Management History in the Modern World: An Overview

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Abstract

Management history as a discipline is different from business and economic history in that it is primarily concerned with the supply side of the economic equation, with the nature of work, the ideas that guide it, and the economic wealth that is produced as a result of managerial oversight and endeavor. In terms of theoretical perspectives, management history embraces three main intellectual frameworks. The most significant of these has been associated with the founding figures of the Management History Division of the (American) Academy of Management, most particularly Claude George, Dan Wren, Ronald Greenwood, and Arthur (Art) Bedeian. Unabashed enthusiasts for free market capitalism, this US tradition is most concerned with the intellectual history of management, and the ideas that shaped managerial practice. By contrast, a different British tradition of management history associated with Sidney Pollard has been more directly focused on managerial practices, arguing that "modern management" is fundamentally different from earlier iterations found in pre-industrial societies. More recently, a critical or postmodernist tradition has gained influence in management history, an intellectual perspective that views management in largely negative terms. In this introductory chapter, we evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these three management history perspectives.

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Introduction: What Is Management History?

Producing the *Palgrave Handbook of Management History* has been a massive undertaking. Involving some 63 chapters, it explores both the ideas and experiences of management *and* the ways in which these ideas and experiences have shaped the world around them across the ages. Its approach is broad and encompassing, covering every issue that a person interested in a management-related theme would want to have include: whether that interest relates to economics, classical management thought, Marxist and postmodernist critiques of management, management practices in antiquity, the emergence of cost accounting, employment relations, the current crisis of wealth creation, or managerial practices in South America, France, Russia, India, China, or New Zealand or a range of other societies. In covering these broad areas of management's past, the *Palgrave Handbook* primarily speaks to the present, to understanding *both* the debt that we owe to the past *and* the unique features that management brings to modern democratic societies that distinguish us *from* the past.

Before advancing further, we must first ask ourselves a number of key questions. What is management history? How does it differ from business history or even economic history?

As a continuous intellectual discipline, both the origins and the continuing beating heart of management history are primarily located within the Management History Division of the (American) Academy of Management (AOM), a division I had the honor of chairing in 2016–2017. Significantly, when the AOM decided to adopt a divisional structure in 1971, the MHD was one of the ten foundational divisions. Claude George from the University of North Carolina not only chaired the MHD's inaugural meeting; he also acted as the Division's Chair for the first 3 years of its existence (Greenwood 2015). In a book first published a few years before the MHD's formation, *The History of Management Thought*, George (1968/1972: vii) declared that the purpose of management history was one of providing "a framework for understanding the development of management thought," thereby helping "to unify the broad field of management for scholars and practitioners alike." What George was clearly most interested in was an *intellectual* history of management, most particularly in the United States, and the ways in which (largely American) managerial concepts and philosophies shaped managerial practice. In an article published in 1987, "Management History: Issues and Ideas for Teaching and Research," Dan Wren – another founding member of the MHD who served as Chair in 1975 – spelt out broader objectives for management history. A figure whom my co-editor, Jeffrey Muldoon, describes in his detailed chapter on this topic, ▶ Chap. 5, "Conflicting Visions: A Recap About the Debates Within Management History," as a historian who has "occupied the commanding heights of the field," Wren (1987: 341) continued to associate management history with "the history of ideas or concepts." However, he also argued in favor of the study of institutions, the "business firm," and "organizational life cycles" (Wren 1987: 341). In doing so, Wren (1987: 342) also asked: "Managing today is different from that of last year, the last decade, or what date we choose. But *how* different?" [emphasis in original].

Implicit in Wren's question is the concept of a fundamental rupture in the history of management, a rupture that distinguishes the management of "today" from that of yesteryear. Strangely, however, Wren and his famed co-authors – most particularly Ronald Greenwood and Arthur (Art) Bedeian – continued to take an ambivalent position on this key issue. In their book, *Management Innovators: The People and Ideas That Have Shaped Modern Business*, Wren and Greenwood (1998: 6) stated that "Management is an ancient practice; it had its place (and still does) in governmental, religious, military, and other types of early organization." Wren and Greenwood (1998: 6), however, then immediately go on to state that "none of these [earlier institutions] grew to the scale and scope of the modern business enterprise, which needs to not only to adapt [to] ever-changing economic, social, and political forces but also to do this in a profitable fashion." Elsewhere, Wren and Greenwood (1998: 6) declare their book to be "the story of American business enterprise," a study that traces how American inventors and innovators changed "the way we live," creating "entirely new industries" within a "competitive environment." Implicit in these principles is not only a belief in American "exceptionalism" but also the understanding that management history differs from business history in that it pays special heed to people and their ideas. In other words, the key driver of managerial and societal change is not economics, or technology, but rather the innovative individual who transforms previous concepts and/or practices. Similar themes characterize Wren and Bedeian's *The Evolution of Management Thought*, a work that is without doubt the most influential study yet undertaken in management history. Originally a sole-authored work by Wren, with subsequent editions being co-authored with Bedeian (it is currently in its seventh edition with an eighth in the pipeline), this study continues to depict management as an "ancient" craft that can be traced back to the ancient Sumerians and Egyptians (Wren and Bedeian 1972/2017: 20). At the same time, however, it draws an implicit distinction between past and modern managerial practices, Wren and Bedeian (1972/2017: 3) opening the first chapter of their book with the following statement:

> The practice of management is ancient, but the formal study of management, based on an evolving body of knowledge is relatively new. Rarely, if ever, in human history has an activity emerged as fast as management and proven so indispensable so quickly.

In the same paragraph, Wren and Bedeian (1972/2017: 3) also hark back to the theme of George's (1968/1972) earlier work, declaring "the evolution" of management "thought" to be their "primary focus." In pursuing this theme, Wren and Bedeian – like George, Wren and Greenwood – are clearly guided by an underlying belief in American "exceptionalism," largely confining their study to American thinkers, practitioners, and experiences. Wren and Bedeian also differ from the "critical studies" that now dominate much of the field in management and organizational studies in being unabashed enthusiasts for free market capitalism.

Wren and Bedeian have profoundly influenced understandings of management history not only through their research but also through their teaching. Between the two of them, they helped train a generation of management historians – including my co-editor, Jeffrey Muldoon – as they turned the University of Oklahoma (Wren) and Louisiana State University (Bedeian) into bastions for management history scholarship. From these bastions, Wren and Bedeian acted as mentors, colleagues, and intellectual leaders for US management history, a tradition that placed ideas and intellectual history at the center of study. Accordingly, if one talked to an executive member of the MHD at the AOM's Annual Meeting prior to say 2010, one could almost be assured that one was speaking to a colleague of Wren or Bedeian, if not one of their former students.

Long dominant, the Wren-Greenwood-Bedeian school of management history was not, however, the only intellectual tradition within management history in the 1960s and 1970s. In Britain, a different tradition emerged through the work of Sidney Pollard (1958, 1963, 1965), a Jewish-Austrian refugee from fascism who spent most of his career at the University of Sheffield. As I discuss at depth in a subsequent chapter – "Conflicting Understandings of the Industrial Revolution and its Consequences: The Founding Figures of British Management History" – Pollard differed from George, Wren, Greenwood, and Bedeian not only in terms of his intellectual background but also in relation to the debates with which he engaged. Whereas George, Wren, Greenwood, and Bedeian were first and foremost students of management, Pollard was an economic historian whose research conclusions turned him into a management historian. Like Arnold Toynbee (1884/1894), John Nef (1932a, 1932b, 1934, 1937, 1943, 1950/1963), and John Clapham (1926/1967, 1932/1967, 1938/1951) before him, the most important questions in human existence for Pollard related to the transformative rupture that we know as the Industrial Revolution, a transformation that produced an industrial civilization unlike any before it.

Whereas the works of George, Wren, Greenwood, and Bedeian were informed by an implicit belief in American "exceptionalism," Pollard's work was informed by underlying assumptions as to British "exceptionalism." Unlike Wren, Greenwood, and Bedeian, Pollard was also unequivocal in drawing – as the title of his major book, *The Genesis of Modern Management: A Study of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain*, suggests – a sharp distinction between pre-modern and modern forms of management. In Pollard's (1965: 6–7) estimation, modern managers in democratic, market economies differ from those found in both pre-modern and totalitarian societies in having the following characteristics: they deal with a free and mobile workforce, they need to possess an acute understanding of costs, they sell into a competitive market economy, they oversee capital-intensive forms of production, and they need to constantly innovate. Above all, Pollard associated the Industrial Revolution – and the industrial civilization that it spawned – with the transformation of managers into a new professionalized social class, creating wealth as a paid occupation that typically owns few of the productive assets it oversees. As to the nature of the Industrial Revolution, Pollard argued it was first and foremost a "managerial revolution" rather than a "technological revolution" and that modern management was both the creation and the creator of the Industrial Revolution. For the hallmark of the Industrial Revolution, Pollard (1965: 102) argued, was not so much technological change as,

> . . . improvements in organization . . .involving better layout of factory space, division of labour, design of the product with the process of production in mind, interchangeability of parts, control of raw material stocking and supply.

As a management historian, Pollard differed from his American counterparts in being more concerned about managerial *practices* than managerial *ideas*. Despite such differences, however, Pollard shared more common ground with his US counterparts than he did with either his fellow economic historians or the emerging leaders of business history such as Alfred D Chandler. Like Wren, Greenwood, and Bedeian, Pollard believed that "modern management" as manifest in liberal, market economies is a progressive social force. Nowhere, Pollard argued, was this more evident than in its relationship with a new class of legally free wage laborers, a workforce that had to be not only recruited and managed but also motivated. As Pollard (1965: 6–7) explained it, "the absence of legal enforcement of unfree work was not only one of the market characteristics" of the new managerial form of capitalism. It was also "one of its most seminal ideas, underlying its ultimate power to create a more civilized society." As a management historian – rather than a business or economic historian – Pollard was also more concerned about the *supply* side of the economic equation than the demand side. This differentiated his ideas from those of Chandler (1965, 1977, 1990) and subsequent business historians, who place greater emphasis on the ways in which the railroads and steam-powered shipping created new mass consumer markets after 1830. For Pollard, the most important driver "from the side of demand" was not the consumer, but rather the supply-side needs of other industries. Consequently, for Pollard (1958: 217) the key event in the Industrial Revolution, around which everything else turned, was "the emergence of an engineering industry," capable of creating and maintaining "the new equipment and the motors or engines needed by the first industries to be mechanised." From this central and indispensable core, Pollard (1958: 217) identified a ripple effect that fuelled industrial take-off as the engineering industry fostered increased coal and iron production, improved transport, and enhanced managerial and employee skills. In other words, in the Pollardian strand of management history, "modern management" is primarily worthy of its study because of its capacity to *create* wealth rather than because of the consumer demand that benefits from that wealth.

In recent decades, traditional forms of management history – be they those informed by the American tradition of George, Wren, Greenwood, and Bedeian or the Britain tradition founded by Pollard – have come under sustained attack from postmodernist-informed "critical management studies." In their *A New History of*

Management, for example, Cummings et al. (2017: 35, 41) declared their intention to write a "Foucauldian"-inspired "counter-history," directed toward "overturning" our "assumptions of how management studies came into being . . . [and] what 'good' it seeks to serve." Elsewhere, in a study entitled, "A History of Management Histories," Jacques and Durepos (2015: 97) similarly condemn, "Management histories that . . .have a scientistic slant and appear timeless, universal, linear, progressive . . .These histories portray our current condition as an unquestioned and uncontested outcome of our past."

The new "critical perspectives" owe a clear debt to French philosophers such as Jacques Derrida (1967a/1976, 1967b/2001), Jean-Francois Lyotard (1979/1986, 1988/1991), Michel Foucault (1966/1994, 1969/1972, 1975/1991, 1976/1978), and Bruno Latour (1991/1993). In the view of Lyotard (1979/1986: 51), for example, modern capitalism and its associated systems of management was an inherently "dehumanizing process," a system of rigorously enforced inhumanity undertaken in the name of "efficiency and development" (Lyotard 1988/1991: 67, 6). Lyotard's postmodernist colleague, Michel Foucault, painted an even darker picture of "the development of capitalism," associating it with new systems of "micro-power" that entailed "infinitesimal surveillances, permanent controls, extremely meticulous orderings of space" (Foucault 1976/1978: 140, 145). For Derrida as well, the modern industrial civilization produced by the West was a retrograde endeavor. As Derrida (1993/2006: 106) expressed it in a lecture given in 1993, "never have violence, inequality, exclusion, famine, and thus economic oppression affected so many human being in the history of earth and humanity."

If we are to sum up the three main theoretical frameworks within management history – the George-Wren-Greenwood-Bedeian tradition, the Pollardian perspective, and the new critical or postmodernist viewpoint – we can ascertain areas of both agreement and difference. Implicit if not explicit in all three perspectives is the belief that nineteenth-century industrialization represented a fundamental break with the past, creating new systems of management and profoundly different economic and social relationship both within the workplace and without. Despite the hostility of the "critical" perspective to industrial capitalism, modern forms of management, and "ethnocentrism" (Derrida 1967a/1976: 3; Whittle and Wilson 2015), all three traditions are also Eurocentric in terms of the primary focus of their research and the methodologies that they use to study the past. Both the George-Wren-Greenwood-Bedeian and Pollardian traditions are positivist in methodological orientation, believing that the primary task of the historian entails the reconstruction of a reasonably accurate understanding of the past. Art Bedeian (1996: 312), for example, in summing up what he believed to be the guiding principles for any researcher, declared, "that truth is to be sought in an independent and rational manner." The idea that one can come to an "objective" assessment of the past, based upon rational and dispassionate criteria is, of course, an anathema to the postmodernist management historian. In articulating an alternative perspective in an article entitled "Research Strategies for Organizational History," Rowlinson et al. (2014: 253, 257) dismiss the positivist claim that there is an objective truth "that exists independently and prior to being discovered and told by the historian," arguing instead in favor of the view that there is a “fictive” element in any historical account. In a similar vein, Durepos (2015: 162) rejects the view that “management and organizational history” can be built upon “truth claims, objective history, fixed meanings.” Instead of giving a primacy to “objectivity” and “truth,” Durepos (2015: 161) recommends a deliberate “destabilizing” of the “dominant narratives” of the past. Cummings et al. (2017: 333) also declare that the purpose of their *A New History of Management* is one of “unsettling” established “orthodoxies” in ways that “lead to new thinking and liberating actions.”

Although the postmodernist approach to methodology makes it the declared foe of positivism, it nevertheless remains the case that postmodernist frameworks are as much a product of the intellectual traditions of Western Europe as any other. As I discuss in ► Chap. 17, “Foundations: The Roots of Idealist and Romantic Opposition to Capitalism and Management,” postmodernism is the intellectual offspring of German idealist philosophy, a school of thought that always paid greater heed to individual consciousness than the circumstances of the material world. Among the German idealist thinkers, postmodernism in all its hues owes a particular debt to Friedrich Nietzsche, who argued that history – whether accurate or otherwise – is only useful to the extent that it inspires action and that “Ultimately the point is to what *end* a lie is told” (Nietzsche 1895/1990: 127). Rather than being directly inspired by Nietzsche and German idealism, however, most of today’s postmodernist and “amodernist” management historians (Michael Rowlinson, John Hassard, Stephanie Decker, Gabrielle Durepos, Albert Mills) obtain their guiding principles through the mediating intellectual prisms of Foucault and the American postmodernist, the late Hayden White. Like Nietzsche, Hayden White (1973: 371) declared that historical writing should create an “illusionary world, outside the original world of pure power relationships,” a world “in which the weak” forge a different image of both past and future so as to challenge “the authority” of the “strong.” In other words, historical accuracy is of little value in and of itself. Instead, management history – like all forms of history – only obtains meaning through its capacity to inspire the weak and the oppressed into active resistance against established authority.

If the critical or postmodernist perspective differs from the older traditions in management history in terms of methodology, it also differs in the issues to which it primarily speaks. Whereas both the George-Wren-Greenwood-Bedeian and Pollardian traditions were primarily concerned with the “supply side” of the economic equation – with modern management’s unprecedented capacity to create wealth – the critical perspective is, as Mollan (2019: 513) recently observed, preoccupied with “postmodernist concerns with power and its distribution,” an orientation that prioritizes “inequality and discrimination in work, pay, and advancement based on gender, ethnicity, race, or sexuality.” A preoccupation with the distribution of wealth, rather than its creation, is of course hardly confined to Marxist and postmodernists. Along with worries as to climate change, concerns as to social, racial, and gender inequality increasingly dominate academic disciplines in management, business, and the social sciences more generally. In his hugely influential *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Thomas Picketty (2013/2014: 15), for example, had a chapter heading entitled: "Putting the Distributional Question Back at the Heart of Economic Analysis." Elsewhere, Picketty (2013/2014: 257, 259) declares that "half the population" of Western Europe "own virtually nothing" and that for "millions of people, 'wealth' amounts to little more than a few weeks' wages in a checking account."

In many ways the growing concern with *distribution* of wealth, and a corresponding decline in the traditional interest of management historians with wealth creation, is paradoxical. In most advanced and developing economies, per capita income levels are at historic highs. In comparison with past societies, comparatively few people are employed in low-paid, menial jobs. In the United States in 2018, for example, 43.5% of the workforce were employed in managerial and professional jobs. Only 22.7% worked in low-paid retail, hospitality, or service jobs. All the rest worked in comparatively well-paid jobs in manufacturing, construction, mining, protective services, and private-sector administration (United States Department of Labor 2019). The percentage of national gross domestic product (GDP) allocated to public social expenditure is also approaching record highs in most OECD countries, averaging slightly more than 20% of GDP. In the United States, where public social expenditure is close to the OECD average, the amount expended in 2018, measured as a share of GDP, is more than double that spent in 1960. In 2018, expenditures were also approximately 50% higher than they were in 1990 (OECD 2019). Similarly, although no one would deny that discrimination on the base of race, ethnicity, and religion still occurs, it is nevertheless the case that discrimination because of gender, race, or sexual orientation is illegal in virtually every advanced economy. Female workforce participation is – in virtually every society – at or close to historic highs.

The comparative disinterest with wealth creation in modern academia points, it is arguable, to the comparative success of past managerial endeavors. For countless generations a matter of overriding concern, wealth creation (i.e., production, logistics, entrepreneurship, productivity, etc.), now appears a secondary issue. While happily conceding that issues relating to inequality deserve the attention of management historians, it is nevertheless also the case that a declining interest in wealth creation has arguably contributed to management history's inability to contribute in a meaningful way to recent debates in economic history as to when, why, and how the wealth-producing capacities – and associated living standards – of Northwestern Europe diverged from those found elsewhere. The product of the so-called "convergence/divergence" debate (i.e., when did the economic capacities of advanced European societies diverge and converge with those located elsewhere in the globe), this emerging literature (Allen 2003; Allen et al. 2011; Broadberry and Gupta 2006; Parthasarathi 1998; Pomeranz 2000; Li and Zanden 2012; van Zanden 2002; van Bavel and van Zanden 2004) is highly significant for management history for two main reasons. First, it points to the great difficulty that pre-industrial societies experience in trying to escape from what Allen (2003: 406) describes as "the Malthusian trap," in which a growing population eventually confronts an apparently immutable productive ceiling. The result is a vicious historical cycle of diminished per capita wealth, famine, disease, population collapse, and an eventual demographic recovery that ends up confronting the same immutable ceiling. The classic example of this is found in the experiences of Western Europe between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. As Fig. 1 indicates – which draws on the so-called Phelps Brown-Hopkins (1956) wage-price index for skilled building workers in southern England between 1264 and 1650 – a collapse in population in the mid-fourteenth century caused by the Black Death resulted in a massive spike in living standards as the survivors opted to farm only the most fertile land. As population recovered, however, living standards collapsed. Accordingly, in the mid-seventeenth century, the real wage of a skilled English worker was little better than that enjoyed by their counterpart in the thirteenth century.

The obvious conclusion that one is forced to draw from Fig. 1 is that the many managerial and technological advances obtained by management during antiquity, the High Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Reformation – printing, blast furnaces, windmills, compasses, new foods from the Americas, double-entry book-keeping, bills of exchange, and merchant banking – were incapable of freeing Western Europe from the "Malthusian trap" in which it found itself. By comparison, Fig. 2, which draws on research by Broadberry and Gupta (2006) into real wages in Europe, India and East Asia between 1500 and 1800 allows for very different conclusions. In tracing the "grain wage" of unskilled workers in a variety of locations – including southern England, Milan and Florence (considered together), and India – Broadberry and Gupta's (2006) research indicates that living standards c.1600 were much the same whether you lived in England, Florence, Vienna, Valencia, or northern or western India [note: a grain wage measures the kilograms of wheat a person could buy if they spent all their wage on wheat or a calorific equivalent in rye, barley, or rice]. Everywhere, societies appeared stuck in a classic Malthusian trap as population grew faster than available resources. In Europe, the possession of a colonial empire – although it enriched a comparatively small number

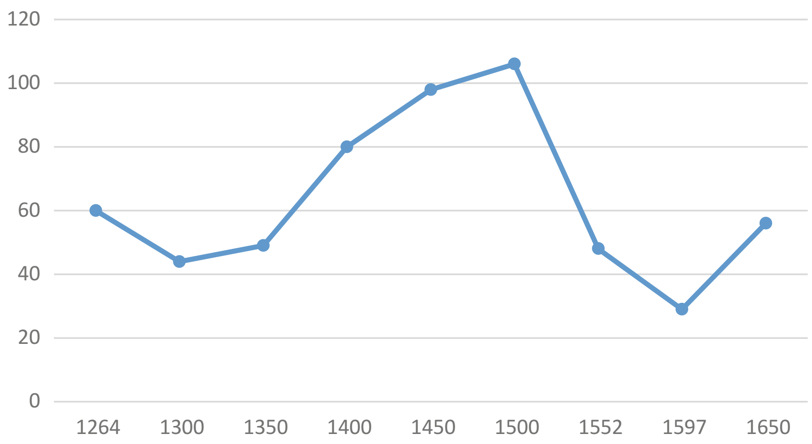

Fig. 1 Real wage of skilled building worker in Southern England, 1264–1650 (1447 = 100) (Source: Phelps Brown and Hopkins: "Seven centuries of . . . builders' wage rates," Appendix B)

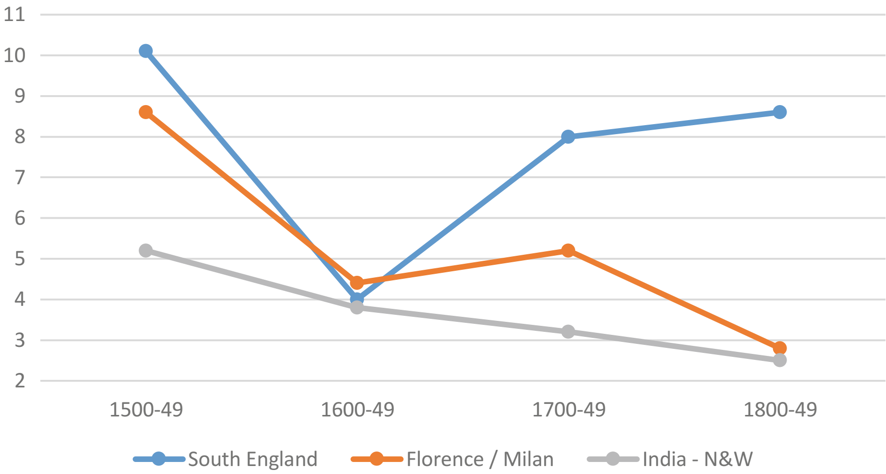

Fig. 2 Real wages (in kg of wheat) of unskilled building laborers, 1500–1549 to 1800–1849: Southern England, Florence/Milan, and Northern and Western India (Source: Broadberry and Gupta, Early Great Modern Divergence, Tables 2, 6)

of fortunate individuals – did little to guarantee improved overall circumstances. In Madrid and Valencia, for example, Broadberry and Gupta (2006: 6) calculate that the typical unskilled worker was poorer in 1700–1740 than they had been in 1500–1549, when the riches of Mexico and the Andes were still in the initial stages of Spanish exploitation. Palma and Reis's (2019) recent study of Portuguese circumstances also indicates that Portugal also gained no fundamental economic or managerial benefit from its colonial empire. As Palma and Reis (2019: 478) record, "Over the long run, there was no per capita growth: by 1850 per capita incomes were not different from what they had been in the early 1530s." By 1700–1749, however, the economic trajectory of England experienced a dramatic change, real wages moving sharply upward even as those elsewhere continued to decline, a trend that was to become even more pronounced in the nineteenth century.

What caused English (and, to a lesser degree, Dutch) circumstances to diverge so fundamentally from that found elsewhere? This is arguably *the* most important question in not only management history but also in the whole human experience. By understanding the answer to this question, we gain insight not only into the role of management in historical change but also as to the circumstances that underpin economic dynamism, entrepreneurship, managerial endeavor, improved real wages, and social cohesion in our own world. In many ways, this book series the *Palgrave Handbook of Management History* can be construed as an attempt to understand not only the answer to the question of why England followed a different trajectory from other societies – leading to what the economic historian John Nef (1950/1963) described as a fundamentally new "industrial civilization" – but also the *consequences* that ensued from the managerial and technological revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Inevitably, those who lived within the confines of the new transformed global economy experienced a wide-range of experiences. As we shall ascertain, things looked very different from the point of view of the worker in the Bengal jute-mill, where traditional Indian values remained strong, than they appeared in New World societies such as Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand. The maturation of the new managerial and industrial order also produced – as we shall explore – not only new understandings of management but also new social tensions, economic crises, and transformative successes and failures. Only by looking at all of the complexities that produced the modern world, and the similarities and variations within it, can we fully comprehend the full story of management history.

A Note on the Meaning and Nature of Management

In the opening chapter of the *Palgrave Handbook of Management History,* ▶ Chap. 2, "What Is Management?," I explore in some depth the nature and meaning of management – and the different forms that it has assumed in pre-modern societies, modern totalitarian regimes, and modern liberal democracies. It is nevertheless useful at this point to consider how the main theoretical perspectives in management history – the George-Wren-Greenwood-Bedeian tradition, the Pollardian framework, and the critical or postmodernist perspective – each understand the term "management" and how these understandings differ from the standard textbook definition (i.e., management is "planning, organizing, leading and controlling"), a definition whose broad scope allows virtually any system of organized work to be considered under managerial direction.

In the introduction to their book, *Management Innovators*, Wren and Greenwood differentiated "ancient management" from management as found in advanced capitalist societies, associating the latter with three unique characteristics. First, Wren and Greenwood (1998: 6) argued modern forms of management are distinguishable by the "scale and scope" of their operations, the scale of the firm's activities demanding the formation of the "modern business enterprise." Second, the enterprise needs "to adapt" to "ever-changing economic, social, and political forces." Finally, the enterprise needs to operate "in a profitable fashion." Clearly, this is a tighter and more restrictive definition than the classic textbook fashion. By associating "management" with the "modern business enterprise," however, it not only differentiates modern "management" from pre-modern management, it also technically excludes modern small-scale activities undertaken by the self-employed and the small family business.

A more useful definition and discussion is found in *The Evolution of Management Thought*, where Wren and Bedeian (1972/2017: 3) begin their first chapter by stating: "For a broad working definition, management may be viewed as the activity whose purpose is to achieve desired results through the efficient allocation and utilization of human and material resources." Significantly, Wren and Bedeian (1972/2017: 3–10) then proceed to distinguish various forms of management – which they broadly group into three categories (traditional, command, and market) – according to various attributes: cultural, economic, social, political, human, technological, and organizational. Unlike economists and Marxists, who tend to see new forms of technology as the key driver of innovation and change, Wren and Bedeian (1972/2017: 7) relegate technology to a secondary role behind managerial innovation and organization, declaring technology to be "a means to an end that can produce beneficial as well as detrimental results." Wren and Bedeian also draw a clear distinction between "tradition-bound" managerial activities from those undertaken according to what they refer to as the "market method." In 'tradition-bound' societies, Wren and Bedeian (1972/2017: 5, 7) argue, management suffers from a lack of "innovation," offering their citizens "little incentive to seek new knowledge, to explore, or to experiment." If, in Wren and Bedeian's (1972/2017: 5–6) view, "modern societies" result from a combination of "tradition-bound" approaches, centralized "command" systems, and "the market method," it is nevertheless clearly the latter approach that is held to be superior. In Wren and Bedeian's (1972/2017: 6) estimation, the "market method" is more than a system of market exchanges. Rather it is recognized "as an economic philosophy," a set of principles that creates "the need for a formal body of management thought" and which "opens the way to the competitive use of resources."

Although the Wren-Bedeian formulation provides us with a far more sophisticated definition that the standard textbook description (i.e., planning, organizing, leading, controlling), it nevertheless suffers from some arguable flaws, most particularly when it comes to distinguishing managerial activity in pre-modern market economies from that found in industrialized capitalist societies. If we turn our mind, for example, to Renaissance Italy and the thriving commercial metropolis of Venice, we can clearly perceive a society characterized not only by managerial activities but also an economy operating according to the "market method." "The island city at the end of the fifteenth century was," Jacob Burckhardt (1867/1878: 51) famously observed, "the jewel-basket of the world," the place "where the business of the world is transacted." Of the Venetian businessperson, the great Belgium historian, Henri Pirenne (1925/1952: 86), declared that "No scruple had any weight with the Venetians. Their religion was the religion of business men." In the early fourteenth century, the Venetian arsenal or shipbuilding yard was also the most extensive manufacturing facility in Europe, covering some 32 acres at the entrance way to the Grand Canal (Nef 1950/1963: 65). Venice was also the birthplace of the commercial bank "cheque" and of double-entry bookkeeping, Luca Pacioli (1494/1994: 4) declaring that the double-entry system described by him to be the one "used in Venice." Yet, for all of its notable achievements, the Venetian economy little resembled a modern market economy. In terms of both production and exchange, Venice's merchants catered for a tiny elite market, excelling as they did in the production of expensive textiles and glassware. Writing of the situation that prevailed in the thirteenth century, Pirenne (1936: 161) observed that "the tonnage of a single [early] twentieth-century ship" was equal in tonnage "to that of the whole Venetian or Genoese fleet." Because the demand for its manufactured products among gullible Italian, German, and French aristocrats far exceeded demand, Venetian merchants had little need to concern themselves with costs. Even if a Venetian merchant was driven to seek efficiencies in production, any such move would have been stymied by the various craft guilds, institutions that North and Thomas (1973: 57) accurately refer to as "early-day monopolists." Despite the appearances conveyed by the activities at the arsenal, capital intensity in Venetian production was low. Moreover, those capital goods that did exist (warehouses, spinning wheels, weaving frames, ships) were – given the European-wide shortage of iron and steel – invariably made of wood. In the absence of artificial forms of energy (i.e., peat, coal, oil, gas, etc.), Venetian society also placed insatiable demands on forest reserves for domestic cooking and heating, for the charcoal used in iron making, and for the firing of bricks and glass. As Venetian society, and that of Renaissance Italy more generally, hit a Malthusian resource ceiling, all available sources of wood were felled. In Genoa, Venice's great commercial rival, the price of wood used in shipbuilding rose 12-fold between the late fifteenth century and the late sixteenth century (Cipolla 1981: 246). Similar price rises would have been experienced in Venice. In consequence, for all its apparent managerial and commercial dynamism, Venice proved no more capable of breaking through the apparently immutable Malthusian ceiling than any other Italian society, experiencing the same general decline in living standards that characterized Milan and Florence (see Fig. 2).

If the Wren-Bedeian definition of management – for all of its obvious benefits when compared to the standard textbook delineation – remains ambivalent as to the differences between pre-modern and modern forms of management within market economies, when we turn our attention to the critical or postmodernist tradition, we ascertain distinctions that are both clearer and more problematic.

Arguably, the most determined attempt to define both the origins and meaning of the concept of "management" within the critical or postmodernist tradition is found in Jacques and Durepos's study, "A History of Management Histories." Dismissing "the bland impressions" associated with the "Wren and Bedeian" formulation, Jacques and Durepos (2015: 101) argue that "management did not just happen." Instead, drawing on a mid-nineteenth century book by Freeman Hunt (*Work and Wealth: Maxims for Merchants and Men of Business*), Jacques and Durepos (2015: 97) describe "the history of management knowledge as a crawl out of the primordial ooze." In their view, "management" – unlike various pre-modern forms of workplace supervision – is *not* an activity inherent to all societies. Rather, Jacques and Durepos (2015: 101) somehow conclude, "What is now called management emerges from several major forces related to American industrialization beginning in the 1870s and [was] largely complete by 1920." In other words, in attempting to define "management," Jacques and Durepos advocate a form of reverse American "exceptionalism," whereby US management and business is declared the global leader in ignominy rather than innovation.

To prove their point that "management" is a fundamentally new concept in the human experience, Jacques and Durepos (2015: 100) point to the fact that the term is not used in a number of nineteenth-century texts, ignoring the research by Muldoon and Marin (2012) that point to the concept entering the English lexicon in the late sixteenth century. In Jacques and Durepos's estimation, it is also not industrial capitalism per se that is the principal source of oppression, as it was for Marx and Engels (1848/1953: 61) who declared in 1848 in their *Communist Manifesto* that "proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains" and "a world to win." Nor, presumably, is it factory mechanization per se, a process that was obvious in England by 1770, a century before the date that Jacques and Durepos associate with the emergence of "management." Instead, Jacques and Durepos (2015: 101) contend that the inauguration of new systems of management in the United States after 1870 was central to an employer conspiracy to silence "the fight that was going on between labour and employers for authority within the factory." Whereas, previously, Jacques and Durepos (2015: 101) claim, employers had instituted "an American 'Reign of Terror'" against workers, the post-1870 systems of management enveloped workers in a "narrative of [employer] legitimation," a discourse that emphasized education, rationality, fairness, and employee welfare rather than overt oppression and violence. Implicit in the Jacques-Durepos definition of management is the assumption – common to critical/postmodernist scholars – that culture is of overriding importance in the workplace, as it is everywhere else. If one holds to this view, then it does not require a physical revolution to break the power of capitalism and management. Rather we can follow the advice of Nietzsche (1886/1989: 31, 27), who declared that through acts of will it is always possible to break the "invisible spell" of societal mores, or of Foucault (1966/1994: xx), who similarly believed that we can break free of the "fundamental codes" of "culture" through acts of will.

Superficially attractive, the Jacques-Durepos argument that the concept of management was a post-1870 American invention does not survive cursory examination. In the pages of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, for example, an aristocratic concern as to efficient estate management pervades almost every chapter, the central character noting how a neighbor "engaged a German expert from Moscow and paid him 500 roubles to investigate the management of their property, and found that they were losing 3000 roubles a year on farming" (1876/1978: 357). Similarly, in Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, written when serfdom was still the central institution in Russian society, the same concern with more efficient forms of management is once more evident, one of the central characters (Bazarov) complaining to his friend:

> I've seen your father's entire establishment . . . The cattle are poor, the horses, run-down. The buildings are in bad shape and the workers look like confirmed loafers . . . And the good little peasants are taking your father for all he's worth. (Turgenev 1862/2009: 34)

If we go even further back in time to the first surviving textbook on farm management, or indeed on any form of management, Cato the Elder's (160 BC/1913: 34) *De Agricultura*, we read the following advice directed to estate managers or overseers:

> He should strive to be expert in all kinds of work, and . . . often lend a hand. By doing so, he will better understand the point of view of his hands . . . First up in the morning, he should be the last to bed at night.

The Jacques-Durepos argument that late nineteenth-century American managers were the first to locate supervisory practices within a cultural context – one that emphasized fairness and worker welfare while simultaneously advancing employer interests – is also without merit. In Tolstoy's (1876/1978: 363) *Anna Karenina*, for example, we read how the lead character (Levin) observes that Russian farm management was only successful when it interested "labourers in the success of the work," appealing to peasants "not as abstract man power" but rather as Russians with peculiar national instincts and values. If we look to the British Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is also evident that cultural concerns were at the forefront of management thinking as managers sought to implement new systems of wealth creation. As the noted English labor historian E. P. Thompson (1967) observed in an article entitled "Time, Work-discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," the precondition for the success of industrial capitalism rested on management's capacity to instill a sense of "time discipline" among workers. Whereas pre-industrial forms of work are largely individualistic, it making little difference exactly when a weaver or farmer starts work, industrial capitalism is collectivist in its work methods. Typically, a factory will not operate, and a plane will not fly, unless all workers are present at their designated time. In instilling this sense of "time discipline," Thompson (1963/1968: 451) – a lifelong socialist – believed that management was profoundly altering society for the better, noting how between 1760 and 1830 "The 'average' English working man became more disciplined, more subject to the productive tempo of the 'clock', more reserved and methodical, less violent." In early industrial Britain, Robert Owen was also hardly unique in establishing a model village community, New Lanark, for his workforce: a community in which Owen provided his workers with houses, shops, sporting facilities, and churches. Far from being rarities, Pollard (1965: 200) observed that "A list of large works providing their own attached cottage estates or a controlling share of them reads like a roll-call of the giants of the industrial revolution."

In considering the distinction between pre-modern and modern forms of management, assuming that there are in fact profound differences, we can ascertain that on this point both the Wren-Bedeian and the Jacques-Durepos definitions of management are found wanting. Jacques and Durepos solve the difficulty of delineating pre-modern forms of management from modern manifestations by a simple sleight of hand: they deny the existence of management prior to its supposed initiation in post-1870 America. Wren and Bedeian, by contrast, thoughtfully draw important distinctions between "tradition-bound" managerial systems and those that are underpinned by "market" methods, without differentiating how "market-focused" managerial systems have marked differences depending on whether or not they are part of a modern industrial society. In comparison, Pollard, in his most notable study, *The Genesis of Modern Management*, placed the distinction between "modern management" and earlier expressions at the forefront of his work. As noted earlier, Pollard (1965: 6–7) associated "modern management" with six unique characteristics which he argued were either partially or fully absent in earlier iterations of managerial practice: they deal with a free and mobile workforce, they need to possess an acute understanding of costs, they sell into a competitive market economy, they oversee capital-intensive forms of production, they need to constantly innovate, and they have attributes in terms of training and responsibilities that differentiate them from entrepreneurs on one side and the workplace supervisor on the other.

One of the factors that caused Pollard to argue for such a tight definition of "modern management" is found in the fact that he focused his research on a restricted managerial experience, the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain between 1760 and 1830, a period that he associated with a total transformation in the human condition. This narrow focus was, however, arguably a cause of weakness as well as strength. The dates chosen by Pollard for the Industrial Revolution (i.e., 1760 to 1830) correspond to the accession of George III and the death of George IV rather than to any profound technological or managerial change. As such they follow the convention established by Arnold Toynbee (1884/1894) in his posthumously published, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century in England*. In attempting to compress the transformative managerial experience into an arbitrarily demarked 60 period, Pollard was required to understate both earlier and subsequent achievements. Thus, on the one hand, Pollard (1965: 156) argued that the period between 1760 and 1830 was unique in possessing a new class of professional managers, a cohort that he described as "one of the most dynamic social groups of their age, responsible for initiating many of its decisive changes." On the other hand, Pollard (1965: 127) correctly pointed to the fact that the growing number of factories in post-1760 Britain was fortunate in being able to draw on the large class of professional managers that already existed in the English coal industry. As Pollard well realized, his recognition of the importance of the coal industry to British managerial and industrial advancement brought him into conflict with the earlier work of the American economic historian, John Nef, who argued that the expansion of English coal production was seminal to what he claimed was an earlier "industrial revolution" in England between 1540 and 1640. Assuming immense size, and utilizing a level of capital intensity unknown elsewhere, the British coal industry by the 1630s was producing some two million tons of product per year, at a time "when the rest of the world combined," as Nef (1950/1963: 14) recorded, "probably produced less than one-fifth as much."

If Pollard paid insufficient heed to managerial advances prior to 1760, he even more obviously understated the developments that occurred after 1830, most particularly in transport, where steam-powered railroads and iron-hulled ships created a mass global market for the first time. "At once effect and cause," the English historian John Clapham (1926/1967: 425) noted, "railway development coincided with a development of metallurgy and mining quite without precedent." In every field of metal production, engineering, and mining, the needs of the railroads drove large-scale increases in production. In 1847–1848 alone, British railroads placed orders for 400,000 tons of iron running rails (Clapham 1926/1967: 428).

Locomotives and rolling stock also placed huge demands on iron smelters, as did a booming export trade. As most readers would be aware, Clapham's highlighting of the railroad "revolution" of the 1840s was one subsequently taken up by Chandler (1977: 79–80), who argued that not only were the railroads "the pioneers in the management of modern business enterprise"; they were also "essential to high-volume production and distribution – the hallmark of the large modern manufacturing or marketing enterprises."

One thing that is apparent if we look across the three main intellectual traditions within management history – the George-Wren-Greenwood-Bedeian tradition, the Pollardian perspective, and the critical or postmodernist theoretical framework – is that none of them utilizes the common textbook definition (i.e., planning, organizing, leading, controlling). Implicit or explicit in all three management history traditions is the viewpoint that what Pollard called "modern management," and Wren and Bedeian referred to as the "market method," is of comparatively recent origin. It is also true, however, that as a comparatively recent societal institution, "modern" management builds on earlier experiences and achievements, in terms of not only organizational skills and practices but also technology, language, culture, legal frameworks, urban and rural infrastructure, financial practices, and the like. Accordingly, in perusing the *Palgrave Handbook of Management History*, the reader needs to have constantly in the back of their minds the following question: How did a particular historical practice or intellectual approach contribute to the development of management, *and* how are such practices and approaches different from the experiences and intellectual premises of management in modern, liberal democratic societies?

In the two and a half years that I have been involved in the compilation and writing of the *Palgrave Handbook of Management History*, it was perhaps inevitable that my own ideas as to the defining characteristics of "modern" management would undergo amendment and modification. Although my ideas on management history remain essentially Pollardian, I nevertheless believed that Pollard erred in two principal ways. First, as this preceding discussion suggests, Pollard understated managerial achievements both before and after the British Industrial Revolution of 1760 to 1830. In doing so, he arguably paid too much attention to managerial achievements in manufacturing and insufficient heed to managerial gains in agriculture, mining, finance, and transport. Second, I believe that Pollard – as with most other management historians – understated the extent to which modern management and modern industrial society are both energy-intensive and metal-intensive. Given the modern concerns with global warming and climate change, the association of modern management with these attributes would appear obvious. However, I believe most of us underestimate the extent to which modern societies rely on both artificial forms of energy and smelted metals. As previously noted, in a pre-industrial society, there is typically only one source of energy for heating, cooking, the firing of bricks and glass, the processing of alcoholic spirits, food processing, etc. – wood. Prior to the eighteenth century, wood was also required for charcoal in the forging or casting of iron, a production attribute that severely restricted the production and use of iron. In the absence of iron, capital intensity was more or less impossible. Where metal was used in manufacture or agriculture, it was typically only applied on the cutting or working surfaces. The low level of metal usage that characterized pre-modern societies can be ascertained from the fact that between 1700 and 1710 the production of cast iron in Great Britain amounted to a miniscule 24,000 tons per year. Much of this production, moreover, would have been consumed by the military for use as cannon, muskets, iron cannon balls, and the like. A century later, by comparison, Britain's cast iron production amounted to more than ten times this amount. In 1837, more than a million tons was smelted – a 400-fold increase on early eighteenth-century output (Riden 1977). For the first time in the human experience, a hardened smelted metal had become a common rather than a rare commodity. This revolution in iron production – made possible due to changes in smelting techniques that allowed for the substitution of coal-derived coke in lieu of wood-derived wood – not only fundamentally altered the nature of management, heralding capital-intensive production methods in manufacturing, agriculture, and transport. It also allowed society to break out of the Malthusian trap which had previously restricted the economic and social possibilities of *every* society in the human experience.

Cross-References

▶ Certain Victory, Uncertain Time: The Limitations of Nineteenth-Century Management Thought
▶ Conflicting Visions: A Recap About the Debates Within Management History
▶ Foundations: The Roots of Idealist and Romantic Opposition to Capitalism and Management
▶ What Is Management?

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