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# Power, Creativity, Innovation, and the Aesthetics of Existence in Contemporary Society and Organizations

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## Abstract

This article examines the potential discrepancies between the discourse surrounding an aesthetics of existence focused on innovation, personal empowerment, self-entrepreneurship, ownership, and creativity, and the persistent presence of deep-rooted contradictions within contemporary organizational mindsets and business models. Drawing on the works of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze, this analysis exposes these contradictions and their implications for understanding power dynamics within organizations. Despite the acknowledgement of the significance of human subjectivity, control mechanisms persist, undermining the transformative potential of these ideals. This persistence highlights the contradictions that exist between the proclaimed values of organizational discourse and the actual practices that perpetuate control and hinder genuine empowerment. Addressing these contradictions necessitates a comprehensive reassessment of organizational mindsets, management practices, and the broader social and economic context. By incorporating the insights of these authors, a more critical and nuanced understanding of power dynamics can be attained. This understanding can enable organizations to instigate meaningful

change, thereby unleashing the true power of human subjectivity as a driving force for innovation and empowerment. This article underscores the urgency of confronting the contradictions between the rhetoric and reality within organizations. Integrating the insights of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze provides a framework for scholars and practitioners to engage in a critical reassessment of organizational mindsets, practices, and their far-reaching implications. This research calls for further exploration, prompting a deeper inquiry into the transformative potential of an aesthetics of existence and its profound impact on organizational practices and mindsets.

**Keywords:** power; power relations; existence as a work of art; aesthetics of existence; transhumanist movement.

## Introduction

This article aims to analyze the notions of power in Nietzsche and post-Nietzschean authors such as Foucault and Deleuze, and explore their impacts on contemporary structures of power, such as the society based on self-entrepreneurship, governmentality, and the society of control. It also examines the recent emphasis on new forms of subjectivity and existence, particularly “existence as a work of art”, which is presented as relevant to the contemporary context of society, business, and organizations in the transition to a digital society. A context that highlights the significance of creativity, self-entrepreneurship, and innovation as central factors of differentiation and competitive advantages (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Jørgensen, 2010; Kärreman & Alvesson, 2011; Linstead, Maréchal, Griffin, & Barry, 2014; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).

In this sense, the main objective of this article is to examine the notion of an “Aesthetics of Existence” in contemporary society and organizations, drawing on the perspectives of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze. Specifically, the paper aims to explore how their concepts of power inform our understanding of power dynamics within organizations and their effects on individual and collective subjectivities.

By examining the potential discrepancies between the discourse surrounding an aesthetics of existence and the persistence of contradictions within organizational mindsets and business models, the paper seeks to shed light on the challenges and implications of putting these ideas into practice. It addresses the tension between the proclaimed values of organizational discourse, such as innovation, empowerment, and self-entrepreneurship, and the actual practices that often perpetuate control and hinder genuine empowerment.

Furthermore, the article highlights the need for a critical reassessment of organizational mindsets, management practices, and the broader social and economic context. It emphasizes the urgency of confronting the contradictions between rhetoric and reality within organizations and calls for a deeper exploration of the transformative potential of an aesthetics of existence in shaping organizational practices and mindsets.

Overall, the article aims to contribute to the field of critical organizational studies by offering insights into power dynamics, subjectivity, and the possibilities for individual and collective emancipation within organizations and society. It does so by applying as a theoretical background the works of Nietzsche and post-Nietzschean authors such as Foucault and Deleuze, who are considered three of the most influential thinkers in the 20th century, and whose ideas on power

have significantly contributed to our understanding of contemporary power relations.

Nietzsche was one of the first to argue that power is not only negative but can also be productive and creative. He proposed that the will to power is the fundamental drive of human beings, and that one should strive to create new values and ways of life (Ansell-Pearson, 1991; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Kaufmann, 1974).

Expanding on Nietzsche's ideas, Foucault reinforced the notion that power is not merely repressive but also productive, shaping individuals and their subjectivities. He developed concepts such as disciplinary power, biopower, governmentality, care of the self, aesthetics of existence, and existence as a work of art, which refer to the various techniques and practices used to govern individuals and populations (Deleuze, 1988; Foucault, 1997).

Deleuze, in turn, introduced the notion of the society of control, describing a new form of power that operates through the modulation and control of information and communication. He also proposed the idea of existence as a work of art, arguing that life should be lived as an ongoing adventure created and shaped by individuals themselves (Deleuze, 1992; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; Lash, 2007; Protevi, 2009).

In light of these three philosophical frameworks, it is possible to analyze the potential impacts of contemporary forms of power on individuals and their subjectivities (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012; Deleuze, 1988; Foucault, 1997). Therefore, the concept of existence as a work of art offers a fresh perspective on how individuals can resist and subvert power relations by creating new values and ways of life not dictated by dominant power structures (Deleuze, 1995; Foucault, 1980). This perspective is particularly relevant in the current digital society, where creativity and innovation are often emphasized as crucial factors for ownership, entrepreneurship, and performance (Bilton, 2007; Christensen, 1997; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Schwab, 2017), but can also become sources of domination, mental health issues, and job-related suffering (Ham, 2017).

Furthermore, critics argue that the self-entrepreneurship movement perpetuates the neoliberal ideology of individualism and self-reliance, shifting the responsibility for success or failure onto the individual rather than addressing the systemic issues at play. Scholars such as David Harvey assert that this individualistic approach ignores the larger societal structures that contribute to inequality and injustice, perpetuating a system that benefits the few at the expense of the many. Additionally, the focus on self-promotion and marketability may limit the potential for creativity and innovation, as individuals become more concerned with catering to existing market demands rather than pursuing unique and innovative ideas (Harvey, 1989a, 1989b).

In this context, the analysis of Nietzsche's concept of the will to power and its relationship to creativity and innovation, as well as Foucault's ideas on disciplinary power, biopower, governmentality, and aesthetics of existence, and Deleuze's notion of the society of control and existence as a work of art in the digital society, becomes pertinent. By addressing these objectives and research question, one can provide insights into the complex dynamics of power and their implications for various domains. Ultimately, our intention is to contribute to a deeper understanding of power relations, subjectivity, and modes of subjectivation in the context of contemporary society, business, and organizations.

One believes that the analysis of the notions of power in Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze can offer new insights into contemporary forms of power and their impact on subjectivity and

existence. Furthermore, the notion of existence as a work of art offers a new perspective on how individuals can resist and subvert power relations by creating new values and ways of life not predetermined by dominant power structures. This can contribute to the development of alternative ways of living and organizing society that prioritize human creativity, autonomy, and diversity instead of conformity and homogenization. Therefore, this article argues that a deeper understanding of power and subjectivity, informed by the insights of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze, can provide a valuable framework for critically examining the contemporary social and economic context.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the mere conceptual understanding of power and subjectivity is not sufficient to enact meaningful change within organizations and society. The practical implications of these philosophical insights need to be explored and translated into actionable strategies and interventions. This requires a collaborative effort between scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

To further advance the understanding of power dynamics and subjectivity, future research should delve deeper into specific areas. One area of exploration could be the intersection of power, technology, and digital control. Understanding how power operates in the digital realm, the role of algorithms, data surveillance, and the modulation of information flows can provide a more nuanced understanding of contemporary power structures.

Additionally, investigating the impact of self-entrepreneurship discourse on creativity, innovation, and social inequality is crucial. By critically examining the dominant narratives of individualism and self-reliance, one can uncover the underlying power dynamics that shape organizational practices and the experiences of individuals within them.

Moreover, studying the transformative potential of existence as a work of art in organizational settings is essential. This requires exploring how organizations can create environments that foster creativity, autonomy, and diversity, while also addressing the systemic issues that perpetuate inequality and restrict individual agency.

Furthermore, the implications of these philosophical insights on organizational practices and interventions should be empirically investigated. By examining how the concepts of power proposed by Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze can inform and transform organizational dynamics in the digital era, one can develop alternative approaches to power and subjectivity that prioritize human well-being and flourishing.

In conclusion, this article provides a critical examination of power relations informed by the ideas of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze, highlighting their relevance in understanding contemporary power dynamics and subjectivity. The notion of existence as a work of art offers a transformative perspective on how individuals can resist dominant power structures and create new ways of living and organizing.

However, it is essential to move beyond theoretical discussions and actively engage in translating these insights into practical strategies for change. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, one can work towards creating organizations and societies that prioritize human creativity, autonomy, and diversity, while challenging and transforming oppressive power dynamics.

Through interdisciplinary collaborations and empirical research, one can continue to expand

our understanding of power, subjectivity, and the possibilities for individual and collective emancipation. This ongoing exploration will contribute to the development of more inclusive, creative, and human-centered approaches to organizational practices, ultimately promoting the humanization of contemporary organizations and society as a whole.

## **From the “Will of Suffer” to the “Will of Power”**

Friedrich Nietzsche, a 19th-century German philosopher, believed that life is a constant struggle against obstacles, where suffer is an inherent part of this process. Nietzsche argued that suffering can be transformed into a source of strength and motivation through the will to power, which involves the ability to act and create oneself and the world (Nietzsche, 1996, 2005).

In this sense, the concept of the will to power emerges as a central notion in Nietzsche’s philosophy, which he saw as a fundamental force driving human behavior. According to Nietzsche, the will to power involves creating and affirming oneself, rather than merely dominating others. While the will to power can be a positive force for creativity and progress, it could also lead to nihilism and the rejection of all values and meaning (Nietzsche, 1996, 2005).

To respond to nihilism, Nietzsche introduced the concept of the “Übermensch”, a symbol of individual autonomy and the creative power of the will to power. The Übermensch represents Nietzsche’s vision of a new, more vital and dynamic form of humanity (Nietzsche, 2003, 2005).

Nietzsche saw the concept of the Übermensch as the ultimate expression of the aristocratic will to power. The Übermensch is someone who possesses the strength and creativity to create their own values and goals, rather than simply accepting those imposed by society. On the other hand, the slave mentality is characterized by a lack of will to power, which manifests itself as resentment and a desire for revenge against those perceived as superior (Nietzsche, 2003, 2005).

In this direction, Nietzsche, for instance, criticized the Christian view of suffering as a virtue in itself, arguing that suffering has no intrinsic value, but can be used as a tool for creation and transformation. He claimed that the will to suffering can lead to repression and negation of the will to power, and that one should learn to use suffering in a creative and affirmative way. The ability to exercise the will to power effectively is a key factor in determining who holds power in society (Nietzsche, 1967, 2003, 2005).

## **“Pastoral Power” vs. “Noble Power”**

In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche (1967) introduces the concept of “pastoral power”. According to him, it is a form of power exercised by institutions such as the church and the state, based on the figure of the shepherd who guides and controls the flock. Pastoral power seeks to control and guide the masses by imposing values and norms, which Nietzsche (1967) saw as a form of oppression that limits freedom and creativity, transforming people into mere obedient herds.

Nietzsche (1967) criticized traditional morality, which he believed subjugates people to divine or social authority, imposing limits on their will to power. Instead, he advocated for the creation of a new form of power, which he called “noble power”. This type of power is exercised by individuals who possess a strong will to power and are capable of creating their own values and

goals, without submitting to external authorities. The exercise of noble power involves taking responsibility for one's own life, creating one's own values, and pursuing one's own goals in a healthy and creative manner, in pursuit of personal fulfillment and the development of new values (Nietzsche, 1967).

For Nietzsche (1967), the fight against pastoral power is a fight for freedom and the creation of new values. The creation of a new type of power, based on the noble will to power, is a way to transcend the limits imposed by traditional morality and achieve a full and authentic life. In this sense, Nietzsche (1967) saw the exercise of noble power as a way of achieving a life of authenticity and fulfillment, free from the limitations of external authorities (Table 1).

Table 1  
**Pastoral Power vs. Noble Power**

Pastoral Power	Noble Power
Based on the figure of the shepherd	Based on the will to power of the individual
Exercised by institutions like church and state	Exercised by individuals who create their own values and goals
Limits freedom and creativity of individuals	Encourages freedom and creativity of individuals
Imposes values and norms on the masses	Creates new values and goals
Submits individuals to external authority	Exerts power in a healthy and creative way
Oppresses and controls the masses	Liberates and empowers individuals
Represents a form of unhealthy power	Represents a form of healthy power

**Source:** elaborated by the authors.

An author deeply influenced by Nietzsche's concept of pastoral power was Foucault. For him, it represents a form of power that is based on the control and guidance of the masses through the imposition of values and norms. However, Foucault went beyond Nietzsche by developing his own theory of power, which he called the "microphysics of power". In contrast to Nietzsche's view, which emphasized the existence of a centralized and institutionalized power, Foucault argued that power is present in all social relations and is exercised in a decentralized and fragmented way (Elden, 2017; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Gordon, 1980; May, 1994; Rabinow, 1984).

According to the microphysics of power, the power is present in every social relationship and exercised in a fragmented and decentralized manner. Foucault suggested that power is not a possession, but rather a complex and fluid network of relationships that shape and regulate our actions and thoughts (Foucault, 1980)

In this sense, power is not only exercised by those who hold formal positions of authority, but also by individuals and groups in their everyday actions and practices. Instead, he emphasizes the subtle and pervasive nature of power in everyday life. Foucault argued that power is not always repressive, but can also be productive, creating new possibilities and modes of behavior. Power is not only about coercion and domination, but also about knowledge, discourse, and the creation of subjectivities (Foucault, 1980).

In this direction, the disciplinary power and pastoral power share the idea that power is exercised through the imposition of norms and values. Both types of power seek to control and

shape people's behavior, although in different ways. While pastoral power is exercised by institutions such as the church and the state, which seek to control and guide the masses through the imposition of values and norms, disciplinary power is exercised by institutions such as the prison, school, and hospital, which seek to control and shape people's behavior through disciplinary techniques. However, both types of power are forms of oppression that limit the freedom and creativity of people, turning them into mere obedient herds. Nietzsche and Foucault argue that submission to power is internalized by people, becoming a fundamental part of their identity and subjectivity. The struggle against pastoral power and disciplinary power is a struggle for freedom and the creation of new values and forms of resistance that can challenge and transform existing power relations (Foucault, 1980).

Therefore, although there are important differences between Nietzsche's and Foucault's theories of power, there is a significant relationship between the concept of disciplinary power in Foucault and Nietzsche's notion of power. Both philosophers believed that power is an omnipresent force that permeates all social relations and exerts a determining effect on people's lives. However, while Nietzsche emphasized the importance of the will to power as the driving force behind human actions, Foucault focused on how power is exercised through specific social institutions and practices. For Foucault, disciplinary power is a form of power that is exercised by institutions such as the prison, school, and hospital, which seek to control and shape people's behavior through disciplinary techniques (Foucault, 1980).

Disciplinary power, like power in Nietzsche, is exercised in a subtle and invisible way, shaping how people think and behave. Both philosophers argue that submission to power is internalized by people, becoming a fundamental part of their identity and subjectivity (Deleuze, 1988; Elden, 2017; Kail, 2011; May, 1994).

Another important concept in the Foucault power analytics is the notion of "biopower" (Foucault, 2008). According to Foucault (2008) the biopower is a form of power that emerged in modern societies with the rise of biology and the management of populations. Unlike disciplinary power, which focuses on individual bodies, biopower operates at the level of populations, seeking to control and manage life and death, health and illness, and reproduction and sexuality.

While disciplinary power seeks to produce docile bodies through the imposition of rules and procedures, biopower seeks to manage the entire population through the implementation of policies and regulations that affect health, hygiene, and social welfare. In this sense, biopower differs from disciplinary power in that it is concerned with the regulation of life itself, rather than just the behavior of individuals (Foucault, 2008).

However, biopower also complements disciplinary power in that it relies on similar mechanisms of surveillance and control, such as the use of statistics and the creation of normative standards. Both forms of power seek to regulate and manage bodies, but at different levels of analysis (Foucault, 2008).

Overall, biopower and disciplinary power are both forms of power that seek to regulate and control bodies, but they operate at different levels and use different mechanisms of control (Foucault, 2008). While disciplinary power is concerned with individual bodies, biopower operates at the level of populations, seeking to manage life and death, health and illness, and reproduction and sexuality through policies and regulations (Table 2).

Table 2  
**Pastoral Power, Disciplinary Power, and Biopower**

Power	Characteristics
Pastoral	Based on the relationship between the shepherd and the flock. It is characterized by guidance, care, and protection. The goal is to ensure the well-being of the flock and their obedience to the shepherd's authority.
Disciplinary	Based on the control of bodies and the regulation of behaviors. It is characterized by the creation of specific spaces, such as prisons, schools, and hospitals, and the use of techniques such as surveillance, normalization, and examination. The goal is to produce docile and productive bodies that conform to societal norms.
Biopower	Based on the management of populations and the regulation of life itself. It is characterized by the control of biological processes, such as birth, death, and health, and the use of statistics and demographic knowledge to govern entire populations. The goal is to maximize the power and productivity of the population while minimizing risks and threats to the state.

**Source:** elaborated by the authors.

At the same time, it is possible to observe a significant relationship between pastoral power, disciplinary power, biopower, and the notion of power in the society of control as described by Deleuze (Lazzarato, 2014; Hardt & Negri, 2000).

Deleuze developed the concept of the society of control as a critique of the disciplinary society model proposed by Foucault. According to Deleuze, in the disciplinary society, power is exercised by institutions such as the prison, school, and hospital, which seek to control and shape people's behavior through disciplinary techniques. However, Deleuze argues that with the emergence of the society of control, this model of disciplinary power is replaced by a more flexible and diffuse model of control (Deleuze, 1995, 1992; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Poster, 2004).

In the society of control, power is no longer exercised by centralized and institutionalized institutions but by a set of devices that extend throughout society. These devices include information and communication technologies, the market, and consumption, which create a network of control that covers all spheres of social life (Deleuze, 1992). In a similar way, people's freedom and creativity are limited not by centralized institutions but by a logic of control that permeates all social relations. This logic of control is based on the production and management of information and the creation of new forms of consumption and subjectivity (Deleuze, 1992).

Deleuze (1992) argues that the society of control is characterized by constant adaptation and flexibility, in contrast to the rigidity and discipline of the disciplinary society. He emphasizes the importance of resistance as a way of challenging and transforming the existing power relations in the society of control.

Thus, for Deleuze (1992), the society of control is a more subtle and diffuse form of power exercise that is based on the production and management of information and the creation of new forms of consumption and subjectivity. Resistance becomes a form of struggle against this logic of control, which permeates all social relations and limits people's freedom and creativity.

Deleuze (1992) also argues that contemporary forms of power have moved beyond the pastoral power of the traditional society and the disciplinary power of the modern industrial era and are now characterized by the control of information and communication. In this context, pastoral



power, which seeks to control and orient the masses through the imposition of values and norms, is being replaced by a more diffuse and decentralized form of power that operates through networks and communication technologies. Disciplinary power, which seeks to control and mold the behavior of individuals through institutions like prisons and schools, is also being transformed by the emergence of new forms of control based on surveillance and data analysis. Biopower, which is concerned with the regulation of life and death, is becoming increasingly important in the context of the society of control, as populations are managed through the manipulation of biological processes such as disease prevention and genetic engineering.

According to Deleuze (1992) these new forms of power exercise are characterized by their flexibility and adaptability, and that they operate through the creation of networks and flows rather than fixed institutions. This creates new opportunities for resistance, as individuals and groups can disrupt these flows and create new forms of organization and communication.

The Table 3 presents different types of power in post-modern society, highlighting the characteristics proposed by Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze.

Table 3  
**Different types of power in post-modern society**

Power Characteristics	Nietzsche	Foucault	Deleuze
Idea	Will to Power	Microphysics of Power	Society of Control
Type	Noble power	Disciplinary power	Control power
Goal	Self-realization, creating new values and objectives	Resistance and transformation of power	Resistance and liberation
Tool	Overcoming limitations, asserting individuality	Disciplinary institutions and techniques	Information technologies, market and consumer
Focus	Individuality and freedom	Power as pervasive and diffused	Network of control, production and consumption
Critique	Oppressive nature of pastoral power and traditional morality	The hidden nature of power and its impact on individuals	The pervasive nature of control and its impact on individuality and creativity

**Source:** elaborated by the authors.

Foucault, in his later studies, examines the ways in which power operates in the modern era through various forms of government, such as liberal govern and neoliberal governmentality. He argues that these forms of government are not just concerned with maintaining order or controlling individuals, but also with shaping individuals to become self-governing and self-disciplining. This process involves a complex network of techniques, technologies, and practices that operate at multiple levels; from the individual to the collective, and that shape the ways in which individuals understand and act upon themselves. Overall, his approach to power focus on the diffuse and productive nature of power, its emphasis on the shaping of individuals through everyday practices and discourses, and its examination of the complex and varied techniques and technologies that make up the processes of government (Foucault, 1980).

Table 4 presents the different characteristics, concepts, agency, objectives, strategies, and forms of power exercise in relation to governmentality and society of control. Governmentality emphasizes the diffuse and productive nature of power, exercised through institutions and governmental practices, with the objective of producing and managing populations for general well-being. Its main strategies are discipline and surveillance, and it produces the individual as a governed subject, who must conform to established norms and rules. In contrast, society of control emphasizes the exercise of power through the control of information and the production of subjectivities, using information and communication technologies as its main agency. The objective is to control the production and circulation of information and subjectivities, maximizing efficiency and productivity, with surveillance and modulation as the main strategies. It produces the individual as a controlled subject, to be modulated for maximizing efficiency and productivity, potentially limiting individual freedom.

Table 4  
**Governmentality vs. Society of Control**

Power Characteristics	Governmentality	Society of Control
Concept	The power is diffused and present in all social relations	Power is exercised through the control of information and the production of subjectivities
Agency	Power is exercised through institutions and governmental practices	Power is exercised through information and communication technologies
Objectives	The objective is to produce and manage populations, promoting general well-being	The objective is to control the production and circulation of information and subjectivities, maximizing efficiency and productivity
Strategies	Discipline and surveillance are the main strategies of power	Surveillance and modulation are the main strategies of power
Relation with Freedom	Governmental power is exercised in the name of freedom and general well-being	Control is exercised in the name of security and efficiency, and may limit individual freedom
Subjectivity Forms	The individual is produced as a governed subject, who must conform to established norms and rules	The individual is produced as a controlled subject, to be modulated for maximizing efficiency and productivity

**Source:** elaborated by the authors.

Despite their differences, all forms of power seek to exert control over people's lives and regulate behavior through the imposition of values, norms, and disciplinary procedures. Pastoral power controls souls and thoughts, disciplinary power produces docile and useful bodies, and biopower regulates life and death. These forms of power limit people's freedom and creativity and are oppressive by nature (Foucault, 1995).

Foucault was also influenced by Nietzsche's concept of resistance and believed that power is in constant struggle with forms of resistance arising from society itself. According to his analytics of power, power is not a static entity but a pervasive force present in all social relations and

practices. Therefore, resistance to power is not only an isolated act of opposition but a continuous process of negotiating, subverting, and transforming power relations (Foucault, 2008).

According to Foucault's analytics of power, resistance takes many forms, from overt rebellion and protest to subtle everyday practices such as evasion, subversion, and counter-conduct. It can be individual or collective, conscious or unconscious, and can occur in various domains of social life, including politics, culture, organizations, and everyday life (Foucault, 2008).

In this sense, resistance is not merely a reaction to power but also produces new forms of power relations. It is a productive force that can create new possibilities and alternatives to existing power relations, such as new forms of subjectivity, knowledge, and social relations. Therefore, resistance is not only a means of opposing power but also a means of creating new possibilities and alternatives to existing power relations (Foucault, 2008).

### **“Existence as a Work of Art”**

For Nietzsche (1976), the artist is a crucial figure in the development of human culture and the embodiment of the highest human values. Nietzsche saw the artist as someone who is able to create new values and transfigure the world through the power of their creative imagination. The artist, in Nietzsche's view, is someone who transcends the limitations of traditional morality and embraces life in all its forms, including its darker aspects such as suffering and chaos.

In Nietzsche's view, the artist is also someone who has the courage to confront the abyss and the void that lies at the heart of human existence. Through their creative work, the artist is able to give meaning and purpose to life, even in the face of the most profound forms of suffering and meaninglessness (Nietzsche, 1976).

However, he also recognized that the artist is a rare and exceptional individual, and that most people are not capable of the kind of creative vision and transfiguration that the artist embodies. Nevertheless, he believed that the artist's example could inspire others to embrace their own creative potential and to seek new ways of living and experiencing the world.

In this sense, Nietzsche's initial admiration for Wagner can be explained (Nietzsche, 1976). He saw in Wagner an artist who had the ability to create an art that expressed life intensely and passionately, in addition to presenting a philosophy of life that preached the pursuit of individuality and free love (Nietzsche, 1976).

According to Nietzsche, Wagner was the prototype of the *Übermensch*. An artist who had the courage to defy social conventions and traditional morality, and who dared to go beyond established limits to create a new form of art and life. Nietzsche saw in Wagner a figure of greatness, who was capable of creating something new and transformative, and who embodied the ideas of will to power and transvaluation of values that he himself defended in his philosophy (Nietzsche, 1976). However, later on, Nietzsche distanced himself from Wagner, criticizing his works and his influence on German culture (Nietzsche, 1976).

Several reasons eventually resulted in his broke with Wagner. One of the main reasons was Wagner's growing involvement with German nationalism and anti-Semitism, which Nietzsche strongly opposed. Furthermore, Nietzsche saw Wagner's views as contradictory to his own

philosophy, which emphasized individualism and the rejection of traditional morality and societal conventions. Additionally, Nietzsche became disillusioned with Wagner's music and believed that it had become too sentimental and lacked the intensity and passion that he had originally admired. Nietzsche also saw Wagner's influence on his own life and thought as limiting and ultimately detrimental to his intellectual development. As a result, he distanced himself from Wagner and eventually became one of his harshest critics (Nietzsche, 1976). Therefore, Nietzsche's new ethics propose that life is a work of art, which must be created and molded from the will to power. Art should transcend the limitations imposed by morality and traditional values through beauty and creativity (Nietzsche, 1976).

In his last works, Foucault's analysis of the Greeks can also be seen as a form of aesthetic critique, as he examines the ways in which the Greeks created new forms of existence and modes of being through their practices of self-care and self-transformation, a form of aesthetic creation as the Greeks sought to create new modes of being through the cultivation of the self (Foucault, 1997, 1984).

In this way, Nietzsche and Foucault share a common emphasis on creativity, self-transformation, and the ability to shape and mold one's own life, viewing human existence as a creative and transformative process that can be shaped and molded. Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch* and Foucault's notion of the "care of the self" share a similar idea of self-fashioning and self-creation. Both authors emphasize the importance of resisting and transforming existing power structures and creating new forms of existence and subjectivity (Foucault, 1997; Nietzsche, 1976) despite approaching human existence as a work of art from different angles.

Table 5 presents a comparison between the *Übermensch* and the transhuman concepts, emphasizing their objectives, valuations, and critiques.

Table 5  
***Übermensch* vs. Transhuman**

Concept	<i>Übermensch</i>	Transhuman
Overview	To overcome human limitations and create new values and ways of life.	Transforming the human condition through advanced technologies to achieve enhancement and transcendence of the body and mind.
Human Nature	Human nature is dynamic and can be shaped by the individual's will to power.	Human nature can be improved and enhanced through the use of technology.
Objective	To create a new type of human, free from the limitations imposed by tradition and morality.	To transform humanity into a more advanced and improved species, overcoming biological limitations and improving the quality of life.
Valuation	Values autonomy, creativity, and self-surpassing.	Values the use of technology to achieve enhancement and improve the human condition.
Critiques	The concept can be seen as elitist.	Criticisms include ethical, safety, and dependence concerns regarding technology.

**Source:** elaborated by the authors.

In this scenario, while the transhumanist vision of a "post-human" may seem enticing, it also has profound implications for human identity and social inequality. One of the main criticisms of

transhumanism is that it may lead to the dehumanization of humanity, as it can result in the loss of human identity and individuality. By seeking a radical transformation towards a post-humanity, the transhumanist movement may contribute to the desubjectification and objectification of humans, transforming them into machines or mere objects to be improved and controlled, rather than unique and subjective individuals (Liao, 2010).

Furthermore, the pursuit of technological enhancement may exacerbate social inequalities, as access to enhancing technologies may be limited to a privileged elite. This can intensify the devices of domination – more than of power (Foucault, 1984) – to increasingly broad contingents of human beings. The transhumanist dream – or nightmare – of a post-human future may also lead to the elimination of critical aspects of the human experience, such as emotions and social interaction. The emphasis on technological enhancement may lead to a society that is more isolated and dehumanized, where human connections and interactions are increasingly mediated by technology (Berardi, 2011; Turkle, 2011).

The ongoing transition to the so-called “fourth industrial revolution” (Schwab, 2017) has brought unprecedented advancements in technoscience and the pharmaceutical industry, highlighting transhumanist movements advocating for the idea that humans can be improved and transcended through the use of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and nanotechnology (Kurzweil, 1999). Transhumanists believe that humanity can achieve a post-human state, in which individuals’ cognitive, physical, and emotional capabilities are significantly enhanced (Bostrom, 2005; Butler, 1997; Harari, 2017).

It is worth noting, however, the differences between the notions of transhumanism and posthumanism – or posthumanisms. While the article acknowledges the significance of transhumanism, it is essential to clarify its philosophical distinction from posthumanism. Philosophically, transhumanism represents a continuation of the Enlightenment humanism, akin to an ultra-humanism rather than a posthumanism (Braidotti, 2013; Ferrando, 2019).

The transhumanist movement, aligned with the modern notion of civilizational progress, aims to accelerate the transition from the human to the posthuman through science and technology, as emphasized in this article. On the other hand, posthumanisms tend to critically examine Enlightenment values such as progress and reason, and do not have an explicit purpose like transhumanism. They offer alternative perspectives that question anthropocentric assumptions and explore the potential of emerging technologies and novel forms of existence. By considering the critiques and insights offered by posthumanisms, one can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities and implications of power dynamics within organizational contexts.

Overall, while this article acknowledges the significance of transhumanism in the analysis of power relations, it also recognizes the importance of engaging with posthumanist perspectives. By incorporating a nuanced understanding of both transhumanism and posthumanisms, one can deepen our comprehension of the transformative nature of power and its implications for organizational dynamics. This integration opens up avenues for critical reflection and the exploration of alternative futures that prioritize ethical, inclusive, and sustainable power relations within organizations”.

## A Transhumanist “Aesthetics of Existence”

This discussion highlights the relevance of the concept of aesthetics of existence developed by Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze, although with different meanings (Deleuze, 1988; Foucault, 1997; Nietzsche, 1976).

Nietzsche’s aesthetics of existence refers to the idea of approaching life as a work of art, created and molded according to the individual’s will to power. In contrast, Foucault’s aesthetics of existence relates to the idea of transforming one’s own life through self-reflection and self-care practices. He proposes an ethical theory of existence that emphasizes critical self-examination and the active construction of one’s own ethical framework. Meanwhile, Deleuze’s aesthetics of existence highlights the importance of freedom and creativity in the construction of new forms of life and the radical critique of traditional morality and social norms (Nietzsche, 2007, 1976).

For Nietzsche, the aesthetics of existence refers to the idea that life should be approached as a work of art, to be created and molded according to the individual’s will to power. This involves an active process of self-creation, where individuals strive to cultivate their own unique aesthetic style and express their individuality. Nietzsche saw this as a means of transcending the limitations of traditional morality and creating new values that affirm life in its fullness (Nietzsche, 2007, 1976; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Foucault, 1986, 1984).

On the other hand, for Foucault, the aesthetics of existence relates to the idea that individuals can transform their own lives through self-reflection and self-care practices. This involves a critical examination of the norms and practices that shape our subjectivity and the development of practices that promote self-transformation and self-improvement. Foucault emphasized the importance of individual autonomy and creativity in the construction of one’s own aesthetic existence (Foucault, 1988, 1986, 1984).

Particularly in his trilogy on *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault began to develop an ethical theory of existence that can be understood as a way of creating oneself as a work of art. In this phase, Foucault proposes a new way of understanding ethics, which focused on the idea of creating oneself as a work of art. He argued that individuals should be seen as subjects who produce themselves through a continuous process of self-creation, rather than simply as objects to be acted upon by external forces such as institutions or traditions.

This process of self-creation involves a critical examination of one’s own desires, beliefs, and attitudes, and the active construction of a way of life that is both satisfying and meaningful. This ethical theory of existence emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, creativity, and experimentation in the pursuit of a rich and fulfilling life (Foucault, 1984, 1986, 1997).

For Deleuze, the aesthetics of existence is related to the idea that life is a creative adventure, which must be lived intensely and with fullness. He argued that the search for new experiences and new ways of life is fundamental to the construction of a rich and meaningful life. Moreover, Deleuze proposed a critique of traditional morality and emphasized the importance of experimentation and creation in the construction of an ethics based on freedom and the will to power (Deleuze, 1990; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980).

Despite their differences, all three philosophers view life as a creative process that involves the production of new values and forms of existence. They also emphasize the importance of





individual freedom and the rejection of traditional moral and social norms in the pursuit of a rich and meaningful life.

In this sense, the concept of aesthetics of existence can be crucial for organizations to navigate the challenges posed by the transhumanist movement, which requires a new understanding of the concept of human and the role of technology in shaping our existence

It is undeniable that the transhumanist movement presents a significant challenge for organizations and society as a whole. To address these challenges, one must approach these issues critically and be aware of the potential risks of intensifying social inequalities and contributing to the dehumanization of individuals. This is where the concept of aesthetics of existence comes in, offering a relevant perspective for society and organizations to promote a more human-centered approach to innovation, emphasizing the importance of individual freedom, creativity, and self-creation.

After all, what are the goals of this movement, and how do they intersect with our current understanding of societal and organizational aesthetics? What is the concept of human associated with unprecedented technoscientific advancements? How have these advances been accompanied by the thought about the aesthetics of existence associated with them? (Table 6).

**Table 6**  
**Aesthetics of existence in Nietzsche, Deleuze, Foucault, and the transhumanist movement**

Characteristics	Nietzsche	Foucault	Deleuze	Transhumanist Movement
Concept of Life and Existence	Creative process of new values and forms of life.	Microphysics of Power with a focus on the care of the self.	Immanence and creativity, connected to desire and affect.	Post-humanism.
Individual Freedom and Rejection of Traditional Norms	Emphasized the importance of individual freedom and rejection of traditional moral and social norms.	Emphasized the microphysics of power and the hidden nature of power.	Emphasized the importance of individual freedom and rejection of traditional moral and social norms.	Emphasized the transcendence of the body and mind through advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and nanotechnology.
Goal	Self-realization, creating new values and forms	Resistance and transformation of power with an ethical focus on care of the self.	Creating new values and modes of existence.	Achieving enhancement and transcendence of the human condition.
Critique	Oppressive nature of pastoral power and traditional morality.	The hidden nature of power and its impact on individuals.	Critiques of traditional notions of power and their effects.	Critiques include ethical, safety, and dependence concerns regarding technology.
An Image <sup>1</sup>				

**Source:** elaborated by the authors.

Table 6 presents the aesthetics of existence in Nietzsche, Deleuze, Foucault, and the transhumanist movement, highlighting their characteristics and the intersection of their goals with our current understanding of modes of subjectivation and social and organizational aesthetics. For instance, the transhumanist movement, as depicted in the table, seeks to achieve enhancement and transcendence of the human condition through advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and nanotechnology. By embracing technological progress, transhumanists envision a future in which humans can overcome their biological limitations and reach new levels of cognitive, physical, and emotional capabilities, in a deeply utilitarian and instrumental manner.

In the context of unprecedented technoscientific advancements, the concept of the human undergoes significant transformations. The vision of a post-human future involves the transcendence of the human body and mind, blurring the boundaries between the organic and the artificial, and opening up possibilities for new modes of existence.

In this sense, it is essential to critically reflect on the implications of these advancements and the accompanying aesthetics of existence. The pursuit of enhancement and transcendence raises ethical considerations and critiques regarding the potential dehumanization of humanity. As the



focus shifts towards the augmentation of human capabilities, there is a risk of neglecting essential aspects of the human experience, such as emotions, social interactions, and the inherent value of embodied existence.

Furthermore, the transhumanist movement introduces challenges and concerns regarding social inequalities and access to enhancing technologies. The potential divide between those who have access to these technologies and those who do not can further exacerbate existing disparities, creating a world where the privileged few benefit disproportionately from transhumanist ideals.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of power within the philosophical frameworks of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze offers a critical and scientifically informed perspective on power dynamics in organizations. These philosophers' ideas challenge traditional conceptions of power and propose alternative understandings of its operation. Nietzsche emphasizes the will to power and the individual's role in shaping values and forms of life. Foucault focuses on the microphysics of power, examining how power operates in everyday practices, institutions, and discourses. Deleuze introduces a new ontology of power that emphasizes its immanence, creativity, and connection to desire and affect.

These conceptual frameworks have significant implications for contemporary forms of power, such as the society of control characterized by information control, behavior modulation, and the emergence of new subjectivities. Technology plays a pivotal role in enabling unprecedented control over individuals, raising profound questions about cognitive enhancements, artificial intelligence, and human-machine interfaces within the context of transhumanism. The advent of technologically enhanced individuals introduces novel dimensions to power relations, including issues of control, surveillance, and ethical considerations.

The concepts of governmentality and the repressive hypothesis emphasize the need for alternative forms of subjectivation and existence, underscoring the importance of freedom, creativity, experimentation, and the creation of new values and modes of being. These philosophical perspectives offer valuable insights into power dynamics within organizations. Nietzsche's concept of the will to power helps us comprehend the motivations and actions of individuals and groups within power structures. Foucault's ideas shed light on hierarchical structures, surveillance mechanisms, and disciplinary techniques present in organizations. Deleuze's framework explores power relations in networked organizations and the impact of technological advancements.

To answer the research question "How do the concepts of power proposed by Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze inform our understanding of power dynamics within organizations and their effects on individual and collective subjectivities?", this article provides a comprehensive analysis of power relations based on the philosophies of these three thinkers.

By applying these conceptual frameworks to specific organizational phenomena, the article uncovers power struggles, disciplinary practices, surveillance mechanisms, and the effects of technological advancements. It demonstrates how these philosophical perspectives deepen our understanding of power dynamics within organizations and their influence on individual and collective subjectivities. Furthermore, it highlights the need for new forms of subjectivation and

existence, emphasizing freedom, creativity, experimentation, and the creation of new values and modes of being.

The insights gained from Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze inform our understanding of power as a productive and creative force, challenging traditional conceptions of power as solely repressive. They provide a basis for critically examining the contemporary context of power relations within organizations and offer pathways for individual and collective emancipation. The notion of existence as a work of art emerges as a powerful framework for promoting individual empowerment, ownership, creativity, and innovation in the face of control and surveillance mechanisms. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the contemporary discourse often fails to align with the principles of existence as a work of art, as control and surveillance mechanisms persist and proliferate.

Indeed, transhumanism, as a vein of posthumanist thought, disrupts conventional understandings of what it means to be human. This disruption prompts us to examine the implications of cognitive enhancements, artificial intelligence, and human-machine interfaces on decision-making processes, leadership structures, and employee autonomy. Furthermore, the potential of technologically enhanced individuals or “post-human” agents introduces new dimensions to power relations, encompassing issues of control, surveillance, and ethical considerations. This necessitates a critical examination of the benefits, risks, and broader implications of these technologies for individuals, groups, and the organizational context as a whole.

Simultaneously, the examination of power relations within the contexts of governmentality and the repressive hypothesis – particularly pastoral power – highlights the need for new forms of subjectivation and existence, emphasizing the notion of existence as a work of art. This concept underscores the importance of freedom and creativity in constructing new ways of living, as well as the significance of experimentation and the creation of new values and modes of existence.

Foucault’s ideas on power and knowledge also bear particular relevance when analyzing power dynamics within contemporary organizations. His concepts of disciplinary power and biopower illuminate how institutions and practices exert control over individuals, shaping their behaviors and subjectivities. This perspective exposes hierarchical structures, surveillance mechanisms, and disciplinary techniques present in organizations. Understanding power through this lens enables us to uncover the mechanisms that influence compliance, conformity, and resistance within organizational contexts.

Deleuze’s notion of the society of control adds an additional layer of analysis to the study of power within organizations. Emphasizing the diffuse and decentralized nature of power enabled by information and communication technologies, this framework allows us to explore how power operates through networks, data surveillance, and algorithms within organizational settings. By adopting Deleuze’s perspective, one can better understand how organizations regulate and govern individuals in the digital age.

When these conceptual frameworks are applied to specific organizational phenomena, they offer valuable insights. Nietzsche’s lens helps us comprehend power struggles and conflicts within teams or departments. Foucault’s concepts illuminate the dynamics of disciplinary practices and surveillance within hierarchical structures. Deleuze’s framework provides insights into power

relations in networked organizations and the impact of technological advancements on power dynamics.

In the context of contemporary society, organizations, and businesses, the concept of existence as a work of art holds significant implications. As the transition to a digital society continues, discourses surrounding creation and innovation become central factors for differentiation and competitive advantage. In this context, promoting individual creativity and freedom can be seen as a means of fostering innovation and new forms of value creation. However, the reality often diverges from this perspective. Instead, one observes a proliferation of devices aimed at erasing human subjectivity, reducing individuals to mere objects.

Consequently, the analysis of power relations based on the philosophies of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze calls for new forms of subjectivation and existence within the contemporary context, demanding a reevaluation of our understanding of power relations and their effects on individual and collective subjectivities. The notion of existence as a work of art serves as a useful framework for promoting individual freedom, creativity, and innovation, and for fostering new forms of value creation and differentiation in the context of contemporary society and human organizations. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the significant growth in mechanisms of control and surveillance despite the contemporary discourse's emphasis on the most human aspects, such as creativity, inventiveness, and desire.

Moreover, the concept of existence as a work of art challenges traditional perspectives on individual and collective identities, inviting us to reimagine our roles within organizations and society. It encourages us to view our lives as ongoing creative processes, where one actively shape our narratives, values, and ways of being. By adopting a creative and aesthetic lens, one can transcend the constraints of conventional power structures and explore alternative forms of organization, collaboration, and expression. Conversely, the reality seems to be moving in the opposite direction, with a proliferation of control and surveillance mechanisms.

The contemporary discourse often suggests that embracing existence as a work of art can have tangible effects within organizations. For example, organizations that foster an environment conducive to creative self-expression and experimentation are more likely to cultivate innovation, engagement, and well-being among their members. In this sense, challenging dominant narratives of Taylorist-Fordist productivity and efficiency while emphasizing the importance of individual agency, authenticity, and the pursuit of meaningful work can be transformative. However, the discourse often remains disconnected from reality, which is shaped by work ethics and management mindsets still dominated by the metaphor of the mechanical worker, short-term results, achieving production scale, and the logic of standardization.

Furthermore, the intersection of power dynamics and the pursuit of artistic existence presents both unique challenges and opportunities. Traditional power structures may resist or co-opt creative endeavors, leading to tensions between individual expression and organizational demands. However, organizations that recognize and embrace the transformative potential of existence as a work of art can foster cultures of empowerment, autonomy, and inclusivity. Yet, the current discourse fails to provide coherent management policies and practices that align with the aesthetics of existence.

Subsequently, this article highlights the “old” and “new” contradictions inherent in the discourse that appropriates the concept of existence as a work of art. By acknowledging these contradictions, one gains deeper insights into the multifaceted nature of organizational dynamics, as well as the possibilities and limitations of individual and collective agency. By exploring specific cases and examples, one can illustrate how the principles of existence as a work of art can foster creativity, innovation, and transformative practices within organizations.

However, one must also be aware of the potential for these principles to be co-opted and transformed into more subtle and sophisticated forms of control and domination. It is crucial to remain vigilant and critically examine how the aesthetics of existence can be commodified, commodified, or appropriated by dominant power structures.

To further enrich the theoretical and conceptual advancements of this work and its implications for organizations and society, it is necessary to delve deeper into certain key areas. Firstly, the discussion surrounding the digital society, surveillance, and digital control can be further developed. Understanding the concept of control through modulation is essential, as it highlights the malleability and flexibility of contemporary power structures. The modulation of flows captures multiplicities, shaping and molding them according to expected norms and behaviors. Within this context, the concepts of innovation, creativity, and existence as a work of art become relevant. Exploring the tensions between conformity and difference and how the celebration of diversity is contingent on individuals acting within predefined expectations would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of power dynamics within organizations.

In addition, advancing this discussion in light of the arguments presented in previous sections would greatly enhance the theoretical and conceptual contributions. By considering the implications of new modes of existence, one acknowledges the profound and often slow transformations they bring to social institutions. Organizations, as significant realms of social action, have long grappled with a disconnect between the rhetoric of valuing creativity and autonomy and the realities of practice. Exploring how power dynamics intersect with the pursuit of innovation, creativity, and autonomy in organizations would shed light on the complexities of organizational life and the possibilities for transformative change.

Additionally, the neoliberal aesthetic of self-entrepreneurship requires further exploration, particularly regarding how the discourse of self-entrepreneurship intersects with power relations and its implications for individuals and organizations in contemporary society. Furthermore, investigating the potential effects of self-entrepreneurship on creativity, innovation, and social inequality would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of power dynamics in the context of entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, it is important to examine the practical implications of the insights presented in this article. Exploring how the concepts of power proposed by Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze can inform organizational practices and interventions would be valuable for developing alternative approaches to power and subjectivity within organizations. Furthermore, studying the transformative potential of aesthetics of existence in organizational settings would open up new avenues for promoting creativity, autonomy, and diversity while challenging dominant power structures.

In conclusion, this article has made a timely and thought-provoking contribution to the ongoing discussion on power relations and their effects on society, business, and organizations. By analyzing power dynamics through the lenses of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze, it offers fresh insights into the dynamics within organizations and their impact on society. However, to further enrich the theoretical and conceptual advancements of this work and its implications for organizations and society, it is crucial to delve deeper into the key areas mentioned above. By doing so, one can deepen our understanding of power dynamics in organizations and their broader implications for society, ultimately contributing to the development of more inclusive, creative, and human-centered approaches to organizational practices that promote the humanization of contemporary organizations.

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**Inclusive language**

The authors use inclusive language that acknowledges diversity, demonstrates respect for all



people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities.

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