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Desires and Affects in Organizations: Spinoza's Contributions to a Critical Study

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Abstract

By contemplating the philosophical complexity of affects and desire as power, this theoretical essay aims to critically discuss the dynamics of desire and affects in contemporary organizations, with Spinoza as the main theoretical inspiration. The study is characterized as theoretical-critical and counter-hegemonic, supporting a process of socio-organizational transformation as it resists the homogenizing, totalitarian discourse of reification and instrumentalization; denouncing ways of capturing and kidnapping subjectivities. Reflecting on this implies uncovering aspects that conceal strategies of domination and instrumentalization of the subject through the development of people management policies and practices, which usurp the power emanating from the worker's desire and manage affects according to their own interests. In this dynamic, organizations seek to achieve the enthusiastic adherence of employees, who invest all their innovative, creative and affectionate potential in the hope of obtaining positive affects that can give meaning to their existence. And Spinoza, in his reflections developed at both an ontological and political level, becomes a rich source for thinking about the individual-company relationship, especially when we start from his positions on freedom, servitude, valuing multiplicity, perseverance in existence and the power to act.

Keywords: Spinoza; desire; affect; organizations.

Introduction

The aim of this theoretical essay is to critically discuss the dynamics of desires and affects in contemporary organizations, with Spinoza's philosophy as the main inspiration. In this endeavor, we also draw on authors from French critical psychosociology (Enriquez, 1995; De Gaulejac, 2007; Pagès, Bonetti, De Gaulejac, & Descendre, 1987) and authors from the Marxist tradition (Alves, 2008; Faria & Meneghetti, 2007, 2019; Negri, 1993). Despite the structural differences between these theoretical perspectives, it is possible to establish a fruitful dialogue to reflect on desire and affects in the context of the individual-company relationship.

A dialogue involving Marxism and Spinoza, for example, has been promoted by authors such as Lordon (2010) and Negri (1993). There is even a certain influence of Spinoza on Marx, who even read him for his doctoral thesis. And with regard to the authors of psychosociology, which draws heavily on psychoanalysis, this dialogue is possible, provided that we consider some limits, such as the non-existence for the philosopher of the death drive, since the *conatus* is the force of perseverance in itself, never turning to self-destruction, and especially in the psychoanalytic perspective of desire as lack, a central concept for it, whereas for Spinoza desire is a power, a positivity.

We also assume that organizations are a refractory locus for thinking about happiness and freedom, even when affects and desires come into play. Passion has been the flagship of the strategic logic of people management, especially in contemporary companies, which rely on an organizational discourse that focuses on the production and capture of subjectivities and the imprisonment of individuals in the bonds of their own desires (Alves, 2011; Enriquez, 1995; De Gaulejac, 2007; Pagès et al., 1987).

There is nothing new in these statements, as can be seen in the works of authors linked to critical psychosociology, such as De Gaulejac (2007) and Enriquez (1995). Nevertheless, our contribution lies in bringing Spinoza to the center of this debate. It is a challenging transdisciplinarity, but one that has produced some good reflections, such as those made by Lordon (2010) in a study that puts Spinoza and Marxism in dialogue, and an analysis that often reminds us of those carried out by thinkers from critical psychosociology and clinical sociology. Lordon (2010) carries out such a dialogue even though there is a structural issue that positions Marxism and Spinoza in a relatively opposite way, the issue of negativity, of dialectical contradiction, which is opposed to Spinoza's positivity. It is a contribution to the socio-organizational understanding of affective arrangements and configurations of passion in the context of capitalism.

In the same vein, and based on Spinoza's philosophy of the affects, Hardt (2007) seeks to understand the changes in the dominant forms of work and production. Starting from the concept of affective work, he brings together elements to "simultaneously understand the bodily and intellectual aspects of the new forms of production, recognizing that such work involves both rational intelligence, negligence, and the passions or feelings" (Hardt, 2007, p. xi).

It is also interesting to mention the mobilization of desire and the management of affect, which triggers the *conatus*, the capture, the affective management, the enchantment that extends the individual's servitude, distancing them from the search for truth, freedom and happiness, at least in Spinoza's terms, that is, the non-moderation of our affects and the broad dependence on the external. A distancing that is produced by the capture of the individual by the desire of the other,

the holder of the means of production, in which the *modus operandi* changes according to the historical context, becoming increasingly sophisticated and less perceptible. In line with Alves (2011), a project of “predatory sociability” is observed in the mass appropriation of the emotional and intellectual creativity of people, whether they are workers, clients or consumers, all of whom are mobilized and captured by the social metabolism of capitalism. Deceived by the “rosy visions” of the new configurations of work, it is impossible to see that the affect implied in the nouns “collaborators,” “consultants” and “partners” conceals a process of approximation for the domination and capture of subjectivities.

We then have the opportunity to rethink managerialist ideology and work relations in the light of a network of affects and passions, in which Spinoza's anthropology proves to be very useful and contributes to a psychosocial reading – in a sense, both carry out a clinic of affects. This analytical perspective adds a certain novelty to the study, as it deepens Spinoza's philosophy and expands the possibilities of analyzing affects and desires in an organizational context. Desire as the production of subjectivities and our reality. Turning to Spinoza is a good encounter with “immanent efficient necessary causality; unity of substance; deconstruction of the images of the anthropomorphic god and freedom as the free volition of the will... and intellectual understanding itself becomes the strongest and therefore liberating affect” (Paula, 2014, p. 68).

And one of the reasons why we have come back to Spinoza is because of the very atmosphere he has created, not only in his socio-historical context, but also for contemporary times, such as that of the democratic potential and the ethics of freedom. Spinoza is a revolutionary who inspires freedom and emancipatory actions. Negri, for example, has a political reading of Spinoza from an emancipatory perspective that transforms the contemporary political order (De Gainza, 2014).

The proposed reflections start with a presentation of Spinoza's perspective on desires and affects, and then discuss these relationships in the context of the contemporary organizational world. Along this path, we first elucidate the aspects that make up desire and then relate it to affects, always from a critical theoretical perspective. We believe that this initiative can contribute to the construction of an innovative analysis that sheds light on new analytical perspectives in organizational studies. The intention is to open up a dialogue between these articulations, without claiming to exhaust it.

Desires and affects from a Spinozan perspective

For Spinoza, ethics is about the power of life. It is not a manual of conduct (Dumoulié, 2005) that suppresses desires and affects, but leads to the search for an understanding of them. It differs from morality as a dogmatic basis for what can and should be done, a mode of action. Ethics, in turn, is a “teaching of desire, for the subject of desire himself and for his autonomy, based on effective knowledge of men and the world” (Bove, 2010, p. 59).

Philosophy, for this Dutch Jew who built a unique body of work and whose thought got him excommunicated in 17th century Amsterdam, has as its basic objective the development of a “vision capable of freeing man from the passions and giving him a superior state of peace and tranquility”

(Reale & Antiseri, 2003, p. 407). And knowledge and reason are the foundation of this mission, including with regard to affects, inadequate ideas and man's servitude.

Our main focus, in terms of Spinoza's studies, is his book *Ethics*, especially part three, where the philosopher presents his theory of the affects, the affective experience, the relationship between them, their causes, the active and passive related to action and the passion to be more active and the causes of our actions, a source of increased power (Spinoza, 2009). In terms of his doctrine of the affects, based on the geometric method, Spinoza (2009) seeks to know their nature, the cause of the affects, from an immanent perspective. Distancing himself from the conception of the affects as vices, and aware of the limits of the power we have over them, especially when speaking in terms of freedom of will – a fiction in his eyes – Spinoza turns to the search for coherence between man's action and his nature, and in working rationally with the affects and their forces, being freer (Bartuschat, 2010). And Spinoza's analysis of the affects, when reflecting on subjectivity, does not ignore the collective, even in democratic terms. There is a strong political dimension to Spinoza, including a critique of institutions (Bove, 2010).

Desire in Spinoza, a primary affect without an object, is conceived as an affirmation of power and is based not on lack but on the perseverance of living, of being continually affected. It would not be possible to conceive of desire as lack, since we are in a reality of positivity, with no room for lack, which would be primarily an effect of the imagination (Bove, 2010). This is a structural difference from both psychoanalysis and nostalgia for one's parents, and from authors such as Bataille, who sees desire in a dialectical position in which neither lack nor positivity are excluded (O'Shea, 2002).

Desire is thus creative energy and the appetite for life, a conceptual positivity. Spinoza (2009, p. 141) understands desire as the essence of man, similar to appetite, with consciousness. For the author, desire would include:

all the efforts, all the impulses, appetites and volitions of man which vary according to his variable state and which, not infrequently, are so opposed to each other that man is dragged everywhere and does not know where to turn (Spinoza, 2009, p. 141).

In this way, desire assumes a nature that is constantly changing and permanently affected by other bodies. And, according to Spinoza (2009, p. 106), “effort (*conatus*), insofar as it refers only to the mind, is called will; but insofar as it refers simultaneously to the mind and the body, it is called appetite...” the same as desire. Bove (2010, p. 31) would also remind us of the eminently unconscious nature of desire as “the affirmation of a singularity crossed by relations of forces.” What remains to be considered in the definition is whether what we desire is what we consider to be good, or the opposite: we consider what we desire to be good.

Talking about desire brings us back to the Spinozan term *conatus*, that force of perseverance, of self-preservation, of persevering in one's being, in one's essence, which is desire. Thus, “the effort by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing other than its very essence” (Spinoza, 2009, p. 105). We are desire, and it is from desire that our lives are configured, that we are forged (Chauí, 2011). Desire is power. It is not a desire for something, “but the very power to affirm life and

produce effects” (Bove, 2010, p. 26). A capacity to affect and be affected. It is a desire that is guided by positive affects, especially that of joy. Spinoza's logic is positive, of sympathy and joy, transforming the passive into the active. In fact, as the latter affect is present, it becomes more possible to achieve greater perfection (Spinoza, 2009). Furthermore, it must be said that internal causes help to affirm the *conatus*.

And the power to act, the foundation of life, is influenced by the way the body is affected. Affects then take on a central role for Spinoza, who understands them as “the affects of the body, by which its power to act is increased or diminished, stimulated or restrained, and, at the same time, the ideas of these affects” (Spinoza, 2009, p. 98). These play a role in regulating our actions and passions, playing a defining role in the very judgment of these actions. It is the basis of our judgments. It is also important to say that the analysis of the affects takes place at the same time, in terms of both the body and the spirit, and there is no duality between soul and body. Both are modified, with the affect or modification occurring in the soul, which we would consider to be an idea (Bove, 2010). In addition, “the increase in one's own power can ultimately be understood as a way of becoming increasingly active, that is, the true cause of our own actions, rather than acting under the coercion of external forces” (Pereira, 2008, p. 75).

In Spinoza's terms, there is a direct relationship between power and self-preservation, in which the latter requires an increase in the former. And freedom, not sovereign will, comes into play more explicitly, in line with the need to promote reason against the influences of the passions, of the external, which ultimately diminish our power to act. Thus, self-preservation is linked to action and not to passion, which would lead us to suffer. Pereira (2008) makes an interesting reading of this relationship between power and self-preservation, using the example of a cowardly man who submits in order to maintain his existence and a brave, rational man who would rather lose it than be enslaved, making the *conatus* dissonant with freedom. The latter, unlike the former, manages to maintain his individuality and becomes increasingly active, more powerful, an active participant. Meanwhile, the former maintains his person only in terms of common sense, departing from a vulgar way of understanding self-preservation.

And yet, we want the other to be in line with what we see as good, joy, and a way of life that the philosopher will see as ambition. In his words:

... everyone, by nature, desires that others live in accordance with their own inclination. Since this is what everyone desires, thus constituting reciprocal obstacles, and since everyone wants to be praised or loved by everyone, they end up hating each other (Spinoza, 2009, p. 120).

Thus, for the philosopher, man's desire is ultimately specifically linked to the desire of the other. And imagination plays a unique role in the process of having what is desired as desirable in itself. According to Chauí (2011, p. 49), drawing on Spinoza, “it is in and through the imagination that desire – *appetitus* and *cupiditas* – carries out its movements...”

We imagine what makes it possible to extend our actions or not, but here we are working with representations, and these are not faithful to the things themselves. The individual ends up becoming a hostage to these images. It is a context in which they become more dependent, in

relation to the external, which commands us, “in which we deposit our being and our life, subject to the imminent and continuous loss of the things we desire...” (Chauí, 2011, p. 65). In this sense, “...the person places themselves in a passive situation, all the more passive the more they surrender to the power of the imagination” (Dumoulié, 2005, p. 150), requiring the development of a reflection experienced simultaneously as an affect of reason and as an affect.

The individual tends to focus on the exterior and not on themselves, in the expression of the *conatus*, in which the external object is perceived as the cause of desire. In this sense, Dumoulié (2005, p. 149) says, from a Spinozan perspective, that “instead of wanting what we deem desirable according to our essence, we make the mistake of looking to things for the origin of desire and the reasons for desirability.” In other words, instead of acting on the basis of reason, we yield to the passions only because of what is outside of us. As Spinoza (2009) would put it, impotence lies in the fact that man does not act according to his own nature. He allows himself to be led by things outside himself, to be determined by them. Impotence consists of “doing what the ordinary arrangement of things demands and not what one's own nature, considered in itself, demands” (Spinoza, 2009, p. 180).

In fact, life is very fickle if we live it according to our passions, and it is important to apply ourselves to reason and to base our actions on coherence with our own nature. Reflecting on our affects helps with this proposal, as well as those that are experienced in organizations and stimulated by them, allowing us to understand the games of desire established there. We would thus be on a path of self-determination, of minimizing heteronomy, aware of the inexistence of a free will. A reflection that is committed to criticism, to understanding the immanent causalities of events, to freedom and to improving the quality of human life.

Hence the importance of reason. And according to the Spinozan thought presented by Chauí (2011, p. 59),

And here we find the great Spinozan innovation: desire is not only an imaginative operation and a passion; it is an original affect that can be passive or active, a passion or an action, and our reason will have a moderating capacity only if it is experienced by us as an active affect or desire whose strength supersedes that of passive affects or passions.

Reason desires. In this sense, Chauí (2011) highlights the fundamental importance of thinking, of reflection, in order to redirect the desire-desired relationship, in other words, from an understanding of the very nature of what we desire and what makes us desire a certain object. It means understanding human nature, the nature of things, the affects we experience, and how they are coordinated within an economic system.

Desires, the power to act and organizations

In order to establish the connections between an ontological order of affects and the theoretical-critical problematization of affects and desires at the organizational level, it is important

to mention some studies that relate Karl Marx, one of the main references for the construction of the field of ideological critique, including management critique, to Spinoza's thinking.

In this sense, Paula (2014), in her reflection on Spinoza and Marx, takes freedom as the starting point of this dialogue. She mentions that while Marx was interested in a socio-economic order of reality and verified it by analyzing the causes of the dehumanization of capitalism, the loss that man suffers from himself and his freedom, Spinoza turned to the understanding of an ontological-metaphysical order, which helped to understand the causes and risks of the loss of freedom that man was experiencing at that historical moment. Maeso and França (2018), in addition to taking the issue of freedom as the guiding principle of Spinoza's and Marx's thinking, argue that the two authors understand that theory is closely linked to practice, with thought and the power of action being on the same level.

Action is the basis of existence, not only for Spinoza but also for Marx, as the authors remind us when analyzing his early writings. In the same way that Spinoza values democracy, Marx sees it as creating the conditions for breaking away from relations of domination, with room for the individual's practical action, for the realization of their aptitudes, which Spinoza would see as an environment conducive to the power of action.

Bianchi (2014) also establishes a dialogue between Spinoza and Marx, looking for possible influences on his theoretical construction, which can be identified in Marx's doctoral thesis and in his preparatory notebooks, a knowledge that would, however, ignore the issue of Spinoza's passionate servitude, but would focus on the broad appreciation of human freedom.

If, then, in the Spinozan context, theory is not far removed from a way of acting ethically – not morally – then the need to strengthen criticality and collectively promote change as a form of resistance to relations of domination and the hierarchical imperative of organizations is reinforced.

And in this context, passionate servitude is the central object of analysis for a critical study based on Spinoza's theory of the affects. Turning to the *conatus*, a central concept for the philosopher, this perseverance within oneself is closely linked to desire, a desire without objects, this energy that is life, existence. An impulse influenced by a network of affects. An energy that, in the organizational sphere, is captured from employees, with their desire being influenced by and at the service of a master desire, the desire of the market. A desire that is not originally theirs, but to which the individual, who does not have the material conditions for reproduction, submits. A master desire linked to an egocentrism of their *conatus* and which, in terms of asymmetrical power relations, will generate the most diverse abuses (Lordon, 2010).

And domination is perpetuated, naturalized, to the extent that, as Lordon (2010, p. 30) argues, “the setting in motion of wage-earning bodies, in the service of, draws its energy from the fixation of the desire-*conatus* on the [money-object] for which capitalist structures have established employers as the sole suppliers,” triggering in employees even affects of joy. And the author extends this discussion even further by introducing the intersubjective network of affects as an influence on desire – the subject is intimately linked to the other and to the affects established there, including through memory and associations, without the existence of an eminently autonomous will.

We have a desire that is exploited and channeled into consumption, transforming it into a totem and a symbolic reference for the individual. Bove (2010, p. 45) speaks of the imbecility of “a desiring (and delusional) reason that is both satisfied and frustrated in the animal-consumer,” in the

context of an obsession with the act of consumption that affects the human psyche. For Alves (2008, p. 234), this is a perverse desire, fueled by the fetishism of merchandise, which permeates “all social objectifications – including images, signs and values, constituting what we call fetish-forms.” Thus, “the new neoliberal order seeks to disseminate exclusively individual dreams, market desires and ideological utopias through the media apparatus and its image-allegories of desire” (Alves, 2008, p. 235).

The possibility of increasing consumption leads us to become massively involved with the company's desire, creating the right environment for the capture of desire and the affective internalization of organizational values and beliefs. In this way, desire without an object is transformed into a desire for, a desire for increasing and totalitarian consumption.

These productive structures are influenced by configurations of affect and also influence them, as well as individual desires. Socio-economic structures permeate the individual psyche, guiding desires, regulating behavior and attitudes in the workplace. Affects are selected and valued, or not, by management, in a context of instrumentalization and reification of the individual, regardless of their complexion. Heterogeneity gives way to the standardization of behavior and the symbolic violence that ensues.

And we can draw a lot of inspiration from Spinoza to analyze some dimensions of the individual-company relationship, with desire as an intervening factor and the concept of *conatus* – perseverance in oneself, in one's own existence. This persistence is instrumentalized at the rhetorical level by organizations, in a promotion of power, action and proactivity, but this path is linked to inadequate causes, linked to external forces, keeping passivity unchanged. Instead of being an adequate cause, which is “to find in the internal force of the body and mind the full cause of our desire” (Chauí, 2011, p. 62).

These are the defining causes of desire, its amplitude and action, as well as the affects that crystallize this energy and influence action. And as these capitalist forces – which are systems of power – change, so do the networks of desire and affect, such as the historical changes from sad affects linked to strict precariousness to happy affects linked to mass consumption or self-realization, in a whole logic of passion (London, 2015).

Our desire begins to coexist with a master desire, to which we place ourselves in a position of submission so that, paradoxically, as a result of the salary we receive, we can continue to persevere in our existence, in other words, desiring. In the end, we find ourselves unable to act, left to the turbulence of the outside world, allowing us to be more open to the organizational culture and, at the same time, placing us in a servile position. We try to find mechanisms that guarantee a certain degree of control over the situation, but “men will often fight for their servitude as if they were fighting for their freedom” (Bove, 2010, p. 32).

For their part, organizations and their representatives seek to stimulate our power to act as much as possible, according, of course, to their own objectives, such as love of work and a pleasant working environment, which can provoke joyful affects, without this meaning that it is an adequate idea, because it remains at the level of passions, a passive affect, without there being a certain level of control in this affected being. In companies, there is also the expectation that “all the potentialities of being (intelligence, sensitivity, will) will be welded to the warrior strategy of the

company's project, and therefore the ideological welding of desire to the merchandise that it supposes, reinforces and perpetuates, as the only model of true life" (Bove, 2010, p. 51).

In organizations, we can identify both experiences of the expansion of power, in which we are provoked to be creative, in which work opens up space for the subjective mobilization of the subject and creativity, and experiences of the reduction of power, compromising our individuality, our perseverance in maintaining our existence, our desire. The control of power to act as an extension of the subjugation of the individual in organizations. There is also the production of subjectivities linked to the master-desire, in which the individual's affects and imagination are increasingly linked to the company, which the analysis of psychic-organizational correspondences helps us to understand.

The employee's imaginary is influenced as much by the social imaginary as it is reinforced by the organizational one, giving it concreteness and external objects such as money, career and status, linking desire to them. This deceptive imaginary happens "... to the extent that [the organization] tries to trap the individual in the trap of their own narcissistic desires in search of recognition and power" (Freitas, 2000, p. 57). It is desire, defined in a discursive process, that makes us enter into an incessant quest to be part of the club of the rare, as Pagès et al. (1987) and Freitas (2000) point out. Driven by desire, individuals surrender themselves to organizations dedicated to perpetuating their ideological beliefs, channeling the psychic energy of workers, shaping and homogenizing their behavior.

Employees forget or ignore the uniqueness of each of their desires. They ignore "... that each desire invents its object, the imagination generalizes the desired singular by universalizing it abstractly, and places it outside of us as a value, rule, norm and external paradigm, which operates coercively on the multiplicity of desires" (Chauí, 2011, p. 63).

In this way, we displace what is of our essence onto external objects and seek the source of our actions in things, in what is offered in the daily life of productive organizations, including that of being a voracious consumer. In a society of merchandise, the psychic energies of class individualities are preoccupied with external objects that appear as things and impose on subjects a certain way of operating subjectivity, a process of subjectivation that Alves (2008) calls the "expansion" of the unconscious. Based on this expansion, the sociometabolic order of capital constitutes the trafficking of dominant consents.

Organizations appropriate the dimension of excess characteristic of hypermodern man, who wants to live his experiences to the full and in an unbridled way, in search of intense sensations and emotions. In common with this incisive and passionate movement, organizations encourage their employees, but obviously intensely directed towards organizational objectives. An inordinate passion towards it, in a logic of restructuring control mechanisms that would be established on the basis of this attitude, with their costs minimized. This is a fruitful discussion that has been taken up by scholars of critical psychosociology and clinical sociology.

The belief in the importance of developing human potential is still part of the modern organizational imagination. Organizational practices such as coaching and mentoring move in this direction (Brunel, 2008; Castro, Medeiros, Dias, & Siqueira, 2021; Louis & Diochon, 2018; Salles, Vieira, Souza, & Barros, 2019; Sarsur & Parente, 2019), even capturing and managing subjectivities at the same time (Alves, 2011; Faria & Meneghetti, 2007; Faria, 2019). There is a directing of the

power to act towards organizational interests, which reinforces relations of domination and keeps people focused not only on the external, but also increases the level of ideological control, which keeps them tied to specific logics of thinking and keeps them away from reflexivity, from the effort to understand the causes of their actions and of the organization.

Workers are even further removed from any perspective of emancipation and resistance. In fact, organizations, with their management practices, end up weakening labor collectives (Linhart, 2021) in an action that is not limited to the specific interests of post-Fordist practices (Alves, 2011; Heloani, 2003; Tragtenberg, 2005; Faria & Meneghetti, 2007). Thus, from both a Spinozan and a critical-theoretical perspective, there is a move away from freedom.

The creative force of desire can generate both an increase in the production process, which companies obviously seek, and an inconsistency with more traditional control mechanisms. In this sense, organizations invest in personal development processes and indoctrination that represent, for the employee, the possibility of achieving their own goals. And these should not take long to achieve, otherwise adherence will be called into question. It is also worth mentioning that the employee will be faced with action linked to the other person's wishes, or what the other person believes should be done. And in this process of pleasing them, we have what Spinoza (2009) calls ambition. We want the other person to fulfill our desires, to live according to our precepts, to endorse what we love and what we believe to be true.

This aspect of human nature makes us reinforce the homogenization of behavior and creates obstacles to diversity, to heterogeneity. Instead of following our desire, we become powerless and go according to what the other wants of our desire, similar to what Spinoza would tell us in his analysis of servitude. He says:

Whoever strives, only for the sake of an affect, to make others love what he himself loves and to live according to his own inclination, acts only on impulse, and thus becomes odious... (Spinoza, 2009, proposition 37, S. 1)

The individual acts as if he were an autonomous person, that desire is autonomous, when in fact we do not understand the causes of what we think is our will, characterizing us more as heteronomous than autonomous beings. We do not know the paths of our desires and how they are influenced by memory, imagination and, we could also say, by society.

And at the same time, we experience situations that reduce our potential to act, such as mental exhaustion linked to the increasing pressure to achieve results and moral violence, diminishing our power to act and obviously leading to sadness and a feeling of helplessness. We no longer wish to persevere in our existence, we are moving towards what Le Breton (2015) would call the disappearance of the self, a surrender of oneself. In Spinoza's terms, we would be in a melancholic state (Bove, 2010).

Moreover, by following a certain idealized model without due critical reflection, the subject is faced with a production system, a work organization and socio-professional relations that are increasingly precarious, both objectively and subjectively. They feel powerless in the face of this reality. And once again we are inspired by Spinoza (2009, p. 134), who says that "when the mind

imagines its impotence, it is saddened by it.” In this way, its capacity to act, to desire, to persist in its being is diminished. And the situation becomes even more delicate as the individual feels isolated and without the approval of others. Once again we come to the question of recognition and how essential it is to the meaning of work, as presented by Lhuillier (2013).

Problematizing affects in the context of desires in organizations

We are affected by other bodies that modify us, either by increasing or decreasing our capacity for action. It is in this context that the construction of the subject itself takes place. Subjectivity is “only the speed/slowness of the mode constituted by its affects and the power to be affected... (and) the potential of the body – its power – is its capacity to multiply and intensify affective connections...” (Hjorth & Holt, 2015, p. 90).

With regard to desire as an affirmation of power, we can mention the discussions on creativity and entrepreneurship by Hjorth and Holt (2015), who discuss the performance, subjectivity and affects of the actor, returning to Spinoza's concept of the *conatus* and analyzing how groups and organizations, considered as bodies, affect and are affected by other bodies. For example, in the context of Spinoza-based entrepreneurship studies, the authors comment on the focus on the relationships established between bodies, including groups, and their ability to affect other bodies, investigating issues of innovation and creativity in relation to these relationships. Such studies look at what these bodies can do, what active forces are present, and how they can be affirmed in order to differentiate and create new values (including joy) (Hjorth & Holt, 2015). Thus, in organizations, as in other social spaces, we experience a range of experiences and sensations from our relationships with other bodies that change us in a variety of ways, including our desire and power to act.

And we are afflicted by sadness and suffering at work, largely because we are encouraged to act or behave in ways that are contrary to our own nature. We want others to live according to our own inclinations, according to our own nature. However, it is important to consider that individuals follow a logic of identification with their fellow human beings, but there is a desire to follow one's own complexion and not be dominated by another who is just like us. “Reciprocal identification between equals immediately entails the desire not to be directed, controlled or dominated,” as Bove (2010, p. 37) reminds us in his Spinozan analysis.

Modes of action that are understood as the right way to act are promoted, neglecting differences. Heterogeneity, however, is necessary, making room for diversity as a source of increasing the subject's action and their ability to affect other bodies. “And the joy that can emerge depends on tolerating multiple centers of power...” (Hjorth & Holt, 2015, p. 92).

In the organizational context, our affects are regulated by organizational discourse and management practices. In the company's liturgy, as Tragtenberg (2005) points out, we maintain an ambivalent reverential anxiety, in which fear merges with the aggressiveness and seduction of the organization. We are afflicted by opposing and interdependent affects, such as fear and hope (that unstable joy), joy and sadness, when we do not feel lost and inactive in the face of the contradictory imperatives we experience in everyday life in organizations. We both love and hate organizations and the way we relate to them, in a confusing dynamic of affects and emotions in which our desires,

appetites and wishes are captured and managed. We live in the “socio-metabolism of barbarism,” in which the emulation of fear, as a regressive affect of the human soul, becomes a crucial element for the spurious consent of class individualities. “In fact, human subjectivity immersed in the social metabolism of capital is a 'subjectivity in de-effectivation,' stressed by the webs of social manipulation” (Alves, 2008, p. 225).

We are led to a fluctuation of mood, in terms of our mental state. These are bad encounters brought about by ideologies of management that develop under the auspices of both the affect of hope and fear. In addition, love is instrumentalized in a variety of ways aimed at the submission of desire. Desire is submitted and affect is managed. In this process, affects have different densities and are evaluated according to the organization's strategies (Enriquez, 2014b).

Affect is partly managed according to the interests of the organization, which instrumentalizes it in a context of instrumental rationality, of a technical reason that overrides an emancipatory reason (Alvesson & Deetz, 1999), defining standardization mechanisms and protocols that can produce good results, including in the employee's relationship with customers. Some of these affects are accepted, while others are completely discouraged.

When flirting with the emotional development of employees, organizations take as a reference a utopian model of man, in which he would only be driven by affects that were desired by them and in line with their organizational culture. Homogeneous modes of conduct are idealized and formalized, leaving no room for behavior that could compromise the hypothetical but always tense administrative harmony (Tragtenberg, 2006).

Affective closeness and love can also be brought into play, for example, to create an atmosphere of closeness between employees and customers, as identified in a study by Dowling (2007), in addition to the existence of a broad stimulus to promote the company culture to internalize specific ways of working and relating, and management practices aimed at fostering enthusiasm and expressions of affect that generate good organizational results.

In a study carried out by Wissinger (2007) on affective and immaterial work in the fashion industry, feelings arising from intersubjective relationships are analyzed in terms of the control of affects, which means that employees, even if they do their job properly, are punished because of their desired or undesired affects. And paying attention to the effects of this management, Mann (1997) and Dias, Siqueira, Moraes and Gomes (2019) warn us that this management of emotions and feelings can make the individual sick, as well as reduce the public spaces for speech, inhibiting any form of resistance or manifestation of sadness or unease about experiences in the organization.

Affect also appears in the analyses in terms of Enriquez's (2014a) clinic of power, which analyzes life drives. Although these help to create group bonds, they are also to some extent avoided by the organization because of a possible excess of affectivity to the detriment of rationality and productive work, especially when talking in terms of bureaucratic structures. Burrell (2013) makes the same observation when referring to Weber's stance. Here, affectivity is discouraged for fear that it will compromise the rationality with which work is organized and thus adversely impact the formation of the work collective, which has affect as its mainstay. The idea is that the individual's energy, desires and affects, even if minimized in terms of their expression, are focused solely on productivity and results. This is in line with Tragtenberg's ideas (2005, p. 38) when he reveals that

“not only is surplus value extracted from work, but there is a loss of its ‘being’ to the detriment of good performance, with profitability as its sole purpose.”

Faria and Meneghetti (2007) consider the capture of subjectivity, such as that carried out in the context of a post-Fordist management approach, to be the kidnapping of subjectivity. Alves (2011) reflects on the flexibilization of work and the organic link between accumulation by spoliation and the new practices of subjectivity capture adopted by companies and by the organizational innovations of capital based on the promotion of the participation and involvement of workers, affectively called collaborators.

And one practice that is widely promoted, in line with the findings of other studies such as Dowling's (2007), is the promotion of the internalization of the organizational culture. This mobilization aims to capture subjectivity, in which desire and affect play a special role, especially in organizational structures based on the figure of a charismatic leader. In this sense, it is not enough to internalize the symbols and values of the organization, but to devote oneself to the leader, an affective dependence that fosters passions and inhibits configurations of resistance. Here desire appears as enthusiasm for the company and its leaders, which can increase their power to act, but moves away from freedom and reason, a being of passion, as the author puts it.

To return to psychosociology, “the company therefore knows how to play with the deepest and most archaic desires of the human being” (Enriquez, 2014c, p. 53). And these games of power and desire are also explicit in strategic structures. Affective control becomes clear when he points out that “the times are no longer of the boss who commands, but of the one who seduces, persuades, exudes charm, encourages and knows how to play with appearances” (Enriquez, 2014b, p. 45). The goal is to fully mobilize the subject, to channel their desire into the interests of the organization, including in terms of social bonds, perhaps not in work groups, but in cross-functional teams, for example. For Hardt and Negri (2001), affect and the power of immaterial and cooperative work are constitutive elements of the new configurations of work that govern the contemporary world. It is the cultivation of passions, based on inadequate ideas, which at first seem to increase the power of the individual to act, but which keep them in a servile position.

Thus, much of the effectiveness of management models depends on organizational investment in indoctrination and awareness-raising to effectively engage and integrate employees. In the functional discourse of engagement, desire is mobilized and libidinal energy is channeled through people management policies and practices that mask the capture of subjectivity (Faria & Meneghetti, 2007).

And the practices of subjectivity capture (Alves, 2011) imprison individuals, keeping them captive to their passions, distancing them from freedom and desire, even if they usually maintain their existence. Therefore, taming affects and guiding emotions is a good strategy for management (De Gaulejac, 2007; Dias, Siqueira, & Medeiros, 2019; Jeantet, 2018; Pagès et al. 1987; Siqueira, Dias, & Medeiros, 2019). Organizational discourse is as much about promises to fill gaps as it is about promoting and stimulating the affirmation of employee power, which produces results in terms of creativity and innovation.

In these games of desire, of stimulating and discouraging affects, some stand out more than others, as we will analyze below. However, before this discussion is detailed, it is necessary to recall

that for Spinoza, affect is understood as “the affects of the body, by which its power to act is increased or diminished” (Spinoza, 2009, p. 98).

The affect of joy, for example, is one of the most important, having the capacity to make “a passage in man from a lesser perfection to a greater one” (Spinoza, 2009, p. 141), which contributes to increasing the body's power to act. Thus, joy as an affect deserves to be problematized in the context of work, especially if we include the discussion of desire. It is encouraged, but always placed in the context of the paradigms that underpin management, such as utilitarianism, functionalism and productivism, as can be seen in the work of Walsh, Boehm and Lyubomirsky (2018), Sender and Fleck (2017), and Layous (2019), and distanced from joy as a “feeling of lightness of being,” or a joy that “voluntarily associates others in a movement of generosity,” as Barus-Michel (2009, p. 21) would put it. Something light, unintentional, and almost natural.

In the context of joy, organizations distance themselves from this perspective and frantically seek enthusiasm, that demonstration of excess that desire is capable of producing in the individual (Dumoulié, 2005), which is the very characteristic of *jouissance* (Barus-Michel, 2009). The *jouissance* that transcends the dualism of pleasure as the opposite of suffering, which singularizes man's search for his own advantage, his satisfactions of self-love and love of self (Miller, 2005).

In fact, it is this desire for continuous enjoyment without end, with the prospect of immortality, that characterizes hypermodernity. As Lasch (1983, p. 25) notes, “living for the moment is the predominant passion – living for oneself, not for those who will follow, or for posterity.” It is the pursuit of incessant, frenzied enjoyment of life, and it is also duly instrumentalized by companies. “The pursuit of happiness has become a social imperative” (Albuquerque & Fonte, 2018, p. 131). As Binkley (2010, p. 90) notes, “the task of becoming happy... induces the individual to integrate the priorities of the dominant socio-economic order into the practice of their own subjectivity.”

First and foremost, the company expects its employees to be enthusiastic. Here we are talking about socio-professional relationships, creativity and innovation, and being a subject. However, what is valuable and significant for the process of subjectivation and giving meaning to life, both on a personal and professional level, is objectified and instrumentalized. In line with this process of instrumentalizing desire, the studies by Albuquerque and Fonte (2018), Dias, Siqueira and Medeiros (2019), De Gaulejac (2007), Jeantet (2018), and Park, Lim and Oh (2018) discuss how organizations instrumentalize emotions in favor of performance and organizational excellence. Desire is part of this process, both from a lack perspective and from an affirmation of power perspective.

The logic of consumerism, excellence and productivism command the categorical imperative of enjoyment: “one lives for enjoyment, to seize it, to organize it, and to prolong it” (Mendes, 2018, p. 56). The subject is summoned “with their resources, their capacities, but also their motivations, conscious and unconscious desires, phantasms underlying their engagement in work” (Lhuillier, 2013, p. 484). And adherence, even if it is so close to the subjective precariousness that Linhart (2014) tells us about, would be, in addition to enabling enthusiasm, the basis of self-realization, of overcoming death.

In addition to the emotion of joy, we identified a second emotion: sadness. Sadness also stands out as one of the main affects for Spinoza and is also the object of aversion by organizations,

which consider it to be an affect that would compromise the employee's power to act. The problem is that the same company that demands a permanent smile on the employee's face is silent about its role and responsibility as a causal agent of this melancholy. The same company that demands the power to act and enthusiasm for work, leads the individual to mental exhaustion, demotivation to work, lack of meaning in the performance of their activities, and physical and mental illness (Dias, Siqueira, & Morais, 2019).

Sadness would be the reduction of that power. In a Deleuzo-Spinozian study that sought, among other things, to conceptualize how affects are organized to serve managerial interests and agendas, such as technological innovation, Sage, Vitry and Daint (2020) explain that as we move away from an idea or something that we find pleasant and closer to something that is unpleasant, our power to act is diminished. And, "being dominated by affects contrary to one's own nature, sadness will be the result: as active forces are separated from what they can do and the creative capacity of the body diminishes" (Hjorth & Holt, 2015, p. 91). There is a whole dynamic that induces us to behave in certain ways, and anything that deviates from this homogenization is seen as harmful; the individual will feel sad because they are not working according to what they have been taught or how they have been socialized. In fact, the management model itself is sustained by systems of rewards and punishments in order to generate the desired actions, a path that is totally antagonistic to the virtue of actions and their active character in Spinoza.

A third affect, anger, for example, is one of the affects that is denied at the organizational level but that plays a role for the worker. When subjected to precarious work, situations of moral violence or similar experiences, this affect can lead to revolt, questioning and the definition of action strategies to get out of these experiences (De Gaulejac, 2011), "defensive strategies designed to combat the psychic pain caused by working in a climate of threat" (Dejours, 2018, p. 5).

Like anger, loneliness is also an experience worth remembering because it is a reality for many individuals in the workplace, especially due to the weakening of work collectives – discouraged by companies, as observed by Linhart (2021). Analyzed dialectically, loneliness appears as a pathology in organizations that generates mental illness. At the same time, a sense of teamwork is encouraged that is not linked to the spirit of the work collective, but rather to the organizational culture and the company's mission. Bove (2010, p. 50) would tell us that "modern man works for solitude, as if for his salvation."

There is a search for a group that is more than cohesive, in fact it is undifferentiated. In this way, he is not isolated, but lonely. But loneliness, instead of being perceived as the fruit of exclusion and impotence, is prominently linked to desire, to the flowering of the power to act. Thus, the "internal silence that terrifies, in terms of subjectivity, identification, desires and idealized objects" (Siqueira, Dias & Medeiros, 2019) has a liberating perspective. Recognizing the emancipatory power of solitude tends to bring individuals closer to the possibility of making and remaking themselves, of expanding, of living, of enhancing their potential to make history (Touraine & Khosrokhavar, 2004).

Conclusions

Without claiming to be conclusive, but inviting new reflections that touch on the dynamics of desire and the pitfalls of contemporary management, the concluding reflections of this study emphasize that the critique of organizations and management contributes more significantly to the advancement of the field of organizational studies to the extent that it considers desires and affects as a basis for analyzing the dynamics of management. Developing a critical reflexivity of the corporate world and our relationship with it helps us to understand both what we desire and what can contribute to understanding its origins.

In a way, the thread that has guided us throughout this theoretical essay has been that of freedom, one of the main riches in Spinoza's view, which depends both on a political understanding and on the work of analyzing affects and desires so that we can expand our power to act and persist in existence. The problem is that instead of being the proper cause, which would be "to find in the internal force of the body and mind the full cause of our desire" (Chauí, 2011, p. 62), we look to the external to guide our decisions and actions. In this sense, when analyzing desire and modern disenchantment, Chauí discusses the existence of a certain tension, in terms of the ambiguity of the very nature of passivity that desire can assume by conditioning itself unreservedly to the external.

And the company encourages what leads us so much to servitude, keeping affects and desires managed and indirectly discouraging the development of reason, which, from a Spinozan perspective, should be understood as an affect. And in both the social and organizational spheres, the cult of urgency negatively influences the search for freedom. Time is denied for reflection, for thinking about oneself, one's affects, which are predominantly the affects of the passions, and one's relationship with others.

In terms of organizational studies, our study contributes to sharpening the critical reflections that make up the field, based on the articulation of the ontological and socio-economic dimensions of the processes of mobilization of subjectivity and desire and the management of affect in contemporary organizations. Spinoza has been little studied in the field, especially in comparison to Deleuze and Nietzsche. As such, it is important to revive him not in the sense of a managerialist reading that seeks to increase the power of the individual to act in a neoliberal productive context, but in an emancipatory understanding, a structuring evaluation of critical organizational studies.

In terms of future research, we believe that broadening the discussion of freedom in the context of Spinoza, taking into account organizational spaces, will allow for the "liberation of new possibilities of life" (Maeso & França, 2018, p. 132). We also bet on reflections similar to Preciado's regarding the analysis of desires and passions, inspired by Spinoza, "in thinking about how one's own feelings are crossed by what is not one's (the individual's)" (Munchow, 2021, p. 140) and the expropriation of the power to enjoy.

Spinoza's theory of affect can also help us to better analyze human coexistence in the workplace. We affect and are affected by other bodies, which obviously highlights the importance of the relationships established there. What seems simple, however, is actually very complex, as Jesus (2021) shows us in a study that seeks to understand how the mind works with this complexity, with the affects that other bodies produce on us specifically, leaving their marks and influencing our power to act, leading to affects of joy, sadness, melancholy and/or loneliness, for example.

We also believe that thinking about desire should be experienced not only in terms of ourselves, but also with special attention to the desire of others, respecting them so as not to expect them to live according to our own desires, as is so present in the organizational space.

The construction of the subject, which obviously involves intersubjectivity and is linked to emancipatory premises, is linked to a taste for otherness and freedom through the strengthening of the work collective at the organizational level, and always with a certain active expectation of the reordering of social relations.

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Inclusive language

The authors use inclusive language that acknowledges diversity, conveys respect for all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities.

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