Organization theories are academic products produced within the context of socially legitimized public institutions which are themselves effects of primary organizing processes. They are therefore, first and foremost socially ‘organized’ bodies of knowledge claims. (p. 25)

This is not a book about ‘organizations’. It is not a presentation of a new ‘theory of organizations’. Organization theories are academic products produced within the context of socially legitimized public institutions which are themselves effects of primary organizing processes. They are therefore, first and foremost socially ‘organized’ bodies of knowledge claims. (p. 25)

Instead of assuming the adequacy of our commonsense orientation to and construction of organizations as entities or objects of research, OADP sets out to question and ‘undo’ the established understanding of ‘organizations’ and organizing processes as concrete, observable phenomena which exist ‘out there’ in the world waiting to be discovered and explained by the organizational analyst. The book is a skilful, thoughtful elaboration of an alternative (‘postmodern’) style of thinking which is committed to ‘turn the given into a question and the familiar into the unfamiliar in order to challenge the modernist cognitive stance that takes things for granted’ (Chia, 1995: 597). It is essential reading for anyone who is curious about post-structuralist theory and is interested to consider how it might change the conduct and self-understanding of
organizational analysis. However, it is not itself a ‘postmodern’ book, if by this it is meant that it departs significantly from conventional forms of reasoning (e.g. linearity), textual strategies (e.g. self-privileging) or that it incorporates high levels of self-reflexivity (see Burrell, 1996). There is little attempt to exemplify ‘deconstructive’ or ‘postmodern’ analysis, as contrasted with the concern to present an account of it.

**Overview**

More than 20 years ago, Silverman (1970) and others initiated a reflexive turn in the field of organization studies (Willmott, 1995). They began to question the adequacy of orthodox or positivist theorizing of organizations, the adequacy of methods proposed by positivist sciences and the unreflexive adoption of commonsense notions of ‘organizations’, ‘individuals’, ‘structures’, ‘goals’ etc. as topics and resources of its analysis (Zimmerman and Pollner, 1971). Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) somewhat contentious positioning of Silverman’s early text in their ‘functionalist paradigm’, however, signalled the limited reflexivity of the action frame of reference. For this location points to residual tensions between a ‘subjectivist’ attentiveness to actors’ meanings and an ‘objectivist’ treatment of them as phenomena that exist ‘out there’ independently of analysts’ identification. Along with a growing number of others (Bob Cooper, Joanne Martin, Martin Kilduff, David Knights . . .) Chia has wrestled with these tensions by exploring the relevance of postmodern philosophy and post-structuralist theory for our understanding of ‘organization’ and the academic activity we call ‘organization studies’. This exploration heightens awareness of the theory-dependence of all observation. Potentially, it also discloses the interconnectedness of knowledge and power and the pervasive influence of language in structuring both our thought and our view of what we call ‘reality’. It serves to re-member ‘the fact that such theories are themselves complex, “organized” linguistic arrangements’ (p. 5). What we know about ‘organizations’ is a product of this organizing process which, to borrow a phrase from Garfinkel (1967), is ‘seen but unnoticed’ as it is taken-for-granted and therefore generally eludes analytical exploration. As Chia puts it, the ‘perverse logic of ordering’ our knowledge of organizations ‘is not considered an issue of central concern in mainstream organizational analysis or their more recent variants’ (p. 5).

Yet, it is this ‘perverse logic of ordering’ on which our truth claims rest. This ‘ordering’ is fundamental since it is productive of our understanding of social and natural worlds (e.g. the world of organization). ‘Structures’, ‘roles’, ‘procedures’ and so forth do not correspond to any discrete elements of reality ‘out there’ (as Magritte wrote on his picture of a pipe ‘Ceci n’est pas une pipe’), even though they frequently rely implicitly upon this assumption to lend weight or meaning to their use. If such a correspondence between concepts and ‘reality’ is assumed, then it is because we have forgotten the power-invested (and value-laden) ways in which concepts frame what we understand the world of ‘organization(s)’ to be.
Chia’s argument is that in mainstream or ‘modernist’ thinking and theorizing in the social sciences in general and in organization studies in particular, reflection on these organizing processes, which make knowledge and knowledge claims possible, is ‘skilfully avoided’ (p. 7). Organization analysts ‘write about organizations conveniently excluding a deliberate analysis of the very organizational contexts within which they themselves are constrained to operate’ (p. 7).\(^2\) \textit{OADP} aspires to provide deconstructive insight into organizing processes and thereby disclose the problematical and precarious status of knowledge claims about ‘organization’. Rather than to participate in the accumulation of seemingly authoritative bodies of knowledge about organizations ‘out there’, it is commended as ‘an intellectual journey without destination’ (p. 20).

The book is organized around Latour’s (1987) metaphors of ‘upstream thinking’ and ‘downstream thinking’. According to Chia these comprise two ‘fundamentally different’ styles of thought in contemporary thinking and theorizing in the social sciences. \textit{Downstream} (or ‘modernist’, ‘representationalist’) thinking starts from the unquestioned assumption of a reality existing ‘out there’ which social science sets out to discover or explain. This reality is assumed to exist independently of the observing subject, i.e. independently of thinking and theory. This style of thinking is allegedly preoccupied with refining reliable methods for gaining access to this reality and subsequently to represent it. As we noted earlier, the discoveries of downstream thinking and the associated truth claims are understood to rely upon a forgetting of the constituted nature of the object of study. \textit{Upstream} (‘postmodernist’, ‘deconstructive’) thinking, in contrast, understands the ‘objective facts’ that downstream analysts discover to be the product or outcome of social organizing processes, ‘rather than the result of an accurate matching words with things and events in the world’ (p. 13). From the perspective of upstream thinking, downstream analysis commits the ‘fallacy of misplaced concreteness’ (Whitehead, 1929). It takes social entities (like ‘individuals’, ‘organizations’) as given rather than as precarious accomplishments which have to be understood in their emergence.

By ‘meticulously chart[ing] out the strategic manoeuvres of ordering’ (p. 20), which make ‘organization’ and ‘knowledge about organization’ possible and plausible, \textit{OADP} aspires to reveal the ‘essential groundlessness’ (p. 19) of modernist truth claims. It represents ‘a procedure of analysis that elaborates or un-forgets an “initial forgetting” brought about by modernist/representationalist imperatives’ (p. 8). But what, the reader of \textit{OADP} might ask, is the status of the ‘postmodernist’ analysis that discloses the forgetting of ‘modernist’ truth-claims? Are ‘postmodernist’ truth-claims about the ‘initial forgetting’ also essentially groundless? We will return to these questions in our discussion of the position taken in \textit{OADP}. First, though, we offer a necessarily selective representation of its central arguments.
Chia’s deconstructive movement to upstream thinking proceeds in three major steps in which the reader is introduced to (i) the discussion of contemporary philosophical debates on the nature of knowledge and the postmodern critique of the ‘ideology of representation’; (ii) the postmodern critique of the ontological primacy of being over becoming; and finally (iii) the Derridian critique of Logocentrism which invites us to consider the significance of writing as a fundamental organizing practice. In following Chia’s upstream movement, we are familiarized with an impressively wide and deep theorizing that invites a progressive vaporization of both the common-sense assumption of organization as a concrete, observable entity and associated concerns of orthodox and critical theorizing in the field of organization studies.

Part One of the book is dedicated to a critique of ‘downstream’ (or mainstream) thinking in social science and organization studies. Here Chia explores the epistemological and ontological commitments of downstream, ‘modernist’ thinking. It is argued that these commitments lead the organization analyst to think of him or herself either as a neutral observer of the world ‘out there’ or as revealer of hidden truths which might only be seen from the privileged vantage point of science. At the heart of downstream thinking is representationalism: ‘the system of thinking that takes self-evident language as a system of signification referring to the world beyond it’ (p. 43). Organizations are assumed to be concrete, material, isolatable entities, which exist independently of our perception of them. Chia calls the associated ontological stance ‘being-realism’:

Being-realism is a fundamental ontological posture which asserts that reality pre-exists independently of observation and as discrete, permanent and identifiable ‘things’, ‘entities’, ‘events’, ‘generative mechanisms’, etc. (p. 26)

A more or less implicit commitment to a being-realist ontology, Chia argues, informs not only orthodox, positivist theorists but also much of what counts as critical or reflexive work in the social and organization sciences. In turn, this legitimizes common-sense knowledge and a hierarchical conception of knowledge that privileges ‘scientific’ knowledge over other forms of knowledge:

It is the continued commitment to a being-realist ontology and consequently to the epistemological problematic of representationalism in research and inquiry which undergrids the apparent differences in intellectual priorities and hence research foci in contemporary organizational studies. ... This version of realism underwrites the still dominant academic predisposition which takes as unproblematic such commonsensical notions as ‘the organization’, its ‘goals’, ‘culture’, ‘environment’, ‘strategies’, ‘life-cycles’, etc., as theoretically legitimate objects of analyses. But it also underwrites the preoccupations of organizational ‘metatheorists’ who impute an objective existence to their self-generated typologies and paradigmatic schemas and then subsequently
Chia here echoes earlier critiques of positivist theorizing in the field of organization studies, such as approaches informed by social constructionism which have challenged the reifying tendency of orthodox organization theory. For Chia, these were first ‘attempts to move upstream’ (p. 17). They offered correctives, or supplements to, orthodox analysis, such as contingency theory (e.g. Child, 1972); but they did not recognize themselves as the outcomes of primary organizing processes. As a consequence, they ‘remain trapped in a realist vision of scientific practice in which representationalism continues to drive the research process’ (p. 65). Nothing less than a radical rethinking of organizational analysis within a ‘postmodern style of thought’ would be required to ‘open the way out of this theoretical quagmire’ (p. 65). Only then, it is claimed, could we hope to escape the theoretical dilemma of both relying on unacknowledged assumptions incorporated in these ‘bodies of knowledge claims’ and of providing an analysis which is more than a recycling of commonsense assumptions about the nature of organizations.

In Part Two of the book Chia gives an outline of the ‘postmodern style of thought’ as informed in particular by writers such as Derrida, Foucault, Latour (but also ‘proto-postmodernists’ like Whitehead who challenged the Cartesian/Newtonian worldview as early as 1926). He explores implications of this style of thought for the concept of organization, and the academic activity that we call organizational analysis. Following from the thrust of Part One, it is argued that an appreciation of a postmodern style of thought requires a fundamental rethinking of the ontological status of organization, as contrasted with the established, epistemological project of grounding knowledge claims or ‘theory building’. Within this style of thought, ‘reality’ is a conceptual category, rather than a concrete material entity to be discovered and represented. What is ‘real’ in a postmodern style of thinking, we are told, is not entities but the ‘emergent relational interactions and patterning that are recursively intimated in the fluxing and transforming of our life-worlds’ (p. 177). Postmodern theorizing and thinking of organization is founded on an ‘ontology of becoming’ rather than being. For the postmodernist, there is a primacy of movement; interactions and processes are ‘the basic stuff of social life’ (p. 58), and

Debates in organization studies which do not address this fundamental ontological distinction between modernism and postmodernism miss out on the potential contributions of a postmodern approach to organizational analysis. (p. 118)

The postmodern insight is centred upon an appreciation of the irresolvable gap between lived experience and the ability to express it in available codes and categories. This leads to a fundamental rethinking of the status and significance of the practice of ‘representation’. Within the post-
modern style of thought, representation is not identified and evaluated as more or less successful or accurate attempt to ‘mirror’ or ‘copy’ an ‘external reality’. Instead, it is understood as an attempt to re-present and inscribe the absent, the fluid, and the processual into the order of thought. Representation articulates a desire to ‘fix’, ‘control’, to ‘act from a distance’ (Latour, 1987), to ‘unfold the manifold into a flat plane’ (p. 146) in order to make it calculable, sayable, manipulable and thereby amenable to human intervention. Representations are, in this sense, always self-referential: they refer back to the attempt of the representer to impose order on a changing and unrepresentable ‘real’. The knowledge generated by this effort reflects our ‘will to order’ (p. 152) rather than some pre-existing state of reality. For Chia, it follows that organization analysis—in the postmodern style of thought—no longer can be thought of as an attempt to

... accurately describe and represent an external organizational phenomenon. Instead, it is recognized as an intrinsically constitutive process involving the continual weaving and reweaving of ideas, relationships and material elements in order to generate plausible and coherent accounts which strengthen particular conceptual links. Such accounts are deemed to be accomplishments in their own right and they do not refer to a supposed reality beyond. Organization as such is an accomplishment as are theories or organization. (p. 93, our emphasis)

If the thrust of a postmodern style of thought in organizational analysis is accepted, it has fundamental implications for more established agendas in organization studies. The study of representational practices (like writing, listing, ordering) becomes of central interest as these (micro) practices are understood to contribute and ‘make up’ what we take to be ‘reality’. As Chia puts it later, the view of organizations as precarious ‘accomplishments’ rather as concrete entities

... implies radical consequences for the study of organization. Instead of the traditional emphases on the analysis of organizational structures, cultures, gender, ethics, etc., in organizations, the postmodern emphasizes the myriad of heterogeneous yet interlocking organisational micro-practices which collectively generate relatively stabilized effects such as individuals, organizations and society. (pp. 117–18)

In a ‘postmodern cosmology’ Chia argues, organization studies take a ‘vastly different complexion’. The task for the postmodern analyst is to conduct an ‘ascending’ analysis which directs attention to the myriad of linguistic and social micropractices that collectively create ‘organization’ as an effect. “Organization’, like individuals—within a postmodern style of thought—is understood as an effect of efforts to organize, i.e. efforts to create order ‘out of disorder’.

In Part Three Chia invites the reader to consider deconstruction as ‘being central to the study of organization’ (p. 20, our emphasis), with the implication that it may or should replace rather than inform or comple-
ment more traditional forms of analysis and theorizing in organization studies. The concern with language as constitutive rather than representative of reality leads to the conclusion that it is ‘specifically the practice of writing which constitutes the postmodern problematic’ (p. 192), and that consequently we ‘begin to realise that our attention must be redirected towards examining the manner in which language and writing organizes our thought’ (p. 176). Following Derrida, it is the grammatical logic of language and writing, which ‘provides us with a fundamental appreciation of the intrinsic taxonomic urge to order and organize our lifeworlds and to render them more controllable and manipulable’. To repeat, deconstruction is not commended as a new method that competes directly with, or aspires to complement, established approaches within the arsenal of research methodologies. Deconstruction is not a theory, nor is it a methodology in the traditional sense. Consequently deconstruction does not itself lead to new ‘knowledge’—critical or otherwise. Instead, deconstruction offers

... an alternative way of understanding organizational analysis as a form of deconstructive practice intended to resist the seductions of using readily available concepts and categories that provide the intellectual bases for traditional knowledge formation. The value of deconstruction lies, not in what is claimed, but, in what is denied. (p. 192, our emphasis)

This way of understanding is illustrated in the example of ‘Decision-Making’ in which ‘decision’ is not some event ‘out there’, which can be observed, described and analysed by the researcher. Nor is it simply about interactions, choices, etc. Instead, in Chia’s deconstructive reading ‘decision’ is better understood as ‘... an ontological gesture, a bringing forth of a reality to the exclusion of other possible realities. It is the arbitrary and “violent” separating of that which is deemed to be significant from that which therefore is perceived as “given” and hence insignificant’ (p. 207). It is an example of the recurrent activity of ‘unfold[ing] the manifold onto a flat plane’ (p. 146) in an effort to make it accessible to human intervention. Deconstructive reading reminds us that the very concept of decision implies the closure or ‘cutting off’ of other considerations and possibilities; it is expressive of a logocentric view in which what is present and given is privileged against what is absent—by what is different and deferred.

Discussion

Chia’s upstream movement is challenging; it is an impressive demonstration of the richness and depth of the ‘postmodern’ argument which articulates and promotes an increased awareness of the limitations of orthodox forms of analysis—forms of analysis distinguished by a disinclination to recognize and address their conditions of possibility in the ‘linguistic and social networking micro practices’ (p. viii) that provide them with the sense of a stable object to analyse. In this discussion of
Chia’s book, we begin by focusing attention upon his own practices which render his objects of analysis stable.

By way of a ‘strategic maneuver of ordering’ (p. 20), Chia sets his discussion in terms of two completely different styles of thought. His either/or dichotomy of orthodoxy/deconstruction or modern/postmodern styles of thinking suggests that escaping the problematic of dualistic thinking and theorizing and the associated ‘ideology of representation’ requires a full substitution of ‘postmodern’ for ‘modern’ analysis. Both the possibility and the desirability of this might be worth discussion. The impossibility of a complete substitution of ‘modern’ for ‘postmodern’ thinking is repeatedly (and unavoidably) demonstrated in OADP. It occurs as ‘reflexive’/‘postmodern’ analysis makes representationalist-type truth-claims about the nature of it’s Other without disclosing the organizing processes which are productive of the ascription of truth to such claims. For example, Chia contends that postmodern analysis can ‘avoid the limitations of its Other’ as it ‘reveals its deficiencies’ and ‘meticulously charts the strategic maneuvers of ordering and organizing’ (p. 20, our emphasis). The obvious problem attaching to such claims is that they imply the occupation of a transcendental position—a God’s Eye View of the World—which ‘meticulously charts’ its terrain—a position which is persuasively challenged by Chia when he deconstructs the claims of ‘orthodox’/‘modern’ analysis.

We can further illustrate this point by considering the claim that the problem(atic) of representationalism can be avoided only when we no longer understand the assertions of modern or postmodern analysis as ‘laying claim to capturing some essential feature beyond the activity itself’ (p. 38). In our view, there is a fundamental problem with this advice. In order to take notice of it, it is necessary initially to suspend consideration of how the sense which it communicates (e.g. how to read particular claims) is a product of, or is parasitic upon, the practice of representation. For, in order to engage in ‘postmodern’/‘reflexive’ analysis it is, paradoxically, first necessary to defer its operation. Otherwise there is nothing to deconstruct, and nothing upon which to reflect. If this argument is accepted, then Chia’s conceptualization of ‘the ideology of representationalism’ requires revision. As it stands, it is based upon the claim that representationalism is escapable, and that practices of representation are ideological when they are forgetful of this escapability.

Chia seems to commend the exclusion of any form of conventional analysis—critical or otherwise—from consideration, since it falls foul of representationalism and leads the ‘would-be critic’ (p. 4) to forget his or her own assumptions and to impose his/her own prejudices to the field of study. We accept that one of the most penetrating and valuable insights of postmodernism has been its capacity to remind us of the ‘violence that is done to [an] emergent and ephemeral reality when we attempt to impose static organizing codes onto it’ and indeed that this is ‘amazingly easily forgotten’ (Chia, 1995: 590). Yet such forgetfulness is a necessary con-
dition of the possibility of representation, including the representations produced by deconstructionism. Any denial of this condition involves a form of idealism as it overlooks how communication relies upon taken-for-granted meanings of a materially and culturally embedded life-world. When recognizing this forgetfulness, the challenge, for us, is not simply to exclude or ‘put aside’ traditional concerns but, rather, to acknowledge that deconstructive/postmodern analysis cannot escape from the criticisms which it levels at the ‘orthodox’/‘modernist’ analyst.

There is a further problem or limitation with deconstructive analysis. When the ideological quality of representationalism is cast in terms of a generalized forgetfulness that tarnishes every kind of representational truth-claim, effectively all forms of representation are equalized. Deconstructive practice is potentially subversive as it discloses the precariousness of all seemingly authoritative positions. But it is also in principle subversive of its own truth-claims and is thereby rendered impotent to differentiate between them. Any topic or object of deconstructive analysis, which embodies particular truth-claims, is as good as any other so long as it enables the analyst to demonstrate the (subversive) power of deconstructive analysis. To deploy the up/downstream metaphor, postmodern analysis excludes consideration of the particular historical and cultural terrain through which the stream has charted its course. Deconstructive analysis lacks the capacity to articulate these conditions of possibility—the conditions which facilitate its development and support its influence. Saying this, the value of postmodern analysis for re-membering the indivisibility of subject/word and object/world is not being denied. But, in addition, we believe that it is important politically and ethically to retain analysis which strives to address, as reflexively as possible, how particular representations come to be privileged and solidified.

In contrast to Chia, we assume the necessity of positioning ourselves (or, better, we are inescapably positioned by the conventions of analysis) as observers/subjects/representors in relation to the observed/object/reality of the texts which we interpret and criticize. If this view is accepted, then the attempt to replace ‘modern mainstream analysis’ with ‘postmodern reflexive analysis’ is futile. It is necessary to acknowledge their continuities as well as their differing—positive and deconstructive—emphases.

Instead of abandoning the concerns of modernist analysis, we suggest that it is appropriate, or at least not incoherent, to explore ways of developing the established concerns of organization theory to analyze the entities which commonsensically appear to be ‘out there’ but in a way that is continuously informed by reflexive insights into the ‘primary social organizing processes’ which are productive of its object(s) of analysis.

Deconstructive analysis usefully reminds us of the violence that is incorporated in the very concept of ‘organization’ which passes unnoticed in mainstream literature and accounts of organization. It also gives us a subversive/productive way of thinking, and reminds us that the pro-
ductivity of human life is not due to the abstractedness of (formal) organization but to the social and informal itself. In this positive light, deconstruction is rightly viewed as ‘an attempt to resist symbolic closure and to thereby emancipate the human imagination’; we agree that it is ‘unhelpful to mistake this as a form of intellectual mischief-making’ (p. 210). Derrida’s idea of ‘alterity’ is not a nihilistic reduction of meaning to non-meaning, which would condemn us to non-sense but the ‘radical emancipation of meaning into a play of otherness’ (Kearney, 1984: 125). However, in addition to the deconstruction of texts, we believe that the analysis of historical and cultural conditions which impede the realization of the productive potentials implied in deconstruction is possible and desirable. By this we mean the identification of contingent institutions and forms of organization which encourage ‘symbolic closure’ by binding us to fixed ‘identities’ (Foucault, 1983: 212). To replace this focus of analysis with deconstructive readings of academic texts would in our view ‘cut off’ much of the radical potential of organizational analysis. Indeed it runs precisely the risk of what Chia bemoans when criticizing other approaches—namely, ‘prostituting its critical force in the name of theoretical consistency’ (p. 93). This is not to diminish deconstructive analysis. On the contrary, our primary concern in this review has been to appreciate deconstructive analysis and the insights provided by it so as to encourage a deconstruction of texts and a reflexification of more conventional forms of organizational analysis.

In this context, it is relevant to point to the close similarities between Chia’s work and earlier works in the field of organization studies. In particular, we are reminded of Silverman and Jones’s (1976) *Organizational Work: The Language of Grading and the Grading of Language*. With Chia, they share an interest in the question of how ‘commonsense’ and notions of ‘reality’ are constituted. They also share an interest in the question of how the forgetting of the process of constitution is organized. In the case of selection and promotion procedures and the related production of ‘authoritative accounts’ of ‘career potential’, Silverman and Jones show how ‘facts’ are socially fabricated or—in Chia’s terms ‘are the outcome of linguistic and social micropractices’. At the same time, they acknowledge the inescapability of language and their own work of constructing or fabricating accounts. ‘So we can say anything with language. Indeed, we cannot say nothing without it’ (p. 179). In both giving an account of organizational practices ‘out there’ and self-reflexively problematizing their own writing, Silverman and Jones acknowledge our collective immersion in the ‘theoretical quagmire’ that Chia has identified. For they comment directly on how ‘writing is an act of production which produces self as (well as) text’ (p. 178). As they disclose both their concerns with self and their own strategies of writing, they show their commitments and problematize the organization of science and writing within what they call, following Marx, the commodity form of existence. They recognize de-authored writing as an expression of ‘alienated
labour’, and thereby point to the socio-historical conditions that lend authority to a spurious (logocentric) universalism which, like Marxism, post-structuralist analysis seeks to disrupt.

Critical theorists influenced primarily by Marx reach a similar conclusion via Marx’s concept of (real) abstraction. Türk (1995, 1997), for example, traces the violence incorporated into ‘organization’ to the capitalist mode of production. In contrast to Derridian Deconstructionism the historical context is narrower. Marxist analysis focuses on the contingent and hence transformable forms of violence whereas Derrida’s connection of the practices of writing with a theory of violence sensitizes us to more universal forms of violence incorporated in the very concepts of language and writing. ‘Writing is unthinkable without repression’ (Derrida, 1978, quoted in Cooper, 1989: 493). Insofar as formal organization ‘finds its true nature in the formalization of the written word’ (p. 493), formal organization is repression and hence violence.

We have argued that critical analysis of organization might usefully be informed by insights into the significance of writing as organizing practice and an analysis of the historically specific forms of organization. With regard to the latter, Türk (1997) combines institutionalist theorizing of organization with a critique of political economy. In this theorizing ‘the form of organization itself is understood as a central institution of the capitalist formation of society’ (p. 160). This historically specific formation is characterized by ‘contradictory institutional structure’ (p. 165) resulting in an ‘institutional double bind’ (pp. 161–7) in which the progressive ‘formal inclusion’ is combined with a simultaneous process of ‘material exclusion’ or marginalization in the extreme case. Türk usefully distinguishes dimensions in which inclusion/exclusion is achieved by the form of organization: political, economic, ideological and psychic inclusion/exclusion. It is the analysis of the historical specific practices of inclusion/exclusion to which attention is directed. In conducting this kind of analysis we may stay ‘friends of truth’ in the Derridian (1997) sense. We may engage in critical analysis, attempt to reveal ‘the truth’ about these practices, without ever claiming ‘to be in the truth’. This is the paradoxical message that allows us to see deconstructionism as reflexion of critical analysis rather than as its dismissal.

By commending a ‘both/and’ rather than an ‘either/or’ approach, we applaud the disruptive capacity of deconstructionism to problematize and subvert claims made in the name of rationalism and/or emancipation. But our preference is for a critical ontology (of ourselves, organization, etc.) which appreciates processual and becoming style of thinking as an inspiration for addressing the question: ‘In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of a necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression’ (Foucault in Dumm, 1996: 143).
Notes

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1 It was these tensions which animated Silverman’s own intellectual journey from action theory to ethnomethodology and discourse analysis (Silverman, 1994; Willmott, 1994). In this, Silverman’s The Theory of Organizations is hardly unique. Initially, an ‘action frame of reference’ was commended as a means of recalling how organizational realities are the product of the actions and negotiations of organizational members, and not the ‘needs’ or ‘goals’ of ‘organizations’. Many analysts who refer to their work as ‘interpretive’ and are concerned with meanings or with culture as ‘root metaphor’ (Smircich, 1983) are comparatively unreflexive about the construction of their own accounts of organizational practices. Such work invites the reader to suspend the belief in the assumption that it gets access to some form of reality, and that getting access to this reality and representing it is what science in general and organization studies in particular is all about.

2 It is the recognition of this contextual reality-constituting process which Chia sees as the central concern of a self-reflexive problematization of ‘organization’.

3 This insight is recurrently rediscovered—most recently by management gurus and academics who are celebrating ‘process’, ‘emotion’ and even ‘chaos’ in preference to ‘structure’, ‘rationality’ and ‘order’. The affinities between the analysis presented by Chia and the current fashion guru thinking is evident in the following: ‘[Our perspective] sees organizations as paradoxically unstable and multiple, founded instead on the uncertainty and specificity of individual situations and people. Its underlying philosophy is pragmatic and particularistic, focused upon “processes of becoming rather than states of being”’ (Nohria and Berkley, 1994: 73). It is exactly the overlooked supplement or ‘the other’ of formal organization which is discovered (and named as ‘culture’, ‘emotion’, ‘informal’, etc.) which managerialist authors attempt to domesticate and incorporate into organization in order to transform it into a manageable and exploitable resource.

References


