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Informing the Ontologies of Organizational Histories: The Critical Conceptualization of Events and Actualization in Organizing¹

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Abstract: Critical Organizational History (COH), as an emergent stream within organizational approaches to history directed by major philosophical works, lacks a reflexive discussion about its ontological possibilities. This article fills this gap through a comparative analysis of Foucault’s and Deleuze’s late philosophies of history and their intellectual ventures. It offers a reflexive analysis about the ontological possibilities for COH by translating Foucault’s and Deleuze’s views of actualization and events in ways that inform COH. First, the “new metaphysics of history” developed by Foucault stresses the importance of the continuous reopening of the present through events, which then defines specific attitudes, subjectivation, and care as ethics as the focus of historical work. Both will and courage agonistically produce emancipation from within historical events and historical work. Second, a “post-historical metaphysics,” as elaborated by Deleuze, reflects a more asubjective stance, in which the post-historical move remains metaphysical. Images, aberrant movements, machines and agencements mediate the fluid becoming of experience, which is primary locus of history and critique as the simple open maintenance of fluidity. Both routes emphasize the role of critique as actualization and eventalization, thus continuously opening and bordering the present. To show the concrete meaning of this philosophical discussion, an example of worker surveillance is developed; it illustrates Foucault’s and Deleuze’s views on actualization, eventalization, and their approach of history. By doing so, this article uncovers an interesting confluence of these approaches to historical work for organization scholars, namely, through the combination of events with non-events stressing the importance of absences and silences in critical descriptions.

Keywords: History; Metaphysics of history; Post-historical metaphysics; Critical organizational history; Organization studies; Foucault; Deleuze; Time; Actualization; Eventalization; Events.

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Introduction: Explicating Philosophies and Ontologies at Stake for Critical Organizational History

Following the “historic turn” in management and organization studies (Clark and Rowlinson 2004; Mills et al. 2016; Suddaby 2016), organization scholars, and critical scholars in particular, increasingly embrace historical perspectives (Durepos et al. 2021). This endeavor reflects the acknowledged need for comparisons of various presents, as well as conversational studies of the far past, present, and remote future (Hernes and Schütz 2020; Maclean et al. 2021; Rowlinson et al. 2014). Such pursuits seek to move beyond a dominant, shared, practical, realist view of history, which tends to equate history with the past and fails to explore what is truly distinctive about history.

Exploring the past can easily become illusory or even dangerous, without clear-cut philosophical stances (Coraiola et al. 2021) and temporal reflexivity (Feuls et al. 2023). Without philosophy, the past might become a mere technical description, whose present and presence could be forgotten (Decker 2016; Zald 1990). The status, scope, and relationships between events and their processes of becoming might get taken for granted, such that the contemporary present might be projected, incorrectly and without challenge, onto the future or the past. The thickness of temporality; distances and tensions among past, present, and future events; and the depth of events, along with their productive differences, all might be ignored in historical work (Wambacq 2011). Perhaps most problematic of all, efforts to elaborate jointly a processual and critical perspective would vanish. Power struggles, emancipations, and the force and directionalities of events would become dead materials or voiceless archives.

Critical Organizational History (COH) instead calls for the development of hermeneutic perspectives that are more likely to foster reflexive and critical thinking about organizational history (Taylor 2015), new research practices (Durepos et al. 2021), and a different approach to memory work that stresses power, silences, and obscured violences and dominations (Barros, Carniero, and Wanderley 2018). However, the wide variety of effective or possible ontological stances likely to inform this critique have not been the subject of reflexive exploration. This emergent research stream rarely explicates the potential variety of philosophies and ontologies that can sustain a critical process, the actuality of the critique itself from and with historical processes, or the relevance of the historian’s critique in the present. Ultimately, critique often seems to be about emphasizing what the past has brought to the domination or oppression of the present or how it has hosted dominations. But as a result, the very eventfulness of historical processes gets neglected (Dosse 2010; Nora 1974). COH definitely needs a reflexive discussion about its ontological possibilities.

With this article, we consider the following research question: How can we build a reflexive discussion of an ontological grounding for COH? History scholars have long discussed the link between historiography and philosophy (Collingwood 1946, 2020; Dosse 2007). Shared influences also spread between philosophy and other human sciences, including historiography (Revel 2015). Yet this interplay is often neglected by organization scholars, even those interested in historical perspectives, leading to various strange, descriptive, analytical, and linear views of historical processes that fail to conceptualize key historical events and processes (Decker 2022). To fill this gap and address our research question, we propose in this essay a novel way to understand the actualization and eventualization at stake in

historical processes and the possibility of their critique, by contrasting the philosophical approaches of two thinkers - Foucault and Deleuze - in ways that highlight their potential for COH (as proposed in a synthetic table below- Table 1). We detail here our explicit, reflexive exploration of the organization and its necessary conversation with philosophies of history by drawing on this contrasting philosophical approach of Foucault and Deleuze's views of actuality and events to feed debates for COH (Durepos, Shaffner, and Taylor 2021) and, maybe more generally, "temporal reflexivity" when remote pasts and futures are at stake (Feuls et al. 2023). In doing so, we aim at "provoking"—in the sense of challenging ways of thinking and raising new questions—by reframing existing historical, processual, critical perspectives (Sandberg and Alvesson 2021). We specify convergences and divergences of these two critical philosophies of history, seen as two ways of conducting historical research, and translate their key insights for COH. The first perspective, based on Foucault's vision of historical processes and partly continuing the thought of Merleau-Ponty, emphasizes a "new metaphysics of history." The second perspective, on actuality and events, pertains to a "post-historical metaphysics," as elaborated by Deleuze, in the vein of Nietzsche, Bergson, or Whitehead. Through these two approaches, we stress distinct political implications for society and therefore focus our discussion and modalities on fertile points of friction between them. To illustrate the meaning and implications of this philosophical elaboration, a concrete example is provided.

Our contributions are two-fold. First, we contribute to the debate by addressing the need for an ontology for historical work, with a focus on actuality and events, in the context of organizational history in general and COH in particular. Second, our discussion resonates with current calls for more processual approaches to history that acknowledge the modes of eventalization at stake in the variety of presents encountered throughout historical processes (Decker 2022; Dosse 2007, 2010). Furthermore, as we translate Foucault and Deleuze's views of actuality and events for a COH audience, we provide guidance for researchers interested in philosophical historiographical and temporal reflexivity (Decker, Rowlinson, and Hassard 2021; Feuls et al. 2023) to engage with ontological discussions. We draw methodological implications about ontological units and ways of describing and enacting experience from archives.

Accordingly, this article is organized as follows: After analyzing why a reflexive discussion of an ontological grounding for COH is necessary, we present Foucault's and Deleuze's respective approaches. We systematically compare each perspective and illustrate their specificities, using an example of organizational control and surveillance. We thereby stress an interesting confluence—namely, the importance of both events and non-events in critical historical work and translate such insights for COH.

Why Is a Reflexive Discussion of an Ontological Grounding for Critical Organizational History Necessary?

In this section, after describing the shortcomings of the dominant realist and positivist perspectives that have long characterized history and historicity within management and organizational research, we explain the need for developing a radical philosophical approach to COH and highlight in particular the importance of building a reflexive discussion about its ontological possibilities.

History and Historicity Within Management and Organizational Research

Even as the “historic turn” has enabled “a different approach to history” in organization studies (Clark and Rowlinson 2004, p. 331), important gaps remain, including the lack of debate, philosophical depth, temporal reflexivity and problematization of history (Coraiola, Foster, and Suddaby 2015). Furthermore, even if history can be approached in different ways, by different researchers and with different methods (see Argyres et al. 2020; Coraiola et al. 2015; Decker et al. 2021; Munslow 2006), a dominant, shared, practical, realist, Cartesian view of history still tends to characterize the way organizational scholars approach business history and organization theory (Rowlinson and Delahaye 2009; Weatherbee et al. 2012). An implicit mainstream consensus in organizational research on history (as represented in leading journals like *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal* or *Academy of Management Review*) relies on taken-for-granted practical, realist assumptions about the nature of historical reality and the past, seen as unproblematic dimensions of human inquiry (Coraiola, Foster, and Suddaby 2015). For example, among alternative research strategies for organizational history (Rowlinson et al. 2014), “analytically structured history,” a form of narrative construction derived from organizational archives, has quickly become a standard way to historicize management, organization, and strategy (Argyres et al. 2020), reflecting an underlying aspiration for theoretical neutrality in the prevailing academic discipline of history (Scott 2005, 2007). The historicization of management and organizational studies thus has been performed mainly through a mainstream perspective that adopts a “naïve-realist view of history,” based on representationalism, i.e. “assumptions of a direct correspondence between historical narratives and the past” (Coraiola et al. 2021, p. 2), historical knowledge and historical truth (Coraiola et al. 2015).

Such a view is problematic. When research equates history with the past, it fails to explore what is truly distinctive about history, the past, and events (Coraiola et al. 2021). *The interruptions, rhythms, eventfulness, ambiguities, turning points and forces of historical processes vanish*. The result is a merely descriptive, analytical, static, and linear view of historical processes, without in-depth analyses, problematization, or critical insights on history and events. In turn, dominant functionalist and interpretivist views characterize the field. Management and organization scholars exhibit limited engagement with different, alternative, processual and critical approaches to history (Durepos et al. 2021). The historical turn has opened up space for more directly critical engagement with history (Mills et al. 2016), but critical approaches to history and the past have had only peripheral, underrepresented roles. Durepos et al. (2021, p. 464) note their regret that “little progress” has been made in terms of the “the original definition of the historic turn, as a *rejection of scientism, acceptance of more heterogeneous forms of history, and reflexive accounts of the social construction of historicized narratives*” (emphasis added). COH, as portrayed by Durepos et al. (2021), remains underdeveloped. Such neglect transpires in the relative absence of critical and philosophical perspectives on history, memory, and the past—whether in the form of post-colonial (Decker 2013), decolonial (Wanderley and Barros 2018), or ANTi-historical (Durepos and Mills 2012) studies—in publications in mainstream journals.

In view of these limitations, some scholars question the impacts of the philosophical tenets of history on management and organization research (Coraiola, Foster, and Suddaby 2015). They

call for moving the field forward by introducing richer, more diverse scholarly ideas (Coraiola et al. 2021) and encourage approaches to historical analysis that can inform critiques (Durepos et al. 2021). Critical management scholars also suggest novel modes of studying and experimenting with and from the past (e.g., by “reconfiguring the historic turn,” Wanderley and Barros 2018), while acknowledging the legitimacy of heterogenous forms of writing history (Durepos et al. 2021). Closely, process scholars call for more “temporal reflexivity” in the exploration of remote events in the past and the future (Feuls et al. 2023; Langley et al. 2013). Both thus recognize the importance of organizational history as “a vital tool for critique in organization analysis” (Durepos et al. 2021, p. 450).

Critical Organizational History: Toward a Radical Philosophical Approach

Contrary to the dominant positivist, entitativist approach, COH considers the impossibility of knowing the past as it actually happened. It focuses instead on the past and history as socially and discursively constructed, not found, with the assumption that there is no “realist past” that exists concretely outside our mental appreciation of it, to which history corresponds exactly (Durepos et al.2021).

We anchor our reflection in this perspective, with the goal of advancing the COH line of inquiry with also some concern for processuality. We wish to offer in this article a reflexive discussion about the ontological possibilities for COH. In particular, to overcome static, descriptive, analytical, and linear views of historical processes, as are evident in mainstream perspectives that fail to conceptualize actuality or ordinary events, we undertake further theorizing about the very notion of “events” and the eventfulness at stake in historical processes. Improving understanding of actuality, events and their becoming is particularly important, as a means to engage with nonlinear views of time (Dosse 2007, 2010; Lamb and Liesch 2002; Nora 1974) and analyze the contingent interactions of events and processes (Decker 2022; Welch and Paavilainen-Mäntymäki 2014). Following Decker’s (2022) critical call to clarify the status of events in business studies by shedding light on the “eventful temporality” of historical research, we seek more precisely to conceptualize historical actualizations and events from two contrasting philosophical perspectives.

As COH matures into a novel genre that challenges unreflexive and ahistorical scientism, organizational scholars must be more explicit about the philosophical assumptions informing their work (Durepos et al. 2021; Lamond 2008; Taylor et al. 2009; Taylor 2015). As highlighted by Durepos et al. (2021, p.451), “Not only is using a theoretical lens to transform the past into history inevitable.... It is one step on the road to using history as critique. As Lamond (2008) notes, *understanding the philosophical assumptions that underpin histories is important and necessary*” (*emphasis added*). In our effort to philosophically conceptualize actuality and events and criticality at stake with and from them, we explicitly rely on and contrast the philosophies of Foucault and Deleuze, two theorists whose ideas are particularly insightful for thinking about present and events jointly. Specifically, both perspectives emphasize the role of critique as “actualization” and “eventalization,” continuously opening the present, either as specific bounding events (Deleuze) or by opening works of the self over itself (Foucault, for whom events open the present). Foucault and Deleuze both make extensive uses of history and historical materials, and both develop unconventional relations with history, unlike the classic practice of historians that aims “to accurately record the past” (Patton 2012, p. 69). They exhibit a lack of interest in origins and a distaste for abstract

concepts such as Reason; they share an interest in experience and the emergence of “the new,” in contrast with a philosophical tradition that sought to discover some universal or eternal character of things (Patton 2012).

Yet beyond these points of convergence, their perspectives entail distinct lines of thought, different ends, and divergent methods (Colwell 1997; Revel 2015), which in turn produce different conceptions of history (Patton 2012). Both approaches are deeply processual, yet they depart from each other in their relation to politics and what constitutes a “better” society (Revel 2015), as well as in their uses of subjectivation and asubjectivation (de Vaujany 2022; Legg 2011; Patton 2012), which represent important aspects of emancipation in the critical tradition (e.g., Rosa 2018). In systematically comparing Foucault’s and Deleuze’s views of actuality and events, we focus on how each philosopher conceptualizes eventalization and actualization, with the goal to translate their ideas and show their potential for the emerging COH community.

The Foucauldian Path: Actualization and Subjectivation as the Ethos of a Better World

To introduce the Foucauldian perspective of view of actuality and events, we first go back to Merleau-Ponty’s “metaphysics of history”, which departs from the Cartesian approach of historical processes. Like Merleau-Ponty before him, Foucault reconciles a concern for an “already made history” with the idea that the present always remains open, through the idea of an “agonistic eventalization” opening the space for historical critique.

Actuality and Present Times: Merleau-Ponty’s Metaphysics and the Late Foucault

Our first perspective is inspired by Merleau-Ponty’s (2003) “metaphysics of history” (Revel 2015; Terzi 2017). Departing from purely descriptive, causal, teleological, or dualist views of history, in particular Cartesian ones, in which ahistorical subjects overhang objects of experience, Merleau-Ponty renews the field of history from within by avoiding two extremes: on the one hand, a mechanist (linear) history that links a set of events, initiating with an ordinary point and moving through successive linear consequences toward a final event; and on the other hand, an insular history, composed of only isolated events stuck in local, instantaneous, and purely subjective eventfulness.

Merleau-Ponty paves the way for a new post-Cartesian historiography, in which the continuous genesis at stake in any historical experience must be understood as both given and transformative, structured and opening. For Merleau-Ponty, subjectivation happens within events opening a shared present. From within the flow of perceptions, subjects and objects sometimes happen in reversible links. For Merleau-Ponty, subjects are not the essential receivers of perceptions coming from the outside. Perceptions, as decentered, continuous flows (indistinctively inside and outside) constitute sometimes and provisionally subjects (in the sense of possibilities of agency in the world). And the way things happen is singular to the present hosting it.

Unexpectedly, Foucault’s (1984a) late philosophical stance on history seems partly inspired by Merleau-Ponty’s approach (Revel 2015). Foucault (1984a) distinguishes two important terms: the “present” and “actuality.” If the “present” is the frame and the shared temporality of ongoing activities in the same world, “actuality” is what keeps opening and reopening the

present. What matters to Foucault is the idea of a difference and possible discontinuity within the present, inside of it, and from it. From the inside of history, experimentation is continuous. This process keeps (re)inventing subjectivity and new ways of living (Revel 2015, p. 51). The ethical, late Foucault explores modes of subjectivation and truth regimes, wrapped within historical movements. Subjectivity is not the teleology of history. Instead, subjectivity and freedom are qualities of history and historical events themselves. There are no ahistorical subjects. Subjectivity thus appears as a process, and subjective work needs to expand a subjective space. It requires courage, determination, and will. Foucault emphasizes a subjectivation process interwoven with objectivation (e.g., of dispositifs) and truth regimes at stake is a shared present. Various past, present, and future (anticipated) selves are put into a fluid conversation, both from the within and against events. The way past, present, and future selves enter into conversation differs from pre-modernity, to modernity, to post-modernity. History matters particularly in this conversational process.

Foucault expresses here ideas that are very similar to Merleau-Ponty's metaphysics of history and political views. For Merleau-Ponty (1964, 2003), political activity entails a "productive difference, i.e., a creative matrix" (Revel 2015, p. 114). Understanding events and developing an "eventfulness of principle" (Merleau-Ponty 2003, p. 3) means exploring the being inside the becoming and comprehending the "accumulation of things already done," because such historicity creates a possibility and consistency with historical processes. Each event potentially challenges the whole history as a present that configures past and future events. History is the becoming of events in the present, as well as their possible ruptures and reconfigurations. Both Merleau-Ponty and Foucault thus stress both the *extraordinary fragility* and the *power of any event* (even the most ordinary one). All things happening in the universe can be or become nothing or be or become everything.

Because he rejects any teleological view of history, Foucault gives deep value to the present, as the consequence of a history already done. But the present is also inscribed into a larger dimension. Something is bigger than the present, in the present. Its prosaic mesh or frame is a repetition and an accumulation, reflecting the verticality of historical processes maintained in the present. But different presents (past or future) can inhabit historical processes. Each new present reconfigures the layers, the verticalization of memory, and perception inside the lived experience. It is also continuously (re)opened to "possible differences" (Revel 2015, p. 155).

Because it is meaningful, history is a more general differential process. Only the in-between of past, present, and future events, put into relationship with the broader prose of the present, produces meaning. From within, the history of a society is always produced according to this model of production. The differential process also is always an opening or inauguration for the whole set of signs accumulated in and form the same present, both memorially and materially; "history already done" and "history in the making" are part of the same chiasms, two facets of the same historical process. In the thickness of this chiasm, subjectivation can occur, which allows us to explore the interlacing of history. Freedom, responsibility, and political agency in turn are possible in the mesh of this complex process.

Agonistic Eventalization: The Foucauldian Space for Historical Critique

For Foucault, events do not actualize intrinsic potentialities at stake in social structures or what would preexist them. Instead, they modify and support history as much as they are carried by it. They open possibilities in their happening and the becoming of this happening

(Revel 2015; Terzi 2017). This process of coming and going suggests that people, objects, and situations never escape history; they are always in between historical processes and events, as part of the broader institutions that connect them.

People always are the product of history (Foucault [1982] 2001, 1984a). Nothing escapes history nor exists outside of it; everything instead is transhistorical, both subject to and as a circumstantial product of history as discontinuations of present times. Imagining any externality to or independence from history implies the reintroduction of transcendence or, even worse, the notion of a given element *a priori*, independent of the historical experience of the world. For Foucault, nothing can remain independent from or cross history without being affected, deconstructed, or reconstructed by and through it as events (Revel 2015).

Foucault (1984a) also evokes the need to conceptualize “agonism” (instead of antagonism) between two interrelated terms of history. On the one hand, he recognizes the production of objects and codification of discourses of knowledge, as well as the way determined practices codify and induce effects of regulation and control in relationship to the self and others. On the other hand, he recognizes the power of invention, of which we are all carriers, and the possibilities for playing with a creative gap in a history of which we are also products (Revel 2015). We do not have to choose between the historical determinations of which we are products versus the intransitive freedom that is ours (Revel 2015). There is no opposition, for Foucault, between a conception of history that makes us “effects” and a conception of human freedom that makes us “actors”. History and freedom must be considered together. Foucault offers an original processual perspective in an effort to make sense, simultaneously, of historical determinations, including the history that produces what we are, and people’s infinite latitude to act, including their capacity to “act history” without any contradiction (Revel 2015). Similar to a chiasm, which links two faces and assigns them simultaneity (Merleau-Ponty 1964; Revel 2015), Foucault conceptualizes compossibility between history and freedom and between determination and invention, by adopting an approach that describes history while also identifying its turning points and possible ruptures.

By doing so, Foucault (1984a) builds a new type of critical relationship with history, beyond archeology and genealogy, as a “third figure.” This view prompts a reflection on today as a difference in history in an attempt to critically understand what we are from, based on we are no longer. At the borders of time (i.e., our present), our selves can happen. They sense the necessity and eventful possibility of otherness. Pasts and futures at the borders of our present, close or remote, call for different possible happening of our selves, or the fragmented “us” that gets provisionally assembled through events.

For Foucault, exploring the past is a way to address its powerful becoming in our present critically and thus to free ourselves from it and depart creatively in processes of subjectivation. This requires both remembering and forgetting, a memorial work made of presence but also necessary absences opening the way to truly personal and agentive selves. And when he stresses the importance of Greek and Roman legacies for philosophies of life, it is designed to celebrate and settle them further—but also to free ourselves from them and be able to “think otherwise” in the future (Foucault 1984a; Patton 2012). Foucault thus defines an ethics of the critical subject who, engaged in the present, questions practices that constitute him or her and the possibilities of discovering new ways of acting and thinking. With this thought of the “discontinuous” (Revel 2010), Foucault highlights the ability of subjects to

reflect on their own history and “free their thought from what it thinks in silence to allow it to think differently” (Foucault 1984b, p. 9), depending on the historical present in which their selves and the world happen together. The relationship with the future is also experimental, speculative, adventurous, and contrary to a utopia; it should be discussed constantly to free and give birth to true selves that can feed thoughts and ethos. In this direction, “heterotopic spaces” can help. They make the future, in all its multiplicity, sensible and experientable. History is all about openness, between the playful past and future material expressions of ordinary events opening and belonging to a specific present.

For Foucault (1982, 2007), what prevents “the compossibility of history and event (or that of power and freedom) from being simply a state of balance between two opposite terms, is the dimension of inauguration, of creation and production” (Revel 2015, p. 186; see also Terzi 2017). An ontology then is the “recording of this power to intervene from the inside itself of the historical world already installed” (Revel 2015, p. 187). Institution, whether a process or a state, epitomizes this ontological move. Instituting processes occur within the institution, with the correspondence of events wrapped into the experience. Events continuously repeat and reconfigure institutions. They establish new lines projected on the past and open new perspectives for the future, as well as new possible configurations of past, present, and future (expected) events. Foucault further explains that, more than a historical period, modernity is an “attitude”, a mode of relating to current events, a voluntary choice made by some, and a way of thinking, feeling, acting, and behaving. Exploring and renewing attitudes is the heart of critical activity.

Foucault also develops a “work of the difference” (Revel 2015) and a “thought of the discontinuous” to tip the present toward something other than what it already is. This difference reflects what can be imagined between a present of which we are a part and a future that we have at least some power to build. Discontinuity and invention relate to the self, based on the idea that our freedom never completely disappears in the mesh of power relations nor under the weight of historical determination. Freedom in history that is largely determining (which is why historicization becomes essential) still does not mandate saturated historical determinism. History remains both determining and open and is never reducible to simplistic, causal series. Thus, it is possible to think of freedom as a quality of history. The “attitude of modernity”, as a way to relate to current events, is a voluntary choice and political act of responsibility, which paves the way to reopening present states to transformation and discontinuity (Revel 2015).

Thus, the metaphysics of history elaborated by Foucault opens a complex process of subjectivation, which is primarily and paradoxically a critical process of objectivation. History matters. Historical events matter. The being of history matters through its becoming. History as expressed, materialized, and stratified in a specific present continuously brings to the surface a process of opening, which is at the heart of any potential freedom. Beyond the history of solutions, Foucault calls for explorations of the history of problems, the event of the problems, and their instituting and instituted facets. Critique, both as part of subjects inside an historical present or the memory work of historians with archives, is much more than an issue of pointing out what matters in the past. It is also much more than “simply” illuminating and stressing injustice and domination. Foucauldian critique is about experimentation with and from the pasts but also the futures. Both events of subjects of history and of historical work need to open alternatives for a better world, accomplished or not.

Beyond (or Before?) History: Deleuze toward Virtuality and Actuality of Becoming and Desires

The conceptualization of events differs for Deleuze. Deleuze (1994, 1994b) expresses great admiration for Foucault, whom he considers one of the greatest modern philosophers, and notes similarities between Foucault's view of history and his own line of thought. Yet a deeper analysis reveals some differences and generative tensions between their approaches to history and its critique (especially after 1976). The convergence of their thought is complex and tense, as well as inspiring and generative. To grasp the generative tensions in their perspectives, we first go back to Deleuze's Nietzschean and Bergsonian heritage, before explaining Deleuze's perspective of post-historical metaphysics and contrasting it to the Foucauldian perspective (as synthesized in Table 1 below).

Deleuze's Nietzschean and Bergsonian Heritage: Against Cartesianism, for Vitalism

Deleuzian philosophy is deeply influenced by Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson, Alexander, Butler, Whitehead, Dewey, and James. It radically and steadily opposes any phenomenological ventures, particularly those attempting to explore subjectivity and subjectivation (even in a non-dualistic way), perception, consciousness and traditional ethics. Deleuze critiques Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, despite sometimes acknowledging unexpected Merleau-Pontian inspirations (Wambacq 2011) and some convergences between his philosophy of events and Heideggerian phenomenology, especially in relation to issues of totality and the openness of experience.²

For Deleuze, the world consists of events, folds and aberrant movements, without any conscious center, or at least not yet (i.e., provisionally). Emotions, affect, multiple selves, and matter jointly exist in a dispersed world (Deleuze 1983, 1985). Images continuously appear as rays of light and sound intersecting, along with the depth of differences between them, their forces, intensities, and differences in intensities. From this perspective, describing history as a long line, crossing events, or a stable consciousness that can tell a story from a defined somewhere is problematic. "Planes of immanence" can be cut, and various presents can be identified, but no history as a hermeneutic process narrated by a consciousness makes sense, according to Deleuze. Life is mostly about desires flowing, and desires are not properties of subjects desiring something. The differences at stake inside the world open the flows attracting or repulsing relations.

This view is strongly influenced by Nietzsche's, Bergson's, and Whitehead's vitalist perspective. Life goes on and is more important than existence. It is pure becoming. The only thing people can do is pass by, feel the becoming of history, and know (in a Stoic way) how to let things and their selves go. In this way, they can sense the connectivity of experience, though not as a teleology or historical events. For Bergson, temporality pertains to duration (Deleuze 1966). Time thus is not linked to instants or points following sequential points. Things happen and matter in their making. The world retains a (virtual) memory of what happened, so continuities in events are likely. Yet actuality is the world itself in the making,

²See his lectures at Université de Vincennes, available at <https://www.webdeleuze.com/sommaire>

happening from ahead, based on the future and continued from the past of memory. In a pre-linguistic world, Bergson (1896) suggests a link of past and future events to images. In the process of imagining the world, material expressions of lights and sounds emerge, along with differences in lights and sounds. All the world happens in one image, and each image needs the whole world to happen, but each image also is fully inseparable from the whole world. The whole world is synchronous on a plane of immanence, each of which is full of holes, interruptions and folds more than lines of becoming. Events do not sediment and stratify in matter or in a continuous memory transcending experience. What happens but also what does not happen (interruptions of events or expectations of events that do not happen) both matter in a specific. In a paradoxical way, this flat world has differential depth, according to the thickness of conversations between past, future events and non-events (inherent to events themselves as unaccomplished potentialities) and their generativity for the present (Wambacq 2011).

Toward a Post-Historical Metaphysics with Deleuze: Becoming Instead of History

In line with Nietzsche's, Bergson's, and Whitehead's perspectives, Deleuze primarily focuses on the happening of novelty in the flow of life and life itself as a continuous happening of novelty (Bell 2009; Deleuze 1990, 1994; Patton 2012). Thus, it is "the event in its becoming" that constitutes the condition of novelty or change in the world. According to Deleuze, pure events, which embody conditions of the emergence of the new, are the real object of philosophy (Patton 2012). In turn, Deleuze does not provide space for subjects and subjectivation, which should be consciousness or conversational selves. In contrast with the perspective described previously (the late Foucault), Deleuze (1985) emphasizes a pre- or asubjective world of machines and images, in an impersonal world. Their events, relative speeds, intensities, durations and interruptions, as well as the world they fold and unfold, are central to Deleuzian metaphysics. Sense is the very process of the images. Subjectivities can happen in the folds of iconography, but they are not Deleuze's primary concern. Ontologically and politically, resistance and counterpowers make sense to Deleuze, but more as a change in the machines and images themselves.

In a way, Deleuzian metaphysics goes beyond (or before) subjectivation and objectification processes. Indiscernibility also exists between subjectivity and objectivity, or what could be an object and what could be a subject, for Deleuze. Most "time-images" (a concept he derived from cinema) happen without being agentive on each other—just differing in their intensity (Deleuze 1983, 1985; de Vaujany 2022). The world of cinema (especially post-World War II Italian cinema and French *nouvelle vague*) is a fully decentered phenomenon that does not need a located or assumed spectator, nor does it require a long line of history to make sense. It is ahistorical, if not at all atemporal. In turn, meaning is not interpretive. For Deleuze (1990, 1994), it is not the product of a powerful, external, stable subject. Instead, it matters in the world (images and imaging), between the past and future, and relationally. Sense happens and matters continuously in a myriad of decentered but interconnected events in an open world. It is not an issue of "representation" (i.e. representing mentally an external activity) of past activities frozen backwards or an hermeneutic process, but of active mediation from things experimented ahead, in the unknown of the future coming into the present, and simultaneously sensed, expressed and materialized as a past.

Thus, Deleuze is more interested in becoming than in history, at least in the sense that most historians use to conceive of history (Bell 2009; Lampert 2006; Patton 2012; Sellars 2007). Deleuze also distinguishes becoming and history explicitly, such that “the event in its becoming, in its specific consistency, in its self-positing as concept, escapes history” (Deleuze 1994a, p. 110). Furthermore, “What history grasps in an event is the way it is actualized in particular circumstances; the event’s becoming is beyond the scope of history” (Deleuze 199b p. 170). He thus seems to interpret history in a reductive manner, as “just the set of more or less negative preconditions that make it possible to experiment with something beyond history” (Deleuze 1994b, p. 170). If history is a starting point for experimental work, it is precisely history “that one leaves behind in order to ‘become’, that is, to create something new” (Deleuze 1994b, p. 171). This interpretation of history first appeared in Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980, p. 295) famous *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which they argue that “History is made by those who oppose history (not by those who insert themselves into it, or even reshape it).”

History appears like an impossible concept in this perspective, because the experience is overflowed by the flow of life itself and the becoming of events. In turn, “The concepts that philosophy creates give expression to the pure event or eventness that is a part of every event but that also escapes or exceeds its actualization. Since history only refers to the event as actualized, the study of history can never really come to grips with the condition of possibility of newness in the world” (Patton 2012, pp. 71-72). With a detour to embrace Charles Péguy, Deleuze explains “there are two ways of considering events, one being to follow the course of the event, gathering how it comes about historically, how it’s prepared and then decomposed in history, while the other way is to go back into the event, to take one’s place in it as in a becoming, to grow both young and old in it at once, going through all its components or singularities” (Deleuze 1994b pp. 170–71). Thus, social scientists can trace events and their becoming, along with what theyprehend and assemble. They can study agencements, planes of immanence, differences in intensities across events, conversations among events, turning points and processes of becoming inaugurated from the future. But history as a larger episteme is, for Deleuze, a dangerous illusion. Instead of subjectivations and better ethos (like Foucault’s invitation described in our previous section), affect should reflect fluidity, experimentability, continuities, and the connectedness at stake in life. Here is the heart of critical work for Deleuze. This requires a very different vocabulary than that of most historians sticking to heroes, extra-ordinary events, historical processes naturally and univocally moving from the past to the future. In the past, in the present and the future, everything moves at the same time, without any privileged point of view assuming a center and positioning things in an arrow of time. Critique as process is also here different than common sense interpretation as a deeper judgement. Beyond questioning and making visible injustice and domination, it is about opening concretely the process under study. History cannot be traced somewhere. It is a multiplicity of events resonating, spanning each other in the past, present and future. It is beyond the possibility of a narrative, at least as enacted by most historiographies.

Translating Foucault and Deleuze for COH scholars

In this section, we first contrast Foucault's and Deleuze's views of actualization and events to draw important implications for COH. We wish to offer here a useful comparative synthesis of these approaches to historical research for management and organization studies, as shown in Table 1. We then propose two concrete examples, related to control issues, which epitomize both the convergence and the divergence of Foucault's and Deleuze's conceptions of history (Patton 2012), to illustrate how a Foucauldian or Deleuzian critical historical analysis would differ. These examples illustrate how both perspectives open up alternative readings or ways of doing history in management and organization studies.

Two Political Stances on a Better World of Organization and Organizing

This article aims to guide researchers interested in philosophical historiographical reflexivity (following Decker et al. 2021) not only to engage with ontological discussions, but also to draw methodological implications about ontological units and ways of describing from archives. We wish in this essay to clarify, through a contrasting analysis of Foucault's and Deleuze's approaches, how to deal with remote events of the past (and the future), how to bring them into an historical narrative, and – in the end – how to handle traces of a past inside, but also outside, our ordinary relationship with the present. To that end, COH already has adopted and mobilized the thinking of leading philosophers, especially Foucault (see, e.g. Butler and Dunne 2012; McKinlay 2006, 2013; McKinlay and Wilson 2012), to better grasp the relation between history and organization studies and understand the role of the past and archives (Coraiola et al. 2021). Our goal here is thus not merely to engage with these previous works, especially with Foucault's and Deleuze's thoughts, but also to translate their views on actualization and events in ways that inform COH (see Table 1 below). To that end, we highlight the subtle productive differences and confluences in their thoughts, in ways that might feed interesting debates and directions for historical work. Such a contrasting analysis, to our knowledge, has not been carried out thus far. Foucault's and Deleuze's thoughts rarely have been put into conversation in an attempt to emphasize the specificities and diversity at stake in critical historical work (e.g., with a focus on or neglect of subjectivation or sedimentation) and their respective processual approach of historical events.

In that regard, to go further in this endeavor, we initiate the contrast between Foucault's and Deleuze's thoughts by turning to the comparison offered by Deleuze: "History, according to Foucault, circumscribes us and sets limits, it doesn't determine what we are, but what we're in the process of differing from; it doesn't fix our identity, but disperses it into our essential otherness" (Deleuze 1994b, pp. 94–95). Deleuze regards Foucault as a philosopher who proposes a non-essential or instrumental vision of history, because he relies on history to accomplish other, specific ends, such as the "a-historical purpose of diagnosing and reinforcing certain kinds of *becoming-other* in contemporary societies" (Patton 2012, p. 69). Thus, "If Foucault is a great philosopher, it is because he used history for something else: as Nietzsche said, to act against time and thus on time in favour, I hope, of a time to come" (Deleuze 2007, pp. 350). Deleuze also clearly compares his own approach to philosophy with that of Nietzsche and Foucault in suggesting that what matters for all of them is not so much the present but the "actual," conceived of as what we are in the process of becoming.

Yet beyond these apparent points of convergence, Deleuze and Foucault developed very different, contrasting views of history, as detailed by Patton (2012, p. 70), who explains that Deleuze actually misinterpreted Foucault's thought and vision of history, such that "His

[Foucault's] conception of philosophy is not the same as that of Deleuze. He has a different usage of the term 'actuality' and a different relationship with history" (see also de Vaujany 2022; Revel 2015). Foucault's approach to historical processes entails "opening", rather than questions of differences and differentiability. It occurs in the context of a discussion of the overall system, or arrangement, of the different discursive practices present in a given society at a given time. Each discursive practice is defined by "a set of rules that govern the emergence of things said (*énoncés*) in a given domain" (Patton 2012, p. 72). For Merleau-Ponty, just as for Foucault, events keep opening and re-opening the present. A strange continuity structures, trans-temporally, all that can be experienced as the present; modes of "presentifications" are precisely what is (or should be) at the heart of any historical work. Then, the gradual rise of new presents discontinues history from the inside of it and settles new modes of happening and new eventfulness.

After 1976, the processual and historical views expressed by Foucault and Deleuze gradually diverged explicitly. For Foucault, history became simply inescapable; in contrast, it was an impossible concept for Deleuze, who preferred concepts such as movement or becoming and went radically away from any epistemic project of an archeology of knowledge and knowing at stake in history. Furthermore, for Foucault, subjectivation involves the "process through which men and women, from the within of the mesh of history, invent and reinvent themselves in a twofold process of critique and inauguration" (Revel 2015, p. 73). Without processes of subjectivation, no resistance or freedom would be possible, and critique could not happen. Only from within this history—that is, inside the materiality of relationships and dispositives, institutions and epistemic configurations, bodies and ways of living—can lines shift, allowing the folding of all that is given as an historical "already here," as well as the torsion of determination, which then takes the name of ethics (Revel 2015, p. 73). Historical work, as any other political activity, should contribute to this re-invention but by stressing it in the past and for the future. According to Foucault, the present is at the borders of experience in the liminalities of our temporalities. This bordering of the present (delimiting future and past events) also delimits us and ourselves as living being in the present. Events happen from the present, in the making of these temporal borders. History pertains to such onto-epistemological discontinuities, because it entails forgetting and renouncing the past (beyond the traditional remembering cited by conventional historians).

In contrast, for Deleuze, only the process of becoming matters. Sedimentation (even as a discontinuous process from one present to another) is an irrelevant concept. Consciousness is an epiphenomenon—and a secondary one at that. Political hope does not rely on consciousness and better subjectivations. Images matter as rays of lights and sounds continuously discontinuing the world. The whole world keeps mattering on its continuous path toward novelty. Experience is made of folds and processes of folding and unfolding that continuously re-recreate new in and out, past and futures, trace aberrant movements and turning points. In contrast, for Foucault the present and modes of presentifications (attitudes) are central to experience and political work, in and from it. New presents reconfigure pasts and futures. Thus, the distinction between Deleuze and Foucault pertains to the issue of the present, which is at stake in an ethos of living.

Whereas Foucault stresses the importance of the present and invites exploration of the history of our present and other presents and how things happen differently from one historical period to another (eventalization regimes), Deleuze is more interested in the process of becoming

itself. The former re-opens a space for an ethics of the self as a key event opening the present; the latter is more interested in the flux and its design as an assemblage (Table 1). Ultimately, for Deleuze, making and letting things flow, and cultivating and abandoning selves in the fluidity of the world, is primordial. Abstract and concrete machines (Deleuze and Guattari 1980) can be designed in a more or less interesting way, depending on the points of subjectivations (which are mainly domination clusters for Deleuze) that they allow to concentrate. Consciousness is not the ultimate, necessary locus of enlightenment or power likely to save the world. Even if Deleuze does not deny the idea (borrowed from Whitehead 1929) that consciousness can crown experience, he does not see in it the way to a better world. Flux itself needs to be worked and maintained openly (and not concentrated around a center) and fluidly, which has implications for his view of history: No history of the self or a self at stake in specific presents appears in Deleuze’s writings. Rather, it is an anti-history and a description of becoming itself, involving flows, “agencements” (as processes), events and their becoming, and desires as beyond a desiring, unified self.

In a slight contrast, Foucault (especially in his later theorizing) stresses the importance of an ethics of the self, which is not necessarily a unique or unified self and which is distinct from consciousness. The work of the self over itself is primordial for Foucault. It represents the way to a better world. With courage and will, a person can work to improve themselves as part of a broader material–discursive community. Selves (past, present, and anticipated) and dispersed events keep re-opening the present and, as such, can question and transform it from its borders. Our dispersed selves in the present are wrapped in continuous conversations, and this necessary thickness makes being alive part of the metamorphosis of the world. In a continuation of this view, history must identify the variety of presents at stake in the past and the present of societies; the episteme and dispositive that also are at stake in them; and the kind of selves wrapped in them.

As summarized in Table 1, the two philosophers do not share the same views of the present or what can appear as historicity or eventalization regimes (Dosse 2010; Hartog 2003). Nor do they share the “same kind of historical reinterpretation of the present” (Patton 2012, p. 77) or equally stress the presence of an episteme (something secondary in Deleuze work).

Table 1. Two approaches to historical research in MOS

Reflexive analysis of ontological possibilities for COH/MOH	New Metaphysics of History	Post-Historical Metaphysics
Philosophical representers of critical ways to inform organizational histories	Foucault	Deleuze
Ontological grounding of historical analyses (status of events)	<i>Eventalization regimes</i> Different presents relate to different attitudes. The way things happen, and the sense of what happens, is historical. Epistemic discontinuity	<i>Continuous process of folding and unfolding events</i> The past is part of a <i>Spatium</i> , and the future is an expanding balloon from ahead. Metaphysical continuity of becoming
Methodological implications for MOH and COH	Foucault has a message for historians and historical work. Cultivating an ethos through the history of past and future experience. Forgetting, experimenting from within an experience.	Deleuze has no message, claim or invitation for historical work. Jointly studying and experimenting agencements, planes of immanence, differences in intensities between events, conversations among events, and

		processes of becoming inaugurated from the future. Both letting go, flowing, acknowledging the fluidity of any experience and sometimes fighting to keep it openly fluid, which is a way to settle a living justice and democracy.
Conception of history	History as “unescapable” History as both determining and open	History as “impossible” History as what separates us from ourselves, our multiplicity
Condition of change and novelty in the world	Change and novelty occur through the production of a difference by the subject, through an ethos (requiring will and courage) to tip the present to something other than what it already is	Change and novelty appear in the flow of life, and life itself appears as the continuous happening of novelty. Only the process of becoming, the “event in its becoming” matters
Subjectivation vs. objectivation	No opposition between a conception of history that makes us “effects” and one of human freedom that makes us “actors.” Subjectivation and objectivation can be thought of simultaneously through history (coexistence of historical determinations and power relations)	Indiscernibility of subjectivity and objectivity, subjects and objects (time-images). No privileged point of view at stake in the images of a world.
Positioning of the subject in history	Recognition of the power of the subject in and through history. Will and freedom, ethos. Resistance from within history. History and freedom must be thought of together.	No space for subjects or subjectivation. Emphasis is primarily on the pre-subjective or asubjective world of images.
Philosophical sources of inspiration	Nietzsche, Bachelard, Bataille, Canguilhem, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Stoicism	Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson, Leibniz, Peirce, Whitehead, James, Simondon

To make sense of such a divergence, we offer hereafter an example that facilitates a comparison of how the two approaches, with an historic perspective.

Illustration of Foucault’s and Deleuze’s Views of an Historical Event: The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

Our illustration deals with the contemporary notion of control and surveillance and their organizational implications, giving us the opportunity to stress an important methodological implication of the Foucauldian and Deleuzian perspectives, namely the need for ontological units and a specific focus on historical work.

In 1911 in New York, 146 garment workers—123 women and girls and 23 men—died in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.³ Due to extreme Taylorist work restrictions and the will to emplace and plug them at their workplace, these workers could not escape once the fire started. Most exits were simply closed. This horrible event, viewed in the context of American capitalism (in the Big Apple), initiated intense media coverage, political debates, and union fights. From 1911 until 1946, legislative bans even prohibited the use of scientific management methods in U.S. Navy Yards.

³ This short case narrative relies on two main sources: <https://www.osha.gov/aboutosha/40-years/trianglefactoryfire> and <https://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/story/introduction.html>

From a Foucauldian perspective, attitudes thus changed. The relationship with what happened (the past) was not muted any more, and the future had to be different. This eventalization means a new discontinuous relationship with events. Subjectivation also became obvious at this point. Workers, unionists, and politicians entered into discussions and allied against a practice. Agonistically with and against this event, multiple selves entered the discussions and its critical orientation. The process of critique existed in this subjectivation, which was likely to be shared and extended by contemporary historians. The active critique also created new lines and edges for the event of the fire, thereby establishing that the event was not new but already had been at stake in multiple incidents in the late 19th century in the United States, as well as in many other countries implementing Taylorist principles. Likewise, this critical line informed what can happen for the future, such as how to design alternative work practices and ways of organizing work. A Foucauldian historical work then needs to emphasize the eventuality at stake in this incident, to make visible denunciation and experimentations (or their absence), to explore what they opened and the new subjectivations they produced. Historians are allies of those suffering, as they elaborate a powerful knowledge through their narrative. They contribute to agonistically built subjectivities in their present for themselves and those who will read their work. Their process of writing and describing today the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire matters. It should raise questions for the present and the future. In short, the Foucauldian description of what happened at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory requires a focus on events and their larger modes of eventalization that were part of a larger institutional context of desperation and social contest against scientific management and the corporate world. Writing is about expressing and making visible this eventfulness regime and the discontinuities at stake with this drama.

From a Deleuzian perspective, it is important to stress the continuous folding and unfolding at stake during events, something unfolded. A new in and out was defined by this bonding event (fire). The all *Spatium* of past events (sweating factories, Taylorism, American capitalism of the 19th century...) became reconfigured as a possible charge against scientific management. The horizon also suddenly filled with unfolding new possibilities and new virtualities about organizing beyond “management”. The critique thus involved movement itself, though a movement with no subjectivation. It pertained to understanding the true desires expressed in the previous fold, such as control and surveillance instead of letting go. Maybe new war machines could be built? Maybe new smooth spaces should be designed in New York? Maybe more nomadic ways of living should occur in the United States? For Deleuze, the nomad represented the most political figure in the world. *But at the end, what matters is new machines and new agencements per se, not critical descriptions and new subjectivations.* Methodologically, Deleuze implications for a description are more about the lines, cuts in these lines, and the agencement at stake with the fire. Ontological units involved in historical work are less about voices, emerging subjects, and enabled expressions and more about the material becoming itself capitalism, factories, gestures, and movements. And critique is beyond the possibilities of a narrative; rather, it is about changing the lines and the intersections to build new machines and new images to bring more hope. That is why Deleuze praised the arts and the material possibilities of art to reconfigure the world.

Discussion and Avenues for Future Research: Actualizing and Eventalizing Critique in Historical Work in Organization Studies

COH offers an important, urgent invitation for organization scholars. We reiterate this invitation, by linking it to philosophical and ontological reflexivity. Basically, critique itself needs to become more historical and processual. Both Foucault and Deleuze help us think about the actuality and eventfulness of history beyond a linear, centered, essentialist view of historical work that merely looks for correspondence between the past and historical narratives. In addition to actively trying to avoid a one-way invitation, our comparison of Foucault and Deleuze provides a means to emphasize different views about actuality, events and non-events, and continuities and discontinuities in historical processes, as well as the importance of subjectivation in critical work. At the end, critique itself is plural and likely to be completed in different ways. For Foucault, it is an issue of subjectivation in and against the power of history. For Deleuze, it is more an issue of co-experimenting from within of past, present, and future events to build new agencements acting on the world.

In turn, our article also aims to contribute to current debates on time and temporality in organization studies (Feuls et al. 2023; Hernes 2014, 2022; Langley et al. 2013), while raising important questions for future research. Beyond the ethnography of contemporary phenomena or case narrative of present processes, how can we explore time when remote past and future events are part of the study? How should we explore historical processes and the “temporal structures” (Orlikowski and Yates 2002), “systems of references” (Gosden 1994), “embedded events” (Peterson 1998), “fields of events” (Hernes 2014), or “systems of events” (Roulet and Bothello 2023) at stake with them? Both Foucault and Deleuze offer interesting answers. Time matters, as is true for any scientific explorations of organizational dynamics. But archives produce discontinued, missing voices; need imagination to re-recreate past events and non-events; and require a different narrative and mode of inquiry. Exploring the eventfulness of management and organizing require a renewal of existing methods and ontological units. This article opens the way to first intuitions and visions for how to do so, though innovative approaches still need to be conceived and designed.

Critique (in particular Foucauldian critique) involves re-creating ordinariness with a reflexivity about the present, while exploring this past. Foucauldian critique also means departing from the past, moving away from it in the present and sometimes forgetting it (digesting it in a Nietzschean way) to re-recreate radically ourselves, from our present. What is critical is this multiple, decentered event of subjectivation likely to involve the subjects of history as much as historians.

Two options (each with different methodological implications) thus are available to organization scholars engaged in historical work. The first entails cultivating an ethos through a history of past and future experience, according to Foucault, which implies forgetting and experimenting from within an experience that always needs to be overcome, at and from its borders. The second one, following Deleuze, implies letting go, flowing, acknowledging and openly cultivating the fluidity of any experience, which always is connected to differentiability and distance from the worst, such as anchorage and territorialization.

In the end, both views concur on the idea that working historically on archives and an imagined past and future is always a political activity. Doing so requires cultivating novelty from within the past. If life is a vibration, it includes both non-vibrant materials of the past and highly intense material of a future, both feeding toward a better world. What happened and what did not happen, events and non-events, absences and silences, silences and noises all

matter in the becoming of organizing (Decker 2013; Giovannoni and Quatrone 2018; de Vaujany and Aroles 2019; de Vaujany, Holt, and Grandazzi 2023). They are all ‘propositional’ (Whitehead, 1938).

In the virtual controversy over history between Foucault and Deleuze (Patton 2012)—a kind of non-event, in that Deleuze emphasizes convergences, on which Foucault is silent—interesting confluence thus emerges, which informs our concluding commentary. For both theorists, forgetting the past matters. Cultivating forgetting, even in historical work itself, is a key political exercise, because history is too much about remembering, which is not sufficient momentum for re-invention and experimentation. Remembering emphasizes the necessities of the past more than the possibilities of the future. But exploring the incompleteness of the past, whatever its source, is also always productive for the present. Uncompleted and unfulfilled pasts matter. Folds, but also holes and voids matter for historical work. They provide interesting material, in particular as part of a creative work completed from history and alternative history (see also Renouvier 1876 about *uchronia*). History then constitutes an *agencement* by itself for organization scholars. Their techniques, institutions, and colleagues all should be part of assemblages, whose fluidity and intensities can be crafted carefully through time. It is up to organization scholars to keep this debate alive and continue the conversation between Foucault and Deleuze in their own practices, following the call to renew their generative differences and events, as well as their shared silences.

Conclusion: Histories of the future

Since the “historic turn” (Clark and Rowlinson 2004), the roles played by the past, history, and memory have increasingly been recognized in organization studies (Mills et al. 2016), especially in COH. However, if this turn had the merit of enabling a different approach to history, important gaps remained, such as the lack of a reflexive discussion of an ontological grounding for COH. This paper fills in this gap: it offers a reflexive discussion about the ontological possibilities for COH and organization scholars in general by translating Foucault’s and Deleuze’s views of actualization and events, as well as their methods of critique, in ways that can inform historiography and provide it with new tools. We offer in this essay a systematic comparison of Foucault and Deleuze, which enables us to unravel an insightful confluence to historical work for COH scholars. We invite the latter to pursue this confluence in their own empirical work. In this regard, it would be particularly fruitful to study other Foucauldian themes (biopolitics, heterotopic spaces, the ethics of the self and *parrhesia*) as intriguing categories to consider archives and historical sites at the heart of the historian’s work. The confluence identified herein combines events with non-events and, by doing so, stresses the importance of absences and silences in critical descriptions and the elaboration of alternative histories. In the end, critique is conceived of as a political activity, happening from within historical processes, their description, remembering and forgetting, events and shared silences.

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