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OT and Power: The Significance of Value-Orientations and a Plea for Pluralism[i]

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Abstract

The paper advances two propositions. First, that organization theory (OT) comprises a heterogeneous body of knowledge which, in effect, is a history of the (on-going) power struggles that produce it. And, second, that OT harbours different concepts of power and associated value-orientations through which it is possible to interpret the diversity and development of OT. These propositions give priority to the politics and ethics of knowledge production, and not differences of ontology, epistemology or levels of analysis. Its pluralist stance accommodates value-orientations which prompt and justify knowledge oriented towards `rationalization', `explication' and `emancipation'.

Introduction

The rise of 'organization' as a category of modernity has given impetus to the formation of numerous forms of organization theorizing (e.g. 'classical', 'systems', 'postmodern', etc)[ii]. In turn, this theorizing conditions, legitimizes, reinforces and subverts the modern(ist) sense of "being organized" and its associated organizational forms. As a key, performative signifier of contemporary, 'advanced' societies, `organization' exerts a pervasive and multifaceted – beatific but also horrific – influence, or power. By reflecting upon the constitution of organization theory (OT), it may be possible to illuminate its conditions and its consequences for organizing.

In many accounts of OT, especially those found in textbooks, its development is presented as a series of stages in which deficiencies in previous forms of theory are progressively exposed and corrected. For example, systems theoretic thinking is pitched as a correction of classical theory; and some version of action or practice theory is proposed to correct shortcomings in systems theory. In a less unified narrative, a cyclical alternation of different modes of theorizing is identified – such as those emphasing rational design, and others that attend more closely to devotional features (e.g. Barley and Kunda, 1992). And, in a third account of OT, the emphasis is upon the parallel development of two or more distinctive or even incommensurable approaches (e.g. Pfeffer, 1982; Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

In such narratives, minimal attention is paid to what may be broadly termed the ethical, value-invested `motivation' of knowledge of organization. In the first and second narrative, the (epistemological) emphasis is upon eliminating blind spots and bias in order to represent organizational reality more fully or faithfully. The first narrative presumes linearity whereas the second indicates recursiveness. And in the third narrative, attention is directed to divergent ontological assumptions about social reality and/or epistemological assumptions about social science – assumptions that are held to underpin and guide paradigms of organization theoretic knowledge. Each narrative of theory development is framed in terms of an incremental refining and revealing of one or more, progressively integrated bodies – approaches, schools or paradigms – of knowledge Yet*, 'organization' is not a datum to be dis-covered.* Rather, 'organization' is a contested category whose unstable and shifting meaning is struggled over within and between a number of materially embedded discourse(s) that include `economics', `political science' and `sociology' as well as `management'[iii].

'Organization' is a contested category because, as Reed (1999) puts it, the process of theory-making, whether lay or scholarly in provenance, is an `historically located intellectual practice directed at assembling and mobilizing ideational, material and institutional resources to legitimate certain knowledge claims and the political projects which flow from them' (ibid: 27). In this sense, knowledge (of organization) cannot be dissociated from politico-ethical relations that animate and legitimize its production, even when the connection between knowledge, power and ethics takes an instrumentalized and so seemingly value-neutral form). The point is well made but undeveloped by Clegg, Courpasson and Phillips (2006) when they note how, in much OT, a preoccupation with efficiency, where the focus is exclusively upon the fullest attainment of a predetermined end while making the least input, '*slice(s) off the value dimension*..[as it] displaces any serious concern with ends, which are given in terms of the need for efficiency' (ibid: 8, emphasis added). As Clegg *et al* then remind us, the privileging of efficiency `is never "given" but has to be struggled for' (ibid). This struggle, I contend, is political and ethical as it involves a value-commitment. This is so even if, and perhaps especially when, the pursuit of efficiency is located within the sphere of science where *inter alia* power is not considered to be implicated in its hierarchies or rules: power, from this perspective, is 'seen only as a category of irrationality because to resist science, by definition [is] to oppose reason' (ibid: 61).

The intent of this paper, as signaled by its title, is to advance and expand upon two propositions. First, that OT comprises a heterogeneous body of knowledge which, in effect, is a history of the (on-going) power struggles that produce it. And, second, that OT harbors different concepts of power through which it is possible to interpret its diversity and development. A central theme of the paper is that 'OT' is constituted within and through value-orientations – a standpoint which can be summarized as a series of claims in which it is the politics and ethics of knowledge production, and not differences of ontology, epistemology or levels of analysis, that are emphasised. Value-orientations are politically invested and charged in the sense that they endow life with a *particular*, privileged meaning: in effect, their mobilization has the effect of 'impos[ing] coherence and direction on the chaos of immediate experience' (Brubaker, 1984 : 88, n.3). The process of 'imposition' corresponds to what Laclau and Mouffe (2001: x) term `the moment of political articulation' when "this" rather than "that" definition of the situation (e.g. a particular representation of organization(s)) is invoked and objectivated (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). When organization theorizing is understood in this way, `the central category is hegemony' (ibid) as this signals the process whereby a particular representation becomes established and dominant; or, as Laclau and Mouffe, (2001) put it, 'a particular social force assumes the representation of a totality that is radically incommensurable with it' (ibid: x). The incommensurability arises from the impossibility of the *particular* ever fully reflecting or capturing the *totality*; and so the coherence and credibility of any specifid knowledge claim is inherently problematical and problem-izable. To present this argument, contributions to OT are grouped by value-orientation with respect to their engagement in projects of (1) rationalization, (2) explication and (3) emancipation.

Before proceeding, it may be helpful to clarify what will not be argued here. I will not be treating OT as a settled or uniform field of knowledge which, as it advances, yields more accurate or useful descriptions or explanations of a (self-evident) research object. I will not be claiming that the production and development of OT occurs externally to a field of power relations in which the value and credibility of knowledge claims are inscribed. And finally I will not be proposing a theory of power – even though, in principle, such a theory is a prerequisite for developing an account of how value-orientations are articulated as forms of OT. I will, however, be drawing heavily, directly and indirectly, upon Foucault's series of reflections upon the meaning and significance of power. Accordingly, I conceive of `knowledge' and `power' as mutually constitutive; and, relatedly, reject any suggestion that the former can be cleansed of the latter.

OT, Knowledge and Power

When considering OT as a body of knowledge, an obvious question is begged: how are we to conceive of its emergence and development? The response offered here entails an appreciaton of how value-orientations are outcomes of the connectedness of knowledge and power. Knowledge of organization is, I suggest, an articulation of socially and materially embedded efforts, or political struggles, to 'organize practical behaviour into a direction of life' (Weber, 1968: 528), and such 'directions', I contend, articulate value-orientations. The association of 'knowledge' and 'power' is redolent of Foucauldian thinking, and it is therefore appropriate to locate the analysis developed here within Foucault's evolving deliberations on the power/knowledge question.

In his *archeological* period, Foucault sought to elucidate how historically specific systems of rules serve to warrant, as well as to frame, particular knowledge claims. The focus is upon discursive formations, underpinned by sets of rules, that constitute particular 'objects' of study, such as 'organization'. 'Power' is significant in this archeological account because it is seen to establish and police the boundaries of discourse by excluding forms of knowledge that may, potentially, challenge privileged discursive formation. Consideration of the significance of values and ethics is largely excluded from, or latent within, such archeological analysis. Turning to Foucault's *genealogical* period, the role of power is strongly underscored as it is conceived to produce knowledge, and not just to police its boundaries, and thereby to form and discipline particular (human) subjects - such as the 'model employee' or the 'professional manager'. While power is understood to be constitutive of knowledge, and not just the boundaries of knowledge production, there is nonetheless little attention paid to values in the production of knowledge. In his final, *ethical* period, Foucault wrestles with the residue of determinism in his earlier formulations where, seemingly, the disciplining effects of power/knowledge leave little room for agency, subjectivity or the associated possibility of 'care of the self'. The favoured conception of power in this final period is that of a more open 'complex strategic situation' (Foucault, 1973: 93) in which the operation of power is understood to depend upon the engagement of `free' subjects – a complexity that contains the (ethically resonant) prospect of resistance and emancipation from solidified relations of power, but not from their necessary operation. This period not only advances the understanding that power is pervasive and relational; it is also endemically open to contestation as it gestures towards the connectedness of power and value-orientations (e.g. in relation to the "care of the self").

Building upon, and possibly moving somewhat beyond Foucault, it is plausible to argue that relations of power are open, and so are inherently unstable, because they lack any foundation that is beyond questioning, resistance and transformation. In place of that foundation are value-imbued fantasies which act to represent particularities as universalities – for example, by advancing and defending some theory or methodology that yields objective knowledge of organization(s). In this process, the radical contingency of the power-invested values which bestow credibility upon such claims is disregarded. When understood in this way, each 'objectivity' is accomplished politically: each theory of organization is, in effect, the product of hegemonic closure where hegemony is offered as 'a theory of decision taken in an undecidable terrain' (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: xi). The projects of rationalization, explication and emancipation, from which theories of organization are seeded, are, I argue, forged through such political processes of inclusion/exclusion.

This stance departs from most 'critical', as well as 'conventional' discussions where power, in or around organizations, is conceived to be accessible through an engagement of one of more different perspectives (e.g. Hickson, Astley, Butler and Wilson, 1981; Ocasio, 2002); or it is conceived to have a number of dimensions (Lukes, 1974); or it is considered to be constituted at a number of levels (Fincham, 1992); or it is seen to move through `distinct circuits of episodic, facilitative and dispositional power' (Clegg, 1989: 239). What is shared by these very different discourses on power is an assumption of its *essential* presence, which makes it intelligible and plausible to claim that certain approaches 'neglect' the power exerted by organizations (Perrow, 2000: 469); that they 'misrepresent the balance of power'; (Hardy and Clegg, 1999: 375), or that they 'obscure the true workings of power' (ibid). If, in contrast, power is understood to have no essential nature (see Dryberg, 1997), then notions of 'neglect', 'misrepresentation' and 'obscuring' are uncompelling. These propositions are not 'wrong'. Indeed, to believe that they are (epistemologically) wrong presumes the existence of some uncontested benchmark. Accordingly, the above accounts of power are here interpreted as (unacknowledged) articulations of what they aspire to study. In effect, they disregard or, at best bracket, consideration of the presence of power in the theory/knowledge of organization. This oversight renders their claims problematical as they are seen to be circular. When, instead, the essential meaning of power is problematized, claims of `neglect', etc. are admissible *only* if it

is made clear that their authority flows from a particular power-invested *value-orientation and any suggestion that they are underpinned by a* universal, truth-disclosing warrant is thereby undercut.

That concepts such as 'power', as well as 'structure', 'strategy', 'culture', etc. lack any essential reality does not imply that they are meaningless or useless. To the contrary, they are rendered meaningful by, and within, particular power-invested value-orientations. So, for example, conflicts between senior executives may be interpreted within the value-oriented framework of managerialism[iv] as 'power struggles' rather than, say, 'personality clashes'. But, what, more precisely, 'power struggle' connotes is contingent upon the specific conceptual framework that articulates a particular value-orientation. Accordingly, the struggle may be represented as a functional or dysfunctional conflict between managers to establish, or subvert, formal rationality; or it may be interpreted as a recurrent feature of processes of (re)institutionalization in response to environmental changes; or it may be understood as an integral part of a broader, class-based conflict over access to valued material and symbolic resources; and so on. What I mean by such struggles in the context of the contested field of OT is illustrated in a lively exchange between Jeffrey Pfeffer (1993; 1995) and John Van Maanen (1995, 1995a). Their 'debate', I suggest, illustrates the struggle over how to develop theory in a manner that 'organize(s) practical behaviour into a direction of life' (Weber, 1968: 528).

Pfefferdigm v. Van Maanendom

Pfeffer advocates basing OT upon `a set of rules to winnow the methods, measures, and theories on the basis of accumulated evidence', and thereby to `resolve theoretical disputes and debates (Pfeffer, 1993: 616, 618)[v]. In the absence of a collective effort to establish a single benchmark of judgment and thereby to ensure `theoretical and methodological conformity' (ibid: 614), Pfeffer fears that, the resources required to develop OT and increase its profile and influence will flow in the direction of competitor disciplines (e.g. economics, political science). For Van Maanen (1995), in contrast, the pursuit of knowledge must resist the restrictions imposed by such demands. `Theorizing', he argues, `is a matter far too important to be left to a small set of self-proclaimed experts with their mock science routines, images and metaphors' (ibid: 140).

In this example, the struggle is between (i) an advocate of a conception of scientific knowledge policed by an elite of gatekeepers committed to establishing a single `paradigm' (or Pfefferdigm) and (ii) an advocate of a pluralist conception of scientific investigation that accommodates and indeed encourages a variety of approaches and `paradigms' (within the Van Mannendom). The Pfeffer – Van Maanen exchange can be read as illustrating how power is a *condition* of our knowledge of organization. Pfeffer (1993) points to the power concentrated in rules, to be presided over by a tightly-knit elite of scholarly gatekeepers who will secure the necessary funding to ensure the `systematic advancement of knowledge' (ibid: 600). There is some resonance here with what Foucault identifies as archeological and genealogical analyses of power. With regard to the former, Pfeffer is interested in establishing a set of rules to stabilize the object of study and to define the legitimate means of study. With regard to genealogical analysis, his intervention exemplifies a concern to define and develop a model of the `professional scientist' who acquires sufficient intellectual capital to challenge the dominance of entrenched elites. Van Maanen, in contrast, points to the rhetorics mobilized by organization analysts to construct, promote and justify diverse and inescapably contested conceptions of what does, or should, count as `science' and its `systematic advancement'. In this regard, there is some affinity with Foucault's third, ethical reflection on power where he emphasizes how power/knowledge is endemically open to contestation and celebrates the transgressive capacities, in addition to the disciplinary effects, of processes of subjectivation.

Joined at the Hip by Power

Pfeffer and Van Maanen's exchange articulates profound differences about how to develop OT whilst simultaneously illustrating how the development of knowledge is dependent upon the operation of power. In Pfeffer's case, `the development and growth of organization science' (ibid : 600) requires the mobilization of scholars capable of establishing a strong, unified paradigm sufficient to 'institutionalize its dominance' (ibid : 615). Without such a bulwark or *hegemon* (i.e. dominating force), the (unexplicated) project of OT will, Pfeffer warns, be overpowered by the superior political organization of other disciplines[vi]. For Van Maanen, power is invested in rhetoric that can be engaged in ways that may close down, but may also open up, enquiry.

When contributions to OT are understood as articulations of socially embedded efforts to `organize practical behaviour into a direction of life' (Weber, 1968: 528), the production of knowledge is not conditional on the elimination of power.

Rather, power is integral to the production of knowledge.[vii] To suggest otherwise is to normalize, or better hegemonise, a particular power relation, and associated definition of knowledge, by asserting its neutrality and universality[viii]. The Pfeffer-Van Maanen exchange illustrates how `power' – as exercised in the effort to draw of `tight' (Pfeffer) or significantly `looser' (Van Maanen) disciplinary boundaries – is a *condition*, and not just a consequence, of knowledge production. Pfeffer's conception of power, as what is acquired and mobilised to establish the position of a dominant group, is an artifact of the way that he theorizes organization (as an external object in the world that is more or less adequately captured by scientific investigation). And Van Maanen's conception of power, as what enables the rhetorical institutionalization of knowledge, is an artifact of the way he conceives of OT: that is, as having `an action component which seeks to induce belief amongst our readers… Rather than mirror reality, our theories help generate reality for readers' (Van Maanen, 1995: 135)[ix].

Scope and Focus of OT

In order to explore further the significance of power in the development of OT, I turn to Perrow's (2000) discussion of `the organization of organization theory' in which he reflects upon how theories of organization, including their conceptions and studies of power, are themselves `organized'. More specifically, Perrow contends that OT has been organized in a way that encompasses the following paradox:

`Organizations in the twentieth century have become the most *powerful* force in industrialized societies, but understanding and appreciation of *their power* has been neglected' (ibid : 469, emphases added)

Perrow's complaint about the `neglect' of power presupposes an (unacknowledged) conviction about the proper scope and focus of OT. Organization theory, Perrow contends, should not be limited to studying the functioning of organizations – a focus that, he laments, `has come to dominate the field' (ibid: 470). Rather, OT should be concerned with two other `broad themes' (ibid : 469): (i) the rise of organizations and (ii) their impact on society (see also Parsons,1956 discussed in Stern and Barley, 1996).

I am broadly sympathetic to Perrow's (2000) criticism that OT has been excessively preoccupied with questions of `how [organizations] function, what are their internal dynamics, and how might these be improved for the various groups that have a stake in them…' (ibid : 469-70; see also Walsh, Weber and Margolis, 2003; Hickson and Greenwood, 2002; Davis and Marquis, 2005). Moving beyond such considerations requires that OT becomes directly attentive to the *`social* role' of organizations (Perrow, 2000: 470) – a concern which, incidentally, resonates directly with the Domain Statement of Critical Management Studies Division of the Academy of Management. *Here*, however, I want to pay attention to how assessments of OT, such as that presented by Perrow, are power-invested *articulations of particular value-orientations*.

The Significance of Value-Orientations[x]

Perrow's (2000: 469) identification of the 'neglect' of an `understanding and appreciation' of the 'social role' and especially the 'power' of organizations in industrialized societies articulates a judgment. A judgment which attains the status of a *social* fact is the consequence of a power-invested subscription to a particular value-orientation that bestows credibility upon it. There are many scholars – indeed, an overwhelming majority, if Perrow's assessment is to be believed – who do not regard OT's inattentiveness to 'power' as a cause for regret, or as symptomatic of scholarly `neglect' (see Donaldson, 1985). The same argument is applicable to Perrow's assertion that 'organizations in the twentieth century have become the most powerful force in industrialized societies'. This view is advanced as if it were self-evidently true when, arguably, it articulates a value-oriented standpoint in which a particular, unexplicated, conception of power is attributed to reified entities called 'organizations'.

These reflections speak to how appeals are made to `power' in ways that claim, or imply, that, for example, its presence is self-evident but 'neglected' (or inadequately represented) in OT. The attribution of an absence, based upon *a* view of OT's proper scope, is invoked to justify forms of analysis that must assume, and will then confirm, its presence. An alternative, as sketched earlier, is to suspend belief in the existence of power in any particular form. This suspension of belief makes it possible to appreciate better how various meanings are ascribed to `power' when developing different theories of organization. Reviewed in this light, OT is interpreted as a political, power-invested process of advocacy and contestation involving struggles between competing value-oriented claims over boundaries and modes of analysis.

The Fantasy of Disinterested Inquiry

To be fair to Perrow (2000), he is not insensible to the problems of relying upon received ideas which are assumed to be self-evidently true. His awareness of this issue is evident in his comments upon the difficulty of providing a disinterested (power-cleansed) account of the history of OT:

> …we do not and cannot have an "objective" or "disinterested" inquiry into these matters, because as theorists and researchers we are shaped so substantially by the organizations we seek to understand and study. We are dependent upon the social constructions of both our workplace and the objects being studied, rather than being independent of the subject matter' (ibid: 470).

These remarks – which are congruent with Van Maanen's (1995:135) concerns about the `performative characteristics of a text(s)' – suggest that, in addition to the 'broad themes' that Perrow commends for further examination in OT, a further theme might be added: the study of the *interdependencies* of knowledge producers and the objects of their production.

This additional theme is presupposed yet unarticulated in Perrow's (2000) reflections. By specifying the `analytic foci' (Stern and Barley, 1996: 151) of OT, and then critiquing its scope and content, Perrow's discussion contributes to the interdependencies theme by providing 'an organizational analysis of OT'[xi]. The formation of OT - including its (alleged) 'neglect' of the impact of organizations on society – is accounted for in terms of the changing scholarly context of its production. Perrow notes how, in the US and elsewhere, the study of organizations has moved from departments of sociology to schools of business where, he suggests, faculty have 'produced research…that dealt with the problems managers were facing' (see also Hinings and Greenwood, 2002). To this assessment, I would add a couple of further observations. The first is methodological. Especially within the US context, the love affair with scientism is deep and seemingly undiminished. As Marsden and Townley (1999) have commented, `organization scientists are so caught up in the science of hypothesis testing that often the practical utility of this "theorizing" is lost from sight' (ibid: 412). Despite some indications of the opening up of scholarship within the most highly regarded (and jealously policed) OT journals, claims about a scholarly *glasnost* are wildly exaggerated (Grey, 2010). Second, especially outside of the US context, much of the OT developed in business schools during the past two decades or more has *no* direct, or even remote, connection to the problems faced by managers, although it does serve a political function by marginalizing and developing more challenging forms of scholarship (see also Starbuck, 2003)[xii]. Notably, in much institutional analysis, the study of organization(s) is 'sociologized' but without attending either to problems presented by managers or indeed to the power of organizations in society.

In what follows, I characterize mainstream OT as harnessed to a *project of rationalization*. This project, I suggest, is defined by a (ceremonial and so largely unfulfilled) aspiration to improve existing means of organizing and/or is valued for lending managerial knowledge a sheen of scientific credibility[xiii]. However, before comparing and contrasting the 'project of rationalization' with other projects of OT, it is necessary to elaborate briefly the framework that differentiates these projects.

The Constitution of OT: Value-Orientations and Power

The constitution of OT is here conceived in terms of power-invested, value-orientations that articulate knowledge-generating projects – of rationalization, explication and emancipation. There are obvious parallels here with Habermas' (1971) theory of three cognitive interests – in prediction and control, mutual understanding and emancipation – that propel three kinds of sciences (empirical-analytic; hermeneutic, and critical). But whereas Habermas attributes these interests and associated sciences to 'the cultural break with nature' (ibid: 312) and, more specifically, to `the interest structure' of the human species (ibid: 313), I regard the openness of this `interest structure' as a condition of knowledge production but without assuming that it necessarily stimulates the three types of knowledge which Habermas associates with cognitive interests. In other words, 'the cultural break with nature' is conceived here as a necessary but insufficient condition of the production of (different types of) knowledge. Manifestations of forms of knowledge are, I suggest, historically contingent, not pre-ordained by an 'interest structure' (see also Willmott, 2003).

The Project of Rationalization

Scholarly work engaged in the project of rationalization aspires to generate knowledge whose credibility rests upon demonstrations of the impartiality, reliability and potential replicability of their knowledge as a basis for enhancing the rational design and functioning of organizations. This association of organization science with the project of rationalization resonates with Weber's conception of formal rationality which he specifies in terms of its maximization of the calculability of action.

Weber wrote eloquently on science as a vocation and on the methodology of social science. But he had little to say about the history and philosophy of science – perhaps because, for Weber, his advocacy of value-free science was ultimately underpinned by a moral, not a rational, justification (Alvesson and Willmott, 2012). To further illuminate Weber's conception of science, it is helpful to turn to his discussion of the application of formal rationality in the sphere of administration and, more specifically, his analysis of bureaucracy. In that sphere, `precision', `unambiguity' and `unity' are seen to be especially prized such that `the "objective discharge of business primarily means a discharge of business according to calculable rules and without regard for persons' (Weber, 1948: 215). Arguably, for Weber, truly scientific knowledge is also the product of unequivocal submission to formal rationality. As he wrote, `I am ready to prove from the works of our historians that whenever the man (sic) of science introduces his personal value judgment, a full understanding of the facts *ceases*' (Weber, 1946: 146, emphasis in original). When pursuing projects of formal rationality, scientists, like bureaucrats, are absolved of moral responsibility beyond compliance with protocols that are conceived to ensure the removal of values and bias from their work, and thereby to usher in an age characterized, above all by the "disenchantment of the world" (Weber, 1948: 155)[xiv].

In the project of rationalization, the concept of power is considered to have limited relevance for the study of organizations. That is because its object of study is assumed to be a product of formal rationality, which is politically neutral. For example, in his classic formulation of the 'Foundations of the Theory of Organization', Selznick (1948) begins from the premise that 'Trades unions, governments, business corporations, political parties, and the like are formal structures in the sense that they represent *rationally ordered instruments for the achievement of stated goals*' (ibid: 25, emphasis added; for an alternative assessment, see Lounsbury and Ventresca, 2002; 2003). Conceived in this way, organizations are (ontologically) rational instruments, not political media.

Yet, Selznick also follows Barnard (1938) in acknowledging that the application of formally rational principles and procedures never entirely succeeds in `conquering the non-rational dimensions of organizational behaviour' (ibid: 25) – not least because these procedures are embedded in a wider social structure or `institutional environment' over which formal rationality exerts incomplete control. It is this embeddedness which necessitates political negotiation in order to achieve some workable alignment between the goals ascribed to `the organization' and the demands attributed to the institutional milieu. Accordingly, the concept of power is reserved for the analysis of forms of resistance and imbalance that `threaten the formal authority' (ibid: 34) and/or account for deviations from it. In the project of rationalization, the concept of power is invoked to explain instabilities that depart from, and disrupt, the consistent exercise of formal authority. `Power' cannot be conceived in a more extensive or challenging manner, or be accorded a more central or constitutive place in such analysis, as this would unsettle the assumption of formal rationality's political neutrality. At most, it may be acknowledged that the application of formal rationality results in organizational designs which (unintentionally) place people in offices - as specialists or as superordinates – and so present them with opportunities to form `power cliques' (ibid: 27), through which they abuse the authority vested in formal positions by appropriating them as a source of personal or factional power.

It is in order to eliminate, or at least limit, such 'abuses' and 'dysfunctions' that other contributors to the project of rationalization have commended a series of interventions, including more astute forms of leadership (Selznick, 1957) and better designed `corporate culture'. Other contributors to this project anticipate that `power' will continue to evade efforts to rationalize design; and, therefore, that its exercise and mobilization by individuals and coalitions (Cyert and March, 1963; Pettigrew, 1985) merits systematic study in order to assist in introducing measures to rationalize (rather than suppress or strive to eliminate), its exercise. This (managerialist) sense of power has been aptly characterized by Hickson, Astley, Butler and Wilson (1981: 152) as `power as technique'.

The Projects of Explication and Emancipation

In distinctive ways, the projects of explication and emancipation problematize the notion of `organization' as an articulation of formal rationality. Advocates of explication strive to elucidate differences in how `organization' is practically theorized by members and/or analytically examined by scholars. Proponents of the project of emancipation move beyond an appreciation of actors' frames of reference or the practical accomplishment of social realities to engage in critique: critique is engaged in exposing and problematizing and transforming oppressive and/or exploitative relations of power (e.g. patriarchy) that have become institutionalized in organizations.

The conception of power in the project of explication is framed and animated by a concern to appreciate the negotiation and institutionalization of organizational realities. In principle, the aspiration is to report or disclose realities, not to correct or transform them. The project of explication may, for example, engender greater awareness of how, for example, the meaning of key concepts of organizational analysis, such as 'discretion' or 'involvement', are shaped in the process of their use by managers (and others). The project of explication is not engendered or accompanied by a concern to open up or change the conditions that produce particular sedimentations of power/knowledge (see Pringle, 1988).

In the project of emancipation, OT is animated by a concern to develop knowledge relevant to transforming the world by overcoming unnecessary forms of domination and exploitation. Its target is the institutionalization of oppression that, as Friere (2005) notes, routinely becomes 'domesticating' (ibid: 51). The intention of what Benson (1977) terms `an emancipatory alternative approach' (ibid: 18) to disclose such domestication but to contribute to the `reconstruction of organizations' (ibid: 17) so that their members are no longer `prey to its force' (Freire, 2005: 51). To this end, it is necessary to `turn upon [forms of oppression and domestication]... by means of praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.' (ibid). As Benson (1977) notes, this `critical-emancipatory stance' (ibid: 18) articulates a distinctive `ethical commitment' (ibid: 6) – namely, `that social science should contribute to the process of reconstruction, to the liberation of human potential through the production of new social formations' (ibid).

Critical reflection on established theorizing, lay and scientific, is a condition of possibility of appreciating, for example, how power and efficiency are 'inextricably linked' (Clegg et al, 2006:7). They are bound together because the pursuit of efficiency requires the mobilization of power as well as its occlusion within 'central organization theory accounts of power' – accounts which offer 'few, if any, pointers to enslavement' (ibid). In other words, the project of emancipation is directly attentive to how oppression is (a) institutionalized in organizations, taking *inter alia* the form of labour exploitation, patriarchy, racism and other kinds of discrimination; and (b) marginalized or disregarded in OT. A pervasive form of oppression is the normalized alienation of wage (commodified) labour as this obliges its sellers (employees) to do their purchasers' bidding– a situation rendered bearable by, for example, embracing the internally repressive practice of contriving to establish a `real self' that is distanced from the everyday, normalized indignities and the enervating mundaneity of much work in modern organizations (Knights and Willmott, 1989). The value-orientation animating the project of emancipation is committed to de-naturalizing such forms of oppression and facilitating change in the conditions that harbour it.

Discussion

In reflecting upon the value-orientations that inspire and guide different contributions to OT, it is relevant to acknowledge the inevitability of unintended consequences. Analyses that conceive of the defining features of organization as `saturated and imbued with power' may, but do not necessarily, contribute to a project of emancipation (e.g. feminist critiques of bureaucracy, Ferguson, 1984 or Marxist critiques of the labour process, Braverman, 1974). An attentiveness to the role of language (see, for example, Tietze, Cohen and Musson, 2003) may serve to develop post-rational, culturalist means of control (e.g. Eccles and Nohria, 1992). Critique may be appropriated by advocates of the project of rationalization (see Boltanski and Chiapello, 2006), as when insights drawn from ethnographic studies of labour processes are used to develop more effective or intensive means of managerial control.

It is necessary to adopt a critical stance towards the emancipatory project as it can harbor contradictions (e.g. residues of the projects of rationalization and explication) as well as contribute to exposing and overcoming them (see also Alvesson and Willmott, 2012). Consider, for example, the relationship between Benson's (1977) formulation of a 'dialectical view' of OT, in which the concept of contradiction is central to the construction of social order (ibid: 5-6), and his contention that

> `The organization scientist can study [organizational design and behaviour] as if they were not connected to something deeper...Yet, until their grounding in power relationships is grasped, our understanding is *seriously incomplete and biased*' (ibid: 10).

The complaint of 'incompleteness' suggests that knowledge produced in the projects of rationalization and explication fail to appreciate how the 'design' and 'behaviour' is `ground(ed) in power relationships' (ibid). Such 'incompleteness' points to an alternative (emancipatory) forms of knowledge that advocates of 'a succession of rational and functional theories and by positivist methodology' (ibid: 1) have dismissed, however, as `unscientific'. This dismissal may be because of, rather than despite, the concern of analysis developed within the emancipatory project to connect the design of organization(s) to 'something deeper' (ibid: 10).

The charge of `bias' (ibid) implies that the basis of much OT developed within the projects of explication as well as rationalization is flawed, and not simply `incomplete'. By attributing `bias' to knowledge generated by other projects of knowledge production, Benson points to the partiality or limitations of particular `rational and functionalist theories' (ibid: 1), which have been associated here with the project of rationalization. He anticipates the development of a purer (less flawed), and not simply less incomplete, form of OT. A similar stance is adopted by Hardy and Clegg (1999) when they criticize contributions to OT in which the study of 'the exercise of power within a given structure of dominancy…focuses only on surface politics and *misrepresents* the balance of power' (ibid: 375).

The terms `incompleteness' and `bias' (Benson) and `misrepresentation' (Hardy and Clegg) imply a privileged access to reality that permits prejudice, and possibly deception, to be detected and then overcome. The call of these authors, I suggest, is to replace, rather than supplement, `biased' and `incomplete' knowledge with a superior, 'unbiased', alternative[xv]. Strikingly, such demands directly echo the more commonly heard accusation of bias and political motivation directed by `rationalist and functionalist theories' (Benson, 1977: 1) at analysis which strays beyond the boundaries of 'positivistic methodology' (ibid). Such critiques are generally marked by a lack of reflexivity regarding the value-orientation that informs and justifies their stance.

Advances in organization theorizing are unlikely to be assisted by uneasy stand-offs where apartheid trumps discussion; or where debates between proponents of competing, but essentialist, concepts of science simply harangue each other for being 'unscientific', 'biased' or 'ideological'. Such exchanges are based upon the dubious assumption that forms of science associated with each value-orientation *necessarily* pose a threat to the credibility of the other(s); or, at best, that the purpose and contribution of `lesser' forms of science is limited to the role of handmaiden to a preferred approach by providing insights that can fuel its imperialist ambitions. The necessarily contested process of appreciating the value and limitations of each contribution is impeded by the self-understanding of theories as rivals competing to provide *the* authoritative account of organization.

These reflections beg the question: if the existence of competing value-orientations – and associated projects of rationalization, explication and emancipation - is endemic, then can the aspiration to eliminate `biased' knowledge from OT amount to more than (scientistic) rhetoric? Short of effectively imposing some kind of *hegemon,* as advocated by Pfeffer, the ambition to establish a body of `unbiased' knowledge will remain unfulfilled. Forms of OT motivated by the different value-orientations, will continue to develop, albeit with differential degrees of support. If this is accepted, then the challenge of OT is to foster their co-existence and to appreciate their distinctive contributions (Ezzamel and Willmott, 2008).

Saying this, it is important to recall that the framework commended here is itself simply a heuristic framework that contributes to an on-going conversation, and it is not to be reified into some authoritative map of the field. In practice, products of the project of explication, such as the one undertaken here, are conditioned by projects of rationalization and emancipation. This understanding is consistent with a view of language that `rejects any metaphysics of presence in which a knowing consciousness guarantees the meaning of any experience, utterance or texts' (Westwood and Linstead, 2003: 8-9). This deconstructive view includes texts interpreted as articulating the value-orientations of rationalization, explication or emancipation. In the present analysis, and the stance which informs it, it is hoped that its chief effect is to protect and/or expand the space for pursuing an emancipatory project which incorporates a critique of residues (*aka* notions of 'incompleteness' and 'bias') that are carried over from the project of rationalization.

Conclusion

The domain of OT has become a great deal more interesting and problematical during the past couple of decades. 'Orthodox' organization theorizing has become more diverse as 'new' approaches (e.g. institutional theory) have emerged, predominantly in the US; and some more reflexive and critical strands of OT have become more established, especially outside of the US. For believers in a unitary vision of OT and science, such developments signal a loss of direction and cohesion which threatens the very survival of the domain. Others are more positive about such diversity – not necessarily because it is sufficiently compelling to discredit or displace the project of rationalization but because it impedes the latter's imperialist ambitions. More reflexive, critical and dialectical forms of analysis, guided by the value-orientations of explication and especially emancipation, challenge the hegemony of orthodox thinking. That said, adherence to the logic of the pluralistic stance advocated here suggests that heterodox OT cannot, and should not, aspire to *replace*, as opposed to *problematize* and thereby expose the limitations and oppressive effects of knowledge generated within the project of rationalization.

A pluralist stance in which organization theorizing is understood to comprise three value-oriented projects – of rationalization, explication and emancipation – resists the demand, exemplified by Pfeffer, to subject the diverse `fragments' of organization to a disciplinary standard established by a single set of evaluative processes and rules. Pluralism assumes and accepts that the terrain of OT is *inescapably contested*. Instead of conceiving of different manifestations of OT making potential contributions to a latent, unified paradigm, different contributions to the analysis of organization(s) are conceived to articulate different value-orientations.

It has been suggested that the field of OT is intelligible as a parallel and often loosely connected movement of three value-oriented strands of knowledge production, which articulate distinctive conceptualizations of power. In this framework, politics is understood as a condition of possibility, as well as a consequence, of the process of theorizing: `power' is articulated in the very resources – `ideational, material and institutional' (Reed, 1999: 27) – that are assembled and mobilized by the makers of theory. `OT' changes through a process of struggle over its boundaries and direction(s) of travel. Key to understanding the process of theory-making, it has been suggested, are the power-invested value-orientations that inform its construction. By highlighting value-orientations in theory development, and thereby illuminating the respective contributions and limitations of diverse theories, diverse forms of binary, oppositional and exclusionist thinking is challenged and, hopefully, discredited.

In opposing imperialism, the pluralist stance advocated here can be interpreted as combining elements of `rationalization' and `emancipation' with `explication'. In offering a distinctive contribution to the self-understanding of OT, its primary orientation is explication. It is also `emancipatory' insofar as it invites an opening up of the field to, and acceptance of the legitimacy of, forms of analysis with an agenda of radical change. Finally, it is oriented by a project of `rationalization' inasmuch that the present analysis proposes an alternative instrument for mapping, making sense of, and participanting within, the domain of OT.

Accounting for OT in terms of competing value-orientations is, of course, itself `motivated', so its own partiality should be fully acknowledged. By drawing attention to a plurality of strands of theory development, it is hoped to foster theories of organization that are mutually aware and respectful of their differing value-orientations. They may then co-exist in a process of creative tension and mutual exploration rather than indifference or hostility. The challenge is to acknowledge the presence of differing value-orientations in processes of knowledge production, and to be attentive to their limitations.

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[ii] Etymologically, `organization' is a product of modernity and is embedded in its checkered trajectory (Bauman,1991). It was only as recently as `the last half of the 19th century [that], being organized increasingly came to be associated with applying external rules of co-ordination, standardization and order, with the aim of achieving greater efficiency' (Cummings and Thanem, 2002: 825). Today, the notion of `organization' and of `being organized' continues to play a central, constitutive role in the maintenance, reproduction and contestation of (post)modernity.

[iii] This does not mean that `organization' is no more than discourse but rather that the ontology of organization, whatever it may be, is identifiable and knowable only through materially embedded discourses. Without this materiality, discourses would be unintelligible.

[iv] Managerialism is widely evoked but remarkably under-examined. At the centre of managerialism, I suggest, is an assumption that every difficulty encountered by human beings - personal, social and political and even spiritual, as well as economic – is amenable to a managerial solution provided either by managers or by anyone who has embraced their ideology and associated techniques. The following conception of managerialism, drawn from Edwards (1998 :560) is suggestive: [Managerialism signals] faith in the tools and techniques of management science and the ability of managers to use those techniques to resolve problems. In the extreme, this faith in managers' specialized skills and knowledge may get carried over from the organizations they run to society as a whole…'. Such tools and techniques present ways of diagnosing as well as `solving' problems but these diagnoses and favoured solutions are themselves embedded in certain (often specialist-centric) interpretations of the nature of the difficulty that is being addressed, which group is held accountable for it, and which group is best positioned to tackle it.

[v] A sense of the profusion of OT leads Pfeffer (1993 : 616) to characterize the field as `truly open and unstructured'. That may be so if economics or political science is taken as the relevant benchmark. But a quick perusal of the reputed top journals in the field of OT suggests that elite control is very much in operation, even if there are occasional slippages, as when a special issue or `rogue' contribution appears. To members of the elite, the contents of its top-tier journals may appear diverse, and even an embarrassment, when even more tightly controlled fields are taken as self-evidently the key comparators. Yet, if the broad sweep of organizational theorizing is contemplated, most of what is published in so-called top-tier journals is exceedingly narrow and formulaic. Claims about diversity and fragmentation must be set against a continuing priority given to a particular, scientistic genre of scholarship that privileges quantitative, variable analysis in which (i) qualitative work is regarded, at best, as preparatory to the specification and refinement of measurable variables (ii) empirical and conceptual work is assessed according to its demonstrable contribution to theory formulation and testing. This template is responsive to aspirations to emulate an idealized model of science, prominent in the fields of economics and psychology, in order to gain legitimacy and thereby secure improved access to sources of funding and spheres of influence. To adapt the words of Meyer and Rowan (1977 : 340), the template requires organization scholars `to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalized concepts of (scientific) work and institutionalized in society'.

[vi] The distinctive form of OT favoured by Pfeffer may be inferred from his own work and methodological preferences but, rhetorically at least, this is secondary to his concern to establish a single benchmark, or whatever pedigree, against which to evaluate the legitimacy of rival contributions to OT. In effect, Pfeffer's argument is, I suggest, motivated by a value-orientation of rationalization where the overriding objective is to justify (rationalize) the continuing existence/funding of OT in the face of a threatened marginalization, if not colonization, by other, more adequately rationalized (and resourced) disciplines. Conversely, what motivates Van Maanen's quite vicious critique of the `Pfefferdigm' is a different, but no less alarming fantasy of a monocultural form of OT presided over by a narrow, self-selected elite of disciplinary protectionists.

[vii] As noted earlier, the argument is made by Foucault (1977 : 27) who he contends that `there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations'.

[viii] As Weber did when he assumed a separation of fact and value and, relatedly, assumed the existence of a single, value-free means of disclosing (value relevant) facts pursued within the autonomous sphere of science.

[ix] This `action component', which speaks to theorizing as `a performance with a persuasive aim' (Van Maanen, 1995 : 135) is, ironically enough, well illustrated in Pfeffer's reflections on the self-fulfilling effects of economic theory (Ferraro, Pfeffer and Sutton, 2005).

[x] The term has an obvious resonance with Weber's (1949 : 76) notion of value-orientation. But it is differentiated from Weber's formulation by a stronger emphasis upon the embodied and embedded character of the values that impel processes of knowledge production. Weber plausibly argues that the choice and constitution of topics of scientific investigation, such as `organization(s)' is `colored by our value-conditioned interest' (ibid). So, whatever significance is attributed to the topics of our investigations, such as `organization(s)', our analysis `presupposes a value-orientation…Empirical reality becomes [`organization(s)'] to us because and insofar as we relate it to value ideas' (ibid). Knowledge of empirical reality, Weber contends, is inescapably intermediated by value ideas that render only particular segments relevant to us : `only a small portion of existing concrete reality is colored by our value-conditioned interest and it alone is significant for us' (ibid). Once this portion is identified, however, it becomes possible, in Weber's assessment, to undertake a scientific analysis that will reveal the objective facts about this value-relevant element of concrete reality. This betrays a sharp distinction in Weber's thinking between objective and subjective forms of knowledge. Objective knowledge is generated by science which is conceived as a single, unified methodology adapted to take adequate account of the ontology ascribed to its objects of investigation. For Weber (1949 : 84), `scientific truth is precisely what is *valid* for all those who *seek* the truth'. Science is understood to yield objective facts, and is underpinned by a value orientation that warrants their production. At the same time, Weber acknowledges that `the value of scientific truth is the product of certain cultures and is not a product of man's original nature' (ibid : 110); and he also stresses that objective facts cannot themselves justify the orientation that values science, and neither can science discredit value-orientations which do privilege the value of such facts. A key strength of Weber's thinking, I suggest, is his firm rejection of the view that the *objects* of scientific investigation exist independently of value-orientations; and his insistence that it is impossible to provide a scientific refutation of the validity claimed for evaluative ideas (see ibid : 111). A significant limitation of Weber's thinking is his unified conception of science which is underpinned by a single value orientation (see below). His stance excludes consideration of how the commitment to `seeking truth' is itself refracted through *diverse* value-orientations that argue for different conceptions of (social) scientific knowledge. To put this another way, when science is conceived as multiple rather than singular, it is understood to *perform a truth* rather than to *reveal the truth*. Weber seeks to *impose a single method (verstehen)* upon what he terms `the cultural sciences', arguing that the significance of their research objects (e.g. `organization(s)') `cannot be derived and rendered intelligible by a system of analytical laws' (ibid). Weber favours a particular, objectivist or scientistic form of hermeneutics (see Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000, Ch 3) that aspires to *integrate* an appreciation of the distinctively interpreted/motivated nature of social action (Weber, 1968: 4) within an established positivistic conception of science where there is a preoccupation with causal explanation of social phenomena. For Weber, *only* knowledge of the social world produced according to these rules of scientific method merits the soubriquet `scientific'. In contrast, the position taken here is that Weber's favoured methodology itself articulates a *specific* value-orientation and should not be accepted as *the* methodology *tout court*. It is of course somewhat ironic that Weber assumes science to have a single, settled meaning (as a species of knowledge that can produce *facts* about `objects') when he also conceives of `the specific function of science' as one that `ask(s) questions about these things which convention makes self-evident' (ibid : 13). His own belief in a unified conception of science, that he takes to be self-evident, appears to escape his attention.

[xi] The relevance of this theme within OT is, of course, contestable. It could be argued, for example, that it properly belongs to some other field of endeavor, such as the sociology of knowledge, because it makes no immediate contribution to what is known about `organization(s)'. Such arguments are here regarded as deeply conservative as they operate to shield the (reified and fetishised) constructions of OT from meaningful reflexive examination and potential radical change.

[xii] It is debatable whether much OT of any variety is primarily concerned with solving, or even illuminating, managers' problems. Most of OT orbits around a scientism published in learned journals that are unread by practitioners. This scientism bestows a degree of importance and legitimacy upon business schools as aspirationally equivalent to law, medical and engineering schools. What mainstream OT contributes to `practice' is not solutions to managers' technical problems but rather a degree of legitimacy for the material and symbolic privileges associated with their elevated position in corporate hierarchies. The appeal of engaging and defending versions of an empirical realist model of science resides in its ability to steer the production of knowledge well clear of other – e.g. critical realist and constructionist - conceptions of science and associated forms of theory, including their theories of power. That ability is not to be underestimated since exposure to such theories in classrooms (and journals) threatens to raise some awkward questions about ownership and control, oppression and inequality. In sum, much `managerialist' OT developed in business schools is irrelevant, except as a source of social capital, to practitioners; but it is consonant with Pfeffer's (1981: 12) incisive observation that `It is certainly much more noble to think of oneself as developing skills towards the more efficient allocation and use of resources - implicitly for the greater good of society as a whole – than to think of oneself as engaged with other organizational participants in a political struggle over values, preferences and definitions of technology. Technical rationality, as a component of the managerial task, provides legitimation and meaning for one's career'.

[xiii] A similar point is made by Stern and Barley (1996). But they account for `the negative correlation between a problem's scope and a researcher's academic credibility' (ibid: 155) primarily in terms of it being technically - that is, methodologically – easier, or reputationally less risky, when the scope of problems is narrower. This, Stern and Barley contend, makes problems more tractable to the dominant model of science `rooted in experimentalism and statistical inference [that has] privileged randomization, the control of extraneous variables, and the law of large numbers as paths of knowledge' (ibid).

[xiv] This process tends to rely uncritically upon a body of knowledge (which borrows heavily from accounts procedures ascribed to natural scientific practice) of the biases which are present and how these are to be eliminated.

[xv] In Benson's case, the position is rather complicated and perhaps inconsistent. He writes that `all existing work will not be categorically rejected. Even work thoroughly within the conventional mode may be valuable. This article builds upon existing work while going beyond it at certain crucial points' (ibid: 2). But he does not accept `existing work' on its own terms but, instead, as seeks to selectively appropriate and incorporate it into `dialectical analysis'.