are increasingly separated from those which are seen as devoid of such qualities (Derrida, 2004).
- 5 Lyotard claimed that legitimization along the lines of performativity marks a state of terror, terror signifying the exclusion of alternative language games. He used the example of Auschwitz to illustrate the devastating potential of grand narratives. By laying bare that history does not inevitably move towards the better, Auschwitz expresses the symbolic end of the project of modernity (Lyotard, 1988).
- 6 As Derrida explained, 'literature seemed to me, in a confused way, to be the institution which allows one to *say* everything, in *every* way. The space of literature is not only that of an instituted *fiction* but also a *fictive institution* which in principle allows one to say everything. To say everything is no doubt to gather, by translating, all figures into one another, to totalize by formalizing, but to say everything is also to break out of prohibitions' (1992: 36; emphasis in original).
- 7 For Deleuze and Guattari (1994) the conceptual persona refers to the figure that is presupposed by a concept (rather than to assume an author). For instance, the conceptual persona of the 'cogito' is the doubting figure of Descartes. We suggest the troubadour as the conceptual persona for the concept of invention.

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