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The Foucault Effect in Organization Studies

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Abstract

Since the establishment of *Organization Studies* in 1980, Michel Foucault's oeuvre has had a remarkable and continuing influence on its field. This article traces the different ways in which organizational scholars have engaged with Foucault's writings over the past thirty years or so. We identify four overlapping waves of influence. Drawing on Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, the first wave focused on the impact of discipline, and techniques of surveillance and subjugation, on organizational practices and power relations. Part of a much wider 'linguistic' turn in the second half of the twentieth century, the second wave led to a focus on discourses as intermediaries that condition ways of viewing and acting. This wave drew mainly on Foucault's early writings on language and discourse. The third wave was inspired by Foucault's seminal lectures on governmentality towards the end of the 1970s. Here, an important body of international research investigating governmental technologies operating on subjects as free persons in sites such as education, accounting, medicine and psychiatry, emerged. The fourth and last wave arose out of a critical engagement with earlier Foucauldian organizational scholarship and sought to develop a more positive conception of subjectivity. This wave draws in particular on Foucault's work on ascetism and techniques of the self towards the end of his life. Drawing on Deleuze and Butler, the article conceives the Foucault effect in organization studies as an immanent cause and a performative effect. We argue for the need to move beyond the tired dichotomies between discipline and autonomy, compliance and resistance, power and freedom that, at least to some extent, still hamper organization studies. We seek to overcome such dichotomies by further pursuing newly emerging lines of Foucauldian research that investigate processes of organizing, calculating and economizing characterized by a differential structuring of freedom, performative and indirect agency.

Keywords: Foucault, governmentality, power, discipline, discourse, ethics, subjectivity, critique, performativity

The Foucault Effect in Organization Studies

'...it is very difficult to isolate one wave, separating it from the wave immediately following it, which seems to push it and at times overtakes it and sweeps it away; just as it is difficult to separate that one wave from the wave that precedes it and seems to drag it towards the shore, unless it turns against its follower as if to arrest it... In other words, you cannot observe a wave without bearing in mind the complex features that concur in shaping it and the other, equally complex ones that the wave itself originates.' (Calvino, 1986, pp. 3-4)

Since the establishment of *Organization Studies* in 1980, organizational scholars have drawn inspiration from the writings of Michel Foucault. Across the subsequent decades, his oeuvre has had a remarkable and continuing influence on the field. This influence has certainly not been uniform. Nor has it been a simple matter of 'applying' Foucault's concepts and analyses to the domain of organization studies. For Foucault is in many respects a nuisance for scholars of organizations (Mennicken & Miller, 2014). Indeed, he had little interest in formal organizations, even though he was deeply concerned throughout his lifetime with the administering and organizing of lives. We term this influence 'the Foucault Effect in *Organization Studies*' (see G. Burchell, Gordon, & Miller, 1991; Gordon, 1991; Mennicken & Miller, 2014). We trace the different ways in which organizational scholars have taken up, worked with, and engaged with Foucault's writings over the past thirty years or so. This diverse and still ongoing set of encounters has been much remarked on by scholars in the field (see for example Carter, McKinlay, &

Rowlinson, 2002; Välikangas & Seeck, 2011). Published close to fifteen years ago, the introduction to a special issue of the journal *Organization* entitled ‘Foucault, Management and History’ underlined the decisive influence of Foucault’s writings even at that time, while making it plain that ‘there are a number of different readings of Foucault within organization studies’, and that ‘to be a Foucauldian can mean very different things and have different implications for research’ (Carter et al., 2002, pp. 515-516).

This multiple and diverse nature of the ‘Foucault effect’ in organizational research presents a challenge: to chart its contours requires that we be selective, both in the material we discuss and the way in which we structure our discussion. To this end, we identify four waves, which approximate to a very rough chronology of the Foucault effect in organization studies: first, discipline and disciplinary power; second, discourse; third, governmentality; and fourth, subjectivity and care of the self. Of course, these waves are difficult to fully separate, just as the waves viewed from the seashore as described by Mr Palomar in Calvino’s novel cited above. This is the case both for Foucault’s own writings, and Foucauldian studies by organizational scholars. That said, we find it helpful to demarcate them so as to understand the nature and extent of the ‘Foucault effect’ in organizational research. Our aim is to explore how, through each wave, organizational analysis has been transformed and extended. Consistent with Foucault’s notion of the productive nature of power, we seek to discern the ways in which the encounter between Foucault’s writings and that of organizational scholars has been productive. In the next

section, we elaborate on the notion of the Foucault effect in organization studies. In the subsequent sections, we explore each of these four waves in turn.

The Foucault effect in organization studies¹

Just as a Foucault effect has been charted in governmentality studies (G. Burchell et al., 1991; Donzelot & Gordon, 2008), a far-reaching Foucault effect is detectable in organization studies. But before embarking on our cartographic enterprise, a word of caution is needed with regard to how we conceive it, lest we slip into viewing the Foucault effect as a result produced by a preceding and independent cause, one that it must constantly reflect and be compared to. Consistent with Deleuze, we conceive the Foucault effect in organization studies as an ‘immanent cause’, inseparable from its effects (Deleuze, 1969, p. 88; 1990, p. 70). According to Deleuze, an effect of this kind cannot simply be traced back to its original source but ‘is a product which spreads or distends over a surface, is strictly co-present to, and co-extensive with its own cause, and which determines this cause as an immanent cause, inseparable from its effects, pure *nihil* or *x* outside of the effects themselves’ (Deleuze, 1969, p. 88; 1990, p. 70) (see also Gordon, 1991, pp. ix-x). The Foucault effect in organization studies should not be understood as a result (in organization studies) of a specific pre-existing cause (Foucault and his work). First and foremost, the Foucault effect in organization studies should be perceived and mapped as a transformation that spreads over the surface of organization studies, in which the effect (of Foucault and his writings) is immanently present as an

element that circulates and enables processes of interaction and co-production with that very same field. Put somewhat prosaically, the Foucault effect in organization studies is a *product*, or perhaps more accurately a *co-product*, one that emerges out of the circulation and exchanges among existing preoccupations and agendas within organization studies (such as debates about the relationship between structure and agency, or labour process theory and Marxist studies of power in organizations) and a particular set of readings and appropriations of Foucault's work (and indeed that of his many co-workers). The latter are as much produced through this process of circulation and interaction, as is the 'outcome', in the form of writings in organization studies claiming or being accorded a Foucauldian provenance.

This kind of effect is analogous to that highlighted by Judith Butler in her analysis of performative agency and performative effects, particularly her discussion of perlocutionary performatives (Butler, 2010, p. 152). To the extent that agency and action have perlocutionary performative effects, they 'alter an ongoing situation', they make certain things happen. But for this to occur, for a perlocutionary effect to be produced, certain conditions have to be met. A felicitous set of circumstances is required. As Butler remarks, the illocutionary model of performative effects falters within the economic sphere, for it presumes that ontological effects are produced without the need for certain intervening conditions. Similarly, it falters when seeking to chart the Foucault effect in organization studies. To analyse such a phenomenon, we have to discard the assumption of a sovereign speaker, and presume that agency is itself

dispersed (Butler, 2010, p. 151). We have to consider the ‘felicitous set of circumstances’ that both enabled and shaped the Foucault effect in organization studies. The performative agency of Foucault’s work is not one which it remains in control of, but one in which its agency is dispersed and co-produced. Foucault’s work only achieves an effect if its performative agency is constantly established anew through an active re-iteration. Our investigation must start from an examination of such re-iterations, the multiple and varying nature and extent of the effects produced by them. Hence our consideration of the multiple themes or waves that together make up the Foucault effect in organization studies.

Foucault’s own work of course actively embraced the notion of multiple conditions of possibility, in his analyses of various transformations in modes of power, forms of discourse, modes of governing, and modes of subjectification. Yet his historical investigations rarely reached the immediate present, even though his engagements as an activist addressed many pressing contemporary issues, including the law of political asylum, the death penalty, the right to abortion and much more (see Gordon, 2000). As Colin Gordon has remarked, even while Foucault had no wish to play the role of ideological traffic policeman, this did not prevent him from being a courageous and creative political actor and thinker, an aspect of his work largely ignored by organizational scholars. And, while his philosophico-historical investigations did not translate into specific injunctions with respect to psychiatric or penal reform, for instance, they none the less offered the possibility of gaining new and more effective

political ways of seeing and understanding (Gordon, 2000, pp. xi-xv). His works invite readers to actively reflect, without telling them what they should think, feel or do (Sverre Raffnsøe, Marius T. Gudmand-Høyer, & Morten T. Sørensen, 2016b, pp. 92-93). Likewise with his description of his own work as ‘a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area’ (Foucault, 1994, pp. 523-524), which should not be taken as an epistemological blank cheque, even as it suggests a firm refusal to pronounce on the truth of this or that utilization. This dilemma is relevant to our endeavour here: to offer a mapping of the multiple Foucault effects within organizational studies, while also seeking to discern the ways in which organizational studies have been reinvigorated in the process, not least through analyses of contemporary forms of organizing. A critique of sorts, but an affirmative critique, one that re-creates and re-evaluates what it characterizes in the light of a virtuality it already seems on the verge of realizing (Raffnsøe, 2017).

Discipline and disciplinary power

Organization Studies has played a pivotal role in the spreading or distending of the Foucault effect. The earliest mention of Foucault’s work in the journal, in a one-page long review of *Discipline and Punish* published in the second issue (Schumann, 1980), was an auspicious but modest beginning. Not very long after, the publication of Gibson Burrell’s (1988) ‘Modernism, post modernism and organizational analysis 2: The contribution of Michel Foucault’, was a more decisive event. This was the second paper

in a series written by Robert Cooper and Gibson Burrell. The initial article, 'Modernism, postmodernism and organizational analysis: An introduction', attempted to 'outline some of the key concepts and methodological insights which a number of European social theorists have developed in recent years and which are of direct relevance to organizational analysis' (Cooper & Burrell, 1988, p. 91). These articles were followed by an article on the possible contribution of Jacques Derrida (Cooper, 1989), and a piece on Jürgen Habermas (Burrell, 1994), while a planned article on Niklas Luhmann (Cooper & Burrell, 1988, p. 92) did not materialize.

Burrell's article marked a watershed, at least if evidenced by the sheer number of articles citing it for close to forty years. Not only was it pivotal in the introduction of Foucault's thought to organization studies, it was also of great significance in the development of organizational theory more generally. Motivated by the 'possible beneficial impact upon contemporary organizational analysis' of Foucault's work, it was 'suggestive of alternative ways of approaching problems and ordering material' (Burrell, 1988, p. 221). According to Burrell (1988, p. 231), this 'Foucauldian approach allows for both the search for generic principles and for detailed empirical investigations of strange local events in single organizations'. Four years earlier, in 1984, Burrell had foreboded this discussion of Foucault by a shorter discussion of Foucault's relevance in an article on 'Sex and Organizational analysis' in the journal *Organization Studies* (Burrell, 1984, p. 106).

In order to chart the characteristics of a 'Foucauldian approach' and its supposed benefits more distinctly, in his 1988 article Burrell suggested a tripartite periodization of Foucault's work, commencing with an 'archaeological' period, followed by a 'genealogical' period, and culminating with a concern for ethics. His primary focus, however, was on the 'genealogical' period, and more specifically *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1975, 1977) and *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (Foucault, 1976a, 1979). Burrell devoted special attention to these works because he was convinced that 'it is here that Foucault's relevance to organization studies is most important' (Burrell, 1988, p. 225). In these works, according to Burrell, Foucault enters a period in which he dissociates himself from his previous stance, to the effect that 'practice now becomes much more important than theory' and 'practices become viewed from the inside rather than from the viewpoint of the detached observer' (Burrell, 1988, p. 224).

With this shift comes a focus on discipline and disciplinary power. According to Burrell, *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* help us to study and conceptualize organizations as 'episodic and unpredictable manifestations' of a particular 'play of dominations' (Burrell, 1988, p. 231). They help to map and analyse 'the unified power field' of disciplinary power that 'does not come from outside the organization but is built into the very processes of education, therapy, house building and manufacture' (Burrell, 1988, p. 227). Despite the fact that 'all organizations are unlike in terms of surface features' (Burrell, 1988, p. 232), the unified power field of disciplinary power creates a remarkable 'homogeneity' of 'organizational forms'

(Burrell, 1988, p. 230) to the effect that ultimately ‘the reality of organizations is that they reflect and reproduce a disciplinary society’ (Burrell, 1988, p. 233).

In choosing such a focus, Burrell’s article shares much with a broader reception of Foucault’s thought that developed and intensified around that time. While Foucault was absent from Stewart Clegg and David Dunkerley’s magistral volume *Organisation, Class and Control* (Clegg & Dunkerley, 1980), Üsdiken and Pasadeos in their bibliometric statement of account in *Organization Studies* in 1995 listed him as the seventh most cited writer in the journal (Üsdiken & Pasadeos, 1995, p. 514). Three years later, Foucault featured as an entry alongside other key thinkers in the mainstream *IEBM Handbook of Management Thinking* (Warner, 1998) (cited in Carter, 2008, p. 15). And two years after the turn of the century, reference was made to his ‘considerable prominence in the field of organization studies’ in an introduction to a special issue on *Foucault, Management and History in Organization*, written by Chris Carter, Alan McKinlay and Michael Rowlinson (Carter et al., 2002, p. 515). In 2009, Campbell Jones went even further in his assessment of Foucault’s importance and writes:

In critical management studies, the pin-up boy of poststructuralism has certainly been Foucault, whose work has, from the mid-1980s onwards, had a significant impact on management studies and has arguably been one of the key crystallization points of the emergence of critical management studies. (Jones, 2009, p. 77)

Central to this initial Foucault effect in organization studies was Foucault's analysis of discipline and disciplinary power in *Discipline and Punish*, and more particularly the striking image of Bentham's Panopticon as the very emblem of modern power. A year before Burrell's article, Stewart Clegg had aired the suggestion that Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* offered a way of developing the analysis of power, while adding the caveat that 'one remains to be convinced by Foucault's analysis' (Clegg, 1987, p. 69). Notwithstanding this reservation, Foucault's book would remain a primary reference point for Clegg in the future. The following year he devoted a chapter to Foucault in his highly influential book *Frameworks of Power* (Clegg, 1989, pp. 149-178). And in 1994, he referred to Foucault as 'the contemporary theorist who has come nearest to carrying out a Weberian project with respect to the analysis of organizations' (Clegg, 1994, p. 149). This chimed with Burrell's rapprochement of Foucault's "'disciplinary" mode of domination' and Weber's "'bureaucratic" mode of domination'. As Burrell remarked, 'for Foucault, human life is existence within an institutional framework of incarceration', even as 'human life' for Weber, 'takes place within the "iron cage" of bureaucracy' (Burrell, 1988, pp. 232-233).

In a similar vein, other significant figures of this early wave such as David Knights and Hugh Willmott indicated that 'the distinctiveness of Foucault's ... perspective on subjectivity resides in its appreciation of the subject as the constitutive product of a plurality of disciplinary mechanisms, techniques of surveillance and power-knowledge strategies' (Knights & Willmott, 1989, p. 549). The workings of the modern 'post-

Fordist' organization were held to exemplify Foucault's analysis of mechanisms of discipline and surveillance. For instance, Graham Sewell and Barry Wilkinson depicted the introduction of management information systems to support Just-In-Time manufacturing and Total-Quality-Control as an instance of surveillance and control (Sewell & Wilkinson, 1992). Likewise, in *Human Relations*, Stephen Fox spoke of the significance of Bentham's Panopticon for management education and 'for the modern organization considered as a disciplinary apparatus' (Fox, 1989, p. 717). Roy Jacques, in *Manufacturing the Employee: Management knowledge from the 19th to 21st centuries*, examined the disciplinary effects of management knowledge on the constitution of the 'normalized or "disciplinary" individual' (Jacques, 1996, p. xvii). And Barbara Townley, when beginning to apply Foucault's work to the study of human resource management, drew 'particularly on *Discipline and Punish*' to give 'examples of the operation of "dividing practices"'. She sought to show 'how personnel policies operate to divide the labour force, by systems of classification and ranking, and, by the same process, articulate the labour process' (Townley, 1990, p. 23).

This common feature was also evident in a volume titled *Foucault, Management and Organization Theory*, edited by Alan McKinlay and Ken Starkey in 1998 (McKinlay & Starkey, 1998). In addition to incorporating Burrell's original article and articles by the editors, the anthology contained contributions from a number of other leading Anglo-Saxon and American scholars in critical organization theory, such as Stewart Clegg, Keith Hoskin, Norman Jackson, Pippa Carter, Mike Savage, Stanley Deetz, Phil Taylor,

Barbara Townley, Patricia Findlay and Tim Newton. Citing Zuboff (1988), McKinlay and Starkey argued that ‘the central principle of continuous observation made possible by technical arrangements’ was ‘Foucault’s major contribution to organizational analysis’ (McKinlay & Starkey, 1998, p. 3). The volume brought together contributions from a number of scholars that had already established themselves in the field, and as such offered a *compte rendu* of the road travelled thus far.

This early wave of the Foucault effect in organization studies was particularly influential among scholars and journals based in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. To a lesser extent, it also distended among scholars and journals on the other side of the Atlantic, including the *Academy of Management Review* and notably through the work of Barbara Townley and her colleagues at the University of Alberta. One may speculate on the reasons for this initial turn to Foucault’s analysis of discipline in organizational theory. No doubt the striking and graphic nature of Foucault’s analyses in *Discipline and Punish* caught people’s attention. No doubt also the image of an architectural apparatus that could act as a machine for creating and sustaining power relations independent of the person who exercises it, had a resonance with those studying work organization within factories (outside organization studies see also Melossi and Pavarini’s insightful study on the prison and the factory (Melossi & Pavarini, 1981)).

More prosaically, the rapid translation of *Discipline and Punish* into English, which occurred within two years, when compared with the 45 years it took for *Histoire de la*

Folie to be translated in its unabridged version, was not unhelpful. And no doubt also there was a generalized feeling of fatigue with the actual state of organization studies at the time, which did not necessarily require or inspire a 'Foucauldian turn', although such a direction offered many a hope that the field might be reinvigorated.

There was also a wider terrain, at times intermittently intersecting with organization studies, including work in accounting, psychology and political science that began in the 1980s (McKinlay & Miller, 2017). Still underway, but already remarkably productive, this Foucault effect was cultivating the fertile fields of accounting and governmentality studies (Carter, 2008, pp. 16-17; Mennicken & Miller, 2014, p. 11). For such scholars, Foucault spoke to a more generalized phenomenon, the emergence of an army of technicians of behaviour, engineers of conduct, orthopaedists of individuality (Foucault, 1977, p. 294). The normalization of normalization took the form of a vast network of experts of the soul, with wide-ranging powers and possibilities for intervening.

Somewhat ironically, as they operate largely outside carceral settings, in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault termed such a phenomenon the 'carceral network', something that included the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge and many more. Such studies opened up a field of study that had resonances with organizational scholars, even as the former suggested a further displacement in the analysis of power relations, which we shall come to shortly.

For Clegg, organization studies had hitherto relied all too heavily on a notion of power defined as sovereign power, ‘power possessed by unitary, “sovereign” political forces’, (Clegg, 1989, p. 159; see also Raffnsøe, 2013a, p. 244). According to Clegg, this conception of power continued to dominate social theory and organization studies. This remained the case even in some of the most advanced and radical contributions to the analysis of power, such as Steven Lukes’ *Power: A Radical View*, first published in 1974 (Lukes, 1974), which ultimately retained a notion of power as a capacity or an ability, in contrast to Foucault’s relational view of power (Lukes, 1974, p. 31). Such a notion of power ultimately means ‘something which denies, forestalls, represses, prevents’ (Clegg, 1989, p. 156). Since power in the form of domination or rule thus took the form primarily of coercion, people subjected to the display of power were consequently doomed to be perceived as passive recipients, mere victims of the exercise of power or power structures.

This concept of power not only prevented any proper understanding and articulation of an active participation on the part of the subjects in question. Within this concept of power, it became equally hard to fashion a positive theory of subjectivity. By taking Foucault’s analysis of disciplinary power as a starting point, it became possible to transcend the divide between hegemonic power structures and individual agency. In the words of Jeffrey Minson, it became possible to analyse how the exercise of power could be ‘constitutive of the subjectivity of the agents of power relations’, rather than viewing

power as limited to imposing itself on the subjectivity of its subjects (Minson, 1986, pp. 113-114) (cited in Clegg, 1989, p. 174).

Similar aspirations were voiced among organizational scholars already engaged in discussions of labour process theory, arising from Harry Braverman's attempt a decade earlier to update Marxian critiques of the capitalist labour process through an examination of a longstanding and still persistent extension of management control (Braverman, 1974). According to Burrell, a state of 'Bravermania' had developed in industrial sociology and industrial relations, and had even gained a footing in organization theory (Burrell, 1989, p. 276). For Knights and Willmott, however, this approach led to a 'neglect of the significance of subjectivity in the organization and control of capitalist production' (Knights & Willmott, 1989, p. 553) as it left 'untheorized' the 'reference to subjectivity' (Knights & Willmott, 1989, p. 544). This raised the question as to whether it was 'possible to take subjective experience seriously without degenerating into a subjectivist interpretation of the world?' (Knights & Willmott, 1989, p. 535).

Foucault's work seemed to indicate how it was possible to answer this question affirmatively. His approach in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* transcended the opposition between subject and object, which privileged subjectivity as the form of moral autonomy and assumed that power falsifies the essence of human subjectivity (Gordon, 1980, p. 239). Instead, Foucault articulated a notion of power

which showed how subjectivity could be understood as a product of disciplinary mechanisms, techniques of surveillance and power-knowledge strategies. Instead of being perceived as a passive object or mere recipient, human agency could be seen to play an active role within mechanisms of power, permeated as the latter are by self-discipline. In retrospect, and as remarked in an introduction to a special issue on Foucault in *Organization*, this meant that Foucault had ‘done much to breathe life into labour process theory’ (Carter et al., 2002, p. 517).

This first wave of the Foucault effect was a significant moment in organization studies, both with regard to the development of Foucauldian approaches by scholars of organizations, and for the field more generally. As one commentator has remarked, Foucault’s writings were a key moment in the emergence of critical management studies, even if they also rapidly became the focus of heated debate which often lacked clarity (Jones, 2009, p. 80). They altered the conceptualizing of power, and suggested that its interaction with knowledge and expertise was a productive and constitutive activity. They suggested that organizing and managing had a more dynamic relationship with subjectivity in all its varied forms. Conflict, struggle and self-affirmation no longer appeared simply as activities in opposition to power, but as an integral part of its operation. This displacement rendered possible new empirical studies of the role of subjectivity in the labour process, in particular within the critical study of accounting, finance and insurance (Knights & Collinson, 1987; Knights & McCabe, 2000; Knights & Sturdy, 1990).

Yet, in spite of this reinvigoration, the initial form of the Foucault effect in organization studies was partial, both empirically and conceptually. It obliterated Foucault's distinction between a disciplined and a disciplinary society, and suggested that the exercise of power had more in common with Marcuse's 'one dimensional' image of social life than the much subtler analyses that Foucault offered in his many and wide-ranging studies. This dystopian image of power understood as discipline tended to blunt the empirical sensitivity, and led to an over-preoccupation with the notion of discipline and surveillance (Mennicken & Miller, 2014, p. 9). It is important to remember that *Discipline and Punish* focused primarily on events between 1760 and 1840, and was never intended to offer an exhaustive analysis of modern work and organizational life. Indeed, Foucault indicated that he was only able to perform his analysis in 1975 at a time when discipline no longer seemed natural and inevitable, but was instead fiercely contested, which he viewed as a condition of possibility not only for his own analysis, but also for the ongoing further development of discipline (Foucault, 1975, p. 35; Raffnsøe et al., 2016b, p. 171).

As Foucault emphasized, when he speaks 'of the diffusion of methods of discipline', this is not to maintain that 'the French are obedient'! In the analysis of normalizing procedures, there is 'no thesis of a massive normalization. As if these developments weren't precisely the measure of a perpetual failure'. As Foucault recapitulates, 'when I speak of a "disciplinary" society, what is implied is not a "disciplined society"' (Foucault, 1994, pp. 15-16, our translation).²

Contrary to a thoroughly ‘disciplined society’, or a society in which everything happened in accordance with discipline, a ‘disciplinary society’ for Foucault is a society in which discipline has a decisive impact and plays the role of an important form of normativity, yet never fully rules, but exerts an influence, rivalling with other form of norms and dispositions (Raffnsøe et al., 2016b, p. 189-190). Even when discipline and surveillance may be ever-present, ubiquitous or even all-pervasive, they are only present as dispositional devices that may act on our actions or perceptions (Raffnsøe, 2013a). None the less, this image of discipline as subjugation led some to reinstate the very dualism between power and freedom that Foucault’s notion of power sought to overcome (Knights & Willmott, 1989, p. 535). Subjectivity was to be re-introduced in the limited sense of an active subjugation or ‘subjection’ (Thomas & Davies, 2005, p. 686), combined with repeated appeals to the necessity of resistance and the importance of being critical (Thompson & Ackroyd, 1995). According to this interpretation ‘compliance with’ was the obverse of ‘resistance to’ (Thomas & Davies, 2005, p. 683), contrary to Foucault’s account of a mutually intensifying and productive relationship between power and freedom.

Across the past quarter century or so, Foucauldian studies within and beyond organizational analysis have provided a considerably more refined and diversified picture of Foucault’s work and the type of analyses that it can inspire. It has become increasingly clear that the focus on power as discipline was just one aspect of the initial Foucault effect in organization studies, and even that focus took a highly specific form.

As we show below, organizational scholars have subsequently returned to Foucault to take inspiration from other parts of his oeuvre, and additional Foucault effects have been produced which complement this initial wave.

Attending to the politics of discourse

A second and adjoining wave in the reception of Foucault's thought centred on the notion of 'discourse', and included a wider 'linguistic turn' in organization studies. As with the notion of discipline, articles published in *Organization Studies* played a key role, with Clegg (1987) already inviting organizational scholars interested in the study of power and language to take a closer look at Foucault. Others reiterated this invitation (Knights & Morgan, 1991), as did more recent contributions (Curtis, 2014; Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2011). This turn towards discourse in organization studies was part of a much broader shift across social science and the humanities in the second half of the twentieth century. Drawing on developments within philosophy during the preceding half century or so, including the diverse writings of those such as Heidegger (1959), Austin (1962), Quine (1960) and Wittgenstein (1958), this turn can be somewhat arbitrarily marked by the publication of Rorty's anthology *The Linguistic Turn* (Rorty, 1967) (see also Derrida, 1967). Inspired by these developments, whether directly or indirectly, disciplines as diverse as sociology (Lash, 1990, 1991; Silverman, 1985, 1993), political theory (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), social psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1999; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), cultural anthropology (Geertz, 1983,

1988) and communication theory (Deetz, 1990, 1998) all contributed to this linguistic turn. Organization studies was thus part and parcel of an increased interest in and focus on language, although here the suggestion was that not only societies, social institutions, and cultures, but also organizations ‘may be viewed as discursively constructed ensembles of texts’ (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000, pp. 136-137).

Foucault’s work was an important part of this discursive or linguistic turn. In particular, the concept of ‘discourse’ proved seminal and formative for what asserted itself as a new paradigm of ‘discourse analysis’, which developed both as a methodological and theoretical approach to instantiate the linguistic turn in the social sciences. By the end of the 1990s Foucault’s reflections on discourse are recurrently indicated as the hinterland for most strands of critical discourse analysis (see for example Wodak & Meyer, 2001). By 2009 ‘Foucauldian conceptions of discourse’ have become ‘widespread’ (Jones, 2009, p. 77), to such an extent that ‘in almost all discourse analytical approaches, Foucault has become a figure to quote, relate to, comment on, modify and criticize’ (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 12).

Like the first wave of Foucault inspired organizational scholarship which we described above, also this wave engaged primarily with the early phases of Foucault’s work, in particular Foucault’s writings on discourse and language, and discursive practices (Raffnsøe et al., 2016b, pp. 43-46), which preceded his studies of power and discipline. The relevant writings by Foucault in this phase, stretching from roughly 1963 to 1971, are

The Order of Things (Foucault, 1971b) (for original French edition see Foucault, 1966), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 2010a) (for original French edition see Foucault, 1976b) and *The Discourse on Language* (Foucault, 2010a) (for original French edition see Foucault, 1971a). During this period, which Burrell characterizes as the ‘quasi-structuralist archaeological period’ (Burrell, 1988, p. 224), Foucault investigates discourses, that is, delimited groups of verbal expressions that constitute reasonably ordered, coherent and meaningful speech. He establishes an analytical approach that attempts to identify the formative rules resulting in the classification of expressions as coherent groups. In his inaugural programmatic lecture *L’ordre du discours* held at the Collège de France in 1970, Foucault stresses that he strives to show how ‘in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role it is ... to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality’ (Foucault, 1971a, p. 10; 2010a, p. 216) and how ‘series of discourse are formed, through, in spite of, or with the aid of these systems of constraint’ (Foucault, 1971a, p. 62; 2010a, pp. 231-232).

When Clegg in his deceitfully short, somewhat prophetic 1987 discussion note in *Organization Studies* suggested that a turn towards language and discourse might be a viable step ahead for the analysis of power as it had hitherto been developed by himself and other scholars in the field, he simultaneously stated a decisive reason for locating power ‘in the play of discourse itself’ rather than ‘in decision-making’ (Clegg, 1987, p. 68) (Clegg, 1987, p. 68). In his note entitled ‘The language of power and the power of

language' Clegg seeks to outline an approach that 'makes power a discursive phenomenon but treats it as neither transparent nor self-sufficient but as a materially structured reality' (Clegg, 1987, p. 62). Such an approach permitted to move beyond a traditional causal conception of power towards a focus on what could be conceived and analysed 'as both a determining and a determined instance of the exercise of power' (Clegg, 1987, p. 69). Clegg at this quite early hour invited organization scholars to look more closely at Foucault's work on archaeology and to develop Foucault (1977) on 'power discourse analysis' (referring to *Discipline and Punish*). At the same time, however, he also acknowledged that 'one remains to be convinced by Foucault's analysis of power' (Clegg, 1987, p. 69). Yet, despite this scepticism, in many ways Clegg's article paved the way for the development of Foucault inspired discourse analyses in the field of organization studies.

In accordance with Clegg's call, and as emphasized by Leclercq-Vandelannoitte (2011), Foucault's early focus on the affirmation of discursive formations (i.e. groups of statements), independent of their social setting attracted widespread attention. Yet, it was particularly Foucault's (later) genealogical framing of such discursive autonomy as limited and relative, not absolute, which inspired organization scholars. Here, discourses are neither seen as 'simple mirrors of social reality', nor are they regarded as being 'a rule-governed, autonomous self-referring system'. Instead, they are analysed as 'the crucial way to exercise power' (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2011, p. 1250).

Following this concern with the exercise of power through discourse back we can trace how this second wave in the reception of Foucault's thought intersects with, and emerges out of, the wave focusing on the analysis of power and the structuring of power in conjunction with discipline that we described above. The two waves meet, for instance, in the *Organization Studies* article by Knights and Morgan (1991) entitled 'Corporate strategy, organizations, and subjectivity: A critique'. Drawing on Foucault (1980), the authors analyse corporate strategy 'as a discourse which has its own specific conditions of possibility' (Knights & Morgan, 1991, p. 251), 'as a set of discourses and practices which transform managers and employees alike into subjects who secure their sense of purpose and reality by formulating, evaluating and conducting strategy' (Knights & Morgan, 1991, p. 252). Knights and Morgan show how 'managers and staff are not just passive victims of the power of strategic discourse; through it they are constituted as subjects either in support of, or in resistance to, its plausibility' (Knights & Morgan, 1991, p. 269). Yet, 'both those who embrace and those who resist strategy find themselves caught up in its reproduction' (Knights & Morgan, 1991, p. 269). In prolongation of the approach developed in this and subsequent articles (see for example Knights, 1992), sixteen years later a Foucault inspired *Organization Studies* article continues to define itself as an empirical and theoretical contribution to a still 'developing interest in discourse in management and organization studies' (Ezzamel & Willmott, 2008, p. 191) in a similar vein.

Amongst other things, organization scholars turned to Foucauldian discourse analysis since it promised to effectively remedy the theoretical and empirical limitations of critical theory, including neo-Marxist approaches and labour process analysis, but also traditional sociology and psychology more generally, which, in their eyes, had hampered the analysis of the organization of social life, in particular that of subjectivity (see here in particular Knights & Willmott, 1989; but see also Newton, 1998).

Foucauldian discourse analysis, in the eyes of these authors, allowed to overcome dualistic accounts of subjectivity where subjectivity was accounted for in terms of ‘a binary opposition’ (Knights, 1990, p. 297) between objective social structures, on the one hand, and ‘subjective’ individual experience, on the other. Not only did such accounts forget that ‘social patterns, institutions and organizations’ are ‘abstractions’ that ‘do not *do* anything’ (Collins, 1981, p. 989); they equally risked ‘promoting a reification of structures and systems’ and downplaying ‘the significance of human agency in the reproduction and transformation of social structure’ (Newton, 1998, pp. 417-418). With an approach inspired by Foucault, by contrast, discourses were conceived of as intermediary ‘ideas and practices which condition our ways of relating to, and acting upon, particular phenomena’ (Knights & Morgan, 1991, p. 253) and which ‘have the effect of constituting managerial and labour subjectivities that enhance the productive power of organizations’ (Knights & Morgan, 1991, p. 270). Such a linguistic turn permitted organization scholars to account for various ways in which discourses and ‘the level of talk’ are binding for an understanding of organizational

processes (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Kärreman, 2014) and shape how subjects can act and be.

Yet, the ensuing success of these and subsequent Foucauldian discourse-analytic approaches to organization (later claimed to have ‘entirely re-written areas of organizational analysis such as human resource management’ (see Newton, 1998, p. 416)), was accompanied from the start with fierce criticism. Early on organization scholars objected that in discursive analyses inspired by Foucault human agents seem to assume a very fragile self that can only establish a secure identity comprehensively administered in and through language (see for example Newton’s (1998) critique of Knights and Willmott (1989)). It was argued that actors (language users) in such studies risked ending up as ‘passive “subjects” who are the conduits, bearers or sites of discourses of power/knowledge’ (Caldwell, 2007, p. 770) acting ‘as the “pre-programmed” puppets of their discourse’ (Newton, 1998, p. 427).

According to some critics of this wave of Foucauldian organization scholarship, such a ‘negative paradigm of subjectification’ (Caldwell, 2007, p. 770) and accompanying conceptions of a fragile and thoroughly managed identity seemed to have originated in the Frankfurt School, critical theory and labour process theory, rather than in Foucault’s work (see here for example Newton, 1998, p. 420). While opening and preserving space within the labour process debate for new discussions of resistance (Knights & Vurdubakis, 1994, p. 168), this wave of Foucault effects seemed substantially affected

and deflected by previously existing trends in organization studies. Notably, it emerged in response to a perceived lack of a framework that permitted to adequately account for agency and discourse in a way that transcended structure/agency divides and conceptions of a pre-given unitary and sovereign subject. Yet, many critics have insisted that it is insufficient to conceive of agency re-actively, either in terms of an ‘endogenous effect’ of discourses (Caldwell, 2007, p. 777) or in terms ‘the capacity to resist’ and ‘act otherwise’ (Caldwell, 2007, p. 771). Instead, it has been suggested, agency should be conceived more actively as ‘the possibility of “making a difference”’ (Caldwell, 2007, p. 771). To make room for a more active and positive conception of human and organizational agency (and subjectivity), it is necessary to question the idea of language as being the central feature around which everything rotates to such an extent that language becomes not only the subject that stands behind and grounds human consciousness but also a an overarching transcendental horizon that sets conditions for what humans can say and do, and for how the world can appear (Raffnsøe, 2013b, pp. 18-25; Raffnsøe et al., 2016a, pp. 283-284). By contesting a strong constitutive view and transcendental view of discourse (Mumby, 2011), it was equally possible to move beyond the idea of discourse as *the* crucial way to exercise power.

For subsequent waves of Foucault inspired organizational scholarship, it proved possible to move beyond both the concept of re-actionary agency and the propensity to assert an overdetermination through language and disciplinary structures, as scholars

turned towards, and became inspired by, later phases of Foucault's body of work. In this manner, additional far-reaching Foucault effects were provoked by his work on governmentality and dispositives, self-formation, technologies of the self and truth-telling that became prominent in the last decade of his life (Elden, 2016). With this broader and more comprehensive approach, it became increasingly plain that even Foucault's early work never endowed language and discipline with the all-constitutive transcendental role that was attributed to them by contributors to the first two main waves in organizational scholarship. Similarly, this has become conspicuous in recent Foucault scholarship in general (Raffnsøe et al., 2016b, pp. 38-97; pp. 147-207).

Governmentality

On 1st February 1978, Michel Foucault delivered a lecture at the Collège de France in which he coined the awkward neologism 'governmentality'. By this, he meant minimally 'the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics' (Foucault, 2007, p. 108) that has population as its target and economic knowledge as its instrument. Titled simply 'Governmentality', that lecture was first published in English in the journal *Ideology & Consciousness* in 1979 (No. 6, Autumn 1979, pp. 5-21), and subsequently republished in revised form in 1991 in the more widely available collection titled *The Foucault Effect* (G. Burchell et al., 1991). It was further revised and republished in 2007 in the collection of lectures titled 'Security, Territory, Population' (Foucault, 2007), a title he declared regretting. In his 1979

lectures, Foucault elaborated on the notion of practices of government, and the pressing contemporary importance of addressing them. As Colin Gordon has remarked, Foucault's lectures at the time were in part a response to the increasing ascendancy of the doctrine of neoliberalism in Western Europe, namely in the governments of Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (Gordon, 2000, p. xxii). Even then, citizens were being called upon to face up to the realities and disciplines of the market, and tutored in the duties of economic enterprise.

In the lectures delivered in 1978 and 1979, Foucault shifted perspective, while building on some of the themes outlined a few years earlier in *La Volonté de Savoir* (Foucault, 1976a), particularly the notion of bio-power. The shift was from a concern with the specialized knowledges of the individual person, such as psychiatry, medicine, and punishment, to the exercise of political authority over an entire population. Or rather, he came to focus increasingly on the ways in which, in early modern Europe and since, a concern developed to coordinate the government of individuals with the government of a human collectivity viewed as a population. Governing in this sense meant managing the population as a collective mass, while also managing it in all its depth and details. This was Foucault's relational way of addressing the thorny issue of how to link the 'micro' and the 'macro' operation of power without effacing either. If his earlier work on the 'microphysics' of power had emphasized the primacy of practices over institutions (and organizations), the analysis of governmental practices and their associated rationalities offered a way of linking up such analyses with the

‘macrophysics’ of power without always and necessarily having to view the latter in terms of state institutions.

This focus on governing as a practice, albeit one animated by a specific rationality, led Foucault to be particularly attentive to the rationalities of liberalism and neo-liberalism, and their respective innovations in the history of governmental rationalities (Gordon, 2000, p. xxii). Liberalism showed, according to Foucault, that to govern well is to govern less. Put differently, the exercise of power understood as governmentality presupposes that action on the actions of others only works where there is some freedom, a point that has often been misunderstood. This meant discarding both the ethical polarization of subject and object, and the notion of power as a substantive entity or institution, independent of the set of relationships within and through which it is exercised.

More than two decades elapsed before the notion of governmentality was taken up by organization scholars, with the exception of Barbara Townley’s innovative work (see for example Townley, 1993). Even then, and from 2002 onwards, the notion of governmentality was read to a large extent through the prism of discipline and disciplinary power, an approach which perhaps had greater affinity with the notion of organizations than did an attentiveness to the arts and practices of governing. In the interim, though, governmentality studies flourished in the adjacent field of accounting research, as well as among a wide range of social scientists, historians, philosophers, and others.

It is important to note, though, that the body of work that is now viewed as governmentality studies, and that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s was not a fully formed product, but rather a ‘zone of research’ (Gordon, 1991, p. 2), a ‘field of investigation’ (Miller & Rose, 1995). It was an assemblage of individually distinctive contributions, loosely connected to each other through common interests in political sociology, philosophy, and the history of political ideas and practices (for a comprehensive overview of this work see Lemke (2001) and Gordon (1991)). Many of these studies did not even start from the notion of governmentality, but from a simple concern with the multiple ways in which socially legitimated authorities ‘beyond the state’ sought to interfere in the lives of individuals in sites as diverse as the school, the home, the workplace and the dole queue (Miller & Rose, 2008, p. 1). Rather than offer a new theory of the state, politics, or modernity, these investigations addressed the ‘how’ of power, the operation of power in all its varied forms and locales. The sites were as diverse as they were illuminating: social insurance, education, accounting, crime control, unemployment, poverty, development, medicine, psychiatry, and health more generally, child abuse and sexual offences, and much more (Miller & Rose, 1995, p. 592). In all these widely differing locales, power was shown to operate as much through practices that ‘make up subjects’ as free persons, as through processes of exclusion and denial. As Miller and Rose have observed (Miller & Rose, 2008, p. 9), these ‘laboratories’ for governing were very different from those typically analysed by political theorists, political commentators, and most social scientists. This was power

without a centre, or rather with multiple centres, a type of power that was productive of meanings, of entities, of subjects and objects.

As these studies expanded, and notwithstanding the hesitation to formalize the analysis of governmentality, some conceptual signposts began to emerge. As early as 1980, Colin Gordon had written perceptively on the programmatic nature of power, and the intrinsic relation between the programmatic and the technological (Gordon, 1980). In 1992, Rose and Miller formulated this in terms of a triptych of political rationalities, programmes, and technologies, while insisting on their mutual interrelations (Rose & Miller, 1992). This was a way of seeking to bring together the local and the non-local, the macro and the micro, and it allowed subsequent studies to focus on the mediated ways in which rather abstract injunctions to ‘modernize’ government could be linked to highly localized actors and interventions (see for example Kurunmäki & Miller, 2011).

In accounting, these concerns were taken up more or less explicitly, and in differing ways, in a number of writings in the 1980s (S. Burchell, Clubb, & Hopwood, 1985; Hopwood, 1987; Hoskin & Macve, 1986, 1988; Miller & O’Leary, 1987). It was, perhaps, Miller and O’Leary’s (1987) analysis of the ‘governable person’ that came closest to deploying the notion of governmentality, in their appeal to the programmatic and the technological, and the importance of considering the ‘macro’ as well as ‘micro’ aspects of power and government. In 1990, the notion of governmentality, and the importance of analysing the roles of accounting and other calculative technologies in

governing economic life, was more explicitly formulated (Miller & Rose, 1990). Subsequent work (Hoskin & Macve, 2000; Miller, 1991, 1992; Power, 1997; Radcliffe, 1998, 1999; and Vollmer, 2003) extended this type of analysis, highlighting the ‘inner workings of governmentality’ (Mennicken & Miller, 2012, p. 7). For accounting technologies make it possible not only to act on the actions of others, but to do so in a way that helps operationalize neoliberal concepts such as competitiveness, markets, efficiency, and entrepreneurship. Accounting numbers constitute firms, organizations, sub-units, and individuals as competing, market-oriented entities, which can be analysed, compared, and acted upon.

Among organizational scholars, Townley (1993) was one of the first to conduct comparable analyses. She highlighted the relational aspect of power, and focused on the ‘how’ of power in organizations, the practices, techniques and procedures that give it effect. Studying the HRM instruments of Management by Objectives (MBO) and selection testing, and echoing Foucauldian ideas of governmentality, she argued that ‘HRM serves to render organizations and their participants calculable arenas, offering, through a variety of technologies, the means by which activities and individuals become knowable and governable’ (Townley, 1993, p. 526).

Almost a decade later, Clegg, Pitsis, Rura-Polley and Marosszeky (2002) explored how new forms of alliance contracting in the construction industry relied on forms of governance that have much in common with neoliberal mentalities. They termed this

‘governance by governmentality’ (p. 333). Using ethnographic methods, they investigated how ‘economies in authoritative surveillance have been sought through building collaborative commitment and transparency into the moral fibre of a project’ (Clegg et al., 2002, p. 317). The governmental tools they identified were: a strong project culture, monetized key performance indicators, and a stakeholder conception of the project to bind different organizational stakeholders together. Noting that stakeholder means of governing projects are particularly susceptible to discrepancies between ambition and outcome, they argued that the notion of governmentality is particularly appropriate for understanding quality management issues. The ‘success’ of such processes is intrinsically related to their failure, in so far as continuous improvement in search of excellence requires some failure as feedback to improve.

Just a few years earlier, McKinlay and Starkey’s (1998) collection titled *Foucault, Management and Organization Theory* demonstrated the increasing scope of Foucauldian studies of governing. And the sub-title ‘From Panopticon to technologies of the self’ highlighted the importance of moving beyond the image of the Panopticon to understand and analyse the operation of contemporary modalities of power. In the ‘Afterword’ to that volume, the editors emphasized the importance of deconstructing the notion of organization, and focusing on those technologies of the self that operate through freedom, through subjectivization rather than discipline construed only negatively. That said, some of the contributions to the volume still tend to read governmentality through the lens of discipline, although Savage’s fascinating historical

analysis of the concept of ‘career’ as a distinctly modern form of ethics, and his appeal to look beyond *Discipline and Punish* and towards Foucault’s later work, reinforces the overall message offered by the editors (see Savage, 1998).

That message was reiterated and indeed strengthened by McKinlay and Taylor (2014) which starts from the question of how do we govern ourselves and others. Suggesting that ‘governmentality has proved to be perhaps Foucault’s most productive concept’ (McKinlay & Taylor, 2014, p. 2), McKinlay and Taylor note the inherently failing nature of attempts to govern, which provides them with a crucial dynamism. They note also that one of the main gains of a governmentality reading of managerialist manifestos of competitiveness and empowerment is that it takes them seriously. Consistent with Gordon’s (1991, p. 6) insistence on the inventiveness of neoliberalism as an art of government (which of course is not to celebrate it), McKinlay and Taylor argue that managerial notions of teams, empowerment and freedoms cannot simply be dismissed as so much ideological smokescreen for their ‘real’ (i.e. hidden) objectives. Focusing on Motorola’s corporate HR function and the notion of self-management and the ‘factory of the future’, the authors echo Miller and O’Leary’s (1994) suggestion that the factory be viewed as ‘an intrinsically theoretical and experimental space, one where phenomena are created’ (Miller & O’Leary, 1994, p. 21).

Just a few years later, McKinlay and Pezet (2017) argued that of all the many concepts that Foucault deployed, the notion of governmentality ‘has proven the most fruitful in

terms of sparking innovative historical and empirical research' (McKinlay & Pezet, 2017, p. 3). That said, they still chide (somewhat harshly) the 'London governmentalsists' for trading in stereotypes, neglecting resistance, and overlooking the vicissitudes of history with its pauses and reversals, thereby ignoring the extent to which programmes and practices of governing produce diverse subjectivities and diverse outcomes. Having provided an overview of the notion of governmentality and its relevance to analyses of neoliberalism, McKinlay and Pezet finish by asking anew a helpful set of questions. How are claims to govern made? How do such claims gain coherence and authority? How are diverse and multiple connections formed between abstract programmes of government and mundane daily life made and sustained? And what are the effects of such modalities of governing on our sense of ourselves and others? The one disappointment for scholars of organizations is that they do not offer any suggestions for how the notion of governmentality may be of particular help to their endeavours.

Subjectivity, Truth/Ethics and the Care of the Self

A last, fourth wave in the reception of Foucault's thought that we are considering in the context of this essay concerns studies that have sought to make room for a more active and positive conception of human and organizational agency (and subjectivity) particularly during the last fifteen years or so. This body of work (see for example Barratt, 2008; Ibarra-Colado, Clegg, Rhodes, & Kornberger, 2006; Iedema & Rhodes,

2010; Knights, 2002; Munro, 2014; Randall & Munro, 2010; Skinner, 2011, 2012; Starkey & Hatchuel, 2002; Weiskopf & Willmott, 2013) draws mainly on the later works by Foucault on ethics, aesthetics, parrhesia, and the care of the self (Foucault, 1985, 1990, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1997d, 2001a, 2001b). This wave emerged out of a critical engagement with organizational scholarship on discipline and disciplinary power and the various Foucault effects and Foucault critiques that that had engendered (see here also Newton, 1998).

Whereas preceding organization studies, as Randall and Munro (2010, p. 1487) put it, had highlighted (and overemphasized) ‘the role of normalization within the disciplinary mechanisms of modern organizations’, this new wave of organization studies sought to develop an alternative understanding of subjectivity and subjectification. Drawing, amongst other things, on Foucault’s research on activism and his analysis of the creation of novel forms of subjectivity in ancient schools of ethics, these studies aim ‘to unearth parts of Foucault’s genealogy of the self which have thus far been neglected within the field of management and organization studies’ (Munro 2014, p. 1129; but see also Starkey & Hatchuel, 2002; Randall & Munro, 2010; Skinner, 2012; Weiskopf & Willmott, 2013). In doing so, they enhance our understanding of ethics and micro-emancipation in organizations (Munro, 2014), and the roles of acts of parrhesia (‘fearless speech’), truth-telling (Weiskopf & Willmott, 2013), and active self-formation (Skinner, 2012) in such processes of ‘micro-emancipation’.

In particular, the following three contributions, or effects, of this wave are worthwhile considering in more detail. These concern, first, the relevance of these studies in counter-acting and modifying waves of Foucault inspired scholarship that stressed the effects of discipline, disciplinary power and subjugation in organizations and processes of organizing; second, their engagement with hitherto overlooked aspects of Foucault's work making these broadly accessible to organizational scholarship and useful for the empirical study of organizational activism, resistance and freedom; and, third, the more general significance of these studies (and Foucault) for the critique of neoliberalism, or put differently, for the development of alternative conceptions of the self and subjectivity that can be used, as Munro (2014, p. 1127) writes, to question and counter-act prevailing notions of the liberal or neoliberal Homo oeconomicus. Inspired by Foucault's 'ethos', his own critical intellectual practice and 'pessimistic activism' (Foucault, 1997b), these studies seek to open up 'possibilities for more practical and engaged forms of critical intellectual work' (Barratt, 2003, p. 1069).

Articles published in *Organization Studies* were pivotal in getting these contributions off the ground (see here in particular Randall & Munro, 2010; Weiskopf & Willmott, 2013; and Munro, 2014; but see also Iedema & Rhodes, 2010). However, also the journals *Organization*, *Human Relations*, *Journal of Management Studies*, and *Ephemera* provided, and continue to provide, important platforms for the reinvigoration and further development of Foucauldian organizational scholarship (see here for example the articles by Barratt, 2003, 2008; Fleming & Spicer, 2003; Skinner, 2011,

2012; Starkey & Hatchuel, 2002), as do edited collections, such as the recent volume by McKinlay and Pezet (2017) or the earlier volume by McKinlay and Starkey (1998).

Examining Foucault's shift in focus from discipline/domination to aesthetics and desire/pleasure, Starkey and Hatchuel (2002) highlight the underlying continuity of Foucault's core concerns, for example with power and subjectivity and processes of subjectification. As Starkey and Hatchuel (2002, p. 641) write 'Foucault's work has ongoing concerns; one of the main ones is with writing the history of knowledge, the manifold ways in which man, if we can still talk about man after Foucault, creates a sense of self'. Starkey and Hatchuel caution us against crude periodisations and compartmentalisations of Foucault's works, a view which we fully endorse. Starkey and Hatchuel centre their analysis on Foucault's engagement with 'technologies of self' (Foucault, 1997c) which they view as crucial as it is 'these technologies that allow individuals to create new modes of being, distinct from those imposed by the workings of power regimes' (Starkey & Hatchuel, 2002, p. 642). Such an engagement allows us to move away from an overemphasis on discipline and the negative aspects of management and organization. As Starkey and Hatchuel state (Starkey & Hatchuel, 2002, p. 642), 'in essence, technologies of self raise the tantalizing prospect of an (un)certain degree of freedom'. They continue to highlight that a key concern of Foucault's later work was 'to show people that they are freer than they feel and than he himself previously thought' (Starkey & Hatchuel, 2002, p. 642).

Building on Starkey and Hatchuel's account, and what Foucault termed the 'aesthetics of the self', Randall and Munro (2010) examine how health workers who treat victims of sexual abuse relate to the concept of care (and freedom). Reassessing the idea of mental health care in terms of Foucault's concept of 'the care of the self', Randall and Munro show how these practitioners were sceptical of traditional medical approaches based on the sciences of the self, the psy-sciences, as Rose (1989) described them, and their associated professional experts. Being critical of care aimed at normalization, containment and control, these practitioners developed an ethics which, following Foucault's analysis of the use of pleasure in the *History of Sexuality*, Volume 2 (Foucault, 1985), can be described, as Randall and Munro put it, 'in terms of the ways in which one attempts to master oneself, to transform oneself and to give shape to one's life' (Randall & Munro, 2010, p. 1487).

Randall and Munro contrast the idea of a disciplined, normalized self with Foucault's 'care of the self', understood in terms of an ethic consisting of 'those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria' (Foucault, 1985, pp. 10-11, cited in Randall & Munro, 2010, p. 1495). The mental health care workers in Randall and Munro's study defined themselves as being involved in a joint journey with their patients, a journey led by the sufferer, where the self and other accept the account of suffering and the challenge of finding a way out of

social isolation. Doctor and patient are seen as equals. The idea of care is rooted in a relation of mutual equality rather than of expert authority, and it is grounded upon a willingness to share and accept the narrative of the other. The concept of the care of the self is thus not to be equated with a healing process or a path to normality (Randall & Munro, 2010, p. 1497). As Randall and Munro recall in their account of one health care practitioner, self-harm, which they highlight as a relatively common problem encountered by voluntary carers amongst their clients, ‘should not be interpreted as a symptom of an illness or abnormality, but rather as a tactic on the part of their clients to re-assert some kind of self-mastery over themselves’ (Randall & Munro, 2010, p. 1497).

Randall and Munro’s paper provides thus an important, rare empirical investigation into non-normalizing organizational practices and the development of alternative forms of care of the self, which, at least to a certain extent, are independent of the normalizing techniques of traditional professional medical practice. As Randall and Munro (2010, p. 1501) highlight, in his later work, Foucault explores the possibility of ‘an ethics without norms’, an ethics that is framed using ‘an aesthetic view of human subjectivity’, where ‘the growth of capabilities [capacities] [is] disconnected from the intensification of power relations’ (Foucault, 1997d, p. 317). A project that, according to Randall and Munro, bares remarkable similarities to the concerns raised by the mental health care practitioners they studied.

Also the paper by Weiskopf and Willmott (2013) seeks to contribute to the development of a critical, practice-based understanding of ethics drawing on Foucault's later work on 'parrhesia' (see for example Foucault, 2001a, 2010b). They conceive of ethics as 'critical practice of questioning and problematizing moral orders and moral rules-in-use in which subjects (re)define their relations to self and others' (Weiskopf & Willmott, 2013, p. 470). Examining Ellsberg's leaking of the 'Pentagon Papers' they analyse processes of whistleblowing as instances of 'parrhesia': 'truth-telling that is risky and free' (Foucault, 2010b, p. 66) (see also Foucault, 2011). As Weiskopf and Willmott point out, parrhesia, often translated as 'fearless speech', 'is not to be confused with 'free speech' or Habermasian 'herrschaftsfreie Kommunikation'. It is neither free of constraints nor oriented towards consensus' (Weiskopf & Willmott, 2013, p. 482). The "'parrhesiast (truth-teller)" stands up, speaks, tells the truth to a tyrant, and risks his life' (Foucault, 2010b, p. 62) (Foucault 2010b: 62) (cited in Weiskopf & Willmott, 2013, p. 482). Thus, a self-relation is established that allows some independence from prevailing relations of power and knowledge, which Foucault has described in terms of a 'relationship of self-possession and self-sovereignty' (Foucault, 2001a, p. 144).

Parrhesiastic acts, as Weiskopf and Willmott state, are characterized by a personal sense of moral duty and they may be both personally transformative and politically subversive (Weiskopf & Willmott, 2013, p. 486), thereby challenging, and potentially destabilizing, established institutional and organizational structures. Weiskopf and Willmott's analysis demonstrates, utilizing Foucault, that power works not simply by limiting and

constraining subjects, but also ‘in more subtle ways by encouraging and inciting specific modes of being, specific ways of seeing and specific ways of doing’ (Weiskopf & Willmott, 2013, p. 474). The employee, as Munro (2014, p. 1127) put it, is thus (re)framed as an ‘active ethical subject who is responsible for their own self-creation’.

Building on Weiskopf and Willmott’s and other, later Foucault inspired works in organization studies (see for instance Barratt, 2008, and Randall & Munro, 2010, discussed above), Munro (2014) draws on Foucault’s work on ethics and ethical ascesis to develop a new approach to understanding organizational ethics and activism in social movement organizations (Munro, 2014, p. 1127). The article focuses on social movements as specific form of organizing and argues that these are fruitful sites to explore the creation of novel organizational subjectivities and ethical practices. Seeking to develop a synthesis between Foucauldian scholarship and social movement theory, Munro engages in particular with ‘Foucault’s practical and theoretical interest in the work of historical and contemporary social movement organizations’ (Munro, 2014, p. 1127). In so doing, he also seeks to ‘reveal possibilities for self-creation in organizations beyond exploitative neoliberal mechanisms of identity formation’ (Munro, 2014, p. 1128). Thereby, the study offers an important platform for questioning contemporary, neoliberal discourses of management.

The question of subjectivity is absolutely central to ethical and political dissent and counter-conduct, as for example defined in Foucault’s work on governmentality. As

Munro writes, ‘Foucault’s genealogical studies of ethics highlight the relationship between power and the self, where any project of resistance must take into account the process of self-formation’ (Munro, 2014, p. 1134). Askesis, in this context, is a key element in the emergence of resistance to the mechanisms of power. As Foucault (2007, pp. 207-208) writes, ‘...asceticism is rather a sort of tactical element, an element of reversal... utilized against these (governmental) structures of power. Asceticism is a sort of exasperated and reversed obedience that has become egoistic self-mastery. Let’s say that in asceticism there is a specific excess that denies access to an external power’ (cited in Munro, 2014, p. 1135).

Drawing on Foucault’s work on ethical askesis, Munro identifies four forms of ethical askesis in social movement organizations that offer ‘possibilities for micro-emancipation’ (Munro, 2014, p. 1136). These comprise, first, the idea of ‘bearing witness’ – activities aimed at making sure that the memory of injustice and oppression is not forgotten (see for example Amnesty International’s activities); second, participation in direct action and activism (see for instance Greenpeace’s activism); third, distinctive forms of care of the self, including the suppression of emotions and personal opinions in the pursuance of organizational objectives (see here for example the movement of Quakerism, but see also the Occupy movement); and, fourth, the uses of pleasure, for example practical exercises to intensify one’s experiences of tasting, as exhibited in the Slowfood movement.

Although Foucault himself never sought to offer a clear political agenda, his works nevertheless offer ‘important lessons for learning about social problems and the ways that these problems have developed historically’ (Munro, 2014, p. 1135). As Munro (2014, p. 1135) states: ‘His genealogical approach to history entails a strategic conception of historical knowledge as part of a critical ontology of the present in order to locate what he termed “points of reversibility” in tactical political struggles’. His position, as Foucault himself pointed out, does not lead ‘to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism’ (Foucault, 1997b, p. 256). Throughout his work, Foucault maintained a deep scepticism about any ontological claims concerning subjectivity, and this scepticism entailed a corresponding commitment to explore the multiple conditions of possibilities for the making of the modern subject (see also Mennicken & Miller, 2014). ‘The “other” over whom power is exercised remains resolutely a person who acts, who is faced with a whole field of possible actions and reactions’ (Mennicken & Miller, 2014, p. 15).

Conclusion

The Foucault effect is of course far from complete, both in organization studies and beyond. So it would be premature to pronounce too firmly on its accomplishments and its potential future trajectory. However, we can still seek to identify its contours and reflect on its contributions to date, as we have done above. In doing so, we need to be mindful of Foucault’s disinterest in organizations, but equally attentive to his lifelong

interest in the administering and organizing of lives, both individual and collective.

Irrespective of how digestible his work may be for some, we submit that overall it has been profoundly innovative, both empirically and theoretically. We have spoken here of the Foucault Effect in organization studies in terms of a series of waves, each of which is difficult to separate from the wave that precedes it, and the wave immediately following it, but which none the less has some distinctive contours and characteristics. We have used the term wave also as a way of focusing on the complex features that shape each wave, and that are produced by it, some of which are 'internal' to organization studies and some of which come from and distend beyond. We have identified four waves, which we suggest can be discerned in the writings of organization scholars who have drawn inspiration from the writings of Foucault: first, discipline and disciplinary power; second, discourse; third, governmentality; four, subjectivity and care of the self. Our aim has been to explore how organizational analysis has been transformed and extended through each wave.

The first wave, which focused on the notions of discipline and disciplinary power was important not only for highlighting Foucault's potential relevance for scholars of organizations. It was important also as a key moment in the emergence of critical management studies more generally. That said, it was at best a partial engagement with Foucault's work, both empirically and conceptually. Most notably, the Panopticon became an icon for a dystopian image of power understood as totalising. Foucault's distinction between a disciplined and a disciplinary society was often obliterated, which

tended to blunt empirical sensitivities to the varying ways in which discipline may act on our actions and our perceptions. Foucault's account of the mutually intensifying and productive relationship between power and freedom was overlooked, in favour of an image of discipline as subjugation, which led some to reinstate the very dualism between power and freedom that Foucault's notion of power sought to overcome. That said, it reinvigorated the analysis of organizations and management, and provided a springboard for much that was to come in the following two decades or so.

The category of discourse served to define the second wave of the Foucault effect in organization studies. This was part of a wider 'linguistic' turn in the field, which was also part of a much broader shift across the social sciences and the humanities in the second half of the twentieth century. Organization studies was an important part of an increased interest in language, which showed that organizations could be viewed as ensembles of texts in much the same way as could societies and a range of social institutions. As with the first wave of Foucauldian organization studies, this wave also engaged primarily with the early writings of Foucault, particularly his work on discourse and discursive practices. This linguistic or discursive turn in organization studies was not only a case of borrowing from other disciplines, it was itself part of the dynamics within organization studies itself, both a reaction to neo-Marxist and labour process analyses, and traditional sociology more generally. Inspired by Foucault's writings, discourses came to be conceived as intermediaries that condition our ways of viewing and acting upon phenomena. As with the previous wave, this discursive wave

met with fierce criticism from the outset, not least for what some saw as a reductionist approach to human agency, in which actions were viewed as more or less entirely programmed by discursive forces. Anomalous as this is, since Foucault's early work manifestly did not endow language with a transcendental or all-powerful role, not least given his insistence on pairing the analysis of discursive practices with non-discursive practices, this second wave none the less paved the way for analyses of the programmatic and technological nature of governing.

The third wave focused on the notion of governmentality, which is particularly important for organizational scholars as it offers a way of linking the macro- and the micro- through the concern to examine the ways in which the government of individuals is linked to the government of a collective of individuals viewed as a population. It was of further importance in highlighting the innovation in modes of governing provided by liberalism and neo-liberalism. For they both showed, in differing ways, that to govern successfully is to govern less. This meant discarding the ethical polarization of subject and object, and rejecting the assumption that the operation of power falsifies the essence of human subjectivity. These twin assumptions underpinned the entirety of Foucault's work, and have often been the most misunderstood and the most challenging for organizational scholars. Perhaps this is why almost two decades elapsed before many organizational scholars began to take up the notion of governmentality, and perhaps it also explains why the notion of governmentality was to a large extent read through the prism of discipline and disciplinary power. That said, it is one of the most promising

lines of enquiry for organizational scholars, as it encourages a focus on modes of organizing, without necessarily having recourse to the more familiar nostrums of organization studies, not least the category of organization itself. Even if relatively few studies have heeded such encouragement, it suggests that much may be learned by focusing on the ways in which the everyday doings of individuals may be understood as mediated by aspirations and actions at a collective level, whether that be the individual firm or entity, or much larger collectives such as meta-organisations, the nation, as well as transnational entities and alliances. In so far as the art of governing presupposes thought, the notion of governmentality reminds us of the importance of attending not only to the actions of individuals, but to the ways in which such actions are based on the parcel of thought that is present in even the most mundane parts of social reality.

The fourth and final wave concerns the notion of subjectivity and subjectification, a theme which runs throughout Foucault's writings but is brought into particularly sharp relief in his later writings on ethics, aesthetics, parrhesia and the care of the self. This wave emerged through a critical engagement with organizational scholarship on discipline, together with a wish to engage with aspects of Foucault's work that had been largely overlooked, namely the ways in which individuals seek to master and transform themselves, to give shape to their own lives. Foucault's deep scepticism about any ontological claims concerning subjectivity, and the corresponding commitment to investigate the multiple conditions of possibilities for the making of the modern subject, come together here in a concern with the ways in which individuals face a field of

possible actions. So, while it is important not to efface the distinctiveness of this fourth and final wave of the Foucault effect in organizational studies, it is equally important to be mindful of the continuity it exhibits with Foucault's lifelong concern to offer, through historical analysis, new and more effective political ways of knowing and seeing (Raffnsøe et al., 2016b, pp. 5-25). Consistent with Foucault's analyses of punishment and psychiatry, the aim is not to invalidate such forms of knowledge, but to prompt processes of reflection and action which dispel the familiarity of the accepted, which can lead to other ways of thinking and acting. Consistent also with the focus on modes of governing are the critical practices of questioning and problematizing moral orders that define parrhesia, and how these come into contact with the will not to be governed, or the will not to be governed thus.

In identifying these four waves, we are not suggesting that organizational scholars should select one or the other. Nor are we suggesting that they are mutually exclusive. Indeed, much of the above suggests that the four waves overlap with each other, and interrelate. A key point of this article is in fact to argue that we need to move beyond the tired dichotomies that hamper the analysis of our present, and in particular those aspects that can be called neoliberal. The dualisms of discipline and autonomy, compliance and resistance, subject and object serve only to recycle the very nostrums that Foucault's work takes us beyond. Likewise, we are averse to epochal periodizations, and the same mentality that seeks to partition Foucault's own writings into watertight compartments. As we have emphasized above, there are many important

continuities in Foucault's writings, not least his interest in subjectification and power (in terms of *pouvoir*, and power as 'power to', rather than 'power over', as Wrong (1988) has formulated it).

Organization scholars ought to draw more attention to the complex constellations within Foucault's work, the intricate relationship between power and freedom, and the potency of indirect action. Fruitful in this context would also be a closer engagement with Foucault's notion of 'dispositive' and its analytical potential, which until hitherto has been largely overlooked by organizational scholarship (Raffnsøe et al., 2016a). Yet, the notion of dispositive (*dispositif*) 'forms a crucial constituent of societal analysis in Foucault's oeuvre on par with the more familiar analytics of discourse, discipline, power/knowledge, subjectivity, and subjectification' (Raffnsøe et al., 2016a, p. 274). Seeking 'to lay bare the social formation and transformation of the conditions for human agency' (Raffnsøe et al., 2016a, p. 274), dispositional analytics points beyond received dichotomies between power and freedom, determinism and agency in organization studies as it draws attention to the complex conditions for organizing in the form of an ongoing dynamic and differential structuring of freedom. The focus is thus shifted away from a concern with constraints toward an analysis of dispositions, including possibilities of agency and change.

When one examines the waves described in this article fleetingly in retrospect, the influence of Foucault's work in organization studies appears as a series of performative

effects. The performativity of Foucault's work depends on its ability to set into motion significant waves of ensuing actions. This dependence on subsequent actions in turn implies that agency is dispersed, insofar as the effect of Foucault's work becomes dependent on the not necessarily foreseeable ways in which it is taken up.

On closer inspection of each of the consecutive, partly overlapping four waves, however, it becomes increasingly perspicuous that performativity itself is an inherent condition of possibility for organizing and the exercise of power more generally. This condition of possibility is made increasingly explicit within the third and the fourth waves, but also in the just mentioned analysis of dispositional, structural differential orderings.

Careful scrutiny of the principles of operation of governmentality, subjectification and dispositives brings to the fore not only *that* 'the perseverance or stubbornness (intransitivité) of freedom' and 'the insubmissiveness and unmanageability (rétivité) of the will' (Foucault, 1984, p. 315) is an essential condition for social organizing and the exercise of power, but also *how* this apparent obstacle has increasingly become an overtly targeted resource in social organizing. While the most recent waves indicate how agents' reciprocal endeavour to overcome potential or existing unfreedom and attain maturity constantly challenges the existing power relations and organizational forms, these waves equally lay bare how this challenge can provoke organizational order to reaffirm itself by unfolding itself in new ways (Raffnsøe, 2013a, p. 251).

On the one hand, social antagonism and performative agency implies the impotence of intentionality, will and direct action. They indicate that the initial act and its intention may, and is even quite likely, to fail. Whether they govern less or more, modes of governance and forms of organizing thus have a gerundive or unfinished aspect, implying that they are very likely to fail and prove unable to fulfil their initial promises (Miller & Rose, 1990). On the other hand, social antagonism and performative agency open up the possibility of a mediated potency, depending on complex responses and relationships. In this sense, modes of governing and forms of organizing are very likely to end up having decisive effects that exceed the prospects they had initially held out.

Accounting technologies and practices play in this context a key role in organizing contemporary economic and social life. The calculative instruments of accountancy actively shape what and who counts. When having this effect, they not only contribute to changing the actions and agency in the field. As calculative infrastructures alter modalities of government, they perform, affect and transform (Mennicken & Miller, 2012). They not only create docile and subjectified subjects. The effects of accounting technologies and practices are concomitantly affected and transformed as accountancy is responded to and used in creative ways that deserve to be subjected to further study. Put creatively to use in processes of active subjectification and affected by processes of self-management, accounting technologies thus can also be understood and analysed as transformative, dynamic, dispositional and differential structures that effect both less and more than what they seem to promise to do.

In prolongation of the third and fourth waves in the reception of Foucault's work in organization studies described here, promising future lines of inquiry could examine how performative agency acts in, and contributes to, an ongoing reorganization of organizational order. In this manner, organizational studies would be able to articulate how organizational ordering is also a fascinating and thought-provoking flight into the dusk.

To conclude, our analysis of the Foucault effect in organization studies has demonstrated the manifold and multifaceted engagements with Foucault's work that has occurred to date. Yet there still remains much more to be gained. Organization scholars ought to be more attentive to the multiple forms of subjectivizing and 'mediating', the linking of the day-to-day administering of lives to broader programmatic concerns and political rationalities, including ideas of neoliberalism (see also Miller & Power, 2013). More could also be done to unlock the relevance of Foucault's writings for the empirical study of processes of organizing, calculating and economizing, as well as the links between organizing and 'democratizing' (Kurunmäki, Mennicken, & Miller, 2016). For it is important to counter the often phobic response to the unrelenting march of numbers in organizations under neoliberal regimes of governing, and to develop a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted and deeply ambivalent relationship between quantification and modes of organizing. Finally, more could be done to scrutinize the conditionality of performativity both within firms and other organizations, between them, and beyond them in a wide range of relatively stabilized relations that lack the

firm entity status of many forms of organizing. Recently, much has been made of the notion of performativity in organization studies (Gond, Cabantous, Harding, & Learmonth, 2016). We argue that the time is ripe to critically engage with this ‘performative turn’ through the lens of a Foucault inspired dispositional analysis, not only to get a better understanding of the genealogy and use of the ‘performativity concept’ as such, but to also get to grips with the inner workings of performativity. As we have highlighted above, performative agency, including the performative agency of Foucault’s work itself, is one in which its agency is dispersed and co-produced, rather than something it remains in control of. It is these co-productions and their effects that deserve our attention, empirically and theoretically.

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¹ See also Mennicken and Miller (2014, pp. 20-25).

² For the full citation see Foucault 'La poussière et le nuage', originally published in 1978 in *Dits et écrits* 3, 1976-1979 (Foucault, 1994, pp. 15-16, our translation): 'When I speak of the diffusion of methods of discipline, this is not to maintain that "the French are obedient"! In the analysis of normalizing procedures, there is no "thesis of a massive normalization". As if these developments weren't precisely the measure of a perpetual failure... When I speak of a "disciplinary" society, what is implied is not a "disciplined society".'