



An Essay about a Philosophical Attitude in Management and Organization Studies Based on Parrhesia

Jesus Rodriguez-Pomeda¹ 

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Abstract

Management and organization studies (MOS) scholarship is at a crossroads. The grand challenges (such as the climate emergency) humankind must face today require an improved contribution from all knowledge fields. The number of academics who criticize the lack of influence and social impact of MOS has recently grown. The scientific field structure of MOS is based on its members' accumulation of symbolic capital. This structure hinders speaking truth to the elite dominating neoliberal society. Our literature review suggested that a deeper interaction between MOS and philosophy could aid in improving the social impact of MOS. Specifically, an attitude by MOS scholars based on parrhesia (παρρησία, to speak truth to power) could revitalize the field through heterodox approaches and, consequently, allow them to utter sound criticisms of the capitalist system. Parrhesia would lead MOS scholars towards a convergence of ethics and politics. We investigate whether daring to speak inconvenient truths to the powerful (some peers in the field and some individuals and corporations in society) can be a straightforward tool for revitalizing MOS. Boosting a candid philosophy-MOS interaction requires the fulfilment of three objectives: practical dialogue between these fields, reconsideration of the fields' structures based on symbolic capital, and a post-disciplinary approach to philosophy. That fulfilment implies the delimitation of the MOS-philosophy interaction, a respectful mutual framework, mutual curiosity, and moving from prescriptive theoretical reflection towards more socially useful MOS. Ethical betterment through parrhesia could be the key to surpassing MOS stagnation.

Keywords Management · Organization studies · Philosophy · Dialogue · Attitude · Parrhesia.

✉ Jesus Rodriguez-Pomeda
jesus.pomeda@uam.es

¹ Dept. of Business Organization, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Autonomous University of Madrid), Room E-8-310, 5, Francisco Tomas y Valiente St., Madrid 28049, Spain

Introduction

Management and organization studies (MOS) suffer from a growing disconnection with the great contemporary problems voiced by many authors who advocate a new academic practice for increasing the discipline's social impact. MOS do not quickly adapt to emerging social needs. Like other disciplines, MOS are structured as a scientific field. Some ego-centric academic interests pursue the accumulation of symbolic capital by each academic (Bourdieu 1975, 1984). The field is hierarchized based on the symbolic capital each scholar possesses. Those occupying high positions in the field are legitimized to establish research agendas and distribute resources. The “Matthew effect” (Merton 1968, 1988) reinforces the power of these people, further increasing their symbolic capital.

Therefore, rebalancing the ethical and political approaches of MOS academics would mitigate the centralized control of scientific activity related to the stagnation of MOS. The aim would be “to rebuild an environment in which the selfless search for truth and knowledge is once again enshrined as the central purpose of academic life” (Tourish 2019: 251). The truth (and its practice) appears at the confluence between ethics and politics. Consequently, parrhesia can contribute to overcoming the limitations representing established practices and ideas in every scientific field (including MOS). Moreover, parrhesia, in deviating from the doxa, can spread innovative ideas. Indeed, parrhesia requires courage to produce ideas that challenge the status quo.

Remarkably, the power exercised by scientific authorities is projected through their control over publications in academic journals. They define the prevalent metrics of symbolic capital (and, consequently, those determining the scientific authority of each academic) based on the number of publications and citations in high-ranked journals. Consequently, the current problem of MOS has an external manifestation (decrease in its social impact compared to other fields in a world defined by the so-called “grand challenges”) and an internal one (scientific sclerotization preventing adequate reaction to external changes). In this essay, we propose a revitalization of MOS by spreading an ethical attitude based on parrhesia among its academics. The aim is to develop an internal dynamic for MOS that guarantees the search for truth, democratizes the field, and allows it to recover lost scientific rigour. Therefore, MOS scholars should reconsider their attitudes and scientific procedures.

Such attitudes and procedures have—on occasion—several flaws, such as “questionable research practices” (QRPs), including data fraud, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, p-hacking (inappropriate null hypothesis analysis), and HARKing (hypothesizing after test results are known) (Tourish 2019). Certain consequences of some of these defects have been observed since the late 1950s: greater fragmentation of the field together with an exaggerated emphasis on research methodology involving the exclusion of validity or relevance (Starbuck 2003: 442).

MOS could thus use the talent of all their members (not only those with the highest scientific authority) to effectively contribute (along with other fields) to overcoming the “grand challenges”. “Grand challenges” are “formulations of global problems that can be plausibly addressed through coordinated and collaborative effort.” (George et al. 2016: 1880). Considering the huge damaging effects of inadequate treatment of these challenges, it is advisable to adopt a prudent, precautionary approach to them. Additionally, some of those challenges (such as the climate emergency) will affect further generations. Thus, careful ethical considerations by present generations will avoid irreversible effects for newcomers.

Such a contribution requires MOS members to behave outwardly as parrhesiastes; this implies the same courage in defending the truth as they must use inwardly. The reason is clear: the “grand challenges” derive from the neoliberal economic system currently dominating the world and run by an elite (individuals and corporations) acting exclusively in their own interests. Therefore, parrhesia represents a link between the ethics of MOS academics and the political spheres in which they operate (within the scientific field and externally in society overall).

Consequently, revitalizing the philosophical perspective at the origins of MOS (Jones and ten Bos, 2007a; Mir and Greenwood, 2022) would allow its scholars to integrate its ethical premises more deeply with the political effects of their work. The philosophical perspective is not new in MOS since these studies have been considering ideas from epistemology or ethics, among other fields. However, ironically, ethics has been considered more as an object of study within organizational activities than as a crucial element in reflecting on the development of the scientific field.

MOS researchers’ freedom and responsibility reinforce the crucial importance of their professional ethics (Tsui and McKiernan 2022). A scientific practice based on deeper integration of ethics and politics would improve the contribution of MOS to solving the problems afflicting contemporary societies. Therefore, an ethic of speaking the truth, even if this means confronting the powerful, would help stop any temptation to complacency. Indeed, MOS academics are responsible for criticizing everything that delays the advancement of knowledge, both in an epistemological sense and in social practice.

In addition to the presence of philosophy in the origins of MOS, the need to revitalize the philosophical attitude of MOS academics is explained by two other arguments: all scientific activity has ontological, ethical, and epistemological roots, and, like any activity developed in society, it has political consequences.

In our view, increasing the interaction between MOS and philosophy activities would require—among others—achieving three objectives: exploring a practical dialogue between philosophers and MOS scholars, reconsidering the dynamics of symbolic capital accumulation in both fields, and facilitating the transmission of ideas from the philosophy through its “de-disciplination” (Frodeman 2013).

Firstly, through a practical dialogue with contemporary philosophers (especially those concerned with social ontology), MOS authors could benefit from a richer and deeper perspective on contemporary humans and societies. After a short review of the present MOS situation in Sect. 2, we address the four premises for building such a dialogue in the following sections of this essay.

Secondly, overcoming the current dynamics of symbolic capital accumulation in MOS could increase interactions among its scholars (regardless of each other’s symbolic capital) on a more egalitarian and candid basis. This increase (in quantity and quality) in interactions between all types of MOS scholars would probably generate new ideas and scientific approaches. Thus, the relevance and social utility of MOS would grow.

The “de-disciplining” of philosophy concerns philosophers. An interesting effort originates from the so-called “field philosophy”: an engagement with “our common lives” driven by improvisation, non-standard methodologies, working within interdisciplinary teams, focusing on the specificities of actual problems, and adjusting rigour and results to the team partners’ requirements (Brister and Frodeman, eds., 2020).

In this regard, for Frodeman (2013: 1935):

Philosophy, and the humanities generally, should never have become disciplines. (...). A merely disciplined philosophy, where philosophers primarily work with and write for other philosophers, is in the end no philosophy at all.

Adopting a philosophical approach in a sufficiently large group of MOS scholars could lead them to use practices such as parrhesia, which externalize ethical reflection towards a political framework.

This call to renew the ethical commitment of MOS scholars also includes recovering and updating the discipline's philosophical roots since this ethical commitment requires rethinking the discipline's ontological and epistemological dimensions. Determining what the existing organizations are, how they interact with new societies, and how to understand them is essential in the current critical moment.

The remainder of this article has the following structure: after addressing (in Sect. 2) the present situation of MOS (scholarship, managerialism, standstill, and the relationship of their aims with philosophy), we analyze the previous premises (field of interaction in Sect. 3, mutual respect in Sect. 4, reciprocal curiosity between philosophy and MOS in Sect. 5, and a passage from a prescriptive theoretical reflection on an adequate academic practice in Sect. 6). Subsequently, we assess the contribution of philosophy to overcoming the current MOS impasse. Subsequently, we consider how to advance the social utility of MOS, considering the contributions of philosophy to the social sciences through its "de-disciplination" (in Sect. 7). Organizational scholars' practice of parrhesia could offer the field internal and external benefits, internally reactivating scientific rigour and democratizing the field. Consequently, in the external dimension, MOS would improve their social impact by uttering truths in analyzing grand challenges (Sect. 8). We conclude (in Sect. 9, before the conclusions offered in Sect. 10) by proposing the adoption by MOS of a philosophical attitude based on the parrhesiastic asceticism of these scholars.

The Present Situation of MOS

MOS Scholarship and Managerialism

MOS have accumulated contributions from diverse theoretical origins supporting conceptual ambiguities and contradictory in their methodologies, conclusions, and performance proposals (Clegg et al. 2022). MOS have been developed in parallel with the growth of the 'organizational society' as the epitome of the modernist ideal based on reason, progress, and justice (Little 2019; Reed 2006). In 2023, with a world built around the concept of organization, and especially the subset of organizations comprising companies (Chandler Jr 1963; Fligstein 2008), the prevalence of MOS as a dominant institution is closely related to the current modes of production, cultures, and political and ideological frameworks. A leading mainstream MOS scholar as Drucker (1954:1) defends that prevalence:

The emergence of management as an essential, a distinct and a leading institution is a pivotal event in social history. Rarely, if ever, has a new basic institution, a new leading group, emerged as fast as has management since the turn of this century. (...).

Management will remain a basic and dominant institution perhaps as long as Western civilization itself survives.

On the ideological relevance of MOS for actual societies, Ward (2012: 47–48) offers a brilliant statement:

management helped create a moral and rhetorical ordering that defines and ranks people, activities and things in term of their rationality, efficiency, performativity and productivity, while simultaneously legitimating the need for a group of specially trained people to oversee all that defining and ranking.

The consequence is the configuration of managerialism as a dominant institution nowadays. In Ward's words (2012: 48):

[M]anagerialism can be seen both as specific set of ideas and practices that, under the direction of managers, arrange a group's activities in particular efficiency- and production-minded ways and as a broader societal-level doxa that legitimates and expands the need for this particular type of control in practically all settings.

One of the consequences of management diffusion is the growing number of MOS scholars, and, consequently, of their production. Rigorous research on the current number of MOS scholars worldwide is scarce. Among available information on the issue, Ioannidis (2022) considered that 164,428 scholars were working in September 2022 on "Economics & Business" of a total of 9,071,122 scientists worldwide (roughly 1.8% of the total number of scientists then covered in the Scopus publication database). Clearly, "Economics & Business" is not the same as "Management and Organization Studies"; however, it appears a useful starting point to estimate the number of MOS scholars. In the absence of undisputed figures regarding how many scholars work in MOS worldwide, the size of this academic community can be realized based on some available data. The first is the number of members of the Academy of Management (AoM), one of the most relevant learned societies in MOS worldwide. The AoM had over 19,000 members in 2022. This number comprises not only faculty but also students and practitioners.

Second is the relative number of documents published by European authors in collaboration that have been indexed in the Scopus and Web of Science databases in the field of strategic management (only one of the areas covered in MOS) over the last quarter-century. With 1993 as the base year (1993=100%), the relative number of these documents attained more than 3,000% in 2017 (Kosch and Szarucki 2021: 57).

Therefore, it could be concluded that scholars working on MOS are a large and rapidly growing scientific community. However, even when MOS has growing steadily in the recent decades, the social impact of their work has not evolved in the same way. Several authors have denounced the lack of connection between scholars and practitioners, as well as the low credibility, replicability and relevance of MOS research (Biggart 2016; Co-founders of RRBM (2017, rev. 2020); Haley, 2022; Hambrick, 1994; Kieser, Nicolai & Seidl, 2015; Latusek and Hensel, 2022; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Tourish, 2019; Tsui, 2021; Wickert et al., 2021). MOS suffers a specific crisis in "times [that] have not been kind to academia" (Elangovan and Hoffman 2021: 68), and when research impact measurement is under high

scrutiny (Williams 2020). The MOS mainstream approaches to current organizational problems (framed within present day societies) in useful and ethical ways are unsatisfactory (Haley 2022; Tourish 2019; Wickert et al. 2021).

MOS' Stalemate

Climate emergency, recurrent economic crises, growing inequalities in wealth distribution, inefficiencies in organizations, mismatches in the organizational-, meso-, and macro-economic levels of the global economy, the threat of nuclear war, and poor global governance are some of the huge and connected problems facing civilization today. MOS, within its capabilities, should contribute to find solutions for portions of them (Chomsky and Waterstone 2021; Co-founders of RRBM, 2017, revised 2020; Roitman, 2014; Scales Avery, 2009; Tsui, 2021).

Tourish (2019) underlines the stagnation of MOS based on some of these problems. An alternative approach is necessary. This standstill derives from a lack of coherence between current changes in organizations and MOS research aims and methods (Davis 2015). Therefore, MOS has lost its adherence to world affairs, and, consequently, its external mission (Starbuck 2003). The main effect is a growing distrust in MOS (Harley 2019). Consequently, some conscientious MOS scholars have expressed concerns about the reduced relevance of their work to practice (Haley 2022). To address this issue, we examine some points related to the dialogue between MOS and philosophy. A philosophical attitude within MOS could improve the current approaches to 21st -century organizations.

The reason is that an updated philosophical approach implies a “back-to-basics” process within MOS because these studies were, since they began, (i) attentive to philosophical ideas and (ii) concerned with their members’ ethics. As a remarkable illustration of this concern with MOS scholarship ethics, for Tsui (2013: 383), a priority for a socially responsible MOS scholarship is “to seek truth above all other considerations by engaging the literature and the research participants as ethically as possible”.

MOS academic ethics should guide the individual behaviour of the scholars in the field not only towards the external constituencies (e.g., practitioners) but also towards the colleagues and the usual practices existing in this scientific field. Jordan (2013: 252) defines academic ethics as all the “standards of moral behaviour, expressed with reference to ethical theory (e.g., deontology), intended to guide all individuals employed as professionals in or working as staff or students in institutions of education, research, or scholarship”.

However, after a journey of decades, traditional academic values clash with current processes at business schools, universities, and scientific journals (Harley 2019). Therefore, MOS suffers “a series of developments, including an apparent lack of practical or academic impact from most published research, a narrowing of focus in the field, increases in unethical behaviour, the downgrading of teaching, and increased pressure in both publishing and teaching.” (Harley 2019: 286). We believe that, in facing this situation, MOS scholars’ rethinking of ethics and epistemology (as well as politics) is highly advisable.

Harley and Fleming (2021) offer a vivid illustration of the sluggishness of MOS with their analysis of approximately 5,500 articles published in prestigious journals between 2008 and 2018. They found that only 2.8% of them aimed to address the so-called “grand challenges” (such as inequality, climate change, or severe discrimination behaviours) since the MOS academics who work in universities and business schools develop practices that,

interacting with the guidelines for scientific journals, produce a “business school/elite journal gridlock” (Harley and Fleming 2021: 133).

In sum, philosophy can infuse new ideas into MOS, following a general statement by Starbuck (2003: 449):

scientific disciplines develop social structures and codes of behaviour that, despite their fundamental virtues, can stifle innovation, creativity, and progress. To prevent this drift into sterility, scientific development needs punctuation by extra-disciplinary influences.

These philosophical influences have been present in MOS from its origins, as is now evident.

MOS' Aim and Philosophy

Since its inception, MOS has offered guidance about people behaviour within organizations. The phenomenon of organization dominates modern society where people are embedded (Krijnen 2015). Therefore, the presence of organizations within the world deserves clarification.

In a broad sense, it can be considered that philosophy and MOS have consistently been inseparable since acting in the world (and, specifically, in the organizational part of it) requires a philosophical approach (O'Doherty 2007). This does not imply that every agent conducts a prior, concurrent, or subsequent philosophical reflection on their action. Conversely, it means that everything surrounding that action is susceptible to philosophical analysis. Several premises must be specified for the relationship between philosophy and MOS to be more intellectually and socially fruitful from their perspectives. First, the field of interaction must be delimited, as we discuss in the following section. That is, it must be determined what aspects of MOS can enable appropriate dialogues. Among such aspects, social science, epistemology, ontology, and ethics are prominent (for both their scholars and readers). Second, a respectful relationship framework must be established, as we see in Sect. 4. This means overcoming, in the philosophical field, supposed intellectual superiorities of certain philosophers. In the field of MOS, this includes the contempt with which some disqualify philosophy as useless. Several authors call for a deep reflection on the philosophical foundations of MOS. For Tsoukas and Chia (2011: 6):

The need for creating a deeper awareness of the ‘unconscious metaphysics’ underpinning our theorizing efforts is particularly acute in OT [Organization Theory].

The distance between philosophy and MOS is explained by Kaulinkfreks (2007: 40) as follows:

[P]hilosophy is of no use for managers and that it should be considered as a useless activity. By use I mean a means to an end. When stating that philosophy may be useless I mean that philosophy is not a means to an end outside the philosophical activity itself.

Finally, on the preconceived opinion about philosophy's appearance in the sciences, Jackson and Carter (2007: 146) think that.

In an epoch in which knowledge is judged by the dominant criteria of science and utility, this has led to it becoming discredited—the 'end of philosophy' argument (see, for example, Baynes et al., 1987)—and perceived as inferior to science, if not actually useless and irrelevant.

After these considerations about some criticisms on the relationship between philosophy and MOS (and sciences in general), we deal in Sect. 5 with the third premise of our proposal for the advance of the relationships between philosophy and MOS. This premise considers that building reciprocal curiosity should be riveting. Finally, the obstacles preventing movement from prescriptive theoretical reflection to a richer and more powerful academic practice must be understood and overcome, as we analyse in Sect. 6.

The Interaction Field between Philosophy and MOS

We now consider the first premise for constructing a worthy dialogue between philosophy and MOS. This premise is the delimitation of their interaction. In configuring the field of interaction, the first question is whether the world is considered an objective or subjective phenomenon. As O'Doherty (2007) states, this question is posed by Burrell and Morgan (1979: 22) with their famous four possible paradigms for studying organizations (The Sociology of Radical Change: (I) 'Radical humanist' (subjective), (II) 'Radical structuralist' (objective); The Sociology of Regulation: (III) 'Interpretive' (subjective), and (IV) 'Functionalist' (objective)). Philosophers continue the debate about the characterization of the world as an objective or a subjective phenomenon. Some of them even question the mere existence of the world, as shown by Gabriel's (2015) denial of such a circumstance, in accordance with his meta metaphysical nihilism. Connected with German idealism, Gabriel (a figure of growing influence in continental philosophy) seeks a realism rooted in the Habermasian 'unity of reason' that opposes the view of constructivism according to which personal affiliations shape people's thinking (Gabriel 2015: xii-xiii). In his words, (Gabriel 2013: 83)

There is no over-arching structure, no archê governing the whole thing. For one thing, there is no whole thing, no world, but only the frayed plurality of manifold appearing. The world does not exist precisely because everything exists. By not taking place it gives place to everything. And it is even better that the world does not exist, because, things being this way, it is always up to us to negotiate our various decisions as to how to compensate the lack of world—as long as the evanescent flickering of semantic field within nothingness endures.

In MOS, attempts have been made to overcome this ontological pitfall from various theoretical perspectives. As O'Doherty (2007) highlights, Burrell and Morgan's (1979) organizational analysis, influential for decades, incorporates several philosophical connections and derivations. He speaks of the dominance Parsons' 'functionalist sociology' had in the

late 1970s. According to O’Doherty, this was based on a conception of the world as a pre-existing and objective entity comprising structures, categories, and dynamics. That is, the objectivity of social phenomena implies the possibility of analyzing them through the methods of natural sciences. By placing Burrell and Morgan (1979) the mainstream of organizational analysis (especially for those who originated from business schools) in one of the four quadrants of their 2×2 matrix, they enabled MOS to be approached with other mentalities, particularly the postmodern ones. This was also a reaction to the then-dominant orthodoxy forgetting ontological and epistemological questions. The expansion and development of ontology (for example, with the work of the most recent decades on social ontology) and epistemology from the philosophical field would allow further extension of these theoretical characterizations of MOS.

Cognitive obstacles could also hamper MOS-philosophy collaborations. These are (MacLeod 2018: 698).

...the more intellectual and technical cognitive, conceptual and methodological challenges researchers face coordination and integrating background concepts, methods, epistemic standards, and technologies of their respective scientific domains –particularly in the context of collaboration—in order to achieve some benefit for solving specific problems or sets of problems. (...) the domain specific (or ‘disciplinary’) structure of science may play an important role explaining why interdisciplinarity is often so difficult.

The interaction field between MOS and philosophy is related to blurred disciplinary boundaries. Disciplines enact boundaries based on its claims to assert an idea. Other disciplines could want to assess that assertive right. Therefore, interaction between disciplines begins. From a pragmatist’s perspective, both disciplines get involved in a process of reasoning or making inferences. This process allows the claim and its criticism to be contrasted. The consequence is a “warranted assertibility” (Dewey 1938) of the initial claim.

Hence, ontological, cognitive, assertive, as well as the social aspects of scientific practice (as the dynamics of symbolic capital) should be considered to create an actionable interaction field between MOS and philosophy.

Mutual Respect between Philosophy and MOS

After cope with the delimitation of the interaction field, the second premise to develop the more socially fruitful relationship between philosophy and MOS we propose is to nurture mutual respect between philosophy and MOS. This mutual respect requires to agree on the scope of collaboration and a duly assessment of the capacity of each group of academics to make relevant contributions. This is a difficult task since it must avoid the desire for superiority. Such a claim requires overcoming existing habits in the respective academic fields since these habits lead – among other things – to the fragmentation of knowledge and a search for the professional prestige of the academic and their affiliation group. Among recent examples of the search for this mutual respect, from the philosophical field, Krijnen recognized that ‘[N]on-philosophical scientific disciplines and philosophy are intrinsically intertwined’ (Krijnen 2015: 31) and affirmed that ‘[T]he non-philosophical disciplinary

attempts at justification of this presupposed meaning and validity of the concept of organization offer no solution' (Krijnen 2015: 31). One might think this is a philosophical reaction against the role of under-labourer that some MOS authors conferred on philosophy. As Spoelstra (2007: 55–56) indicates,

[W]e might distinguish between two concepts of a radically different nature: philosophical concepts and social scientific concepts. They cannot be translated into one another, yet they affiliate. (...) organization studies tends to understand philosophy as the under-labourer for the social sciences. Philosophy, thus conceived becomes something located outside of organization studies rather than a positive force within organization studies.

Without a change of attitude in many of the members of both fields (philosophy and MOS), it is difficult to envision the necessary cooperation between them. This does not concern invading other territories, but mutual recognition based on different orientations, objectives, practices, and methods. The subordination of one field to another (or scientific imperialism) should be avoided (Persson et al. 2018). MOS-philosophy relationships should attain some integration of knowledge. This integration requires deciding among pluralist and unificationist attitudes to collaboration. For Persson et al. (2018), the pluralist view focuses on transitory interdisciplinary connections, whereas unificationist scholars believe disciplinary boundaries can be surmounted in the long term. Then, cultivating a philosophical attitude in the field of MOS could build bridges. However, authors such as Krijnen do not consider this feasible (2015 : 31):

The *philosophical* justification developed in the debate about the foundations of organization studies within organization studies themselves is not a solution either. Critical realism does indeed show that positivism and social constructionism are inadequate. The ontology of critical realism, however, is inadequate as well. In itself there is nothing peculiar about this inadequacy: in all sciences there are after all good and not so good theories.

Philosophy has useful and less useful theoretical systems. Primarily, based on the colossal challenges societies currently face, the most ethical, prudent, and useful option would be to seek cooperation frameworks between philosophy and MOS. Such cooperation will probably require revising the foundations of MOS using philosophy. However, the current social function of these and the developed academic framework must also be appreciated.

The reasons for a renewed ethical rooting in MOS are twofold: scholars' behaviour and MOS foundations. Regarding MOS scholars' behaviour, their ethical perspective is accompanied by their responsibility as scientists.

For Tsui and McKiernan (2022: 1613), MOS scholars have four types of responsibility: *general ethical* (their behaviour as citizens), *societal well-being* (as advisers to the users of their work), *contextual* (as members of a stakeholder network), and *epistemic* (as trained scientific professionals). However, some current practices could erode their ethical compromise. For instance, the biases observed in top-ranked journals towards theory creation and quantitative methods, together with growing pressures on scholars for publication in those

outlets, drive the homogenization of research (Harley 2019: 288). Nevertheless, grand challenges require open-minded, creative, and offbeat research.

Another reason for a deep ethical compromise within the MOS community is the “disturbingly high incidence [of unethical conduct] in our field” (Harley 2019: 289). Although it is challenging to estimate the diffusion of unethical behaviour in MOS, it appears to have grown in recent years. Alongside some cases of fake research, are the so-called ‘questionable research practices’ (QRP) (Tourish 2019). Of the five studies on QRP revised by Tourish (2019), one of the more interesting is by Bedeian, et al. (2010). This article, based on the responses of 438 management faculty in 104 US Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accredited business schools, found that almost 73% of the respondents reported knowledge of faculty engaging in QRP within the previous year.

Considering MOS foundations, ethics has been involved in different management and organizational areas since the field’s inception, including decision-making and individual and organizational models of action (Griseri 2013). Therefore, reinforcement of ethics reflection by MOS scholars would prevent some undesirable behaviours.

Thus, MOS scholars’ behaviour, epistemological evolution of MOS, and the study of arising phenomena (such as artificial intelligence) promote wide reconsideration of the interaction of philosophical developments on ethics, epistemology, or ontology with MOS. Rabetino, Kohtamäki and Federico (2016) offer an absorbing reflection on this reconsideration related to the foundations of the strategic management field.

That is, it is not a question of rewriting what was elaborated in MOS but reordering its theoretical and practical developments starting from more robust philosophical bases. These bases could originate from social metaphysics, a field still in its infancy (Epstein 2015: 9). However, contemporary philosophical literature collects relevant contributions such as those of Searle (1995, 2010), Toumela (2002, 2007), Gilbert (1989), Bratman (1993), Pettit (1993), List and Pettit (2011), Little (2016), Lawson (2019), Patomäki (2020), and Archer (2013, 2017), in some cases specifically aimed at social ontology. As is evident, also from MOS, it would be advisable to assess the elaboration of an open, humble, and collaborative vision towards philosophy. The field of MOS must discard contempt related to the supposed uselessness of philosophy. It must recognize that, like M. Jourdain, MOS speaks a language linking certain concepts within ideological frameworks typical of philosophical reflection.

A successful and relevant research line explores the relationships between philosophy and MOS (Griffin et al. 2015; Hassard 1999; Koslowski (ed.), 2010), even when MOS sometimes “seems a bit shy to embrace a philosophical orientation” (Mir and Greenwood 2022: 17).

Erkal and Vandekerkhove (2021) offer an interesting analysis of the meta-theoretical discussions on philosophy of management. From that analysis, some trends appear: philosophy of management should adopt an analytic and prescriptive perspective (Laurie and Cherry 2001), need to understand properly systems thinking (Dearey 2002), should be a process philosophy (based on dialogue between philosophers and managers) (Platts and Harris 2011), and should question what management is (Blok 2020).

This article tries to adopt a synoptic view (Gare and Neesham 2022; Broad 1947) of the assimilation of parrhesia within MOS. The aim is to look for some inter-actions between MOS and philosophy considering several complexities present in organizational phenomena. These complexities are boosted by the increasing roughness of current societal chal-

lenges. A respectful relationship between MOS and philosophy is the premise to develop an actionable inter-action to tackle with those challenges.

Nevertheless –as academic fields— philosophy and MOS show dynamics pointed towards a symbolic capital accumulation that can thwart the blossom of parrhesia in academia. Parrhesia should be the key to overcome hesitations observed in MOS when dealing with current challenges.

Another trend within MOS –especially within authors oriented towards consultancy for practitioners— is to appreciate philosophical ideas, but to approximate them in a superficial way. It seems that those authors draw upon philosophy just to garnish their mental framework. So, they disguise that framework (focused only on the business' bottom line) with intellectually prestigious references. An example of this behaviour is Iñiguez (2020).

Finally, as we have said in the introduction, to attain a more relevant inter-action between philosophy and MOS requires thirdly –in our view— the implementation of a reciprocal curiosity amidst both fields. We deal with this issue in the following section.

Building Reciprocal Curiosity between Philosophy and MOS

Curiosity for other fields' novelties is a powerful source of renewal in any discipline. Indeed, “questioning out of curiosity can build new dialogue and open up new methodological avenues” (Kelemen et al., 2019: 3). Questioning is a premise for critique, dialogue, and progress in any knowledge area. Therefore, if MOS and philosophy are concerned with each other's developments, new forms of questioning will arise. Another thought-provoking aftermath of the MOS-philosophy mutual curiosity could be improved concern for societal issues through new methodologies. For Kelemen et al. (2015: 25) “new methodologies could be promoted that not only ensure the co-production of knowledge, but also can engender a ‘giving back to the community’ sensibility.” Philosophy's openness to new methodologies and topics (especially applied topics) will boost its development and social engagement (Brake 2017; Hicks and Holbrook, 2019).

Regarding reciprocal curiosity between philosophy and MOS, the distance that initially appears insurmountable between both fields could be addressed based on the study of specific actions of organizations (which MOS academics observe and analyze). An example is the actions of managers in current organizations and their inability to face problems of a higher order than the organization (like climate change). Such directive action unfolds within a specific paradigm. This dominant paradigm in managing organizations presents limits preventing them from solving that problem; this cannot be disputed because it is incommensurate with other alternative paradigms.

Resulting from the co-evolution of organizations and societies, organizational objectives nowadays are sharply connected with wider issues that –in contrast with the modernist view of the organization—are beyond the mere organizational borders. A clear, interesting and relevant example is ‘open innovation’ (OI). OI has evolved recently as a useful tool to tackle simultaneously with business and societal challenges, as McGahan et al. (2021: 49) say:

...[I]deas, concepts, theory, and practice on open innovation that were developed primarily for business are deeply relevant to address the grand challenges of social impact that now loom as the most important management problems of this century.

Therefore, concrete organizational problems and pending challenges will guide the reciprocal curiosity between philosophy and MOS. However, there is a risk of considering as concrete only that clothed with an adequate appearance of reality. This is the society of the spectacle (Debord 1967/2014: 14, 19):

The society based on modern industry is not accidentally or superficially spectacular, it is *fundamentally spectacular*. In the spectacle—the visual reflection on the ruling economic order—goals are nothing, development is everything. The spectacle aims at nothing other than itself. (...) The spectacle inherits the *weakness* of the Western philosophical project, which attempted to understand activity by means of the categories of *vision*, and it is based on the relentless development of the particular technical rationality that grew out of that form of thought. The spectacle does not realize philosophy, it philosophizes reality, reducing everyone's concrete life to a universe of *speculation*.

Precisely, the consideration of how the knowledge of what is considered real is obtained points again to the epistemologies applied in MOS, specifically, social constructionism. As Böhm indicates, it is typical of social constructionism to consider that conflicts between communities of practice must be resolved at the local level through politics understood as 'dialogue, "language" and conflict management techniques' (Böhm 2006: 129). Referring to the social framework and appealing to the concepts of 'non-synthesis' by Benjamin (1996) and of 'impossibility' by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), he considers that the final integration of the parties in conflict is impossible. The conflict is linked to wide-ranging social and historical elaborations, and 'it cannot simply be solved by establishing dialogue between oppositional parties. Resolving social conflict, that is, bringing about a final synthesis, is impossible' (Böhm 2006: 129). His analysis of Gergen's work (1995) helps Böhm to conclude that his emphasis on the importance of dialogue (2006: 115–116),

[H]ighlights that, in his view, reality is always embedded in conversations and social interactions within communities rather than a pre-existing entity. (...) For these social constructionists, then, language does not reflect reality; instead, it constitutes it. That is, reality is constructed (inter-)subjectively through the communal construction of language, or 'languaging'.

Finally, Böhm (2006) offers a critique from the perspective of the Frankfurt School, based on Adorno's (1967) attack on Mannheim's psychologism (1951), of the discourses of social constructionism. This criticism extends to the approaches of Berger and Luckman (1966), Weick (1995), and Hatch (1997), considering that (Böhm 2006: 121),

Reality is seen as something that is produced by individuals reaching consensus and shared understanding through dialogue. (...) I argued that such views are based on a certain psychologism, which remains blind towards those social structures that endure over time and space and traverse local communities. One of these social structures is, for example, capital that always already shapes reality in specific ways and produces subjectivities along specific lines.

A possible escape from the limit psychologism establishes for the reciprocal questioning between philosophy and MOS could also originate from hermeneutics. In the 20th century, hermeneutics had relevance in some areas of organizations, such as culture, sensemaking, identity, and learning. In this sense, Barrett, Powley, and Pearce (2011: 205) point out that.

With interpretation as a focal point of dialogue and deliberation, forms of dialogue shape meaning systems and action and thereby influence social actors' action with and toward others. Practically speaking, dialogue becomes an actionable strategy by which organizational actors may influence, engage, enable, empower, or whatever suits them.

This dialogue implies an openness towards the other as well as proceeding to a mental openness from the awareness of prejudices (believing that one is alien to prejudices is the greatest of these) held as part of the experience (Gadamer 1960). Can this open-mindedness and overcoming of prejudices enable dialogue between philosophy and MOS in the short term? This would require awareness that, as Spoelstra states, 'A meeting between philosophy and social science is never common sense' (Spoelstra, 2007: 65).

It would be also useful to build and develop adequate platforms for dialogue: journals (such as *Philosophy of Management*), scientific conferences to discuss issues of common interest for philosophers and MOS scholars and learned societies. Improved interactions with philosophers imply rethinking of what it means to be a MOS scholar: through a reflexive process, it becomes evident that approaches questioning the mainstream can revivify this academic field. MOS scholars should not absorb any philosophy study programme but should work from a critical perspective that enables them to overcome the scholastic practices that have sclerotized the field by focusing all efforts on accumulating symbolic capital, that is, gaining positions within the field hierarchy.

This essay addresses a special study of applied ethics related to MOS scholarship; thus, it could be framed within moral philosophy. The main ideas considered here come from Western tradition, as the parrhesia (arising from ancient Greece since c. V BC). However, the main authors in MOS thought could be related to several relevant themes in the Western tradition (heroism, rationalism, positivism, romanticism, existentialism and postmodernism), making its understanding advisable for MOS scholars (Joullié 2016).

A highly remarkable example of dialogue between philosophers and management and organization scholars is the study of parrhesia in MOS. Since the reception in MOS of Foucault's ideas on the knowledge/power bond, different authors within the field have studied the so-called Foucault's third period to consider parrhesia within organizations (Vandekerckhove and Langenberg 2012). Raffnsøe, Mennicken, & Miller (2019) situate parrhesia within Foucault's fourth wave alongside his analysis on subjectivity.

In parrhesia, the subject assumes an active role in the event of the utterance of truth. The relationship between the subject and truth is one of the main axes of Western culture, as Vandekerckhove and Langenberg (2012) explain, offering an interesting reflection on truth and critique within organizations (Vandekerckhove and Langenberg 2012: 35):

Foucault clarified his position towards modern, western analyses of truth through an elaboration of the concept of critique. In practicing resistance towards a dominating truth, a personal truth emerges. Any utterance of critique is speaking a personal

truth (hence the acknowledgement of the subject) but this is done in an organizational context which is a relational and communicative reality. Thus critique in organizations appears as an interactive truth. (...) In foucauldian parlance, an interactive truth appears through the critical judgements which are part of a power game embedded in the organizational praxis.

In the Western philosophical tradition, the presence of truth in organizational activities can be studied from different perspectives, such as German idealism or critical realism, among others (Krijnen 2015). Truth in organizations is a hot issue, with a growing number of applications (authored by MOS scholars, regulators, and practitioners) concerning phenomena like whistleblowing, raising concerns, or the ethical dimension of organizational life (Vandekerckhove and Langenberg 2012). Several academics (Rodriguez-Pomeda and Casani 2022; Skinner 2011; Weiskopf and Willmott 2013) have applied the available knowledge to the study of parrhesia and critique within specific organizational situations, tracing links to not only Foucault but to the different parrhesiastic processes in the ancient Athenian democracies. These works illustrate how MOS scholars and philosophers can obtain mutual benefit from their interactions on parrhesia.

From Prescriptive Theoretical Reflection to Richer and more Powerful Academic Practice

In the introduction, we proposed that the collaboration between philosophy and MOS should deal with four aspects. Firstly, the delimitation of the interaction field. Secondly, the building of a respectful relationship. Thirdly, the implementation of useful modes for enhancing their reciprocal curiosity. The fourth and final aspect of the interaction we propose between philosophy and MOS refers to the passage from prescriptive theoretical reflection to an academic performance consistent with the times. As social fields, both philosophy and MOS reflect the features and behaviours of Bourdieu's accurate analysis of academia (1975: 19).

The “pure” universe of even the “purest” science is a social field like any other, with its distribution of power and its monopolies, its struggles and strategies, interests and profits, but it is a field in which all these *invariants* take on specific forms.

The academic field and the practices developed in it (such as communication and scientific publication or exchanging ideas and dialogues between people and groups) consistently reflect power relationships that must be analyzed contextually (Paasi 2017). The context in which these relationships develop has been characterized as ‘academic capitalism’ (Slaughter and Leslie 1997). This term includes a market mentality (behaviours, attitudes, values) assumed by both academics and the universities and research centres in which they work. This mentality is reflected in the competition for financing from external private sources (companies, foundations, and students). Success in attracting external funds – and the results of scientific publication and the generation of patents – is among the main determinants of academic evaluation. This evaluation sanctions the results of the struggle for control of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1975, 1984).

Specific mechanisms (like mixed conferences) are examples of a useful dialogue between MOS and philosophy scholars. That dialogue, together with Bourdieu's lucid vision concerning the dynamics of academic fields, and recent developments in the sociology of science, widens the understanding of MOS as an academic field.

From Merton's traditional approach (Merton, 1957, 1973) regarding 'Mode 1' of knowledge production, other authors have studied the new contexts in which scientific activity occurs. Thus, concepts such as 'post-academic science' (Ziman 2000), 'Mode 2' (Gibbons et al. 1994), and the 'n-tuples helix' (Carayannis et al. 2018; Park 2014) appear. That is, the literature registers a heterogeneous evolution from modern to postmodern approaches to academic activity. Not all fields of knowledge observe their practices transform at the same speed, even when all are inserted in a social context that presses for a change guided by neoliberal ideology. This change is reflected in the passage from the ethos of modern science (determined by four institutional imperatives: communism, universalism, disinterestedness, organized scepticism – CUDOS –; Merton, 1973: 270) to the postmodern 'industrial science' (proprietary, local, authoritarian, commissioned, and expert, PLACE, Ziman 1995). However, that post-academic or industrial science is also subjected to the attacks of anti-scientific movements that question the role of academics as experts (Porter and Woltenweber 2018).

Post-academic science is 'postmodern in its philosophy' (Ziman 1996: 77), and it has several essential characteristics. Among them are the following: it multiplies the places of knowledge production, opens scientific knowledge to public scrutiny, privatizes academic knowledge, facilitates interdisciplinary research, increases specialization, reinforces the link between science and social needs, and weakens the relationship between curiosity and science (Kellog 2006). The coexistence of areas where academic and industrial or post-academic science predominate makes the hybridization of both possible in a framework of mutual relationships dominated by economic, political, cultural, and social (communicative) factors. Thus, fractures and discontinuities are produced by fields of knowledge, supranational regions, and countries affecting the dialogue and interaction of academics. With different levels of acceptance of the academy-industry overlap, the literature registers emerging concepts concerning their social context, such as 'open science', which affects scientific communication, currently dominated by an editorial oligopoly (Larivière et al. 2015), or 'open innovation' (Smart et al. 2019). The interaction between academic fields may be driven by another new concept, such as that of 'post-academic disciplinarity' (Hellström et al. 2003). Overcoming disciplinary boundaries (and the limitations of any order they entail) is a necessity, according to Böhm (2007: 112), that.

The relationship between philosophy and organization cannot be a linear one, as 'philosophy' and 'organization' themselves are not given constructs. That is, before we can even problematize this relationship, we have to first envisage the destruction of philosophy and organization.

Previously, we argued about the four premises needed –in our view– to construct a relationship amid philosophy and MOS that enhance their social contribution and boost MOS scholarship. Those premises are –regarding both disciplines– the delimitation of their inter-action field, the enablement of a respectful relationship framework, the development

of reciprocal curiosity, and, finally, the movement from a prescriptive theoretical reflection to a more powerful academic practice.

Confluences and interchanges between disciplines are a central issue for interdisciplinary studies. Authors like Mäki (2016) have proposed the development of a new branch of philosophy of science called “philosophy of interdisciplinarity (PhID)”. That philosophy considers that one objective of PhID is to analyze “contactual information” (why disciplines contact others and the specific outcomes of these contacts). This huge work requires the collaboration—among other fields—of social epistemology, social philosophy, and social ontology with philosophy of science. Mäki (2016) believes that this “heavily collective” effort towards the understanding of interdisciplinarity from a philosophical lens should have two initial objectives. The first is to develop a systematic research agenda and the second to publish work jointly authored by philosophers, other scholars, and practitioners. These two objectives are also applicable to interdisciplinary collaborations between philosophy and MOS.

However, if philosophers want to develop interdisciplinary work with other disciplines, the characterization of philosophy should be modified. As Hoffman et al. (2013: 1858) write.

interdisciplinarity can be perceived as a more fundamental challenge to philosophy itself; that is, as a challenge to the self-understanding and self-conceptualization of philosophy as an academic discipline, including its forms of institutionalization with funding procedures, academic careers, course programs, and teaching methods. (...). Philosophy ‘as’ interdisciplinarity calls for intensive and explicit philosophical engagement with ‘the world out there.’

As with all knowledge fields, philosophy has crystalized practices derived from the accumulation of symbolic capital over the years. For Frodeman (2013: 1018), “twentieth century philosophy has been unhealthily insular”, so he calls for “the de-disciplining of philosophy.” Thus, philosophers should actively engage with ongoing problems (and the associated scientific debates). He considers that “[p]hilosophers need to get out of the study, and into the field.” (Frodeman 2013: 1018).

All these proposals could widen the interaction opportunities between philosophy and MOS. Therefore, philosophy could facilitate compromising with MOS. So, although philosophy and MOS have had relevant connections throughout history, the future deepening of their links remains uncertain. We explain below how such a deepening could strongly benefit the advancement of MOS from their present situation.

Interaction with Philosophy as a Means to Overcome the Stagnation of MOS: Dedisciplinizing the Philosophy

The interest of the argument by O’Doherty on the philosophical connections of Burrell and Morgan (1979) (discussed in Sect. 3) illustrates a key question: should MOS be infused with philosophical premises? To answer affirmatively would imply supposing that MOS and philosophy are on the same plane of intellectual work. That is, a fruitful interaction between the two could be considered despite their considerable differences in objectives, approaches, and practices. This aporia could be overcome by specifying the level of interaction to be

achieved between MOS and philosophy. On a radical level, both work on the human, their links with themselves and other human beings, and what contextualizes them. By sharing this radical concern, it has been possible to develop collaborations in different areas, such as ethics or ontology. However, at a more superficial level (that on which MOS and philosophy meet due to their respective academic development), the differences become larger, hindering interaction.

As a social science, MOS have different methodological and teleological horizons from philosophy. Regarding philosophers, the freedom to elaborate new approaches is apparently broader (Laplaine et al. 2019), even when each is framed in a certain philosophical tradition. They appear authorized to unlimitedly expand the tradition they ascribe to, which usually means departing (fighting fiercely at times) from other traditions. For social scientists who cultivate MOS, the degrees of freedom appear smaller since their mental frames are more clearly or apparently more rigidly defined. That is, the epistemological limits of action are expressly proclaimed and would be accepted more submissively.

Both fields (philosophy and MOS) are subject to the institutional (academic) context in which they are cultivated. Therefore, they share the obstacles to freedom of thought typical of their political dynamics (Bourdieu 1975). However, both are losing their real impact on societies as technoscientific change promotes historical transformations. Some philosophers advocate more intense participation in social debates (Epstein 2015), which would require dedisciplinizing the philosophy (Frodeman 2013) and extending their collaborations with other fields of knowledge (Hoffman et al. 2013). That is, their lack of social projection is mainly due to the disciplinary framework despite their strong capacity to open new paths of thought. The dedisciplinizing of philosophy should also regard the nature of the discussions within the field, and its links to reality in a broad sense, as Norrie (2018: 647) says.

[T]he most plausible attempt at a non-partisan, umbrella philosophy has probably been the view that philosophy aims at a theory of the most general features of reality, over and above the particular theoretical domains of the sciences.

On the side of organizational scholars, the debate on the lack of relevance has a long history, which has intensified since the 1980s (Palmer et al. 2009).

This growing lack of relevance relates to, firstly, the definition of the social groups towards which the results of MOS scholars are directed. An important literature current considers that the main group is the managers (Palmer et al. 2009). Second, it relates to generating useful knowledge for managers and its transmission to them (Shapiro et al. 2007). Finally, it relates to the balance between rigour, relevance, and institutional structure (Ben-nis and O'Toole 2005; Gulati 2007). It should also be noted that the managers' training needs, and the results of MOS research that could be useful to them, are also changing. Proof of this is the Rethinking the MBA project undertaken at the Harvard Business School in 2008, one century after its foundation. Such a project, among the imperatives for change in training MBA students, includes concerns for 'research lacks relevance', as well as on "the need for broader research *approaches*" (Datar et al. 2010).

This essay has a worry for the MOS social impact. A more fruitful inter-action amidst philosophy and MOS could pave the way for a higher social impact. This improved interaction could get over the MOS impasse facing the mammoth challenges of this time. In the following section we discuss this issue.

Towards more Useful MOS: Philosophy and Social Sciences

The Social Impact of MOS

One of the symptoms of the crisis afflicting MOS is the growing debate concerning the utility or social impact of their products. Several works have recently addressed this issue, focusing on aspects such as the contributions of organizational development (OD) to organizational change (Cummings and Cummings 2020); the refocusing of the debate on relevance from a more rigorous elaboration of the theory (Kieser et al. 2015); a more complete characterization of the concept of impact, considering its scholarly, practical, societal, policy, and educational dimensions (Wickert et al. 2021); the role of consultants as intermediaries between management science and management practice (Bouwmeester, Heusinkveld and Tjemes, 2021); and a more comprehensive conceptualization of the theory from a typology of the same that includes explaining, comprehending, ordering, enacting, and provoking (Sandberg and Alvesson 2021).

An inextricable relationship exists between academic activities of education and research in MOS, whose impact on societies plagued by injustice, environmental disasters, and scandalous business ethics should be analyzed reflexively (Cunliffe 2020). This educational and research resource comprises criticizing and questioning the premises and practices conventionally assumed in organizations.

One must be careful not to fall into the reductionisms that abound when attempting to extrapolate critical theory to MOS. Thus, with the main reference to the works of Adorno (1998) and Benjamin (1996), it is noteworthy that all criticism, to be so, must be immanent. That is, it must be embedded in the social and political context of the historical moment in which it occurs. In the words of Böhm (2007: 109),

‘Immanent critique’ asks how a phenomenon – for example, a phenomenon of organization – stands in relation to the antagonisms of society, and whether there are any techniques to confront and overcome these antagonisms. Only if one is immanently involved with these antagonisms one can speculate about a way beyond them.

Without losing sight of the immanent criticism, Cunliffe relates reflexivity to foresight and imagination to break the growing reductionism in MOS academic activity through Ingold’s (2011) metaphor of “wayfaring” (Cunliffe 2018). It is interesting to note the echoes existing between Ingold’s wayfaring and Heidegger’s erring: ‘[M]an’s flight from the mystery towards what is readily available, onwards from one current thing to the next, passing the mystery by –this is erring’ (Heidegger 1978: 133).

Both concepts allude to the loss people suffer when wandering, which causes concealment of the truth. In a sense, this tendency towards failure characterizes philosophical activity (Kaulingfreks 2007: 43):

Philosophy is in this sense opposed to science. It is a discipline of failure and is directed to not knowing. Philosophy is the discipline that knows that it does not know. Nicholas of Cusanus explained this paradoxical situation as *docta ignorantia*. (...) Wisdom is to see the borders of our knowledge.

From the viewpoint of scientific research in MOS, it would be necessary to avoid the danger of being irrelevant in the debates that, in society as a whole and all types of organizations, develop concerning the historical challenges humanity faces. If it is considered that the ethical and effective response to these grand challenges implies overcoming a neoliberal mentality, it may be agreed that a new MOS model integrating philosophy is not only convenient but necessary. In effect, philosophy is a useless activity within the dominant ideological framework, considering that useful activities serve to achieve a certain economic end (Kaulingfreks 2007).

Common Sense in the Social Sciences

While the social sciences operate with concepts based on common sense, philosophy analyzes how that common sense is presumed (Spoelstra 2007). What is commonly understood as reality and people's relationship with it would be the caesura between social sciences and philosophy. Now, this caesura could exist only at the level of demand established socially towards the practices and results of social science. If contemporary social science is required to achieve nothing more than a series of developments with more or less relation to reality – as is generally assumed – no philosophical reflection is necessary. However, when the researcher, or certain social groups, are dissatisfied with the socially sanctioned image of reality (that is, when the status quo is questioned), that first level of scientific relationship with reality is insufficient. It is necessary to analyze the overlaps between the different levels of social activity. So, the social scientist should realize a series of acts based on their ethical principles. As explained below, the concept of parrhesia combines these ethical and political dimensions.

The convergence point of our rationale is parrhesia. Academic parrhesia is a powerful tool to renew fields that (as MOS) show a growing social impact depletion. One reason is that to speak truth to the people driving academic fields can be, sometimes, the only way to infuse fresh ideas in the scholastic debates. Another one is to prevent that academic capitalism (through its symbolic capital accumulation) can impose a MOS research agenda focused only on the interests of some agents, like big corporations.

Parrhesia, as an ascetical practice rooted in the ethical betterment of the parrhesiastic (*παρρησίαστες*, who exercises parrhesia), is built on longstanding philosophical workings. But also has a transformative potential on the parrhesiastic's community. The parrhesiastic can serve as a role model for their peers fearful to say what they really think. In times of profound crises (as the ones we are living now in MOS and, more generally, in society as a whole), parrhesia could be the beacon that shed light on new paths. Paths guided by a social members' clear ethical compromise. As Foucault say (1999: 7/67), considering the relationships between parrhesia and politics as them appear in Euripides plays,

...[P]arrhesia is an essential characteristic of Athenian democracy. (...) *parrhesia* was a guideline for democracy as well as an ethical and personal attitude characteristic of the good citizen.

Parrhesia, then, is a mighty lever to revitalize ethical compromises within communities (as MOS scholarship) as well as societies laid at critical crossroads. In the next section we examine this topic.

Parrhesia

In ancient Greece, from c. V BC until c. V AD, the concept of parrhesia developed as an interaction between ethics and the political performance of the individual (Foucault 1999). The parrhesiastic assumes a risk (even death) by telling the truth to the powerful, be it the sovereign or society. Therefore, the behaviour of parrhesiastic links the personal dimension of caring for oneself with the collective dimension of caring for others. The long tradition of studying parrhesia was brilliantly continued by Foucault (1999) as part of his interest in the links between power and truth (Cooper, Ezzamel & Willmott, 2008: 680). The parrhesiastic speaks when and how they deem appropriate, animated by a desire that others act virtuously, in the sense of living their life in accordance with the truth. Starting from this principle of conduct (telling the truth and ensuring others do the same), they adopt a political position without calculating what effects their proclamation will have. They do not harbour rhetorical concerns but honestly and completely state all their thoughts about an issue. With this, they consistently face the established order, whose survival is based on hypocrisy, silence, or flattery. Therefore, they are subversive.

Parrhesia, whose etymological meaning is ‘to say everything’ (Foucault 2004: 36), implies accepting the risk of the reaction of power to reconsider what one can be at each moment. The person who practices parrhesia must ask themselves what they want to be and what they are willing to do to achieve it. It is an act of ethical coherence that requires courage towards oneself and others since, according to Foucault (1999: 2),

In *parrhesia* the speaker emphasizes the fact that he is both the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enunciandum –that he himself is the subject of the opinion to which he refers. The specific ‘speech activity’ of the parrhesiastic enunciation thus takes the form: ‘I am the one who thinks this and that.’

Telling the truth is the essence of parrhesia, and how does a parrhesiastic know that they speak the truth? (Foucault 1999: 3)

To my mind, the *parrhesiastes* says what is true because he knows that it is true; and he knows that it is true because it is really true. The *parrhesiastes* is not only sincere and says what is his opinion, but his opinion is also the truth. He says what he knows to be true (...) there is always an exact coincidence between belief and truth.

Thus, the parrhesiastic tells the truth, puts themselves in danger by doing so, and tells the listener (or listeners) how to behave. That is, they criticize the thinking or actions of another (generally, someone powerful, be it the sovereign or the people). Depending on who this other is, several types of parrhesia can be distinguished: citizen (which only Athenian citizens could exercise publicly), democratic (telling the assembly, gathered in the agora, what they do not want to hear), autocratic (telling the truth to the prince, who, if he does not want to appear a tyrant, is forbidden to ignore or punish the parrhesiastic), Socratic (when Socrates shows the ignorance or bad faith of his interlocutor) and ‘Hellenistic’ (the teacher covertly exposes the truth to their disciple) (Gros 2015: XXX).

Based on the above, it can be deduced that practising parrhesia on the part of the faculty within and from the neoliberal university could be advisable (Rodriguez-Pomeda and

Casani 2022). Firstly, it expresses a personal commitment to the inseparable truth of the teaching function. Secondly, it provokes a political action that aims to modify the behaviour of others to make it consistent with the truth. In a broader sense, the academic field harbours conflicts originating from the quest for power. Those who hold power exercise it to increase the cultural or symbolic capital they treasure (and can transform into other types of capital), prevent other people and groups from taking power from them, and perpetuate it through the co-option of their disciples (Bourdieu 1975).

If, together with these political dynamics, it is considered that the university (and, by extension, the academic field) also shows the characteristics of organizational hypocrisy – dissociation between the triple discourse of the dominant elites, that in which the organizational objectives are proclaimed, that corresponding to the decision-making, and that expressing the execution of the decisions (Brunsson 2002) –, the parrhesia can be a useful action of resistance.

In this context, parrhesia has a special meaning in the field of post-academic research (Hellström et al. 2003; Kellogg 2006; Ziman 2000). In this, the dominant economic agents set the objectives and lines of research deserving finance, seeking their benefit. Once objectives and lines have been established, the academic inner circles manage the research process. They do this by fixing the admissible methods, establishing the working conditions and, especially, controlling who can publish in scientific journals (which, to a large extent, are in the hands of an editorial syndicate (Larivière et al. 2015)), which people and groups have access to the financing of their research activity, and who can hold positions in universities and research centres. The power of these academic inner circles is manifested in the determination of the mechanisms governing the accumulation of academic prestige and the consequent access to the advantages associated with it (however, this prestige as externalization of cultural capital is interchangeable for other types of capital).

Disciplinary knowledge appears to be among the social problems of modernity and post-modernity. The critical theory derived from the Frankfurt School is useful for the understanding of “the literary production of academic discipline.” (Agger 2013: 3). As this author shows, the commodification of knowledge in contemporary universities requires an academic discourse intertwined with the organization of academic disciplines. The scholars dominating a scientific field shape its academic discourse (mainly published in scientific journals). Thus, they can enforce discipline within the field through some specific discourses constituting disciplinary knowledge (Agger 2013).

Disciplinary knowledge is the cornerstone of any scientific field, that is configured (Bourdieu 1975: 19, 25),

As a system of objective relations between positions already won (in previous struggles), the scientific field is the locus of a competitive struggle, in which the *specific* issue at stake in the monopoly of *scientific authority*, defined inseparably as technical capacity and social power, or, to put it another way, the monopoly of *scientific competence*, in the sense of a particular agent’s socially recognised capacity to speak and act legitimately (i.e. in authorised and authoritative way) in scientific matters. (...) Scientific authority is thus a particular kind of capital, which can be accumulated, transmitted, and even reconverted into other kinds of capital under certain conditions.

Academic publishing is at the core of disciplinary knowledge and, consequently, is key for hegemony within a scientific field (Weiner 1998). Therefore, the structure of academic fields, as well as technological changes in academic publishing, call for rethinking of academic publishing, as does the so-called “philosophy of academic publishing” (Peters et al. 2016).

That is the context in which the contemporary academic super-competitive atmosphere unfolds, revolving around anglophone hegemony articulated on a geopolitics/economy of knowledge, uneven writing spaces, and a publishing industrial complex, all within a framework defined by the following key dimensions: global(ization) political/knowledge economy, the state policy transfer (e.g. the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD), neoliberal rationality, globalization of academia, universities’ academic capitalism, claims for internationalization, English as lingua franca, ranking, evaluation and citation culture, entrepreneurial subjectivity, struggle over symbolic capital, and ISI journals’ visibility (Paasi, 2015: 518).

Twenty-first-century organizations are jeopardized by an increasingly intractable environment. MOS responses do not fit with that environment. Thus, a renewal of MOS is needed to build actionable ideas for current organizations and societies. Criticism has been a powerful renewal tool in all scientific fields. Following Foucault, Vandekerckhove & Langenberg (2012: 35) consider that criticism is the lever of an interactive truth within organizational power games.

As power games also characterize scientific fields (including MOS), if conscientious academics (as discussed in Sects. 8 and 9) practise parrhesia as an ethical mandate facing disciplinary knowledge (Agger 2013), disorganization of the MOS dynamic occurs. Seeking truth is the epistemic responsibility of MOS academics (Tsui and McKiernan 2022), and seeking truth (“understood as a linguistic act driven by moral impulse, elicited by a critical perception and formed into a personal judgement”, Vandekerckhove and Langenberg, 2012: 38) requires differentiating between parrhesia and the institutionalized critique within MOS. Institutionalized critique provokes no substantial change in the academic field. However, parrhesia originates from sources differing from that institutionalized critique and has no intended effects (Vandekerckhove and Langenberg 2012: 38 and 40):

The parrhesiastes has no agenda. Her critique is sudden and is one of ‘not this way, without alternatives, without foundation.’ (...) [p]arrhesia in organizations leads to a disorganization of the organizational dynamic, on the condition that others in the organization are prepared to hear the parrhesiastic truth-speaking (...). [i]f the organization is to continue to exist, disorganization is succeeded by a re-organization.

Therefore, if MOS are losing the ability to offer prompt responses to running organizational challenges (Starbuck 2003), parrhesia (linking academics telling and hearing the truth) could launch a much-needed reorganization process in the field. Parrhesia’s moral call resonates in the proposal by Mir, Willmott, and Greenwood (2016: 6 and 10):

[i]t is incumbent on us all to resist continuity and to enact other forms of organizing and organization. Philosophy then becomes a dual act of disruption and creation, leading us back to life itself. (...) [a]n approach to organizational studies and research that decentres the taken-for-granted assumptions populating the ‘common sense’ of our

field (...) invite a more reflective, inclusive and politically sensitive understanding of the working life and its challenges.

Performing parrhesia in the academic field where the academic super-competitive atmosphere occurs implies, as it must, certain risks for parrhesiastics. An illustration of such risks has been offered by Steele (2010) in the international relations academic community. Considering these risks (along with other factors) should explain the growing deterioration of the role of teachers as examples for their students of seekers of freedom, as well as the gradual abandonment of teachers of the practice of speaking and acting together in countries such as the United Kingdom (Tamboukou 2012).

Parrhesia is a disposition to act based on truth to complete this proposal of academic conduct at the intersection between ethics and politics. This proposal is rooted in philosophical thoughts prior to the twelfth century. The separation between theory and practice, between thought and action, occurred much earlier than the relatively recent marketization of academic life and began with scholasticism (Case 2007). There is a longstanding tradition, increased after Enlightenment, of moral improvement through practising (Sloterdijk 2013). The integration between thought and action has already been proposed by various ancient philosophical schools, such as Stoicism (Hadot 1995). Briefly, as Case (2007: 98) states, it would involve emphasizing ‘the importance of leading a virtuous life based on reasoned moral principles’.

Conclusion

Our proposal is not limited to defending a certain philosophical turn in MOS but approaching MOS from a philosophical attitude. The philosophical approach adopted so far in some areas of MOS has focused on discussing theories and concepts, the debate on the meaning and elaboration of knowledge, and, finally, studying ethics in organizations. One current also analyzes the political function of MOS, studying, and expanding, the concept of their social impact. The gigantic challenges facing contemporary societies require a clearer and broader contribution from MOS to maintain their legitimacy. Specifically, the philosophical attitude in MOS would start from the concept that, although they belong to an intellectual dimension other than philosophy, they can share some premises. Above its many differences, any rigorous perspective in the fields of MOS and philosophy should consider that both share the elaboration of abstract statements about some conceptual relationships. In philosophy, that elaboration develop specific *modes of problematisation* about the human (Norrie 2018). In MOS, that elaboration should consider empirical practices of some kinds (Clegg et al. 2022). The best efforts in philosophy and MOS throughout history has invited humankind to defy established ideas and to reflect on the unknown.

These include a radical critical sense that does not hesitate to question (overcome) the existing mental frameworks. Another premise is the search for the surprise that appears when approaching organizations from viewpoints other than the traditional ones (both theoretically and methodologically). The surprise is permanently hidden in the ineffable. Briefly, it is a willingness to advance in the territory of knowledge without fear of stumbling upon aporias (rather, looking for them) (Jones and ten Bos 2007b).

To benefit from a new philosophical attitude within MOS it is worth to adopt a synoptic view. Philosophical thinking develops on three basic operations: analysis, synopsis, and synthesis (Broad 1947). This author considers that synopsis is “the deliberate viewing together of aspects of human experience which are generally viewed apart, and the endeavour to see how they are inter-related.” (Broad 1947: 4). Synopsis prepares for the creative integration of some experiences’ aspects through synthesis. Notwithstanding analysis dominates actually the main part of the MOS. Gare and Neesham (2022: 3) consider that “organization, as process and outcome of human action, is a complex phenomenon that requires synoptic investigation across disciplines.”

In our proposal, the idea of parrhesia has a leading role. Parrhesia is a key concept, situated between the Cynics, the Stoics, and the Epicureans (Aubert-Baillet 2015).

In The Porch, parrhesia appears (in texts from Zeno of Citium (after Stobaeus, Ecl. 3.14.4; 469.9–10 W. (=SVF 1.237), Marcus Aurelius, and Aristo of Chios (after Stobaeus, Ecl. 3.13.40; 462.2–4 W. (=SVF 1.383)) as a preparatory to philosophy, a must to become a sage (Aubert-Baillet 2015: 73).

From these premises, the philosophical attitude would open new paths in the fields of knowledge and ethics in MOS. Regarding knowledge, its orderly advance requires confronting the structure and dynamics existing in the academic field of MOS. The results of the dialectic between those who treasure and defend their symbolic capital and those who wish to access it will determine the effective social contribution of those who participate in this academic field. The question is whether – among other things – our work helps solve contemporary challenges or continues to be mainly a product of self-consumption within the field oriented towards personal prestige within the current rules of the game.

Regarding ethics, it would be initially necessary to unmask the banal use of philosophy made by a significant part of the mainstream MOS and management since this use neutralizes the potential of philosophy, prevents fruitful dialogue between MOS and philosophy, and, ultimately, only seeks to reinforce the mainstream through its adornment with philosophical trifles.

Secondly, scholars must exercise themselves in the parrhesiastics’ model. The institutionalization of the academic field of MOS has led to the suppression of the individual and the collective practice of telling the truth to the powerful (those inside and outside the field, knowing that the former serves the latter). That is, our ascesis of parrhesia involves being aware that the successive compromises between ethics and politics it requires will remain imperfect since they will require accepting limitations in applying personal values.

We base our action proposal on a practice of parrhesia within MOS that starts with the fearless speech of the individual scholar and follows with a growing number of scholars doing the same.

The possible implementation this proposal should deal with the parrhesia’s political dimension that affects the organizational decision-making (as Skinner (2011) illustrates analysing parrhesia in a self-managed community devoted to organic farming), as well as with some technical problems. Among these problems, two of them are more relevant: to break down the individual’s resistance to recognize the truth, and to attain the apathetic mood that drives to self-sufficiency.

Dealing with those “technical problems” derived from the practice of parrhesia, Foucault (1999: 52 ff.) studies Plutarch’s *Moralia*, which contains a text titled “How to tell a Flatterer from a Friend.” The friend that acts as a parrhesiastic help us to overcome our *philautia* (or

“self-love”). This would be the first benefit that the human collectivities obtains from the practice of parrhesia. The second one, after Foucault’s reading of Plutarch, is to reinforce the steadiness of mind developed by the late Stoics (Foucault 1999: 53). In fact, “destroying self-delusion and acquiring and maintaining continuity of mind are two ethico-moral activities which are linked to one another.” (Foucault 1999: 53).

In the last part of Foucault (1999) appears the so-called “techniques of the parrhesiastic games.” These techniques are related to the labelled “technologies of the self”, which constitutes a relevant part of Foucault’s work (Besley 2005; Foucault 1988). To develop those parrhesiastic games technologies, there are three requirements: courage to see the truth about oneself, practice (*askesis*) of parrhesia, and situate the practice within a blurred spiritual exercises’ framework. A Stoic philosopher like Seneca (in *De ira* and *De tranquillitate animi*) proposes self-examination as one of the main parrhesiastic exercises (Foucault 1999: 56). Another one, Epictetus, advocates for a constant scrutiny of our representations. For him, the representations (and not the things represented) are the real perturbators of the human mind.

Foucault (1999) is a contribution “to construct a genealogy of the critical attitude in the Western philosophy” by analysing the problematization (this is, “how and why certain things (behaviour, phenomena, processes) became a problem”) of parrhesia (Foucault 1999: 66). His analysis deals with (Foucault 1999: 66).

These four questions about truth-telling as an activity –who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relation to power—seem to have emerged as philosophical problems towards the end of the Fifth Century around Socrates, especially through his confrontations with the Sophists about politics, rhetorics, and ethics.

Any parrhesiastic activity involves risk because the individual must assume negative consequences. For the academic parrhesiastic tenure and promotion are two high risk areas when they speak freely (Huckaby 2007).

In sum, we are proposing a philosophical attitude within MOS. This attitude could be extremely interesting not only for MOS scholarship, but also for managers (Ledoux 2012).

Sloterdijk (2013) and Hadot (1995) could contribute to design detailed links between philosophy and parrhesia as moral practice. The implementation of parrhesia is relevant for this essay’s aim because an ethical renewal of MOS scholarship is urgently needed to deal with the grand challenges from the organizational point of view. Business-as-usual is no longer an acceptable behaviour for a stagnant academic field as MOS is nowadays.

Adopting the proposed philosophical attitude through the asceticism of parrhesia would contribute to solving the question posed initially in the abstract (To dare to say the inconvenient truths to the peers (especially, to those of them with high influence on the field) can be a straightforward tool to revitalize MOS nowadays?) by finding a field of interaction between philosophy and MOS framed in respectful relationships that improve their mutual curiosity to achieve an academic practice of the richest and most powerful MOS. This path is arduous but full of meaning for those seeking the truth.

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