
A response essay to TAMARA Manifesto

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Full Text (975 words)

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As this is not up a paper as such it is not possible to discuss the (Tamara Manifesto) treatise in terms of the review criteria set out as per the reviewers report. I therefore intend to present some overall impressions and then proceed to introduce possible editing points throughout the article. I hope my comments will be taken in the spirit that I relay them, which is as constructive critique. I should say at the outset that I am totally in support of David's intentions however I have some discomfort with his manner of presentation.

While David would no doubt define himself as a resistant postmodernist, there is a tendency (as Foster warns) in the manifesto to theorise from within the 'structural basis of modernisation'. This is largely because many complex and problematic relationships are asserted without qualification. For example, the Frankfurt School is claimed to have "produced a critical science". Given the critical engagement with science that its members engage in [e.g. Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972,1947] some expansion on a critical notion of science is imperative. As James Schmidt (1998 Journal of Social Research) notes, in the Dialectic of Enlightenment Horkheimer and Adorno focus on the relationship between reason and the scientific domination of nature. They question the possible basis of a discourse in the name of science. As Schmidt puts it:

"where other critics of the Enlightenment respond to its alleged failings by seeking to reactivate modes of thinking that had not been corrupted by Enlightenment rationality, this path is not available to Horkheimer and Adorno. In their view, the concept of enlightenment 'stretches back to the beginning of recorded history, [thus] they can find no form of thinking that is not already inclined toward enlightenment" (pp815).

Equally, the description of Paulo Freire's radically grounded critical pedagogy 'as developing a science' is a claim that misrepresents the emphasis of his work. Lata Narayan's (2000) comparison of the preoccupations of Friere and Gandhi, namely: injustice, non-violence and social responsibility show they emerge from a poetic of peace-making foreign to the historical discourses/outcomes of scientific practice.

These general shortcomings stem, in my view, from the issues outlined in Rowlinson & Proctor's (1999) article in the Journal of Organization Studies, 'Organizational culture and business history'. The authors point to a lack of 'critical reflexivity' and 'ahistoricism' in organisational analysis. While they are referring to traditional approaches, David's failure to present a more subtle, nuanced account of intellectual history falls into the same trap. The too-ready acceptance of science in the manifesto thus returns us to Foster's warning re theorising from within the structural basis of modernisation. While David and I will be addressing the issue of science more fully in a discussion paper in the next edition of Tamara, there is a pressing need, in a journal that promises radical potential, to more fully address the postmodern critiques of the origins of science to avoid recreating the grounds of domination.

In this regard, the potential productive 'pluralism' of postmodernism is undermined through its somewhat flat and caricatured depiction (exacerbated by the insertion of various disparate quotes that detract from a more synthesised overall narrative). While the restricted nature of a manifesto inevitably prevents an intricate portrayal of the themes under discussion, nonetheless given its radical intention, the overgeneralised use of terms is problematic in such a document. One way to address this issue, introducing some expansion of postmodernism, would be to draw out the distinctions between the prefiguring of the postmodern condition (e.g. the PM subject, PM society re consumerism etc), and PM as a critical reflexive alternative to the modernist Enlightenment diatribe. David makes reference to the perils of materialism, but fails to name the unique contribution proffered by an applied critical postmodern perspective (*vis a vis* critical modernism). A brief reference to post Fordist technological change in relation to work processes also needs to be documented given the journal's organisational focus. This is important contested terrain for affirmative and resistant pomo researchers as they dispute the outcomes of attendant social changes, e.g., collapsing of private and public work boundaries etc.

Overall then while I am concerned about its didactic tendencies, given the sense of the parts being assembled independently of each other, I would suggest a stronger sense of direction in the manifesto to achieve a greater level of consistency. To end on a more positive note I have worked through the document raising qualifications and making contributions wherever possible. I do hope that David will find this critical analysis helpful to assist the creation of a more meaningful account for publication.

[Reference]

References

[Reference]

Foster, H. ed. (1983) *The Anti-aesthetic : essays on postmodern culture*. Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press.

Horkheimer, M. & Adorno, T. W. (1972) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, (trans. J. Cumming).

[Reference]

Horkheimer, M. (1973) *Eclipse of Reason [1947]*, New York: Continuum.

Nike project , particularly in relation to the action research/ethnographic components. Ngaire's general academic concerns, as a public intellectual, are with general issues of power and inequality and ecology, Hence in her theoretical work she is developing an expansive 'corporate citizenship' model that reframes the workplace as an ecospace, from the perspective of critical postmodern theory.

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