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***SYNTHESIS
SYNTHÈSE***

***Short title: WHAT WORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY UNDER CAPITALISM?***

**LONG TITLE: WHAT WORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY UNDER CAPITALISM? SPINOZIAN
APPROACH AND THE HYPOTHESIS OF
STRUCTURAL ALIGNMENT**

BY/PAR FLORIAN FOURTIER¹

SUMMARY

The objectives of work and organizational psychology (WOP) are now supposedly complementary, namely those relating to workers' conditions and those relating to productivity. We believe that productivity objectives are highly detrimental to human objectives. The aim of this article is, in a Spinozian approach, to build the foundations of a hypothesis of the structural influence of capitalism on the objectives of the WOP.

After a presentation of the various Spinozian theories and the structuralism of passions introduced by Lordon (2013), we propose an affective clinic of the practicing work psychologist (PWP) in order to identify the affective issues linked to his or her activity. The conclusions of our work support the hypothesis of a structural alignment of the goals of the PWP with the goals of capitalism. Empirical perspectives for testing this hypothesis are proposed. We conclude by a discussion on the possible objectives of WOP under capitalism and the hope for a disciplinary debate.

KEYWORDS: work and organizational psychology, capitalism, Spinoza, structuralism of passions, social utility, ethics.

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RÉSUMÉ

QUELLE PSYCHOLOGIE DU TRAVAIL ET DES ORGANISATIONS SOUS LE CAPITALISME ? APPROCHE SPINOZIENNE ET HYPOTHESE D'UN ALIGNEMENT STRUCTUREL

La psychologie du travail et des organisations (PTO) possède dans ses objectifs des finalités aujourd'hui prétendument complémentaires, à savoir celles relatives aux conditions des *travailleurs* et celles relatives à la *productivité*. Nous considérons pour notre part que les objectifs de productivité sont grandement préjudiciables pour les objectifs humains. Nous disons également, dans la lignée des travaux existants, que la recherche en PTO est fortement influencée par l'idéologie néolibérale, notamment ses traits relatifs à la gestion affective individuelle, à l'impératif de développement personnel et à l'individualisme méthodologique (Adams et al., 2019). Puisque notre discipline est également souvent considérée comme complice dans le soutien au capitalisme (Islam & Sanderson, 2022), nous proposons que la question de l'*utilité* (sociale) de la PTO soit posée non pas de manière quantitative (dans quelle proportion ?) mais de manière qualitative (à qui ?) puisqu'il semble que ses objectifs soient davantage profitable au système économique capitaliste qu'aux travailleurs.

Le but de cet article est donc, dans une approche spinozienne, de construire les bases d'une hypothèse de l'influence structurelle du capitalisme sur les objectifs de la PTO. Après une présentation des différentes théories spinoziennes et du structuralisme des passions soutenu par Lordon (2013), nous proposons, sur cette base, une clinique affective du psychologue du travail praticien (PTP) afin d'identifier les enjeux affectifs liés à son activité. Cette analyse propose que le PTP soit soumis à 3 conditions objectives d'exercice : (1) *Le PTP travaille sous l'approbation – mandat ou embauche – des dirigeants des structures organisationnelles du travail*, (2) *il n'a aucun pouvoir décisionnel sur la mise en œuvre des recommandations qu'il formulera* et (3) *le pouvoir d'action de ses commanditaires se limite au cadre organisationnel*. Cela aura pour conséquence plusieurs atteintes à son intégrité, notamment scientifique, par une exposition constante à un jeu de séduction, à des injonctions paradoxales et à une politique de la déraison. Ainsi, l'incapacité structurelle du PTP consistant à devoir « *trouver la solution, pas le problème* » génère chez ce dernier le constat de son impuissance dans sa tentative d'aider l'humain au travail et l'amène progressivement à épouser les objectifs capitalistes au détriment de ceux d'amélioration de la condition des travailleurs.

Les conclusions de notre travail appuient donc l'hypothèse d'un alignement structurel des objectifs du PTP sur les objectifs du capitalisme. Des perspectives empiriques permettant de tester cette hypothèse sont proposées. Une discussion

sur les objectifs possibles de la PTO sous le capitalisme est ouverte et un débat disciplinaire espéré et encouragé.

MOTS-CLÉS : psychologie du travail et des organisations, capitalisme, Spinoza, structuralisme des passions, utilité sociale, éthique.

I INTRODUCTION

Work and organizational psychology (WOP) has a dual purpose that potentially leads to an "ethical" crisis. As Karnas (2011, p. 5) points out, early work psychologists founded the discipline around a commonly accepted goal: "to help create a work environment based on optimal harmony between man and work, between man and his professional activity." According to the author, this postulate of harmony seems even to fall within the realm of wishful thinking: "A dominant idea already expressed by the founders of work psychology is that *the goals of improving staff conditions* (reducing fatigue, alleviating the arduousness of work, improving job satisfaction, developing a sense of self-fulfillment at work, etc.) and *those of improving performance* (increasing efficiency, productivity, quality, profitability, competitiveness, etc.) are not contradictory; on the contrary, it would be possible—and desirable—to view them as complementary." (Karnas, 2011, p. 6). Thus, there are two main potential beneficiaries of WOP activities historically²: *workers* and *production*.

The distinction proposed by Spector (2020, p. 5) between the goals of *industrial psychology* and those of *organizational psychology* aligns with this. According to the author, industrial psychology deals with "organizational efficiency through the appropriate use of human resources or people." (ibid., 2020, p. 5) while organizational psychology developed from "the human relations movement in organizations. It is concerned with understanding behavior and enhancing the well-being of employees in the workplace." (ibid., pp. 5-6). While it is possible to disagree with these definitions, it is difficult to deny the existence of a dichotomy in the goals of our discipline. The question is whether the two are indeed compatible and what determines them.

For the first question, we propose, from a Marxist approach, that the goals relating to *workers*, or where humans are the beneficiaries, are those related to *Work*, and the goals relating to *production* are those related to *Capital*. In this approach, we assert that the interests of these two goals are in constant conflict.

Continuing with Karnas's definition, we can also hypothesize about our second question. Indeed, "increasing efficiency, quality, productivity, profitability, competitiveness" (Karnas, 2011, p. 6) is the grammar of capitalism, which can be defined as the "requirement for the unlimited accumulation of capital by formally peaceful means" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2011, p. 35) necessarily involving productivity and more recently, investments in production equipment. Then, "improving job satisfaction, developing a sense of self-fulfillment at work" (Karnas,

² "Work psychology, which until the 1914 war had positioned itself, in the name of science, as an arbiter of conflicts between labor and capital, will increasingly appear as 'the auxiliary of capital'" (Albou, 2000).

2011, p. 6) is the grammar of neoliberalism, specifically its traits related to *affect management* and *growth imperative* (Adams et al., 2019). Neoliberalism can be defined as the hegemonic socio-political ideology (Bettache & Chiu, 2019) aimed at creating an environment conducive to the flow of capital, notably through market deregulation and the privatization of public enterprises, for example.

Thus, the two goals of WOP described by Karnas (*staff conditions* and *performance*) seem determined by the capitalist economic system and neoliberalism as a socio-political ideology serving the interests of capitalism. This latter also appears to greatly influence research in psychology (Adams et al., 2019; Bettache & Chiu, 2019) as well as in WOP (Bal & Dóci, 2018). But what about the influence of capitalism on the goals of WOP? Karnas, further in his work, acknowledges that the interests of staff conditions can harm the interests of performance and *vice versa*: "Actions aimed at one goal can hinder the other. The priority of one over the other often needs to be considered. On this question, which can be described as ideological, each work psychologist will undoubtedly provide their own answer" (2011, p. 13).

At the dawn of the 20th century, Max Weber already described a form of individual powerlessness within such a society in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: "The capitalistic economy of the present day is an immense cosmos into which the individual is born, and which presents itself to him, at least as an individual, as an unalterable order of things in which he must live." (1905/1998, p. 51). We know from various psychological theories (e.g., *System Justification Theory*, Jost & Banaji, 1994; *Fairness Theory*, Folger & Cropanzano, 2001; *Utopian Thinking*, Fernando et al., 2018) how fundamental the ability (objective and subjective) to change the system and the existence of alternatives are in forming world representations, attitudes towards the social order, and societal practices. So, does the question of priorities as proposed by Karnas really arise in the minds of work psychologists?

Weber's comprehensive sociological approach allows for a precise description of the affective stakes involved in attempting to extract oneself from the capitalist logic: "It forces the individual, in so far as he is involved in the system of market relationships, to conform to capitalistic rules of action. The manufacturer who in the long run acts counter to these norms, will just as inevitably be eliminated from the economic scene as the worker who cannot or will not adapt himself to them will be thrown into the streets without a job." (1905/1998, p. 51). The movement described by Weber here is the necessary conformity, the forced adaptation. In a certain approach, we could even talk about *socialization within a capitalist context*. Karnas also refers to sometimes constrained choices for work psychologists: "Unless it is, at least partially, predefined by a regulatory and ethical framework [...] the answer [to the priority question] may also depend on the specific context in which the psychologist finds themselves and the constraints to which they are subject." (2011, p. 13). The similarity with a passage from the *new doctoral oath of scientific integrity* in France is also interesting: "by cultivating intellectual rigor, ethical reflexivity [...] I commit, *for what will depend on me* [...] to maintain an integral conduct."³.

³ <https://www.hceres.fr/sites/default/files/media/files/fiche-serment-doctoral-integrite-scientifique-pdf1.pdf>

As with the neo-doctors, the limit to the "ethics" of work psychologists thus seems to reside in "what does not depend on them" or in what the context allows them (for a reflection on the question of ethics in the scientific research environment, see Carvallo, 2019). We know well in the humanities and social sciences (HSS) and particularly in psychology that causal attribution is a historical field of research that teaches us at least that it largely depends on social norms and situations (cf. *Fundamental Attribution Error*, Nietzsche, 1878/1968, p. 163; Heider, 1944, p. 361; Ross, 1977; *Locus of Control*, Rotter, 1966; *Norm of internality*, Jellison & Green, 1981; Beauvois, 1984; *Norm of allegiance*, Gangloff, 1997).

Then arises the question of what could be called the *usefulness* of "ethics" in the academic environment. Faced with this feeling of powerlessness in a too-powerful capitalism leaving no alternative in sight, "ethics is often conceived as a neutral instrument capable of rationalizing collective decisions in connection with individuals' awareness of their responsibilities as actors in collective systems" (Carvallo, 2019). What common sense calls "ethics"⁴ could be *useful* to researchers and practitioners to give meaning to what they do, to regain a sense of power through the belief in their ability to *do good without questioning the role of social structures* in their issues. This is a movement of reducing social phenomena to the individual level, a characteristic trait of the neoliberal ideology known as *radical abstraction*, which takes epistemological form through ontological and methodological individualism (Adams et al., 2019). Thus, if this "ethics" appears *useful* to researchers and practitioners, it is especially *useful* to neoliberalism. We could even say that it *makes them useful* to neoliberalism.

The question of the social utility of WOP therefore arises. Before asking whether our activity is "useful for society," it seems necessary to reflect on its utility for the current economic system, as Weber argued, life under capitalism almost mechanically compels us to pursue its objectives: "Thus the capitalism of today, which has come to dominate economic life, educates and selects the economic subjects which it needs through a process of economic survival of the fittest." (1905/1998, pp. 51-52). Thus, by its mere presence in a capitalist environment, the WOP may orient its actions to be necessary for and useful to the current economic system in order to survive, to persevere in its being, to ensure its existence and that of its members.

This hypothesis is what we aim to develop in opposition to the belief in researchers and practitioners being "free" to be "ethical" or not. For this article, the objective is to propose a reflection on the *real social utility* of practitioners from an epistemological approach diametrically opposed to methodological individualism.

II SPINOZIAN THEORIES OF DESIRE AND AFFECTS

The phenomenon of *socialization within a capitalist context* is central to this article. Invoking Spinoza's thought to explain such phenomena seems pertinent. Indeed,

⁴ The highly influential *Belmont Report* (1979) can be taken as an example of the formalization of this "ethic" in scientific research, with its three principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

his radical philosophical stances, such as the denial of free will, diametrically oppose current conventions and appear provocative and timely in the face of the hegemony of psychologizing social phenomena.

II.1 SPINOZA'S THEORY OF ACTION

Spinoza's absolute determinism, demonstrated in the first chapter of the *Ethics* (1677/2006), asserts the existence of a God-Nature as the primary cause, the origin of all effects and causes. According to Spinoza, nothing happens that is not necessary and predictable for all eternity: "By reality and perfection I mean the same thing" (*Ethics* (*Eth.*), II, def. 6), which qualifies his philosophy as necessitarian. Spinoza also advocates for *integral naturalism*: every event or phenomenon, in his view, can be explained by external causes.

Spinoza subsequently develops a theory of action based on a central postulate, that of *Desire* and its affects. Since "a thing cannot be destroyed except by an external cause" (*Eth.*, III, 4), then "each thing, in so far as it is in itself, endeavors to persevere in its being" (*Eth.*, III, 6). Thus, the essence of everything is to persevere in its being (*Eth.*, III, 7) indefinitely (*Eth.*, III, 4). Spinoza names this essence *Desire*, effort, appetite, or *Conatus*. This Desire constitutes the power of acting of a *Mode*, that is, its capacity to affect other modes and to be affected by them (*Eth.*, IV, 38).

Every thing (that is, every mode) can be affected by other things that then modify its power of acting. These modifications (or affections) are called *Emotions (or affects)*: "By emotion [or affect] I understand the modifications [or affections] of the body by which the power of acting of the body itself is increased, diminished, helped, or hindered, together with the ideas of these modifications." (*Eth.*, III, def. 3). Affects thus exclusively refer to bodily affections that alter – either to increase (affect of *Joy*) or diminish (affect of *Sorrow*) – the power of acting of the body, encompassing both physical reality (bodily affections) and psychological reality (ideas of bodily affections).

One of the essential properties of affects is to condition our thoughts and behaviors. Thus, according to Spinoza, individual action is directed by the pursuit of increasing the power of acting of one's body, that is, its ability to affect and be affected. This Desire, shaped by external bodily affections, thus drives the body towards objects that bring *Joy* or enable it to avoid or annihilate *Sorrow*. Hence, "we neither [...] desire anything because we think it to be good, but, on the contrary, we adjudge a thing to be good because we [...] desire it" (*Eth.*, III, 9, *scholium*).

Affects thus condition the Desire of the body and mind (*Eth.*, III, def. 1), respectively, *Conatus* and *Will*. Spinoza also explains that objects induce affections that can vary both inter-individually and intra-individually: "Different men may be affected by one and the same object in different ways, and the same man may be affected by one and the same object in different ways at different times" (*Eth.*, III, 51). This implies that humans can be affected simultaneously by affects of *Joy* and affects of *Sorrow* towards the same object. This leads to what he calls the "fluctuation of the mind" (*fluctuatio animi*). The affect that will be determinant, in the literal sense, and

therefore that will remain, will be the strongest: "An emotion [or affect] cannot be restrained nor removed unless by an opposed and stronger emotion" (*Eth.*, IV, 7).

II.2 SPINOZA'S THEORY OF SOCIETY

It is from the theory of affects that Spinoza develops a theory of society in the *Ethics*, but especially in the *Political Treatise* (1677/2001), positing that interpersonal relationships are structured around the two primary affects of *Love* (idea of Joy) and *Hatred* (idea of Sorrow). More specifically, Spinoza explains that humans, under *passionate servitude* and thus condemned to orient themselves towards objects and individuals that will increase their power of acting, will assemble under common affects, that is, being affected by affects of the same nature (love, hatred, hope, fear, ...) and towards similar objects. Society will then be divided into passionate bodies, that is, socially composed bodies commonly affected. Multitudes are thus created, composed bodies possessing their own power of acting, that is, their own capacity to affect and be affected.

The concept of *common notion* is crucial for Spinoza to describe this phenomenon, as it intersects with his theory of action, theory of society, and theory of knowledge. Since modes have the essence of increasing their power of acting, they will assemble (compose) with other modes that have affected them with joy-passion⁵. This is what Spinoza calls a common notion, that is, a composition of relationships among several bodies. These composed bodies will then be affected by active-joy⁶. The common notion increases its power of acting and will necessarily form increasingly general common notions with other bodies that affect it with joys-passions and with which it composes.

In the *Political Treatise*, Spinoza speaks more specifically about relationships within common notions under the term multitude or the specific case of the State. He proposes, more or less explicitly, the concepts of *imperium* and *obsequium* that lead to a transcendence of the eternal antagonism of objectivism-subjectivism, through his naturalistic and absolute deterministic approach, including the notion of *natural right*, which is, according to him, the power of the multitude. Thus, Spinoza names *imperium* "This right defined by the power of a multitude" (*Political Treatise (TP)*, II, 17). *Imperium* is the power that the multitude confers upon itself, necessarily, that is, according to the words of Lordon (2015, p. 20), the ability of the multitude to "self-affect." Thus, we are affected by the multitude because we allow it to affect us. But conversely, the survival of the multitude will depend on its ability to affect sufficiently with joy – or not to affect too much with hatred – its components, without which they would quickly detach from it.

We fall into a Boetian scheme⁷ bringing with it the question of obedience. *Obsequium* is precisely this "complex of affects that moves subject bodies towards the

⁵ That is to say, an affection of the body accompanied by the idea of another body as an inadequate cause, that is, whose cause can be explained by the mind only inadequately, in other words, whose cause is not self-sufficient to explain this effect.

⁶ That is to say, an affection of the body accompanied by the idea of another body as an adequate cause.

⁷ We refer here to the work of Etienne de la Boétie, *Discours de la servitude volontaire* (1577).

objects of the norm, that is, that leads subjects to perform actions conforming to the requirements of the perseverance of its empire" (Lordon, 2010, p. 87). Spinoza defines it as "constant willingness to do what by law is good and what the common decree says ought to be done" (*TP*, II, 19). Since, like every body as a mode of Extension, the multitude has the essence of persevering in its being ("perseverance of its empire"), it will summon a complex of affects, always based on Spinoza's dichotomy, one might even say Machiavellian, of love (idea of joy) and fear (idea of future sorrow), to "cause" subjects to "do what must be done" and thus preserve, or even increase, its power of acting since subjects will affect it with joy by directing their actions in line with its Desire (Master-Desire, in Lordon's terms). Rights, laws, rules, and ultimately social norms, can be respected, says Spinoza, either out of fear of punishment or out of love for the multitude (*TP*, III, 8), implying that under certain conditions, they cannot be. (*TP*, IV, 4). Indeed, the State (or multitude) cannot demand everything from individuals, the limit of its power is defined by a greater weight of affects of Sorrow compared to affects of Joy on the balance of common affect, and thus fatally, a rejection of the multitude, which then loses its power to affect, its power. This is what, according to Spinoza, explains social transformation, the disappearance of certain institutions in favor of others, but also the maintenance of certain institutions that succeed in being sufficiently loved or sufficiently feared and thus persevering in their empire.

III LORDON'S SPINOZIAN APPROACH

III.1 TOWARDS A STRUCTURALISM OF PASSIONS

The structuralism of passions aims to integrate structuralist epistemology, notably Bourdieu's, with Spinoza's theory of desire and affects in order to surpass critiques of structural immutability and institutional reproduction (Lordon, 2013). To achieve this, Lordon proposes incorporating Spinoza's concepts of *desire* and *affects* into structuralism, with the stated goal of providing a theory of action, institutions, and social efficacy in explaining institutional determinants. As we saw with Spinoza in the previous section, every human action is determined by (1) external causes, (2) the human's desire, which is also their essence, leading them towards these external causes, and (3) the affects attributed to these external causes. Thus, global structures would be sites of desires and affects, while the psyche of the subject serves as the *local site for social inscription*. Spinoza's theory of desire and affects complements structuralism by explaining the dynamics of structures through the articulation of sociology and psychology via a relation of expression, considering psychic facts as individually localized expressions of social order (Lordon, 2013).

III.2 EXAMPLES OF CONTRIBUTIONS FROM A STRUCTURALISM OF PASSIONS IN EXPLAINING SOCIAL PHENOMENA

III.2.A Dynamics within structures and social change

While it may be tempting to explain phenomena of sedition and revolution by exiting determinism toward providential free will and opportunity, Lordon explains that this would constitute a partial analysis of the determinants at play. Indeed, institutions are merely temporary stabilizations of common affects sustained by affects of authority recognition and obedience to its commands (*obsequium*). Here, Spinoza extends beyond structuralism in the *Ethics*: "An emotion cannot, be restrained nor removed unless by an opposed and stronger emotion" (*Eth.*, IV, 7). If an individual's positive affects of recognition and obedience towards an institution weaken in comparison to, for example, *indignation*⁸, then the latter will reject the institution. Revolt arises when a community experiences the same counterbalancing of common affects, shifting from positive to negative affects, from obedience to sedition. Indeed, "when certain circumstances are present, the subjects respect and fear the commonwealth [or State], and that when those circumstances are absent, this fear and respect are destroyed. When they are destroyed, so is the commonwealth [or State]." (*TP*, IV, 4). Structures determine the affects that individuals will associate with these structures. Affects of love or fear maintain obedience towards the rules they impose, and negative affects, if they become sufficiently unbearable, modify or even annihilate these structures. Thus, the structuralism of passions is "necessarily dynamic since the individualized power poles are held to an institutional order only by the affective balances which, nothing ever excludes that they may come to be modified" (Lordon, 2013).

III.2.B Affective clinic of the wage relationship under capitalism

Beyond offering an explanation of revolt phenomena, the interest of this epistemological approach is also to provide an explanation of immobilism phenomena. For example, it allows us to grasp the stakes of the wage relationship on an affective level and its evolution under capitalism. According to Lordon (2010, 2013), *primary capitalism* (1st phase) affected subordinates with intrinsic sorrow associated with the idea that they must work to survive. The sorrow stemming from fear for one's survival, subordination consisting of avoiding this evil through the earned salary. Then *Fordism* (2nd phase) ushered in the consumer society, and with it, other affects associated with wages, *extrinsic joy affects*, where the salary became not only a means of survival, but also a means of being affected with joy through consumption of products or services. However, joy affects linked to consumption remain extrinsic. *Neoliberal capitalism* (3rd phase) has thus made them *intrinsic* by introducing myths of "personal fulfillment"

⁸ Negative affect toward someone who has harmed another, according to Spinoza (*Eth.*, III, Definitions of the Emotions, 20).

and "self-realization"⁹ in and through work. The strength of this transformation of the emotional world lies in the fact that through joy affects associated with work in the company, capitalism has managed to make subordination to the wage relationship *desirable*.

III.2.C Enrollment of desire for the master-desire

Finally, since the company possesses the affective means to make them joyful—and since "we shall endeavor to do everything which we imagine men will look upon with joy" (*Eth.*, III, 29) and if we act in a way "which he imagines will affect others with joy, he also will be affected with joy, accompanied with an idea of himself as its cause, that is to say, he will look upon himself with joy" (*Eth.*, III, 30)—subordinates will adjust their own desire to that of the company, namely to the *master-desire*. This master-desire is generally that of the company's leader. Unable to satisfy their desire by themselves—and possessing sufficient economic capital—they have decided to make others work to achieve it. In an economic selection (Weber, 1905/1998, p. 52), this desire brings with it the desire for the accumulation of economic capital through the value-added of finished services/products, the nature of the products that can be a means allowing them to persist in the idea of their humanity. The leader therefore has every interest in those who work for them having the same desire. Through more or less conscious affective games, they will guide their desires to align with theirs. This is what Lordon calls the *enrollment of desire for the master-desire*, which he illustrates in the form of vectors—the subordinate's and the master's—and the angle (α) they form (see Lordon, 2010, pp. 54-55).

The orientation of the subordinate's desire is expressed by the angle α . Its scalar product¹⁰ allows it to be converted into a proportion of conformity of the subordinate's desire to the master-desire. The closer the angle α is to 90° , the less the subordinate's desire will conform to that of the master, and therefore the less *useful* it will be to them. The closer the angle α is to 0° , the more the subordinate's desire will conform to that of the master, and therefore the more *useful* it will be to them. We can speak here of utility because subordinates are those who allow the master to obtain the object of their desire. And whether they like it or not, the master, say the leader, will desire their business to persevere in their being because it allows them to be affected with joy by the capture of the value added to the finished services/products. In this sense, the leader is also a subordinate. For some companies, the leader must "account for" a group of people who share, equally or not, the company's capital. Those who own a share of their capital have only one desire: profitability, return on investment, and thus the company's economic growth. It is on this desire that they will enroll the leader's desire—thus becoming the intermediary between the personified company's capital (the shareholder) and the workers—to ensure they align completely.

⁹ We intentionally leave the expression in quotes because it is absurd: we are "realized" (real) even before our birth.

¹⁰ The scalar product of two vectors is equal to the product of their magnitudes and the cosine of the angle they form.

IV AFFECTIVE CLINIC OF A PRACTITIONER WORK PSYCHOLOGIST

The various examples of application help grasp the interest of a Spinozist approach in the HSS and the relevance of the structuralism of passions for explaining social phenomena. It is now necessary to address the case of the practitioner work psychologist (PWP) and their *socialization within a capitalist context*. Therefore, we propose an affective clinic of the objective conditions of this profession with the goal of identifying, through an analysis of the affective dynamics at play, the injunctions faced by the PWP. As proposed in the introduction, the current objectives of WOP are divided into two categories: actions aimed at the interest of the *workers* (Work) and actions aimed at *production* interest (Capital). For this affective clinical study, in accordance with our definition of WOP, we consider that the only purpose compatible with the aim of our discipline, namely "to help humans at work," is that of *Work*.

Before proposing this affective clinic of the PWP, it is necessary to identify what the objective conditions of the practice of this profession are. Indeed, once this framework is established, we will have the basis to identify potential and generic structural influences that will apply to any subjectivity within.

IV.1 OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS OF THE PRACTICE OF THE PRACTITIONER WORK PSYCHOLOGIST

The PWP practices their profession either independently (in private practice) or on behalf of an organization. In both cases, their action will be focused on a structure, responding to a demand. If in private practice, they may choose among different offers presented to them, the number of which will be partly determined by their ability to be "visible" and "desirable" to organizations, with negotiation proportional to their economic independence. If they work for a specific structure, they generally do not have the choice of their missions. However, if they work for this structure, it is because they have passed the hiring test, which is also determined by their ability to be "visible" and "desirable" to organizations, with negotiation proportional to their economic independence. Therefore, the first objective condition of the practice of the PWP is as follows: *they work under the approval - mandate or employment - of the leaders of organizational work structures*.

Moving on to the concrete action of the PWP. When they go to an organization, it will be the leaders (either directly or indirectly) who will formulate a request to them. Even after all possible reformulations, it will remain a request from the management, and thus from a well-identified group within the structures, involving issues whose nature will necessarily be consistent with their concerns. At the end of their mission, the PWP will be able to propose their diagnosis and recommendations to their commissioners. It is they who will have the final say on what will be retained and what will not. This constitutes the second objective condition of the PWP's practice: *they have no decision-making power over the implementation of the recommendations they make*.

Work organizations themselves are subject to common objective conditions of existence. Fundamentally, a private enterprise, for example, must minimally be profitable, ideally making a profit, at a minimum to anticipate economic downturns, ideally to enhance capitalist investment. However, in the event that these conditions are diagnosed as problematic by PWP's or even by the leaders of organizational structures, neither party has the power to negotiate them. They cannot modify the economic prosperity requirements of the organization; they cannot change capitalism. This implies our third and final objective condition of the PWP's practice: *the action power of their commissioners is limited to the organizational framework.*

IV.2 IMPLICATIONS ON AFFECTIVE DYNAMICS: SEDUCTION GAME AND PARADOXICAL INJUNCTION

Considering the three objective conditions of practice in the PWP profession that we propose, we believe that Lordon's concept of *enrolling desire for the master-desire* (see Part III.2.C) will be relevant to grasp the affective implications. This will be our basis, viewing the PWP's desire as subordinate desire and the generic desire of the structures within which they operate—personified by the commissioners or by the management—as the *master-desire*. The objective is to understand what implications these three conditions may have on the affective dynamics concerning the PWP's desire during their activity. For this study, we will take a generic case of a young PWP starting in the profession, with no professional experience beyond their master's internships, carrying with them, as we announced at the beginning of this section, a desire excluding *capitalist* goals of WOP and including *worker-centric* goals.

IV.2.A Working under the approval of organizational leadership

The socialization process of our PWP begins with their job or mission search. From this stage onward, they must appear "desirable" to their prospective commissioners, who have the ability to affect them positively and thus align their desire with theirs, even before effective collaboration begins. To be desirable, the young PWP must understand the common expectations of commissioners to be able to generate in them a strong hope of joy sufficient to be hired or commissioned—that is, to foster the hope that they will be *useful* to their desire. This phase corresponds to *learning* in the socialization process. It is essential for the subsequent phase: *internalization*. To learn, the young PWP will generally rely on the teachings of their training and the practices of more experienced peers. This will enable them to anticipate their alignment with the master-desire, as this socialization—*anticipated* in terms of training and professional in terms of peers—will help them understand how to be *useful*¹¹ to the structures in which they will intervene. This seduction game of pleasing potential commissioners involves an initial compromise of the PWP's *scientific integrity*. Indeed, this first objective condition of practice necessarily compels the PWP to engage in actions that

¹¹ Particularly here, it is important to specify that utility should be understood in the Spinozian sense, that is, in this case, useful to the master-desire, aligning with its ends.

may diverge from their initial desire—assumed to be solely oriented towards human welfare—and to mask it. It marks the initial selection of those most inclined to align with the desire of their prospective commissioners.

IV.2.B No decision-making power in implementing formulated recommendations

Once in the field, the young PWP implements their approach: first diagnosing (identifying the problem's origin), then formulating recommendations (proposing solutions). Let us imagine our PWP guided by *Reason*. In their diagnosis, they identify the adequate causes of the problems for which they were commissioned. In their recommendations, they propose suitable avenues to genuinely assist humans in the workplace. However adequate their intervention may be, the implementation of actions from their recommendations does not depend on them but on the commissioners. This has several consequences.

The PWP is the one who encounters suffering in the workplace, a source of *Commiseration*, which is "sorrow with the accompanying idea of evil which has happened to some one whom we imagine like ourselves" (*Eth.*, III, Definitions of the Emotions, 18), reinforcing their initial desire—and sometimes even constitutive of their identity as a psychologist—named by Spinoza as *Benevolence*, which is "the desire to do good to those whom we pity" (*Eth.*, III, Definitions of the Emotions, 35). Their diagnostic process sometimes evokes *Hope* or *Joy* in those they interview, which can affect them with *Self-exaltation* (or *Glory*), "joy with the accompanying idea of some action we have done which we imagine people praise" (*Eth.*, III, Definitions of the Emotions, 30), thus reinforcing what Spinoza terms the desire for *Ambition*, "the immoderate desire of Glory" (*Eth.*, III, Definitions of the Emotions, 44). To satisfy these desires, the PWP must be capable of "doing good" to those for whom they feel commiseration. This is precisely what their recommendations (hypothetically adequate) would enable. Since they have no decision-making power in implementing their recommendations, they cannot ensure the full satisfaction of their desire. Indeed, what they propose may not be accepted, particularly if the proposals are incompatible with the desires of the real decision-makers (master-desire). This potential rejection, beyond preventing the psychologist's desire from being satisfied—and thus increasing their power of acting—will affect them with what Spinoza calls *Humility*, "the sorrow which is produced by contemplating our impotence or helplessness" (*Eth.*, III, Definitions of the Emotions, 26).

As human essence lies in increasing its power of acting and avoiding its diminution, in a situation where they cannot decide on the recommendations that will be implemented¹², they must avoid the sad affects of *Humility*. For this, the only solution will be to "adjust" their recommendations to make them "desirable," acceptable, and ultimately accepted by the commissioners. As with the first objective condition, the consequence is again a seduction game where the PWP must please their

¹² It is important to note, however, that despite the formulation used here, we are not saying that the fact that the PWP cannot decide which recommendations will be implemented is a problem; rather, we are saying that the problem is that the decision-making power is attributed, in light of Reason, arbitrarily. We will explore this further.

commissioners, leading to alignment with their desire—in other words, enrolling the PWP's desire for the master-desire. This represents a second compromise of the PWP's *scientific integrity* since their objective conditions of practice could, in principle, lead to a policy of *unreason*: "the objective is not to find *the truth* but to find one that will be accepted."

IV.2.C Action power of commissioners limited to the organizational framework

The consequence of this seduction game implies that problems and solutions must be considered within the framework of the structure to remain within the "competence field" of both parties. This concerns the legitimacy of the PWP, as seen in the previous section, but also that of the commissioners. Indeed, the latter have power limited to what the multitude confers upon them—that is, the organization and its members. Like the PWP, they are subject to sad affects, especially *Humility* when they realize their own inability to solve a problem within their organization. Depending on the situation, they may also be subject to other sad affects such as *Fear of Shame*, which is "sorrow arising from the idea of a future action which we imagine people blame" (*Eth.*, III, Definitions of the Emotions, 13 and 31). Indeed, their position in the organization is generally justified by their ability to affect joy in subordinates and solve problems—that is, to avoid sad affects—and thus affect the master-desire with joy when they make subordinates *useful* to its desire.

The PWP will be a *means* to help maintain their legitimacy. As seen in the previous section, it is the commissioners who will make decisions regarding the recommendations. These decisions will be useful for the organization's desire, which we could call the *ontological desire of the organization*, a master-desire necessarily oriented towards profitability and profit since "each thing, as far as it is in itself, endeavors to persevere in its being" (*Eth.*, III, 6). Indeed, the essence of an organization lies in its ability to be profitable, at a minimum.

The third objective condition of PWP practice reveals their structural incapacity to genuinely solve problems. Indeed, this seduction game confronts them with a paradoxical injunction: "*find the solution, not the problem!*" In other words, "*find problems that we can solve!*" This represents the final compromise of their *scientific integrity*. Even if the problems are objectively caused or exacerbated by systemic causes external to the organization, the PWP will be conditioned to *view* problems only within the framework of the studied structure and condemned to *think* of solutions at the organizational level. These solutions align with the master-desire and will be gladly implemented by leaders, allowing them to increase their power of acting through positive affects of *Self-exaltation*, and even *Self-Satisfaction*, "the joy which is produced by contemplating ourselves and our own power of action" (*Eth.*, III, Definitions of the Emotions, 13 and 25).

On their part, the young PWP, to avoid the multiplication of sad affects of *Humility* and to gain joy from their commissioners, will progressively resolve this paradoxical injunction by internalizing the rules and directing their desire towards that of work organizations, notably by redefining what constitutes a real problem: *one that the*

organization can solve on its own. Thus begins a gradual methodological individualism in their approach, a consequence of their powerlessness, which leads to their depoliticization: "*what lies outside the organization is not my problem,*" they will say, "*it is not within the realm of the work and organizational psychologist*". Therefore, the PWP is the one who "helps humans at work," but only when the problems and solutions to these problems remain within the organizational and psychological framework.

V THE WORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST TODAY: A STRUCTURALLY CAPITALIST DESIRE?

The power of acting of commissioners and management members does not stem from their right but from their ability to bring joy to the members of their organization. They play an intermediary role that involves a double injunction: to bring enough joy to the master-desire (to continue being joyfully affected) and to bring enough joy to subordinates (to maintain their *obsequium*, which is why the master-desire affects them with joy). This represents an allegory of the "ethical" conflict between the goals of WOP: simultaneously ensuring the interests of *workers* and the interests of *production*. While this depiction may present commissioners or management members negatively, our approach does not intend to do so. If they refuse to implement a recommendation, it is because they do not find it beneficial or *useful* to their desire. Commissioners have a desire whose essence is to increase their power of acting and to avoid its diminishment. This desire, sometimes conflicting with the desires of subordinates or the PWP, if it seeks to increase its power, may harm other desires. This remark is significant as it prevents the explanation of the phenomenon from shifting towards a moral questioning¹³. Commissioners and management members are not *bad people*; they do not desire a recommendation because they deem it *good*, but judge a recommendation as *good* because they desire it (*Eth.*, III, 9, *scholium*).

The organization's desire, here the master-desire, is necessarily capitalist, meaning oriented towards profitability and profit, as this is where its essence and objective condition of existence lie. This desire then enrolls that of management members, who in turn enroll that of subordinates. There exists, in fact, a chain of enrollment within work organizations, whose fundamental mechanism is, in Spinozian terms, *the quest for love* (Lordon, 2010, p. 99). Obtaining the master's joy—and thus, their love¹⁴—depends on the subordinate's ability to bring them joy and therefore be *useful* to their desire. To be useful, the subordinate will necessarily align their desire with a *capitalist desire*.

The PWP, whether aware of their *objective conditions of practice* or not, necessarily enters into a game of seduction. By socializing, they will internalize these

¹³ This is precisely the strength of Spinoza according to Deleuze since "the entire *Ethics* presents itself as a theory of power, as opposed to morality as a theory of duties" (Deleuze, 1968/2003, p. 143). The Spinozian approach thus allows us to "distinguish 'ethics' from 'morality' as the viewpoint of exteriority and that of interiority" (Ramond, 2007, p. 70).

¹⁴ "Love is joy with the accompanying idea of an external cause" (*Eth.*, III, Definitions of the Emotions, 6). The external cause here being the subordinate.

conditions, allowing them to no longer suffer from the conflict between their initial desire (oriented towards the goals of *Work*) and the desires of commissioners (*structurally* oriented towards the goals of *Capital*). They will rationalize their objectives: notions of "feasible," "pragmatic," and "concrete" will accompany their definitions of a good recommendation. For them, nothing is worse than proposing recommendations that commissioners will, rightly or wrongly, judge as "unfeasible," "too theoretical," or even "utopian". This is why we affirm that the goals of an PWP in practice today are structurally capitalist; otherwise, they would have been "eliminated from the economic scene as the worker who cannot or will not adapt himself to them" (Weber, 1905/1998, p. 51).

VI QUESTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES IN WORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Islam and Sanderson (2022) note that the argument of WOP as complicit in supporting capitalism is persistent in the literature (Gerard, 2017; Islam & Zyphur, 2009; Prilleltensky, 1994; Steffy & Grimes, 1986). According to them, it is even surprising that critical WOP, as the branch of psychology most clearly situated in the work process, does not have more to say about capitalism. With this article, we hope to make a modest contribution and invite researchers to test the *hypothesis of the structural alignment of WOP's goals with those of capitalism* through empirical studies¹⁵. By considering this alignment as a socialization process within a capitalist context, for example, it would be interesting to propose a longitudinal study measuring the evolution of PWP perception of their profession's goals. Political attitudes or ideological positions could also be integrated into this study. Another way to test this hypothesis would be to conduct a qualitative study, collecting PWP's definitions of the goals of WOP and their profession, and comparing these based on seniority or simply exploring to discover potential determinants of alignment or non-alignment with capitalism and its goals. Finally, a study illustrating the importance of PWP training in this socialization process could involve a documentary analysis of WOP training content, using an analytical framework based on the dichotomy of the discipline's goals, *Work* and *Capital*, to identify elements attributable to *neoliberal positive WOP*, such as approaches aiming for job satisfaction, workplace well-being, quality of work life, and self-fulfillment at work¹⁶.

This brings us to the goals for WOP in light of what has been discussed. If WOP aims to be socially useful, *it must start by not being useful to capitalism*. Besides being an absurd system¹⁷, capitalism is ecocidal, responsible for a major climate crisis, to the

¹⁵ Apart from the proposed studies, one can draw inspiration from the various works mentioned by Guimond (2010, Chapter III) seeking to validate the hypothesis of socialization in an academic context: Guimond et al. (1989); Galland (1995); Guimond & Palmer (1996); Duarte et al. (2003).

¹⁶ This is particularly the case when they become objectives or indicators in research protocols or interventions. While job satisfaction and quality of work life remain desirable for everyone, their study, when not critical, necessarily takes on a neoliberal character.

¹⁷ "Capitalism is, in many ways, an absurd system: employees have lost ownership of the results of their work and the possibility of leading an active life outside of subordination. As for capitalists, they find

point that some now refer to it as the "capitalocene" (Bonneuil & Fressoz, 2016; Campagne, 2017; Malm, 2017). To avoid being *useful* to capitalism, WOP must ask itself two questions. The first is what it could look like without its capitalist goals. The second is what this would entail in a world where capitalism still exists. This is precisely the point that brings out our ontological desire: *to persevere in our being* as work and organizational psychologists and as a discipline. Currently, would abandoning our discipline's capitalist goals mean its demise? This is an important question that we believe must be debated.

In a Spinozian approach, *utility* is defined by the *Good*, which is itself defined by *Joy*, meaning the increase of the power of acting. If "men are most profitable to man" for Spinoza (*Eth.*, IV, 37, first demonstration), it is because another human being is the best means of being joyfully affected. This is why Spinoza is interested in common notions, these modes assembled mutually affecting each other and thus increasing their capacity to affect and be affected. For Spinoza, these common notions are sources of knowledge, potentially adequate knowledge, meaning sources of freedom of the mind and thus *Blessedness*. In this sense, Spinoza proposes that *concord* be synonymous with the union of minds, at the widest possible scale. Thus, he will propose in the *Political Treatise* that *radical democracy* be the political system most capable of "maximizing the actualizations of our powers of acting and our powers of thinking" (Lordon, 2010, p. 201). Spinoza says, "peace consists not in the absence of war but in a union or harmony of minds" (*TP*, VI, 4), but also that "if slavery, barbarism, and being without protection are to be called peace, nothing is more wretched for men than peace" (*TP*, VI, 4).

This approach offers interesting goals for rethinking WOP's action: *collective dynamics as the absolute priority* and *radical democracy as the goal*. This is not far from what is proposed as a solution for most of the themes in the *manifesto for the future of WOP* (Bal et al., 2019): more democratic practices, promoting exchange and deliberative practices. It is probably no coincidence that part of the research is moving towards "democratic" practices in organizations. The capitalist nature of work organizations necessarily brings with it anti-democratic practices since all workers' rights rely on codifying their subordination, thus reducing them to the status of *social minors* (Friot, 2011). It is very likely that these workers would hardly accept the application of the current governance mode in work organizations to the state (Beauvois, 2005, pp. 145-160). Could orienting our goals in this direction make WOP *useless* to capitalism? Or even socially *useful* WOP? We must be wary of traps here too: "democratic" practices must allow for collective decision-making on production goals; otherwise, they will remain *useful* to capitalism. Indeed, these practices can easily be captured by a neoliberal management approach by objectives¹⁸.

This article does not attack anyone's practice; on the contrary, our approach is intended to be understanding, necessarily so since, as we have repeated enough, what

themselves chained to an endless and insatiable process, totally abstract and dissociated from the satisfaction of consumption needs, even luxurious ones" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2011, p. 40).

¹⁸ On this argument, Chapoutot's book, *Libre d'Obéir* (2020), is very instructive, particularly for its contextualization and analysis of management by objectives.

we desire does not come from us. We wrote it hoping it will inspire reflection and debate within our discipline. Like Bal and his collaborators' *manifesto* (2019), it is an open discussion, and as such, we invite anyone wishing to participate to do so by whatever means they find most appropriate.

"Many reasons incline me to ask this of you, but I shall mention only one. I want everyone to find it easy to believe that these things are published for the benefit of everyone, that in publishing this little book your only wish is to spread the truth, that you are taking the greatest care to make it pleasing to everyone, that you are generously and with good will inviting men to study the true philosophy, and are aiming at the advantage of all" Spinoza, Letter to Louis Meyer (August 3, 1663).

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VIII ETHIC

This article does not contain any sensitive data and did not require approval of a research ethics committee.

IX DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The author declare that he has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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