
Art as a form of knowledge: The implications for critical management

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Abstract (Article Summary)

Theodor Adorno (1970/1997) declared that art was a form of knowledge. In a somewhat related vein, his critical theorist colleague Herbert Marcuse (1956/1998) characterized art as a mode of cognition that is an alternative to positivism. The work of these two scholars is linked with the school of thought called "The Frankfurt School". Famous for its notion and development of "critical theory", the Frankfurt School's work was carried out initially at the Institut für Sozialforschung (the Institute for Social Research). This Institute was established in, but financially independent of, Frankfurt University. Founded in February 1923, a number of the scholars associated with the Institute found themselves drawn to *art and the aesthetics as arenas in which alternative ways of thinking and 'seeing' were possible*. For this group of scholars, in many ways, authentic art represented a "Great Refusal" (Marcuse, 1956/1998, p. 149) against totalizing forms of logic.

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Drawing upon the work of the Frankfurt School, and specifically that of Adorno, Marcuse, and Walter Benjamin, this paper initially explores the mimetic and enigmatic qualities of art. Benjamin (1933/1999c) insisted that we all have a "mimetic faculty" (mimicry) responsible for producing and perceiving resemblance. For Benjamin, imitation is one of our most irresistible impulses. Benjamin, and Adorno, came to think of mimesis as an assimilation of self to other — a type of enactment behaviour.

Adorno suggests that all autonomously generated artworks are enigmas in as much as they have a capacity to sustain a discrepancy between projected images and their actuality. They carry similarity while at the same time carrying difference. As will be noted later, Adorno (1970/1997) argued that “the survival of mimesis, the nonconceptual affinity of the subjectively produced with its unposited other, defines art as a form of knowledge and to that extent as ‘rational’ ” (p. 54). It is in this dynamic that art carries its critical element. It was the decline of autonomously generated art which Adorno came to view as being as a direct consequence of the rise of the culture industry.

Both Adorno and Benjamin came to think of art as a form of language, or having a language-like character, which incites philosophical reflection. This type of thinking was a forerunner to the post-structuralist Jean-François Lyotard’s (1971) more recent ‘discovery’ of the potential liberating tension between discursive (the verbal) and the figural (the visual). Lyotard viewed the unconscious as being associated with the figural and the pre-conscious with language. Art in this context is part of the transgressive and disruptive element in this tension. I will discuss this presently, but in a context of the work of Marcuse and Benjamin who suggest that forms of art, such as surrealism, liberate that critical dimension of art in producing a discomfort or estrangement. These forms of art represent art’s own “attempt to rescue the rationality of the negative” (Marcuse, 1964, p. 67).

The discussion of art as a form of knowledge, and having a language-like character, will culminate in considering the forms of rescuing its own critical dimension, and whether similar forms could be used for *critical* management. In using the term “critical management”, I wish to denote forms of thinking that help us see anew that which we have taken-for-granted and may have blinded us to alternative constructions of problems and solutions. Some of the parallels between movements in art and ‘schools’ of thought in organisation studies have featured in this author’s previous work (Carr, 1999, 2000a, 2001a; Carr & Zanetti, 2000). On this occasion a more targeted critique is intended and, in particular, a consideration of the field of management itself as merely being part of a culture industry that is intent upon producing, what Adorno (1975) called, “patterned and pre-digested” products with no critical element. In this latter context to speak of critical management would seem an oxymoron.

Having given a sketch of the paper in bold relief, and noted some the direction of the argument, let us examine in a little finer detail some of the work of these scholars associated with the Frankfurt School.

Mimesis and Enigma in Art — Hearing from Benjamin and Adorno

Rainer Rochlitz (1992/1996) argues that "In German aesthetics, avant-garde movements have been interpreted primarily in the light of the concepts elaborated by Benjamin and Adorno. In France, in contrast, whether or not a particular critic favors the avant-garde, he attempts to understand it through Nietzsche" (p. 220). The contrast between the Benjaminian/Adornian orientation to art and aesthetics to that of the

Nietzschean orientation, is a contrast that highlights the fundamental working assumption made by the two Frankfurt scholars. Nietzsche insisted art needed to be seen within the sovereignty of its own terms and would suggest that "art tends to set aside any criterion *brought in from* the logical or moral order ...(with) 'truth' (being) a vital illusion and the truth of art a tonic lie" (Rochlitz, 1992/1996, p. 220; see also Comte-Sponville, 1991/1997, p. 55-57). Although often drawing upon the work of Nietzsche, on this topic the two Frankfurt scholars had a somewhat different view and, throughout their work, insisted that the "truth content" of art has "not lost its logical and ethical stakes" (Rochlitz, 1992/1996, p. 220).

Adorno and Benjamin were of the view that art and aesthetics are not some separate order that obey some pure detached aesthetic logic as such, but instead had a co-determined link to the 'otherness' that, putatively, it sought to escape. Art, aesthetics and critical theory had a 'power' to disclose 'truths' about society. In contrast to "shoulder-shrugging aesthetic relativism", Adorno (1970/1997) insisted that "art is directed toward truth, it is not itself immediate truth: to this extent truth is its content. By its relation to truth, art is knowledge; art itself knows truth in that truth emerges through it. As knowledge, however, art is neither discursive nor is its truth the reflection of an object" (p. 282). Of course, Adorno, and his Frankfurt school brethren, reject *any* pretensions to absolute truth and argued that valid knowledge cannot be detached from knowing subjects — knowledge always has to be conceived as mediated through society and has a *dialectic* 'nature' in the interplay of the particular and universal, of the moment and totality (see Carr, 2000b).

For Adorno and Benjamin, art and aesthetics was not only an attempt to represent, but in the representation it had the capacity to transcend that 'rationality' which it was representing. As Adorno (1970/1997, p. 31) once observed: "The modernity of art lies in its mimetic relation to a petrified and alienated reality. This, and not the denial of that mute reality, is what makes art speak" (see also Rasmussen, 1996, p. 29). To understand the 'rationality' that art represented and also its transgressive and critical "self-reflexive" 'voice', one needs to appreciate Benjamin and Adorno's conception of *mimesis* and *enigma*. It is these two concepts that are pivotal to their work on art and aesthetics. Indeed, it would not be overstating the case to suggest that these two concepts are the essential scaffolding to how they came to the conclusion that art carried its "truth content" and critical perspective.

The notion of *mimesis*, although widely used by Adorno and others in the Frankfurt school, was a notion first elaborated upon by their fellow theorist Walter Benjamin. It was this elaboration that shaped the use of the term by others of the Frankfurt school. Benjamin (1933/1999c) suggested that we all have a "mimetic faculty" (mimicry) responsible for producing and perceiving resemblance. While imitation maybe the ultimate form of flattery, and a basic behaviour through which we may learn new skills etc., Benjamin (1933/1999b, p. 698; 1933/1999c, p. 720) also viewed it as one of our most irresistible impulses. Indeed, Benjamin, along with Adorno, came to think of *mimesis* as an assimilation of self to other — a type of enactment behaviour (Adorno, 1970/1997, p.111; Benjamin, 1933/1999c, p. 720; see also Jay, 1997b, p. 32; Nichol森,

1997, p. 147). This enactment behaviour was to anticipate some of the work of Winnicott related to the psychodynamics involved in play (see Winnicott, 1971a, 1971b, 1971c, p.41, 1971d, p. 100, 1971e, p. 107).

Benjamin (1933/1999c, p. 720) notes that a child's play is "everywhere permeated by mimetic modes of behaviour. ... The child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher, but also a windmill and a train". Anyone listening to their adolescent offspring trying to sing along with whatever is the top of the hit parade, will soon discover it is not only a matter of getting the words right, you also have to get the right accent to sound like the original! Of course, this behaviour is not always reproduced in the same form, i.e. an aural phenomenon imitated aurally. For example, the child who moves through the house as though they were an aeroplane. Here a human being is seeking to imitate a non-human object. Some areas of this imitation, such as flying, are substituted with a behaviour that is in another form — in this case, running around the house with outstretched arms. Thus the similarity is not necessarily embodied in the same form. These brief examples cause us to consider, perhaps more deeply, the dimensions of mimesis — not only the issue of the success in producing a likeness, but the more general question, that of: "What is the nature of the link with otherness that is both presupposed and created by imitation?" (Nicholsen, 1997, p. 138). The ability to produce but *also* perceive resemblance would appear to implicate some form of human mimetic faculty or capacity.

Mimesis and the mimetic faculty, for Benjamin (1933/1999b, p. 695), in times long gone is different to that of today. In those earlier times, Benjamin points to interest in the cosmic order and divination as the medium through which the reading of correspondence was to occur. Today the system of signs takes the form of language, as Benjamin (1933/1999b) argues:

Language now represents the medium in which objects encounter and come into relation with one another. No longer directly, as they once did in the mind of the augur or priest, but in their essences, in their most transient and delicate substances, even in their aromas. In other words: it is to script and language that clairvoyance has, over the course of history, yielded its old powers. (pp. 696-697)

It was the process of producing similarities rather than the object of the similarity that was important for Benjamin (see Nicholsen, 1997, p. 140) — important, in as much as the mimetic faculty could be noted to exist throughout the course of history. Nicholsen (1997) makes the profound connection of mimesis and self and other, which she notes in the work of Benjamin, and argues: "Language, in short, can mediate the mimetic assimilation of self to other. Words mediate the loss of self as a loss of one's own image, figure, or face. Words could make him like things, Benjamin says, but 'never like my own image'; the child is 'disfigured by likeness' to everything that surrounds him" (p. 143).

Adorno (1970/1997) agreed with these sentiments but suggested that, rather than language, it was art that had become the emergent form of the mimetic impulse. For

Adorno (1970/1997), a work of art actually induced mimetic behaviour in the viewer (or listener, in the case where he uses the term art in its broader sense to include music, film etc.). He also, however, suggested that art has a rebus-like face — an "enigmatic gaze that it directs at us" (Nicholsen, 1997, p. 150), which is a non-conceptual but language-like character that incites philosophical reflection. Nicholsen (1997) summarizes Adorno's position extremely well¹ when she says:

The work itself is analogous to a musical score. The recipient — listener, viewer, reader — follows along or mimes the internal trajectories of the work at hand, tracing its internal articulations down the finest nuance. ... the act of aesthetic understanding is an act whereby the self is assimilated to the other; the subject virtually embodies, in a quasi-sensuous mode, the work, which is other. (p. 149)

It is the enigmatic face of the work of art, the enigmatic gaze it directs at us, that incites this philosophical reflection. ... First of all, the work is enigmatic because it is mimetic rather than conceptual. Being nonconceptual, it cannot be unenigmatic, because it cannot have a discursive meaning. Further, it is enigmatic because it lost its purpose when the mimetic migrated from ritual into art; art has become, in Kant's phrase, purposive but without purpose. As Adorno says, art cannot answer the question, "What are you for?"

The enigmatic quality implies otherness as well as affinity. It requires distance if it is to be perceived. The experiential understanding of art that is gained through mimetic assimilation to the work does not have this kind of distance. It is trapped inside the work, so to speak, and accordingly cannot do justice to it. (pp. 149 –150; see also Adorno, 1970/1997, pp. 119-131)

For Adorno, all autonomously generated artworks are enigmas in as much as they have a capacity to sustain this discrepancy between projected images and their actuality. Carrying similarity yet difference at the same time: "Artworks say something and in the same breath conceal it..." (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 120; see also Held, 1980/1995, pp. 82, 83, 88-89). At one point Adorno (1970/1997) added to this dynamic and argued that "the survival of mimesis, the nonconceptual affinity of the subjectively produced with its unposited other, defines art as a form of knowledge and to that extent as 'rational' "(p. 54). Art is everywhere engaged in a dialectic with reason in its various forms: as cognition, construction, technique, spiritualization, objectification etc (see Nicholsen, 1997, p. 148). Art overcomes the constraining and unreflective nature of rationality through the very act of expression of non-identity with itself. The 'truth-value' of art arises from this ability to sustain "a discrepancy between its projected images (concepts) of nature and humankind, and its objects' actuality" (see Held, 1980/1995, p. 82). These were the dynamics in which art was considered to carry its critical perspective. It was also the decline in this autonomous art that Adorno saw as the flip-side of the rise of the culture industry which will be discussed presently. It is to this 'latent' critical content carried by art to which I now turn our attention.

The critical content of Art: Hearing from Benjamin, Marcuse and Adorno on surrealism

The notion that *works of art return our gaze in a manner so as to induce critical reflection*, was something that some of the Frankfurt School thought was particularly well exemplified in the work of the surrealists. Benjamin and Marcuse, and a little less so Adornoⁱⁱ, used the *example* of surrealism, as a somewhat 'exaggerated'ⁱⁱⁱ case, to illustrate how the critical content of autonomous art gets played out in a dialectic manner assumed in critical theory. Benjamin and Marcuse found that the body of work by the surrealists engendered an opportunity to see the world anew. The variety of techniques developed by the surrealists in writing, poetry, painting, theatre and film were intended to create new associations and overthrow the usual linear correspondence of objects and 'logical'/familiar associations.

It was the paintings by de Chirico during 1911-1917 that inspired some of the early work of the surrealists. Indeed, Breton (1927/1965, p. 83) saw the work of de Chirico as reflecting the founding philosophy of surrealism. In some senses De Chirico might be considered to be a surrealist, but his work did in fact preface both the formal declaration of surrealism by Breton in 1924 (see Breton, 1924/1969) and a subsequent movement of the surrealists into the medium of painting. De Chirico, like some of the 'officially' declared surrealist painters that followed e.g., Magritte, Dali, Delvaux, and Toyen, questioned the familiar identity of objects by faithfully reproducing them but placing them in unfamiliar settings and using such unfamiliar associations to produce a kind of poetic strangeness. The rich mimetic and the enigmatic mixture of the work. The shock of the juxtaposition of objects in unfamiliar association elicited unforeseen affinities between objects and, perhaps, unexpected emotion and sensations in the observer. As Breton more generally observed: "the external object had broken with its customary surroundings, its component parts were somehow emancipated from the object in such a way as to set up entirely new relationships with other elements, escaping from the principle of reality while still drawing upon the real plane (*and overthrowing the idea of correspondence*)" (italics added) (1927/1965, p. 83^{iv}).

It is important to recognize that the intent of the surrealist was to break with the 'language' of correspondence of that rationalism and logic that had, in their view, led to the atrocities of WW1. Civilization seemed to have lost its justification and new ways of thinking were needed that were more *authentic* and particularly not infected by bourgeois society. This orientation is nicely captured in the words of the surrealist Patrick Waldberg (1965/1997) when he observes that surrealism is:

A distrust of rationalism and formal conventions (which were worshipped at that time by the representatives of the avant-garde) prompted the young men towards the exploration of the realm of the unconscious and the dream. They were seeking what might be called 'the language of the soul', that is, the expression — stripped of all logical device — of the profound 'me' in its nakedness. (p. 13)

Surrealism actually had its beginnings in the written word but, it soon became

associated with visual art for which it is probably more commonly known today. In their efforts to transcend rationality and linear thinking, the very early surrealists developed some specific techniques and approaches. One technique, the use of *dreams* or inducing a dream-like state to give the unconscious unimpeded passage, was inspired by the work of Freud (1900/1986, p. 769), who once said that dreams were the royal road to knowledge of the unconscious. The importance of dreams to the surrealists was such that Breton (1924/1969, p. 14) specifically contrasted it with reality and suggested that he "believed in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a *sur-reality*". Other techniques and approaches developed by the early surrealists included: the *exquisite corpse* (stringing together of arbitrary chosen phrases by different poets unaware of what preceded or followed); and, *automatic writing* (writing quickly without control, self-censorship, or thought for the outcome in terms of literary merit, making free associations as they seem to flow).

When it came to surrealism as an expression in the visual arts, the artists also experimented to try and produce further techniques that transcended rationality and the control and presence of the "author". Some of these techniques included *automatic drawing and painting* (similar to automatic writing but in this case not trying to control the hand — an extreme version of this was draw with one's eyes closed); *decalcomania* (placing a sheet of paper with wet paint onto another sheet of paper and then separating them to reveal 'patterns'); *coulage* (paint drippings onto a canvas); *collage* (reassembly of objects on a canvas without concern for how they might be arranged and juxtaposed) and *frottage*. Breton (1948/1965) also insisted that the "*exquisite corpse*" could be used in drawing and suggested it was "an infallible way of holding the critical intellect in abeyance, and of fully liberating the mind's *metaphorical activity*" (italics added) (p. 95). In the drawn version, "players" took turns adding portions of the drawing. The first person might draw the head, with two lines protruding for the neck. The paper was then folded and passed to the second player, who added the torso, with lines protruding across folds for the arms and legs, and so on. The point of the "*play*" was both collective and automatic: the unleashing of the "marvelous" or non-rational, and the production of a work that could not have been produced by a single player acting alone (Caws, 1997).

Marcuse and Benjamin both viewed surrealism as producing discomfort, turmoil, shock and/or emotional disturbance and in so doing was a form of sociocultural critique. The shock induced through the juxtaposition and dissociation of the familiar in unfamiliar settings was particularly resonant with their ideas associated with dialectics. They came to view this discomfort and shock in a manner similar to that captured by Bertolt Brecht in his idea of an "estrangement-effect". Citing the words of Brecht, Marcuse (1964) explains the effect in the following manner:

To teach what the contemporary world really is behind the ideological and material veil, and how it can be changed, the theater must break the spectator's identification with the events on the stage. Not empathy and feeling, but distance and reflection are required. The "estrangement-effect" (Verfremdungseffekt) is to produce this dissociation in which the world can be recognised as what it is. "The things of everyday life are lifted out of the realm

of the self-evident... That which is 'natural' must assume the features of the extraordinary. Only in this manner can the laws of cause and effect reveal themselves" (Brecht, 1957). (Marcuse, 1964, p. 67)

Marcuse further argued, using literature as a specific example, that the estrangement-effect "is not superimposed on literature. It is rather literature's own answer to the threat of total behaviourism — the attempt to rescue the rationality of the negative" (p. 67). Amongst other things, for Marcuse, the estrangement-effect was part of a "great refusal" to one-dimensionality.

For Marcuse, the limitations that were being imposed upon freedom and happiness by a domineering and repressive society had an antidote in the liberation of imagination. It was the enslavement of imagination that aided and abetted a social amnesia as to how the present sociocultural arrangements came into being — a social reification, and at the same time robbed us of thinking of alternative possibilities. It was in this context that Marcuse cites Breton's *First Manifesto of Surrealism*:

"To reduce imagination to slavery — even if one's so-called happiness is at stake — means to violate all that one finds in one's inmost self of ultimate justice. Imagination alone tells me what can be". (Marcuse, 1956/1998, p. 149 citing Breton, 1924/1969, pp. 4-5)

Both Benjamin and Marcuse saw an affinity between the surrealists' production of the estrangement-effect and the mode of critical thought championed by the Frankfurt School scholars, i.e., dialectics. This affinity was such that Benjamin (1929/1997b) argued that surrealism needed to be perceived dialectically in order to appreciate its purpose and contribution and, in particular, to understand that "we penetrate the mystery only to the degree that we recognize it in the everyday world, by virtue of a *dialectical optic* (italics added) that perceives the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday" (p. 237). The dialectic optic is used in its Hegelian sense^v. The estrangement that comes from contradiction, paradox and irony are the necessary reflective opportunities in which juxtaposition aids dialectical self-consciousness. Indeed, in Aragon's 'anti-novel' *Paris Peasant*, this surrealist argues that "reality is the apparent absence of contradiction. The wondrous is contradiction appearing in the real" (Aragon, 1926/1971, p.166). Benjamin (1929/1997b, p. 227) came to describe this wondrous revelation carried in surrealism as "profane illumination". He also reinforced that the act of reflection in the medium that is the work of art and the link to philosophy, when he observed that "all genuine works have their siblings in the realm of philosophy" and that our task in understanding the work of art is to reveal the "virtual possibility of formulating the work's truth content" (Benjamin, 1922/1997a, p. 333 and p. 334).

For Benjamin and Marcuse, in the surrealist movement the estrangement-effect becomes an artistic-political reflective device only to the extent that the estrangement can be maintained "to produce the shock which may bare the true relationship between the two worlds and languages: the one being the positive negation of the other" (Marcuse, circa unknown/1993, p. 187). Marcuse warns that, in the past, intellectual oppositions to the mainstream became impotent and ineffective because the estrangement-effect was, in

effect, disarmed by the assimilating mechanisms of the prevailing order. He argues in Aragon , for example:

The avant-gardistic negation was not negative enough. The destruction of all content was itself not destroyed. The formless form was kept intact, aloof from the universal contamination. The form itself was stabilized as a new content, and thus came to share the fate of all contents: it was absorbed by the market.
(Marcuse, circa unknown/1993, p. 182)

Thus the estrangement-effect can only be maintained to the extent that it continues to reveal the prevailing order in its opposition and (simultaneously) the opposition in the prevailing order — that is, to the extent that it maintains a dialectical tension. The opposition between antagonistic spheres, is a dynamic conceived as the mediation of one through the other (see Adorno, 1970/1997, pp. 44-45). This, of course, is the dialectic optic that Benjamin argued was crucial to the understanding of surrealism^{vi}.

The dialectic dynamic inherent in the surrealist movement was also noted by Adorno, particularly in the context of throwing the spotlight on those aspects of social life that functionalism neglects, obscures and/or seeks to remove from our vision. He expresses this view succinctly when he says:

[Surrealist paintings] ... gathered together what functionalism covers with taboos because it betrays reality as reification and the irrational in its rationality. Surrealism recaptures what functionalism denies to man; the distortions demonstrate what the taboo did to the desired. Thus surrealism rescues the obsolete — an album of idiosyncrasies where the claim for happiness evaporates that which the technified world refuses to man [Theodor W. Adorno, “Rückblickend auf den Surrealismus”, in *Noten zur Literatur*. (Berlin-Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1958), p. 160 - Cited in Marcuse, 1964, p. 70].

Adorno (1970/1997) was to remark, more generally, that art could not be reduced to “the unquestionable polarity of the mimetic and the constructive, as if this were an invariant formula” but what “was fruitful in modern art was what gravitated toward one of the extremes, not what sought to mediate between the two” (p. 44). This line of thought leads Adorno to make a more general point about dialectics, when he states that “the dialectic of these elements is similar to dialectical logic, in that *each pole realizes itself only in the other, and not in some middle ground*” (italics added) (p. 44).

In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, although not adopting these words, it was the dialectic tension and the maintenance of some estrangement that Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997) had concern, in the face of the culture industry. They despaired at how the culture industry had assimilated the arts into a world of advertising and kitsch^{vii} and in this process of objectification had repressed (neutralized) art’s critical knowledge content. To further understand the critical knowledge element and the language-like quality of art and aesthetics, it is instructive to very briefly consider some of the contours of Adorno and Horkheimer's view about the development of what they dubbed the "culture industry".

Art as part of the Culture Industry: Hearing from Adorno (& Horkheimer)^{viii}

Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997) in their book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*^{ix}, in a chapter entitled “The culture industry: Enlightenment as mass deception”, suggest that ‘art’^x and manual labor have become structurally divided. They viewed capitalism^{xi} as engendering a new form of domination. The power of the ruling classes was being reproduced through a form of ideological hegemony; it was established primarily through the rule of consent, and mediated via cultural institutions such as schools, the family, churches and mass media. It was in this context that Adorno and Horkheimer argued that culture, like everything else in capitalist society, had been transformed into an object. This objectification resulted in both the repression of the critical elements in its form and content, but also represented a negation of critical thought. As Adorno (1975) was to remark:

Culture in the true sense, did not simply accommodate itself to human beings; ... it always simultaneously raised a protest against the petrified relations under which they lived, thereby honoring them. Insofar as culture becomes wholly assimilated to and integrated into those petrified relations, human beings are once more debased. (p. 13)

Culture had, metaphorically, become another industry producing commodities, which had little or no critical function. Adorno (1975, p. 14) was to clarify that “the expression ‘industry’ is not to be taken literally. It refers to the standardization of the thing itself — such as the Western, familiar to every moviegoer — and to the rationalization of distribution techniques ... (and) not strictly to the production process”. To paraphrase Adorno in a number of his works (see also Held, 1980/1995, p. 94; Rocco, 1994, p.87), music, art, film were essentially, aimed at a passive, passionless and uncritical reception, which it induces through the production of “patterned and pre-digested” products. The culture industry anticipates individual consumer ‘need’. The images and messages that are commercially produced are largely *mimetic* of the broader socio-political relations. The criteria of merit for these products was perverted, according to Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997, p. 124), as it was judged by the amount of “conspicuous consumption”.

Positivist rationality, the manipulation and suppression of critical imagination, were embodied in the images and messages produced by the culture industry — an industry so reductionist that culture was mere amusement. The structural division between work and ‘art’ (read culture) was such that culture was to be the vehicle of escape from the boredom, drudgery and powerlessness inherent in mechanized work processes. Culture had, instead, become an extension of that same world of work. In the words of Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997, p. 137):

Amusement under late capitalism is the prolongation of work^{xii}. It is sought after as an escape from the mechanized work process, and to recruit strength in order to be able to cope with it again. But at the same time mechanization has such power over a man’s leisure and happiness, and so profoundly determines

the manufacture of amusement goods, that his experiences are inevitably after-images of the work process itself. The ostensible content is merely faded foreground; what sinks in is the automatic succession of standardized operations. (for a similar critique, see also Marcuse, 1956/1998, 1964, 1968)

Nowhere was Adorno and Horkheimer's criticism of the culture industry greater, and more illustrative, than in the realm of art. Scathing as to what art had become, Adorno and Horkheimer suggested that *art had not simply been turned into a commodity, but from the outset was conceived of as an item for sale to a market.* In an idiom of style, art and advertising had merged as cultural products with perhaps the ultra-realism of Andy Warhol's Campbell Soup painting saying it all (see Giroux, 1983, p, 21). The one dimensional society, highlighted by Marcuse (1964), is a world that collapses the distinction between what is and what might otherwise be possible and, at the same time, reifies — serving to encourage a social amnesia as to the ontology of such a world. The aesthetic character of art that brings enjoyment and entertainment now, simultaneously, serves to pacify and, in many instances, has been turned over as an instrument to aid in the promotion and acquisition of commodities. The 'prevailing' interpretation of reality gets reproduced and reinforced such that the reconciliation of alienated individuals with society occurs through a process of identification of the latter with the former, as Held (1980/1995) cogently observes:

The 'plots', the 'goodies', the 'heroes' rarely suggest anything other than identification with the existing form of social relations. There is passion in movies, radio broadcasting, popular music and magazines, but it is usually passion for identity (between whole and part, form and content, subject and object). The products of the culture industry can be characterized by standardization and pseudo-individualization. It is these qualities which distinguish them from autonomous art. (p. 94)

Art had been robbed of its ability to suggest alternative possibilities to a world in which it now seemed to merely act as a mirror. To reverse a Kantian expression, in the words of Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997, p. 158; see also Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 139); "The principle of idealistic aesthetics — purposefulness without a purpose — reverses the scheme of things to which bourgeois art conforms socially: purposelessness for the purpose declared by the market". Art had been neutralised into a mere object of contemplation^{xiii}. Art had become part of the culture industry that promoted, and sought to have assumed, intellectual and social conformity.

Management and organisation studies: Taking lessons from the world of Art?

Having heard from some of the Frankfurt School scholars on the matter of art as a form of knowledge and its language-like character, the question arises: "How might the work of these scholars provide us with a valuable optic through which to more deeply *understand* and *reflexively explore* management and organisation studies?" I would suggest the work of these scholars, on the matter of art, is helpful in a number of ways which are perhaps most conveniently addressed under three sub-headings.

1. Management and organisation studies: Has it become a culture industry?

In 1997 a book was published, written by Gibson Burrell, entitled *Pandemonium: Towards a retro-organization theory*. In the same year David Farmer (1997a) made a conference presentation entitled "Public administration discourse as (Heraclitean, Derridean) play: Does it pay to play?" (see also Farmer, 1998). Both of these prominent contributors to the organisation discourses were independently voicing a disillusionment and seeking to 'extract' themselves from the mode of thinking that had characterised these discourses. Both of them had turned to post modernism which, at the time, I interpreted (see Carr, 1997; Carr & Zanetti, 1998) as, unknowingly, entering the realm of surrealism — more of that connection, of postmodernism and surrealism, in a moment. The core of their disillusionment appeared to be the shallowness or superficial 'nature' of the discourse and, in particular, linear thinking. Burrell (1997) expressed his disillusionment and frustration with the discourse throughout the book, both explicitly and implicitly. Early in his tome, in addressing those in the field that he expected to be his readers, he suggested that if his book were a video, "decidedly not for public viewing", it would show "that we're swimming in deep shit" (p. 4). Burrell (1997) goes on to make the following argument as to why he holds this view, saying:

The pressures to carry out work of an empiricist kind, to make this research relevant to a managerial audience and to play for good and instant feedback from teaching our clients, places tremendous pressures towards conservatism on lecturing staff. (p. 4)

To put this comment in even greater context, it must be remembered that this was the 'same' Burrell who once joined with Morgan (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and posed that most unKuhnian rendering of paradigms. You know that Burrell — the 2x2 typology in which 'human nature' became part of their strange brew of unproblematic oppositional dimensionality, and who talked of being confined to 'cells' in a context of incommensurability. In *Pandemonium*, this was clearly a different and Burrell (1997) now observes that he "now leaves the equally sized rooms he has been stalking" (p. 25).

The work of Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997) might suggest that Burrell and Farmer, and of course others, are at one level expressing the pressures associated with a *culture industry*. Using the optic of the culture industry one might ask for some reflexivity — to inquire as to whether, both in the content and teaching methodology, as well as in research, the field in which we toil is simply another culture industry? For example, we often, jokingly, refer to MBAs as undergraduate management degrees for engineers. Carried in the joke is, perhaps, a hint of a larger story, a story that has something to say more generally about the field. MBAs and many other degrees in management and administration could be seen, very much, as commodities to be purchased from a marketplace. Commodities that give a superficial understanding of the subject matter. Burrell (1997, p. 27) remarks upon this superficiality when he invites some readers to exit his book as early as page twenty six. He refers to these 'scholars' as "being content with 'Heathrow Organization Theory' and its practitioners (e.g. Handy, 1994)". He then distinguishes his own volume by distancing it from the "Handy pocket theory with all its superficiality, ease of travel, liberal humanistic stance, technobabble

language and fundamentally conservative political leaning ... (and) all that consultancy-speak" (Burrell, 1997, p. 27).

Recalling the summary in the last section of this paper about what art had become, the question remains: "Has the teaching, research and discourse in management and organisation studies become another culture industry, aimed at a passive, passionless and uncritical reception, which it induces through the production of patterned and pre-digested products?" The answer, for many of us, is a resounding YES. The work of Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997) has provided the basis to pose this fundamental question and in doing so has given us a basis for some reflexivity. For the scholars of the Frankfurt School, art is certainly a form of knowledge. It also represents "a kind of rationality that contains a certain 'non-rational' element that eludes the instrumental form" (Rasmussen, 1996, p. 29). Art's non-rational element gives it the power to go beyond instrumental rationality. For Adorno (1970/1997, p. 79) "capitalist society hides and disavows precisely this irrationality, whereas art does not". In this context, earlier it was observed, and it bears repeating, that:

Adorno (1970/1997) insisted that "art is directed toward truth, it is not itself immediate truth: to this extent truth is its content. By its relation to truth, art is knowledge; art itself knows truth in that truth emerges through it. As knowledge, however, art is neither discursive nor is its truth the reflection of an object" (p. 282). Of course, Adorno, and his Frankfurt school brethren, reject any pretensions to absolute truth and argued that valid knowledge cannot be detached from knowing subjects — knowledge always has to be conceived as mediated through society and has a dialectic 'nature' in the interplay of the particular and universal, of the moment and totality. (see Carr, 2000b)

In seeking to liberate ourselves, and the discourse more generally, from the culture industry, a dialectic optic would cause us to more reflexively consider what our 'own' discourse offers us as knowledge. The critical dimension of our gaze is still within 'the work', in as much, as we can see the superficiality and note the contradictions and ruptures in the 'images' that is our discourse — the field's own mimesis and enigma dynamic. More than this, a dialectic optic would have our gaze upon knowledge itself as being an object of study in a twofold sense. In one sense we can examine our 'knowledge' in a context of understanding its social function, that is, the manner in which it legitimates certain practices and structures. At the same time, our 'knowledge' can be analyzed "to reveal through its arrangement, words, structure and style those unintentional truths that contain 'fleeting images' " (Giroux, 1983, p. 30) of other possibilities.

2. The contemporary evocation of surrealism in management and organisation studies

I noted earlier that prominent organisation theorists such as Burrell (1997) and Farmer (1997a, 1997b, 1998), as well as others, had sought to extract themselves from "linearity" and totalising "logic" (Burrell, 1997, p. 27) by adopting a postmodern perspective. I interpreted this, at the time (see Carr, 1997; Carr & Zanetti, 1998), as, 'unknowingly', entered the realm of surrealism. Indeed, as my review of Burrell's work

was being published, in which I made this connection, Farmer's aforementioned conference paper came out in a special issue of the journal *Public Voices*, edited by Farmer (1997b) himself. This special issue focused upon postmodernism and public administration. The cover of this special issue featured a surrealist work, a reproduction of the Rene Magritte's painting "The Blank Signature". Farmer comments in his introduction, that this painting makes the point that "reality extends beyond conscious rationality" (p. 8). I was left to ponder if he, and or any of the other authors in this special issue, had also ever considered any possible deeper connections between postmodernism and surrealism?

The contours of that original argument, that much of postmodernist thought was a contemporary evocation of surrealism, is an argument that bears revisiting in the context of this paper^{xiv}. It is an argument, that if sustained, also provides some clues as to how the analysis of surrealism by the scholars of the Frankfurt School, discussed earlier in this paper, has implications for the management and organisation discourse. This is, again, an attempt to learn from the world of art and those who have noted a transgressive and critical 'voice' of art.

In the context of explaining how some the Frankfurt School scholars viewed surrealism as somewhat of an exemplar of the manner in which art carried its critical element or content, it was earlier noted that the surrealists sought to transcend rationality and linear logic. To achieve this objective, it was also noted that the surrealists developed techniques such as: the exquisite corpse; automatic writing/drawing/painting; dream work; decalomania; coulage; collage; frottage; and others of a playful kind. Postmodernists appear to have taken a similar path. Their fundamental orientation is also to transcend rationality, linear thinking, and the 'author'. The central and recurrent themes of postmodernism are that '*its all in the text*' and the importance of *the death-of-the-subject*. Also, postmodernists generally embrace the early poststructuralist view that 'truth' is merely a construction of language (see Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiii). Moreover, the human as a subject is likewise simply part of that text, nothing more than a transient epiphenomenon of a specific and local cultural discourse.

Derrida (1976) insists *il n'y a pas de hors-texte* (p. 158), ie., there is nothing outside of the text. Postmodernists ask us to consider the text without relation to any fixed referents, whether those referents be historical or metaphysical. For Derrida words gain "their" meaning from their relationship to other words that may be presented at the same time, i.e., in the same written or spoken discourse and/or from their implied relationship to other words that do not appear in that discourse. It is this "play of difference" that is at the heart of how language needs to be examined. Derrida similarly insists the text itself is a bearer of a statement, whose truth is problematic, as its "elements" have a fluid rather than fixed meaning. It is in this context that the self has no referential status other than the text, and the hallmarks of Enlightenment — knowing, naming, and emancipation — become problematic.

As noted earlier, the surrealists were extremely sensitive to exactly the same issues that Derrida raised, sharing a distaste for representation as it signified

mastery ["odius supremacy" (Breton, 1927/1965, p. 81)] — whether that representation were political, social, linguistic, or cultural in origin. For the surrealist visual artists it was the interplay of absence and presence [akin to Derrida's *écriture*] that was relied on to produce a kind of poetic strangeness. Its signification was not through everyday meaning, but through the impact of disturbing the everyday associations, and thus problematising what seemed to be real. The faith in one's 'eyes' was challenged. For example, the idea of overthrowing correspondence, through the placing of familiar objects in unfamiliar associations and settings, was intended to inspire an anti-representational outcome in the observer — but it was the observer who was to make the 'meaning', not the artist [akin to the postmodernists 'death-of-the-subject/author']. Sarup (1993) makes a parallel comment in respect of post-structuralists/postmodernists, arguing that "broadly speaking the signified is demoted and the signifier made dominant. This means there is no one-to-one correspondence between propositions and reality" (p. 3). A similar comment is made by Rosenau (1992) when she points out that "reader-oriented post-modernism implies that meaning originates not in the production of a text (with the author), but in its reception (by the reader)" (p. 37). These intentions are exactly those of the surrealists.

In postmodernist formulations the self or individual has no referential status other than the text. The self becomes figured and reconfigured as a textual creation. This is such a fundamental theme of postmodern thinking that one writer concludes "the connection between ... thinkers and theories of postmodernity has mainly to do with their announcements of the 'death of man' (Foucault), or the 'death of the subject' (Derrida), or the 'death of the author' (Barthes)" (Kumar, 1995, p. 129). The individual is a part of the text and not first and foremost its subject. Indeed, we find the parallel in the surrealist movement in as much as Breton (1930/1969), at one stage, even contemplated encouraging surrealists to remove their name from 'their' works as he feared that being able to identify the 'author' would colour interpretation and too closely tie them to the world. At one point he declares that "the approval of the public is to be avoided like the plague" (p. 177). Under the subheading "I ask for the profound, the veritable occultation of surrealism", he says: "I proclaim, in this matter, the right of absolute severity. No concessions to the world, and no grace" (pp. 177 and 178). The nihilism of the surrealists, ie. the disdain and rejection of a belief of values, which is also so characteristic of the postmodernists^{xv}, is openly declared in the earlier writing of Breton. The rejection of modernism, and what it represents, was an early touchstone for the surrealists along with absenting the knowing subject.

For many postmodernists, individuality and consciousness are conceived of as verbally grounded experiences where self-awareness can only be realised through hearing oneself and being acknowledged by others through discourse, "man [sic] is decentred; the individual subject is dissolved into linguistic structures and ensembles of relations" (Kvale, 1992, p. 40). Thus, like the surrealists, the postmodernists seek to transcend or absent the 'author'.

The similarity in orientation of postmodernist formulations with those of the surrealists suggest a close affinity. In many ways, it should not be at all surprising to find

that the 'techniques' used in the service of such an orientation should also be similar. If, in the interests of brevity and immediate relevance, we concentrate on those in the discourse of organisation studies and management that had championed postmodernism, we gain a rapid appreciation of the specific form that these have taken in our discourse. Our aforementioned Gibson Burrell (1997) and David Farmer (1997a, 1997b, 1998), for example, have asked us to become *playful* by engaging questions such as — “what if it wasn't like this but the opposite?” They suggest that it is through a *clash-of-opposites* that we may transcend the logic and rationality of the day. In Farmer's case, the “play of irony” is particularly viewed as important in considering, for example, public administration as a language game. Burrell's playfulness is a little more elaborate.

Burrell's book is a medieval tale that is full of despair, images of death and decay, and is designed to shock our sensibilities. In a Hegel-versus-Nietzsche view of history, crudely summarised as teleology versus genealogy, Burrell has taken the side of Nietzsche. Nietzsche (1901/1968) rejected totalising forms of analysis and instead advocated an approach that looks at the present and moves back in time until a difference is found. Burrell appears to have chosen the medieval period as it represented a time where the contrast between the aspects of the present he is so discomfited by are so different from the past. He declares that Pandemonium does not represent “an argument, or a thesis or a story. It is a ludibrium — a playful toying with ideas — more than anything else and contains hidden meanings of which I am not aware” (1997, p. 28). Burrell also formats the book in a way to try to escape linearity and conventional logic and induce free association. The formatting is such that page numbering is not conventional. The numbers are neither at the top or bottom of the page but indeed on the side of the page often flanked by an arrow to give the reader an indication of where to read next. There is a “dual carriageway in which text across the top half of the page moving from left to right ‘meets’ text moving from right to left across the bottom half of the page. Pages have a central reservation which it is always dangerous to cross” (Burrell, 1997, p. 2). This intertwining of form and content, that Burrell employs, was the very essence of the techniques beginning with De Chirico, later in the exquisite corpse and automatic writing, to also inspire free association and thus move beyond the constraints of conventional logic.

In addition to *playfulness*, the *clash-of-opposites* and *intertwining of form and content*, other ‘surrealist’ techniques can be noted in the work of the group of writers who claim, or invoke, the insights of postmodernists in the organisation discourse. These well established writers have been advocating what, at first glance, seems to be using the fantastic to elucidate assumptions and neglected visions. These techniques have included: *deconstruction* (an introspective activity that seeks to unsettle the taken for granted meaning and assumptions of a text by using the text against itself e.g., by *erasing* one word/concept, and substituting its ‘opposite’ also by scanning the text for contradictions and disruptions in the words, expressions, and ideas that are used and by so doing, putatively, exposing a text's logocentrism); and, *metaphoricality* (the use of metaphors not just to capture a general idea but to be used as a tool to explore thinking of organisations *as if* e.g., as if they are organisms — using this metaphor we may consider the issues as organisational health, decision centres, the existence and role of feedback,

homeostasis, and the like, aspects that are, putatively, hidden or obscured from our everyday vision and consciousness).

Not to labor the point, the parallels of these techniques with those of the surrealists, are summarised in Appendix A. If for the moment it is accepted that surrealism, in the form of a contemporary evocation postmodernism, in both its orientation and techniques, has permeated the discourse of organisation studies and management, then are their lessons to learnt from the appreciation of the surrealist art movement? The work of the Frankfurt School scholars, outlined earlier in this paper, is instructive here. It was noted, for both Benjamin and Marcuse surrealism needed to be interpreted dialectically in order to appreciate its purpose and contribution. It creates an estrangement-effect, and provides "profane illumination", to the degree that it continues to reveal the prevailing order in its opposition and (simultaneously) the opposition in the prevailing order — a dialectic tension. This estrangement-effect is, as Marcuse (1964, p. 67) argued, not something that we can impose upon our own field, but is an endogenous reaction to rescue that 'rationality' of the negative. The problem here is that oppositions are all too easily absorbed into the prevailing discourse. In the case of surrealism, as was noted in an early work describing an 'exhibition' of surrealism held at the Galerie des Beaux-Arts, in Paris on the 17th January 1938:

... by 1938, when the exhibition was held, images and devices from the visual portion of Surrealism had already begun to be appropriated by advertisers and marketers. Dali, for example, was designing perfume bottles shaped like torsos. Miro's biomorphic fantasies were beginning to influence furnishings and interiors. Rather than announcing a revolution, the 1938 exhibition seemed more a display of radical chic about to cross the threshold into textbook history. Reviewers accused the Surrealists of seeming to take risks while actually being disengaged, and lamented "one more revolution that fades into that which it wishes to overturn" (Sawin, 1995, p. 8). (Carr & Zanetti, 2000, p. 915)

Similarly, G. Garfield Crimmins in an the recent wonderfully evocative, humorous and erotic journey in a book entitled *The Republic of Dreams: A Reverie* (1998), takes us to the 'land' of dreams called the Rêverian Republic. During this time-travel, we are treated to surrealist images and provided with the "Visitor's Guide to la République de Rêves" in which it is noted:

Recently discovered documents in which the original Rêverians referred to themselves as "Randomites" suggests a connection with the Randomites, a society of nonlinear thinkers active in the 1920s. Their membership was international, as was their persecution and suppression by linear thinkers of the period. By 1938, nothing more was heard of them and all traces of their activities had vanished. (p. 28)

The recent postmodernist formulations in the organization and management discourse, seem also set to become mainstreamed and commercialized which will fracture the dialectic. The terminology of postmodernism, such as 'postmodern' and 'deconstruction' seems to be heading in the same direction as the way in which the overuse of the word 'paradigm' has left it devoid of its original meaning. One of the

lessons to be learnt, would seem to be, that the field itself needs to on its guard against the decontextualising of concepts and allowing a variety of 'chain-saws' to be applied to the theoretics. Only by caring for the integrity and authenticity of streams of thought, can we take advantage of how that estrangement-effect helps in the re-presentation of previously-accepted truths and social conditions. In similar vein and unknowingly reflecting the Marcuse (1964, p. 67) cite of Brecht's explanation of the "estrangement-effect" that was used earlier in this paper, Cooper and Burrell (1988) note in a passing reference to the significance of the work of Foucault that:

...the auratic dimension appears as a form of 'estrangement' in which the normal and familiar come to be seen in a novel and sometimes disturbing way. In order to see the ordinary with a fresh vision, we have to make it 'extraordinary', i.e., to break the habits of organized routine and see the world 'as though for the first time'; it is necessary to free ourselves of normalized ways of thinking that blind us to the strangeness of the familiar. (p. 101)

The group of writers who have advanced a postmodernist view in the discourse of organisation studies and management have, unknowingly, entered the realms of surrealism. If this argument was indulged a little further, what if writers were to literally adopt a surrealist orientation and seek to develop new forms and manifestations of surrealist 'techniques'. Such a development would seem to advance the cause of enhancing "fresh vision". Equally, it might also be instructive to look at other 'surrealist movements' in other fields to understand and explore new approaches.

For example, it has very recently been suggested that in the field of literature, magic realism might be similarly productive (see Carr, 2001b). Magic realism, as the name implies, is a form of representation that juxtaposes reality and fantasy. Although originally a form of art, it gains its more elaborate evocation in writing of a group of writers that reside in Latin America, most notably Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes, These authors create narratives in which the realistic elements of the text are undermined by reference to events that have not occurred and situations that are impossible. In his introduction to a volume of *Latin American Stories*, Fuentes (1998) remarks that as a story writer:

*you are ... expected to construct your stories in one of two ways: in either a 'realistic' or a 'fantastic' mode. I, for one, have always tried to avoid this stark choice by recalling the lesson of Balzac and particularly *The Wild Ass's Skin*. The novelist who wished to be the public notary of French social classes 'carried a whole society' in his head, but also carried ghosts, myths, fears, unexplainable occurrences and a wild ass's skin that fulfils your desires but shrinks every time it gives, until, at the end, it takes life from the hapless owner and disappears. (p. xii)*

Some historians (see Gonzalez-Echevarría, 1977) have suggested that the origins of magic realism are distinctly Latin American, pointing to the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier's work *The Kingdom of This World* (1949) in which there is reference to "lo real-maravilloso" (the marvellous-real, as was noted earlier in this paper, the surrealists also talked of their own work as unleashing the "marvellous" — see Spector, 1997).

Carpentier, in this book, describes his reaction to what he sees as the fantastic and brutal history of Haiti. He argues that the "marvellous" is a feature of life in Latin America, and the Caribbean, that cannot be authentically reproduced by the realism of a Dickens. Thus, magic realist, postmodernist, or surrealist, all liberate the "marvelous" through what the Frankfurt School detected as that vital quality of a 'medium' to carry similarity and difference at the same time. This quality not only needs to be understood, but the dynamics of assimilation mechanisms also revealed.

3. The dissociation of sensibilities

A third issue for the field of organisation studies and management, that I believe immediately suggests itself from the work of the Frankfurt scholars on the matter of art, relates to a range of philosophical issues. In particular, those issues related to what the poet T. S. Eliot dubbed the "dissociation of sensibilities" (see Carr, 2000b). It seems almost self-evident that modernism itself has encouraged a separation of our forms of knowledge within the social science. Each phenomena, including that of our everyday life, we are encouraged to examine through a multiplicity of specialist lenses. This differentiation has been accompanied with a regime that encourages: scientism; the realists idea that something is mind-independent; and, pervasive forms of "dualisms (nature vs. culture, mind vs. matter) that have served to valorize an abstract idealism at the expense of an embodied, practical rationality" (see Gardiner, 2000, p. 11). Different knowledge-forms, the abstractions, the hierarchy in the knowledge-forms that gives primacy to metaphysical reason, and dualisms — all, have splintered and substituted for 'real life' and negate critical function.

The work of the Frankfurt scholars, in their critical examination of art and aesthetics, alerts us to some ways in which the issue of 'truth' might be explored in a much more reflexive manner. Of course, it is all too easy to confuse truth and knowledge, but these Frankfurt scholars have teased-out that relationship. Their work leads us to the discovery that the issue is not one of objective truth, but one of some transparency over how we come to hold the conclusions that we do. What logic, reason and other mediated pathways did we use (consciously and unconsciously guided), in coming to "believe" this was the truth? (see Carr, 2001c). The work of Burrell and of Farmer asks a similar question, but also echoes the Frankfurt scholars concern that totalising forms of thinking, such as linear thinking, obscures and marginalizes any "other" and in the process deprives us of reflexive opportunities.

The 'sub-text', that is not so subtly being suggested here, is one that we should give greater priority to examining the philosophy behind the generation of our knowledge and 'truth'. A recently translated fragment of a work written by Benjamin, in 1920-1921, seems to have anticipated our plight. Benjamin (1920-1921/1997c, p. 276) suggests :

The truth of a given circumstance is a function of the constellation of the true being of all other circumstances. This function is identical with the function of the system. The true being (which as such is naturally unknowable) is part and parcel of the infinite task. However, we have to ask about the medium in which truth and true being are conjoined. What is this neutral medium?

Two things must be overcome:

- 1. The false disjunction: knowledge is either in the consciousness of a knowing subject or else in the object (alternatively, identical with it).*
- 2. The appearance of the knowing man (for example, Leibniz, Kant).*

The two tasks facing the theory of knowledge are:

- 1. The constitution of things in the now of knowability;*
- 2. The limitation of knowledge in the symbol.*

Benjamin's words would suggest a discourse, in organisation studies and management, of a different character than, with few exceptions, we have seen thus far. Clearly postmodernist approaches to our field have sought to "overcome" the issues raised here by Benjamin. The exploration of art and aesthetics, and alike, affords us an opportunity to more reflexively examine our own field and perhaps take it away from scientism.

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^[1] It is noteworthy that very few commentators on Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* have attempted to come to terms with his concept of enigma, and, indeed, how it is related to mimesis. NicholSEN is an exception and an exception well worth reading for the profound incite she brings to the work of Adorno. NicholSEN does not, however, pursue the logical conclusion of projecting Adorno's argument further. If mimesis is enactment behaviour in which self seeks assimilation to other, then enigma would seem to represent an other to other. Thinking about this more laterally, the dialectical assimilation of self to other and other to self (see Carr & Zanetti, 1999) would in the same process appear to 'create', as an artifact of that process, an other that remained unassimilated — unassimilated as it represented a quality, or in NicholSEN's words "being nonconceptual".

^[2] It could be said that Adorno was hesitant toward embracing the work of the surrealists — a conclusion reached by Wolin (1997) with which I concur. Adorno seemed to think surrealists fetishize certain object and representations, producing a form of reification. The production of such images was carried out with little awareness of the mediated nature of their production. The whole work, in his view, is programmatic and becomes one imbued with rationality with the sole intention to shock and provoke. The problem I see in this position is that Adorno has failed to distinguish between the different 'techniques' used by the surrealists and he appears less than sensitive to the different form that surrealism may have to take in different arts. This said, Adorno was sympathetic to montage and in his last major work, *Aesthetic Theory* (1970/1997), surprisingly praised the surrealists for the ability to produce the "shock effect" and in so doing defetishize and help disarm everyday rationality (see also commentaries by Agger, 1992, p. 228; Held, 1980/1995, pp. 104-105; Hohendahl, 1995, p. 211; Jay, 1984/1997a, pp. 129-131).

^[3] The word exaggerated is used here as I am very mindful of the way in which the Frankfurt scholars saw the critical function of art and aesthetics being over-powered. Gardiner (2000) reads this situation similarly when he says:

In the perspective of Adorno et al., techniques of social control had become perfected to such an extent, and 'false consciousness' so pervasive, that moments of no-alienated or emancipated experience could only be glimpsed furtively in the most avant-garde of artworks and forms of theoretical production, in aesthetics and intellectual experiences which, by virtue of their very complexity and symbolic opacity, resisted absorption into what they termed the 'culture industry'. (p. 15)

The dynamics of the culture industry are discussed in the next section of this paper.

^[4] See Carr and Zanetti (1998, 2000) for a much larger discussion of surrealism and the connection with the work of the critical theorists Adorno, Benjamin and Marcuse, and, also, the parallels with aspects of the work of post modernists/post structuralists.

^[5] Hegel argued that dialectical thought begins with a "thesis", any definable reality that is the starting point from which all further development proceeds. As reflection progresses, this thesis is seen to encompass its opposite, or "antithesis", *as part of its very definition*. The triadic structure of Hegelian thought is not simply a series of building blocks. Each triad represents a process wherein the synthesis absorbs and completes the two prior terms, following which the entire triad is absorbed into the next higher process. Hegel himself preferred to refer to the dialectic as a system of negations, rather than triads. His purpose was to overcome the static nature of traditional philosophy and capture the dynamics of reflective thought. The essence of the dialectic is the ability to see wholes and the conflict of parts simultaneously.

^[6] Of course the surrealists, like the Dadaist movement, often satirized and mocked bourgeois society, but such satire and mocking was reliant upon the extent to which the irony and juxtaposition could continue to create this unease and not 'simply' be taken as an aesthetic presentation and get otherwise absorbed into a

world of advertising and kitsch. Indeed, in the case of Dada, as one of its leaders, Richard Huelsenbeck claimed: "The Dadaist considers it necessary to come out against art (painting, sculpture, culture, spirit, athletic club) because he has seen through its fraud as a moral safety valve" (Cited in Gardiner, 2000, p. 29). It was the repressive and ideological content carried in art that Dadaists found so objectionable. The Dadaist endeavored to escape anything that was traditional or common sense by engaging the spontaneous and the by-chance. Some of the 'techniques' for exploring the spontaneous and by-chance were to find their way into that later movement called "surrealism". Of course, the spontaneity and by-chance as an avenue to the repressed had also been championed by Freud in his notion of free association and Jung and his concept of synchronicity. The anarchistic and provocative 'stunts', and the nihilistic orientation, of the Dadaist were, however, not the path of the surrealist. Although originally followers of Dada, the founding surrealists sought a "radical renewal of means; to pursue the same ends [as Dada], but by markedly different paths" (Breton - cited in Gardiner, 2000, p. 33). The path of the surrealist was more programmatic, aimed at the dawn of an intellectual revolution and not merely at protest, non-conformity, stunts, irrationality for its own sake and acts of destructive agitation.

^[7]For some, the position that these scholars are expressing on art and its function could be seen as elitist, simply just one point of view, a personal preference, or merely an expression of taste. I think the key point here is, however, that Adorno and Horkheimer have identified that art appeared to have a critical function which, as will be noted in this next section, has been surrendered or lost in the context of the rise of a culture industry. It is the analysis of this loss that is the focus and as such is beyond the realm of simply a matter of taste [see also Jameson (1991, pp. 298-289) for a parallel argument on postmodernism].

The issue of kitsch was a significant matter for some scholars of the Frankfurt School. Adorno and Benjamin were very careful in their interpretation of kitsch. Adorno (1970/1997) argued:

Kitsch is not, as those believers in erudite culture would like to imagine the mere refuse of art, originating in disloyal accommodation to the enemy; rather it lurks in art, awaiting ever recurring opportunities to spring forth. Although kitsch escapes, implike, from even a historical definition, one of its most tenacious characteristics is the prevarication of feelings, fictional feelings in which no one is actually participating, and thus the neutralization (italics added) of these feelings. Kitsch parodies catharsis. Ambitious art, however, produces the same fiction of feelings; indeed, this was essential to it: The documentation of actually existing feelings, the recapitulation of psychical raw material, is foreign to it. It is in vain to try to draw the boundaries abstractly between aesthetic fiction and kitsch's emotional plunder. It is poison admixed to all art; excising it is today one of art's despairing efforts. (p. 239)

Benjamin (1927/1999a), in the context of discussing surrealism, refers to kitsch in the following manner:

Picture puzzles, as schemata of the dreamwork, were long ago discovered by psychoanalysis. The Surrealists, with a similar conviction, are less on the trail of the psyche than on the track of things. They seek the totemic tree of objects within the thicket of primal history. The very last, the topmost face of the totem pole, is that of kitsch. It is the last mask of the banal, the one with which we adorn ourselves, in dream and conversation, so as to take in the energies of an outlived world of things.

What we used to call art begins at a distance of two meters from the body. But now, in kitsch, the world of things advances on the human being; it yields to his uncertain grasp and ultimately fashions its figures in his interior. The new man bears within himself the very quintessence of the old forms, and what evolves in the confrontation with a particular milieu from the second half of the nineteenth century — in the dreams, as well as the words and images, of certain artists — is a creature who deserves the name of "furnished man". (pp. 4-5)

^[8]I have placed Horkheimer in brackets as much of this chapter of the book, including the first draft, was clearly written by Adorno (see Wiggershaus, 1994, p. 323). Also much of the line of argument emerges from Adorno's earlier work in which he was the single author and which I cite in this section of the paper.

^[9]The term "Enlightenment" is used frequently in this paper and has an assumed philosophical meaning. For those unfamiliar with the philosophy of enlightenment, the doctrines of Enlightenment include: reason is crucial to the capacity to act; humans are by nature rational and good; individuals and humanity as a whole can progress to perfection; all persons are created equal and should be accorded equality before the law and individual liberty; tolerance is to be afforded to all groups in society; beliefs are accepted only on the basis of reason (note: often the Age of Enlightenment is called the Age of Reason); rationality is the universal binding force that transcends differences in culture and creed and as such devalues customs and local practices to the extent that they maybe historically based rather than the exercise of reason; the non-rational is to take a back seat to the rational, thus education is to be viewed as imparting knowledge rather than developing feeling, emotions, and art as the product of good taste rather than genius (see Honderich, 1995, pp. 236-237).

^[10] Adorno and Horkheimer often used the terms *culture* and *art* interchangeably but in other instances were more disciplined and used culture as a more generic term that includes art, music, film etc. This is an important point as in their chapter on the culture industry when they refer to art they mean the arts more generally as in culture, yet they also single out the world of art, as in painting, as an example.

^[11] In using the term "capitalism", I am prompted to comment that readers of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* need to be aware that some terms were changed from the mimeographed edition of 1944. Euphemisms were inserted such that: capitalism became "existing conditions"; capital became "economic systems"; capitalist bloodsuckers was changed to "knights of industry"; class society became "domination" or "order"; and, ruling class became "rulers" (see Wiggershaus, 1994, p. 410). There were other small changes to phrases and certain phrases that were omitted, in acts of self censorship, in the interests of maintaining the goodwill and support of the American authorities. The Institute for Social Research, in Germany, that was the home of the Frankfurt School scholars was closed in 1933, under the Nazi regime, for tendencies deemed hostile to the State. The Institute moved its home, temporarily, to Geneva and then to New York, becoming affiliated with Columbia University. The Institute did not return to Frankfurt until 1949.

^[12] Adorno and Horkheimer used the now familiar tale by Homer of Odysseus to particularly highlight the dynamics of such a prolongation of work. For Adorno and Horkheimer the reconciliation of the apparent antagonism between work and pleasure, that appears in the tale, is attempted in the modern bourgeois in the same way, i.e., in the contemplation of art. The ancient tale is viewed by them as a parable for more recent times. Adorno and Horkheimer explain this 'lesson' and simultaneously provide a restatement of Hegel's master-servant parable:

Whoever would survive must not hear the temptation of that which is unrepeatable, and he is able to survive only by being unable to hear it. Society has always made provision for that. The laborers must be fresh and concentrate as they look ahead, and must ignore whatever lies to one side. They must doggedly sublimate in additional effort the drive that impels diversion. And so they become practical. – The other possibility Odysseus, the seigneur who allows the others to labor for themselves, reserves to himself. ... They (the oarsmen) reproduce the oppressor's life together with their own, and the oppressor is no longer able to escape his social role. The bonds with which he has irremediably tied himself to practice, also keep Sirens away from practice: their temptation is neutralized and becomes a mere object of contemplation — becomes art. ... Thus the enjoyment of art and manual labor break apart as the world of prehistory is left behind. The epic already contains the appropriate theory. The cultural material is in exact correlation to work done according to command; and both are grounded in the inescapable compulsion to social domination of nature.

Measures such as those taken on Odysseus' ship in regard to the Sirens form presentiment allegory of the dialectic of enlightenment. Just as the capacity of representation is the measure of domination, and domination is the most powerful thing that can be represented in most performances, so the capacity of representation is the vehicle of progress and regression at one

and the same time. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/1997, pp. 34-35)

For a larger discussion of the manner in which the reconciliation of the apparent antagonism between work and pleasure has modern significance, see Carr's paper "Understanding the 'imago' Las Vegas: Taking our lead from Homer's parable of the oarsmen" (2001a).

^[13] Further to the previous footnote, this view has much in common and, in some senses, anticipated some of the work of Guy-Ernest Debord and his notion of "Spectacle" (1967/1977). Debord described how, through capitalist rationalisation, the individual had become alienated in a world of circulating images. Life was a spectacle to be watched from a distance rather than something the individual was an active participant and over which s/he had some sovereignty.

^[14] For a much discussion of this argument see Carr (1997), also Carr and Zanetti (1998, 2000).

^[15] In noting the nihilism of both surrealists and postmodernists it is not the intention to infer that, philosophically, such a position can be held as some kind of 'ideal-type'. In the case of postmodernists, I have specifically challenged they fit into such a black and white labelling system, for they do hold a value position that focuses and privileges the neglected, the silent, the hidden and gives primacy to the 'reader' over the 'author' (see Carr, 1996).

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