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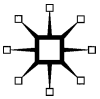

INSTITUTIONS INC.

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Contents

List of Figures and Tables vi

Notes on Contributors vii

1 Introduction 1
Elke Weik

2 Institutional Forgetting/Forgetting Institutions: Space and Memory in Secure Forensic Psychiatric Care 7
Steven D. Brown and Paula Reavey

3 Disgust and the Institutions of Cleanliness and Purity in Organizations 30
Thomas Klatetzki

4 Don't Be Unhappy, You Can Be Perfect! The Institutionalization of Aesthetic Surgery 63
Raluca Kerekes and Peter Walgenbach

5 Recursiveness: Relations between Bodies, Metaphors, Organizations and Institutions 94
Christian Gärtner and Günther Ortmann

6 Incorporating Embodiment 124
Jeroen Veldman

Index 145

Figures and Tables

Figures

4.1 Units of analysis and data sources 68
5.1 Recursive relations between metaphors, bodies, organizations and institutions 96
5.2 Recursiveness of metaphors and institutions (①) 98
5.3 Recursive relation between institutions and organizations as corporate actors (②) 102
5.4 Recursive relation between institutions and embodied actors/interaction (③) 103
5.5 Recursiveness of metaphors of the body and communities/organizations (④) 104
5.6 Recursiveness of metaphors and embodied (inter)action (⑤) 105
5.7 Recursive constitution of organizations and individual bodies 105
5.8 Organization and different modes of the body 110

Tables

3.1 Intuitive and reasoning processes: The dual-process theory of cognition 33
3.2 Types of disgust, functions and elicitors 39
3.3 Direct strategies for coping with core disgust and animal-nature disgust in care for the sick and elderly 47

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Günther Ortmann was Professor of Business Administration at Helmut Schmidt University, Hamburg. Since 2014 he has held a Research Professorship at the University Witten/Herdecke. His main interests include organization theory, strategic management and leadership. Recently his research has focused on 'organization and morality' and 'rules and rule-following'. His publications include 'On drifting rules and standards', in *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 26 (2010); 'Organisation und Moral. Die dunkle Seite' [Organization and morality: The dark side], *Weilerswist* 2010; 'Organisationen regeln; Die Wirkmacht korporativer Akteure' [Ruling organizations: The power of corporate actors], Wiesbaden 2012 (ed. with S. Duschek et al.).

Paula Reavey is Professor of Psychology at London South Bank University, as well as leading and consulting on projects at the Maudsley and Royal Bethlem hospitals. She has created and taught courses related to the psychology of mental health and distress for a number of years and is currently developing a master's program in mental health and clinical psychology, which has a firm focus on experts by experience and service users. She is the co-editor of *New Feminist Stories of Child Sexual Abuse: Sexual Scripts and Dangerous Dialogues* (2003, with Sam Warner) and *Memory Matters: Contexts for Understanding Sexual Abuse Recollections* (2009, with Janice Haaken), and editor of *Visual Methods in Psychology: Using and Interpreting Images in Qualitative Research* (2011). She is the co-author of *Psychology, Mental Health and Distress* (2013, with John Cromby and Dave Harper) and *Vital Memory and Affect: Living with a Difficult Past* (2015, with Steven D. Brown). She is the author of numerous articles on social remembering, child sexual abuse and sexuality, mental distress, and embodiment and space, using a variety of methodologies, including visual methods, memory work and discourse analysis.

Jeroen Veldman is a senior research fellow at Cass Business School, City University, London. He is interested in the way the historical development of the corporate form can be understood from the perspective of organization studies, and how these developments play out in and between discourses of law, finance, accounting, politics, corporate governance and public governance. His articles on these topics have appeared in the *British Journal of Management, Critical Perspectives on Accounting, Business Ethics: European Review, Business and Society Review, ephemera* and *Management.*

Peter Walgenbach is Professor of Organization, Leadership and Human Resource Management, Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany. He has authored and edited several books and special issues on management and organization. He has also contributed a number of chapters/articles in edited books and journals. His research focus is on institutional theory.

Elke Weik is a senior lecturer at the School of Management, University of Leicester. Her major research interests are located within institutionalist sociology. She is currently working on the conceptualization of institutional endurance in process theory and is engaged in a project on the English and German wine-making industries. Other areas of interest are process theories and philosophies as well as social theory.

1
Introduction

Elke Weik

1.1 Human, organizational and institutional corporeality

From the dawn of written records comes one of the most pervading definitions of Man, as *zoon logon echon* or *animal rationale*. Older even than the writings of Aristotle, to whom the concept is often attributed, this definition's origins takes us into the 6th century B.C. (Grawe and Hügli, 1980). It is this idea of Man (we will not be talking Woman for another two millennia) as the only organism capable of thinking and talking that shapes European anthropology and culture. It is the core conviction that propels Rationalism, the Enlightenment and Idealism at the beginning of modernity. In the Middle Ages it moves Man into the proximity of God and the angels, both entities that are more rational and thus even more perfect. The one thing that holds Man back in comparison with them, that mars his perfection and gives him an animal character, is his body. In the trinity of soul, reason and body, the latter constitutes the 'dark side' and imperfection; a contrast that becomes even starker when the trinity is reduced to the duality of mind and body.

Institutions are processes of this world. They are constituted, maintained and dismantled by human beings embedded in the meaning structures of their culture(s). At the same time, they are set in a material world of bodies and physical objects. Institutionalist scholars are also subjects of this world. They will constitute, maintain and dismantle theories in accordance with the meaning structures of their (Western) culture. Both institutional workers and institutionalist scholars must grapple with the 'dark side' of institutions, that is, with their materiality and the bodily involvement of their members, while living in a culture that confers perfection (only) upon spiritual entities, most notably in

the form of reason and will. Thus, morality and legitimacy – the central building blocks of institutions – become matters of reason and volition in clear distinction from the appetites, affects and desires of the body (Strejcek and Zhong, 2014).

Institutional workers as well as scholars have a number of options for dealing with this incongruence. They can ignore the materiality of institutions – an option that is far more conveniently pursued in an academic environment than elsewhere. They can fight it and try to eradicate it. They can sublimate it. They can accept it. As institutionalist theory is full of examples of the first option, this book will look at the remaining three. It will examine how people in institutions deal with bodies: their own and those of others, and bodies that are imperfect, ugly, dirty or ill. It will, however, not limit itself to the control of bodies by institutions but will also ask how the materiality of bodies has shaped institutions. This question takes us to another form of corporeality: that of corporations. In a parallel move that is probably as old as that from animal to deity, objects seek to become subjects; they seek the divine spark that will turn them from creations into creators.

1.2 Institutions and corporeality: The contributions in this book

Friedland and Alford's (1991) seminal paper, 'Bringing society back in: Symbols, practices, and institutional contradictions', is cited often and for many reasons, but rarely for its observation that institutions have a dual – symbolic and material – nature. In the decades since the paper's publication, organizational institutionalism has primarily been concerned with the symbolic and/or cognitive aspects of institutions, which have been defined as shared rules and meanings (Fligstein, 2001), or as consisting of cognitive, normative and regulative pillars (Scott, 1998).

In contrast, we would like to bring Friedland and Alford's insight back to center stage and discuss and explore the material aspects of institutions. We will focus on one particular aspect that comes in two guises: the notion of corporeality, in its two forms concerning either the human body or corporations. The issues we wish to explore revolve around the following:

- The interplay of the symbolic and the material: What does corporeality do to rules, meanings, cognitions and logics? What do they do to corporeality?

- The triad of institutions, bodies and corporations: How do they relate and interact? How do bodies and corporations constitute institutions and vice versa?
- The significance of aspects traditionally linked with corporeality, namely passivity, receptivity, susceptibility: What role do they play in institutions?

The often repeated complaint concerning the neglect of the body in institutionalist, and more broadly, social theory is justified in that studies on actors' cognitive abilities and interactions with the world far outweigh studies on actors' corporeal abilities and interactions. This, however, should not be taken to mean that nothing exists that could be used as a foundation to develop institutionalist thoughts on the subject. Most visibly, some great names in sociology have contributed to our understanding of the role of the body in social interaction. Norbert Elias (1994) has made the body and its functions central to a history of civilization that is directly related to the development of Western institutions. Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and physical capital (Bourdieu, 1984, 1991) elevate the body as a central agency of social reproduction as well as strategic conduct. Last but not least, Michel Foucault – conspicuously absent in an institutionalist theory that avoids discussing power relations – has provided a 'micro-physics' of power (Foucault, 1977) as well as the notion of 'bio-power' (Foucault, 1978) to describe the relationship between human bodies and institutions. The British sociologist Chris Shilling (1997) has compiled these, and many more, contributions into a 'sociology of the body' that can prove a useful point of departure for those who wish to bring more corporeality into institutionalist studies. A very intricate discussion of the body within a theory of action can also be found in Hans Joas' creative action theory (Joas, 1996; Weik, 2012). In particular, Joas draws attention to classic bodily features like passivity, sensitivity, receptivity and imperturbability that are neglected in most action theories focusing on intentions, interests and reasons. He is, however, not only interested in the materiality of the human body but also in the materiality of institutions, the corporeality of group actors and the (legal) ontology of the 'corporation' – topics that find an echo in the present collection.

While interest in the human body has waxed and waned in institutionalist and organizational theory, interest in the corporation has only recently become an issue. For many decades, the mainstream treated 'corporation' as just another word for company or

organization. Its legal connotations were noted, but its corporeality remained undiscussed. Recent trends suggesting 'corporate citizenship' or 'corporate personhood' have, however, challenged the understanding of corporation we previously took for granted (see Matten and Crane, 2005 for a review; Ortmann, 2010 in a critical vein).

The aim of this book is to draw together aspects of human and organizational corporeality and link them to institutions for the first time. This drawing together revolves around the concept of wholeness in its double meaning of health and perfection.

In their study of mental health institutions, Steve Brown and Paula Reavey show how institutions manipulate bodies as part of their institutional work. In an empirical approach quite new to mainstream institutionalist theory, the authors define institutions as assemblages of objects, space, time, organization and agency held together by classifications that they have created for themselves and that they seek to control. In the case of mental health institutions, some of these classifications revolve around 'wellness'. Since wellness is defined with regard to present symptoms and without any concern for the patient's past, the institutions feel justified in manipulating patients' bodies with medication to the point where patients feel they lose their former self-identity and their memories of the past.

Thomas Klatetzki analyzes the organizational and institutional consequences of the feeling of disgust. He shows how the initial biological reaction that prevents us from consuming rotten food is ultimately mobilized as a moral valuation of persons and practices. By the same token, its counterpart 'cleanliness' assumes positive moral valuation as purity or soundness. Klatetzki shows how organizations in particular strive to avoid, banish from sight or reframe practices that trigger disgust. Adopting a microsociological approach – as far as it makes sense to distinguish between the micro and macro level in this case – the author argues that human actors' bodily affective reactions towards cleanliness constitute institutions, as objects of valuation, as pure, legitimate and trustworthy. With this, he goes beyond what institutionalist theory would traditionally connote with the normative pillar of institutions. Klatetzki also points out that the bodily affective dimension opens an avenue into the study of what Joas (see above) would call the passive aspect of human agency.

In their historical study on the institutionalization of aesthetic surgery, Raluca Kerekes and Peter Walgenbach show, however, that health and beauty do not automatically trigger institutionalization. They explain how aesthetic surgery has struggled throughout most of

the 20th century to become recognized as a 'proper' branch of medicine despite the eternal desire for beauty and even despite the fact that the requisite technology was already in place. In what the authors describe as 'institutional hostility', the institutionalization process has encountered a number of reversals, slowdowns and holdups to the point where a failure to institutionalize seemed the more likely course. With regard to the overall theme of the book it is interesting to see, for once, beauty and health juxtaposed with one another. What the history of aesthetic surgery indicates is that in this case health is viewed as the more legitimate concern, and it is only when beauty becomes defined as healthy that the practice of aesthetic surgery moves from the periphery to the center. It also indicates, conversely, that the realm of health and sanity expands with every successful institutionalization.

Christian Gärtner and Günther Ortmann bring in a further aspect by regarding bodies as metaphors for organizational and institutional 'wholeness'. The latter notion expresses, once again, the duality of health on the one hand and completeness (in the sense of perfect functioning) on the other. These metaphors not only provide agents with cognitive word play, but become terms of valuation in the same sense as the emotion of disgust discussed above. Or, to put it in institutionalist language, they transcend Scott's cognitive pillar to become part of the normative and regulative pillar as well. Gärtner and Ortmann then look in more detail at the requirement or desire for 'whole' bodies in their recursive relationship with organizations: producing bodies and consuming bodies, bodies as objects (sometimes even victims) of organizations, and bodies that limit organizational aspirations. They all draw on the confusion between material health and cleanliness and moral soundness and trustworthiness.

The nexus between bodies, organizations and institutions is also discussed by Jeroen Veldman. He looks at the history of the concept of the 'corporation' from legal fiction to anthropomorphic agent. Veldman shows how the vague and oscillating ontological status of the corporation has gradually become filled with neoliberal ideas of a contractually embedded, self-interested *homo economicus*; ideas that then spill back into the self-understanding of human (economic) actors. In this way, corporations not only become personified actors but also serve as role models for actorhood. In contrast to real human beings, this oscillating ontological status between legal fiction and natural persons also enables corporations, or rather their corporate lawyers, to perform the 'corporate vanishing trick' by adopting the identity that is of greatest advantage to them in lawsuits.

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