

Industrial Democracy
and
Employee Involvement

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Essay Question 3

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1 Introduction

Harry Braverman published in 1974 his book “Labor and Monopoly Capital” putting the focus on the labour process from the view of the worker. A viewpoint which is usually forgotten in the discussion of the work process (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 9). Braverman work builds on Marx’ economic theories on capitalism when describing how the process of work has developed in the modern industrialised society. One thing that distinguishes Braverman’s work from Marx’, is that Marx never lived to experience the industrial revolution and how his theories worked in this new world of industry. So even though their works cannot be compared, Braverman does give new life to Marx’ theories set in the modern world.

One of the unique things about the Braverman thesis is that Braverman himself never has defended any of its critics or contributed to the debate in any way. This has its tragic explanation in that Harry Braverman died only two years after the publication of his book. Therefore, Braverman never lived to see the impact his book has made on the discussion of the labour process in the western world. One might also argue that this has created the “Bravermania” (Thompson & Smith, 2001, 40-41).

The significance of Braverman’s book can easily be measured by looking at the vast number of contributions to the discussion of his works. The discussion is quite amazingly still ongoing at the time of writing, 28 years after its publication. In 1998 there was even a whole conference dedicated to the discussion of “Labor and Monopoly Capital”. Staged in Binghamton New York, it attracted scholars from a number of countries contributing to the debate.

Some scholars argue the Braverman's thesis is not applicable to the modern work process, that it has been proved to be invalid by the sum of its critics. Some critics argue that the thesis must be corrected, whereas other critics go further and claim that the whole thesis have been contradicted and proved invalid. One of these critics, John Eldridge, puts it like this:

"Braverman's thesis has died the death of a thousand qualifications" John Eldridge

This essay will outline Braverman's thesis, how it came about and most importantly, what it is about. Secondly, the essay will present the different critiques to Braverman's thesis, the background for these and whether they are to be considered valid. Finally, I will assess if and to what extent, Braverman's thesis is applicable to real world development in the world of work.

2 Braverman's Thesis

Braverman spends a lot of time in his book addressing Frederick Winslow Taylor's principles of scientific management and therefore I find it logical to start here when outlining Braverman's thesis.

One of Taylor's themes that Braverman focused on was the claim that as long as the workers hold the knowledge of how to do the work, and that the worker's sum of knowledge exceeds management's knowledge, it will be impossible for management to control the production output. This is because, Taylor argues, the workers will use their power in knowledge to control the management's influence. If the management is behaving unreasonable, according to the workers, for example by requesting increased output, the work-

ers will just hold back, since they know that the management are dependent on them (Braverman, 1974, 100).

Taylor therefore started to make the workers replaceable by dividing work into easy manageable tasks. So that the different workers carrying out the different tasks first of all did not need to know the other tasks, and secondly, the skill required for the different tasks was a lot lower than the required by the previous all around worker. This way, it became easier for management to simply replace the workers they were not satisfied with, since the requirements for the different jobs were a lot lower and the time spent to train new workers was considerably lower.

Another important part of Taylor's theories is that the conception of work is separated from the execution of work (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 151). All the brain work of the job, all design and planning, is carried out in the office. The worker on the shopfloor should not need to think about the work, the worker should use all his or her energy to carry out the carefully designed task (Braverman, 1974, 113-120).

According to Taylor this had also a positive impact on the worker. Since the work was separated in to small easy manageable tasks, the worker could perform way more advanced tasks than he ever could have done without the scientific division of labour. Taylor argued that with his division of labour, low skilled workers could do work that before only belonged to workers with far greater skill, impossible for the normal worker to participate in. Quite the opposite of what all critics accuse Taylorism for, Taylor himself described this as a move towards "more brain and less monotony" (Braverman, 1974, 129).

This deskilling of labour had more reasons that management got control over the total development process. This division and management of labour also meant higher efficiency because the workers all used the most effective, “best way” of doing their tasks. It was also beneficial for management because it made the production more predictable. The use of scientific management gave the management a greater guarantee for when work was finished and how much outcome it resulted in (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 434).

The core of Braverman’s thesis is that management seeks to control the entire labour process in order to make sure that it gets the most out of the worker and thereby secures a maximum output of the production. Braverman talks about volarisation, that there are two values that makes up the total value of the workplace. One is the value of the work once in development and one once the work is ready for sale. In order to achieve this, management needs to control the entire labour process, the pace of work, how work is rewarded and maybe most importantly, how work is carried out in order to gain the maximum output from production (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 151).

Braverman argues that there are two kinds of deskilling taking place in the work place, one technological and one organisational. The technological is the idea that work shall be divided into easy doable tasks, where the skill is left to the technology rather than the worker. He argued that the separation of brain and hand is the work of capitalism. The brain work should be left to the office, not for the worker, following Frederick Taylor’s second principle of scientific management. Therefore, Braverman also talks about a organisational deskilling (Braverman, 1974, 113). He also found that this deskilling

was recursive, the technological and organisational deskilling took place all over again in the office as it before was done on the shopfloor (Braverman, 1974, 316).

There is also a fundamental conflict of interest between the worker and the capitalism according to Braverman. This is because meaning of work, at least under capitalism, is to create a profit, leaving no room for the worker's satisfaction (Wood, 1982, 13). Capitalism also have a monopoly of the means of production and the whole capital backup up the industry. The worker is only a subject to capitalism, selling his or her "power to labour over an agreed period of time" (Braverman, 1974, 54) and thereby is cut off from having shared concern or responsibility for the work place, other than having a place to work fulfilling the need to work and the money this rewards the worker.

3 Critics

Harry Braverman's book have been very important to the debate about the nature of work, Wood (1982). It has also been subject to a lot of criticism and articles are still published to contribute to the debate. Noon & Blyton (2002) have categorised both the critics and their criticisms into groups. They split the debate contributors into two categories, sympathisers and agnostics. The sympathisers are the critics that accept the general concepts of the Braverman thesis, but offer some minor refinements to his work. Agnostics is the other group of critics. This group do respect some of the elements of Braverman's work, but generally find his work out of aim (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 153).

3.1 Workers' Resistance

The number of criticisms to Braverman thesis have been grouped into six different groups. One of these criticisms is that Braverman treats the workers as passive, that it is given that workers have total consent towards management's decisions and do not oppose them (Wood, 1982, 12). This opposition could either be individual, collective or powered by a trade union (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 435). This is supported by Penn (1984) that points out that Braverman does not leave any room for how social relations can work in the work process. Braverman believes that political struggles in all ways are separate to the work process (Penn, 1984, 43).

This point is also supported by Edward (1979), that claimed that Braverman ignored worker's resistance and backed the argument up with research showing how management had to rethink their management strategies and how to control the workers. Even though management managed to defeat the worker's resistance to change of the labour process, the workers' resistance were of a such considerable character that management felt forced to find more advanced ways of controlling the workers (Edward, 1979, 48-71).

Knights and Willmott (1990) claimed that the greatest hole in Braverman's work was the absence of the worker's resistance. They described this as the active element of the labour process, the "living individual subject" (Thompson & Smith, 2001, 53). Edwards and Friedman are referenced in (Wood, 1982, 16) giving examples of how management needed to develop new ways of controlling labour because of workers' opposition. This argument is also supported by Edward (1979) who argues that at least in the twentieth century, opposition from workers has become so frequent, that management

had to reorganise the whole process of labour. This had to be done not just for reducing the workers' ability to resistance, but also to alter the workers' perception of the motives of opposition (Edward, 1979, 16).

This idea is also supported by Armstrong (1989 and 1995) cited in (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 155). Armstrong claimed that the influence represented by management accountances at board level is so significant that management is bound to rethink their strategy to be in lines with financial objectives as well as human resource objectives.

3.2 Ignores Gender

A third criticism of Braverman is that he totally ignores the aspects of gender in his deskilling thesis. This leads to a number of problems when trying to get the total understand the sexual division of labour (Beechey, 1982, 54). One of the things Braverman is accused for in this respect, is that he totally separates the family from the labour process. He makes no reference to the family when discussing the labour process and when he discusses the family it is totally isolated from the labour process. Therefore "Labor and Monopoly Capital" does not provide a foundation for understanding the development in the sexual division of labour and the traditional, patriarchal social relations that exists in the capitalist organisation (Beechey, 1982, 71).

Other critics such as Baxandall, Ewen and Gorden (1976) cited in Beechey (1982) criticise Braverman of not assessing how monopoly capitalism has affected the role of the housewife and that he has failed to examine the connection between the social division of labour and the detail division of labour. Furthermore, they argue that Braverman has ignored women's unpaid labour

in the home and to acknowledge the housewifery as craftsmanship. Braverman also fails to appreciate women's work on the domestic arena. This craftsmanship, they claim, has also under the influence of capitalism been deskilled and the domestic arena has been turned into an "internal market" for consumption within monopoly capitalism (Beechey, 1982, 54).

3.3 Ignores Skill Transfer Possibilities

Penn (1982) is one of the contributors to the debate that represents another critique of Braverman. The core of this critique is that Braverman ignores the possibilities of skill transfer in the labour process. Deskilling in one area of work may result in upskilling in another area. Penn uses research from the textile industries in Rochdale Lancashire as an example and conclude that there was a tendency that management issued a deskilling in production in order to gain more control over the process and increase the predictability of the outcome, according to Braverman's thesis. Where Penn's research differs from Braverman however, is that he discovered there was an increase in the need for higher skilled labour within organised labour. He claimed that it was both through pressure from strong trade unions and the fundamental need for higher skill in some areas in the industry, that lead to an increase of higher skilled work (Penn, 1982, 107).

Wood (1982) is another critic that claim that deskilling in some areas of the workplace may introduce upskilling in other areas. Wood claims that even though deskilling may occur some parts of the industry due to technology, the general tendency in modern industry, is that technology leads to a number of new skilled jobs, especially in the electronics industry. Wood (1982) also

argue that Braverman fails to acknowledge that workers in the nineteenth century lacked the basic skill of literacy. These days this skill is implied for almost all kinds of work and not recognised by Braverman as an upskilling of labour when looking at the developments of the working class (Wood, 1982, 18-19).

Together with other critics such as Scattergood, Gasteen and Sewel, Penn argues that neither deskilling or the opposite, upskilling, is by themselves enough to understand the development of the skill change in the labour process. They claim that there is a compensatory theory, that technological change leads to both deskilling and upskilling. Zuboff (1988) analysed this in detail and found that with the continuing emphasis on technology in the workplace led to a decline in action centred jobs, the jobs where the workers physically do something, and an increase in the need of intellectual skills, that is jobs involving analysis. These ideas are called the polarisation of skills (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 161-165).

3.4 Worker's Consent

Another great critic of Braverman is that he underestimates the workers' consent and accommodation by employees (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 155). This implies the workers do not necessarily have a problem with their own subordination to management and will not want to try challenging this authority relationship. This idea was first put forth by Burawoy (1979) that argued that workers instead of trying to challenge management's way of controlling the labour process, the workers themselves developed an internal, informal work culture that offers other ways of looking at the work situation. Thereby

giving the workers more meaningful activities, since they look upon the work situation differently.

The degree of workers' consent to their own subordination can also be found in the works of Karl Marx. Noon & Blyton (2002) presents Marx' view on the worker selling his labour as follows:

“...in selling their labour power employees are relinquishing the right to control their own labour, thus discretion over how and when work should be undertaken becomes the prerogative of employers” Marx cited, (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 229)

Marx argued that it is implied when workers sell “the power to labour over an agreed period of time” as Braverman defines the selling of labour (Braverman, 1974, 54), that the management can decide how and when work is to be carried out. The worker should be fine with this since they have given their consent by selling their labour power. Their reward for this is the wage paid by the employer.

3.5 Overstates Management's Objective of Controlling Labour

Braverman is criticised for overstating the Management's objective of controlling labour. Critics such as Kelly (1985) argue that it is a lot more to it than just controlling labour in order to secure a profit. Controlling the labour process only belongs to one half of volarisation, ignoring the second half, namely securing a profit through sale of the commodities on the markets.

Also, Braverman is criticised of taking every change made by management

to be in the interest of gaining more control over the work process. The introduction of new technology is such an example. Technological deskilling was to transfer power and autonomy from the shopfloor to the office (Braverman, 1974, 151). He argued that the development in technology only broadened the gulf between workers and the machine (Braverman, 1974, 230-232). However, as critics such as Batstone, Gourlay, Levie & Moore (1987) argue, management may have many other reasons for introducing new technology, other than increased control over the labour process (Batstone, Gourlay, Levie & Moore, 1987, 206-207).

Crompton & Reid (1982) supports this with giving an example of advantages of the introduction of the computer in the clerical industry. The computer put less stress on the individual clerks and their experience to validate the data on their respective cases. A computer could be used for validating the accuracy of the data entered, even though this gives management more control over what the clerk is doing, at the same time, distributed computing gives the clerk that chance to follow the data through all parts of its processing. The computer can also store all cases the clerk has been working on leaving greater overview for the individual clerk (Crompton & Reid, 1982, 177-179).

Technology may give management new opportunities in terms of product quality, increased product development, efficiency and flexibility (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 155). New technology could make the company better equipped to meet fluctuating market demands, being more able to broaden its appeal if the market demanded it.

3.6 Ignores Alternative Management Strategies

Friedman (1977 and 1990) cited in Noon & Blyton (2002) is one of the critics arguing that Braverman ignores the fact that management may have other strategies to meet their goals. Friedman had especially new group technologies such as job enrichment and quality circles in mind. They all represent new ideas wants to make the workers more autonomous and thereby take more responsibility.

One of the most famous examples of quality circles are the Volvo and Saab car plants in the 1970s. These were social groups that worked together for accomplishing a certain task. They had a certain degree of autonomy and responsibility making them very different to the traditional, assembly line model of car production (Makin, Cooper & Cox, 1989, 32-65). Quality circles are an “advice team” according to Eric Sundstrom, Kenneth De Meuse and David Futrell and one of the primary tasks of “advice teams”, except for carrying out their work, is to provide management with feedback and advice upon production related issues. This way, there is a two way communication in the organisational hierarchy (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 380-381). The workers feel empowered and contribute in a more flexible way to the company.

Another aspect of this is that by giving some discretion to the workers in an assembly line setting, the workers become more interchangeable, moving more easily around the line since they themselves take responsibility for the work. This in the next turn leads to greater assembly line balancing and greater work satisfaction for the workers. At the same time, management continues to control the labour process (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 435).

Wood (1982) argues that one of the main problems with Braverman is

that it takes for granted that the logic of Taylor is the logic of capitalism. That is, the objective to control the labour process. Braverman is criticised for having no historical proof of this, that he implies that before Taylorism, control was not in the hands of management, that management were given control only for practical reasons. The real power was still in the hands of the workers since their knowledge superseded management's knowledge (Wood, 1982, 15). This point is supported by Taylor himself, that wrote that as long as the sum of all the workers' knowledge exceed management's knowledge of work, management could not control the labour process (Braverman, 1974, 100).

Braverman is also criticised for not being accurate enough in his historic background of the nineteenth century. Littler (1982) argues that Braverman oversimplifies how the control of labour was in the nineteenth century industry. Littler emphasise the difference in the structures of control in Britain and how it is presented in Braverman's work. Furthermore, Littler stresses that the contract system had great control over the labour process and that Braverman is romanticising the craft control by the worker in the nineteenth century industry (Littler, 1982, 122-145).

4 Supporters

Some defenders of Braverman's thesis, such as Armstrong (1988), claim that Braverman tried to describe a general "law of motion" in capitalist economies. This could be influence in either way by a number of factors, which have been more or less discovered by Braverman's critics. In order words, what the critics of Braverman suggest of modifications of his thesis, could be seen

as just realisation of such changing factors. Braverman tried only to describe a general tendency in how the work process is being shaped in a capitalist economy (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 156).

Braverman also gets support from Cooper & Taylor (2000), that concludes in their report on the change in the accounting craft that there is still truth to Braverman's thesis in today's industry. Cooper & Taylor looked at advertisements for accountants and how the requirements for these positions changed from 1974 to 1996. What they found was that even though there was a significant higher demand for computer experience the further out in the research period they looked at, the range of other qualifications radically declined. What was once a profession that demanded a number of skills, was reduced to a few critical skills, with a heavy emphasise on computer skills. This implied a number of issues. First, it seemed like a lot of accounting work was degraded to simply computer punching of data and the real brain work was left to a few, highly skilled accountants, leaving out a big number of previously low and semi skilled accountants. Secondly, the tendency found was that accounting was looked upon as something more and more firms outsourced to professional accountant firms, leading to fewer accountants jobs on the whole.

Cooper & Taylor (2000) argue that Braverman not just represents a significant theoretical basis in order to explain the development in the requirements for the accounting craftsmanship from 1974 to 1996, but his analysis of Frederick Taylor's scientific management will also continue to be influential in years to come the way the accounting craftsmanship is going (Cooper & Taylor, 2000, 575).

A lot of the same conclusion drawn by Cooper & Taylor (2000) can be found in Crompton & Reid (1982) and their research of the change in clerical work. They do recognise the deskilling of the clerical position, that the clerical position once required detailed knowledge and had a significant degree of autonomy. Technology has been introduced in the clerical profession with computers and the clerk has become more a subject to the computer and have a lot less responsibility for coordination and completion of separate work tasks. These tasks are left for management, to those who plan and coordinate the use of the computers (Crompton & Reid, 1982, 175-78).

5 Braverman in the Modern World of Work

According to Braverman, all new organisation theories are based on Taylorism (Braverman, 1974, 87). However, as Braverman also writes the degree varies on how much of Taylorism the different organisations have inherited. An interesting note is that Braverman mentions farmers as a unique group of workers that fall outside much of his theories of how everyone is an employee of capitalism (Braverman, 1974, 109). I will now look at some examples illustrating the validity of Braverman's thesis in the development in the world of work.

McDonald's is perhaps the best example of Taylorism in the modern world of work. The multinational corporation has restaurants in all corners of the world and is continually expanding. Braverman deskilling has since the 1990s been discussed as the "McDonaldisation" thesis (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 433). And there may be a lot of true in that the "McDonald way" has incorporated Taylor's scientific management throughout its organisation.

Following the Taylor theories, they have deskilled all parts of the process of running a hamburger restaurant. The recipes for each of the burgers are the same no matter which McDonald's restaurant you choose, a "Big Mac" is a "Big Mac", regardless of purchasing it in Manhattan or Melbourne. The French fries come pre cut in plastic bags to the restaurant, same for vegetables and sauces. There are alarms set for the different boiling and frying times and the employees even have standard ways of greeting the customer. Everything is done in order to make the "McDonald's experience" the same no matter where you are in the world. It is both a matter of branding, but maybe even more importantly, a case of management taking total control over the labour process (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 143-144).

Call centres is an increasing industry as more and more firms rely on them. The call centres customers include everything from emergency calls to support and customer services. It has become a trend that companies out source this kind of operation to professional call centres, instead of handling it themselves, as would be the traditional approach.

If we examine the call centres' mode of operation we will also find that in itself it represents an example of a deskilled workplace. This may sound a little surprising when first thinking about it since a call centre operator's job is about having conversations with people. Human interaction should in theory be something unique and different every time the operator gets a call, however this is not the case. The call centres operates with set schemes and rules for what their employees are to say in all phases of the conversation with the caller. Everything from the opening greeting to the problem solving and closing remarks are carefully described by the call centre management,

leaving the individual call centre operator little choice and autonomy in their daily work (Thompson & Smith, 2001, 58) and Taylor & Bain (1999) cited in (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001, 436).

Call centres even take the time of how much time the operators use on the different stages in the conversation, keeping statistics with resolution of one hundredth of a second. The call centre operators are divided into teams that are ranked on a weekly basis on the average call handling time of the different team members.

We can also see a sign of Marx' and Braverman's theories in that the worker becomes alienated towards its work because the worker does not have a direct relation to what he or she is doing. Doing support on a product that the worker's firm have not made is a source of alienation. This fact makes a distance from the worker to the product, since the call operator is not an employee of the firm delivering the service or product the caller is enquiring about.

Another example of an industry that implements Taylor's principles to a great extent, and in doing so creates an alienated work situation, is the chicken industry.

Noon & Blyton (2002) prints an interview with an assembly line working on a chicken plant, done for a television programme called "Dangerous Lives". The worker's only job was to check chickens for livers, hearts or anything else that might be inside the chicken. Then to take everything out into bins on the floor. This work was performed at an incredible pace counting 2000 chickens an hour, 14000 chickens a day leaving the worker highly alienated to his work (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 147-148).

The most famous example of Taylorism is probably Henry T. Ford's car plants. Ford revolutionised the car industry in the early 1900s. Nothing he did was totally new, he did not make a single new technological invention. What he did was merely that he used already developed technologies and put them together, with a clear idea of what he was to achieve and how to do this. The first thing he did was to use public relations to promote his cars. He was the first in the industry to do this to a great extent. Secondly, and for what he is most famous for, he introduced the assembly line in the car plant. Instead of making the workers move to where the work was, he made the work come to the workers (Beynon, 1975, 18).

Henry Ford had the most famous early implementation of Taylorism in the industry. By following the theories of scientific management, he divided work into easy doable tasks, had performance related pay and kept the workers under a strict supervision (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 146-148).

Braverman explicitly described the division of labour at Ford's car plants and described it as a fine example of capitalistic control over the labour process and how they followed Tayloristic ideas (Braverman, 1974, 146-151).

Checkout operators is another work group that really have become a regular sight in stores the last 30 years, especially in larger towns or cities. The normal operation of work for a checkout operator is quite different these days to what it used to be. If we go back to the time of "Labor and Monopoly Capital", checkout operators had to know the price of the individual commodities and punch this in on a calculator to calculate the final sum. Some places were even still using pen and paper (some still do today but it is rare). The last 15 years it has become more common that a machine registers the price

of the different goods, taking the brainwork from the worker and putting it on the computer.

The checkout operator does not even have to make out how much money the customer is to get back in change, since the computer also calculates this for the checkout operator. The checkout operator in this respect has been deskilled in that he or she does not need to hold the same amount of skills as before the introduction of technology. This deskilling follows exactly what Braverman writes about capitalism wanting to separate the brain and work in order to reduce production time, that is the time to calculate the sum of the prices of the customer's goods in this connection (Braverman, 1974, 120-126). The only real skill the operator still needs to hold, is social skills, giving the service the customer expects.

6 Conclusion

I have now looked at a lot of the critics that have arisen after the Braverman's thesis was published alongside with defences and real world examples of Braverman's theories in the modern world of work.

Braverman emphasised in his introduction that his work was not meant as a nostalgic cry on the lost era of craftsmanship, but merely as a comment on the contemporary development of capitalism in the US industry and how it affected the cycle of work. He stated that he did not want a crusade to old times of labour, but merely encouraged a way that labour and technology could work together in the future (Braverman, 1974, 7).

This can be important to bear in mind when reading his works, since it is a quite dramatic description how everything has become an employee to

capitalism and how management and capitalism have arranged work in order to secure profit and development.

One of Braverman's greatest defenders, Armstrong, argue that a lot of the critics' corrections and ideas to the Braverman's thesis is already there in the original text, one only have to have the right eyes to "see" them. Rereading the original text would very often reveal the same ideas put forward by the critics. He also accuse the critics of using too narrow scope in case studies to prove Braverman wrong, as Braverman described general tendencies in the industry (Thompson & Smith, 2001, 45).

And this is true, a lot of Braverman's critics can be defended by rereading the "Labor and Monopoly Capital". For example, when one of the most common critics to Braverman's thesis, that he did not take into account the worker's resistance to change, is described by Braverman himself, He admits already in the introduction of his book that he did not include the dimension of the modern working class and their degree of self awareness, organisation and activity. And in that lies all the individual worker's and the collective resistance to management's introduction of scientific management, in addition to trade unionism's opposition to capitalism's control over the labour process (Braverman, 1974, 26-27).

Regardless of the critics, there is a couple of issues that are important to remember regarding the Braverman thesis. First of all it was a description of general tendencies of the development in the labour process in the United States. Secondly, the cultural differences, both work wise and socially between the UK and the US is so different that this dimension must be taken into account when reading and assessing Braverman's text. Secondly, the

Braverman book is a comment on a *general* tendency, not a rule book but a general “law of motion” in capitalist economies, Armstrong cited (Noon & Blyton, 2002, 156). And I believe Armstrong is right. Braverman must not be read like an instruction book, but rather represent a valuable discussion on where the labour process development is going in a capitalist economy. As shown in the different real world examples such as McDonald’s and call centres, Braverman’s thesis has by no means “died the death of a thousand qualifications”.

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