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Art as “The Great Refusal”: Lessons for organization studies and management

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ABSTRACT

This article revisits and seeks to add to some of the author's earlier work to highlight, once again, the manner in which art is able to return our gaze and induce critical reflection. In line with Herbert Marcuse's notion of “The Great Refusal”, it is suggested that art has the potential to help us 'see' anew that which is familiar, the everyday, the banal. Drawing upon the work of the surrealist art movement, the paper highlights the manner in which an “estrangement-effect” is created that gives us sufficient distance to reflexively consider the taken-for-granted. The techniques used by the surrealists are shown to have their parallels in the work of some who occupy a 'space' in the field of organisation studies. The author argues the case that the field of organisation studies needs to recognize and protect this *space of refusal*.

The critical theory scholar Herbert Marcuse (1956/1998) put forward the concept of “The Great Refusal”, initially, in his work *Eros and civilization: A philosophical inquiry into Freud*. Marcuse raised the concept in the context of the manner in which forms of limitation upon freedom become sedimented in the unconscious such that we are encouraged “to forget what *can be*” (1956/1998, p. 149, italics is original emphasis) and numbed to the possibility of radical critique. Marcuse was drawing upon Sigmund Freud's meta-psychology to illustrate how different *forms* of repression and domination are reproduced both *over* and *within* the individual. As we will note in this paper, it was in such a context that Marcuse was to view repression as *both* a psychological and political phenomenon (see Carr, 1989). In his very cogent explanation of how forms of repression become reproduced within the individual's unconscious and how the individual in turn becomes unwittingly a willing participant in the continuation of their own servitude, Marcuse was to argue, in dialectical fashion, that the most powerful seeds of struggle for freedom from forms of domination are within the system that is being refused.

This initial founding of the concept of

“The Great Refusal” was one in which Marcuse found himself discussing the realm of art and its relationship with ‘truth’ – making the following citation from the work of Whitehead (1926, p. 228):

The truth that some proposition respecting an actual occasion is untrue may express the vital truth as to the aesthetic achievement. It expresses the “great refusal” which is its primary characteristic. (See Marcuse, 1956/1998, p. 149)

It was the realm of art that Marcuse, and some of his fellow Frankfurt School scholars, found to carry a non-discursive moment of ‘truth’ in its recovery of the non-identical (see Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/1997, pp. 130-131; also Benhabib, 1996, pp. 333-334). Marcuse's Frankfurt School colleague, Adorno, came to insist 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 and represented a Great Refusal against totalizing forms of logic.

I have previously commented upon: (a) the manner in which art can be considered as a form of language; (b) the manner in which art carries critical content; and (c) how the discourse of organizational studies is now, albeit unwittingly, carrying a contemporary evocation of surrealist art in the form of postmodernist theorizing (see Carr, 1997, 1989, 1999, 2003; Carr & Zanetti, 1998, 2000). While I wish to revisit some of that previous territory, the emphasis here is to expand upon how art carries its critical element as a Great Refusal and the manner in which it has been explored by the surrealists. It was for Marcuse (circa unknown/1993), the manner in which the surrealists created an "estrangement-effect" in their work that held the key to a much richer understanding of resistance to one-dimensionality and totalizing forms of logic. It will be argued that organizational studies can learn from the world of Art such that 'surrealist movements' within organizational studies occupy a space of refusal that needs to be recognized and protected if totalizing forms of logic and one dimensionality are to be avoided.

To understand the way in which forms of domination are reproduced over and within individuals', and thus the issue of what is being refused and how it can be refused, we first need to briefly discuss Marcuse's application of Freud's meta-psychology. It is from such an appraisal that the potency of the 'system' being refused can be comprehended.

The Great Refusal: Marcuse on the 'depths' and 'nature' of one-dimensionality

"The Great Refusal", as was noted earlier, was a concept initially put forward by Marcuse (1956/1998) in his work *Eros and civilization: A philosophical inquiry into*

Freud. As a starting point for his analysis, Marcuse accepted Freud's topographical theory of the mind, with its three hypothetical mental provinces, i.e.: the *id* -- the various biological urges, drives or instincts that operate entirely unconsciously; the *ego* -- the part of the mind that uses logic, memory and judgment in its endeavor to satisfy the demands of the *id*; and, the *super-ego* -- the province of the mind whose concern is for obeying society's 'rules of conduct', i.e. morality and social norms, and reminds the ego of these social realities. Of particular significance for Marcuse was Freud's view of parental figures as being vital agents in ensuring the individual was socialized into the 'needs' of the social system. The psychodynamics of the formation of the ego-ideal and the super-ego were pivotal to Marcuse's vision for reforming social relations.

The formation of the ego-ideal and the super-ego are inter-related. The ego-ideal represents the assimilated *positive* identifications with parents and parent substitutes (e.g. religion and society, so far as they are positively identified with) and leads to standards that the ego seeks to attain. The ego-ideal is established and re-established through a process of *identification* "whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides. It is by means of a series of identifications that the personality is constituted and specified" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988, p. 205; see also Freud, 1921/1985, p. 137). Freud envisaged in the development of the super-ego the child would, in resolution of the Oedipus (or Electra) complex, identify and internalize the values, attitudes and ideals of the parent. This *positive* sense of the super-ego for self-judgment represents the ego-ideal. In these same identifications the super-ego simultaneously has its *prohibitive* aspect (or conscience) also developed. Freud reflects upon this dynamic in arguing that the super-ego's "relation to the ego is not exhausted by the precept: 'You ought to be like this (like

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your father)'. It also comprises the prohibition: 'You *may not be* like this (like your father) - that is, you may not do all that he does; some things are his prerogative'" (Freud, 1923/1984, p. 374, emphasis in the original). Thus, the ego is narcissistically drawn to the ego-ideal -- "the target of the self-love" (Freud, 1914/1984, p. 88) but, is 'drawn' to yield to the prohibitive aspects of the super-ego that acts akin to a censor to the ego's wishes, from a fear of punishment (see Nunberg, 1932/1955, p. 146). This punishment is manifested as a feeling of *moral anxiety*.

The super-ego, as both an ego-ideal and as a censor, is conceived as being fashioned to accept the systematic social restraints as though they are 'needs' that are to be realized. This psychological embeddness of restraint and the particular nature of that restraint, Marcuse argues, has to be understood in a specific historical context "and judged as to whether such systems of domination exceeded their bounds" (Giroux, 1983, p. 26). Unlike Freud, Marcuse rejected the notion that legitimate and illegitimate forms of domination were a natural and permanent feature of civilization. Marcuse was of the view that each society has material conditions that operate as a *reality principle*. The reality principle can take a different form in different societies. In capitalist societies the specific reality principle that applies is one based on a *performance principle* - under whose rule "society is stratified according to the competitive economic performance of its members" (Marcuse, 1956/1998, p. 44). This performance principle, Marcuse believed, had outstripped its historical function. Scarcity was no longer a universal feature of society and therefore it was no longer 'necessary' to submit individuals to the demands of alienating labor that were engendered through the application of this principle. It was historically outdated and was in need of replacement. In this context Marcuse noted that a degree of repression was 'necessary', in that it was socially useful but in this case it was excessive -- 'surplus repression'. Marcuse captured the relationship of these notions

when he argued:

... while any form of the reality principle demands a considerable degree and scope of repressive control over the instincts, the specific historical institutions of the reality principle and the specific interests of domination introduce *additional* controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association. Those additional controls arising from the specific institutions of domination are what we denote as *surplus-repression* ... the modifications and deflections of instinctual energy necessitated by the perpetuation of the monogamic-patriarchal family, or by a hierarchical division of labor, or by public control over individual's private existence are instances of surplus-repression pertaining to the institutions of a *particular* reality principle. (Marcuse, 1956/1998, p. 37-38)

Marcuse highlights how repression is reproduced within the individual, but also simultaneously is pointing out how the individual becomes unwittingly a willing participant in the continuation of their own servitude. Repression is reproduced both *in* (through the super-ego as both an ego-ideal and as a censor) and *over* (through the reality principle of the ego that takes note of the institutionalized repressive agencies in society) the individual -- thus, repression is in this sense both a psychological and political phenomenon. Marcuse ultimately suggested that there would be a transformation of the current performance principle as contradictions continued to emerge from the operation of the specific reality principle in the various institutions, and citizens would no longer tolerate what was in fact surplus repression. These contradictions, however, have become somewhat invisible to the masses as the masses themselves have been psychologically and politically manipulated such that the "individuals identify themselves with the existence which is imposed upon them and have in it their own

development and satisfaction” (Marcuse, 1964, p. 11). This is so complete and a potent process that Marcuse, in a subsequent volume, argues that a one dimensionality is the outcome:

This identification is not illusion but reality. However, the reality constitutes a more progressive stage of alienation. The latter has become entirely objective; the subject which is alienated is swallowed up by its alienated existence. There is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all forms. The achievements of progress defy ideological indictment as well as justification; before their tribunal, the “false consciousness” of their rationality becomes the true consciousness. (Marcuse, 1964, p. 11)

Contradiction, the powerhouse of social change, was not absent as much as it had been made invisible through this mass conditioning and false patina. We were being denied the jarring moments that contradiction affords us and, at the same time, the opportunity for our conscious to have that psychodynamic therapeutic possibility that comes from rendering that which was previously unconscious now made conscious and thus potentially “freeing” us from the compulsion or repetitive behaviour that had arisen from unconscious psychic material. It was the ‘logic’ in the production system itself that reinforced the indoctrination and domination such that it minimized and suppressed dissent. The emerging “pattern of *one-dimensional thought* and behaviour” (Marcuse, 1964, p. 12, italics is original emphasis) was such that human ‘reason’ itself could be revealed as a fundamental instrument of domination. In tracing the origins of this emergence of one-dimensional thought, Marcuse noted that “society reproduced itself in a growing technical ensemble of things and relations which included the technical utilization of men -- in other words, the struggle for existence and the exploitation of man and nature became ever more scientific and rational” (1964, p.

146). Positivist rationality was seen as suppressing the question of ethics and precluding the possibility of self-critique. Giroux (1983) summarizes well how, more generally, the Frankfurt School viewed such a development when he says:

For Adorno, Marcuse and Horkheimer, the fetishism of facts and the belief in value neutrality represented more than an epistemological error; more importantly, such a stance served as a form of ideological hegemony that infused positivist rationality with political conservatism that make it an ideological prop for the status quo. (p. 15)

The infusion of a rationalist, positivist and a functionalist orientation into the specific reality principle was consistent with an implication raised in some of Marcuse’s earlier work where he insisted that positivism “induces thought to be satisfied with the facts, to renounce any transgression beyond them, and to bow to the given state of affairs” (1941/1996, p. 27). In line with what he was later to describe as part of one-dimensionality, Marcuse asserts:

... positivism amounts to giving up the real potentialities of mankind for a false and alien world. The positivist attack on universal concepts, on the ground they cannot be reduced to observable facts, cancels from the domain of knowledge everything that may not yet be a fact. (1941/1966, p. 113)

The paradigmatic and ideological prismatic status of rationalism and functionalism is absorbed into administration and management of social relations in terms of the orientation of administrators and managers to their tasks. As I have outlined elsewhere (see Carr, 1989), the one-dimensional thinking, informed by the epistemological/ideological functionalism orientation, promotes and reinforces a *technical notion* of administration and

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management in which it is largely assumed that social relations are technical issues/problems and actions are to be assessed in terms of technical efficiency. Research and scholarship in the field of organization studies has as its 'default setting' a rationalist and functionalist epistemological paradigm and occupies a space to the exclusion of other perspectives. The institutional milieu that supports research and scholarship, largely does so within a one-dimensional epistemology of liberal capitalism that has this fetish for facts and the empirical. Other perspectives are denied, attacked, colonized or otherwise contained. How is it possible to liberate alternative epistemologies and avoid being drawn back to this 'compulsive' logic that comprises this one-dimensionality? Marcuse, in *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), poses the same question and its solution, in a broader sense, when he writes:

How can [the individual] satisfy his own needs without hurting himself, without reproducing, through his aspirations and satisfactions, his dependence on an exploitative apparatus which, in satisfying his needs, perpetuates his servitude. (p. 4)

...This 'voluntary' servitude (voluntary in as much as it is introjected into the individual), which justifies the benevolent masters, can be broken only through a political practice which reaches the roots of containment and contentment in the infrastructure of man, a political practice of methodological disengagement from and refusal of the Establishment, aiming at a radical transvaluation of values. ...

Such a practice involves a break with the familiar, the routine ways of seeing, hearing, feeling and understanding things. (pp. 4 and 6)

As was noted in the introduction and overview to this paper, for Marcuse, as well

as for some of his Frankfurt School colleagues, an examination of the realm of art quickly reveals how it carries a non-discursive moment of 'truth' in its recovery of the non-identical. It was particularly in the work of the Surrealists in which this was most pronounced and highly developed in the manner in which techniques were employed to produce an "estrangement-effect" -- the production of which, the Frankfurt School scholars saw as being at the heart of the mode of critical thought they championed, i.e. dialectics. The dynamics in which art carries its critical element is instructive for other fields and it is to these dynamics that I now wish to turn our attention.

The Great Refusal: Art and the dynamics of estrangement, 'profane illumination' and dialectics

In the work of the Frankfurt School scholars, particularly that of Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse, it is suggested that autonomously generated works of art had a capacity to return our gaze in a manner so as to induce critical reflection. Marcuse (1978) was to most generally argue that:

By virtue of its aesthetic form, art is largely autonomous vis a vis the given social relations. In its autonomy, art both protests these relations, and, at the same time, transcends them. Thereby art subverts the dominant consciousness, the ordinary experience. (p. ix)

The connection of the realm of art to its reproduction of everyday social relations and the capacity to transcend the 'rationality' which it was representing, was something that Benjamin and Adorno raised in the context of what they regarded as the *mimetic* and *enigmatic* qualities of art. 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 Nicholzen, 1997, p. 147).

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". 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?" (Nicholzen, 1997, p. 138). The ability to produce but *also* perceive resemblance would appear to implicate some form of human mimetic faculty or capacity.

Adorno (1970/1997) agreed with these sentiments, but also suggested a work of art not only 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.) but that art has a rebus-like face -- an "enigmatic gaze that directs at us" (Nicholzen, 1997, p. 150). This enigmatic gaze is one which has a non-conceptual, but language-like character that incites philosophical reflection. Nicholzen

(1997) summarizes Adorno's position extremely well on this point 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,

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1970/1997, p. 120). 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 unopposed 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 Nicholse, 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” (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.

In relation to the ‘latent’ critical content carried by art, the Frankfurt School scholars thought this was particularly well exemplified in the work of the surrealists. 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).

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 were prominent in the Frankfurt School in declaring that surrealism produced discomfort, turmoil, shock and/or emotional disturbance and in so doing was a form of socio-cultural 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" (1964, p. 67). For

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Marcuse, the estrangement-effect was part of a "great refusal" to one-dimensionality.

The limitations that were being imposed upon freedom and happiness by a domineering and repressive society, Marcuse argued, 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. At the same time, it 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* that perceives the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday" (p. 237, italics added). The dialectic optic is used in its Hegelian sense ¹. 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 argued 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).

The Great Refusal: Maintaining the estrangement-effect and 'profane illumination'

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 surrealism².

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). This was a fundamental issue as it underscored one of the major points of departure from the traditional (formal) logic that was being challenged and refused in critical theory.

Traditional Western logic, under a principle of non-contradiction, insists that two propositions cannot be true simultaneously (see, for example, Popper, 1963). This is so because traditional logic because it focuses on empirical (mostly quantitative) representations of reality, necessarily builds on arbitrarily constructed foundations. At some point, the logic is abstracted from reality (formalized). Thus, in this 'system' of logic one proposition must prevail. In critical theory, however, form cannot be separated from content. It must continually reflect the whole of reality, not just a simplification of it.

Dialectical relationships do not express simply existence and non-existence; they also recognize the other possibilities available in the whole. For example, "the dialectical contradiction of 'a' is not simply 'non-a' but 'b', 'c', 'd', and so on -- which, in their attempt at self-assertion and self-realization, are all fighting for the same historical space" (Arato and Gebhardt, 1982/1993, p. 398). Horkheimer gives other examples of such dialectic logic and suggests we need to think in terms of substantive opposites rather than formal/logical positivist/logical empiricist ones to help in understanding our assumptions. He gives an example of the contradiction to "straight" which formal logic might seem to suggest is "non-straight", but Horkheimer (1935/1993) offers other negations: "curved"; "interrupted"; and "zigzag". Another example might be to recognize that there are multiple negations to power: resistance, powerlessness, and quiescence, all of which have different relationships to power and consequently different dialectical resolutions.

For the Frankfurt School scholars it is the ability to work with, and see, the dialectic tension that contradiction represents, that commended to them the estrangement-effect created in the work of the surrealists. This was the avenue through which profane illumination was possible. However, as we noted above, Marcuse warns the estrangement-effect can be denied through assimilating mechanisms of the prevailing

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order. This was a matter that Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997) were to highlight in a work, entitled *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in which they revealed how forms of 'art' could be 'absorbed' into a culture industry in which they constituted a product for consumption with little or no critical function. They had not just been turned into a commodity, but from the outset were conceived as items for sale to a market. Adorno and Horkheimer despaired at how the culture industry had assimilated the arts more generally into a world of advertising and kitsch³. and in this process of objectification had repressed (neutralized) art's critical knowledge content. Adorno, in a number of his works argued that art, music and film were essentially, aimed at a passive, passionless and uncritical reception, which it induces through the production of "patterned and pre-digested products" (Adorno, 1975, p. 14). The culture industry anticipates individual consumer 'need'. The images and messages that are commercially produced are largely *mimetic* of the broader socio-political relations. According to Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997, p. 124), the criteria of merit for these products became perverted as it was judged by the amount of "conspicuous consumption".

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 '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): "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 contemplation⁴. Art had become part of the culture industry that promoted, and sought to have assumed, intellectual and social conformity.

The Great Refusal: Lessons for organization and management studies

The manner in which some of the Frankfurt School scholars saw art carrying its critical element as a Great Refusal which was particularly well exemplified in the work of the surrealists, I would suggest, potentially provides us with a valuable optic through which we can more reflexively appreciate the dynamics within the fields of organization and management studies. Briefly, I would like to propose a number of ways in which such an optic is helpful and, for convenience, I will group these thoughts under four sub-headings.

Organization and management studies: Part of a culture industry?

In the last section of this paper, Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997) noted the manner in which art had been robbed of its ability to suggest alternative possibilities. This potential had been given over in the

processes of commodification in which, from the outset, art became viewed as a product to be sold and was essentially aimed at, and assumed, a passive, passionless and uncritical reception, which it induces through, what we also noted Adorno (1975, p. 14) called, the production of "patterned and pre-digested products". Many within the fields of organization and management studies have criticised the shallow and superficial 'nature' of these fields with some offering explanations for this state of affairs. Gibson Burrell, for example, fairly recently argued that:

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. (Burrell, 1997, p. 4)

The burgeoning industry of MBA-ism appears to match the description of a product being purchased from a marketplace that often describes itself as being "tailor-made" to the "consumer". Burrell (1997, p. 27) again remarks upon the superficiality that has come to characterize the field, as "Heathrow Organization Theory" and its practitioners, such as Charles Handy (1994), producing travel guides "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).

The work of Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997) has provided the basis to pose fundamental questions about the nature of the fields of organization and management studies 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". We might ask of the fields of organization and management studies: Do you have "surrealist movements"? If you did, would they be so obscure or undeveloped that most within the field would not have appropriate conceptual lenses to recognize them? Moreover, can we note attempts to hide and disavow such "movements"?

Clearly, consideration of the discourse about "The Great Refusal" causes us to reflexively consider what it is the fields are offering and how, if at all, we may wish to liberate ourselves. The critical and dialectic optic offered in this paper causes 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. A dialectic optic focuses 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. It is in such a context, the work of Marcuse poses a challenge to all who toil in these fields.

Organization and management studies: Where are the surrealists?

A small number of prominent organization and management theorists have sought to extract themselves from what they view as the "linearity" and "totalizing logic" (Burrell, 1997) that is part and parcel of the production of superficiality in these fields, by adopting a postmodern perspective. At the time of these initial attempts at liberation, I

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commented that they had 'unknowingly' sought refuge in the realm of surrealism (see Carr, 1997). Subsequently (see Carr, 1999, 2003; Carr & Zanetti, 1998, 2000), an extensive commentary and analysis was offered to show the close affinity in orientation of postmodernist formulations with those of the surrealists. Indeed, the manner in which surrealist 'techniques' had their parallels in the emergent postmodernist theory was charted. It was further argued that surrealism, in this contemporary evocation called postmodernism, had permeated the discourse of organization and management studies. It is not the intention to again revisit that lengthy analysis -- those parallels are summarized by way of an Appendix to this paper. I would like to very briefly raise some of the contours of that previous argument and analysis in order to pose further questions that seem to be prompted by consideration of the challenges posed by the work of Marcuse.

It was earlier noted that the surrealists developed techniques that had at their heart an objective of transcending rationality, linear thinking and the control and presence of the "author". "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" (Waldberg, 1965/1997, p. 13). Transcending the control and presence of the author was seen as crucial to holding at bay, or at least curbing the influence of, those processes that Marcuse was to talk about as "one-dimensionality". This same fundamental general orientation is shared by postmodernists, who collectively insist that one needs to interrogate the construction of a text to reveal its' truth-effects. In this process 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. 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).

The close affinity between the orientation of the surrealists and those of postmodernists is witness to very similar 'techniques' being brought to bear in the service of such an orientation. As was noted earlier in this paper, the surrealists in one technique questioned the familiar identity of objects by faithfully reproducing them but placing them in unfamiliar settings and in so doing induced a poetic strangeness and estrangement. This juxtaposition of familiar objects elicited unfamiliar associations and, sometimes, unexpected emotions. The gaze presumed a common 'meaning' (or signification), but used this meaning against itself in the juxtaposition. The postmodernist introspective activity of deconstruction is an equivalent 'technique' unsettling the taken-for-granted meaning and assumptions of a text by using the text against itself, often exposing its logocentrism. One deconstructive technique involves erasing one word/concept and substituting its 'opposite'. The estrangement from the text invites new associations and exposes the original text to an interrogation as to the manner in which that text made representations and truth claims. An early illustrative and important contribution of this kind was that by Linstead (1993) who made a plea for what he called "deconstructive ethnography". Organizations, he argued, could be conceived as being multi-authored texts. For Linstead, deconstruction was as a means through which one could understand the conditions in organizations under which things were taken to be true (truth-effects) rather than necessarily having

to make some external judgement as to whether they were true. In pursuing such an approach, Linstead suggested it would be possible to detect how these multi-authored texts partially inscribe an identity upon members of an organization. There have been a number of other appeals in the field of organization and management studies to engage in deconstruction (see, for other early examples, Arrington & Francis, 1989; Copper, 1989; Hassard, 1994).

While calls to employ deconstruction in organization analysis is not something that is particularly new, it is however only in recent times that an advocacy for, and a development of, a larger 'portfolio' of postmodernist techniques has occurred. An increasing level of criticism of the state of the field has witnessed a 'louder' voice for postmodernist forms of analysis. The Appendix to this paper provides the larger case for the one-to-one correspondence between the surrealist orientation and techniques to those of postmodernists that I have argued for previously. It is in the recognition that postmodernism could be regarded as a contemporary evocation of surrealism in organization and management studies, that the observations of Frankfurt School scholars afford us an opportunity to reflect upon the fate of the surrealists and their work. These Frankfurt School scholars also, as noted earlier in this paper, warn that the estrangement-effect can be all too quickly neutralised through assimilating mechanisms of the prevailing order. 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

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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 protect this vital space and 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)

Organization and management studies: Applying other surrealist techniques?

The manner in which surrealist 'techniques' had their parallels in the emergent postmodernist theory has been noted. Further, surrealism, in its contemporary evocation called postmodernism, can be noted to have permeated the discourse of organization and management studies. These parallels are summarized in the Appendix, but one can note in this Appendix that certain surrealist 'techniques' have not seen a parallel presence in the discourse of organization and management studies. One might reflectively consider what the discourse might look like if we literally adopted a surrealist orientation and specifically seek to apply some of the techniques in an overt

manner. Equally, it might be instructive to consider the examples of 'surrealist movements' that have arisen in other fields. At this juncture, it might be useful to give a brief example of each of these possible avenues for enhancing Cooper and Burrell's aforementioned plea for a "fresh vision".

Earlier it was argued that surrealist techniques transcend not only linear thinking but also the control and presence of the author. Metaphors can be cited in this context, however, these metaphors might be employed in both a similar and a different manner than they have in the past. Metaphors were viewed by the surrealists as inspiring new and free associations -- as in the Freudian sense of "free association", or, more correctly translated as "sudden idea" from the German word *Einfall*, (see Rycroft, 1995, p. 59).

To employ metaphor in a way that is less familiar to the organization studies discourse but more in keeping with surrealist intention of the "sudden idea" or "free association", one might, for example, ask members of an organization to think of a metaphor to describe their organization. The metaphor might then be passed to someone else in the organization to explain and develop a story that seems to fit (no name is to be given to indicate who provided the original metaphor). The author of the original idea no longer has the 'text' in their control, but associations and a 'story' are developed that join the organization and the metaphor in a space and time. The metaphor and the story can then be 'examined' and discussed without the authors being known, or acknowledged. As these are 'turned over' they may reveal assumptions and ideas that have not previously been made 'public' or even thought of by those in the organization. This is a form of automatic writing, or exquisite corpse -- taking the 'texts', i.e. the metaphor and the story, away from the original authors and getting others to make of this 'creation' what they will.

In relation to considering of 'surrealist movements' that have arisen in other fields, in

the field of literature, magic realism might be a productive example. 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 García 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. The magic realist, postmodernist and

surrealist all liberate the "marvellous" through what the Frankfurt School detected as that vital quality of a 'medium' to carry similarity and difference at the same time. Magic realism may provide an optic for further understanding the manner in which truth gets constructed. By making the truth-effect in the construction more problematic, we may reveal more of the hidden text. In making this point what immediately comes to mind is the use of story telling in organization and management discourse. *If* the 'stories' that we seek to bring to the foreground in our organization analysis were considered in the genre of magic realism, as a mix of reality and fantasy, what might flow from this? One immediate suggestion, of this *playful* engagement, would be to treat stories as though they were *dreams*. In taking this approach, the analysis and decoding through, for example, a psychoanalytic optic would reinvigorate interrogating the symbolism and motive for the generation of the dream (story).

Organization and management studies: The nexus of epistemology and philosophy

In the course of exploring "The Great Refusal" and in particular the Frankfurt School scholars 'liberating' views about art, one cannot help but be struck by the manner in which epistemology and philosophy are highlighted as being intertwined. However self evident this may first seem, it is nonetheless the case that the Frankfurt School scholars are drawing attention to the multi-faceted and, at times, the somewhat overlooked character of this nexus. For example, one issue that may escape our immediate attention is 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

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encourages, amongst other things: 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 that was at the heart of the concern for refusal.

The work of the Frankfurt scholars, in their critical examination of art, 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? The work of Burrell and other championing a postmodernist discourse 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.

Perhaps the major 'sub-text' in the examination of "The Great Refusal" is that we might do well to give greater priority to examining the philosophy behind the generation of our knowledge and 'truth'. Interestingly in similar vein, a recently translated fragment of a work written by Walter Benjamin 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.

To follow the words of Benjamin would suggest a discourse, in organization and management studies, of a different character than, with few exceptions, we have seen thus far. If the injection of postmodernist approaches into organization and management studies represents a contemporary evocation of surrealism, could one endogenous response be to reconsider the nexus of epistemology and philosophy?

Notes

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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

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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)

4. 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.

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Appendix A: Similarity of surrealism and postmodernism

SURREALISM

POSTMODERNISM(/POSTSTRUCTURALISM)
Management/Org Studies discourse

<u>GENERAL ORIENTATION</u>	
<p>To transcend rationality, linear thinking and the control and presence of the “author”. 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” (Waldberg, 1965/1997, p. 13). Some surrealists such as Desmond Morris (1987) did not believe their work was part of revealing some form of essentialism of being, but simply it was “visual play”.</p>	<p>Central and recurrent themes of postmodernism are that “<i>its all in the text</i>” and the importance of <i>the death-of-the-subject</i>. Postmodernists embrace the early poststructuralist view that 'truth' is merely a construction of language. 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.</p>
<u>'TECHNIQUES'</u> (Not a strict correspondence but overlapping affinity)	
<p>Exquisite Corpse - a stringing together of arbitrary chosen phrases by different poets unaware of what preceded or followed.</p>	<p>Intertwining of form and content - formatting 'text' in a way which tries to escape linearity and conventional logic e.g. in Burrell's (1997) book “Pandemonium” page numbering is 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” (p. 2). Free association is encouraged by this technique.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Playfulness and the play of irony - engaging questions such as - “what if it wasn't like this but the opposite?”. It is through the <i>clash-of-opposites</i> that we may transcend the logic and rationality of the day. In the example of Burrell's medieval tale of Pandemonium, a historical setting full of despair, images of death and decay is designed to shock our sensibilities.</p> <p>Clash-of-opposites - overturning an implied hierarchy and 'reading' of a text by disturbing the conventional associations - see deconstruction and playfulness.</p>

<p>'Dreams' or inducing a dream-like state to give the unconscious unimpeded passage.</p>	
<p>Metaphoricality - 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 <i>metaphorical activity</i>” (Breton, 1948/1965, p. 95).</p>	<p>Metaphoricality - the use of metaphors not just to capture a general idea but to be used as a tool to help us see that which is hidden or obscured from our everyday vision and consciousness.</p>
<p>(The Visual arts) Questioned the familiar identity of objects by faithfully reproducing them on canvas or in spaces but placing them in unfamiliar settings and using such unfamiliar associations to produce a kind of poetic strangeness. The shock of juxtaposing objects in unfamiliar association elicited unforeseen affinities between objects and, perhaps, unexpected emotion and sensations in the observer. A similar philosophy was applied in the technique of Collage - reassemble objects on a canvas without concern for how they might be arranged and juxtaposed.</p>	<p>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 <i>erasing</i> 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.</p>
<p>Other techniques which are variations of those listed above: Automatic drawing and painting, Decalcomania and Frottage.</p>	

Source: (Adapted from: Carr, 1999, p. 339; Carr, 2003, pp. 31-32)

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