Past, Present, and Future of Critical Perspectives in Work and Organizational Psychology – A Commentary on Bal (2020)

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> Prevailing structures of domination produce a *systemic* corrosion of moral responsibility when any concern for people or for the environment requires justification in terms of its contribution to profitable growth (Adler, Forbes, & Willmott, 2007; p. 121)

In his timely essay, Bal (2020) argues that Work and Organizational Psychology (WOP) needs to move beyond its present focus on constructs of performance and well-being (advocated as) instrumental to achieve organizational goals. This focus includes ontologically and empirically rather naïve conceptualizations (as industrial and organizational sociology has demonstrated), such as congruence between worker health and performance, employee and employer interests, work behavior and free activity. The author argues that WOP should broaden its perspective to include societally more relevant outcomes, such as reducing inequality and injustice, and promoting dignity, solidarity, social cohesion, and environmental protection.

This provocative critique of a narrow fixation on performance and well-being is well developed – albeit not completely new. For instance, drawing on ideas of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, Islam and Zyphur (2009) have outlined basic tenets of a critical perspective on industrial and organizational psychology. Their analysis includes alternative views of theories of individual differences, motivation, and leadership, the deconstruction of human resource technologies of job analysis, selection, recruitment, and training, as well as

shortcomings of mainstream research on occupational stress, careers, and organizational culture. Bal's (2020) critique also resonates with four key problems of social psychology applied to work, identified by McDonald and Bubna-Litic (2012) with reference to principles of Critical Management Studies: a) adoption of a positivist epistemology (legitimation through unreflected methods of quantification and statistics); b) an owner/management perspective of workplace issues (naturalizing and generalizing employer interests); c) focusing on intra-psychic and individual variables (neglecting external economic and political forces and social issues); and d) lack of commitment to explicitly ethical and moral principles and considerations (subordinating humanistic values to economic interests).

From a background in organizational communication, Mumby (2019) has recently summarized the development of critical perspectives in organizational research from the social critique of Marx to Labor Process Theory and Critical Management Studies, most recently culminating in the analysis of neoliberal governmentality and subjectification, based on the work of Foucault. Moreover, lacking ethical and moral values and responsibility in WOP have been criticized repeatedly, internationally (Lefkowitz, 2017), as well as domestically (Volpert, 2004).

The above examples complement the focal article by Bal as they illustrate the continuities, connections, and common threads among critical perspectives on work and organizations. Although we fully agree that there is a pressing need to develop, establish, and strengthen critical perspectives in WOP and to refocus on social responsibility and humanistic concerns, we also believe that it is important to contextualize such an approach within broader historical developments and existing pluralistic traditions in WOP and related fields.

Notably, the focal essay also did not emerge in a vacuum, but is embedded in current debates. Bal is a leading voice in the movement for the "Future of Work and Organizational Psychology", a group of researchers who have formulated demands and suggested ways to better live up to the neglected moral and ethical responsibilities of WOP towards individuals,

social groups, and society as a whole (Bal et al., 2019). Sparking lively debate in the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology, Bal and Dóci (2018) have contributed an influential article on the influence of neoliberal ideology in the workplace and WOP.

Connecting the critique by Bal (2020) with historical developments, current debates, and possible trajectories in the field, we try to address the broader context of the focal article with regard to the past, present, and future of critical perspectives in WOP. First, we argue that critical perspectives in WOP, incorporating critique on the societal status quo and supporting positive societal change and transformation, do not have "start from scratch", but can build on long and rich theoretical and empirical traditions in psychology and beyond. Second, we point out that also in the present, critical research on WOP-relevant phenomena exists in- and outside the scientific boundaries of academic WOP. Third, we present some ideas about directions for an envisioned future of critical WOP, enabling the scientific discipline to maintain or further develop its ability to improve the well-being of individuals, organizations, *and* society against the background of global environmental, economical, and political challenges. This means, taking seriously the objectives proclaimed by psychological associations (c.f. Lefkowitz, 2017).

The Past: Emancipation, Humanization, and Democratization
Historically, critical approaches in social sciences in general are programmatically based on the philosophical distinction between *critical* and *traditional* theory by Horkheimer (1937/2002) and the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. Some actual critics of critical approaches in WOP (e.g., Zacher, 2019) claim, that the terms *critical, critical research or critical scholarship* are nothing else than self-labels to boost self-esteem by processes of social identity creation and that science by definition is "critical". However, there is a rich and elaborated tradition in social sciences formulating distinctive features of critical theories and

research. *Critical* in this context, denotes a distinct epistemological scientific perspective within the plurality of epistemologies in the history of ideas. Thus, it should not and cannot be equated with the diffuse meaning of "critical" in common language, as for example done by Zacher (2019) or in the language of representatives of Logical Empirism or Critical Rationalism (see their discourse contributions in Adorno, Albert, Dahrendorf, Habermas, & Popper, 1972). Admittedly, Critical Theory shares the position that scientists have to be constantly "critical", in the sense of being self-reflexive about their scientific activities against the background of the conventional "state of the art" (Adorno, 2003). Moreover, critical theory and research in the sense of the Frankfurt School has its foundations in philosophical materialism and Hegel's dialectical idealism and the critique of instrumental reason as a formal, ostensibly purposeless rationality (e.g., Adorno et al., 1972; Fromm, 1955; Habermas, 1978; Holzkamp, 1983; Horkheimer, 1937 / 2002, 1947 / 2007; Klikauer, 2015).

Critical Theory insists that social science is entitled to discuss the social and societal (including global political-economic) reasons underlying their objectives and research practices as well as their (also unintended) effects. According to Critical-theoretical researchers, scientific theories, models and constructs are steeped in philosophical concepts, either reflected by their constructors or not. Scientific theory-building necessarily uses language-based, semantic – and therefore philosophical – constructions, especially when it comes to the operationalization of social science constructs. This has been demonstrated, for example, by Fleck's (1935 /1999) empirical analysis of "protocol sentences" and thinking styles of natural scientists. Or, in the words of Bal (2020): "Performance is usually measured as doing what is in someone's task description, regardless of whether this is actually the right thing to do. Meaning is not self-evident; it has to be theorized, and explicitly included in how performance is measured". (p.197)

Thus, critical-theoretical researchers state that objects of social research (including in WOP) are always influenced by the researchers' - reflected or unreflected - epistemological

interests and by the - intended or unintended - utilization possibilities that exist in the societal context of the respective research. In this regard, critical-theoreticaly-oriented researchers follow their most resolute critics: "We encourage future researchers to be more open in communicating the basic assumptions and beliefs underlying their research" (Wagner, Leana, Locke, & Schweiger, 1997, p. 58). Hence, critical-theoretical researchers request that criticizing the social and societal reason of scientific concepts represents a significant scientific task - as demonstrated in the focal article for "performance" and "well-being". Although critical-theoretical researchers sometimes disagree over standards and evaluation criteria for the critical-theoretical analysis of the societal reason of scientific objectives and methods, they seem to share, from Horkheimer (1947 / 2007) to Fromm (1968), Habermas (1990) and Ulrich (2008), the position that humanistic values represent the basis of any economy conducive to life. Based on this *minima moralia* and the tragic historical experience of their "first generation", critical-theoretical researchers agree that neither Leninist/Stalinist communism, or Fascism, nor the neoliberal form of capitalism, provides the foundation for a humane economy, society, and organizations.

Unsurprisingly, critical-theoretical researchers' references to humanistic ethics or – partially – to elements of Marx' (1887 /2018) theory of alienation were vehemently criticized by representatives of positivist or critical-rationalist positions as being "normative", "ideological" or incompatible with scientific rules. They presented their own definitions of *value-free research* or *free science* versus *ideology*, not without the normative statement that Critical Theory and its representatives could be excluded from the realm of science for not accepting these arbitrary definitions (e.g., see several contributions in Adorno et al., 1972).

In the field of WOP, Edwin A. Locke, one of the most prominent and recognized researchers, has contributed several extreme examples of this Janus-faced, ostensibly *value-free* and *open* and *objective* (neo-positivist) epistemology serving the exclusion of alternative theoretical and methodological scientific principles. Promoting his vision of laissez faire

capitalism, he criticized early representatives in the research field of participatory organizational democracy like Carole Pateman (1970) as follows (Locke & Schweiger, 1979): "While there are groups such as the New Left who advocate the imposition of 'participatory democracy' onto society as a whole by revolutionary means, their views have not gained wide acceptance in the United States—mainly because their real motive, the establishment of dictatorship, has been effectively exposed." (p. 267).

More recently, commenting on Kasser, Cohn, Kanner, and Ryan's (2007) study of the negative psychosocial effects of corporate capitalist ideology he argues (Locke, 2007): Kasser et al. (2007, p. 4) were told to "write extra carefully so that the readers did not 'discount the ideas as left wing propaganda." However, left wing propaganda, couched carefully in terms of academic terminology, is exactly what we got. It is Neo-Marxist propaganda disguised as research" (p. 41). Locke's way of defending freedom and pluralism in science is a self-serving contradiction and unfit to trigger productive dialogue between "critical" and "conventional" researchers in WOP. Critical-theoretical researchers can truly claim theoretical and methodological pluralism (e.g., Adorno, 2003; Habermas, 1978; Ulrich, 2008). Their outset is the critique of the theoretical and methodological self-restrictions of Logical Empirism and Critical Rationalism as dogmatic and impeding scientific progress and social responsibility of social scientists (Adorno et al., 1972). They emphasized the role of historical and societal conditions for individual psychological processes, and also considered their research in the context of overcoming the material, ideological, and power-based societal status-quo – with the objective to support democratically legitimized, peaceful change in business organizations and society towards emancipation, humanization, and democratization (Fromm, 1968; Habermas, 1978; Wright, 2012). Thus, (not only) from a critical-theoretical perspective, research to study and support organizational and societal change and transformation is not more normative than its counterpart that contends to be "value free" and "descriptive" or that posits a basic harmony in organizations between the interests of shareholders, entrepreneurs,

senior management, subordinated employees and external stakeholders (e.g., Locke & Schweiger, 1979, p. 327). Or, in Bal´s (2020, p. 196) words in the focal article: "…this entails the utopia where organizations function well, and where people are highly performing and feeling healthy, happy and vigorous."

Although critical scientific approaches have primarily unfolded their impact in social philosophy, sociology and later in (critical) management studies, there are also related critical traditions in psychology – even in WOP. Two German examples, critical psychology (e.g., Holzkamp, 1983) and some precursors and variants of action regulation theory (e.g, Volpert, 1975), are based on Marx' (1887 / 2018) critique of the political economy and A. N. Leontiev's activity theory (see Weber & Jeppesen, 2017). Both approaches recognize that WOP often serves as instrument to manipulate employees' genuine interests and increase performance and profits. Critical Psychology developed a "psychology from the standpoint of the subject", sharing similarities with phenomenological psychology (Markard, 2009) and created a methodology of qualitative content-analysis, well-suited, for example, for the analysis of occupational socialization. By contrast, Walter Volpert's (1975) "Lohnarbeitspsychologie" (psychology of wage labor) is more structuralist and "objectivistic". Volpert (1975, 2004) analyzed how several stages of scientific progress in improving health, well-being and participation of employees were associated with new forms of work intensification and managerial control. The conceptualization of a general process-structure of activity demonstrated, how the regulation of individual work behavior is integrated in work tasks that include very different possibilities for the employee to develop his/her cognitive and communicative abilities, depending on the specific organizational division of labor. Based on this, several job analysis instruments have been developed, which allow to assess work tasks with regard to their inherent resources or barriers for personality development and psychosocial health beyond subjectively experienced "well-being" (see Dunckel, 1999).

Moreover, critical perspectives in WOP were also reflected in historic developments, political agendas, and research programs for the humanization of working life (e.g., Fricke, 2004) and the democratization of work organizations, including relationships with the labor movement, trade unions, and welfare capitalism (IDE, 1981; Wilpert, 1998). The approach of socio-technical systems design (STS approach) builds one of the conceptual cores of these developments (Trist & Murray, 1993; for an overview see Moldaschl & Weber, 1998). Whereas the STS approach was an outgrowth of Humanistic Psychology, its concepts of job analysis are very similar to those of Action Regulation Theory in assessing technological and organizational conditions with regard to their effects on employees' personality, need satisfaction, and health. Similar to Bal's request in the focal article, conflicts between humane work design and its restrictions through organizational or technological politics and power structures were explicitly reflected. Though, the STS scientists did neither agree upon how these conflicts should be integrated in their scientific model nor whether design principles concerning the social or the technological system should have priority in case of conflict. Similar to present representatives of the Critical Management Studies approach (Adler et al., 2007), some prominent STS scholars considered programs of democratization of the economy, like those earlier in Scandinavia, necessary for the success of humanization projects on the level of the organization (see the debate documented in Trist & Murray, 1993). Others developed instruments for the large-scale democratic organizational change (e.g. search conference, democratic dialogue).

However, it is not to say that all historical developments purporting to improve the quality of working conditions also had a truly critical and emancipatory character. On the contrary, improvements in work design and employee autonomy have given rise to new forms of self-enacted work intensification and extensification via modes of "responsibilization" and "subjectification". Likewise, under a dominating paradigm of managerialism, direct and representative forms of worker involvement (e.g., group work, worker councils) have turned

into varieties of self-organization, co-management, and "participatory rationalization" (e.g., Delbridge & Keenoy, 2010; Moldaschl & Weber, 1998; Klikauer, 2019). In light of these developments, WOP needs to critically examine its own role in the political-economic and socio-cultural developments that have led to the current state of contemporary workplaces, including their ideological foundation and scientific representation (e.g., Bal & Dóci, 2018). In contrast, a lack of critical reflections on the humanistic and emancipatory roots of WOP, as well as tendencies towards their corruption and co-optation as interest-guided instruments of economic valorization, increases the risk of repeating mistakes of the past in shaping the future of WOP. Specifically, in our view, the need for more critical distance, and even opposition to, managerial logics and discourses of perpetual performance increases, and so called "positive organizational behavior" and its variants, seem to be important historical lessons. Again, the influential work of Edwin A. Locke on effects of leadership and participative decision making, can be considered as exemplarily for Bal's (2020, p. 196 f) critique of what he calls "WOP's myopic focus on performance": "While performance for a (private) organization equals profitability and shareholder value, it ultimately instrumentalizes anything for the pursuit of these goals". We encourage Bal and other proponents of Critical WOP to test their propositions concerning the logics of neoliberal instrumentality, competition, and individualism in WOP (Bal & Doci, 2018) by analysing Locke's conceptualizations and arguments. Based on methods of content analysis, researches could study how far Locke's statements are representative (or not) for considerable parts of leadership and participation research. Some examples are "productivity and not satisfaction is the proper goal of a profit making organization" (Locke and Schweiger, 1979, p. 266) or "employers who are rational … will have a competitive advantage because biased policies overlook *potentially* valuable employees" (Locke, 2010, p. 101; italics added by the authors); or his repeated recommendation that participation should be practiced only if subordinates provide a source of information for productivity-related decisions that their leaders otherwise

would not have (Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Wagner et al., 1997). Maybe, this would help to clarify whether Bal's (2020, p. 196) statement in the focal article is indeed justified, that: "… in work and organizational psychology research, there are usually two outcomes relevant: performance and well-being".

The Present: Researching and Overcoming Neoliberal Ideology

A central task for WOP in the present has been described as a humanistic normative re-orientation to expose and counter the equally normative, but typically unquestioned and socially corrosive influences through neoliberal ideologies – biasing research and work practices towards logics of instrumentality, competition, and individualism (e.g., Bal & Dóci, 2018). A very similar critical development has emerged in the field of social psychology (e.g., Bettache & Chiu, 2019; Jost, 2019). More specifically, this would mean putting a stronger emphasis on critical reflections, integrative reviews, and reinterpretations of psychologically relevant research, being more receptive and inclusive with regard to related fields, such as work sociology and critical management studies, specifically concepts such as *subjectification*, *neoliberal governmentality*, and *biopower* (e.g., Tweedie, Wild, Rhodes, & Martinov-Bennie, 2019). In light of these interdisciplinary literatures, theories, models, constructs, and results in WOP should be synthesized, reinterpreted, and reoriented within critical and alternative explanatory frameworks (e.g., Moisander, Groß, & Eräranta, 2018). Thus, conventional assumptions in WOP need to be reviewed and revised or extended, for instance, regarding "intrinsic" work motivation, work engagement, job attitudes, voluntary, extra-role, citizenship, or proactive work behavior, employability, as well as relationships between well-being and performance. Particularly, WOP should overcome its blind spots with regard to issues of structural economic and organizational power (on higher levels than leadership behaviors and influence tactics), social justice (beyond employees' *perceived* organizational justice), and ethical responsibilities (or moral disengagement) concerning

shareholders and other principals of corporations (see overviews and recommendations by George, 2014; Kasser et al., 2007; White, Bandura, & Bero, 2009). Above, we suggest some starting points for such discussions and developments within WOP, highlighting some recent contributions by Islam and Zyphur (2009), McDonalds and Bubna-Litic (2012), Mumby (2019), Bal and Dóci (2018), and Lefkowitz (2017).

However, the numerous commentaries in response to Bal and Dóci (2018) and Mumby (2019) also demonstrate the spectrum of normative positions and the range of (more or less sophisticated) arguments in support and opposition to the currently emerging discussion concerning a re-orientation of WOP. We applaud this, as debate is not only a scientific necessity but also makes our field more vibrant, engaging, and societally relevant. However, some proto-typical objections seem to unintentionally provide examples for exactly the issues critical voices within the scientific community of WOP are trying to raise concerns about. To some extent, this speaks for the extent that researchers already are grounded in different scientific paradigms.

For example, integrating different streams of literature, Bal and Doci (2018) have analyzed neoliberal ideology as a subtle pervasive force, co-opting, shaping, and mainstreaming work and organizational practices, as well as corresponding concepts, constructs, and theories in WOP, through a "matrix" of interest-guided, political, social, and "fantasmatic" (deep structure) logics, advancing principles of individualism, competition, and instrumentality. In a commentary on Bal and Doci (2018), however, Rudolph und Zacher (2018, p. 557) entirely "…question the influence that a distal exogenous phenomenon like neoliberalism could have on psychological processes of individuals". Thus, they seem to argue that ideologies (neoliberal or otherwise) do not affect the experiences and behaviors of individuals and groups at work at all. To support this notion, they interpret "neoliberalism" as a "distal exogenous" independent *variable* at the societal level, revealing a rather mechanistic logic resembling a quantitative multi-level model. Further, they argue, if neoliberal ideology

is a universal phenomenon there could be no variance in this variable, and without variance, there can be no causal effects on individual outcomes. In our view, this conclusion is incorrect because it obviously conflates a theoretical relationship or causal effect with the specific methodological analysis used to detect it.

In the real world, it is not the variability that potentially exercises an influence, but the phenomenon *itself*. Moreover, even if neoliberal ideology is hegemonic, it does not affect all collectives and individuals with identical consequences. Indeed, there *is* variance on the societal level, as long as competing and resisting worldviews exist (e.g., humanism, eco-social market economy, democratic socialism), as well as on the individual level, expressing different value orientations (e.g., humanistic, socialistic or communitarian orientation). Several empirical studies have identified associations between neoliberal or related value orientations and outcomes. Surprisingly, in his focal article, Bal does not refer to the following overviews to underpin his arguments. For example, a research review by Kasser et al. (2007) on the costs of American corporate capitalism indicated that consumer materialistic or financial success values (extrinsic aspirations) are significantly associated with less generous and prosocial behavior, more anti-social activities, lower empathy, shorter, more conflictual, and more mutually instrumentalized close relationships. Further, a meta-analysis by Dittmar, Bond, Hurst, and Kasser (2014), including studies from different countries and cultures, demonstrated that consumer materialistic values and beliefs (compared to post-materialistic values) are significantly related to poorer subjective well-being, worser self-reported physical health, more negative self-appraisals, depression, anxiety, compulsive buying, and risky health behaviors. One major postulate of the neoliberal worldview is that human beings are unequal in their abilities and, thus, in their economic value for employers and, therefore, deserve different rights, power, and income (Locke, 2007, 2010). More recently, George (2014) and Beattie (2019) added studies indicating that attaining power and wealth in enterprises tended to reduce individuals' ability to empathize and show compassion,

and seemed to diminish their level of moral judgement, making them more narcissistic and prone to social domination ideologies. Complimentarily, those working self-employed under precarious conditions tended to show decreased readiness for collective action against exploitative contracts and were prone to self-accusation or excessive self-improvement – in accordance with neoliberal principles. Finally, in their extensive content analysis of 365 internal corporate documents on research activities (and notes on a 1,000 more), ranging from the 1920s through the 2000s, White, Bandura, and Bero (2009) demonstrated, how North-American corporations (applying neoliberal business ideology) in four industry groups systematically manipulated research and policy. The study revealed several practices of selective moral disengagement to hide health-risks and harm of products or production processes.

In sum, Rudolph and Zacher (2018) seem to criticize an ideology-critical perspective by developing arguments based on the narrow epistemological and methodological (quantitative) perspective strongly influencing existing WOP research and ways of thinking – that is, the very same logic that was highlighted as problematic in the first place. Further, their arguments neglect the abundant, interdisciplinary, and differentiated body of research on the forms and functions of ideologies, and their relationships with human experiences and behaviors, notably spanning a period of more than 200 years (for an overview, e.g., Eagleton, 1991; Rehmann, 2008). Thus, we see a second tendency exemplified here, which is to devaluate, downgrade or exclude broad swaths of literature as irrelevant, inferior, or out of one's own disciplinary jurisdiction, based on their use of methodologies deviating from prevailing approaches of Logical Empirism and Critical Rationalism in WOP. Importantly, we interpret this inability to "see the forest for the trees" not as an *individual* misunderstanding, but as a symptom of increasingly so-called "incommensurate" research paradigms within WOP. Yet, constructive controversies, based on pluralism in epistemology, theory and methodology (as practiced in this issue), may broaden the perspectives of the conflicting

discourse partners and stimulate scientific progress (Habermas, 1978; Ulrich, 2008; Vollmer, Dick, & Wehner, 2015).

The Future: WOP for Social Transformation and Sustainability

As it has become clear, we agree with Bal (2020) that it is imperative to develop recommendations for WOP to become more socially relevant, moving beyond its current narrow focus on profitable performance and employee well-being as a precondition for the former. Indeed, there is a broad range of psychologically relevant outcomes, not only at the individual, but also at the group, organizational, and societal levels. Some examples are personality development, solidarity, and psychosocial health in transnational supply chains, as well as moral competences, pro-environmental behavior, democratic attitudes and civic participation (e.g., Weber, Unterrainer & Schmid, 2009; Weber, Unterrainer, & Höge, 2020). Determining what are relevant and important alternative outcomes for an explicitly normative, socially responsible, and positively transformational or emancipatory version of WOP requires theoretical and practice-oriented disciplinary debates and developments, akin to the discourse on *critical performativity* as an alternative to managerial objectives in the field of critical management studies (e.g., Adler et al., 2007; Spicer, Alvesson, & Kärreman, 2016). To do so, WOP should reorient, redefine, and "reinvent" itself within ethical, moral, and societal discourses as an advocate for alternative modes of democratic and participatory organizing and humanistic and critical management, embedded in overarching normative frameworks and models of economics for the common good, decent work, and social and ecological sustainability (e.g., Campos, Sanchis, & Ejarque, 2019; De Stefano, Bagdadli, & Camuffo, 2018; Exner, 2013; Pereira, dos Santos, & Pais, 2020). Once such a rethinking has been initiated, it should become clear, that narrow conceptions of performance and wellbeing are neither the most important, nor the most interesting outcomes, thus opening up a broader scope of societally relevant individual and collective work experiences for WOP to explore.

As we are writing this commentary during the pandemic covid-19 crisis, we are cautiously optimistic, that this catastrophic disrupting event may provide an impetus to rethink prioritized values, goals, and principles in WOP – both on the level of individual researchers as well as in the discipline as a whole. If anything, concern for human welfare, solidarity, and collective action towards the common good, have been demonstrated to offer solutions, whereas profit orientation, market fetishism, and primacy of the economy, have (once again) been exposed as part of the problem. We believe that this could be a transitional moment for society, as well as the field of WOP, which now has the chance to assume a more active role in leading, rather than lagging, in the projected social and ecological transformation.

Conclusion

To conclude, we concur with Bal (2020) with regard to what we perceive as a tendency to constrain WOP to an overly restrictive "scientific cage", made up of rather narrow and unreflected basic ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions and principles. Although these confines are advocated (and adhered) to for the sake of scientific rigor, they are also manifestations of an interest-guided, one-sided agenda, shaping the field in ways that many scholars feel increasingly uncomfortable with. Bal's call to challenge the ubiquitous double bind between humanistic concern for the working individuals and the (felt) need to justify these in terms of their contributions to profitable performance exposes a Procrustean bed in WOP. The rejection of the current narrow focus on constructs of performance and instrumental wellbeing should not be misunderstood (or misconstrued) as "prohibition of thought". Rather, it should be seen as a metaphor and a call to action for a broader paradigm shift from "conventional thinking" to critical consciousness, humanistic values, and social responsibility, necessary to overcome the present impasse and to realize and

develop the full potential of the field. Indeed, there is a world beyond the status quo for the future of a more critical WOP.

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