Corporations assure the overall context of moral life. For Hegel, Sittlichkeit represents ‘the institutional reality of human selfhood’. When ethical selfhood is applied to business corporations, it becomes apparent that a reversal of much of what is found in today’s corporations is required. For example, Hegelian ethics demands a return to a situation where the actuality of ethical life occupies a prime position ‘over’ business corporations and management. The demand for a turnaround of today’s corporations starts with the place where today’s corporate managers are trained, namely, business schools. Governed by Managerialism, these business schools are located inside universities. Instead of teaching ethics, the managerial university prefers to train people in vocational and useful knowledge to be used by corporations rather than teaching academic, scholarly, intellectual, and perhaps even critical subjects. Non-revenue-creating academic subjects are often marginalised and excluded. The marginalisation of philosophy in favour of managerial subjects supports a university’s economic success, leadership, profit-margins, market share, competitive advantage, wealth accumulation, shareholder-values, profit-maximisation, and so on. This has created serious pathologies ‘that can be viewed as misdevelopments [Fehlentwicklungen], disorders or social pathologies’ according to Hegelian philosopher Axel Honneth. In society, the deliberate decline of ethics in favour of business has led to a class of people who, according to Oscar Wilde (1892),

know the price of everything and the value of nothing.
Fostered by corporate mass media, the ideology of Managerialism has created a petit-bourgeois mindset of egoistic corporate managers, just as Hegel had predicted. Their actions are defined by selfishness and what Hegelian philosopher Kersting calls ‘self-addicted purpose’ and it is this selbstsüchtiger Zweck that is contradictory to Sittlichkeit. Hegel has described this as ‘he alone is the only purpose; everything else is nothing to him’. It manifests itself, for example, in Schwartz’s (1990) ‘Narcissistic Process and Corporate Decay’ but the problem of selfishness versus Sittlichkeit has more significant implications. Being a philosopher of spirit [Geist], Hegel saw another more philosophical and more important conflict, namely, the conflict between Sittlichkeit’s ethics of freedom and nature’s instincts and desires. Hegel noted in his Philosophy of Right that one is unfree when one is ‘merely desire-driven’. He calls this ‘unfreedom’. Management successfully exploits this. It feasts on individual desires for status, wages, salaries, gratification, bonuses, and petit-bourgeois attitudes. Managerialism’s prime writer, found in almost every management textbook, is Frederick Herzberg (1923–2000) who calls the desire for money ‘extrinsic rewards’ while desire for praise is termed ‘intrinsic rewards’. Ever since management’s move from ‘punishment to reward’ regimes, management scavenges on instinctive desires (McGregor 1960, 2006). Management’s exploitation of desires has become a largely unchallenged ideology taught at management schools. While Hegelian philosophy sees desire-driven actions as unfreedom, management, meanwhile, systematically fosters them – through, for example, its ingrained system of performance management – for its ends of working exactly in opposition to Sittlichkeit.

There are management decisions that are made on desire-driven motives and those that are – more deliberately – made on instrumental rationality such as cost–benefit decisions. The latter are decisions Hegel calls selbstsüchtiger Zweck which translates into selfish purpose made by someone who is addicted [süchtig] to oneself. These managerial decisions are reflective of Sophie’s Choice, forcing one to choose between managerially pre-designed options. Managerialism links this to the prisoner dilemma, quasi-scientifically labelled ‘rational choice theories’. Both provide management with a conceptual underpinning for Sophie’s Choice-like manipulations. These manipulations create narrowly defined managerial unfreedoms. They are deliberate distortions of freedom reducing human freedom to pre-conceived choices while Managerialism frames this as ‘free’ choice. Unlike management’s exploitation of instincts and desires, the free choice ideology