Modernism, Post Modernism and Organizational Analysis 3: The Contribution of Jacques Derrida

Robert Cooper

Robert Cooper
Department of Behaviour in Organizations, University of Lancaster, U.K.

Abstract

This paper, the third in a series on the relevance of the modernist-post modernist debate to organizational analysis (Cooper and Burrell 1988; Burrell 1988), examines the work of Jacques Derrida. Specifically, Derrida's work is viewed as a contribution to the analysis of *process* (as opposed to *structure*) in social systems. In this context, three interrelated themes of his work — deconstruction, writing, 'difference' — are described in some detail and their implications explored for social and organizational analysis. Derrida's account of the logic of writing shows it to be fundamental to the division of labour and therefore to significant dimensions (complexity, formalization) of formal organization. Since 'organization theories' are themselves products of writing and the division of labour, their essential function is to explain and justify the structures they represent; they are therefore more concerned with maintaining their own consistency and the stability of the organized world they describe rather than critical understanding. This point is illustrated by a detailed deconstruction of two major approaches to the study of bureaucracy (the 'formalist' and 'expertise' models) in organization theory. Finally, it is suggested that the affinity between the logic of writing and the division of labour underlies Michel Foucault's concept of *knowledge–power* and the development of areas of professionalized knowledge such as accountancy.

Introduction

The recent 'symbolic turn' in organizational studies provides an appropriate context for understanding the relevance of Jacques Derrida's work to organizational analysis. In a programmatic introduction to the symbolic approach, Pondy and Mitroff (1979) argue that the chief feature of human organization is the use of language and symbolism (including the attribution of meaning to things and making sense of the world). They claim that traditional approaches to the study of organizations have completely neglected language. Specifically, they cite Thompson's (1967) 'open system' model as the dominant way of thinking about organization. This is essentially an input–output model which emphasizes the control of environmental uncertainty. Among various criticisms, Pondy and Mitroff argue that Thompson's model has forgotten that it is dealing with *human* organizations, so that the characteristically human capacities of symbolism and language are not addressed as components of the organizing process.

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In their emphasis on language, Pondy and Mitroff begin to approach Derrida's concern with discourse, text and writing as the bases of human institutions. But it is not difficult to show that the way in which they understand language and symbolism is light years away from Derrida's thought, and that their work is still contextualized by the input–output logic they criticize in Thompson's work. For example, they say that 'language is a technology for processing both information and meanings just as production technologies process material inputs into outputs' (p. 25). Despite the apparent critical intent of their analysis, Pondy and Mitroff remain caught up in the thought-world they wish to overturn.

For them, language appears as a mere carrier of information and meaning. For Derrida, in contrast, language is a structure of material marks or sounds which are in themselves 'undecidable' and *upon which meaning has to be imposed*. Derrida thus goes beyond Pondy and Mitroff's position that language (somehow) reveals the organizational world to us and shows especially that it is a process that reflexively includes its own antithesis. Applied to organizational analysis, this means that organization always harbours within itself that which transgresses it, namely, disorganization. Whereas traditional organization theories presuppose, and therefore give priority to, the notion of organization, Derrida's strategy is to show how the supposedly rational and stable aspects of organization are constantly under threat by their devious and insidious countermovements. He also shows that the task of understanding organization from the perspective of disorganization demands an appropriately reflexive logic and intellectual practice from the analyst. For these reasons, Derrida's work holds much promise for the further development of the 'symbolic turn' in organization theory.

His work addresses a central problem of social analysis: the logics of *structure* and *process* and their interaction. He starts from the position that our traditional ways of thinking are structure-biased and are therefore incapable of revealing the nomadic and often paradoxical character of process. So deep does structure run in our mental habits that when we actually try to analyse process we turn it into structure. Derrida's task has been to reverse this predilection and show that process is primary to structure.

Although occupationally a philosopher — until recently he occupied a chair in philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris — Derrida resists attempts to 'place' him in the academic division of labour, arguing that this is a lazy accommodation to the institutionalized demands of structure which, by definition, must preclude the serious pursuit of process. To subvert this tendency, he employs an intellectual strategy that is 'outside' traditional philosophy, being less concerned with the 'content' or 'meaning' of philosophical arguments and more concerned with the 'rhetorical' tactics that philosophers use to privilege their positions. Philosophy thus becomes just like any other form of human exchange in which actors vie with each other for status, honour or the place of 'truth'. But underlying this covert social struggle is the more fundamental problem of discourse itself which is subject to the

turbulence of displacement, condensation and elision. The philosopher (like any other professional academic) seeks to structure his or her discourse so as to eliminate the wildness intrinsic to it. Derrida's project is therefore not so much 'philosophical' in the institutionalized sense but has more to do with the new logics of information and communication that characterize postmodern science (Lyotard 1984) and which disclose the essential uncertainty of human discourse. It is this feature of Derrida's work that makes it so relevant to the field of the social sciences whose own subject matter is distinguished by such communicational concepts as 'interaction' and 'relation'.

In this brief introduction to Derrida's thought, I hope to bring out the major themes of his work and show their general significance for the analysis of social systems and, more especially, organizations. One difficulty in attempting this is the problem of translating Derrida's intricate and multi-levelled style of thinking and writing (often like a difficult crossword puzzle) into an intellectual tradition (here, that of social science) which puts a prime value on clarity and coherence of communication. In fact, Derrida assumes that such a demand may actually work against the genuine understanding of process since it is implicitly grounded in the idea that knowledge is somehow already clearly structured for us in the 'external' world, if only we can apply the 'correct' methodology to 'reveal' it. Nothing could be farther from Derrida's project which instead rests on the idea that knowledge and discourse have to be 'constructed' out of a continuously chameleonic, and indeed ultimately phantasmic, world. To think in terms of 'process' requires a radical transformation of the structural cast of mind that prevails in the social sciences — in short, nothing less than its unconditional 'deconstruction'.

Deconstruction

Derrida starts from the position that human experience is pervaded by an existential 'ambivalence' which in turn serves as the drive to organize. In itself, this is hardly news since common experience tells us that every 'interaction' and 'relation' is double-valued, implies an alternative and hence requires a decision to be made and acted on, often in situations where the choices are equivalent or indeed incompatible. In fact, Merton (1959) has made ambivalence in this general sense into a sociological theory, arguing that social actors are embedded universally in networks of social incompatibilities. Though Merton's context is sociological, thus leading him to view ambivalence as inherent in social positions and not in the psychologies of people, nevertheless, his focus is still largely at the level of the individual actor. In contrast, Derrida offers an entirely new reading of ambivalence which goes beyond both the psychology and sociology of actors to the idea of the 'text'. The text — any discourse, whether political, social, philosophical, etc. — is the field of operation of deconstruction. Derrida's object in deconstruction is to reveal the ambivalences, or, more accurately, the self-contradictions and double binds, that lie

latent in any text. Such a project has been nursed for some time by certain social theorists who view social action in terms of the metaphor of the 'interactional text' which has to be 'read' in all its 'variety and ambiguity' (Dawe 1978: 413). Derrida's work can be seen as a significant contribution to both the philosophy and methodology of this project.

Texts normally rest on the (usually unexamined) assumption that language is a means for the communication of thoughts. Consequently, thoughts take prime place and language is seen simply as a vehicle for the transmission of thought. Derrida calls this mental strategy 'logocentrism' since it centres human experience around the concept of an original 'logos' or presupposed metaphysical structure (e.g. mind, soul, reason, etc.) that validates and gives meaning to human activities. 'Logos' is a Greek word that encapsulates in a single idea 'the inward rational principle of verbal texts, the inward rational principle of human beings, and the inward rational principle of the natural universe' (Harland 1987: 146). Its more general meaning is 'the law', which serves to control and direct the extra-human world and thus provide the feeling of mastery over those forces of the unknown that continually besiege us. Logocentrism is thus a structure with a fixed centre or point of origin that also censors (i.e., to 'centre' is also to 'censor') the self-errant tendencies in the text. As Derrida (1978a: 278–293) points out, the centre not only orients, balances and organizes the structure, but above all it serves to limit excessive 'play' in the structure. In other words, logocentrism determines a centripetal form of organization with a single essential metaphysical centre which assures stability and therefore certitude.

Elias (1978) has argued that such logocentric tendencies pervade the literature of social science. In his study of the civilizing process, which was historically characterized by the imposition of stronger and more 'internalized' self-control within the individual, Elias has shown that the theories of knowledge which flowed from such self-control were 'concerned far more with the problems of the object of knowledge than with the subject of knowledge' (Elias 1978: 256). In sociology, this perspective is reflected in the traditional separation of the field of study into 'individual' and 'society' as self-contained entities. Elias illustrates this tendency in the works of Parsons (e.g., Parsons and Smelser 1957) who views 'social change' (i.e., process) as the malfunction of a 'normally stable state of social equilibrium' (Elias 1978: 308) and Merton (1959) who sees the social system as 'an ideal social state . . . in which there are no contradictions and tensions' and which is 'so counterposed to another in which these social phenomena, evaluated as "dysfunctional", exert a pressure toward "change" on a social structure normally free of tension and immutable' (Elias 1978: 308). The process of 'civilizing' is essentially one of 'cleaning up' and 'taming' but which is expressed in the 'semimetaphysical sense' of 'development' which itself is understood either as a 'mechanical necessity' or a 'teleological purpose' (Elias 1978: 223). Significantly, Elias argues that sociological concepts are themselves riddled with such 'civilizing' forces in which (often unconsciously) desired states of affairs are raised up over distasteful alternatives. The civilizing

process is thus guarded against further, and possibly destructive, analysis by securing it in a metaphysical foundation which serves to 'hide' it from critical view. It is precisely this work of mystification that deconstruction aims to reveal. Its distinctiveness as process lies 'in the way it tries to avoid falling into the same (metaphysical) traps itself, even if this is to some extent unavoidable' (Wood 1987: 32). Deconstruction is therefore continually in danger of being consumed by the very problem it faces: how to critically open up a text 'without merely endorsing the wider framework to which its terms belong' (Wood 1987: 32). In order to prevent the possibility of logocentric incorporation, deconstruction employs a double movement of *overturning* and (what I shall call) *metaphorization*.

In overturning it is recognized that texts are structured around binary oppositions (e.g., good–bad, male–female) in which one of the terms dominates the other. As Derrida writes: '. . . we are not dealing with the peaceful co-existence of a *vis-à-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment' (Derrida 1981a: 41). In itself, the phase of overturning is nothing new since it is a widely recognized *possibility* in all areas of social life, from politics to academic debate. It is implicit in Elias' critique of the metaphysical basis of the concept of 'civilization' as well as in the normatively-based interpretations of 'social system' that appear in the writings of Parsons, Merton and others. Derrida is careful to emphasize the potential trap of merely overturning the 'higher' term and replacing it with the 'lower' term, which then of course becomes the 'higher' and is thus itself ripe for overturning. This is merely another instance of structure, in which the opposing terms are kept separate and discrete: 'the hierarchy of dual oppositions always reestablishes itself' (Derrida 1981a: 42). It is therefore necessary to proceed immediately to the second movement of deconstruction — metaphorization — which is perhaps what makes deconstruction especially distinctive as a critical process. The point of this second stage is to keep process from degrading into structure. Derrida does this by reminding us that there is a perpetual double movement *within* the opposition so that the positively-valued term (e.g., 'civilization') is defined only by contrast to the negatively-valued second term (e.g., 'barbarism') which continually threatens the former's sovereignty. In fact, the relationship between the apparently opposing terms is really one of mutual definition in which the individual terms actually inhabit each other. In other words, the separate, individual terms give way 'to a process where opposites merge in a constant *undecidable* exchange of attributes' (Norris 1987: 35). It is this process of undecidability that underlies the movement of metaphorization with its mutual crossings and implications, making it a means of textual 'transportation' by which the speaker or writer is carried along — '*metaphorikos* still designating today, in what one calls "modern" Greek, that which concerns means of transportation' (Derrida 1987b: 6). Elias (1978) also recognizes the significance of undecidability and metaphorization when he

critiques Parsons' manner of thinking about the relationship between the 'individual actor' and the 'social system' as being one of 'interpenetration'. In fact, as Elias argues, the process of interpenetration in Parsons' work is always subservient to the separate existences of the individual and the social system. This leads to the 'spatialization' of the social field in which, for example, the individual 'ego' is somehow 'inside' the human being and the 'society' somehow 'outside' it. While we may say that 'the human brain is situated within the skull and the heart within the rib cage . . . we can say clearly what is the container and what is contained, what is located within walls and what outside, and of what the dividing walls consist' (Elias 1978: 258). But such physical metaphors are completely inappropriate for the understanding of psycho-social processes since at 'this level there is nothing that resembles a container' (259) and therefore one cannot talk about the 'inside' or the 'outside' of a human being. 'One recalls that Goethe once expressed the idea that nature has neither core nor shell and that in her there is neither inside nor outside. This is true of human beings as well' (Elias 1978: 259). Elias clearly senses the central idea of deconstruction for, when he says that there is 'neither inside nor outside', he is saying that this particular binary opposition is really 'undecidable'. A more artful way of thinking about the problem of 'interpenetration' is required in order to reflect the complex, processual nature of social life and it is precisely this possibility that Derrida's work offers.

Writing

To grasp the general idea of the text, it is necessary to consider the operation by which texts come into existence — writing. Writing is the process by which human agents inscribe organization and order on their environments. In this sense, writing is a technology that is universal in the human world, dealing with such factors as 'ordering, listing, display, hierarchy of arrangement, edge and margin, sectioning, spacing, contrasts . . .' (McArthur 1986: 23). Writing is not concerned with the meaning and content of messages but, more fundamentally, with the structure and organization of representations. It is this latter feature that characterizes the idea of 'formalization' in bureaucratic organizations (Hall 1982) in which rules and regulations are written down in official documents. Writing in this sense was a necessary ingredient of administration and management from the earliest historic times as Goody (1977) points out: administrative functions dominate the use of writing in the ancient world, especially in the form of lists, formulae, recipes, prescriptions, etc. Goody even suggests that Western logic was dependent upon the development of writing: '. . . the setting down of speech . . . enabled man clearly to separate words; to manipulate their order and to develop syllogistic forms of reasoning . . .' (Goody, 1977: 11). Writing thus developed as a way of fixing the flux and flow of the world in spatial and temporal terms in what McArthur (1986) has called the 'taxonomic urge'.

Derrida (1976) begins with the assertion that the history of writing in the Western world shows it to have been always subordinate to speech. The spoken word is thought to be prior to the written word which is thus reduced to the status of a 'vehicle' for speech. Speech is viewed as the means by which the human mind expresses its thoughts. Speech becomes the privileged term and the real significance of writing is therefore suppressed. Derrida wants to overturn this logocentric conception of writing which sees language as a system of signs that represents ideas which are supposed to exist in the 'objective' world, independent of human intervention. For Derrida, there can be no metaphysical entities since his critical programme is utterly materialist and begins and ends with the physical world. His concept of writing is the physical action of inscribing marks or signs on a surface — a sheet of paper, the brain, the surface of the earth, etc. — and not a supposed logocentric origin beyond those marks. In developing this idea of writing, Derrida (1978a: 196–231) uses Freud's model of the Magic Writing Pad, a child's toy which possesses the novel feature of being able to self-erase any writing inscribed on its surface. The pad is constructed of an upper layer of transparent celluloid and a lower layer of translucent waxed paper. Writing is effected by pressing a stylus onto the celluloid surface which then causes the darker-coloured base to show through as writing on the lighter-coloured paper. The writing is thus not inscribed directly on the paper and it can be erased simply by breaking the contact between paper and base. But the waxed base still bears the impression of the stylus despite the writing being no longer visible on the surface. Freud compares the base to the unconscious mind, which 'remembers' what it does not consciously perceive, and the double surface (paper and celluloid) to the conscious mind, which receives and filters stimuli, but does not retain them. The physical basis of writing is further elaborated by Derrida when he compares the invisible traces of the stylus on the writing pad to the neurological pathways that external stimuli create when they impinge upon the nervous system. These pathways (traces, tracks) are literally incised or engraved (Derrida also uses the term 'graph', with its suggestion of 'groove', to refer to this latent aspect of the written sign) on the neurological system, thus facilitating the direction and flow of later stimuli. All writing for Derrida has this character.

Viewed in this way, writing shows how the human actor is materially involved in its world in a process of *reflection*. Writing is not a *direct* effect of the stylus' contact with the celluloid surface but is, instead, an *indirect* effect of the contact between the celluloid and the wax base; writing is thus a deferred impression of the wax base showing *up* rather than the stylus pressing *down* (Harland 1987: 143). Consciousness therefore comes on the rebound, so to speak, as the delayed effect of a purely unconscious, involuntary action; it is not a direct relection *on* the outside world but a relationship made with what has already been inscribed. Extending the metaphor of the pathway into the world of modern transport, Derrida's analysis of writing would compel us to admit that it is the motorway that 'drives' (directs) us in our vehicles just as much as we

think ourselves to be consciously in the driving seat. We are driven as we drive or, as Derrida would say, we are written as we write.

The operation of the delayed effect exemplified in the writing pad leads Derrida to propose that *later* ideas or experiences always take precedence over what was initially there; this delayed effect he calls 'supplementarity', i.e., adding something on at a later time. Traditionally, writing has been viewed as supplementing the spoken word, as simply communicating speech which is privileged as the direct voice of consciousness. But Derrida points out that 'supplement' also means that which is required to *complete* some deficiency in the present state of things. Seen thus, writing is no longer that which merely supplements oral communication; in fact, writing now has to be understood as the very condition of discourse in general, and without which communication is just not possible. Derrida's 'logic of supplementarity' surprises us by revealing a subservient term to be (unconsciously) dominant.

Now the concept of delay has a spatial as well as a temporal dimension and this is also brought out by Derrida in his analysis of the supplement, for one of the movements of supplementation is to delay by putting aside or placing in the margin (as well as postponing). The supplement is that which is made marginal to a controlling centre, such as we noted in the first overturning phase of deconstruction. But, as we have also noted, the marginal or inessential as supplement is actually the necessary and essential, as writing is to speech. This paradoxical feature of writing, in which a term is shown to be inhabited by its opposite, Derrida calls 'undecidability'. Freud (1957) drew attention to the presence of undecidability in the 'antithetical meanings' behind 'primal words'. In the earliest languages, opposites such as 'strong/weak', 'light/dark', 'big/small' were expressed by the same verbal roots. In Ancient Egyptian, *ken* represented 'strong' *and* 'weak'. In Latin, *altus* means 'high' *and* 'deep'; *sacer*, 'sacred' *and* 'accursed'. As these examples show, the essence of undecidability is the existence of contradictory meanings *within a single term*.

One of Derrida's (1981b: 61–171) best-known deconstructions is centred on the Ancient Greek term *pharmakon* as discussed by Plato in the *Phaedrus*. The word *pharmakon* is intrinsically undecidable since in ancient Greece it meant *both* remedy *and* poison; good *and* bad, at the same time. The 'problem' of the *pharmakon* is that it is the 'medium in which opposites are opposed' and in which one side insists on crossing over and contaminating (i.e., metaphorizing) the other. In the *Phaedrus*, writing is described as a *pharmakon* for while, on the one hand, it can facilitate the recording and transmission of knowledge, on the other hand, it depersonalizes human knowledge by taking it away from its oral tradition and therefore its authentic living source. But Derrida shows, by means of a subtly nuanced deconstruction, that the logocentric properties that Plato elevates (speech, memory, thought) in his campaign against the *pharmakon* of writing are undermined from the very start, because their philosophical defence has necessarily to use writing so that Plato's argument is pervaded by the same undecidability to which it objects. Writing turns out to be a necessary evil, full of strange tricks, but which Plato cannot do without. At

best, he can only 'delay' its intrusion through the writerly trick of supplementarity. This point in Plato's argument is analyzed by Derrida in terms of the inside/outside polarity and thus enables us to connect Derrida's conception of writing with Elias' (1978) criticism of the inside/outside problem in social science discussed above. 'Apprehended as a blend and an impurity, the *pharmakon* also acts like an aggressor or a housebreaker, threatening some internal purity and security' (Derrida 1981b: 128). The purity of the inside can only be attained, says Derrida, if the outside is branded as a *supplement*, something inessential, even parasitical. The supplement is added in order to complete and compensate for a lack in what is thought to be complete. Yet, in order to cure the inside of the odious aspect of the *pharmakon*, it is necessary to keep the outside out. Derrida emphasizes how the outside as the unwanted supplement plays a necessary constituting role in the formation of the inside and, far from being a mere accessory, is thus a central feature of the inside. To illustrate this, Derrida uses examples from the human body whose innermost spaces — mouth, stomach, etc. — are actually pockets of externality folded in. An outside is thus seen to be the most intrinsic feature of a system, displacing the inside.

When Elias identifies the inside/outside problem as a major conceptual problem for social science, when he criticizes the 'container' metaphor of the human being with its spatial image of walls that include and exclude, when he recalls Goethe's insight that in nature there is 'neither inside nor outside', he is offering us a proto-deconstruction which leads logically to Derrida's more developed form of deconstruction. In fact, topographical spatialization is essential to the logocentric model which includes 'the whole history of the metaphor of structure . . . everything having to do with "the order of forms and sites", "the internal unity of an assemblage", a *construction* . . .' (Ulmer 1985: 11). Deconstruction disassembles the structured metaphors of logocentrism by revealing their intrinsic supplementarity and therefore their self-corrupting liabilities. The *pharmakon* is not just an 'ambivalent' term capable of various interpretations; it is a double-valued metaphor whose antithetical senses are always co-present in Plato's text, thus defeating any attempt to present a consistent, unilateral message. In other words, the *pharmakon* goes beyond the specific intentions of Plato because it is caught up in a play of forces that inheres within writing itself: '. . . the word *pharmakon* is caught in a chain of significations . . . (which) is not, simply, that of the intentions of an author who goes by the name of Plato' (Derrida 1981b: 129–130). Meaning spreads out in a process of *dissemination* like the dispersion of a drop of ink discharged into a glass of water. Derrida shows that *pharmakon* disseminates into even more remote and foreign contexts, though always returning to the problem of undecidability: it is closely related to *pharmakeus*, which means magician or sorcerer and thus, more generally, to the act of dissembling; it is linked with *pharmakos*, a scapegoat which was sacrificed in the Greek city-state as a symbolic purging of an invading evil; it also suggests the dye and perfume used as cosmetics by actors, a further example of dissimulation. In dissemination,

the various terms of a text point away from themselves to other terms in a continuous, unstoppable movement so that writing appears to be in the grip of an autonomous, self-propelling force that lies beyond the intentions of the individual actor. This implacable movement of writing, which runs always beyond traditional metaphor, is therefore better called *metaphorization*, implying the act of being transported here and there in a vehicle that has no substance, by a driver whom one cannot see and to a destination that one can never know.

Derrida's concepts of deconstruction and writing rely for their effect on their denial of conceptual mastery and definition. If their movement were to be arrested, it would no longer be movement but just another immobilizing and immobilized circumscription. It is therefore necessary to develop a strategy of thought which reflects and preserves (but which does not 'capture') this process — hence the urge constantly at work in Derrida's project to express writing as a self-deferring process of 'difference'.

From Difference to 'Differance'

The concept of difference is fundamental to Derrida's view of process, including the activities of deconstruction and writing. His way of thinking difference is complex and subtle. But, for the moment, let us start with some very basic issues. Difference is roughly equivalent to the concept of 'information' in information theory where it appears as a *binary structure* based on the idea of division (Cooper 1987). The human world is constituted by such divisions, e.g., male–female, day–night, etc. There are two ways of thinking about division: (1) by emphasizing the two separate terms, or (2) by emphasizing the actual process of division itself. Step (1) is a definitive feature of logocentrism which, as we have seen, thinks in terms of hierarchized binary oppositions. Step (2) enables us to see that division is not just an act of separation but is also an undifferentiated state in which its terms are actually joined together, i.e., *division both separates and joins*. Paradoxically, it is the act of separation which creates the perception of something that is also whole or unitary. Division (i.e., difference) in this second sense is therefore like Derrida's concept of undecidability in which opposing terms inhabit each other. We now see that division is the sharing of a whole between two terms in a continuous *process* of differentiation or active alternation.

In order to dramatize the *processual* nature of difference as distinct from its meaning as a fixed presence (i.e., static difference), Derrida invents the term 'differance'. Differance embodies the two meanings of the French verb 'différer': to *defer*, or postpone, in time, and to *differ* in space. The very fact that these two meanings reside in 'différer' means that the differential nature of the word cannot be grasped as a singularity and that one of its meanings always has to be *deferred*. Derrida intends that differance should be understand as a continuous *absence*, as a force that is continually beyond our grasp and

therefore never properly present: '*Differance* is neither a *word* nor a *concept*' (Derrida 1973: 130). In writing differance with an *a*, Derrida further emphasizes the absent force (i.e., non-presence) of writing, for in French the infractive *a* becomes apparent only in the written version of the word — when spoken it cannot be distinguished from the commonly accepted spelling, i.e., the two versions *defer* each other. Derrida always wants to bring out the active or processual character of differance and we can get some idea of this by returning to the example of the *pharmakon*. In terms of differance, the *pharmakon* does not simply include the two opposing meanings of 'poison' and 'remedy'; these are not just structurally different *from* each other; instead, they actively *defer* each other, the deferred term being postponed for the present, waiting for an opportunity to flow back to the medium from which it was severed. This latter point, especially, brings out the processual character of differance, for underlying the idea of *differance from* (i.e., static difference) is an originary force of 'sameness' (to be distinguished from static identity in which one thing is said to be the same as another) which works in a subterranean and unconscious way to bind differences together: 'In "differance", alternative meanings are not the same to the extent of being identified in a single meaning; they are the same to the extent that a single force passes through them, crosses the boundary between them' (Harland 1987: 138). This moving 'sameness' is the process of metaphorization which underlies all the metaphors we use to give spatial and temporal stability to the undecidability of writing.

Differance, therefore, has to be understood as continuous movement, but it is not the movement of specific things. Writerly concepts such as spacing, contrast, organization are not physical properties of things; they are forms of differance and as such lack a specific locatability. This is also Elias' 'anti-container' argument in which he denies the locatability of 'inside' and 'outside'. It means, for example, that we cannot properly talk about objects or events as being 'in' the mind, for the mind 'contains' only differences. There is even a problem in talking about *the* mind since this gives the impression of a locatable place, a thing which contains other things. In fact, the mind, too, is difference. Differance thus destroys the idea of simple location and indeed the logic of identity which relies on locatability. But differance as undecidable movement which cannot be pinned down can at least be delayed or deferred, as we have noted, and it is this process of delaying that lies at the bottom of logocentrism. Logocentrism rests on a philosophy of 'presence', the idea that things and events are given to us as fully constituted experiences. The social sciences are replete with examples of presence — e.g., individual, society, organization, environment — whose unexamined 'naturalness' and 'obviousness' privileges them as 'essences' and thus puts them beyond critical analysis. Derrida reminds us that such 'presences' are actually the effects of differance, just as the 'presence' of the 'remedial' *pharmakon* depended on its complementary 'absence' of 'poison'. Logocentrism denies that presence originates in this way by positing it as a 'priority' that is 'held to be simple, intact, normal,

pure, standard, self-identical, in order *then* to think in terms of derivation, complication, deterioration, accident, etc.' (Derrida 1977: 236). So ingrained is this procedure in our thinking that we 'naturally' start from the simple, normal, standard case and go on to consider other cases that can then be defined as 'less perfect' complications, derivations and deteriorations of the normal (Culler 1983). Logocentric presence is thus a form of covertly willed prior knowledge (i.e., 'presence' becomes 'pre-sense') which delays (and denies) differance by claiming to be a kind of 'perfect' foundation or origin from which the latter deviates. As we have seen, thought and speech occupy this role in relation to writing.

Presence is a form of thinking that goes from effect to cause — a track in the forest tells us of the presence (i.e., prior action) of some animal or person; the track is derived from, and therefore secondary to, the presence. At the same time, the presence represses the other traces of the track, the thousand other possibilities which are never realized as presence, which prompts Derrida to think 'track' as the metaphorization of writing: a road or path cut into the natural matter of the forest becomes a topography inscribed on the surface of the earth and which further re-inscribes writing and travel as traces of each other, thereby deconstructively transforming a specific effect into a more general cause: 'it is difficult to imagine that access to the possibility of a road-map is not at the same time access to writing' (Derrida 1976: 108). Presence is thus integral to repression ('pre-sent' is a writerly version of 'pre-ssion') and Derrida expresses this integrity in terms of the Magic Writing Pad: 'Writing is unthinkable without repression. The condition for writing is that there be neither a permanent contact nor an absolute break between strata: the vigilance and failure of censorship' (Derrida 1978a: 226). In other words, repression has that paradoxical structure of division in which separation and joining come together. This means that every presence is a form of censorship, albeit a necessary one — necessary not just for its own realization but for the emergence of differance and the trace. The human agent (as 'writer') thus re-presents in repression the excesses of writing that it censors; in this way, the agent both reproduces and is reproduced by the act of writing. The agent is in precisely the same position as Plato who, while condemning writing for its contaminating powers, was actually empowered by the very force he sought to deny.

Derrida clearly places the idea of the human agent at the centre of his analyses — all human action occurs within the matrix of writing and differance. Specifically, the concept of agency here is tied up with repression and censorship. Ideas *in* the mind, for example, do not exist: 'we are written only as we write, by the agency within us which always keeps watch over perception' (Derrida 1978a: 226). This 'agency' is the unconscious and automatic work of repression and censorship, a double-valued process which, as we have noted, denies that which gives it power. All this means that the subject is pervaded by the uncertainty and doubt intrinsic to differance and writing; indeed, that differance is incorporated into the human subject as its founding principle.

Differance as uncertainty and doubt is built into the very fabric of the agent as a social being: '. . . an agent living in a complex, heterogeneous world requires strong empathic capacities for acquiring the interests and motives of the members of his community. Rousseau and Freud have shown that the mechanisms that make social cooperation easy and natural are mechanisms that also internally divide a person. Precisely to the extent that a person can empathize with, and acquire the interests of the various members of society, to that extent he will be divided' (Rorty 1980: 910). Uncertainty, then, is not the mere 'absence' of certainty — the two terms *co-exist* as the result of the intrinsically divided logic of writing. Such effects of differance are therefore not 'outside' us, nor in our 'environments', since we have seen that we are actually 'inhabited' by writing and its contradictions. Among other things, this view of human agency destroys the idea that the subject is a more or less rational, self-contained unit — the latter is 'at best something to be hoped for (and) certainly cannot be presupposed' (Nehamas 1985: 182). Instead of being an accomplished fact — or, more specifically, a logocentric presence — the reality of the voluntaristic, rational agent is an approximation which is continually threatened from the inside by its own Doppelgänger in the form of writerly displacements, condensations and elisions, all of which evade cognition.

The paradox of human agency, in Derrida's analyses, lies in censoring that force — call it differance or undecidability — which gives the agent its power. Built into the actual process of agency, therefore, is an unconscious tendency to deny its own origins — the problem of 'presence' discussed above. In effect, this means that the agent *necessarily* suppresses the processes involved in its own 'becoming', its own history and causative processes, which emerge out of the conflict intrinsic to differance; indeed, if it were to grant proper recognition to its own differance, the agent would, like Hamlet's pithy and momentous enterprises, 'lose the name of action'. But the act of censoring is itself a product of differance and so cannot escape the latter's dissembling guile. What Derrida (1978a: 227) calls the 'punctual simplicity of the classical subject' that is capable of rational self-control, turns out, on further inspection, to be nothing more than an effect of differance. For example, Elias (1978) has shown that such self-control, while 'appearing in the consciousness of the individual as the result of his own free will' (p. 150), is, in fact, the product of increasing social differentiation which exerts itself through an automatic censoring process and is therefore quite definitely not under the individual agent's own control. Furthermore, this 'self-control' is continually subject to the vacillations of undecidability, for the more closely the ideal of self-control is approached and the stronger the habits that support it, then the more routinized and fixed actions become, leaving less room for adaptive self-control. Derrida's conception of agency is therefore more like a field of interacting forces dominated by differance: 'The subject of writing is a *system* of relations between strata: the (Magic) Pad, the psyche, society, the world. Within that scene, on that stage, the punctual simplicity of the classical subject is not to be found. In order to describe the structure, it is not enough to recall that one

always writes for someone; and the oppositions sender–receiver, code–message, etc., remain extremely coarse instruments' (Derrida 1978a: 227). The subject here is written by a wider and looser community of terms than the logocentric functions we normally use to capture the supposed rationality of the 'classical subject'. If the agent appears only in a loose community of 'differantial' terms, it can perhaps be said to disappear when it sees itself as a specific, integumented presence. This, at least, is the position that Elias (1978) comes to after a meticulous analysis of the role of the human agent in sociological analysis. The history of human thought shows human agency to have been always interpreted in terms of the 'metaphysics of presence' (Derrida 1978a: 196–231). The scientific abandonment of the geocentric world-picture for the heliocentric view did not radically challenge the self-centredness of human thinking: 'Often this transition is presented simply as a revision and extension of knowledge about the movements of the stars' (Elias 1978: 254). More than new discoveries, more than a 'cumulative increase in knowledge about the objects of human reflection' (Elias 1978: 255), were needed to decentre the persistence of the metaphysics of presence at work in the geocentric perspective. 'What was needed above all was an increased capacity in men for self-detachment in thought. Scientific modes of thought cannot be developed and become generally accepted unless people renounce their primary, unreflecting, and spontaneous attempt to understand all experience in terms of its purpose and meaning for themselves' (Elias 1978: 255). A necessary component of such scientific decentring is the increased control over affects and the awareness of their influence in cognition and analysis. In the modern period, men have attained a certain stage of self-detachment but 'they are not yet able to detach themselves sufficiently from themselves to make their own self-detachment . . . the object of knowledge and scientific enquiry' (Elias 1978: 256). This is the precise point where the punctate, classical subject loses itself as the object of its own enquiry, for 'the detachment of the thinking subject from his objects in the act of cognitive thought . . . did not appear to those thinking about it at this stage as an act of distancing but as a distance actually present . . .' (Elias 1978: 256). The subject's self-detachment is viewed as an already accomplished fact, a magical instance of metaphysical presence which refuses to examine its own pedigree. In order to reclaim itself as active agency, the subject has to view itself *in the act of distancing*. In Derridean terms, this is exactly the function of deconstruction which shows agency to be an enigmatic process that denies the very thing that gives it life, oscillating forever between difference and differance.

Organizational Analysis

Writing, for Derrida, is primarily a form of control; its communicative function comes second to this. It is the control aspect of writing that makes it central to

organizational analysis. According to Giddens (1985), formal organization finds its true nature in the formalization of the written word. Giddens quotes the time-table as 'one of the most significant of modern organizations' (Giddens 1985: 174): 'Thus, rather than the steam train, it is Bradshaw's directory . . . that epitomizes modern transportation' (Giddens 1985: 175). The first writing grew out of administrative contingencies in the ancient world where it recorded mainly business and statistical information. Derrida (1976) locates the emergence of formalized writing in the agrarian capitalism of the ancient world where it served to stabilize the hierarchical order of 'a class that writes or rather commands the scribes' (Derrida 1976: 86) in written balance accounts. Writing thus becomes inseparable from the division of labour in society and the inscription of solid foundations.

The specific connections between writing and the division of labour can be more clearly seen in Latour and Woolgar's (1979) study of scientific work in a biochemical laboratory. Basing their analysis on Derrida's conception of writing as a technique of 'inscription', Latour and Woolgar show how the entire social organization of the research activity revolves around the physical act of inscription carried out by the laboratory apparatus. Most of this apparatus functions as 'inscription devices' designed to transform material substances — a chemical, rats' brains, sections of muscle — into figures, graphs, diagrams, reports, which represent the 'writerly' end-products of the scientist's work. A significant feature of these inscribed end-products is that, once they become available, 'all the intermediary steps which made their production possible are forgotten' (p. 51). In other words, inscription is viewed not as a means of constructing the product but rather as a device for communicating the product's existence: 'Inscriptions are regarded as having a direct relationship to the "original substance". The intervening material activity and all aspects of what is often a prolonged and costly process are bracketed off in discussions about what the figure means. The process of writing articles about the substance thus takes the end diagram as the starting point' (Latour and Woolgar 1979: 51).

Scientific statements begin life as tentative and uncertain inscriptions. Eventually, the 'successful' inscriptions move beyond their materialist, graphic status and end up as 'ideas', 'theories' and 'reasons'. In this process, as Latour and Woolgar constantly remind us, the 'craft' basis of scientific production is forgotten or repressed: 'Our argument is not just that facts are socially constructed. We also wish to show that the process of construction involves the use of certain devices whereby all traces of production are made extremely difficult to detect' (p. 176). Two steps are apparently responsible for this mental sleight-of-hand: (1) *the splitting of the statement*, and (2) *its inversion* — a process which, significantly, reproduces the operations of the Magic Writing Pad used by Derrida to depict the micro-logic of writing.

In the first step, 'the statement becomes a split entity': (1) a set of words which represents a statement about an object, and (2) the object which is assumed to exist independently of the statement. Scientists *begin* with written statements.

Then there appear objects *and* statements about these objects. 'Before long, more and more reality is attributed to the object and less and less to the statement *about* the object. Consequently, an inversion takes place: the object becomes the reason why the statement was formulated in the first place. At the outset of stabilization, the object was the virtual image of the statement; subsequently, the statement becomes the mirror image of the reality "out there"' (pp. 176–177). In addition, the past also becomes inverted, for the object has been there all the time, just waiting for the scientist to come along and notice it.

Latour and Woolgar's analysis then shows how the social organization of the laboratory reflects the technical base of writing or, to be more precise, how the social division of labour repeats the actual operations of division intrinsic to the writing process, i.e., separation and inversion. Just as Derrida (1978a: 227) described the 'subject' of writing as a *system* of relations diffused among the different strata of Magic Writing Pad, psyche, society, and the world, so Latour and Woolgar show how the laboratory and its research environment are pervaded at every level by writing and its effects: separation and inversion not only organize the specific products of laboratory writing but research and ancillary workers are also subjected to the operations of division which *writing imposes on them as writers*, thus demonstrating Derrida's dictum that we are written as we write. Authority and position, group dynamics and structure, depend significantly on the power of researchers to construct credible accounts of the writing process, and the latter effectively means the suppression of the subjective and contingent in favour of the objective and the established in both the social and technical divisions of labour in the laboratory organization. By revealing the division of labour at work in the micro-logic of writing, Latour and Woolgar also show that 'formal organization' is a phenomenon to be explained and not to be taken routinely. 'Routine' approaches to the study of organization rely unreflectively on a conception of writing that represents an already constituted object from which the 'construction' function of writing is excluded. The object thus becomes a primary reference which can then be simply re-presented by a 'model' or a 'theory'. As we have seen, Latour and Woolgar's analysis reveals that the supposed 'primary reference' of representation is really a construction of the writing process and therefore comes *after* the latter and *not before* as the 'logic' of representation would have us believe.

The representational mode of analysis in organizational writing has been critiqued by Degot (1982). Degot singles out the concept of 'representation' as a key factor in the study of organizations, but places it in question in much the same way as Latour and Woolgar do. He argues that while it is generally assumed that orthodox organization theorists study organizations that are actually 'out there' in the real world, it can be shown that this often is not the case. The 'reality' of this literature is that the organization is a cultural object which is the product of a prior model. In effect, what the theorist sees is not the model as a representation of the organization but the organization as a

representation of the model. Degot instances the systems model of Katz and Kahn (1966) to illustrate this point: '. . . the results produced present a relatively tautological structure: the organization is a system ruled by the system's laws: the variables identified in this system are created by laws whose form is such precisely because the organization is a system' (Degot 1982: 637). Similarly, the work of the Aston Group (e.g., Pugh, Hickson, Hinings and Turner 1969; Child 1972) relects not so much the real world of organizations, but rather the methods which come to represent those organizations. Psychological approaches to the study of the individual in the organization — whether based on behaviouristic learning theories or hierarchies of needs — are also afflicted with this paradox of representation. All these approaches are contaminated by a 'metaphysics' of representation which gives priority to an unexamined, taken-for-granted model or method which serves to 'represent' the organizational reality; they do not stop, therefore, to examine their own 'construction' practices: 'The construction of the object results from the application of a theory to the real world; the constructed object exists (has sense) only in relation to this theory . . .' (Degot 1982: 630).

A related issue (though not directly raised by Degot) concerns the nature of organizational analysis as an academic product of the university organization. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) have argued that the role of the university is to *reproduce* the control structures of society and that its claim of academic freedom is therefore largely illusory. As a reproducer of control, the university cultivates a representational mode of research and teaching which, by definition, cannot be radically critical since it rests on logocentric norms of purity and rectitude. The key issue here is the status of writing (including representing) and how it is dealt with in the academic system. The function of the academic division of labour and its representational discourse is to police the effects of writing — undecidability, metaphorization — by maintaining the distinctions between disciplines and the order within them. It is this moral economy of good behaviour that is taught and reproduced in research rather than the quest for enlightenment and truth with which the university is traditionally associated: 'Naturally destined to serve the communication of laws and the order of the city transparently, a writing becomes the instrument of an abusive power, of a caste of "intellectuals" that is thus ensuring hegemony, whether its own or that of special interests . . .' (Derrida 1979: 124). Organizational analysis in the representational mode is therefore fated to reproduce in its discourse the very structures that give academic organization its communicative power and this is why one can describe systems theory as being tautological and criticize 'empirical' studies of organization for merely 'mimicking' their subject matter. As Latour and Woolgar's (1979) work suggests, a 'deconstruction' of the representational approach shows 'copy' and 'original' to be implicated in each other and therefore to be intrinsically inseparable.

Another version of this argument has been presented by Frug (1984) in a deconstruction of bureaucracy theories. Frug shows that the conceptions of

bureaucracy used by organization theorists and scholars of corporate and administrative law are structured around the binary opposition of subjectivity/objectivity. Every effort is made by the theorists to secure a firm foundation for their conceptions by keeping subjectivity and objectivity separate from each other in order to objectify bureaucratic organization. Frug's criticisms thus repeat Elias' (1978) charge that social scientists are 'concerned far more with the problems of the object of knowledge than with the subject of knowledge' (p. 256) as well as Latour and Woolgar's (1979) demonstration that the 'object' of scientific research was the elimination of subjective and contingent factors in the development of knowledge and formal organization. Using Derrida's concepts of 'supplementarity' and 'undecidability', Frug shows that subjectivity/objectivity, like the double-term constituting Plato's *pharmakon*, continually threaten each other's separate identity and therefore must confound all attempts to make them serve as the firm foundation for a 'theory'. The 'theories' of bureaucracy theorists are essentially 'writings' and are therefore subject to the logic of division or differance that characterizes Derrida's conception of writing: they are motivated to hide their internal divisions in the interests of control and stable social order. These are big stakes because 'knowledge' by itself is not the key factor but the *status* of the theorists themselves in the hierarchy that reproduces itself (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Derrida 1979): knowledge and hierarchy 'supplement' each other. In short, the 'theories' explain and justify large-scale bureaucratic power. Frug argues that the theoretical justifications of bureaucratic organization have committed themselves to two tasks: (1) to defend bureaucracy against the fear of domination by showing that bureaucratic power is based on objectivity, i.e., 'neutrality' and 'pursuit of a common purpose'; since objectivity is 'neutral' and 'shared', subjective, personal values have to be treated as inconsistent with it: 'Objectivity is so important to the security of those threatened by the organizational structure that it must not be infected by its antithesis, subjectivity' (Frug 1984: 1286); (2) to show, *nevertheless*, that bureaucracy does enable personal freedom and self-expression by, for example, emphasizing the will of constituents to 'ensure that the bureaucracy does what they want it to do' or the freedom of officials to use their own knowledge and experience in their work; thus 'subjectivity in organizational life must be protected from the demands of objectivity' (Frug 1984: 1287). All the theories of bureaucratic legitimation 'share a common structure: they attempt to define, distinguish, and render mutually compatible the subjective and objective aspects of life. All the defences of bureaucracy have sought to avoid merging objectivity and subjectivity — uniting the demands of commonness and community with those of individuality and personal separateness — because to do so would be self-contradictory. Moreover, it has never been enough just to separate subjectivity and objectivity; each must be guaranteed a place within the bureaucratic structure' (Frug 1984: 1287). But because of the 'supplementary' relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, in which each term is necessary to, and yet at the same time threatens, the identity of the other, Frug

is able to show that the theoretical project of separating and making them compatible is doomed to failure from the start.

Within organization theory, Frug identifies two major theoretical defences of bureaucracy: the formalist and expertise models. Based on the metaphor of the machine, the formalist model is defined in terms of its instrumental relationship to predetermined ends, its technical design, and its symbolic association with modern efficiency. In this model, bureaucracy is simply a machine for realizing its constituents' — citizens' or shareholders' — ends; it is 'based on the categories of instrumental rationality: it sharply distinguishes values and facts, ends and means, desire and performance. Values, ends, and desires — the subjective part of the human personality — are the attributes of the constituents who control the bureaucracy rather than the bureaucracy itself. The bureaucracy is "objective": it cannot exercise threatening discretion because it merely responds to constituents' commands. If the shareholders say, "Maximize profits" or the legislators say, "Eliminate dangerous health hazards", it does so. These directions are "formally realizable" — they impel the bureaucratic official to respond to a multitude of fact situations in a way determined by the directive itself' (Frug 1984: 1298–1299). By separating the objective and subjective in this way, the formalist model ensures the best of both worlds: the technical division of labour tuned to respond to constituents' needs with maximum efficiency which, at the same time, permits constituents to choose and pursue their own goals, totally free from bureaucratic impediment. At this point in the analysis, Frug shows that the formalist model can only work if it supplements objectivity with subjectivity: 'To be objective, the bureaucracy has to carry out the wishes of its constituents, but to do so it must refer to their general intentions ("maximize profits") or their specific commands ("fix prices"). Any application of (constituents') commands to specific situations requires the exercise of bureaucratic subjectivity — deciding what the words mean, what their purpose is, or how their meaning and their purpose can be made consistent with each other. Implementers cannot grasp other people's wishes in a way unmediated by their own consciousness' (Frug 1984: 1312–1313). The model assumes that the bureaucracy will work objectively to implement constituents' wishes but that it requires, as a necessary supplement, the exercise of discretion in order to reach these objectives. As Frug shows, this step destroys the objective emphasis of the model since the latter has no means of limiting the discretion once it is admitted: 'The idea of objectivity cannot by itself limit the discretion because bureaucratic objectivity includes within its meaning the need for bureaucratic subjectivity. Without limits, however, discretion threatens to become the exercise of arbitrary power. Paradoxically, the only apparent way to limit this discretion is through the discretion itself' (Frug 1984: 1313). In this way, the formalist model subverts its own basic premises: 'Bureaucratic organization loses its machinelike character and becomes one of the decision-makers — a decision-maker whose discretion the formalist model cannot defend' (Frug 1984: 1315). Hence, the model suffers the same fate as Plato's campaign against

the *pharmakon* of writing, which turns out to be a necessary evil, full of strange tricks, but which Plato cannot do without.

The expertise model of bureaucratic organization was invented to compensate for the subjective deficiencies of the formalist model. The expertise model pictures the bureaucratic organization as a 'natural community' organized around a common purpose and which depends more on the psychology of its members than on the formal realizability of its rules. . . . People function within the bureaucracy with their whole personality and not just their rational, objective side. . . . As a consequence, organizational success depends on the creation of a successfully integrated organization personality, not on rationalist schemes to rid the organization of subjective discretion' (Frug 1984: 1319). Within the organization, the executive functions to lead, inspire and energize subordinates in the effective pursuit of their common purposes; the executive is an expert in group management and in the husbanding of human resources. Despite the priority given to subjectivity in the expertise model, it is recognized that experts' 'subjective' decisions are confined within objective boundaries; since these boundaries 'endanger the ability to exercise the necessary discretion, (they) must not assume the place of the rulelike, mechanistic restraints that made formalist bureaucracy undesirable and unworkable' (Frug 1984: 1331). Formalist objectivity must therefore be moderated by perfecting the 'discipline of professionalism', but, again paradoxically, the so-called objective qualities of professionalism which are assumed to exist somewhere outside the individual, are necessarily qualities that the expert himself helps to define: '. . . the objectivity of the expertise model can be defined only by its purported antithesis, subjectivity' (Frug 1984: 1331).

Frug's account of the vacillating relationship between subjectivity and objectivity in the formalist and expertise models illustrates the movement of Derrida's idea of differance as a 'doubled' term which cannot be grasped as a singularity and in which, therefore, one aspect of the 'double' always has to be *deferred*. This naturally creates problems for the theorist whose goal is to present a bureaucratic model based on sure foundations but, as Frug shows, a deft process of deception is maintained to protect the model's certainty. If, for example, theorists find that the concept of expertise is 'too manipulable to ensure objectivity, they can assume that the objectivity necessary to curb managerial power can be found elsewhere' (Frug 1984: 1379) — in the formalist model. But when they examine the formalist model, they see how unreliable it is as a standard for objectivity. Their normal reaction to this further denial of theoretical certitude is to assume that objectivity must be somewhere else.'The same sort of deferral pervades the attempt to locate subjectivity somewhere: if it doesn't seem to be where one is looking,one can act as if it is safely lodged in another part of the system' (Frug 1984: 1379). Adding the models together — (Frug also discusses two other theories of bureaucracy — the 'judicial review' and 'market/pluralist' models — derived from administrative and corporate law) — enables theorists to defer endlessly the intrinsic intractability of the problem and so comfort themselves — for the time being. The deferral process

is further explained by Frug in terms of Crozier's (1964) hypothesis that the reason for building bureaucracy is the evasion of face-to-face relationships which necessarily involve power and dependency. All Frug's models are themselves now to be seen as forms of evading the power problem by suggesting that relationships can be made unthreatening through some appropriate organizational arrangement. Mannheim's (1936) argument that 'the fundamental tendency of all bureaucratic thought is to turn all problems of politics into problems of administration' is cited as yet another version of this deferral process. The result of this step to moderate the problem of power is actually to disguise it as 'formal organization'; this merely 'conceals the exercise of personalized, human domination in the organizations within which we work and live' (Frug 1984: 1382).

Frug's deconstructive analysis of bureaucracy and the 'theories' which defend it can now be understood as expressions of the role of writing in human institutions. As we have seen, writing and the division of labour go hand in hand; social relationships reflect the micro-logic of the writing process. Intrinsic to this process is the necessity of control, and specifically the idea that division (the separation and inversion processes described by Latour and Woolgar 1979) *includes* the writer and his/her social world. Writers of every kind are compelled to write within the socio-technical structures that writing creates. Hence, formal organizations and the theories which represent them are necessarily implicated in the division of labour intrinsic to writing. Writing and its various movements — undecidability, supplementarity, differance — thus become central to the understanding of formal organization and its critical analysis.

The affinity between writing and the division of labour also marks the area of common concern between Derrida and Foucault, the subject of an earlier paper by Burrell (1988) in this series. Less concerned with the micro-logic of writing than Derrida, Foucault's (e.g., 1977) analyses of writing and the development of areas of professionalized, objective knowledge in modern institutions nevertheless complement and support Derrida's thesis that writing and the socio-technical division of labour are implicated in each other at all levels. Foucault refers to this synthesis as *knowledge-power*. The function of knowledge-power is to create and sustain a system of 'objective representations' based on separation and inversion (Latour and Woolgar 1979), i.e., the operation of division for Foucault is significantly bound up with the act of 'seeing' in which 'vision' is an intrinsic component of 'division' (Derrida has also analyzed this relationship: see Ulmer 1985: 32–36). The pursuit of visibility was advanced, as Foucault (1977) notes, through the introduction of the 'examination', a technique which combines the power of an 'observing hierarchy' with that of a 'normalizing judgement' in a 'network of writing' which captures and fixes its objects. Against this background of writing and visibility, Hoskin and Macve (1986) have traced the history and development of accounting out of the technology of the examination. Accounting is that branch of modern management which has capitalized on the two most obvious features

of the visibility of writing — *instantaneity* and *distance*; in other words, writing enables information to be made available *at a glance* and in a *depersonalized* form (i.e., free from the possibility of contamination by undecidability and differance). Working within the general context of Derrida's and Foucault's work, Hoskin and Macve reveal accounting to be a product of the writing/division-of-labour synthesis centred on the universities: the 'examination, discipline and accounting are historically bound together as related ways of writing the world (in texts, institutional arrangements, ultimately in persons) into new configurations of power' (p. 107). These new ways of re-writing the social world date conceptually from antiquity, but their influence was limited until medieval times when a 'new knowledge élite appears, centred around the nascent universities' (p. 109). The new élite of clerks and masters produces 'a vast new range of pedagogic re-writings of texts, i.e., techniques which grid texts both externally and internally in the service of information-retrieval and knowledge-production' (p. 109).

The point of Hoskin and Macve's analysis is to reveal the power of accounting as 'grammatocentric organization' to create a specific form of knowledge (knowledge-power) which subjects individuals to a fixed and determinate visibility. As such, it is a specific example of a more general trend in modern society: the development of knowledge-power by means of professionalization. In fact, Hoskin and Macve characterize accountancy as a profession that is squarely founded on the knowledge-power of accounting technology. The implication here is that the professions are those groups in society that are accredited with the task of creating and maintaining the appropriate visibility or objectivity of social agents through such techniques as the examination. Writing is therefore viewed as performing the same function as Derrida noted in antiquity: the preservation of a hierarchical order of 'a class that writes or rather commands the scribes' (Derrida 1976: 86). Furthermore, this point is at least implicitly recognized in modern organization theory where 'complexity' and 'formalization' as definitive features of organization (and therefore the division of labour) are strongly associated with professionalization (Hall 1982). However, these studies lack the deconstructive cast that Derrida brings to the analysis of writing, and without this they are liable to give the impression that the formalized writing of the professional is firmly founded and therefore largely unproblematic. Frug's (1984) deconstruction of professional social science writing on bureaucracy shows that the firm foundations of 'theory' are continually deconstructed by the vacillating 'supplement' of writing which forces the theorist to continually defer theoretical certitude. Similarly, Samuel Weber's (1982) deconstruction of professionalism as social practice clearly shows that the professional's knowledge-power is also based on the deferral ruses noted by Frug (1984) in the writings of bureaucracy theorists and the techniques of separation and inversion identified by Latour and Woolgar (1979) in the construction of scientific knowledge. All this serves to remind us that professionalized knowledge in the modern world suffers from a preoccupation with what Elias (1978) has called, as we noted earlier, the

'object' of knowledge rather than its 'subject'. Derrida's work shows how this reversal can be realized through the recognition of 'writing' as the true subject of knowledge. Within the specific context of organizational analysis, as I have tried to show, this means that the 'writing of organization' must be overturned in favour of the 'organization of writing'.

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