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# Disalienation in the management classroom: lessons from Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game*

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## ABSTRACT

In contemporary academia, education is often perceived as a supplement to an academic career or a tool to satisfy management through course evaluations and this can alienate academics from teaching. To create inspiration and deepen the understanding of teachers' alienation as well as disalienation in the management classroom, we draw on Hermann Hesse's last novel 'The Glass Bead Game'. The story of Joseph Knecht who escapes an elitist pedagogical province to engage in personal teaching serves as an inspiration through which we discuss the act of resisting alienation in contemporary management education. Alienation, as we learn from Hesse, is not an unchangeable condition and it can be resisted through reinventing personal teaching, re-focusing attention from the demands of academic excellence to the imperfection of human beings, and acknowledging education as a history maker and teaching as a preparation for life and death.

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## Introduction

Alienation, as some researchers claim (Alakavuklar, Dickson, and Stablein 2017; Hall 2018), is a common experience in contemporary academia. It is related to the feeling of not having control over one's labour paired with the feeling of limited autonomy to realize one's academic ideals (Kociatkiewicz, Kostera, and Parker 2021). Since universities are subject to continuous reforms that make them more compliant with market demands, and more than ever in history are argued to be occupied by the ghost of capitalism (Kociatkiewicz, Kostera, and Zueva 2021), they are being criticized of fostering control over academic labour and of subjecting labour to the requirements of excellence (Butler and Spoelstra 2012). Working in such allegedly 'neurotic environments' (Fleming 2021) push academics to desperately search for recognition through boasting behaviours (Lund 2020), publication games (Alvesson, Gabriel, and Paulsen 2017) and an 'ecstasy of obedience' to university management decisions (Warner 2014). A resulting masculine culture of competition (Zawadzki and Jensen 2020) very often reduces teaching to an unnecessary supplement to career promotion through research. In such an environment, teaching and learning processes are dissolved in the totalizing authority of marketized know-how (Izak, Kostera, and Zawadzki 2017). Under the emerging regime of performance measures, rankings and audits management teachers are defined as working at students, and not with the students (Way et al. 2018) and this goes hand in hand with a pressure to reach high course evaluations through marketized, career-oriented goals of education, rather than to follow one's pedagogical beliefs, ideals and passions (Biesta 2016).

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We are very aware that all universities, and also management schools, function differently, and where neoliberalism, market-orientation and capitalism are welcomed or resisted to different degrees. Furthermore, we also know of, and have worked at, management schools, where teaching is highly respected and seen as a core activity, where tenured positions are secured through teaching merits, and where teachers have significant degree of autonomy to develop their courses within quite vaguely formulated limits. Therefore, the alienation that we discuss is not something that is given, but that can happen as a consequence of the above mentioned, and in this paper further explored, tendencies. While the experience of alienation that prevents teachers in the management school from self-realization requires detailed analysis, it is also important to discuss disalienation and ways in which alienating tendencies can be resisted.

Our article has two main aims. First, we extend the consideration of teachers' alienation in the management school, which has not been sufficiently discussed, even though there is extensive research on the neoliberal crisis in the business school (Alakavuklar, Dickson, and Stablein 2017; Huzzard, Benner, and Kärreman 2017; Parker 2018). Second, as part of this elaboration, rather than limiting our analysis to the structural causes of alienation, we engage with Hermann Hesse's 'The Glass Bead Game' (1969) to examine the possibilities of contesting alienation (Kociatkiewicz, Kostera, and Parker 2021) and becoming a disalienated teacher. Hesse's scepticism of capitalism (Hesse 1971; Schickling 2009) and institutional education (Roberts 2012) as well as his resistance towards the 'despotism of pragmatism' and the 'fascism of efficiency' (Fischer 2011, 26), make his novels a fascinating repository of knowledge about how social institutions – including schools and universities – affect the life of individuals. This includes 'The Glass Bead Game', a masterpiece described by Thomas Mann as a 'great novel of education' (Mann 1999, X). An analysis of Hesse's novel demonstrates that alienation in academia under certain conditions can be reversed.

We begin by reviewing the literature on alienating processes in the management school reformed through neoliberal principles in relation particularly to teaching. We show the growing appearance of the concept of the entrepreneurial self (Ball 2003) as a dominant idea regulating teachers' subjectivities and we reflect on how this pressure might lead to teachers' alienation. An analysis of alienation in the management school is then extended and nuanced by us through inspirations derived from Hermann Hesse's 'The Glass Bead Game' that shed light on the process of disalienation of teachers in academia (Hesse 1969): an experience of being oneself, of achieving self-respect, of realizing one's pedagogical ideals and of having control over the processes and products of education. We summarize by sharing some brief personal reflections regarding disalienation in our teaching practice as well as by encouraging management scholars to reflect on Hesse's novels as a source of inspiration in management and organization studies.

## **Alienation in the management classroom**

Management schools nowadays are seen as imbued in neoliberal rationality that dissolves teaching and learning processes in the totalizing authority of marketized know-how (Ehrensall 2002; Huzzard, Benner, and Kärreman 2017). They have been accused of going from higher aims to hired hands (Khurana 2007). Critics have argued that their official and hidden curriculum now focuses on creating infantile 'business selves' (Lezaun and Muniesa 2017), employing an abstract, grandiose and value-free managerial vocabulary (Ghoshal 2005) to convince students and management about the practical value of knowledge (Alvesson and Gabriel 2016). Audit requirements started to have enormous power over management teachers' labour process since the value of excellence, performativity and practical relevance directs the design of curricula (Parker 2018). The design of the study programmes and courses are then seen to obey the rules of consumer satisfaction (Alvesson 2013), making management education complicit in the emergence of global economic and sustainability crises (Rhodes 2021). This situation pushes academic teachers to design and deliver courses related mainly to projected practical aspects of the business 'where intellectual and theoretical questions are often

ignored for the advantage of increasing industrial and business demands' (Alakavuklar, Dickson, and Stablein 2017, 459).

Because of neoliberal changes in academia, as Hall observes (2018), alienation in the academic workplace occurs that prevents teachers from realizing their educational ideals if they differ from the institutional ones, and from the possibility to reinvent their teaching practice to serve the society and democracy. Alienation, following Marx' writings (Marx and Engels [1844] 2007), is an experience of not having control over one's labour or its products which is paired with a feeling of not being at home while at work (Kociatkiewicz, Kostera, and Parker 2021) and with a tension between who we really are and who we have to be at work (Costas and Fleming 2009). This lack of homeliness in neoliberal academia is seen as a result of internalized self-regulating mechanisms of projection and the construction of academic identities through external contingencies (ranking lists, publication games, audit demands on curriculum), rather than through finding 'its core in its place in an organization of knowledge and practice' (Bernstein 2000, 70). Academic scholars are then perceived as living their lives as an enterprise of the self (Foucault 2010) and are 'represented and encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who "add value" to themselves, improve their productivity, strive for excellence and live an existence of calculation' (Ball 2003, 117).

In consequence, as some scholars observe (Ball 2016; Scharff 2016; Berglund, Lindgren, and Packendorff 2017; Zawadzki et al. 2020), neoliberal academia produces new kinds of academic subjects based on an entrepreneurial self. Measured only in terms of success or failure in obeying market and organizational rules, the self-entrepreneur became a desired role for the accountable teachers (Holloway and Brass 2018). Since 'entrepreneurial subjects compete with the self, and not just with others' (Scharff 2016, 108), a performative pressure is created which dissolves the psychic life in the totalizing authority of never-reached expectations towards oneself, which creates self-doubt, personal anxiety and caused erosion of solidarity and cooperation in the classroom (Way et al. 2018). Entrepreneurial self-regulation has a power to challenge the social identities of academics, undermining their 'social thermostats', so they become 'unable to warm themselves in the light of human love and compassion' (Kostera 2020, IX). The social relations in the classrooms are diagnosed as artificial, not personal, replaced by judgmental alliances of productivity in which the value of a person is eradicated (Biesta 2010). A capitalistic paradigm of excellence is seen to transform both teachers and students into alienated 'serial collectives' (Young 1994) in which people are isolated, but not alone (Bauman 1995), and where everyone goes about one's own business.

Such alienation makes co-operation, commitment and intimacy – crucial elements of university teaching (Giroux 2002; 2020) – difficult. Alienated academic teachers have very little to give to students – they are in the classroom mainly to draw out what is already inside the students, to facilitate students' learning, to make the learning as smooth and enjoyable as possible, 'all in the hope that students will leave as satisfied customers' (Biesta 2016, 57). Alienation also means that teachers are not able to perceive learning as a process that makes a difference, but rather treating learning as something inevitable, that they cannot do. Such 'learnification' means that teachers are subjecting themselves and the students to learning rather than having power over it through teaching (Biesta 2010).

Despite the intensive process of transforming academia and the management schools through neoliberal reforms, academic institutions have witnessed scholars resisting alienation and struggling with protecting their teaching against instrumental demands. In the next part, we examine an example of this struggle through the story of Joseph Knecht – the main character in Hermann Hesse's 'The Glass Bead Game'.

### Leaving academia to teach: 'The Glass Bead Game'

Hermann Hesse (1877–1962) – a German–Swiss writer, a Nobel Prize winner from 1946, a cosmopolitan European discovered by the hippie generation in the 1960s – is still one of the most read and translated German-language authors worldwide (more than 150 million copies of Hesse's books

were sold in more than seventy languages, see Cunningham 2021, 3). Through his resistance towards instrumental ideologies, Hesse inspired whole generations of peaceful contestants sending a positive response to the world crises, including two World Wars, fascist ideology and the Vietnam war (Zeller 2005, Cornils 2009), Hesse's novels ('Siddhartha', 'Steppenwolf', 'Narcissus and Goldmund', 'The Glass Bead Game', to name a few) are full of empowering meanings and contain paradoxes of the author's life: always against reifications, rigid social rules and totalitarian ideologies, but never escapist and constantly emphasizing the value of the individual (Blanchot 2003).

Hesse was a home-seeker, struggling with the alienating pressure of social institutions that often-times made him seriously depressed (Decker 2018) – but he never escaped the responsibility to serve society. He rebelled against the alienating and will-breaking discipline of pietistic family and the school, as he knew that he was going to be 'either a writer or nothing' (Decker 2018, 93) but he appreciated both family and education as crucial institutions for human development (Stephenson 2009; Roberts 2012). While he was banished from the country for his anti-war views and critique of the totalitarian regime of Nazi Germany, he was serving as a civil servant to his homeland (for example, selling watercolours he had painted and handwritten copies of his poems to financially help his German colleagues, or providing refuge to writers who had fled Nazi Germany at his house in Switzerland, see Decker 2018). Although he travelled alone to the mountains to break free from bourgeois rules, he was often coming back home to take care of family. This ambivalent struggle with alienation is mirrored in his novels that became a critical contribution to and played an important role in the evolution of the German *Bildungsroman* (Roberts 2012).

Hesse's novels thus function as a repository of knowledge about the complicated relationships between institutions and individuals, containing stories about how educational, family, state, religious or corporate institutions affect the uncertain and fragile life of human beings. Surprisingly, however, little attention has been given to Hesse's work by educationalists (with rare exceptions, see Arzeni 2009; Witkowski and Jaworska-Witkowska 2010; Roberts 2012). Even 'The Glass Bead Game' (first published in 1943) has not attracted much consideration in educational research. Sears, Anderson, Peters and Nelson concentrate on 'The Glass Bead Game' as a metaphor to show the parallels between the Game and the deconstruction of educational curriculum (Sears 1992), the worthless publication competitions leading to the erosion of the university mission (Anderson 1996), the ideal speech community in the liberal university (Peters 1996) or the grand narrative and unifying structure of academia (Nelson 2008). Edwards analyses the parallels between the notion of game in Wittgenstein's philosophy and in Hesse's novel, in relation to the institutionalization of learning (Edwards 2019). The most complex and deepened educational reflection on 'The Glass Bead Game' has been provided by Peter Roberts who analyses the process of conscientization of the main character, Joseph Knecht, and based on the story of Joseph's life, considers the transformative value of teaching and learning (Roberts 2007, 2008, 2012).

Joseph Knecht (Knecht means *servant*) was a talented musician with a passion and vocation to teach who progressed from his early education to the elite schools of Eschholz and Waldzell to eventually becoming a rector (Magister Ludi – Master of the Game) of the pedagogical province Castalia. This prestigious academic institution existing in the twenty-third century symbolized the desire to find spiritual shelter against the instrumental regime and the disintegrated values of the outside society and the previous Feuilleton Epoque. That time was characterized by the loss of meaning and truth in the maze of bourgeois consumerism, individualism and mass production of meaningless texts. In this Epoque, 'men came to enjoy an incredible degree of intellectual freedom, more than they could stand' (Hesse 1969, 19). The social norms of institutions – church, state or family – no longer served as regulators of social life. Moreover, 'people postulated the total capitulation of Mind, the bankruptcy of ideas, and pretended to be looking on with cynical calm or bacchantic rapture as not only art, culture, morality, and honesty, but also Europe and "the world" proceeded to their doom' (Hesse 1969, 25).

Castalia was invented to introduce 'strict mental exercises' and 'intellectual discipline' (Hesse 1969) against this social and cultural disaster. The basis for the functioning of the province was

the Glass Bead Game: an intellectual game containing many disciplines and based on meditation and music. Castalia was a hierarchical society with students at different levels of education and Masters of the various disciplines. Joseph was enjoying his role, as well as his engagement in the Game for many years. Finally, however, through dialogues about the role of life as opposed to disengaged intellect with his more critically oriented colleagues – Magister Musicae, Pater Jacobus and Plinio Designori – Knecht realized that the knowledge produced in the province had no pedagogical value due to the lack of passions and emotions in the teaching and learning processes and the consequent impossibility of shaping the world through education. He discovered that his real mission was in teaching but that Castalia was repressing people's educational passions and overlooked the need for institutional reforms. For the whole of his life, Knecht wrote poems that expressed his opposition to the rules of institutions:

To stiffen into stone, to persevere!  
 We long forever for the right to stay.  
 But all that ever stays with us is fear,  
 And we shall never rest upon our way  
 (Hesse 1969, 429)

Reading those poems, one can discover Joseph's longing for life and that Castalia was totally disengaged from the outside world. It had forgotten its historic distinction and perceived itself as a self-sufficient organization (Wilde 1999). Knecht realized that he diligently served the hierarchy 'in which the individual's personality is effaced and subjugated to the needs of the whole' (Ziolkowski 1974, 300). Most of the Castalians failed to question the structures of the pedagogical province, its system of education and its values. But Knecht was perceiving himself as an unfinished human being who wanted to explore the world through always the uncertain practice of teaching, rather than working in a homogenous and hierarchical ivory tower:

Life in the world, as the Castalian sees it, is something backward and inferior, a life of disorder and crudity, of passions and distractions, devoid of all that is beautiful or desirable. But the world and its life was in fact infinitely vaster and richer than the notions a Castalian has of it; it was full of change, history, struggles, and eternally new beginnings. It might be chaotic, but it was the home and native soil of all destinies, all exaltations, all arts, all humanity; it had produced languages, peoples, governments, cultures; it had also produced us and our Castalia and would see all these things perish again, and yet survive. My teacher Jacobus had kindled in me a love for this world which was forever growing and seeking nourishment. But in Castalia there was nothing to nourish it. Here we were outside of the world; we ourselves were a small, perfect world, but one no longer changing, no longer growing. (Hesse 1969, 399–400)

As realized by Knecht, the knowledge cultivated in Castalia was unrelated to the central issues of life, and the educational processes in the province were artificial. The Game itself became only an 'interesting or amusing specialty, an intellectual sport or an arena for ambition' (Hesse 1969, 124). The Castalians' mindset could be characterized as 'the total lack of political awareness in the broad sense of the world: human relations' (Ziolkowski 1974, 320). As written in the famous circular letter by Knecht,

The average Castalian may regard the man of the outside world, the man who is not a scholar, without contempt, envy, or malice, but he does not regard him as a brother, does not see him as his employer, does not in the least feel that he shares responsibility for what is going on outside in the world (Hesse 1969, 349)

Knowledge was produced only through tinkering with meanings. This brought mystical joy to the Castalians but carried no sensual and existential dimensions to human relationships between teachers and learners; thus, there was no potential for learning which requires self-transformation (Roberts 2007).

Knecht, therefore, tried to reconstruct Castalia by reinventing passion-based and personal teaching as well as through encouraging the other members of Castalia for self-reflection. But he saw no real effect of his efforts. He refused to serve the Castalian hierarchy any longer, left the pedagogical province and took the role as a quiet personal teacher to Tito Designori – the son of his old friend Plinio. Knecht died when trying to beat Tito in a swimming competition in an icy mountain lake.

### Searching for disalienation with Knecht

Since Knecht, in Castalia, saw the impossibility of teaching immersed in life matters and based on close human relations, he experienced alienation: even though he loved Castalia, he felt a separation from the process of educational creation, from the products of his labour and from his students. But he did not give up in his search for dignified labour to achieve self-respect (Zawadzki 2018) and continuously tried to resist what he saw as obstacles to his teaching efforts. He wanted to explore what truly mattered in education, including the beauty of human life outside Castalia, full of frailty, full of hope and irreparably incomplete (Roberts 2012). He felt that such a commitment to life was effectively relegated to somewhere outside the curriculum in the province. Knecht saw no real effect of his efforts to reform the pedagogical province – the knowledge produced there had no pedagogical value due to the lack of passions and emotions in the teaching and learning processes molten in the abstract, excellent and competitive Glass Bead Game, which made it impossible to create a new, better world (Wilde 1999). He left Castalia to finally bring teaching back to his life through taking the role of Tito's personal teacher.

What is unique in Hesse's story for our analysis of disalienation is that Knecht was not really interested in only distancing himself from the Castalian order through self-alienation while keeping his position in the province. At the centre of 'The Glass Bead Game', as Peter Roberts observed (2007), is rather a full transformation of Joseph Knecht: from an excellent rector taking care of his institution with love and compassion to an empowered and imperfect teacher experiencing the fragility and unfinishedness of himself and his pupil. Through dialogues with critical friends as well as through his involvement with the Glass Bead Game, Knecht became a student again, practicing reflective reasoning and experiencing awakening understood as 'experiencing and proving oneself in the real world' (Hesse 1969, 380). Awakening was crucial in his road to disalienation since Knecht discovered the value of being in the world for others, a process of becoming (Freire 1972) constituted by 'reflexive moments where actors become aware that the narrated imaginary of authenticity is patently unrealizable in lived experience' (Costas and Fleming 2009, 359). Interactions with other Castalians gave Knecht the possibility to build this awareness and to not obey the Castalian hierarchy that promised letting tensions, contradictions, questions, or doubts go. But at the end, instead of just tactically constructing a less alienated identity back-stage – a resistance strategy that might integrate him into the 'rhythms of work more effectively given the impression of autonomy it engenders' (Costas and Fleming 2009, 354) – he decided to quit the province.

Although the secluded and detached pedagogical province of Castalia is very different from contemporary management schools which aim to be useful to certain parts of society, the story of Knecht's life can serve as inspiration for searching for disalienation in the management school in several ways. First, to assume responsibility for the students through engagement in always imperfect teaching, no matter the demands of academic excellence, can help resisting alienation. Through following his self-will in teaching and resisting the Castalian order that was providing him with a superior position but at the same time breaking his will, Knecht was able to take back control over his teaching labour and to realize his educational ideals (Bishop 2009). Through his escape Knecht 'formed a more critical view of the pedagogical province, but he has also developed a greater awareness of his own limits and of the need for ongoing reflection, dialogue and action' (Roberts 2007, 519). In fact, Knecht gave away everything, including his prestigious position, status and career security 'to pursue the humble but vitally important task of educating one

person' (Roberts 2008, 174). Following Hesse and Paolo Freire, we should, as teachers, always be ready to 'die as elitists so as to be resurrected on the side of the oppressed' (Freire 1985, 122–123), to serve the students through sacrificing our excellent academic careers and becoming students again.

Secondly, teaching, as we learn from Hesse, really matters for the quality of life and without the personal relations with the students, it is difficult to realize the main aims of education, including the transformation and awakening of the students' selves through their passion and commitment to life matters. Through his escape from Castalia, Knecht managed to transform his teaching into an event, 'bringing something to the educational situation that was not there already' (Biesta 2016, 6). His obedient subordination to the Castalian hierarchy was replaced first by taking the role of a student eager to learn from others and then by an active engagement in personal teaching. Personal teaching – the one Knecht established with Tito – and making students' voices hearable and their real faces visible can be perceived as an 'empowering gift' (Ippolito and Adler 2016) that can give students and teachers a possibility to make sense of their own life experiences. Reinventing democratic associations with students' lives and having – not only being in – a social environment of the classroom (Dewey [1916] 1997) can serve as a disalienating practice. In this regard, Knecht managed to present himself as an ignorant teacher (Ranci re 1991), a learner eager to give a voice to Tito, rather than an explainer transferring knowledge to Tito's mind or an emancipator making a powerful intervention from the outside.

Thirdly, the death of Joseph Knecht is a symbol of the weakness and risk that gives democratic power to teaching (Biesta 2016). Teaching is not about producing taken-for-granted results but about providing the conditions for existential awakening and self-transformation that form civic attitudes and encourage engagement in social and political matters critically (Giroux 2020). Management education in this perspective should be understood as a field of difficult and unpredictable learning based on love and compassion that challenges the status quo, rather than a smooth and fully controlled process of customer satisfaction (Biesta 2010). That's why we should not aim at reaching fast and obvious results through our teaching practice. As we learn from Hesse, Knecht's life and death was not really his victory – he died before any of his hopes were realized. But his effort to follow his vocation and his struggles with alienation have changed the history and have become a new beginning that was picked up by us in this article. Joseph's story shows that not always individual's actions bring rapid changes for which the individual hoped – sometimes it is a matter of a distant future (Ziolkowski 1974).

Finally, the death of Joseph Knecht is a reminder about what really matters in our lives as well as in our teaching practice. As mortal human beings, we will die and reflection about this fact can encourage us to confront the questions about the limited time we have to pursue our responsibility to other human beings – inside and outside the management classroom. In this regard, death can be perceived as a culmination of lifelong education processes (Roberts 2012) where teaching is a preparation not only for life but for death. The ideology of academic excellence, however, distracts the attention from the mortality and fragility of human lives (Bauman 1992; Sievers 1994). It means, paraphrasing Hesse's second novel, remaining 'beneath the wheel' (Hesse 2003), in other words, 'not dead, not being tortured or killed or threatened with either – but living in a weakened (and likely miserable) state' (Vahlbush 2009, 39). This state is based on a constant fear of staying common, of being unable to rise above others, of being the same mortal human being as the others are. Reflecting on the reality of death and life's limitations can help us with reinventing an awareness of the imperfection of human beings engaged in education and with escaping the alienating wheel of academic capitalism.

## Conclusions

In this paper, we have attempted to problematize the process of alienation in the business schools through reading Hermann Hesse 'The Glass Bead Game'. It demands courage to escape the wheels of

neoliberalism that can work as a 'dis-imagination machine' (Giroux 2013) that naturalizes the status quo and triggers mechanisms of alienation. It also requires the re-making of a sense of a teacher's self, organizing hope in the management classroom, and filling the void of fear through social imaginations (Ericsson and Kostera 2019). One of the ways to do that is to use novels as a source of meaningful knowledge and imagination about the possible alternatives of organizational worlds (Czarniawska-Joerges and de Monthoux 1994; Land and Śliwa 2009; Nordqvist and Gartner 2020). Fiction is a fertile mode of research writing in organization studies (Czarniawska 1997), providing readers with a new vocabulary that can make institutions a better place to work (Jensen 2013). In this sense, as Rhodes and Brown observed, novels serve as an important source of meanings and theorizations of empirically grounded 'facts' (Rhodes and Brown 2005). In fact, 'reading novels may turn out to be generative towards the identification of new ideas and angles for organizational research', since fiction is a 'process through which organizations are imagined', emotionally embodied, and thus created (Savage, Cornelissen, and Franck 2018, 977–978; see: Otto and Strauß 2019).

The story of Joseph Knecht, following our reading, is a source of inspiration regarding the possibility to resist the alienation in the management school and finding hope for disalienation. Establishing the conditions of personal teaching that involves dialogues between equal learners and gives the possibility of existential awakening; re-focusing attention from instrumental demands of excellence to always fragile human lives that need responsible teachers to grow and awake; not expecting fast and predictable results of our educational efforts but rather keeping in mind that both students and teachers are active agents in a history-changing process; and finally, acknowledging the mortality of human beings involved in educational processes and teaching as a preparation for life and death, can empower management (and not only management) teachers with their struggle with finding their disalienated selves.

In our teaching practice in academia (within management education in business and engineering schools), we also often experienced alienation from what we believed to be our true selves and true educational ideals. Academic excellence has been haunting us many times, not the least when we have been explicitly evaluated by others when attempting to be promoted or when applying for academic positions. During those moments and also fearing those future evaluations, we have played the Glass Bead Game of aiming to create excellent academic careers but, as in Joseph Knecht's case, we have never stopped thinking that what really mattered in our academic practice was not only meaningful research (disregarding various metrics allegedly indicating how good our research was) but more importantly our teaching. By accepting our struggles with alienation as an integral part of our academic profession, with its different, conflicting and infinite demands, we managed to make a step forward towards disalienated labour, letting (at least sometimes) our entrepreneurial and instrumental selves to die.

As passionate teachers who love teaching and music, we tried to resist alienation through designing the curriculum of our courses in an alternative way: in Michal's case introducing anarchism and collective leadership into profit-oriented, self-improvement seeking management curriculums in the business school, and in Thomas' case putting an emphasis on ethics in otherwise instrumentally oriented industrial management and engineering educations. We also introduced art-based sessions playing music with our students to learn collective leadership or listening to music and analysing lyrics to learn ethics. We also used film (Hitt and Lennerfors 2021), fiction and drama-based pedagogies (Birch and Lennerfors 2020) to create embodied, personal, experiential learning to reinvent human connections in the classroom, and to make students' voices hearable and their real faces visible. This was not merely done because such pedagogies are suited to fulfil important learning outcomes in the curriculum, but not the least because they expressed an important part of who we are as teachers and what we can bring to the educational situation. And by exposing our own selves, we at times think we encouraged students to expose theirs, which we see as crucial for education that matters. During these times, we managed to forget about expectations from different stakeholders about the content and form of our teaching, for example, perceived or explicit expectations from the university of successful course evaluations or students' demands for knowledge that

can be used to be employable in the labour market. This made us feel less alienated. Perhaps we could even at times see our efforts not as resisting alienation, but as a more constructive attempt to build something different: to create renewed learning outcomes in management education, to bring up a discussion about the purpose of management education, to problematize the currently prevalent expectations around management education and provide alternative ones. We believe that at least sometimes we became a part of the ongoing change in the classroom of bringing people together in solidary action against fragmentation, individualization and alienation.

Finally, through this paper, we would like to encourage the community of management and organization scholars to use Hermann Hesse's writings more extensively to find inspirations for their research and teaching (Zawadzki 2021). Only focusing on 'The Glass Bead Game' we can reflect on ideas such as limitations of Humboldtian model of university with its own subjective power-producing conforming scholars (Alakavuklar, Dickson, and Stablein 2017, 455) or critique the masculine academic culture of white male scholars committed to spiritual inner life as a form of generous emancipation and reformation of academia (Peters 1996: 167). 'Siddhartha' – one of the most popular of Hesse's novels nowadays – can be read as a story of an entrepreneur enacting humanizing and dignifying labour; 'Beneath the wheel' which has gained immense popularity in Japan (Cunningham 2021) provides a deep understanding of schooling oppression; and 'Steppenwolf' – a novel admired massively by the students during 1968 revolution – explores an existential struggle with institutional norms. These as well as the other novels by Hesse, not to mention his fascinating biography (Decker 2018) and political writings (Hesse 1971) are waiting for our discovery.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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