JUSTIFICATION, EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE IN THE STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE VOLUME

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ABSTRACT

This volume presents state-of-the-art research and thinking on the analysis of justification, evaluation and critique in organizations, as inspired by the foundational ideas of French Pragmatist Sociology's economies of worth (EW) framework. In this introduction, we begin by underlining the EW framework's importance in sociology and social theory more generally and discuss its relative neglect within organizational theory, at least until now. We then present an overview of the framework's intellectual roots, and for those who are new to this particular theoretical domain, offer a brief introduction to the theory's main concepts and core assumptions. This we follow with an overview of the contributions included in this volume. We conclude by highlighting the EW framework's important yet largely untapped potential for advancing our understanding of organizations more broadly. Collectively, the contributions in this volume help demonstrate the potential of the EW framework to 1) advance current understanding of organizational processes by unpacking justification dynamics at the individual level of analysis, 2) refresh critical perspectives in organization theory by providing them with pragmatic foundations, 3) expand and develop the study of valuation and evaluation in organizations by reconsidering the notion of worth, and finally 4) push the boundaries of the framework itself by questioning and fine tuning some of its core assumptions. Taken as a whole, this volume not only carves a path for a deeper embedding of the EW approach into contemporary thinking about organizations, it also invites readers to refine and expand it by confronting it with a wider range of diverse empirical contexts of interest to organizational scholars.

Keywords: economies of worth; justification; critique; evaluation; French Pragmatist

Sociology.

JUSTIFICATION, EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE IN THE STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE VOLUME

French Pragmatist Sociology and in particular studies building on the Economies of Worth (EW) framework have profoundly renewed the landscape of social theory and sociology over the last 30 years, first in France and then beyond. In his endorsement of the English translation of Boltanski and Thévenot's *On Justification. Economies of Worth* in 2006, David Stark describes the book as "one of the most important contributions to the field of sociology" that "does not fit neatly into any of the major theoretical perspectives that currently dominate the field." For others, *On Justification* is simply "the most important sociological treatise in post-Bourdieu French sociology" (Baert & Carreira da Silva, 2010, p. 43). In his endorsement of a recent collection of essays dedicated to Boltanski's work (Susen & Turner, 2014), the pragmatist philosopher Hans Joas claimed that "Boltanski has given new meaning to the notion of 'critique' – away from the pretensions of academic radicals, toward actual human beings and their moral judgements." The "spirit" of the EW framework and other major books from French Pragmatist Sociology (Boltanski, 2011; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005) has not only diffused to social theory through engagements with critical scholars (du Gay & Morgan, 2013) or debates with lead authors from the Frankfurt school (Boltanski, Honneth, & Celikates, 2014) it has also acted as a catalyst for important sociological developments around the concept of valuation (Fourcade, 2011; Hutter & Stark, 2015) and cultural models of action (Silber, 2016; Vaisey, 2009).

Despite early acknowledgement of the relevance of the EW framework for studying organizations (Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2007; Livian & Herreros, 1994), and a recognition that it provides "a highly original perspective stressing the importance of processes of critique and justification for the production of organizational order and change" (Jagd, 2011, p. 344), organizational scholars have not yet fully explored its potential for investigating

organizational phenomena. Past organizational theory research that has mobilized the EW framework has tended to use it as a way of complementing more mainstream theories – such as new institutionalism or the institutional logics perspective. For example, McInerney's (2008) study of field-configuring events in the technology assistance field helped unpack how institutional entrepreneurs (DiMaggio, 1988) legitimize new practices by providing accounts that serve to align them with dominant orders of worth. Other studies using the EW framework have been helpful for advancing our understanding of institutional work, by explaining legitimacy maintenance (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006) as a dynamic combination of multiple orders of worth (Patriotta, Gond, & Schultz, 2011; Ramirez, 2013; Taupin, 2012). While demonstrating the "generative" potential of the EW framework by combining it with other theories is both interesting and useful, there are many missed opportunities in failing to embrace the EW framework as a theory that is worthy for its own sake, one that can be particularly helpful, for example, for uncovering some of the normative contradictions that underlie institutional life by investigating how individual actors engage with a plurality of moral orders.

Some of this potential can be seen in studies that have mobilized the EW framework to address topics such as intra-organizational dynamics of justification (Jagd, 2011), the strategic management of pluralistic organizations (Daigle & Rouleau, 2010; Denis et al., 2007) decision-making in public management contexts (Dodier & Camus, 1998; Fronda & Moriceau, 2008; Oldenhof, Postma, & Putters, 2013), or inter-organizational relations (Cloutier & Langley, forthcoming; Mesny & Mailhot, 2007). By recognizing the dynamics by which distinct value sets and normative orders in intra- and inter-organizational settings can be made compatible or not, the EW framework offers a pragmatic approach for 1) unpacking what underpins social critiques of unfair situations in social life (Boltanski, 2011), and 2) understanding how actors negotiate agreements around issues of justice (Boltanski &

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Thévenot, 2006) and by so doing, help researchers arrive at a more fine-grained understanding of how social actors manage to coordinate their actions.

It is in light of the above observations and the opportunities they gave rise to that we settled on the following four objectives for the volume: (1) clarify how individuals manage the contradictions and compromises inherent in organizational pluralism by considering the daily moral life of actors inhabiting institutions; (2) look at organizations critically by unpacking the rhetorical foundations of critiques, and pragmatically examining the roles of rhetoric and justification in the critical operations that organizational actors engage in; (3) reconsider the notion of worth beyond its purely economic sense and consider the multiple facets that constitute and produce value in organizational life and (4) push the boundaries of the EW framework itself and by so doing, help further embed notions such as justification, critique and valuation in our contemporary analysis and understanding of organizations. Collectively, the set of contributions proposed in this volume address these four key objectives. While we introduce and discuss each of these in greater detail below, before doing so, we present an overview of the EW framework's intellectual roots, and for the benefit of those new to this theoretical domain, we offer a brief introduction to its key concepts and the main assumptions underpinning them.

INTELLECTUAL ORIGINS OF THE ECONOMIES OF WORTH

From both a sociological and economic perspective, the study of organizations arguably is, in its essence, the study of coordination. It is the study of whether, why and how individuals come together, be it formally or informally, to accomplish some purpose or task, and what potentially facilitates or gets in the way of that. From either of these perspectives, it is assumed that actors become involved in collective action because they view, tacitly or explicitly, such action as an effective way of meeting their needs and interests. Needless to

say, various scholars offer different explanations for how and why individuals come together and manage to coordinate their actions. One such explanation is offered by the EW framework, which emerged in the late 1980s in the crossfire of various debates taking place at in French sociological circles and the European social sciences more generally at the time. We will discuss three here which, in our view, were particularly influential in this regard.

The first key debate regards Bourdieu's critical sociology. Bourdieu's sociology is based on a series of strong assumptions, the most important being that the dispositions of persons are rooted in the specific trajectories each has followed in life. And while Bourdieu had always been pre-occupied with unveiling domination (hence his sociology being called *critical*), ironically enough, his own sociology became quite dominant in the late 1980s. However, while Bourdieu's sociology provided a powerful way to account for reproduction in society, it was eventually criticized for not taking into account the capacity of ordinary actors to adapt to unfamiliar situations and find creative solutions to coordination problems as they arose, even without clear (cultural) guidelines for doing so. One of these critics was Luc Boltanski, who at the time was one of Bourdieu's main collaborators. Along with Laurent Thévenot, Boltanski had been observing, in the context of games, how groups of professionals from diverse industries (e.g., nurses, salespeople, marketers, etc.) categorized and classified different individuals on the basis of information provided to them about their professional background and social milieu (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1983). They became intrigued with the way professionals from very different backgrounds could classify other actors and come to an agreement on a common classification scheme for doing so. They noticed furthermore that when asked to explain how and why they classified individuals the way they did, actors would develop arguments that were based not only on logic, but also on principles of justice (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, pp. 4-7). These observations showed that people were not "cultural dopes" (Swidler, 1986), and pointed to actors' ability to use their critical

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competencies to resist hegemony, an ability that Bourdieusian sociology could not account for.

A second important debate regarded the question of pluralism in contemporary societies and how such pluralism might affect coordination. An emphasis on plurality became prominent in the wake of post modernism as authors began to express increasing doubt as to the relevance of a single legitimate narrative, in most cases the modern one based on a faith in reason and progress, as a basis and justification for action. Reflecting on the many disasters that shaped the history of the 20th century, postmodern authors questioned the possibility of a grand unified narrative for explaining it, and advocated for the development of multiple narratives for doing so. A prominent author in this approach was Lyotard (1983) who suggested that scholars acknowledge the impossibility of unity and thus reject any totalizing grand narrative, such as that of modernity. He argued for the existence of multiple narratives which were local in scope, equal in status (no narrative should be considered better than another) and incommensurable. According to this view, a single narrative was illusory and disagreements over different narratives were essentially irreconcilable because there existed no common principle of justice for resolving them. In contrast, vividly opposing this view is Habermas (1984). In his communicative theory of democracy (1984), Habermas insisted on the existence and importance of a common language and a mutual recognition among debaters such that agreement could be achieved through communication and deliberation. On this premise and building on earlier studies of heterodox economists who sought to unpack the multiple forms of conventions – beyond those based on market mechanisms – that supported coordination in society –(Eymard-Duvernay, 1989; Favereau, 1986; Thévenot, 1984) – Boltanski and Thévenot proposed a repertoire of conceptualizations of the common good which allowed for the coordination collective action (Boltanski, 2012). In so doing, EW scholars opened a 'third way' between the advocates of unlimited plurality and those of unity,

by providing a limited pluralism of narratives centred on different views of the common good, each providing a basis for justice through which agreements could be forged (Ricoeur, 1991).

Finally, a third debate centred on growing interest for pragmatism, an approach that became influential in France notably as a consequence of ideas borrowed from ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) and symbolic interactionism (Goffman, 1959). This 'pragmatic' dimension of French sociology in the late 1980s may appear puzzling – if not paradoxical and should be analysed with caution, especially when seen in light of the North-American pragmatist philosophical tradition (John Dewey, William James, Charles Peirce, George Herbert Mead). French sociology has long criticized the pragmatist tradition on the basis that it overestimated the importance of individual subjectivity and underestimated the importance of social facts and social reality (Durkheim, 1983). In this regard, claiming to be pragmatist was an effective 'emancipatory strategy' (Bogusz, 2014) for a new generation of French sociologists interested in local and contextual coordination among actors (Dodier, 1993). And yet, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) barely refer to American pragmatism in its sociological or philosophical form in *On Justification*, and one can only find a passing reference to Goffman in Boltanski's (2012) earlier *Love and Justice as Competences*. When interviewed by Blokker and Brighenti in 2011 (2011, pp. 397-398), Laurent Thévenot explained that he became acquainted with American pragmatism only after the publication of *On Justification*. It therefore comes as no surprise, on account of its willingness to identify 'regimes of justification' that transcend contexts (Silber, 2016, pp. 160-161), that pragmatist scholars might view *On Justification* as reifying, at least to some extent, the classical dualism between social theory and everyday practice which pragmatism seeks to overcome (Quéré & Terzi, 2014). However, for other authors such as Bogusz (2014) or Lemieux (2014), *On Justification*'s focus on ordinary actors' critical capacities, normativity and reflexivity can be viewed as an attempt at 'democratizing' critical theory and thus of thinking beyond the circles

of 'professional sociologists', a project that resonates well with the 'spirit' of the earlier founding fathers of pragmatism such as Charles Peirce or John Dewey (Bernstein, 1992, pp. 329-330). This being said, the relationship between economies of worth, pragmatism in general and the American pragmatist tradition in particular is becoming more and more explicit, notably in some of these authors' more recent work (Stavo-Debauge, 2012; Thévenot, 2006b, 2011).

Thus, it is with these various and occasionally opposing views in mind and a desire to propose a different way of theorizing about coordination and collective action that Luc Boltanski, a sociologist, and Laurent Thévenot, an economist, embarked on the writing of *On Justification* (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991, 2006). Rather than assume, as Bourdieu and others have, that collective action is dictated by the dispositional properties of actors, Boltanski and Thévenot chose to give weight to social actors' capacity to regard the situations they found themselves in critically, and to act accordingly (Jagd, 2011). As such, they assumed that when presented with a specific opportunity to engage in collective action, critical actors might question or criticize the principles under which such action is governed. In turn, those targeted by such criticism might seek to justify their chosen arrangements, and debates as to what the best or most appropriate course of action is or should be under the circumstances might ensue. In these authors' view, and using their terminology, social actors with critical competencies will voice their concerns about the situation (critique), suggest and advocate for alternate, presumably more "acceptable" courses of action (justification) and assess action outcomes (both real and imagined) against the criteria they deemed were most appropriate (evaluation). In sum, in what has now become a major stream of thought under the banner of French Pragmatist Sociology, Boltanski and Thévenot sought to theorize about how the mundane and situated acts of criticism, justification and resistance of ordinary actors engaged in collective action helped shape the organizations and institutions in which they

were embedded and by so doing, provide a better theoretical explanation for coordinated action, one that recognizes actors' critical competencies and explicitly accounts for the heterogeneity of organizing principles upon which such action depends.

Interestingly, the three key debates which shaped the emergence of the EW framework resonate with current debates within the sociology of organizations. For example, the potential contribution of Bourdieu to organizational research has been put to the challenge by scholars who feel that Bourdieusian explanations fail to deal with actors' autonomy and their social competences and capacity to innovate. While some authors have used Bourdieu to unveil domination (Golsorkhi, Leca, Lounsbury, & Ramirez, 2009), explain practice (Golsorkhi, 2016; Gomez, 2015), and have even suggested a Bourdieu-based approach for studying organizations (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008), others have suggested that the EW framework is a better lens for arriving at a fuller understanding of organizational practices more generally (Denis et al., 2007).

In recent years, organizational research has also shown an increasing interest in pluralism. The broad interest for the diversity of logics of action (Fine, 1996) and valuation (Hutter & Stark, 2015) already echo approaches coherent with the EW framework. Interest in pluralism has come even more to the fore with the current popularity of institutional logics (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011; Lounsbury & Boxenbaum, 2013), an approach that has clear connections with the EW framework (Cloutier & Langley, 2013; Friedland, 2009). And finally, American pragmatism is currently being rediscovered by organizational scholars on the basis that if offers insights that can potentially solve some of organizational theory's most important issues (Farjoun, Ansell, & Boin, 2015; Ferraro, Etzion, & Gehman, 2015).

In our view, the conceptual apparatus and key assumptions that constitute the scaffolding of the EW framework offers scholars a unique lens through which to expand our

understanding of the processes and practices that underpin collective action, and by association, organizational life more generally. Paradoxically, even though it was developed in the late 1980s, the EW framework seems particularly well suited to offer timely contributions to organizational research today. The papers in this volume offer some compelling examples of how the framework might be mobilized for this purpose, but also of how it can serve as a springboard for a more in-depth explorations of often ignored dimensions of organizational life, including love, justification and morality.

But before we undertake this exploration, a brief overview of what exactly economies of worth are about is warranted. The objective here is not to provide an exhaustive summary of the original thesis as presented in *On Justification*, but to introduce readers to the central conceptual opportunities the EW framework affords so that they can more easily follow the arguments presented here and the papers included in this volume.

ECONOMIES OF WORTH: A CONCEPUAL GRAMMAR

An important starting point for understanding French Pragmatist Sociology and the EW framework is its consideration of individuals as *competent social actors*, capable of appraising the situations they find themselves in critically and of evoking, and even advocating for, a variety of principles upon which collective action might be organized. The sociology of Boltanski and Thévenot thus focuses on the social, and essentially pragmatic, actions taken by actors in their daily lives to solve mundane disputes about coordination or to otherwise address what they perceive as a lack of justice in ordinary life, without resorting to violence. Such competence rests on several key assumptions.

The first is a specific approach to *pluralism*. As alluded to above, central to the EW framework is an assumption of pluralism which rests on empirical observations made by Boltanski and Thévenot (Boltanski, 1987; Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991, 2006) and others that

social actors' justificatory accounts for their beliefs and actions tend to almost always be made in reference to a limited number of broad-based conceptions of the 'common good' (Silber, 2003). As engagement in collective action is a necessarily public activity (in the sense of being at least known to those directly involved in a particular instance of coordination), the critiques, justifications and evaluations used to coordinate action must to be based on organizing principles that are themselves public and that are also, perhaps more importantly, deemed legitimate by others. These assumptions gave rise to Boltanski and Thévenot's concept of *common worlds*.

Boltanski and Thévenot use the concept of "world" to refer to the "higher common principles that reflect the degree of legitimacy of certain rules and values in society and define appropriate forms of conduct" (Patriotta et al., 2011, p. 2). To help define and articulate these, they undertook a number of studies in the 80s in which they systematically analyzed the reasons social actors typically gave for harbouring a given opinion or adopting a particular course of action, notably in cases when such opinions or actions were challenged by others (a phenomenon the authors refer to as a dispute) (Boltanski, 1990, 2012; Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). They relied on the notion of "common humanity" to refer to the necessarily moral and limited bases upon which a shared sense of justice among human beings can be built and coordination governed. Because of the framework's assumptions about competence, each common world is conceptualized as a cognitive and material toolkit (what Boltanski and Thévenot refer to as a "grammar") that social actors can use to assess and eventually prove what things, actions, people and beliefs are deemed worthy or not in a given situation, and which they believe should constitute the principles that govern collective action.

In their book, Boltanski and Thévenot define six common worlds: the inspired world (where worth is defined in terms of uniqueness and creativity); the domestic world (where worth is defined in terms of respecting tradition, responsibility, caring and honor); the world

of fame (where worth is defined in terms of recognition and popularity); the civic world

(where worth is defined in terms of solidarity, representation, and freedom); the market world

(where worth is defined in terms of money, gain, and self-interest) and the industrial world

(where worth is defined in terms of efficiency, productivity, mastery). Narrative descriptions,

as well as key words associated with each world, are presented in Appendix 1. Articulating

which worlds are in presence in various situations and how they are mobilized by social

actors is a key empirical task of scholars mobilizing the EW framework for understanding

organizational processes and phenomena.

A second assumption of the EW framework is *symmetry* (Nachi, 2006), according to

which no conception of the common good is deemed a priori to be superior to any other, and

scientific knowledge about these conceptions is no better or superior than that of lay persons

(Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). Determining which conception of the common good should

prevail in any given situation depends on the context, the actors involved and the disposition

of available material artefacts at that specific moment in time. As Thévenot has put it (2006a,

p. 6):

> "[The actor] is confronted by a plurality of models, not ones defined by social theorists,
> but by those that laypersons use to apprehend events in the course of every day action, in
> order to understand what others do, and adapt their own behavior. For [the actor],
> plurality is not a classification issue, but is something that is important in her relation to
> the world. Her personal integrity as well as her integration into a community will depend
> on her capacity to cope with this diversity."

It is on account of symmetry and competence that social actors can engage in *critique,*

justification and evaluation. When social actors engage in critique, they denounce to others

what they think is inappropriate or improper about a situation or action (Boltanski, Darré, &

Schiltz, 1984). Critiques usually take the form of reasons that social actors give to explain

why a particular course of action is not acceptable, or why particular evaluative criteria are

not appropriate for assessing a particular task or action (Lamont, 2012). Critique essentially

reflects discomfort about the means or ends of collective action. Justification often follows

critique, as social actors engage in debate, using elements of common worlds' grammar to try and agree on a suitable basis for such action. Such a basis can be forged within a common world, or represent a compromise between worlds. Resolution often requires a *test of worth* or mechanism that helps actors assess whether specific criteria for determining "worth" or "appropriateness" within a given world are met (Dansou & Langley, 2012). A test may also serve to raise the question of whether the criteria used for a test are indeed the "right" ones for evaluating the situation at hand.

Finally, a third key assumption of the EW framework is *materiality*. Materiality reflects the early influence of Actor-Network Theory ideas on the genesis of Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006) framework (Guggenheim & Potthast, 2012). Indeed, central to the theorization underscoring the framework is the assumption that collective representations of what is right or appropriate in a given situation depends heavily on the material environment in which the proposed or existing course of action is embedded. Although the cognitive elements of engagement are important (e.g. what people think of the situation at hand), the capacity of social actors to justify their thoughts and actions and to potentially convince others to think and act as they do, rests not only on their rhetorical competence, but also on their competence to properly and appropriately engage with their material environment. Indeed, convention theory in general (Daudigeos & Valiorgue, 2010), and the EW framework in particular, pay close attention to how the material environment, and the objects contained therein, contribute to helping coordinate collective action (Thévenot, 2006a).

In the following sections, we discuss the various uses of the EW framework, and introduce the different contributions to the volume in light of these themes. Specifically, we explain how each set of contributions address the four core theoretical objectives we set for the volume: (1) *clarify how individuals manage the contradictions and compromises inherent in organizational pluralism*; (2) *look at organizations critically by unpacking the roles of*

rhetoric and justification in the practice of critique; (3) *reconsider valuation and evaluation in organizations*; (4) *push the boundaries of the EW framework to help further embed the EW approach in organizational theory*.

MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL PLURALISM: HOW INDIVIDUALS NAVIGATE MORAL CONTRADICTIONS AND COMPROMISE

There is growing recognition that organizations navigate in pluralistic institutional environments (Greenwood et al., 2011; Kraatz & Block, 2008). How they navigate pluralism and find ways to reconcile contradictory pressures and expectations is a topic that has interested scholars sympathetic to French pragmatic sociology from its earliest beginnings. Indeed, early examples of studies that have mobilized the EW framework are in this vein, although their treatment of the topic tends to be more descriptive than theoretical. An example is Boisard and Letablier's (1987, 1989) study of how small, local producers of camembert cheeses, who favoured traditional methods of production, dealt with globalization pressures that required them to "mass produce or die." The compromise that came out of their confrontation with agri-business was the application of the world-renowned AOC label (*Appellation d'Origine Controlée*) to cheeses produced using traditional methods (Boisard & Letablier, 1989). A more recent example is Moreira's (2005) ethnographic study of the development of medical practice guidelines. Moreira used the EW framework to show how committees dedicated to developing guidelines for medical practitioners engaged directly in building compromise between the tenets of evidence-based medicine (associated with Boltanski and Thévenot's *industrial* world) and the inability of doctors to impose technical standards on the highly individualized interpersonal relationship that they felt they needed to maintain with patients (beliefs associated with the *domestic* world).

A second area of interest within this theme are studies that examine the inherent potentialities of pluralism. Instead of looking at pluralistic environments, this perspective investigates the ongoing articulation between multiple orders of worth *within* organizations or within tightly woven networks of organizations. From this perspective, organizations are conceptualized as settings where multiple orders of worth co-exist (Thévenot, 1990). Indeed, organizations engage routinely with multiple logics, such as innovation (inspiration), manufacturing (industrial), sales and profit (market) and social responsibility (the civic). Building on the EW framework, David Stark (2009) proposed the term "heterarchy" to describe the organizational form specific to organizations that seek to generate, rather than suppress, perplexing situations and that recognize the legitimacy of plural, rather than singular, conceptions of what is worthy (see Stark's thoughts on the sources of his ideas in this regard in the closing chapter of this volume). The view from this perspective is that ongoing ambiguity between different orders of worth favors creativity and innovation through the recombination of multiple approaches and perspectives (Girard & Stark, 2002). According to Stark (2009), heterarchy creates unstable, yet adaptable organizations.

Although these various avenues of inquiry have been fruitful, many aspects of managing organizational pluralism remain unexplored. The articles featured in this section address some of these shortcomings, notably by using Boltanski and Thévenot's EW framework in order to better understand the specific mechanisms whereby settlements in disputes are reached or alternately, explore what prevents such settlements or compromises from being formed.

The first paper in this series is a conceptual paper entitled "When orders of worth clash: Negotiating legitimacy in situations of moral multiplexity." In this paper, Juliane Reinecke, Koen Van Bommel and André Spicer explore how dialogue helps establish moral legitimacy in contexts where multiple moral frameworks co-exist and compete with each other. They

draw on Boltanski and Thévenot's EW framework to help highlight the structure of these clashing moral frameworks, each of which provides a sense of what social actors perceive as just from a different perspective. The authors argue that moral legitimacy "truces" can be established as an outcome of dialogical processes where relations between the moral frameworks that social actors refer to are constantly negotiated and renegotiated through dynamic exchange with various audiences. They develop a model that proposes three dialogic paths to achieving such truces in situations of moral multiplexity: transcendence, compromise, and antagonism. In addition to helping advance our understanding of how individuals manage organizational pluralism in various contexts, the authors also provide theoretical arguments supporting the idea that legitimacy is not a binary variable, but one that can vary both in terms of scope and certainty.

Stéphane Jaumier, Thibault Daudigeos and Vassili Joannidès on their part offer an empirical and more micro perspective on how individual actors respond to organizational pluralism in their daily work. In their article "Co-operatives, compromises and critiques: What do French co-operators tell us about individual responses to pluralism?" they extend our understanding of institutional logics by drawing on Boltanski and Thévenot's EW framework to examine how French co-operators publicly justify the cooperative principles they abide by. By so doing, they provide an account of how actors in hybrid organizations instantiate competing logics in practice, relying on positive affirmations as well as critical mobilizations of various logics. They show in particular that individuals will often instantiate the same logic in different ways, and that it is the ambiguity associated with these different instantiations that allows compromises between logics to be settled. This is interesting in particular as it helps us better understand the situated and flexible nature of agency, and is well suited to extending the inhabited perspective on institutional logics.

LOOKING AT ORGANIZATIONS CRITICALLY: RHETORIC, JUSTIFICATION AND CRITICISM-AS-PRACTICE

In addition to exploring how pluralism is managed in organizations, the EW framework is also a useful lens for tracing the origins of organizational controversies in order to better understand how organizational actors mobilize arguments to rhetorically advance particular viewpoints (Boivin & Roch, 2006). Past studies in this vein have examined, for example, which arguments are viewed as credible by organizational actors and why that is. Patriotta, Gond and Schultz (2011) took this approach in their analysis of how a company deemed responsible for a nuclear accident sought to maintain legitimacy in its aftermath by strategically mobilizing various justifications inspired by different worlds to appease or counter legitimacy challenges addressed to it by key stakeholders. These authors argue that it is the capacity to draw on a variety of worlds rather than to become trapped in bipolar conflict that contributes to legitimacy repair and reproduction, and consequently institutional maintenance. In a similar vein, past studies have investigated the capacity of managers' to become aware of the diverse economies of worth to which organization's members might be responsive, and use them reflexively to convince other actors to follow a particular course of action (McInerney, 2008; Messner, Clegg, & Kornberger, 2008).

This section of the volume includes studies that use the EW framework to dissect the arguments advanced and the strategies used by organizational actors to manifest their disagreement with a dominant frame in credible ways (such that they are heard and listened to rather than dismissed outright) and to overcome differences. For example, in a longitudinal study of the credit-rating industry, Taupin (2012) shows the different rhetorical and justificatory claims that actors mobilized in order to maintain the legitimacy of the industry in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Studies that also consider why certain rhetorical arguments fail to take root are also of interest. A better understanding of the ways in which

different types of arguments shape ideas and beliefs should help advance our knowledge of how deeply seated beliefs are potentially uprooted, knowledge that would be particularly useful for elaborating discourses that are aimed at promoting change (Gond, Leca, & Cloutier, 2015). These insights would also help extend our knowledge of the factors beyond access to resources that contribute to the success of social movements (McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

Articles in this section seek to understand why certain arguments advanced by organizational actors are viewed as credible, and others not, and why that is so. By so doing, they shed light on how discursive processes lead to certain ideas and/or actors gaining traction and thus power in organizations. For example, Daniel Nyberg and Christopher Wright, in their article "Reproducing a neoliberal political regime: Competing justifications and dominance in disputing fracking" use Boltanski and Thévenot's EW framework to analyse the dispute surrounding the expansion of hydraulic fracturing of shale gas in the UK. Their analysis of four public hearings and subsequent reports that served to 'test' the worth of fracking in the UK context helps show that within the prevailing neoliberal political regime, some forms of justification – in this instance, the market order of worth – enjoy precedence over others. Using a discursive perspective, the authors explore how different actors involved in the dispute use varying justifications to promote their agendas and wield political tactics to ensure that certain public goods are viewed as more important than others. As such, they discredit the notion of justifications being apolitical. Nyberg and Wright's study is interesting in that it uses the EW framework to help explain how a political regime – which is where political debates take place – is constituted, and by so doing, helps us better understand how different forms of justification support hegemonic political ideologies.

In their article, "'Public' vs. 'natural' grammars: Complex domination in the financial intermediation industry," Benjamin Taupin and Marc Lenglet argue that pragmatic sociology provides an appropriate conceptual basis for making sense of complex forms of domination in

contemporary organizations. In particular, they combine Boltanski and Thévenot's EW framework with Lemieux's work on "grammars" (Lemieux, 2009), to sketch out how power plays out in organizations in the financial intermediation industry. They contrast simple vs complex domination, where the latter works not directly, but obliquely by means of processes that redefine rules and laws, and by so doing, modify reality in ways that dilute and thus weaken actors' critiques of current arrangements. The authors' detailed analysis of data gathered from a three-year ethnographic study of an investment firm, helps them delineate the features of what they call "complex financial domination," which they argue is the outcome of specific contradictions inherent in different grammars specific to the industry. Their study helps us see how power manifests itself in and around organizations in subtle and indirect ways, shaping the way organizational actors collectively think and act as they go about doing their jobs in the "right" way.

Finally, Thomas Beamish and Nicole Woolsey Biggart were among early North American adopters of convention theory as a lens for understanding coordination, and economic activity more broadly (Biggart & Beamish, 2003). Their contribution to the volume, "Capital and carbon: The shifting common good justifications for energy regimes", shows how key concepts underlying the EW framework can be used as a loose theoretical frame to help explain why and how important shifts in the institutions and collective beliefs that underpin capitalist economic systems occur. In their article, they take a macro, socio-historical approach to show how regimes of worth that defined energy as a productive force of human and animal labor for centuries were transformed in the eighteenth century to an "industrial-energy" regime of worth supporting an economy of mass production, consumption, and profit, and more recently one centred on market forces and price. They argue that the organizing principles and underlying orders of worth that support industrial and market energy are presently being challenged by different higher orders of worth and propose

eight emergent justifications underpinning this. Various societal actors – including incumbent firms, the media, and social movements – can thus be seen as offering different criticisms and justifications for why certain kinds of energy are—and are not—in the best interests of society. Historical perspectives such as the one offered here are important as they help show how debates over what is "right" and "appropriate" in terms of the common good come to shape prevalent beliefs in contemporary society.

RECONSIDERING VALUATION AND EVALUATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

The EW framework offers an interesting conceptual apparatus for further exploring notions of valuation and evaluation both within and across organizations. Organizational scholars have recently engaged with a growing stream of research on the social practice of valuation (Lamont, 2012) by relying on the EW framework, sometimes in combination with the concepts of 'calculability' (Callon & Muniesa, 2005), 'commensuration' (Espeland & Stevens, 1998) or 'judgment device' (Karpik, 2010). This makes sense, as how people determine and assess "worth" (of objects, actions or persons) is central to the way Boltanski and Thévenot have constructed the EW framework. These ideas are also important, as they are an integral part of social life:

> "In everyday life, we are all bookkeepers and storytellers. We keep accounts and we give accounts, and most importantly, we can be called to account for our actions. It is always within accounts that we "size up the situation," for not every form of worth can be made to apply and not every asset is in a form mobilizable for a given situation." (Stark, 2000, p. 5)

For instance, Reinecke (2010) uses the EW framework to investigate how multiple orders of worth are involved in the social construction of what is a 'fair price' in the Fair Trade industry, and Huault and Rainelli-Weiss (2011) use it to highlight how forms of 'resistance to commensuration' made it difficult to reach an agreement on a single evaluation metric in the process of constructing a market for weather risk. Kaplan and Murray (2010) on their part

use the framework to show how contests about value shaped the marketplace for biotechnology. These three studies show how the EW framework can help theorize the dynamics at play in the construction of valuation devices, notably by uncovering the forms of worth that are at stake in such processes.

Articles in this section investigate how criteria for valuing objects or persons are chosen, particularly in situations where such determination is debated or contested. They also examine the consequences that the imposition of particular valuation criteria might have on individuals, organizations or institutional fields. For example, Marcia Annisette, Gillian Vesty and Thierry Amslem, in their paper, "Accounting controversies in tests of worth" use the EW framework as a conceptual toolbox for studying accounting as a situated practice. Drawing on two case illustrations, a not-for-profit welfare agency and a government owned water utility, the authors follow the unfolding of disputes in which accounting processes and measures are implicated. They mobilize the EW framework to show how accounting is used to justify decisions and actions in various organizational situations, and how it helps "hold things together" in compromise arrangements, serving as a stabilizing device and thus facilitating coordination. They also show that because of this, accounting is likely to trigger organizational and institutional dispute (over what measures "should" apply in a given situation, for example). In the view of these authors, the role of accounting as an "ambiguous object" (one that is relevant in multiple worlds) or "controversial device" (one that is subject to dispute) is precisely what gives it agency for bringing about institutional change. In this regard, they see an opportunity to push back against accusations of accounting hegemony in contemporary society by arguing that the study of valuation processes up close helps reveal, among other things, how competing values are afforded industrial/market worth, and by so doing, become influential in decision making. Thus, as does Stark (see commentary below, and his contribution in the present volume), Annisette, Vesty and Amslem highlight clashes

between orders of worth as potentially generative of new institutional arrangements for the governing of collective action.

On their part, in their paper, "Commercializing academic knowledge in a business school: Orders of worth and trajectories of evaluation", Chantal Mailhot and Ann Langley draw on the literature on valuation and evaluation and the EW framework to consider the process of knowledge commercialization in academia. They view knowledge commercialization as a valuation exercise, in which new forms of value are assigned to knowledge as it passes into practice. Based on the study of two knowledge commercialization projects in a business school, they show how the EW framework may assist in understanding the assignment of worth to knowledge-based objects in the context of multiple and potentially competing systems of valuation. In particular, they show how "composite objects" or "assemblages" that achieve compromise or synergy (i.e., mutual reinforcement) between different value systems may be constructed and potentially sustained. They suggest that durable compromises between competing systems of valuation might be achievable if oriented around a composite object that pulls together objects and subjects from different worlds of worth in a mutually reinforcing assemblage and illustrate two ways, based on their empirical data, in which such assemblages might be constructed. Their study is of interest here as it shows the usefulness of the EW framework for addressing the valuation challenges that transferring knowledge from academia to practice give rise to and for shedding light on how these might be overcome.

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF PRAGMATIC SOCIOLOGY'S AGENDA

In this final section of the volume, we've included articles that seek to push the boundaries of French Pragmatic Sociology theorizing, by exploring certain core concepts of the theory more deeply, but also by providing food for thought for where scholars might focus their attention as they seek to better understand organizations and organizational processes. The first

contribution we offer in this section is an original translation of Claudette Lafaye and Laurent's Thévenot's (1993) article "Une justification écologique? Conflits dans l'aménagement de la nature" which first appeared in the *Revue Française de Sociologie* in 1993. In this piece, translated here as "An ecological justification? Conflicts in the development of nature," Lafaye and Thévenot examine how nature, in its various forms, has been appreciated, justified and defended by various activist individuals and groups. They use this examination to explore whether it is legitimate, from a pragmatic sociological point of view, to argue for a "green" order of worth. Based on points of disagreement over what are considered to be appropriate or legitimate ways of exploiting nature in the interest of "development", they articulate three paths toward this outcome. The first proposes to integrate the development of nature into existing orders of worth – arguing for "green" development on the basis of economic, industrial, civic, etc. justifications. The second proposes to develop an entirely new order of worth on the basis of "green" principles. And finally the third path reflects on the status of "nature" within the pragmatic sociology context, which considers human beings as distinct from non-human beings. As a core premise of pragmatic sociology is that of actors having agency, what space within the theory is afforded to entities (such as the environment) that have no voice, and consequently no agency? In other words, reference to nature leads to a broadening of the list of beings involved in the assessment of what is just. From this perspective, "green" development calls for an adjustment to the theory, such that nature be viewed a new instance of the common good, with its own definitions of worthiness and justice attached to it.

Lafaye and Thévenot do not endorse a particular path in their text (although since its publication many authors have endorsed the existence of a "green" polity in their writings, for (for ex. Patriotta et al., 2011), but the authors' reflections on the nature of nature from a justification and worthiness perspective is important in at least two ways, hence our decision

to include its translation in this volume. First, it supports the idea that Boltanski and Thévenot's six original polities or "worlds" were never intended to be exhaustive: there may be, as Lafaye and Thévenot argue, more worlds in presence in contemporary society. Second, and related to this former point, it affords the EW framework the capacity to evolve as society itself evolves. Definitions of the common good and the higher order principles underpinning them, as articulated in the original formulation of the framework, were based on key texts having influenced and shaped the emergence of modern, capitalist society. Concern for the effects of industrial development on the environment was nonexistent in these texts, but in recent decades, have since grown considerably. Lafaye and Thévenot's contribution is important as it highlights the need for those who see value in the framework to not view it as fixed, but rather as open to redefinition and reinterpretation, in relation to the evolution and development of Western society's repertoire of definitions of the common good.

A second exploration of novel ideas is offered by Roger Friedland and Diane-Laure Arjaliès in their essay, "The passion of Luc Boltanski: The destiny of value, violence and love in institutional theory." Friedland and Arjaliès examine in particular how Luc Boltanski, through five influential monographs written between 1990 and 2014, has sought to reintegrate important but often disregarded notions such as love, violence, religion, production and institution into our understanding of how social order is attained and maintained. These authors argue that despite its many strong points, the original formulation of the EW framework is lacking in many respects. It fails, for example, to consider power and violence as integral to the operability of justification. As the theory focuses on the ways in which conventions of worth afford coordination, it fails to consider how conventions themselves are constituted by or as a consequence of domination. Friedland and Arjaliès point out how passion, desire, and bodily affect are missing from Boltanski and Thévenot's justified worlds and how, because the EW framework was explicitly designed to analyse moments of

controversy, it fails to pay attention to moments where there is no controversy or criticism, moments where social actors are "content". Friedland and Arjaliès' contribution focuses particularly on the ways in which Luc Boltanski, in his subsequent work, has attempted to address these particular shortcomings. In clarifying the internal logic underpinning key works published by Boltanski and his co-authors since *On Justification*, Friedland and Arjaliès' analysis provides a unique opportunity for organizational scholars to get a sense of the breadth of the intellectual project undertaken by EW scholars. This contribution sheds light on the multiple ramifications of the EW project across seemingly unrelated domains of social theory, such as the sociology of abortion, the study of crime novels, and more recently, the analysis of present-day capitalism as an 'economy of enrichment' (Boltanski & Esquerre, 2016).

A third contribution that helps push the boundaries of pragmatic sociology theorization is offered by Simon Susen. In his essay, "Remarks on the nature of justification: A socio-pragmatic perspective", Susen reflects on the nature of justification on the basis of the assumption that processes of justification are fundamental to the symbolically mediated construction of social life. He examines, in particular, the extent to which Boltanski and Thévenot's EW framework helps show how processes of justification are vital to both the conceptual and the empirical organization of social life. He argues that human socialization is inconceivable without processes of justification, which explains the need to understand its many facets, which he does by exploring the meaning of "justification" in relation to ten key dimensions, including "ethics", "agreement" and "justification" itself. For organization scholars, Susen's contribution is thought-provoking – especially in light of the fact that organization theory has given scant attention to justice and justification as a means of understanding organizations and organizational processes. More significantly, by subjecting the analysis of justification to academic scrutiny using some of its own intellectual tools –

ultimately, to question "the justification of justification" – Susen reminds us of the importance of the principles of symmetry and reflexivity inherent in scholarship within the EW tradition and the need to explore, as well as to question, the intellectual apparatus that shapes the theory's underlying foundation.

Finally, in this closing essay of the volume, "For what it's worth," David Stark, who is one of the first North American scholars to have mobilized some of the key ideas and concepts of Boltanski and Thévenot's writings in his own work, shares his story of how he adopted, elaborated and modified these ideas but also (particularly in the view of purists) departed from them over the course of his career. He goes on to explain how these modifications and departures formed the basis for his own theorizing about the empirical phenomena he was studying at the time. His observations and remarks raise an important point, which in our view applies to all of the contributions contained in this book: theory in general is partial at best. Indeed, the use of a specific theory to better understand some aspect of social reality, as we've done here, can be both generative and inhibiting. In some cases, such uses can help highlight processes and relationships that might otherwise have been overlooked. They can also serve as a springboard or as a source of inspiration for extending our understanding of them. In no way however should a theory become a harness, into which everything must fit. As Stark argues, it is both the use and misuse of existing theoretical frames that ultimately allow us to generate new ideas and better theories for understanding the world we live in.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Taken collectively, the contributions in this volume sketch out the possible uses and potential contributions that the EW framework in particular – and French Pragmatist Sociology in general – can bring to organizational thinking, while at the same time recognizing its

embedded dynamism, as evidenced by how its confrontation with concepts borrowed from other theories (such as institutional logics, actor-network theory, etc.) and application to novel empirical contexts (such as David Stark's heterarchical organizations) have helped refine and strengthen it. In the following paragraphs, we explore some of the opportunities that these characteristics of the EW framework create.

As regards future applications of the framework, recent research has highlighted the potential value of the EW framework for advancing central questions in organizational and management theory related to categorization processes (Durand & Khaire, 2016; Durand & Paolella, 2013; Glynn & Navis, 2013), organizational paradoxes (Fairhurst et al., 2016; Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011), materiality in organizations (Hussenot & Missonier, 2010; Leonardi & Barley, 2008; Nicolini, Mengis, & Swan, 2012), strategy practice (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012), social movement theory (Benford & Snow, 2000; Tilly, 2004) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) related issues more generally, including critical CSR (Fleming & Jones, 2013).

These themes are little more than a sampling of the numerous and as yet untouched empirical and theoretical spaces that might benefit from the mobilization of concepts drawn from the EW framework. Thus, as it builds on empirical analyses of the operations conducted by ordinary actors in order to categorize other actors or entities in ways that reflect specific criteria of worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1983, 2006), the EW framework can become an important tool for analysing and advancing our understanding of the situated dynamics underpinning categorization processes in and around organizations. Recently, Ganter, Zellweger and Gond (forthcoming) used the EW framework to explain the variability in firms' decisions to invest in sustainability labels that could facilitate their categorization by stakeholders. The EW framework can also be potentially useful for taking into consideration the normative dimensions underlying many types of organizational paradoxes – especially

those related to organizational performance – and explain how and why paradoxes arise in the first place (Gond, Demers, & Michaud, 2017). It can also be useful for addressing recurrent calls that the practice perspective in strategy gain sharper critical teeth (Blom & Alvesson, 2015; Carter, Clegg, & Kornberger, 2008; Clegg & Kornberger, 2015) and broader societal significance (Knights & Morgan, 1991; Whittington, 1996), by reintegrating activities of critique and justification within its conceptualization of strategy practice, activities which are arguably central to the doing of strategy in organizations (Gond et al., 2015). The EW framework also provides a means for advancing our understanding of materiality in organizations. Recent studies have helped highlight the importance of objects for supporting compromises between multiple orders of worth in various settings, such as in the case of cross-sectoral partnerships (Cloutier & Langley, forthcoming). Common examples of compromise-bearing objects include CSR reports (which integrate social, environmental and economical "worths" in organizations) (Persais, 2007) and management control systems (that also integrate multiple orders of worth) (Annisette et al, this volume; Dontenwill, 2012). Future research could leverage the EW framework to unpack the normative content of the multiple 'framing' strategies used by actors to organize and trigger social movements. For example, in their study on the provision of political rights to animals, Whelan and Gond (forthcoming) illustrate how the EW framework helped identify unique strategies that served to align different 'orders of worth', thus enabling the translation and circulation of radical claims across multiple social spheres. And finally, the EW framework can be useful to investigate how the transformations required by organizational adoption of CSR and/or sustainability ideas are negotiated and instantiated in organizations (Kazmi, Leca, & Naccache, 2016) and help develop a more pragmatic analysis of critical CSR by studying how to enhance managers' and civil society actors' 'critical capacities' (Gond, 2017).

In addition to providing a useful approach for addressing numerous issues faced by these growing streams of research in organizational and management theory, the lenses supplied by the EW framework and French Pragmatist Sociology, thanks to their multiple and growing conceptual ramifications (as discussed in the fourth section of this volume), can help organizational theory move beyond traditional 'organizational' sites (Ahrne, Brunsson, & Seidl, 2016) in order to investigate presently unchartered empirical territories by considering organizational dynamics related to phenomena such as capitalization, enrichment, simulacra, violence, love or religion.

As regards the embedded dynamism of the framework, an interesting specificity of the EW approach, as already mentioned, is its flexibility and thus openness to being combined with other approaches. In contrast with other theories, such as the Bourdieusian sociology (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008), the EW framework does not claim to be a complete sociological theory which explains all aspects of social life. On the contrary, it has maintained constant dialogue with other approaches such as the economies of conventions (for a review see Biggart & Beamish (2003) or Actor Network Theory (Guggenheim & Potthast, 2012). These dialogues have never stopped, leading to the development of new notions that overlap between approaches. For instance, Callon, Lascoumes and Barthe (2009) developed the notion of "hybrid forums" to explore situations where groups with multiple backgrounds and justifications could come together to discuss options around socio-technical controversies. Drawing on ideas from the EW framework, they explored how to re-assemble actors, in ways that facilitated dialogue and agreement. Latour's recent inquiry into modes of existence (Latour, 2013) also recalls this proximity when he insists on the need to bring back a plurality of views and values in our understanding of social life, which, according to this author, the Moderns have lost. More of such conceptual overlaps are possible and welcome.

A second dimension of the embedded dynamism of the EW framework, is the recognition of its limitations regarding its relevance beyond the "Western" context in which it is tacitly embedded. Such recognition involves efforts to examine whether the framework applies in different contexts, across time and space. *On Justification* remains very Western-centric and mostly focused on Modern societies and their specific, related understandings of the public good (Silber, 2016). Since then, authors have tried to expand the notion of "order of worth" in order to investigate whether these ideas apply to different historical and geographical contexts (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000). Such expansion also implies the existence of other polities not initially identified, as both Thévenot (see, e.g. Lafaye & Thévenot, this volume) and Boltanski (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005) have done. While such additions raise theoretical and methodological questions regarding how to do this (Leca & Naccache, 2008), they remain coherent with the logic embedded in the creation of the framework in the first place. Indeed, and as already mentioned in our presentation of the translation of Lafaye & Thévenot's (1993) essay above, it was never the authors' intent to suggest that available forms of justification were necessarily limited to the six worlds initially presented in *On Justification*. The possibility of extension however raises the question about actors' capacity to access the full spectrum of justification forms available to them, which points to the notion of a repertoire of repertoires to account for the forms that different actors can actually access and use, and thus to the diversity of such repertoires interacting in everyday social life (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000; Silber, 2003, 2016), a topic worthy, in and of itself, of further exploration. Albeit a challenge to elucidate, these ideas yield the potential of helping us further extend our understanding of why actors sometimes manage to achieve agreement and other times fail to do so (Huault & Rainelli-Weiss, 2011).

CONCLUSION

In closing, our goal in compiling this volume was to provide English-speaking scholars in organization studies with a novel and unique set of resources to help them investigate pressing empirical questions difficult to address otherwise and see the opportunities that taking into account justification, evaluation and critique in their conceptualization of organizations and organizational processes provides. It is our belief that the interaction and confrontation between these and other concepts, taken from organizational studies and elsewhere, as well as their application in diverse empirical contexts, can be uniquely fruitful for revealing novel pathways that significantly enhance our understanding of coordination, and organizational life more generally.

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