Towards a Complex Third-Way Irony

A Critical Review of the Contribution of Organisational Studies to an Understanding of Irony as a Strategy for Living in Modern Organisations

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

from

Macquarie University

by

Richard Claydon

B.A. Hons (Fine Art and Visual Studies), M.A. (Cross Cultural Communication and International Management)

Macquarie Graduate School of Management

2013

For Lily

Table of Contents

Abstract

As Linda Hutcheon observes, irony always has an "edge", a wry smile, smirk or sneer that suggests ridicule or foolishness. Yet this edge is but an edge, a cutting blade at the tip of a rich array of insights and prejudices that inform and afflict the term irony. Any commentary on irony is inevitably infused with the contradictions and ambiguities that these insights and prejudices contain. As perhaps might be expected, academic treatments of irony have tended to package these elements into manageable, but one-dimensional, polarities, alternating between the tone and perspective of *ironic cynicism*, which celebrates or condemns irony as a form of disengagement and distancing, an escape attempt from commitment in a disappointing world, and a *romance of irony*, in which irony is naïvely celebrated as a self-critical and reflectively engaged intellectual and moral stance. This is not the case with this work.

What is being presented is a *"third way irony"*. Third way irony does not simply occupy the space between enthusiastic zeal and detached cynicism, but recognises and accepts the core tensions of an ironic stance or sensibility, a stance that is both utopian and dystopian in character, comic and tragic, with the potential for one who takes irony seriously to relapse into either unreflective self-assured arrogance or an absolute infinite negativity.

The thesis also introduces and supports a *"complex view" of irony*, treating irony as a multi-faceted and multi-levelled outlook (perspective), rhetoric (performance) or character (personality). In each case, no simple contrast is assumed between "surface" and "deep" meanings (e.g. "what is intended" and "what is achieved", "what is said" and "what is meant", or "who one appears to be" and "who one is") but a more subtle, nuanced, multiple and contradictory perspective, performance or personality.

It is further argued that a comprehensive exploration of this *complex third-way irony* requires an understanding, familiarity and central focus on irony as a

strategy for living, as the temper or stance of the "ironist". The thesis argues, and seeks to illustrate, that organisational studies often neglects this dimension in favour of a focus on irony as a perspective or performance, or a one-dimensional, narrow and restricted view of the "ironist". In order to build on organisational studies of irony, and move beyond such restrictions or neglect, the thesis takes the form of a series of theoretical interventions in the style commonly adopted by advocates of irony. These different interventions do, however, cluster around a central theme, which is that while organisational theorists have contributed towards an understanding of irony as a perspective, performance or personality, it is necessary and desirable to extend their work in two ways: firstly by introducing broader and deeper analyses of irony from writers on irony from outside organisational studies; and secondly by extending the discussion and understanding of irony as a strategy for living, and the manner in which this requires an integration of discussions of irony as a perspective or performance with considerations of the ironist as a character or temper.

Given the complex, shifting and controversial nature of irony, the aim of the thesis is not to close off discussion by providing "the" model of irony but, rather, to be more open ended, encouraging discussion and debate, revealing how leading exponents of irony in organisational studies have addressed the topic, and develop suggestions on how their understanding might be extended or elaborated using the literature on irony from outside organisational studies. In these interventions, key organisational studies scholars considered include Gareth Morgan and Cliff Oswick in discussions of metaphor and the ironic perspective, and Gideon Kunda, Graham Sewell and Peter Fleming in discussions of the ironist

Thesis Certification

I, Richard Claydon, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Graduate School of Management, Macquarie University, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted to any other academic institution for qualifications.

Richard Claydon

December 2013

List of Tables and Illustrations

Publications and Papers

Richard Badham, Richard Claydon and Simon Down (2012) "The Ambivalence Paradox in Culture Change", <u>The Routledge Companion to Organizational Change. Eds </u>Boje, David M., Burnes, Bernard and Hassard, John. New York, Routledge

Richard Badham and Richard Claydon (2012) "The Dance of identification: ambivalence, irony and the organisational self", <u>Problems and Perspectives in Management</u> **2012** (4)

Richard Claydon (2011) "The Modern Socrates: Jon Stewart as an Exemplar of Coping Strategies in Ambivalent Organisations", presented at APROS 2011, Auckland

Richard Claydon (2009) "The Ironic Leader: Walking the Tightrope between Aspiration and Achievement in Late-Modern Organizations", presented at APROS 2009, Monterrey

Richard Badham and Richard Claydon (2007) "The Irony of Power and the Power of Irony", presented at APROS 2007, Delhi[1]

---

[1] The first three papers are included as appendices to the thesis.

Acknowledgement

When I embarked upon my doctoral thesis, I did not expect it to be simultaneously so pleasing and infuriating, exhilarating and discouraging, cathartic and polluting, liberating and binding, energizing and exhausting. At times I have needed my hand held, mind prodded, backside kicked, emotions relaxed, stress reduced, and irritation soothed. I believe that only those who have experienced a PhD journey can truly appreciate the above.

For coping with my ups and downs, highs and lows, and ins and outs of this journey, I wish to thank my supervisor, Professor Richard Badham. Not only has he accompanied me on the trials, tribulations and occasional successes of my intellectual development, but also he has become that rare thing in life, a good friend. He has always been available to buy me yet another welcome cup of coffee during our long conversations about my research. Furthermore, whenever I have felt that I would never be capable of completing my PhD or getting close to his intellectual level, he has been happy to boost my self-esteem by losing to me at tennis. For all the above, I will always be truly grateful.

There are many others in my life that I need to thank. At one time or another, whether they realised it or not, they have provided the support I needed to produce a doctoral thesis. Among these are: Alex Alexander, Jules Ambrose, Hooman Attar, Justin Bates, Francis Buttle, Richard Cardew, Richard Carter, Simon and Barbara Channon, Cara Chen, David and Barbara Colvin, Paul Couchman, Owen Coughlan, Sam Cruickshank, Temi Darief, Alex de Lira, Simon Down, Lauren Dmytrenko, Courtenay Farquharson, Mike Frizell, Lara Garcia, Andrew Gordon, Daniel and Lucia Haigh, Gail Hallinan, Peter and Sue Harding, Race Hartweg, Geoff Haynes, Kate Hughes, Emma Jeanes, Mark Johnson, Robin Kramar, Ian and Jasmine Lister, Jing Lui, Elaine Martin, Jennifer Martin, Linda Matula, Mick McGee, Amanda Mead, Susan Officer, Stephen Ratcliffe, Emma Ritchie, Brenda Santiago, Greg Scott, Andrew Swaffer, Mark Taylor, Elizabeth Thomas, Ekaterina Todarello, Megan Williamson, Ross Williamson, Pernille Wiberg, Iris Xie, Simone Yee, Sara Zaeemdaar and Michael Zanko. I would especially like to thank Tamsin Baker for getting me through my lowest moment and helping me regain my feet when continuation with the thesis seemed an impossible task. For all these wonderful people, many of whom I have not been able to spend the amount of time with I would wish during my doctoral journey, my deepest gratitude.

My parents, Michael and Sheila, my sister and brother-in-law, Lesley and James Fleming, my nieces, Darcey and Imogen, and particularly my best friend and wife, Lily, have endured my preoccupation with my research for far, far longer than I intended. For their ongoing love and continuing support go my eternal thanks.

Richard Claydon
Macquarie Graduate School of Management (MGSM)
Sydney, Australia

1 Introduction: Complex Irony as a Strategy for Living

Writing a thesis on irony is a tough task to undertake. Etymologically, the concept of irony has existed for two and a half thousand years. For the last two thousand four hundred of them, its meaning has been contested. Had I known that when I started, perhaps you would not be reading this now! Consequently, I have decided to introduce this thesis by explaining its developmental path rather than looking to overview my complete argument. As will become clear, decision is perhaps the wrong word. Perhaps "enforced choice" is a better description.

Initially, the thesis was to be arranged around an examination of ironic attitudes in an Australian steelworks, as presented in the paper on the Ambivalence Paradox in the appendices. The reason was that the most interesting people interviewed during a six-and-a-half-year research project at these steelworks were those that played around with and poked fun at organisational practices and expectations, not resisting but not quite conforming either. The term that seemed most appropriate to their stance was "ironic". Although the opening "literature review" stage of the research was illuminating, this reason never felt strong enough. There were always some nagging questions loitering at the back of my mind; "why irony", "what's the justification", "what contribution does this make to Organisational Studies", and "is finding these people interesting enough in itself'?"

Unfortunately, the literature on irony failed to help me determine any satisfactory answers. Indeed, it actually confused things to the point of eternal frustration, not just for myself, but my supervisor, other members of my research group, and the university, which became somewhat forceful in pushing for a submission date. That everybody who writes on irony is seemingly talking about a different concept did nothing to help this confusion or relieve the pressure. If I read that irony is a literary performance, which can be stable (good) and unstable (bad), the next author was sure to tell me it is a philosophical perspective that is inherently unstable and that anybody trying to stabilize and control irony has fundamentally failed to understand it. The same author would

then praise Kierkegaard for his genius, seemingly relating it to the taming and mastering of irony, thereby contradicting his original argument about unstable irony. If that were not bad enough, I would then read a plethora of authors telling me that this definitional contradiction is inherent to irony and any attempt to overcome or define it is betraying the very spirit of irony itself.

After the literature review, my research question matured into "why are people who employ a highly contested, possible inherently indefinable stance that is sort of a philosophy and sort of a performance, interesting to organisational research?" Not a good position to be in at a reasonably late point in my research. Then came an epiphany of sorts. Many Organisational Studies scholars have written about irony, all pretty much highlighting different dimensions of the concept. For example, Sewell (1995) and Tretheway (1999) examine how irony can be employed as an academic lens that reveals organisational contradictions and ambiguities. Morgan (1983), Oswick and colleagues (Oswick, Keenoy et al. 2002; Oswick, Putnam et al. 2004) and Sewell (2006a) examine how irony emerges out of, reflects on, or is the binary opposite of metaphor. Kondo (1990), Hochschild (2003) and Hatch (1997) examine how irony and humour are reflective coping mechanisms in organisational environments. Collinson (1992) and Fleming (2003) examine how irony is a tool of resistance or cynicism. Kunda (2006), Wallace and Hoyle (2007) and Badham and McLoughlin (2005) examine the notion of an ironic organisational self. Given the wide-ranging but somewhat under-theorized interest in irony in Organisational Studies, I decided that, rather than devote my thesis to examining the ironic stance of Australian steelworkers, I would attempt to synthesize the current contributions on irony to Organisational Studies, and, in doing so, move forward Organisational Studies' general comprehension of irony and its various contestations by treating irony as a strategy for living replete with a multiplicity of performative tactics.

This synthetic approach also betrays the spirit of irony somewhat, undermining one of my central points, that an incontestable and all-encompassing analysis of irony is an impossibility. To remain true to this spirit, I determined that each chapter of the thesis would be an intervention in its own right, and that the

synthesis, successful or not, would be shaped by how the reader interpreted the chapters' relationships to each other and to the overall thesis. Each intervention partially illuminates what has become my actual research question, "what does it mean to employ irony as a strategy for living in or around modern organisations?" Such a broad question perhaps challenges the standards of how a thesis should be written. I felt that given a choice between betraying the spirit of irony by writing a narrow thesis on one of its multitudinous definitions, or challenging thesis conventions by writing a broad-brushed and necessarily somewhat fragmented and contradictory analysis of irony, the latter was the only viable option. I do not feel a narrow approach could begin to get close to doing irony justice. It seems that it is impossible to write about irony without a little of its spirit rubbing off.

In attempting to answer the research question, I have organised the thesis around the concept of the ironic organisational character and her strategy for ironic living, who *transmits her ironic perspective via an extended ironic performance, which takes ongoing effort to maintain.* This arrangement allows me to discuss many of the dimensions and tensions of irony without having to make any definitive statements about which interpretation is more correct. It enables me to discuss irony in terms of the ironic perspective (i.e. is something ironic, 'isn't it ironic that…"), the ironic performance (i.e. saying something and meaning something else, "being ironic") and the ironic personality (i.e. a tempered response to existential and situational gaps between human aspirations and achievements). It allows me to discuss various positive and negative reactions to irony, in which the ironic personality can be interpreted as being deceitful, sarcastic, witty, smug and superior, elegant and sophisticated, clear-sighted or nihilistic. It provides an opportunity to combine a number of classical and modern interpretations of irony that praise and condemn its various tensions without having to take a stance that supports one over the other. In approaching it this way, I have tried to remain true to what is inevitably my view of "the spirit of irony" without making the thesis too esoteric.

In terms of a contribution to Organisational Studies, the thesis does the following. Firstly, it suggests that a very small pool of, generally American, writers has influenced much of the discussion on irony in Organisational Studies. Of these, the most commonly cited are the literary critic, Wayne Booth (1974), and the liberal philosopher, Richard Rorty. Booth analyses performative irony without any meaningful discussion of philosophers of irony, and Rorty explains philosophical ironism without any reference to performance (Rorty 1989). Consequently, much of Organisational Studies has become stuck in restricted categorizations of irony that fail to capture its full range, tensions and contestations. Although much of Organisational Studies suffers from a limited definition and restricted sources, other theorists of irony *have* been discussed, although rarely very deeply. For example, Kunda (2006) cites Northrop Frye's (1957) ironic mode, Morgan (1983) cites Vico, White and Burke's tropological irony, and Fleming and Sewell (2002) refer to the Socratic dialectic when discussing an ironic disposition. By treating each "external" author as having contributed to an understanding of irony in organisations in a useful but limited manner, I look to extend their insights on irony by moving outside Organisational Studies and making an in-depth analysis of these cited, but relatively under-appreciated, authors and characters.

Each chapter nods to the "spirit of irony" in two distinct ways. Firstly, in fully embracing the complexities of the multitudinous definitions of irony, each winds its way across a wide spectrum of influences. Ranging across Ancient Greek and Roman texts discussing the merits of Socratic irony, the satirical raillery of Jacobean England, a High Renaissance Neapolitan treatise on declining civilizations, Teutonic gloom and romanticism, Søren Kierkegaard's reflections on living ironically in Copenhagen society, contemporary and Victorian theories of decadence, American critiques of performative irony, European critiques of nihilistic irony, and the use of irony in US and British television shows, the thesis picks out moments in which discussions of irony deepen beyond any individual definitional claim and combine notions of perspective, performance and personality. Given the breadth and depth of these influences, there are both moments of crystal clarity and moments in which the thesis becomes complex,

obtuse and meandering. In a sense, this tension between clarity and confusion, serene reflection and foolish enthusiasm, is what defines the "spirit of irony" in the first place. To help the reader pick his way through the discussion, the following sections outline where I think I have achieved some argumentative clarity and where the reader might be frustrated by the meandering confusion of the thesis chapters.

1.1.1   Notes on the Chapters

Chapter Two, A Framework of Ironic Tensions, examines the long history around the contestations of defining irony. After offering twelve "accepted" definitions, it moves to suggest that there is a more complex and nuanced understanding of a complex third-way irony that may be termed "philosophical-emotional" irony with three dimensions: perspective, performance and personality. It structures discussion of these dimensions around Paul de Man's attack on the American critiques of irony as presented in the work of Wayne Booth and Northrop Frye, prior to arguing that understanding irony requires understanding the eiron, ironist or ironic personality. Whilst agreeing with the general thrust of de Man's argument, it illustrates that de Man's dismissal of the performative dimension of the American tradition ultimately leaves us with the unsatisfactory options of a superior American ironist or a nihilistic German ironist.

To help address this, the chapter examines the historical tensions regarding the interpretation of irony as deceit, nihilism and superiority, and places these tensions in the contemporary era through the use of Linda Hutcheon's framework of the affective "functions of irony", and suggests that irony as a strategy for living is the extended critical performance of an ironic temper, character or personality. The chapter then proceeds to employ the work of Hayden White in suggesting that there are a number of tactics of irony employed by an ironic personality as a strategy for living: making metaphorical perspectives strange, making serene and objective observations, poking fun at opponents, playing the fool, and satirically attacking or defending ideological positions. These distinctions introduce the reader to the differences between,

yet complex intertwining of, irony as perspective, performance and personality, that concerns a large part of the thesis.

In crude terms, the thesis attempts to pack thousands of years of debate into a framework of irony as a multi-dimensional concept including a perspective, performance and personality, yet one that informs an integrative view of irony as a strategy of living, the extended critical stance and performance of an ironic personality.   I am not fully convinced that my use of Hayden White's notion of ironic tactics in this chapter has acted as an insightful aid rather than causing an unnecessary and undesirable degree of confusion.   My hope is that the reader will at least lean towards the former.

Chapter Three, The Ironic Perspective in Morgan's Theory of Metaphor, uses Gareth Morgan's critical use of metaphor in OS to help illustrate and inform our discussion of the nature and value of an ironic perspective.   The chapter suggests that Morgan's mission was to radicalize organisational research by drawing attention to the weaknesses of established models and the strengths of alternative models of organisation.   The argument is made that Morgan employs three tactics in pursuing the mission: the tactic of fallibility, the tactic of meta-fallibility or existential folly, and the tactic of elaboration. The chapter suggests that the increasing turn within OS to the tactic of elaboration has had a conservative effect on metaphor research. Drawing on, yet seeking to go beyond, the work of Cliff Oswick, the chapter argues that irony is a tactic that potentially combats this increasing conservatism. While Oswick's "ironic turn" was useful in this enterprise, it is weakened, I argue, by a reliance on a discredited "comparison-cognitive" theory of metaphor, and an argument is made for an alternative "interactive-rhetorical" view of metaphor and irony   The chapter draws on Kenneth Burke's analysis of synecdoche and irony, in outlining the nature and desirability of an ironic perspective informed by a "strong defense" of rhetoric.

Ultimately, the final contribution of this chapter stands and falls on Kenneth Burke's interpretation of synecdoche and irony.   Unfortunately, Burke is a

complex, difficult, unsystematic writer. As Fish writes, "the greatest difficulty that confronts the reader of Burke, is to find out what he means" (quoted in Herrick 2005: 225). One reason that Burke is so complex and difficult to understand is that his vast range of conceptual terms (e.g. representative anecdotes, logology) and methodological tools (e.g. The Pentad) are rarely referenced outside Burke-orientated literature. I have attempted, as far as possible, to circumnavigate these concepts, as they have the tendency to obscure rather than clarify. The analysis does, however, elaborate and continue to rely on an understanding and acceptance of Burke's views on the contrast between "tragic" and "comic" perspectives or attitudes to history. Although I think this chapter illustrates why Burke's perspective is required to address the inadequate definition of irony in Oswick's comparison view, this argument is weakened by the complexity, and sometime obscurity, of delving into Burke's corpus. My intention, and hope, is that the benefits outweigh the costs!

Chapter Four, Characters of the Ironic Mode in Kunda's Engineering Culture, examines the introduction of the ironic personality, character or self into OS in the work of the Israeli ethnographic sociologist, Gideon Kunda. It outlines the ways in which Kunda's view of the "ironic self" is restricted by Kunda's adoption a (Wayne) Boothian slant on irony in the exploration of Frye's "ironic mode". To help broaden and expand the view of the "ironic self", the chapter seeks to bring out the complex and nuanced character of the "ironic self" present in Kunda's empirical data, and to do so by utilising the complex, nuanced and full range of characters that exist within Frye's "ironic mode", (utopian v dystopian, comic v tragic, inferior heroes, colourful supporting characters in alazons and eirons etc.). In conclusion, the chapter argues that Kunda's restricted Boothian interpretation of his data results in a dual view of eirons (good at the level of the academic commentator/narrator, bad at the level of the organisational actor) that ultimately hinders a full discussion of irony as a strategy for living that is contained within the richness of his data.

Ultimately, however, this chapter rests on a relatively short section in Frye's work in which he delineates between the various types of characters in the ironic

mode. In exploring the characters in Kunda's Engineering Culture in these terms – as eirons, authors, sarcastic commentators, tricksters and wise ironic ironists - I have arguably gone beyond the brief personifications provided by Frye. Moreover, there remains some ambiguity and overlap in the character types, for example between what I term "trickster-eirons" and "sarcastic-eirons". Hopefully the reader will forgive the unauthorized extension of Frye's work, and the blurring of character types, in support of the intention of the chapter: to use Frye's framework to help show that there is a richness and complexity to the ironic personality type that is not captured within Organisation Studies by the use of restricted views of *the* 'ironic self'.

Chapter Five, The Temper of the Times: Irony and Decadence in the work of Peter Fleming, addresses the issue of the ironic personality as a "temper", but in this chapter as a character that emerges in a cyclical historical process of cultural transformation.   As was the case in *Chapter 4*, this general theme in representations of the ironic personality is addressed through a critical examination of a particular OS writer on irony, and the ways in which they are limited by and yet in some ways transcend traditional restricted views of irony. In this chapter the particular focus is on the influence of a "discourse of decadence", and the work of Peter Fleming as a representation of yet partial extension beyond such a discourse.

The chapter explores the discourse of decadence through two dimensions or views of its character – as "incivil" and "restless" – whereby the rise of an ironic character is interpreted as a proponent of deceit or nihilism (incivil) or energetically engaged with the challenges of a culture in decline (restless). In so doing the chapter explores contemporary and historical views of an "incivil" irony perceived as destructive, undermining culture and returning to primitivism, and a more complex, "restless" irony that emerges to counter the decadent impulse and renew the culture. The chapter introduces this discussion by illustrating its pervasiveness in a "good versus bad irony" debate in contemporary culture – particularly in the United States. It continues by drawing attention to the re-emergence of a "restless" interpretation via a very

recent debate on irony and sincerity in academic literature and popular culture. The chapter then examines the work of Peter Fleming through this perspective of a writer working within and on a decadence discourse, situating his discussion of the ironic personality in the context of an analysis of the rise of artificiality, curiosity, egoism, and perversion in contemporary organisations. To situate, and critically assess, Fleming's interpretation of the ironic personality through this lens, the chapter turns to the work of Giambattista Vico, Frederick Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard to illustrate the nature and challenges of viewing irony as a "temper of the times". In doing so, the chapter argues for an examination of contemporary ironists as combining informed authentic restlessness as well as nihilistic withdrawal, sarcastic mockery and deceitful dissembling.

One of the limitations of the chapter is that, while at times Fleming is explicit about irony, ironic performances and stances, at other times his analysis of decadence in contemporary organisations makes little reference to irony or ironic characters. When Fleming discusses corporate corruption, for example, he does not directly reference irony as being an informing characteristic. At the same time, however, Fleming's OS analysis of decadence in contemporary organisations is an excellent late modern, or even post-modern, version of the long established tradition of thought on irony and decadence. By locating his work within the dimensions and dilemmas of this discourse, the chapter hopefully deepens the discussion of the themes and issues that Fleming raises, and even helps to offer a way out of what some have seen as Fleming's increasingly bleak picture of organisational life.

Chapter Six, Beyond Svejkism: Socratic Irony as a Strategy for Living, further explores the ambiguities, tensions and dilemmas in portrayals of ironic personalities and characters through an examination of the "Socrates debate". Fleming and Sewell provide one of the most sophisticated investigations of such issues in their portrayal and analysis of the fictional character "Švejk". This chapter argues, however, that the detail and depth of discussions of Socrates and his life makes Socrates a far better exemplar for the exploration of the ironic character. Drawing on three interpretations of Socratic irony (as 'eristic',

'maieutic' and 'elenctic'), the chapter attempts to paint a picture of a more tempered and complex "third-way Socrates" as an exemplary composite figure combining all three viewpoints.

Having illustrated how a complex "third-way" Socrates emerges from a combination of these interpretations, the chapter continues to examine how the Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, merges perspective, performance and personality in his treatment of Socrates as a basis for his own personal strategy for living - as a combination of ironic agility, the mission to know oneself, and the determination to live an examined life. The chapter concludes by arguing for the superiority of using Kierkegaard's Socrates rather than Fleming and Sewell's Švejk as an exemplar of the fluidity, tensions and dilemmas facing the contemporary "ironist".

This chapter covers a considerable body of scholarship on both Socrates and Kierkegaard. It is debatable whether, in such a short space, it is possible to adequately capture and do justice to this body of work. I hope, however, that there is sufficient content to warrant a return of Organisation Studies scholars to Socratic debates in order to help inform the analysis and evaluation of irony in late modern organisations.

1.1.2 Notes on the Appendices

The appendices comprise three attempts to make ironic interventions into organisational research that have been published or presented during the life of this thesis. They have been extracted from the main body of the thesis, as it is already quite lengthy, and they constitute more a set of interventions in Organisational Studies discussion and debate than a direct contribution to the main purpose of the thesis – to overview the nature and role of irony and its relevance for Organisational Studies. They play a role, however, in illustrating some ways in which the argument for a "complex third way irony" that integrates ironic perspective, performance and personality can be expressed in Organisational Studies. One purpose of the interventions was to make a serious

attempt towards persuading organisational researchers to take irony seriously and to perceive it as more than a smirk or a sneer. A second purpose was to provide some empirical support for the perspective, performance and personality dimensions of irony. Although each chapter sits within the thesis' main focus of discussing what an ironic organisational man, or organisational eiron, might look like, each slants towards different elements of the framework of irony, respectively perspective, performance and personality. As these interventions make clear, it is impossible to completely separate these elements and they always intertwine.

Appendix One, The Dance of Identification: A Serious Play in One Act examines how one might make an ironic perspective on the dominant figurative language of organisations more mainstream. Arranged around the work of a potential "ironic hero", the leading sociological thinker, Zygmunt Bauman, whose work, according to Stewart Clegg, has been almost criminally ignored by Organisational Studies, it is a Socratic dialogue, in which the Socratic-Bauman challenges a number of Organisational Studies conventions through debates with other marginal but somewhat respected figures, such as Erving Goffman, Robert Merton and Richard Rorty. As the play progresses, we hope the reader or listener will become increasingly convinced that the world of liquidity, fluidity, ambivalence, and contradiction that Bauman reveals is an equally viable perspective on organisational life than the controlled, manageable, rational and disciplined image more commonly described by Organisation Studies research.

At one level, the play illustrates Bauman's perspective on the ambivalent panic that afflicts people when confronted by the flux and instability of liquid modern conditions under expectations and promises of stability and permanence, and its relevance to contemporary organisational research. At another level, it regards Bauman as an ironist standing against the world without offering a route into a new actuality. Despite his seemingly destructive or pessimistic stance, Bauman's work is imbued with hope and full of humour and transmitted with the elegance and style of a practiced ironist. Even more pertinently, Bauman's suggested method of coping by becoming a poised and elegant stranger who walks a

tightrope over an abyss of despair, persevering in the journey of knowledge even when aware there is no final horizon, bears strong parallels to the Socratic eiron.

Appendix Two, Jon Stewart: The Modern Socrates, is an attempt to illustrate and explore the positive role of the eiron as biting satirist and worldly fool – exploring and positioning the comedian, Jon Stewart, as the modern-day Socrates of the public sphere. It illustrates how an ironic sensibility presented with sophisticated and elegant humour can be just as, if not more, influential, than the proclamations of more established power elites. His ironic interventions in American politics and media appear to have had some transformative effect. Evidence suggests he is perceived as being more trustworthy than other newscasters, and that his insights directly influence the voting habits of many young Americans. His media critiques have also directly or indirectly resulted in the cancelling of politically influential TV shows. Serious political commentators often appear to engage with him to be taken seriously by certain, possibly key swing, sections of the voting public. By employing Stewart as an empirical example of a successful eiron in the public sphere, the thesis moves away from the literary eirons presented in earlier chapters, such as Socrates and Švejk, and places Stewart in the contemporary Kiergaardian position, as somebody strategically living through an extended public ironic performance.[1]

Appendix Three, the Ambivalence Paradox in Culture Change, is an attempt to explore the complexities of the character positions identified by Organisation Studies writers as typical responses to normative cultural change programs. While aiming to capture the ambiguity, uncertainty and fluidity of identities and identity-work, it is also concerned to illustrate the fact that "ironic" characters cannot, and should not, be reduced to nihilistic game-players or self-interested deceivers poking fun at the expectations of management and organisational culture. In contrast, in all their complexity, they take the form of multi-faceted characters poking fun and mocking not only organisational expectations but also themselves, whether or not they are supporting, resisting or ambivalent towards the rhetorics of the organisational change programs.

2 A Framework of Ironic Tensions

2.1 Introduction: Defining Irony

As noted in the introduction, irony is and has long been a highly contested concept. Given that any attempt to produce a singular definition of irony merely adds to these contestations, this chapter aims at synthesizing at least some of the most common definitions, in which irony is deceitful dissembling, sophisticated speech, a philosophical tool, a nihilistic philosophy, an ethical perspective, a presumption of superiority and a critical challenge, into some kind of meaningful, if complex, whole. To achieve this, I arrange the current academic and lay conceptualisation of irony around a framework in which irony informs a perspective on language and situations, a performance to knowing and unknowing audiences and some form of critical and witty personality. In doing so, I take a philosophical-emotional approach which examines how irony at a philosophical level is concerned with negation of imprecise language through reflective clarity via elegant performance, while at the emotional level it is interpreted as playful mockery, elegant wordplay, self-protective detachment, deceit, nihilism or arrogance. In pointing to these dimensions, I hope to illustrate why those considered great ironists (e.g. Socrates, Cicero, Jonathan Swift, Søren Kierkegaard and Oscar Wilde) either fell into disfavour or met with sticky ends. By employing a multi-dimensional concept of figurative irony, I examine how these philosophical and emotional dimensions inform the complex irony of what I term the extended performance of an ironic personality. Although the thesis points to how this complex irony informs a strategy for living throughout, I am not making a claim that I have discovered a superior and 'authentic' ironic strategy from which I am now able to empirically investigate and normatively judge organisations and organisational theorists, merely that discussions on irony in Organisational Studies tend to progress from one of many definitions discussed in this chapter without seriously considering how they might intermingle and entwine.

2.1.1   Lay Definitions of Irony

To explain the dimensions of ironic man, character or personality, I need first to come up with a definition of irony on which to ground my research. This is no easy task. Irony is one of the most frequently misunderstood or ill-defined concepts in the English language, often confused with sarcasm, coincidence, or misfortune. Scenes in the film *Reality Bites* play on this confusion, when the lead character, the valedictorian of her university, is asked to define irony but cannot, stating she "knows it when she sees it". Her ignorance is juxtaposed against the knowing worldliness of her flat mate and potential lover, played by Ethan Hawke, who states, "It's when the actual meaning is the complete opposite from the literal meaning." Although this is accepted in the film as correct, a closer inspection reveals that the cool boyfriend has also failed to define irony. As the *Wolfsgard* blog argues

> Irony has no negative or positive values, and while an ironic relationship can be caused through polar opposition, it is not necessarily the only cause. Hawke ultimately feeds into the *this thing sucks/I don't suck* philosophy. This isn't irony, but grade school opposite day.[2]

So, not only does the clever girl fail to define irony, but the clever boy does too. But don't feel bad, Ethan. The Canadian singer Alanis Morisette wrote a whole song about irony in which many would see her as not citing an example of "real" irony. In one verse she defines irony as being "like rain on your wedding day". As the Irish comedian Ed Byrne points out, "only if you are getting married to a weatherman and he set the date."[3]

The above cultural examples require a pause for thought. They seem to be about completely different things. One seems to be an ironic speech act and the other about an ironic situation. So, what are we really talking about? Is irony a speech act, situational, neither, or both? If this is how irony is defined, then why am I talking about an ironic personality? These are all interesting and pertinent questions.

2.1.2 Academic Definitions of Irony

My first attempt to unravel this complexity was to examine whether any academic disciplines help in determining a definition. The answer was "not really". They tell us that irony seems almost impossible to define and that there is little agreement as to what it actually is. For example, Kreuz and Roberts (1993) refer to irony as a "poorly understood and frequently misinterpreted concept," Littman and Mey (1989) suggest the common attitude of researchers is to give up on the quest to understand irony, and Kaufer's (1977; 1981; 1983) three histories of irony all openly question the possibility of there being a singular definition. Abrams (2005) provides nine categories and subcategories of irony: verbal, structural, stable and unstable, Socratic, dramatic, tragic, cosmic, and Romantic. He furthers this with some related terms, such as sarcasm and invective. Although Lanham (1991) distinguishes between "trope" and "scheme" irony with relative clarity ("trope" irony is when the meaning is hidden except to the sophisticated; "scheme" irony is when the disguise is obvious rather than confessed), he obscures this distinction through the concept of extended irony, which includes and absorbs complex tropes like allegory, metonymy, and pun. The *New Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Preminger and Brogan 1993) offers hope in its mere six categories of irony, before dashing it with ten subcategories, such as meiosis, litotes and others more obscure still.

This mixture of confusion and complexity occurs in extended examinations of irony. In his seminal analysis of rhetorical irony, Wayne Booth (1974: ix) states irony is "the mother of confusions. There is no agreement about what irony is, and many would hold to the romantic claim [...] that its very spirit and value are violated by the effort to be clear about it." In his examination of the critical history of irony, Joseph Dane states "there is no correct understanding of the word irony, no historically valid reading of irony" (Dane 1991: 191). In his forensic investigation of the idiom of irony, Muecke agrees, claiming "the word 'irony' does not now mean only what it meant in earlier centuries, it does not mean in one country all it may mean in another, nor in the street what it may mean in the study, nor to one scholar what it may mean to another" (Muecke

1982: 7). The water is further muddied in De Man's influential essay, *The Concept of Irony* (1996), when he opens with a strong argument that there is no such thing as a concept of irony, suggesting nearly all discussions on irony take contention with previously proffered definitions. The American philosopher Richard Rorty just ignores the issue, saying the "last thing the ironist theorist wants or needs is a theory of ironism" (Rorty 1989: 97). This complex confusion can perhaps best be summed up by claims that irony is or can do any and all of the following:

1. Sham humility, artful trickery and a technique of those (eristic) prone to discussion and debate (pre-Socratic roots, some interpretations of Socrates (e.g. Guthrie 1958))

2. A sophisticated form of speech and thought employed by educated urbanes (influenced by Aristotle and the Roman and Romantic interpretation of Socrates, best evidenced in British literature in the 16th to 20th Century (e.g. Cicero and King 1927; Cicero, Rackham et al. 1942; Quintilian and Loretto 1974; Shaftesbury 1999; Shaftesbury and Rand 1999))

3. A philosophical tool aimed at revealing false and uncovering true knowledge and a necessary technique of an epistemological philosopher (Platonic and Hegelian interpretations of Socratic irony (e.g. Plato, Bury et al. 1914; Lauer and Hegel 1983; Hegel, Haldane et al. 1995))

4. A destructive and nihilistic philosophy, being 'absolute infinite negativity' (Hegel's description drawn from the German Romantics (e.g. in Schlegel and Firchow 1971) and the interpretation favoured by Kierkegaard (1989))

5. The doorway into ethical behaviour and the necessary stance of a moral philosopher (Kierkegaard 1941; Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989; Vlastos 1991; Nehamas 1998)

6. A rhetorical form that presupposes and creates communities and victims (evidenced by Muecke (1969; 1983), Booth (1974; 2004), Knox (1972) and Hutcheon (1994))

7. A philosophical outlook that seduces the young into challenging the values of society (a claim laid against Socrates in *The Apology* and, more contemporarily, the American political satirist, Jon Stewart (Baumgartner and Morris 2006; Holt 2007))

8. A technique for revealing and expressing contradictions and ambiguities (Trethewey 1999; Sewell and Barker 2006b)

9. A poised and artful form of language and thought (Burke 1941; Vico, Bergin et al. 1948; White 1978; D'Angelo 1992)

10. The revelation of the folly of others from a superior theoretical viewpoint (Brown's sociological irony (1977) as evidenced in Kunda (1992: 2006) and critiqued by Woolgar (1983) and Latour (1983))

11. A means of speaking the truth to power (Socrates' interrogation of the powerful (Popper 1966))

12. Saying one thing but meaning another (Quintilian's tropological definition (Quintilian and Loretto 1974))

As the above illustrates, there is a great deal of rich complexity involved in theorizing irony and the ironist. If I cannot untangle it, then it will be an impossible task to comprehend ironic organisational man. However, given the complexity and disagreement about irony, it seems foolish to attempt a single definition, as it will immediately be challenged by a competing and contrasting definition. So, how to proceed?

2.1.3   The Philosophical and Emotional Dimensions of Irony

One of the most worthwhile attempts to address these complexities is provided in Norman Knox's (1972) critique of Muecke (1969), in which he shows exasperation at Muecke abandoning his definition of irony just as he was moving into unusual and interesting territory. Initially, Muecke runs through what might be seen as unexceptional treatments of irony, in which he analyses the field of observation in which irony is employed, with irony noting a degree of conflict between appearance and reality, and deploying a dramatic structure of victim, audience and author. Knox is interested in Muecke's attempt to move beyond

such standards into the realm of "philosophical-emotional" irony. Discussing the philosophical-emotional dimensions of irony, Muecke delineates between "corrective irony", in which "one term of the ironic duality is seen ... as effectively contradicting, invalidating, exposing, or ... modifying the other" (Muecke 1969: 23) thereby generating and rapidly releasing psychic tension, and a type of irony (in Knox's terms "paradoxical irony") in which "the psychic tension generated by the ironic contradiction is not released or not entirely released by any element of resolution" (ibid 25-26). As Knox (1972: 57) notes, however, Muecke does not extend this observation in any meaningful manner. Attempting to interpret Muecke's statement, Knox argues that irony "can be realized concretely in any of a variety of materials, all of which, however, necessarily have some philosophical-emotional colouring - tragic, comic, satiric, absurd or nihilistic, paradoxical" (Knox 1972: 57). He further argues

> irony may take on a wide range of such aspects, and attempt to discriminate among them... the decisive factors are the supposed nature of the universe, the way in which the irony is or is not resolved (that is, in triumph, in defeat, or in paradox), and the degree of sympathetic identification or satiric detachment elicited by the victim (Knox 1972: 62).

Wanting to capture these complex philosophical-emotional dimensions, but with seemingly little concrete help in academia to fall back on, I re-examined common parlance to see if it could provide a useful starting point. I turned to the three definitions of irony provided by the *Merriam Webster Online Dictionary*[4], in which irony is:

> 1: a pretence of ignorance and of willingness to learn from another assumed in order to make the other's false conceptions conspicuous by adroit questioning —called also Socratic irony

> 2: a: the use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning

b: a usually humorous or sardonic literary style or form characterized by irony

c: an ironic expression or utterance

3: a; incongruity between the actual result of a sequence of events and the normal or expected result (2): an event or result marked by such incongruity

b: incongruity between a situation developed in a drama and the accompanying words or actions that is understood by the audience but not by the characters in the play —called also *dramatic irony, tragic irony*

By taking the sub-points into account, I determined that these definitions could be grouped around the following concepts; 1) an ironic personality, 2) an ironic performance and 3) an ironic perspective.   I found that these definitions become more insightful when they are reversed, with the ironic perspective, as the recognition of existential or situational incongruities, the point of emergence; the ironic performance as a means through which such incongruities can be communicated; and an ironic personality as a character who adopts and deploys irony as her primary method of viewing and interacting with the world.   It seemed to me that Knox and Muecke's philosophical dimension of irony could be arranged around the interplay between an ironic perspective and an ironic personality, and the emotional dimension around positive and negative responses to the performative techniques of irony.   It is the overlaps and tensions within and between these notions that inform the answer to the underlying question of this thesis, "what does it mean to possess or adopt irony as a strategy for living in a contemporary organisation?"

2.2   The Philosophical Dimension: Perspective, Performance, Personality

Returning to academic debate, I discovered that the Belgian deconstructionist literary critic and theorist, Paul De Man (1996), presents a similar hierarchal

order in his analysis of American and Germanic irony, in which he argues that attempts by American theorists to define irony are restricted by their narrow perspective and their ignorance, whether deliberate or accidental, of Germanic debates on irony. I agree with de Man that the American tradition has tended to fail to capture the richness of irony by focusing on its performative dimensions. I likewise agree with his argument that comprehending the personality dimension is of paramount importance and the American tradition is lacking in its sporadic or partial reflections on it. However, in his desire to combat the shortcomings of the American tradition, I feel de Man is overly dismissive of its contributions, particularly in explaining how irony tends to work in performative practice. Although his interjection counters the limitations of the American tradition, irony cannot be properly understood without the complex intermingling and understanding of its perspectival, performative and personality dimensions. Indeed, as the following indicates, de Man's argument is quite illustrative of this point, with the American performative dimension he wishes to counter present as a dimension of irony throughout his argument.

2.2.1   The Ironic Perspective

De Man's critique begins with Northrop Frye's definition of irony in an anatomy of criticism:

> The term irony, then, indicates a technique of appearing to be less than one is, which in literature becomes most commonly a technique of saying as little and meaning as much as possible, or, in a more general way, a pattern of words that turns away from direct statement or its own obvious meaning (Frye 1957: 40).

With this statement, Frye is describing how an ironic perspective reveals that there is more going on than the overtly obvious. In literature or drama, this is transmitted to a sophisticated audience covertly, with the author assuming they can pick up on the ways in which the protagonists are tragically foolish without the author having to spell it out in detail. For Frye, irony "turns away" from one

supposedly inferior perspective towards another, supposedly more sophisticated, perspective.

De Man perceives this definition as limited and restricted, arguing, "this turning away in irony involves a little more, a more radical negation than one would have in an ordinary trope such as synecdoche or metaphor or metonymy" (de Man 1996: 165). De Man argues that all tropes (from the Greek *tropos*, to turn), by definition, turn away from each other. He states:

> Irony seems to be the trope of tropes, the one that names the term as the "turning away," but that notion is so all-encompassing that it would include all tropes (de Man 1996: 165).

For de Man, the American performative interpretation is employed not just to turn away, but also to turn towards a "better", superior and stable reading. De Man's contention is that any and all tropes can be employed to turn listeners away from the obviousness of a description by importing an alternative description that is plausible and persuasive. Although Frye's interpretation of irony makes an overt reading foolish, it does not treat the alternative definition ironically. Irony becomes a tool of the author's "superior" position. For De Man, this does not capture the functionality of irony, which, in his reading, turns away from all tropes, challenging language in its entirety. The ironic perspective reveals that any statements delivered as capturing reality are inherently fallible and that uncritically believing in any of them is folly. As de Man notes when commenting on how at-first-glance seemingly smart statements get revealed as folly in Greek or Hellenic comedy, "you must [...] keep in mind that the smart guy, who is by necessity the speaker, always turns out to be the dumb guy, and that he's always being set up by the person he thinks of as being the dumb guy" (de Man 1996: 165). Whereas at Frye's American pole, irony is merely oppositional, employed to turn away from a single definition in order to impose or introduce another, at de Man's Germanic pole, it is a perspective that rejects all language, spinning into a never-ending infinity of deconstructions.

De Man's reading of the German tradition, in which we are fated to grapple with this infinitely complex spinning of language, points towards what Colebrook (2004) and others (e.g. Knox 1961; Knox 1972; Booth 1974; Booth 1983; Hutcheon 1994) have referred to as "cosmic irony."[5]   For Colebrook, this is an "irony of existence; it is as though human life and its understanding of the world is undercut by some other meaning or design beyond our powers . . . The word irony refers to the limits of human meaning; we do not see the effects of what we do, the outcomes of our actions, or the forces that exceed our choices. Such irony is cosmic irony, or the irony of fate" (Colebrook 2004: 14). Muecke (1969: 119-158) makes a similar claim when examining the dimensions of general irony, which he perceives as a metaphysical viewpoint on the fundamental contradictions of the human condition, encompassing freedom and determinism, intention and outcome, the infinite universe and finite existence. As Cross notes, Kierkegaard's existential irony is of similar ilk, being "a particular way in engaging in public (interpersonal) activity in general" in which ironic speech or writing is only one of the many activities comprising the stance of examining what it means "to live ironically – to manifest in one's life, unqualifiedly, the attitudes and type of orientation toward the world that constitute irony" (Cross 1998: 126). For Cross, Kierkegaard's conception of existential irony informs the answer to the question of what it is to be an ironist "all the way down", which flows through his life's work from his early "awakening of subjectivity" to later reflections on self-understanding and maturation.   Similarly, in a more recent examination of irony as a possible response to a crisis of public meaning in ecological debate, Szersynski views world-relation irony "as an overall stance towards the world [...] involves the application of the term 'ironic', not to communications or to situations, but to persons and their comportment towards the world" (Szerszynski 2007: 349). This dimension of irony and the relevance to organisational research of de Man's argument that irony turns away from all tropes rather than just one description is presented more thoroughly in the next chapter on irony and metaphor in the work of Gareth Morgan.

2.2.2 The Ironic Performance

This stable meaning / unstable spiral distinction presents itself again in de Man's critique of the American tradition of thought on ironic performance. Within the North American interpretation, irony is regarded as being "good" if there is a stable alternative that the sophisticated reader or audience can confidently deconstruct. A successful ironic performance is communal and stable; a way of covertly communicating a superior perspective to sophisticated others at the expense of a naïve but over-confident audience. An ironic performance is regarded as flawed or unsuccessful if it has no stable or finite outcome. Booth (1974: xi) addresses this directly, arguing

> One hears it said these days that understanding is not really possible in any normative sense: each man constructs his own meanings, and the more variety we have the richer we are. But I never find anyone in fact tolerating all readings with equal cheer; critical practice assumes that readers sometimes go astray. There is surely, then, some validity in the notion of "going astray," and we can thus meaningfully pursue the notion of finding one's way. Some readings are better than others, and it is an impoverishment of the world to pretend otherwise.

Booth's methodological approach involves discovering better readings of texts and performance by asking the questions "is this ironic?" and "how do we know it is ironic?" Booth (1974: 5-7) argues that the quality of the irony and the better reading of the text can be discovered by addressing whether the statement, text or performance is:

> 1: *intentional*, deliberately created by one human in order for it to be heard or read and understood with precision by another
> 2: *covert*, intended to be reconstructed with a meaning other than that of the overt obvious
> 3: *stable*, in that once the deconstruction has been made it will not be undermined by further infinite deconstructions of meaning

4: *finite*, in that it is local and limited and concerned with certain specifics attributable to specific people at a particular time

For Booth (1974: 13), the outcome of good performative irony is "a more astonishing communal achievement than most accounts have recognized." To achieve this outcome, one can employ all number of performative techniques, including sarcasm, satire, parody, exaggeration, false praise, dissembling questioning, dramatic displays of fake ignorance, a pretend neutrality that, for the discerning reader, illustrates what is really wrong with the situation, and other such witty or clever tricks. Commenting upon *A Rhetoric of Irony* shortly before his death, Booth notes "Stable irony, when it works, provides (along with successful metaphor) the tightest, most rewarding of all rhetorical bondings of authors and readers" (Booth 2004: 500).

De Man's critique of ironic performance is a thorough attack on this theory, arguing that an ironic act sets an infinite chain in motion, with each new ironic step capable of dissolving the last. De Man's criticism is centred on Booth's relative ignorance of the German tradition. He bases his critique on Booth's statement about the problem of an ironic temper, which, for Booth, "can dissolve everything, in an infinite chain of solvents" (Booth 1974: 59). Whereas Booth argues that the "desire to understand irony […] brings such a chain to a stop", (Booth 1974: 59) de Man (1996: 181) argues that Booth's method is seriously challenged by the key theoretical text of Germanic irony, Schlegel's "*Uber die Unverstandlichkeit*". De Man translates this as meaning either "On the impossibility of understanding," "On incomprehensibility," or "On the problem of the impossibility of understanding." As de Man notes, if Schlegel is correct and irony is inherently incomprehensible, then Booth's project on trying to control irony through understanding performance is doomed from the outset. Following de Man's interpretation, there can be no ironic statements of any conceptual or critical worth that will not set in motion a plethora of future deconstructions. The quality of the irony is not found in stable deconstruction, but in the ability to write or speak well. To explain this, de Man again draws on Schlegel, who writes

In order to be able to write well upon a subject, one must have ceased to be interested in it; the thought which is to be soberly expressed must already be entirely past and no longer be one's actual concern. As long as the artist invents and is inspired, he remains in a constrained [illiberal, coerced] state of mind, at least for the purpose of communication. He then wants to say everything, which is the wrong tendency of young geniuses or the right prejudice of old bunglers. Thus he fails to recognize the value and dignity of self-restraint, self-limitation, which is indeed for both the artist and the man the first and the last, the most necessary and the highest goal (quoted in de Man 1996: 170).

For de Man, writing and speaking well requires a balance between reflection and enthusiasm, in which the performer can skilfully, or even beautifully, capture the subject matter without being enthralled or seduced by it or thinking it has any irreducible meaning. If the writer or speaker is too enthusiastic, reflection is lacking, leading to the folly of unreflective belief and the glossing over or ignorance of conceptual fallibilities. As discussed in *Chapter Six*, Schlegel's reading points to the nihilistic edge of irony, in which the techniques of irony and reflection make all enthusiastic performances ridiculous and naïve.

The tendency towards the over-reflection of irony at the expense of some form of enthusiastic dynamism is revealed in Woolgar (Woolgar 1983) and Latour's (Latour 1983) observation about Harvey Brown's (Brown 1977; 1983) interpretation of sociological irony as being a "bad" performance. Woolgar argues that Brown's theory privileges a single, stable, sociologically reflective interpretation of reality that fails to recognize or capture the self-reflexive dynamism of ironic performance evident in, for example, Socrates and Kierkegaard. He argues that its reflective, action-free methodology results in it becoming a form of tragic irony, unable to liberate its subjects from their bondage. Latour states that it is arrogant to believe that reflective elevated sociological descriptions of reality can better capture the experiences of the subjects than they are able to do themselves, and that there is no reason they should be interested in such attempts unless these are elegantly and

entertainingly presented. As discussed at length in *Chapters Five and Six*, Kierkegaard also points to the problem of excessive reflectivity (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1978; Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1998) and the seduction of reflective aestheticism (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1987), arguing that some kind of meaningful action is required to prevent an ironist slipping into nihilistic despair.

2.2.3   The Ironic Personality

Having problematized Frye's attempt at defining an ironic perspective and Booth's attempt at defining ironic performance, de Man argues that it is more useful to think of irony in terms of the self. He claims

> irony can be dealt with, and can be in a sense defused, [...] by reducing it to a dialectic of the self as a reflexive structure. [It] has to do with reflexive patterns of consciousness. Irony clearly is the same distance within a self, duplications of a self, specular structures within the self, within which the self looks at itself from a certain distance. It sets up reflexive structures, and irony can be described as a moment in a dialectic of the self (de Man 1996: 176).

Although de Man does not directly reflect on the American tradition's notion of an ironic self, it is possible to unpack his critique of the dimensions of "American irony" that he does address to reveal it. In the American reading, scholars perceive themselves as having a "superior" view of irony, in which they can, in de Man's words, stop, stabilize and control irony through an understanding of the ironic performance. This superior reading of irony, in which the literary critic, through his reflections on the performative techniques of irony, can work out what is "really going on", has remarkable parallels to what Nietzsche and Thomas Mann refer to as Apollonian irony. The Apollonian ironist (Nietzsche, Geuss et al. 1999) employs an "all-embracing crystal clear and serene glance [...]: a glance of the utmost freedom and calm and of an objectivity untroubled by any

moralism' (Thomas Mann 1960: 88 cited in Muecke 1983: 400). A similar stance informs the 'infinite impassivity' of Flaubertian irony (Colebrook (Colebrook 2002)). For Frye (1957: 41), such an "ironist fables without moralizing, and has no object but his subject." In such an interpretation, there is plenty of reflection on irony, but no reflexive structure of the self. The American "ironist" seems to be an "arrogant" user of stable performative irony and a "knowing" observer of the situational ironies of others, but unable to move towards a deeper reflexive structure that questions its own foundations.

De Man addresses the reflexive structure by turning, once again, to Schlegel's merging of the ironic perspective and the ironic performance in his analysis of the relationship between philosophy and poetry. In arguing that certain ancient and modern poems capture "the divine breath of irony", Schlegel claims

> Their interior is permeated by the mood which surveys everything and rises infinitely above everything limited, even above the poet's own art, virtue, and genius and their exterior form by the histrionic style of an ordinary good Italian buffo (quoted in de Man 1996: 177).

As *Chapter Four* illustrates, the buffo or "sarcastic-eiron", is a common character type of ironic mode literature. For de Man, the buffo is defined by "what Schlegel refers to in commedia *dell'arte*, is the disruption of narrative illusion, the *aparte*, the aside to the audience, by means of which the illusion of the fiction is broken (what we call in German *aus der Rolle* fallen, to drop out of your role)" (de Man 1996: 178). It is the moment in ironic mode comedies (see Frye 1957 and *Chapter Four*) in which the buffo or sarcastic-eiron turns to the audiences to make witty and sarcastic remarks about the main characters, illustrating how their aspirations are ridiculous and their actions absurd, forcing the audience into a different perspective. The buffo employs "parabasis", the "interruption of a discourse by a shift in the rhetorical register" to interrupt "friendly conversation at all moments, freely, arbitrarily" (ibid). At this level, the buffo's ironic performance is sensible to the American tradition, as each parabasic break can be deconstructed with a degree of confidence (i.e. there is a better reading

available, the one the play's characters have themselves). However, de Man and Schlegel go further, arguing that irony is not just restricted to the performative interruptions of the buffo, but a "permanent parabasis", "not just at one point but at all points", meaning narrative can be interrupted everywhere, even in the sober claims the American scholars of irony are making about irony (ibid). The reflective clarity of the American tradition is thus interrupted by the same reflexive techniques of irony it is claiming it can control.

De Man illustrates this by referring to the smart-dumb eirons and dumb-smart alazons of Ancient Greek comedy, in which the seemingly smart guy is always eventually revealed as being dumb, whereas the seemingly dumb guy is eventually revealed as being the smart one all along (De Man 1996: 165). He argues that within debates on irony, the American tradition, which seems smart in its controlled analysis, is actually dumb, whereas the German tradition, seemingly dumbly incapable of defining or controlling irony, is actually smart, as it employs ironic performance to permanently interrupt the perspective of the American tradition on the ironic performance. As he then notes, this claim ironically makes him the alazon, as he is now claiming to be the smart-dumb one that can define irony, rather than the dumb-smart one that continuously interrupts this attempt at definition. This ironic undermining of a non-ironic perspective on irony into a never ending unravelling of descriptions is an example *par excellence* of the point de Man is trying to make about the ironic perspective infinitely deconstructing via an ironic performance.

Following this, de Man posits the ironic self as avoiding the folly-laden traps of descriptive claims, being "a man who can take on all selves and stand above all of them without being anything specific himself, a self that is infinitely elastic, infinitely mobile, an infinitely active and agile subject that stands above any of its experiences" (ibid: 175). Drawing from this, he further posits that

> one could say that any theory of irony is the undoing, the necessary undoing, of any theory of narrative, and it is ironic, as we say, that irony always comes up in relation to theories of narrative, when irony is

precisely what makes it impossible ever to achieve a theory of narrative that would be consistent. Which doesn't mean that we don't have to keep working on it, because that's all we can do, but it will always be interrupted, always be disrupted, always be undone by the ironic dimension which it will necessarily contain (ibid: 179).

The ironic man is thus somebody who can apply the ironic perspective to his own self, treat any positing of the self as merely a temporary collection of certain properties, and attend to the project of creating an infinite self. He is simultaneously an empty, blank self upon which anything can be written and an active, engaged self, interacting with, and in a sense within, the linguistic structures of the world. Although he is capable of razor-sharp critique and blinding insights, he also avoids, or is at least sensitive to the seductive entrapments of, enthusiastically believing in those critiques or insights.

De Man's insights, however, only take us so far. As might already be obvious, De Man's exemplary ironist is Schlegel, whose project of aesthetic irony, as Kierkegaard noted at length (especially in Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1987), ultimately ends in nihilistic despair. De Man agrees irony is risky, stating it is

> a consciousness of madness, itself the end of all consciousness; it is a consciousness of a non-consciousness, a reflection on madness from the inside of madness itself. But this reflection is made possible only by the double structure of ironic language: the ironist invents a form of himself that is "mad" but that does not know its own madness; he then proceeds to reflect on his madness objectified (De Man 1983: 216).

Within these restricted boundaries, are we left solely with a choice between defending the ironic alazons of the American tradition who wittily attack their supposed inferiors for the pleasure of their supposed equals, or de Man's Germanic eirons who, after a period of blinding, witty elegance, slip into nihilism, exhausted and dizzied by their ironic sensibility? With neither satisfactory, we must attempt to conceptualise the in-between space.

2.3   The Emotional Dimension: Stable Sanity or Unstable Devilry?

De Man's dispute with Booth and Frye is ultimately part of his attempt to inject de-constructionism into the corpus of American literary criticism. In pursuing this enterprise, he takes a binary either/or position, in which the nihilistic instability of German Romanticism overwhelms the controlled analysis of the American literary critics. For me, De Man's achievement is the re-establishment of the tensions of irony in a discipline that was straining to develop an uncontested definition. Following de Man's lead, all discussions of irony must take into account its double seductiveness towards stable superiority and unstable nihilism. Indeed, disagreements about irony have circled around these tensions throughout history, beginning with Aristotle wrestling with the problem of Socratic irony. It also continues to dog those praising or condemning irony as a wise, sophisticated perspective or a deceptive, anti-establishment danger. By revisiting this debate, it begins to be possible to start to comprehend this in-between space that de Man has left unfilled.

2.3.1   Tension I: Stable Superiority or Unstable Nihilism?

All debates on irony are rooted in the classical descriptions of Socrates as an *eiron* practising *eironeia*.   In pre-Socratic Athens, *eironeia*, was 'not so much a mode of speech but the general mode of behaviour (Sedgewick 1967)' characteristic of the *eiron*, a man who customarily pretended to be less than he truly was. E*iron* was a term of abuse, with possible modern parallels being 'dissembling rascal' for *eiron* and 'sham humility' for *eironeia* (Holland 2000). In Aristophanes' *Wasps* (173), *Birds* (1210) and *Clouds* (415), the *eiron* is characterised by the intention to deceive. Likewise, Demosthenes (I Phil. 7) portrays the *eiron* as evading civic duty and Plato compares *eirons* to hypocritical heretics (*Laws* 901E) and *eironeia* as being a characteristic of ordinary sophists. The negative connotations of *eironeia* are noticeable when comparing Plato's Socrates with descriptions from less sympathetic characters in the *Dialogues*. Plato never characterises Socrates as an *eiron*[6]; he is proclaimed thus by

Alcibiades in the *Symposium* (215a9-219a1) and by Thrasymaschus in the *Republic* (336c1-337a7), who explicitly condemns Socrates' *eironeia*:

> "Heracles!" he said. "This is Socrates' habitual shamming. I had predicted to these people that you would refuse to answer and would sham and would do anything but answer if the question were put to you." (translated by Vlastos 1987: 81)

As Stewart (1892) and Gooch (1987) note, Aristotle made the first step towards a positive conceptualization of irony by broadening its definition from being a mode of behaviour into a rhetorical device. Employing the three characters standard to Greek Old Comedies, Aristotle provides rhetorical and ethical contrasts to *eironeia*, respectively as *bômolochia* (buffoonery) and *alazoneia* (boastfulness). He does not entirely detach it from its negative connotations, however, regarding it in some instances as the rhetorical device of the treacherous man:

> and of those whom we have wronged or who hate or contend with us [we should fear] not those who are quick-tempered and out-spoken but those who are mild and ironical and [thus] treacherous [*panourgoi*]; for, as it is never clear how close they are to harming you, it is also never certain if they are far removed from doing so (2. 5. 1382bl9-22: all translations of Aristotle by Pavlovskis (1968)).

He does, however, add a soupçon of respectability. Although he regards irony as deception, he believes it to be the deceptive strategy of a free rather than common man, and thus an acceptable "sophisticated" form of speech, claiming

> Irony is more gentlemanly than buffoonery [*bomolochia*], because the ironic man jests on his own account, but the buffoon for the sake of another man (*Rhetoric* 3. 18. 1419b5-9)

Aristotle does not move as far as saying irony is admirable, only commendable in part, some ways and some instances. In the *Eudemian Ethics* (3. 7. 1233b38-1234a3) and in the *Magna Moralia*, Aristotle places *eironeia* and *alazoneia* as the two extremes between which truthfulness lies.

> Truthfulness is the mean with regard to irony and boastfulness. It has to do with words, but not all kinds of words. The boaster pretends to possess more than his actual resources, or to know what he does not know. The ironic man is his opposite, since he not only pretends that he has less than his actual resources but also denies what he actually knows, concealing instead the fact that he knows. But the truthful man will do none of this: he will not pretend to have more or less than he actually does, but will admit both his real resources and knowledge. Whether these are virtues or not, would belong to another discussion (*Magna Moralia* 1. 33. 1193a28-37).

Aristotle contends that irony should be reserved for the educated man addressing the *hoi polloi*, whilst straightforwardness and candid exchange should be expected between those of equal rank. Irony can make the educated man seem attractive to the listening crowd and can thus be a tool of persuasion.[7] In making this argument, he invokes Socrates.

> The ironic men, since they use understatement, seem more attractive in character [than do boasters], for they seem to speak in this manner not for the sake of an advantage but because they avoid pomp; and these too, most of all, disclaim ostentatious things, as Socrates also used to do [...] those seem attractive who use irony in moderation and are ironic about such things as are not too troublesome or apparent (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1127b22-32).

Aristotle's idea that irony was a quality of sophisticated urbanity was furthered by Roman and Anglo-Saxon interpretations (e.g. Cicero and Jones 1776; Shaftesbury and Rand 1900; Cicero and King 1927; Cicero, Rackham et al. 1942;

Quintilian and Loretto 1974; Shaftesbury 1999), in which Socrates was characterized as the prototype gentleman philosopher. However, a taint of self-interested deceit has never entirely dissolved. It is present in the characterizations of the ironist as a confidence-trickster in Renaissance Italy (see, for example, Rebhorn 1988; Horvath 2007), a cuckolding rake in Reformist England (see, for example, Loftis 1966; Harwood 1982; McMillin 1997; Richetti 2005)[8], a roguish picaro in 16th Century Spain and 17th-18th Century Europe (see, for example, Blackburn 1979; Ballinger 1991), a decadent dandy in Victorian England (see, for example, Gregor 1966; Wilde 1991; Schmid 2002), and, in contemporary times, the controversial political satirist, best represented in the US by Jon Stewart, Bill Maher and Stephen Colbert. Likewise, the notion of nihilistic mockery has been maintained in foolish and jesting figures such as the English bumpkins and fops, the French sotties, sots, fols, Badins and Pierrots, the clown, the Indian Birbals, the Jewish schlemiels and schlimazels, and the Italian harlequins and zannis (see Janik 1998 for a comprehensive overview of fool figures in world cultures).[9]

These tensions remain apparent in the American tradition's analysis of irony as, in one way or another, a sophisticated and nuanced form of thought (e.g. Burke 1941; Muecke 1969; Booth 1974; Rorty 1989; Hutcheon 1994), whilst also contributing to the perspective of those who distrust irony (e.g. Wallace 1993; Purdy 1999). This distrust has been furthered by the increasing influence of the Germanic perspective through post-modernist interpretations that praise irony's instability (e.g. Derrida 1987; Gergen 1991; De Man and Warminski 1996). Those who distrust irony perceive such post-modern interpretations as enabling it to run amok, undermining everything for the sake of undermining. Any contemporary debate on irony must take these tensions on board. The ironist is simultaneously interpreted as mocking and dissembling sacred beliefs but also, by some, being sophisticated enough to perceive there are better ways to see the world, even if that better way is merely the ironic perspective itself. These tensions continually feed off each other.

Operating in the face of such embedded cultural tensions, an ironist always risks the fact that negative interpretations of his ironic stance will damn him. History is littered with ironic characters who misstep and experience ill fortune at the hands of the powerful elite. Socrates, Cicero and Thomas More were executed. Juvenal was exiled. Alexander Pope lived in fear of his life after the publication of his satirical work, *The Dunciad*. Jonathan Swift was awarded an obscure and unimportant post in the church. Voltaire spent much of his life exiled from Paris from fear of imprisonment should he return. Søren Kierkegaard was so mocked in Copenhagen that his name was invoked as a warning to children not to become foolish. Oscar Wilde was imprisoned. Flaubert died diseased and penniless. The Roman Catholic Church put Anatole France's life's work on the Prohibited Books Index and his writings were mercilessly attacked after his death. Similarly, Erasmus' corpus was placed on the Church's index of prohibited works. Yet, with the benefit of hindsight, these figures are now regarded as exemplary writers, philosophers and poets, with those who punished them generally forgotten. Ironic?

2.3.2   Tension II: The Snorkel of Sanity or the Devil's Mark

To locate the tensions around irony as dissembling sophistry and urbane critique in the contemporary milieu, and suggest why these ironic greats were treated so shabbily by their contemporaries, I will draw on Hutcheon's approach to the performative functions of irony, in which she borrows from Julian Barnes flamboyant description of the modern mode of irony being the "snorkel of sanity" and/or the "devil's mark" (Hutcheon 1994: 41). Hutcheon's central argument is that irony always has a critical edge, which is always laden with and interpreted as having an "affective charge" that can be either or both negative and positive. As she notes at length, each performative function of irony has a double-sidedness, carrying a sharp demeaning edge while having the potential to enlighten. The three lowest charge functions (reinforcing, complicating and ludic) are mainly concerned with the use of witty language and aesthetic enjoyment. The mid-level affective functions (distancing, self-protective, provisional and oppositional) are performative techniques concerned with

balancing a critical performance with self-protection. The higher communal functions (from assailing to aggregative) are concerned with exclusion and inclusion, domination and liberality, in the use of irony in social affairs.

maximal
affective
charge

inclusionary "amiable communities"	AGGREGATIVE	exclusionary elitist "in-groups"
corrective satiric	ASSAILING	destructive aggressive
transgressive subversive	OPPOSITIONAL	insulting offensive
non-dogmatic demystifying	PROVISIONAL	evasive hypocritical duplicitous
self-deprecating ingratiating	SELF-PROTECTIVE	arrogant defensive
offering a new perspective	DISTANCING	indifferent non-committal
humorous playful teasing	LUDIC	irresponsible trivializing reductive
complex rich ambiguous (+)	COMPLICATING	misleading imprecise ambiguous (−)
emphatic precise	REINFORCING	decorative subsidiary

minimal
affective
charge

Figure 2.1: The Functions of Irony, from Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, **(London; New York, Routledge 1994: 45)**

In the framework of perspective, performance and personality, Hutcheon's typology can be usefully re-arranged as a collection of techniques of ironic performance (the lower and middle affective functions) that inform the ironic perspective and personality (the higher affective functions). From the point of view of an ironic character seeking to effectively communicate his or her point of view, whilst protecting him or herself from sanction, the skilful deployment of these techniques can help prevent them from being seen as a dangerous

35

subversive, with the witty and comic lower levels, the self-protection of the middle levels, and the liberality and inclusiveness of the higher levels, helping to prevent redress from the authorities being challenged.

As argued above and throughout this thesis, there is an ongoing and continuing set of shifts and movements between irony as perspective, performance and personality in any uses of the term. With this in mind, I agree with Hutcheon's (1994: 51) determination that the aggregate function lies somewhat outside her schema, considering it her interpretation of what I have termed the ironic perspective. The aggregate function occurs when an ironist stands apart from or above society, travelling "in an exclusive incognito, as it were, and look[ing] down from its exalted station with compassion on ordinary pedestrian speech" (Kierkegaard quoted in Hutcheon 1994: 51). Hutcheon notes that the negative, exclusionary interpretation of aggregative irony sees it "as implying an assumption of superiority and sophistication on the part of both the ironist and the intended (that is, comprehending) interpreter—at the expense of some uncomprehending and thus excluded audience (Hutcheon 1994: 52)." She draws attention to criticisms of this form of irony as an elitist, intellectual, aristocratic and antisocial attitude, looking down on inferior manners, beliefs and customs, and exhibiting arrogance and insensitivity.

Despite these criticisms, Hutcheon (1994) notes that the elite social status of the individuals is not a necessity. The aggregate function can occur between any in-group that privileges its own interpretation of reality as superior to that of another. Within this interpretation, there is always a superior audience that "gets" the irony and an inferior one that is a "victim" of the irony. This notion is also made explicit in Booth, who examines two reactions to the ironic performance, from "those who will recognize the ironic intention and enjoy the joke, and those who are the object of the satire and are deceived by it. This implies that the ironist has ranged himself with those of his readers who share his superior values, intelligence and literary sensibility; together they look down on the benighted mob" (Booth 1974: 105).

Hutcheon's assailing function further illuminates de Man's division between American and Germanic irony. In the assailing function, irony is employed to satirically correct the "vices and follies of humankind". Hutcheon (1994: 50) determines that there is "a very wide tonal range possible within this corrective function, from the playfully teasing to the scornful and disdainful"; essentially being an amalgamation of all the lower functions she has previously listed. She frames it via a stable/unstable dualism.

> For some theorists, it is clearly a positive for an ironist or for an interpreter to have a firm perspective from which to correct those vices and follies, to have "real standards" in which to ground moral outrage. But today, others appear to be increasingly suspicious of a stand like this: to presume such a position of Authority and Truth, they argue, might well itself be a folly, if not a vice (Hutcheon 1994: 50).

In the former interpretation, the ironist follows the American tradition, sure that his perspective is either morally or rationally better than that which he is critiquing. In contrast, the latter interpretation follows the Germanic tradition, "never knowing" if its own perspective is good or truthful, and thus holding it to the same ironic critique that it holds to other perspectives. This type of irony can never be quieted, forever interrogating the world and revealing the foolishness of those who believe they know what is right without necessarily offering a corrective course. That is why, as Hutcheon notes, it has the sharpest edge or bite, honed into razor sharp precision by constant usage (Hutcheon 1994: 49-50). Despite this ever-cutting edge, Hutcheon is uneasy with the term "assailing" for this function and suggests we should try to come up with a better term. I would like to suggest "the extended critical performance of an ironic personality."

This definition requires some unpacking. That irony involves the extended performance of an ironic personality is by no means a novel interpretation. Quintilian, the last great Roman oratory theorist, examined this in his delineation between tropological and figurative forms of irony. For Quintilian, tropological

irony is short-form performative irony, being 'purely verbal', in which "the meaning […] contrary to the words uttered, understood from context or delivery" (*Institution Oratoria* 8.6.54-59, all translations of Quintilian from Butler (2010)). By this, he is discussing how individual sentences or phrases, or even speeches, can be given ironically, as a deliberate technique intended to provoke a certain reaction. It is a type of irony turned on and off for performative purposes, an oratory technique rather than an extended performance or strategy for living.

In contrast, for Quintilian, figurative irony is long-form performative irony, involving the speaker disguising his entire meaning so that the entire situation may be contrary to the intended meaning (*Institutio Oratoria* 9.2.44-51). While this, at times, merely extends tropological irony beyond the clever verbal quips and jests of the orator into the construction of a fully-rounded character skilfully crafted to cope with whatever tricky situation is confronting him, Quintilian takes it further, positing irony as a complete strategy for living via the example of Socrates. Quintilian claimed "a man's whole life may be coloured with irony, as was the case with Socrates who was called an ironist [eiron] because he assumed the role of an ignorant man lost in wonder at the wisdom of others" (*Institutio Oratoria* 9.3.47).[10] [11] For Quintilian, irony as a trait of personality is figurative, being a complex interaction of context, delivery and assumed character.

2.3.3   The Dimensions of Extended Figurative Irony

Quintilian's use of "figurative" to describe this form of extended ironic performance is a critical point of relevance throughout the thesis. There are three dimensions to the relationship between irony and figurative. The first two dimensions refer directly to the use of language itself, in micro terms the analysis of a specific metaphor and image, and in macro terms the construction of reality through the use of all types of and techniques pertaining to figurative language. The third term, as per Quintilian's definition, refers to the person, character or figure who employs de Man's ironic perspective on language, has mastered the

art of "speaking or writing well", and develops and maintains a personality around these two dimensions.

To explain the micro dimension, some scholars of irony have referred to gestalt figures when describing the effects of irony.
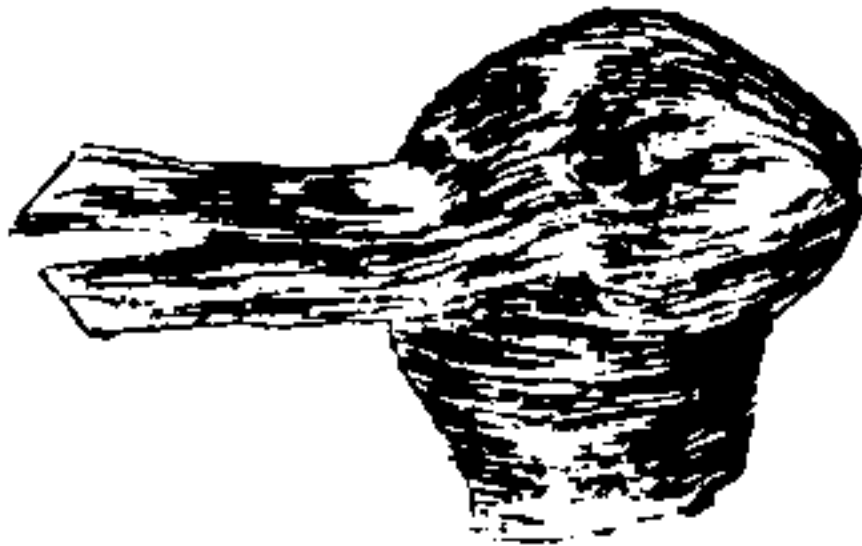
Figure 2.2: Rabbit or Duck, from Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, (London; New York, Routledge 1994: 57)

A gestalt figure can be interpreted as being either one thing or another, but not both at the same time. While our eyes cannot experience both readings simultaneously (i.e. we either see the above image as a duck or a rabbit, but cannot see a "dabbit" or a "ruck"), as Hutcheon notes, our minds almost can (i.e. we are aware that both images exist and can comprehend that while we can only ever focus on one foreground image, the background image is always equally present). She suggests that "the idea of a kind of rapid perceptual or hermeneutic *movement between* them that makes this image" allow "a way to think about ironic meaning as something in flux, and not fixed" and imply "a kind of simultaneous perception of more than one meaning" (Hutcheon 1994: 57-58, italics hers). Figurative irony in this sense means there is always a double awareness that what is going on in the foreground masks at least one equally

viable interpretation that hovers half seen in the background. In this sense, we have an acceptably configured interpretation of reality, which, at a naïve level seems sensible, but still need to figure out what else is going on behind the scenes to develop a more complex and nuanced interpretation of events.

In Organisational Studies, this definition of irony is strong in the metaphor discourse, notably in Oswick and colleagues' discussion on irony and metaphor (Oswick, Keenoy et al. 2002). In this paper, Oswick, pointing out that a metaphor can be "reversed" or "overturned" through irony, refers to the manufactured image of Dolly Parton as an example. At first glance, Parton's identity is "cheap, customized, busty, dumb blonde" (ibid: 299). Parton, however, remarked on a TV talk show, "it takes a lot of money to look this cheap", inferring she had "deliberately set out to manufacture and cultivate such an image" and "that she is separate from the image", employing it only to appeal to a mass audience and fuel her ongoing success (ibid: 299-300). For Oswick, she is "attempting to transform her identity by simultaneously separating herself from that identity while reidentifying with that identity" (ibid). To understand the sophistication of Dolly Parton's strategy of identity, you must take into account the foreground and the background images of Parton the "cheap, customized, busty, dumb blonde" and Parton the sophisticated and successful businesswoman deliberately cultivating an image to sell more records.

The macro dimension of the term "figurative" relates to the conflict between literal and figurative interpretations of reality. Those believing that language is or can be literal assume there is a one on one correspondence between language and the world. Those who assume it is figurative assume that we actively construct the world and that language configures reality. This debate informs Rorty's work on language, irony and philosophy (Rorty 1967; Rorty 1980; Rorty 1989), in his argument for the development of a constructivist, liberal plural, ironic philosophy to confront the naturalistic scientism of more traditional, Platonic philosophy. The Rortian constructivist approach of the linguistic turn has been strongly applied to organisational studies in the work of, amongst others, Mats Alvesson (e.g. Alvesson 1993; Alvesson and Kärreman 2000;

Alvesson and Willmott 2002), Barbara Czarniawska (Czarniawska 1997; Czarniawska-Joerges 1998; Czarniawska 1999; Czarniawska-Joerges 2004) and David Boje (e.g. Boje 1991; Boje 1994; Boje 1995; Boje 2001; Boje 2008). This constructivist approach can be linked to the metaphor discourse via Sewell and Barker's (2006a) insightful, but little cited, examination of the construction of organisational reality through the master tropes of figurative language (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony (as detailed in Burke 1941; D'Angelo 1992)), in which they illustrate how the metaphor of "teamwork is family" eventually informs the structures of the organisation and the behavioural expectations of its management and workforce. In this dimension, the ironist is a constructivist, revealing time and time again how "literal one to one correspondence" is partial, fallible, contradictory and absurd, and how uncritically believing in it would be folly. Informed by such a perspective, as discussed by de Man (1996), Schlegel (Schlegel 1991) and Latour (1983), and, to an extent, Rorty (1989), an ironist tries to write and speak as well as she can.

These two dimensions might also be thought of as the recognition of entrapping follies. The former (folly one) entraps people into believing that one specific figurative image captures reality, refusing to see its blind spots or absurdities, or other ways of seeing or describing the same situation. The ironic perspective has value, in this view, through its critique of any slippage into uncritically believing any such representation of reality (in figurative terms, a synecdoche (to be discussed in depth in *Chapter Three*)). The latter (folly two) views language in "literal" terms as a reflection of reality in the pursuit of achieving literal correspondence with the world. The ironic perspective, in contrast to this view, reveals the constructed nature of the world and the role of language within this process – undermining any "naturalistic" correspondence view of the relationship between language and reality.

The third dimension of figurative irony refers to a figure as a "person's public image or presence" (*American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*), or "the impression created by a person through behaviour" (*Collins English Dictionary*). As exemplified in Quintilian's example, and de Man's discussions of

the ironic self, this idea of irony informing a particular type of human "figure" is well-established (Burke 1941; Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989; Rorty 1989; Vlastos 1991; Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1998; Nehamas 1998). As detailed in the above section on Aristotle, the etymology of irony is strongly linked to the notion of an ironic man (*eiron*). Burke (1941: 422, 432, 436-437) examines how figurative language can be seen as informing a character with a certain perspective on the world, with irony informing a character with a "perspective of perspectives". Kierkegaard talks of an "ironic subject" or ironist that has "stepped out of line with his age [and] turned and faced it" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: XIII 335).   Rorty refers to an ironist who "who faces up to the contingency of his or her own most central beliefs and desires – someone sufficiently historicist and nominalist to have abandoned the idea that those central beliefs and desires refer back to something beyond the reach of time and chance" (Rorty 1989: xv). Likewise, Vlastos (1991) and Nehamas (1998) closely examine how Socrates' irony was part of his character rather than just a performative technique.

Such an ironic "figure" may employ irony in the first two "figurative" senses as micro and macro perspectives on the world. This is accompanied, however, by an extended ironic performance that seeks to communicate such perspectives through a rhetorical, verbal or performative irony that ranges from "mock modesty" to the strategic "double entendre" (i.e. the use of both a perspective on the world and a performance). In using such techniques, to hide a wolf of "estrangement" in an ambiguous "comic" sheep's "clothing", what Hutcheon (1994) describes as "irony's edge" leads to two conflicting interpretations of the ironic character (figure) – as (a) facilitating a wider appreciation of the existence of foreground and background perspectives, multiple meanings and the tensions between them, whilst not getting sanctioned or punished by advocates of one or the other for doing so, or (b) hiding insights and his or her motives, and ridiculing others in pursuit of his or her own self-interested hidden agenda.

If the ironic figure pursues this perspective and performance over an extended period, the tension between these two performances inevitably raises questions

42

about his or her character. The long-term tendency to estrange raises questions about the motives of the person doing the estrangement.   No matter whether the estranging voice is being interpreted as self-interested or critical, it is likely to be sanctioned and silenced by some authorities being questioned.   In order to avoid sanction from such authorities, the classical response and distinguishing character of the ironic figure is to either play the fool, as a foolish critic is less likely to be sanctioned than a manipulative or clever one, or espouse a liberal philosophy of pluralism and diversity, while attempting to answer the criticisms of decadence and nihilism that dog such approaches.

2.3.4   The Tactics of Extended Figurative Irony

Hayden White's examination of irony in *Metahistory* (White 1973a) helps synthesise many of the debates and contestations discussed above.   In the philosophical dimension, he perceives irony as moving from "figurative" as a "catachrestic" misuse, to "figurative" as a "linguistic paradigm", to an 'existential' "full blown philosophy of living".   In this, he is unusually close, for an American scholar, to de Man's Germanic interpretation of irony.   For example, White strongly supports de Man's arguments when stating "irony is in one sense metatropological, for it is deployed in the self-conscious awareness of the possible misuse of figurative language", being a "linguistic paradigm of a mode of thought which is radically self-critical with respect not only to a given characterization of the world of experience but also to the very effort to capture adequately the truth of things in language" (White 1973a: 37-38).   He also reflects upon its cosmic and existential tensions, arguing, "As the basis of a world view, irony tends to dissolve all belief in the possibility of positive political actions. In its apprehension of the essential folly or absurdity of the human condition, it tends to engender belief in the 'madness' of civilization itself and to inspire a Mandarin-like disdain for those seeking to grasp the nature of social reality in either science or art" (White 1973a: 38).

Where White becomes most useful is in his reflection of how irony's performative tactics underpin these dimensions, thereby somewhat closing the

gap between the American and Germanic traditions. According to White, "the basic figurative tactic of Irony is catachresis (literally "misuse"), the manifestly absurd Metaphor designed to inspire Ironic second thoughts about the nature of the thing characterized or the inadequacy of the characterizations itself" (White 1973a: 37). White's use of figurative here largely corresponds to first two definitions of figurative discussed above, the images and descriptions of reality that the Quintilian figurative ironist is confronting, rather than the figure of the ironist himself. He aligns this tactic to Foucauldian deconstructive methodology and its goal "to render the familiar strange" (White 1973b: 50). This tactic intends to enlighten, encourage or shock the listener into the recognizing the absurdity of their own perspective and to think about things in other ways. Its favoured rhetorical stylistic device is "aporia (literally "doubt"), in which the author signals in advance a real or feigned disbelief in the truth of his own statements" (White 1973a: 37). White illustrates this by explaining how "the expression "He is all heart" becomes Ironic when uttered in a particular tone of voice or in a context in which the person designated manifestly does not possess the qualities attributed to him by the use of this Synecdoche" (White 1978: 37). It either casts doubts on the abilities of another or on one's own abilities.

This narrow "figurative" form is perhaps the most well-known technique of irony and one that might be seen as strongly accompanying the notion that one employing irony is being self-interested, arrogant and manipulative. Indeed, one of the most famous definitions of irony illustrates this, in which Samuel Johnson defines irony as "a mode of speech in which the meaning is contrary to the words: as, Bolingbroke is a holy man" (Pettit 1997), meaning "Bolingbroke is a shit!" Likewise, in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar (Act 3, Scene 2)*, Marc Anthony states, "For Brutus is an honourable man; So are they all, all honourable men", meaning Brutus is a traitorous rat. However, this casting of doubt is not necessarily intended to wound, as in the above examples, but also to protect. For example, in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Bennett, mindful of his daughter's talent-free musicianship and the guests' discomfort at her continued playing, entreats her away from the piano by stating "That will do extremely well, child. You have delighted us long enough. Let the other young ladies have

44

time to exhibit". Here, the guests recognize the irony, but his daughter does not read the second meaning, and is deceived but not upset. As *Chapter Four* suggests, this dimension of the tactic, manifesting in poking fun and the playful mockery of others, perhaps obscures the other dimension, in which one casts doubts about his own abilities.

Casting doubt on one's own abilities has two dimensions. Firstly, it informs the writing style of the "ironic mode" (Frye: 1957), casting a "self-consciously sketpical tone", being "'relativizing in […] intention", and presupposing that the "reader or auditor already knows, or is capable of recognizing, the absurdity of the characterization of the thing designated in the [the figurative language] used to give form to it" (White 1973a: 37). In this mode, as discussed earlier, the author possesses, or at least seems to possess, an "all-embracing crystal clear and serene glance" "of the utmost freedom and calm and of an objectivity untroubled by any moralism" (Thomas Mann 1960: 88 cited in Muecke 1983: 400). A second dimension can help the ironist hide his critical insights behind a veneer of bumbling, jesting foolishness.[12] This good-natured japery hiding insightful wisdom, sourced in interpretations of Socrates, has been interpreted as being a central tactic of the ethical ironist through the ages. For example, Erasmus, who, according to Sloane,

> asserts that his purpose is, as always, to teach his readers, who, he believes, will attend to a comic discourse more agreeably than if he had cast his ideas in solemn tones. After all, as Folly herself says, only fools are licensed to utter the truth without giving offense. The masquerade invites the reader to meet the author at a remove from the discourse itself, a distance from which the twists, turns, and ambiguities may be viewed and their sly wisdom perceived (Sloane 2004: 117).

Likewise, Walton illustrates how Voltaire and Moliere focused on how the performance of a deceitful rogue can reveal the hubris of a sincere fool.

The idea of a speaker looking this sincere and acting in such a hypocritical

way, suggesting a scurrilous opportunism and absurdly insincere posturing, is an irony that is funny, in just the way that the ironies satirized by Voltaire and Moliere were funny. They depict a rogue who can sell things to gullible and unsuspecting buyers of his products or ideas by saying all sorts of ridiculous things that he does not believe at all. And yet he says them with the greatest apparent sincerity. It is somehow very ironic and hence comical to people that the respondent pays rapt attention to this absurd performance. The sincerity apparently expressed by both parties makes for a highly amusing dialogue. Whatever is at the bottom of it, the humour in this sort of ad hominem attack is a powerful part of its effectiveness (Walton 2007: 176).

White's concept of the tactics of irony can also facilitate a deeper understanding of the emotional dimension. He states that "existentially projected into a full-blown world view, Irony would appear to be transideological. It can be used tactically for defense of either Liberal or Conservative ideological positions, depending on whether the Ironist is speaking against established social forms or against "utopian" reformers seeking to change the status quo. And it can be used offensively by the Anarchist and the Radical, to pillory the ideals of their Liberal and Conservative opponents" (White 1973a: 38). With no distinct ideological position informing it, irony can emerge in support or critique of any position, and can thus invoke strongly supportive or aggressively antagonistic emotional reactions across all ideological groups. As it can be employed to mock and poke fun at any strongly held belief, it perhaps becomes easier to perceive why it is has become such a distrusted form of communication for some commentators who regard it as always, rather than only sometimes, being a smirk and a sneer, which overpowers alternative interpretations of irony being a serious philosophical perspective, sophisticated performative technique and authentic strategy for living.

2.4 Conclusion: The Dimensions, Tensions and Tactics of the Extended Performance of an Ironic Personality

Given the contestations, divisions and complexities involved in historical attempts to define irony, providing a simple definition is a pipe dream. This chapter has arranged the dimensions of irony around a philosophical-emotional framework that examines its philosophical implications through notions of perspective, performance and personality, and its emotional implications through notions of superiority versus instability and sanity versus devilry. As the thesis will reveal throughout, these dimensions and tensions accompany all discussions on irony, from Socratic Athens, Imperial Rome, Jacobean England and the contemporary USA. Unlike many Organisational Studies texts, the central concern of the thesis is not about irony as a performative tool of any specific ideological position, but a performative technique of an ironic personality that has a complex, fluid and contested character. That does not mean that some form of limited but ideologically stable irony is not valid, nor that the distrust of irony is without foundation, and the thesis will at times point to such examples. However, it does suggest that perceiving irony merely as performatively supporting a stable ideological position obscures its philosophical dimensions.

Hayden White's tactics of irony seem a useful way to arrange research around the complexities of examining an ironic strategy for living that incorporates an awareness of irony as an incongruous perspective, a dissonant performance and an existential situationalism. It helps to substantiate a definition of irony as a strategy for living that does not deny the deceitful dissembling and nihilistic concerns that many have with ironic performances and motivations or relapse into simplistic outlines of a complex ironic hero as an ultimate goal. Following this, *Chapter Three* examines the tactic of "gestalt" and "linguistic" forms of figurative irony in making the familiar strange in the metaphor discourse in Organisational Studies, and *Chapters Four, Five and Six* examine the implications of the third Quintilian view of the figurative ironist - as a character

or "figure" – through the deployment of an extended existential perspective and performance.

3 The Ironic Perspective in Morgan's Theory of Metaphor

3.1   Introduction: The Folly and Fallibility of Metaphor

In this chapter I will examine the current level of comprehension and limitations of the micro and macro dimensions of figurative irony, (i.e. the process of making familiar metaphors strange and how figurative language actively constructs the world), by examining the metaphorical discourse in Organisational Studies. While this metaphorical discourse has always been accompanied by a sub-discourse that refers to the fallibility of metaphoric descriptions of reality and the desirability of making metaphors strange, it has been swamped by a focus on examining the mechanics of metaphor creation and elaboration. Within this sub-discourse, there are two distinct tactics; making the fallibility of a particular metaphor explicit by turning attention to the ways in which a metaphor is not like the object or domain it is describing; and suggesting the fallibility of uncritical belief in single metaphors in general. The aim of this chapter, building on the work of Kenneth Burke and his strong defense of rhetoric, is to highlight this sub-discourse, and extend it to include a deeper consideration of the dynamics of folly that surround metaphorical entrapments and their critique.

In making this argument, the chapter reflects on the contributions of Gareth Morgan, arguing, with Morgan, that while some metaphors are inherently persuasive, they restrict and blind as much as they reveal. I suggest that Organisational Studies' focus on the mechanics of metaphor creation and elaboration has tended to neglect Morgan's concern with the persuasiveness of, and need to challenge, established metaphors of organisation. Although Cliff Oswick and colleagues have noted this, their solution of employing irony to counter the conservatism of metaphor creation suffers from an ambiguous usage of two different theories of metaphor ("cognitive" and "rhetorical") that restricts their analysis of the persuasiveness of metaphor, and a slippage into a discredited ("comparison") view of metaphor that limits their analysis of irony. To make this point, and further develop their work to provide a more comprehensive understanding and analysis of the ironic perspective, I turn to a

group described by George Lakoff as "traditional rhetoricians" to examine their interpretation of metaphor, irony and figurative language. By drawing upon the work of the leading American rhetorician Kenneth Burke, I suggest, in particular, that the currently inadequately theorised trope of synecdoche is fundamental in understanding how the metonymic elaboration of metaphors can entrap people into believing in them. In addition, the chapter explores the "comic" dimension of Burke's work as grounds for a "strong defense" of rhetoric, and a basis for exploring how "irony" can "make strange" not only particular metaphors but also the blinkers of unreflective metaphorical thought in general.

3.2 Gareth Morgan: More than Just a Metaphor Theorist

Reflecting on the reasons for his turn to metaphor and figurative language, Gareth Morgan commented that,

> one challenge, voiced casually to me while writing the book by a colleague waiting for a coffee in the Faculty Lounge at Lancaster University, lingered on. "Gareth," he asked, "how can my work be in one of your paradigms if I don't even know what the paradigms are?"
>
> I took it seriously, "Yes," I thought, "How can one be developing social theories, or theories of organization, without really knowing the fundamental assumptions on which one's theories are based?"
>
> I had absolutely no idea how I could teach a conventional undergraduate management course while being true to the principles of *Sociological Paradigms*. Then it hit me. I could teach organization theory through metaphor, illustrating a range of different theories by presenting them as metaphors, each of which had both strengths and weaknesses (Morgan 2011: 460).

As this illustrates, Morgan's initial foray into metaphor was an attempt to make his sociological paradigms meaningful to the wider academic and student

community and translate his Interpretive, Radical Humanist, and Radical Structuralist and Functionalist paradigms of organisational research into an array of perspectives capturing various schools of organisational theory (Morgan 1980).

Throughout his early career, Morgan tries to address the dominance of the functionalist paradigm in organisational scholarship and provide an

> "*important legitimization of non-traditional methods of research*" (Morgan 2011: 460)

and by doing so draws attention to the notion that all perspectives are limited and partial. His paradigmatic assumptions meta-inform a range of perspectives (or metaphors) embedded in various organisational schools. For example, the functionalist paradigm is

> "*based upon the assumption that society has a concrete, real existence, and a systemic character oriented to produce an ordered and regulated state of affairs" (Morgan 1980: 608),* which informs the machine, organism, brain and culture metaphors or perspectives.

In contrast, the interpretive paradigm is

> "*based upon the view that the social world has a very precarious ontological status, and that what passes as social reality does not exist in any concrete sense, but is the product of the subjective and inter-subjective experience of individuals" (ibid),* which informs the language games, texts and enacted sense-making metaphors.

For Morgan the problem was that organisational research tended to only take functionalist metaphors seriously and not the counter-functionalist ones. As he stated

51

One of my definite aims was to help break the bounds of existing thinking and open inquiry to more radical metaphors, such as those captured in the chapters on psychic prisons, instruments of domination, and the image of transformation and change (Morgan 2011: 468).

To make these more radical metaphors seem plausible alternatives, Morgan can be seen as pursuing a three tactic strategy comprising;

- A "tactic of fallibility" that made the partiality and incompleteness of established metaphors explicit
- A "tactic of meta-fallibility or existential folly" that illustrated how "in recognizing theory as metaphor, we quickly appreciate that no single theory will ever give us a perfect or all-purpose point of view" (Morgan 2006: 5)
- A "tactic of elaboration" that introduces "radical metaphors" and concretizes them as plausible alternatives to already established metaphors

3.2.1   The Tactic of Fallibility

Morgan argues that metaphor "requires of its user a somewhat one-sided abstraction in which certain features are emphasized and others suppressed in a selective comparison," (Morgan 1980: 611) and that "different metaphors can constitute and capture the nature of organizational life in different ways, each generating powerful, distinctive, but *essentially partial* kinds of insight" (ibid: 612, italics mine). The limitations of this one-sided abstraction are revealed in Schön's (1993) discussion on how generative metaphors tacitly generate problem-setting stories within a discursive community. The metaphor is already deeply established in social consciousness, thereby generating, yet limiting the scope of, "problem-setting" stories and subsequent patterns of "problem-solving" (ibid: 138).   It generates a plethora of perceptions, explanations and inventions that might be better described as shibboleths, clichés and slogans, a one-dimensional way of seeing a problem that channels thought and action and

restricts the possibility of other creative solutions. The role of the scholar is, for Schön (and for Morgan), to uncover the problem-setting metaphor that is generating the stories, address the sense of obviousness attending such stories and examine their appropriateness (ibid: 138-139).

There are two types of metaphor in Schön's analysis of the problem-setting generative metaphor: surface metaphors and deep metaphors. Surface metaphors are present in the surface language of a story, offering "clues to the generative (or deep) metaphors which set the problem of the story" (Schon 1993: 149). Deep metaphor "accounts for centrally important features of the story - which makes it understandable that certain elements of the situation are included in the story while others are omitted; that certain assumptions are taken as true although there is evidence that would appear to disconfirm them; and, especially, that the normative conclusions are found to follow so obviously from the facts" (ibid). The surface language of the story does not need to contain or mention the deep metaphor, just associations and attributes that relate or refer to it. Following the above, Morgan's early work on metaphor, especially *Images of Organizations*, has a Foucauldian archaeological function (Foucault, Fitzpatrick et al. 1972) which surfaces the associations and attributes that relate or refer to deeply established machine, organism, brain and culture metaphors, examining how people have tended to talk and think about organisations historically and in contemporary society. George Lakoff and his colleagues (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1993; Lakoff and Turner 2009) perform similar, and renowned, archaeological analyses in the wider scholarship on metaphor.

After archaeologically examining these metaphors, Morgan attends to their limitations by drawing attention to their undesirable consequences. In this example, he illustrates how organisations seen through the machine metaphor

> (a) can create organizational forms that have great difficulty in adapting to changing circumstances; (b) can result in mindless and unquestioning bureaucracy; (c) can have unanticipated and undesirable consequences as

the interests of those working in the organization take precedent over the goals the organization was designed to achieve; and (d) can have dehumanizing effects upon employees, especially those at the lower levels of the organizational-hierarchy (Morgan 2006: 28).

Each chapter of *Images* has the same structure, illustrating how a metaphor generates novel ideas and enthusiasm, gets intensively elaborated and fully established, but also creates the conditions for its own downfall. Reflection on its limitations results in a focus on a new metaphor (the first four chapters of *Images of Organization* can be read as a chronological history of the establishment of functionalist metaphors) and the process repeats. This process is more fully revealed in Barley and Kunda's (Barley and Kunda 1992) examination in the surges of rational and normative rhetorics of organisation and management.

3.2.2   The Tactic of Meta-Fallibility or Existential Folly

In *Images of Organization*, Morgan explicitly and repeatedly draws attention to the way in which metaphors distort and limit vision, suggesting that uncritically believing in the insights of a single metaphor at the expense of all others would be great folly. He argues that any metaphor is "inherently paradoxical. It can create powerful insights that also become distortions, as the way of seeing through a metaphor becomes a way of *not* seeing" (Morgan 2006: 5, italics his). In each of the chapters of *Images of Organization*, Morgan follows a strategy of revealing a metaphor's insights prior to detaching his readers from its one-dimensionality. He continually draws attention to the necessity of recognizing the partiality of each description in the structure of the book, in which the only repeated sub-heading is *Strengths and Limitations of the (name of) Metaphor*. This interpretation is further captured in Morgan's introduction to *Images of Organization*:

> [The book] has a clear point of view: that metaphor is central to the way we "read", understand, and shape organizational life. But at no point will

you find that view being brought down to advocacy of a single perspective. There are no right or wrong theories in management in an absolute sense, for every theory illuminates and hides. The book offers a means of coping with this paradox. It offers a way of thinking that is crucial for understanding, managing, and designing organizations in a changing world (Morgan 2006: 8).

As such, his case study on Multicom (chapter eleven of *Images of Organization*), in which he interprets, reads and narrates the storyline of Multicom from the different metaphoric perspectives discussed in the book, exemplifies his approach. In it, Morgan develops an elevated perspective on the metaphors of organisational science, a perspective that reflects on the fallibility of each metaphor and seeks to ensure that nobody gets trapped into the folly of believing one metaphor can adequately capture reality. In doing this, he appeals to researchers to use all there is to use. He furthers this appeal throughout his career, in which he states his primary motive was to examine the "interrelationship between the insight and distortion embedded in the use of metaphor […] and the epistemological, ideological, and political implications that flow from this" (Morgan 2011: 464).

3.2.3 The Tactic of Elaboration

A more "politically" creative function informs the more radical psychic prison, flux and transformation, instruments of domination and political systems metaphors that Morgan presents in the second half of *Images of Organization*. These metaphors comprise a thought experiment that explores and conceives novel ways in which some people do and other people might come to talk and think about an organisation in an attempt to persuade functionalist scholars that these alternative radical metaphors offer genuine insights. Although these metaphors were not drawn out of thin air, are present in organisational life and established in academic discourse, they were not as mainstream as the functionalist metaphors Morgan wished to challenge. While he notes ways in

which they are already employed in descriptions of organisations, Morgan seeks to elaborate them further.

The mechanics of the tactic of elaboration are located in the relationship between metonymy and metaphor. For reasons discussed in depth in the later section on Kenneth Burke, I will avoid Morgan's preferred definition of metonymy here and instead turn to definitions discussed in academic literature and dictionaries. In his list of rhetorical terms, Lanham defines metonymy as "substitution of cause for effect, effect for cause, proper name for one of its qualities, or vice versa" (Lanham 1991: 189). Lakoff argues that we employ metonymy when "we are using one entity to refer to another that is related to it" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36). The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* defines metonymy as "a figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated (as "crown" in "lands belonging to the crown")" and the *Random House Dictionary* as "a figure of speech in which the name of one object or concept is used for that of another to which it is related, as 'scepter' for 'sovereignty, or 'the bottle' for 'strong drink.'" By regarding metonymy as covering the wide range of "cause and effect", "qualities", "attributes and associations" and "relations", it is possible to understand how, when conceived in great numbers, they elaborate and concretize a metaphor.

Whilst first arguing that metonymy was a "secondary form within the domain or context forged through metaphor" (Morgan 1983: 602), Morgan has since accepted that "metaphor and metonymy are always interconnected" and "you cannot have one without the other" (Morgan 1996: 231). He argues that "a metaphorical image relies on some kind of metonymical reduction, otherwise it remains thin air" (Morgan 1996: 231), and that "metonymy is entirely dependent on metaphor, for without a prefiguring image we have nothing to see" (Morgan 1996: 231). In his 2011 reflection on *Images of Organization,* Morgan's illustrates this relationship:

This *process of tying down the details is fundamental for the operation of*

metaphor— otherwise we would have an image without any intrinsic or detailed meaning (if, indeed, one can imagine such a situation). The concretization or "tying down" of the metaphor is, in fact, what is described in linguistics and literature as "metonymy"—a process whereby the names of elements or parts of a phenomenon can be used to represent the whole. *As a result of this process, we may now arrive at a stage where the concepts stand as concepts in their own right as the generative metaphor gets lost from view*. The focus now is exclusively on "metonymical elements" that may be viewed as literal representations of the phenomena to which they are applied (Morgan 2011: 464; italics mine).

Morgan's turn to the mechanics of metaphor elaboration through metonymies has become a dominant perspective in Organisational Studies, in which the essential characteristic of the creativity of language and thought is attributed to the construction of cognition through metaphor (as discussed in Cassirer 1953; Schön 1963; Koestler 1964; Reddy 1979; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Morgan 1980; Morgan 1983; Morgan 1986; Lakoff 1993; McLuhan 2011). This research examines how metaphors elaborated through parts *conceived in great quantity* seem cognitively real. The metonymic process elaborates metaphor in a particular direction, which, once taken to a certain level, is presented as and seems just "obvious". The focus is on the process of creating or selecting metonymies that fit, with little attention paid to the manner in which this process of unpacking, viewed from an "ironic" stance, may be inappropriate or limiting. While persuasion occurs *through* this selective concretization, the manner in which this selection and concretization occurs, making a specific "reading" of a metaphor "persuasive", receives little attention and is arguably even reified.

3.3   The Ironic Outcome of Morgan's Vision

As noted by Oswick and colleagues (Oswick, Keenoy et al. 2002), Morgan has somewhat failed in his mission to radicalize Organisational Studies through a turn to metaphor, figurative language and imagery. Oswick claims, "despite the

57

coherence, forcefulness, and lucidity of his work, Morgan has, ineluctably, constrained rather than aided knowledge generation" and the "powerful orthodoxy he has constructed diverts attention away from ambiguity and alternative readings and, at worst, actually undermines the formation of new perspectives" (ibid: 294-295). That Morgan's attempt to radicalize organisational scholarship through the introduction of metaphor has actually produced an innate conservatism is located in the tactic of elaboration, which has, ironically, ended up contributing to the very entrapment that he sought to question - creating a methodology that can creatively conceive new metaphors and further elaborate established ones in a way that can act counter to a recognition of the fallibility of any single metaphorical perspective and direct attention away from the dynamic follies of entrapment.

3.3.1 Cliff Oswick's Ironic Tactic

To address this conservatism, Oswick and colleagues (Oswick, Keenoy et al. 2002) examined how irony could be used as a radical tactic against elaborated metaphor. This turn to irony was an attempt to reinvigorate Morgan's vision and draw attention to the limitations, distortions and partiality of established metaphors in a manner that a continued focus on the metonymical elaboration of metaphor seemed unable to do. In positioning irony as the solution, Oswick differentiates between tropes "of similarity (metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche) [and] dissimilarity (anomaly, irony, and paradox)" (ibid: 295). He suggests that tropes of similarity operate in a cognitive comfort zone, being "valuable conduits for communicating pre-existing understanding and, thus, have the potential to contribute to the incremental explication of knowledge through processes of reinforcement, refinement, and cumulative learning" (ibid: 301). In contrast, irony is seen as operating

> within what might be called the "cognitive discomfort zone." Irony implies that you might think that A is like B, but don't be fooled; once you explore it in more detail, you will find that it is more complex than that (Oswick, Keenoy et al. 2002: 299).

For Oswick, irony works by "creating a disjunction between the conventional image and the reality it represents", which is "accomplished by overturning or reversing the meaning of the conventional image" (Oswick, Keenoy et al. 2002: 299), producing incongruence and dissonance within the metaphor.

This approach crystalizes in a theory of metaphoric resonance versus ironic dissonance, which posits the two master tropes of organisation as metaphor and irony (Oswick, Putnam et al. 2004). In this theory, resonant tropes (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, simile, analogy) illustrate all the ways in which a metaphor resonates, thereby revealing its powerful entrapment. Irony is positioned as the prime dissonance trope by clustering minor dissonant tropes (paradox, sarcasm, satire) around it in the same manner. For Oswick, Putnam et al (2004), situational irony reveals and interrogates contradictions in how metaphorical perspectives describe or prescribe organisational action, or the unforeseen consequences of adopting their restricted or limited outlook. (i.e. paradoxes & anomalies). This is equivalent to Morgan's tactic of revealing the fallibility of individual metaphors. Intentional irony is a performative "deliberate application of subversive and oppositional forms of irony to organizational phenomena" (i.e. sarcasm, satire & parody) (Oswick, Putnam et al. 2004: 120). This, in turn, is equivalent to Morgan's rhetorical intervention in attempting to persuasively demonstrate the folly of (meta-) metaphorical entrapment.

3.3.2   The Limitations of Oswick's Model of Irony

While this is a sound understanding of some of the perspectival and performative characteristics of irony, Oswick's overall treatment of irony is problematic. This can perhaps be explained by returning to Morgan's definition of metaphor. Morgan never pursued a formal definition of metaphor or a detailed analysis of the functions of figurative speech. Reflecting on his career, he states "to be perfectly honest, I just "ran with the idea" of theory as metaphor without too much regard for the formal details presented in the literature"

(Morgan 2011: 462). In his initial paper on metaphor, Morgan provides the following definition:

> Metaphor proceeds through assertions that subject A is, or is like B, the processes of comparison, substitution, and interaction between the images of A and B acting as generators of new meaning (Morgan 1980: 610).

This definition contains three different views on metaphor, comparison, interaction and substitution, which, as the analytical philosopher Max Black argues in his seminal analyses of the use of metaphor in philosophical and scientific research (Black 1954; Black 1962; Black 1979), are formally incompatible. The comparison view analyses how a metaphor reveals objective *a priori* similarities between the target and source (e.g. in Srivastva and Barrett 1988; Sackmann 1989; Barrett and Cooperrider 1990; Tsoukas 1991; Alvesson 1993; Marshak 1993; Tsoukas 1993; Oswick and Grant 1996; Oswick, Keenoy et al. 2002; Oswick, Putnam et al. 2004), whereas the interaction view focuses on subjectively conceived or constructed connections (e.g. Cornelissen 2004; Cornelissen 2005), with "no simple 'ground' for the necessary shifts of meaning - no blanket reason why some metaphors work and others fail" (Black 1954: 292). Oswick's work on irony, drawing on Morgan's wide definitional base, pre-dates Cornelissen's introduction of Black's interaction view, or the "domain-interaction" view as it is now termed, into Organisational Studies, and rests on the discredited comparison view – with some negative consequences for his treatment of irony.

As the above suggests, the comparison view of metaphor "suffers from the temptation to think of similarities as 'objectively given', so that a question of the form, 'Is A like B in respect of P?' has a definite and pre-determined answer" (Black 1954: 284). Consequent upon his adoption of a comparison view, Oswick's concept of a metaphor working through an objective "optimum overlap" is a Goldilocks theory in which a metaphor works if just the right amount of *a priori* comparisons are revealed, but fails if too many or too few

exist. As a result, Oswick suggests that irony can "overturn" or "reverse" the conventional image by creating a disjunction that points at ways in which the metaphor is "really" not like the object. This is comparison theory in reverse, a "let me count the ways" approach that fails to address why the metaphor is persuasive in the first place or why (or how) illustrating *a priori* ways in which the metaphor is not like the object would successfully address that persuasion. He goes on, in his discussion of "intentional irony", to detail ways in which performative irony is subversive, employing the mocking communication of sarcasm, parody and satire in presentation. This is not, however, linked to his cognitive analysis of metaphor-as-resonance/irony-as-dissonance. If the use of irony is merely the mechanics of pointing out the degree to which a metaphor does not hold, and the holding is "objectively" pre-determined as being *x-percent* true and *y-percent* false, then why does irony need to be subversive or employ mocking communicative forms? Why would you try to poke fun at and make a fool of somebody who believes in a metaphorical model that has been objectively proved to be *x-percent* correct, and in what circumstances would this be successful, and when not?

By turning to the interaction view, however, we can begin to move beyond Oswick's "objectively pre-determined" view of metaphor and irony and start to examine why people get trapped into the folly of believing in a metaphor even when it is a partial and subjective linguistic and social construction, and why subversive and mocking communication is often necessary for those challenging such beliefs. To achieve that, it is also necessary to move some way into the third view of metaphor referenced by Morgan, the 'substitution' view.

Defining the substitution view as pointing to when "a metaphorical expression is used in place of some equivalent literal expression" (Black 1954: 279), Black argues that this use of metaphor "is supposed to give pleasure to the reader", however, he then goes on to state that while it has "been accepted by most writers (usually literary critics or writers of books on rhetoric) who have had anything to say about metaphor" it has "no serious place in philosophical discussion" (ibid: 282) and is incompatible with his advocacy of and approach to theory modelling (ibid: 291).[13] The almost total dismissal of the rhetorical

tradition in "cognitive" work on metaphor, following Black, creates significant problems for any initiative to extend Oswick's attempt to explain irony.

As Heracleous notes, Oswick slips between cognitive/analytical and rhetorical approaches to metaphor and the tropes of analogical modelling (see Heracleous, Keenoy et al. 2003), at times employing the cognitive/analytical model, in which metaphor is the central trope (as defined in Ortony's *Metaphor and Thought*), whilst at other times employing the rhetorical model, in which metaphor is on equal footing with the other master tropes of metonymy, synecdoche and irony. Ultimately, Oswick's innovative solution of positioning irony as the oppositional mirror of metaphor, while useful in refocusing attention on the failed radicalism of Morgan's initial vision, ends up failing to correspond to either tradition. In the cognitive/analytical tradition, irony is regarded as a far more minor trope than Oswick suggests, whereas in contrast to the rhetorical tradition, which does put it on a level of equal importance, he fails to completely appreciate the full role and mechanics of metonymy and synecdoche.

What Oswick does provide, however, is a departure point from which to launch an examination of irony's relationship to metaphor. He outlines a cognitive comparison theory, in which metaphor works because a certain number of similarities or connections between the metaphor and target are in play. He suggests that irony can draw attention to the fallibility of any given metaphor by examining how it is dissimilar to the target, but cannot explain why people will defend themselves against observations of situational irony, or how this is linked to a subversive and mocking intentional irony. While interaction theory suggests that there are social mechanisms lying behind the generation of connections between a metaphor and its target that result in the folly of belief and defensive reactions to a challenge, it cannot adequately explain what they are. Although Oswick's half-turn to the rhetorical tradition and its theory of master tropes begins to hint at a solution, his confused modelling and slippage between the cognitive/analytical and rhetorical traditions ultimately obscures it. By moving to a rhetorical-interactive view of metaphor and irony, in which the creative process of metaphor generation in the interactive view is supported and enhanced by a rhetorical tradition that examines how figurative language might

firmly lodge in the public consciousness, this chapter argues that a richer analysis of the relationship between metaphor and irony can emerge.

3.3.3   Turning to the Rhetorical Tradition of Metaphor

As noted, the interactionist view of metaphor claims that it is impossible to know or predict why some metaphors are persuasive while others are not. Moreover, that some form of rhetorical persuasion is involved in "selling" a preference for one metaphor over another is still somewhat distasteful to serious scientific metaphoric modelling (as argued at length in the initial battle over metaphor in OS by Pinder and Bourgeois 1982; Bourgeois and Pinder 1983; Tinker 1986) and has thus not been seriously examined. Although the initial objection has been somewhat silenced by the widespread acceptance of the linguistic turn (Rorty 1967) in organisations, a lingering "anti-rhetorical" prejudice prevents cognitive and analytical scholars of metaphor from moving beyond a reductive, mechanistic and metonymical approach to metaphor.

Rhetorical scholars examine two different dimensions, (1) the techniques or art of rhetoric and (2) the epistemology of rhetoric. Since Aristotle, rhetoric has been interpreted as the art or technique of discovering all available means of persuasion. Scholars examining this aspect of rhetoric look at rhetorical proofs (ethos, pathos, logos), delivery (invention, style, arrangement, delivery, memory) and genre (forensic, deliberative, epideictic). Arranged around this dimension is the problem of rhetoric being used for self-interested and manipulative purpose, which has long been employed to discredit it against the purity of science and philosophy. However, scientists and philosophers recognize that they must employ rhetoric, at least in a limited way, to "sell" their insights and advances to the wider social sphere. The common solution to the problem of rhetoric being simultaneously good and bad is termed the "Weak Defence" of rhetoric by Lanham (1993), who states

> The Weak Defence argues that there are two kinds of rhetoric, good and
> bad. The good kind is used in good causes, the bad kind in bad causes. Our

kind is the good kind; the bad kind is used by our opponents. This was Plato's solution, and Isocrates', and it has been enthusiastically embraced by humanists ever since (Lanham 1993: 155).

While this tradition recognises the necessity of rhetorical persuasion, it presumes the "philosopher" has captured reality. To provide a thoroughgoing figurative and pathetic study of the mechanics and epistemological outcomes of the "selling" of metaphor, in our own perspective as well as those of others, we need to move beyond the arrogant presumptions of anti-rhetoric prejudiced philosophers and turn to the examination of the epistemology of rhetoric, which regards social consensus as knowledge (Farrell 1976) and states that "a worldview in which truth is agreement must have rhetoric at its heart, for agreement is gained in no other way" (Brummett 1976: 35).

While this perspective on knowledge has entered Organisational Studies (e.g. in Weick and Browning 1986; Alvesson 1993), organisational scholars have yet to address its analysis of the mechanics of figurative language to explore why some metaphors become more persuasive than others. To use the rhetorical tradition to restore and extend Morgan's radical perspectivism, and Oswick et al's (2002) argument for irony as a radical "dissonance" tactic, it is useful to more fully examine Lanham's characterization of the "strong defence" (Lanham 1993) of rhetoric. For Lanham,

> The Strong Defence assumes that truth is determined by social dramas, some more formal than others but all man-made. Rhetoric in such a world is not ornamental but determinative, essentially creative. Truth once created in this way becomes referential, as in legal precedent. The court decides "what really happened" and we then measure against that. The Strong Defence implies a figure/ground shift between philosophy and rhetoric-in fact, as we shall see, a continued series of shifts. In its world, there is as much truth as we need, maybe more, but argument is open-ended, more like kiting checks than balancing books (Lanham 1993: 156).

If we take Lanham seriously about figurative language determining truth (the cognitive metaphor theorist George Lakoff makes a similar claim (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1993; Lakoff and Turner 2009)), and accept that part of Morgan's work involved archeologically uncovering "truthful" deep metaphors of organisation, then the following suggests itself. Firstly, it supports the claim made earlier that Morgan's *Images of Organization* can be neatly divided into two. His opening four chapters evidence the metaphors that Lanham's court has already decided are good metaphors. His next four chapters introduce four metaphors that he perceives as being "equally good" as those already more widely established, trying to persuade the court that they contain useful insights and should be taken more seriously.

Morgan's method of using innovative figurative language to solve the problems of embedded figurative language can also be viewed through another of Lanham's concepts, toggling. For Lanham, human agents toggle between looking at the language and looking beyond the language. He states

> Rhetoric as a method of literary education aimed to train its students to toggle back and forth between AT and THROUGH vision, alternately to realize how the illusion is created and then to fool oneself with it again (Lanham 1993: 81).

Following the above, we can treat Morgan's work as employing radical metaphors to facilitate practitioners stepping back and examining the language they commonly employ in order to creatively solve immediate organisational issues, but expecting them to fall back into taking metaphoric language literally again at some undetermined time in the future. This fall back can be a return to established metaphor (the court rejects the plea), or a movement that accepts the new metaphor as being better (the court accepts the plea).

This process is drawn on in Sewell and Barker's investigation into how the metaphor of "teamwork as family", at first exciting, innovative and capable of solving current organisational problems, eventually becoming organisation wide

practice, and interpreted as the only way of doing things, thereby creating a set of new problems embedded in the limitations of that metaphor (Sewell and Barker 2006). Those involved in creating and concretizing the metaphor are shown to become too involved with its persuasive elaborations to see the new set of problems it creates and are thus resistant to new perspectives.

Lanham also allows us to escape from the problems of Morgan's broad definition of metaphor. If we follow the analytical and cognitive tradition inspired by Black, then we would not be interested in ornamental or pleasurable language (the substitution view of metaphor), and should only be interested when metaphor is purposive (the theoretical model building facilitated by the interaction view). Morgan's wide definition of metaphor calls us to be interested in both and reject neither. Lanham's toggling allows this.

> This is a toggle to boggle the mind. It means that the two basic theories of language are placed in permanent oscillation. Language was in origin ornamental; language was in origin purposive (Lanham 1993: 82).

Following Lanham, language is ornamental for purposive reasons (and maybe also purposive for ornamental ones!). In strategic practice, ornamental purposiveness occurs self-consciously through the masterful control of rhetoric, in which an orator employs elegantly controlled ornamental language as a precursor to the purposive action he wishes to happen.

The practice of ornamentally purposive rhetoric, situated within a "strong" view of "rhetoric is all there is", is best explained by one of the most significant rhetorical theorists of the 20th Century (e.g. Herrick 2005; Sloane 2006), the American literary critic, sociologist, poet, author, and philosopher, Kenneth Burke[14], who, taking a strong defence position, argues that rhetoric is a vicious battle, a killing field in which the only purpose is to win. Burke writes

> Rhetoric is par excellence the region of the Scramble, of insult and injury, bickering, squabbling, malice and the lie, cloaked malice and the

subsidized lie . . . We begin with an anecdote of killing [...], because invective, eristic, polemic, and logomachy are so pronounced an aspect of rhetoric" (Burke 1969: 19-20)

For Burke, any claim toward good and bad causes has no place in such a battle, as both protagonists argue that they hold the moral high ground. He states "however 'pure' one's motives may be actually, the impurities of identification lurking about the edges of such situations introduce a typical Rhetorical wrangle of the sort that can never be settled once and for all, but belongs in the field of moral controversy where men properly seek to 'prove opposites'" (Burke 1969: 26). The only thing that matters in rhetorical battle is the decision of Lanham's court that one way is right and the other wrong. What becomes important after the battle is concluded is how one reacts to subsequent evidence that the court-winning claim is actually fallible, flawed and limited while dealing with powerful others who have been persuaded that it is morally good and the best way forward.

Although, of course, a deep analysis of the techniques of persuasive argumentation are required to examine how metaphors became established in practice, Burke's analysis of the mechanics of figurative language addresses the dynamics and degree to which some metaphors, and not others, are seen, held to be or made to be persuasive and require the subversive mockery of irony as a counter-weight. This analysis occurs in his *Four Master Tropes* essay, first published by the *Kenyon Review* in 1941, but more commonly referenced as an addendum to *Grammar of Motives* (Burke 1945). In it he explicitly discusses the power of figurative language and the relationship between metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony, focusing not "with their purely figurative usage, but with their role in the discovery and description of 'the truth'" (Burke 1941: 421).[15] With this statement, Burke seems to be suggesting he is examining the construction of reality via the myriad of rhetorical techniques that surround the persuasive deployment of figurative language.

3.4   Kenneth Burke: A Rhetorical Perspective on Truth

3.4.1   Poetic and Scientific Realism

Burke's corpus is arranged around an argument that poetic and scientific languages are commensurable.[16] This counters the claims made by Black and the analytical/cognitive tradition of metaphor, in which metaphors are only deemed relevant if they have a genuine scientific worth, reversing this claim to suggest that poetic metaphor is the more powerful and relevant. Burke claims "scientific symbols, being languages, cannot be expected to lie outside the laws of language and the laws of the relation between the linguistic and the non-linguistic" (Burke to Ransom, undated).   Following this, Burke determines both disciplines are governed by the same linguistic logic. Noting that "various kinds of scientific specialists now carry out the implications of one or another of such [metaphoric] perspective with much more perseverance than that with which a 17th Century poet might in one poem pursue the exploitation of a 'conceit'" (Burke 1941: 423), Burke employs the tropes to illustrate how poetic and scientific language is commensurable, stating that

> The "literal" or "realistic" applications of the four tropes usually go by a different set of names. Thus:
>
> For metaphor we could substitute perspective;
> For metonymy we could substitute reduction;
> For synecdoche we could substitute representation;
> For irony we could substitute dialectic (Burke 1941: 421).

For Burke, poetic and scientific language is commensurable when both are viewed through a poetic perspective, with notions of incommensurability only raised when the scientific perspective dominates.

He furthers this with a discussion on action and motion. Burke argues that "motion" is the most basic element of scientism, being the most fundamental

perspective to all purely physical, autonomous processes in the universe. Burke claims that poetic realism produces better insight into human behaviour than scientific realism, because poetic realism more properly attends to action and acts and that the terminology surrounding "action" separates men from lower orders of life. Action is "motion with intent." Burke claims that motion with intent cannot be understood through scientific realism alone because it does not and cannot attend to action. For Burke, the root term of action is act, and therefore requires an analysis that includes a terminology suited to comprehending human existence, which, for Burke, is provided in poetry and drama.

When Burke refers to poetic realism, he refers to the number of perspectives of "being" that might do the object under investigation justice. For example, "plants have 'more being' than minerals, animals have more being than plants, and men have more being than animals, because each higher order admits and requires a new dimension of terms not literally relevant to the lower orders" (Burke 1941: 422). He argues that human motivation, "may, with varying degrees of relevance and reward, be considered in terms of conditioned reflexes, or chemicals, or the class struggles, or the love of God, or neurosis, or pilgrimage, or power, or movements of the planets, or geography, or sun spots, etc." (Ibid). Burke further argues that a poetic realist terminologically reduces, accepting that the reduction is a specific terminological choice taken from one of many possible perspectives. This is vital to Burke's argument. For Burke, scientific realism does not move beyond metonymy or reduction, because the metonymical process is regarded as offering "real" or "substantial" evidence. In contrast, poetic realism explores the possibilities of a chosen terminology to see if it can be used as a plausible representation of the object under investigation.

3.4.2 Burke's Mechanics of Figurative Language

Metaphor: For Burke, metaphor *per se* is empty, a term that merely notes the perspective applied to the object. This interpretation is starkly similar to

Morgan's (1980) original application of metaphor in Organisational Studies to describe the perspective of the various organisational schools. Burke writes

> metaphor is a device for seeing something in terms of something else [...] If we employ the word "character" as a general term for whatever can be thought of as distinct (any thing, pattern, situation, structure, nature, person, object, act, role, process, event, etc.,) then we could say that metaphor tells us something about one character as considered from the point of view of another character. And to consider A from the point of view of B is, of course, to use B as a perspective upon A (Burke 1941: 421-422).

It is important to note Burke's concept of character, being the person who takes a metaphoric perspective and employs it to make sense of the situation he is observing. For Burke, we are always dealing with the character or characters employing the perspective, not the perspective in isolation. That a perspective and character cannot be separated already begins to hint at the necessity for the subversion and mockery in Oswick's concept of irony that a purely analytical approach fails to address.

Metonymy: For Burke, metaphor only becomes meaningful through its metonymies, which reduce "some higher or more complex realm of being to the terms of a lower or less complex realm of being." Its basic "strategy" is "to convey some incorporeal or intangible state in terms of the corporeal or tangible" (Burke 1941: 424).[17]   To do this, the metaphor's metonymies (associations, attributes, relationships, referents, causes and effects) are conceived and collated. Burkean metonymy only processes in a downward, reductive and deductive movement, being no more than a collection of the number of ways in which the metaphor is like the observed object.[18] According to Burke's schema, if a metonymical reduction is the focus, then the temptation is to slip into a reductive claim about reality. If enough metonymies are collated, they can then be presented as "objectively" real and a substantial claim about reality, as suggested in the comparison view of metaphor and Oswick's theory of

"optimum overlap". If one is to avoid this temptation, one must move beyond the "mere" reductionist metonymy of the scientific perspective and examine how the tropes of synecdoche and irony inform persuasive claims about reality.

Synecdoche: Burke's interpretation of synecdoche clashes with Morgan's definition of metonymy as "a process whereby the names of elements or parts of a phenomenon can be used to represent the whole" (Morgan 2011: 464). This definition is not uncommon in Organisational Studies research into metaphor, or indeed in the wider cognitive and analytical field. For example, Putnam also defines metonymy as "a figure of speech in which the whole stands for its constituent parts or the language system reduces multiple elements into one whole" (Putnam 2004). Although these definitions and examples are not wrong *per se*, for Burke and the rhetorical tradition they relate to synecdoche, not metonymy. Burke's definition of synecdoche as "a figure of speech by which *a part is put for the whole* (as fifty sail for fifty ships), *the whole for a part* (as society for high society), the species for the genus (as cutthroat for assassin), the genus for the species (as a creature for a man), or the name of the material for the thing made (as boards for stage)" (Burke 1941: 426 (italics mine)). This difference in definitional approaches is widely accepted, as revealed in Lakoff's statement, "we are including as a special case of metonymy what *traditional rhetoricians* have called synecdoche, where the part stands for the whole" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 37, italics mine).[19]   That synecdoche is subsumed into metonymy, as in the cognitive/analytical tradition, would be strongly contested by Burke, for whom synecdoche, is the "basic" figure of speech (Burke 1957: 26). Burke stated he could "see synecdoches everywhere", telling his friend and publisher that synecdoche was "Trope No. 1." (Letter from Burke to Ransom, August 29, 1939 in Tell 2004). [20]

3.4.3   Synecdoche and the Mechanisms of Entrapment

The differences between Burke's comprehension of metonymy and synecdoche can perhaps be best be explained by comparing a simile to a metaphor. A simile

refers to an object being like another object, (e.g. an organisation is like a machine), whereas a metaphor regards the object as being the same as the other object (an organisation is a machine). The subtle difference can be seen as referring to the level of persuasion that couches the terms. If phrased as a simile, one is counting the ways in which a metaphor is like the object, but is not yet persuaded it is like it. If phrased as a metaphor, one is convinced of the efficacy of the image. Following the above, it might be useful to suggest that the metonymic process occurs when working out how an object is like another. Once one is persuaded, and persuades others, that the metaphor can stand for another object or domain, he shifts to synecdoche.

To illustrate the persuasive aspect of synecdoche in the Burkean frame, it is useful to examine some of Gareth Morgan's writing in *Images of Organization*. Morgan writes

> We talk about organizations as if they were machines, and as a consequence we tend to expect them to operate as machines: in a routinized, efficient, reliable, and predictable way (Morgan 2006: 13).

These expectations that a good organisation should be routinized, efficient, reliable and predictable are both metonymies (attributes and associations of a machine) and synecdoches (used to stand for the machine). A routinized organisation stands for a machine-like organisation. When scattered about common speech, they travel upwards to the metaphor, locking people into taking that perspective seriously and undermining other perspectives. Similar examples occur when Morgan talks about the established functionalist metaphors:

> ***Organism:*** when change in the environment becomes the order of the day, as when changing technological and market conditions pose new problems and challenges, open and flexible styles of organization and management are required (Morgan 2006: 43).

> ***Brain:*** we come to see that the various job, departmental, and other

divisions within an organization do not just define a structure of work activity. They also create a structure of attention, information, interpretation, and decision making that exerts a crucial influence on an organization's daily operation (Morgan 2006: 77).

Culture: daily life in an organizational society is full of peculiar beliefs, routines, and rituals that identify it as a distinctive cultural life (Morgan 2006: 117)

From the above, we can posit that organisations are routinized, efficient, reliable and predictable; need to be flexible and open to changing conditions; are influenced by decision making that shifts in attention, requires constant information and interprets conditions differently; and are full of peculiar beliefs, routines, and rituals. Reference to any of these words immediately informs us of the perspective the speaker is taking. They are parts of the perspective that stand for the complete perspective.

Compare this with the images of Morgan's next four chapters, when he argues that organisations should be seen as having repressed sexuality, being a patriarchal system, constantly fearing death, anxious, favoured playthings of children, shadows, creative yet destructive forces, autopoietic, narcissistic, egocentric, chaotic, dialectic, dominating, exploiting, hazardous, mentally stressful, radically political, and world powers (Morgan 2006: 149-315). While these images are often extremely useful in researching and conceptualizing organisations, it is a stretch to regard them as being as embedded in commonplace thinking about them. Indeed, instead of archeologically examining the embedded language of organisations, Morgan is often forced to draw on theorists working beyond Organisational Studies to source them. They are metonymies (attributes and associations that might become ways in which we think and talk about organisations), but they have not yet matured into Burkean synecdoches that can "stand for" organisations at a public "rhetoric of administration" level. However, they can and do inform what Dalton (1961) and Burns (1961) call the dual moralistic and linguistic codes of management and March and Olsen refer to as the backstage "rhetoric of realpolitik" (March and

Olson 1983). At a public or lay level we have already been fully persuaded by the former; we are still waiting to be fully persuaded by the latter. This might never happen as it could be politically inconvenient for such rhetorics to surface beyond the backstage.

3.4.4 The Structure of Synecdoche I: Binaries

For Burke, for synecdochic representation to occur and the "part stand for the whole and the whole for its parts", movement must occur in both directions, i.e. the representation is simultaneously a complex collection of reductive metonymies (e.g. an organisation as a machine is effective, efficient, rational) which, taken individually, instinctively reassemble the complex deep metaphorical concept (of organisation as machine). For Burke, a synecdoche "stresses a relationship or connectedness between two sides of an equation, a connectedness that, like a road, extends in either direction" (Burke 1941: 428). Burke explains connectedness through the concept of "synecdochic reversals", stating "I would want deliberately to "coach" the concept of the synecdochic by extending it to cover such relations (and their reversals) as: before for after, implicit for explicit, temporal sequence for logical sequence, name for narrative, disease for cure, hero for villain, active for passive" (Burke 1941: 428). This is where Burke's definition of synecdoche merges into Morgan's notion of metaphor as analogical model and Schön's surface language emerging from deep metaphors. For Burke, the upwards/downwards travelling of synecdoche, in which the part represents the whole and the whole the part, enables them to be accepted as representational. An analogical model is persuasive because it moves from the whole to the part and vice versa, with all its surface language plotted along its connecting pathway.

The idea that a persuasive terminology has a normative dualism is not unique to Burke, being prevalent in Schön's (1993) analysis of urban decay through deep problem-setting generative metaphors. Schön provides two examples, in which slums are conceptualized through the metaphors of "blight" and "natural

community." Schön notices a normative dualism that informs each metaphor. He writes:

> A situation may begin by seeming complex, uncertain, and indeterminate. If we can once see it, however, in terms of a normative dualism such as health/disease or nature/artifice, then we shall know in what direction to move. Indeed, the diagnosis and the prescription will seem obvious. This sense of the obviousness of what is wrong and what needs fixing is the hallmark of generative metaphor in the field of social policy. But that which seems obvious to the unreflecting mind may upon reflection seem utterly mistaken. In so far as generative metaphor leads to a sense of the obvious, its consequences may be negative as well as positive (ibid: 148).

Lakoff makes a similar point when discussing biconceptuality in his analysis of deep frames. In *Moral Politics*, he draws a distinction between competing deep frames of the nation as family metaphor, which draw from "strict father" and "nurturing mother" variants (Lakoff 1996: 65-142), arguing that Americans constantly draw from both models. In their analysis of metaphor and irony, Oswick and colleagues point to "oppositional dyad constructs" when investigating the culture metaphor (Oswick, Keenoy et al. 2002). The idea that "binaries" really structures thought is also supported by Lévi-Strauss (1963) and Alexander (2003), who concentrate on binaries as being a central feature of cultural codes.

Morgan's *Images of Organization* might be seen to contain comparable structures. For example, the brain metaphor might be seen to be located around the poles wise/foolish or intelligent/stupid. Organisational Studies research has certainly fleshed out these two poles. The wise/intelligent pole has led to insights regarding how an organisation learns (e.g. Brown and Duguid 1991; Brown and Starkey 2000; Snell 2002; Clegg, Kornberger et al. 2005), makes decisions (e.g. Pettigrew and Pettigrew 1973; Pfeffer and Salancik 1974; George and McKeown 1985; Singh 1986), or processes information (e.g. Tushman and Nadler 1978; Daft and Lengel 1986; Smith, Grimm et al. 1991). The

foolish/stupid pole can perhaps be seen as having been revealed in March's (Cohen, March et al. 1972; March 1976; Levinthal and March 1993; March 2006) examinations of technological foolishness, garbage can decision-making and myopic learning. Other metaphors in *Images* can also be seen in binary terms. For example, Morgan's organisations as political systems metaphor suggests a dictatorial/democratic binary, juxtaposing themes of resistant subjects struggling for freedom under authoritarian and paternal rule (e.g. in Collinson and Hearn 1994; Fleming 2005; Fleming 2005) against themes of empowerment in a more democratic model (e.g. in Calhoon 1969; Block 1988; Conger and Kanungo 1988; Williamson 1993; Zimmerman 2000; Buchanan and Badham 2008). Similar cases might be made for organisation as machine having the working/broken binary, as organism healthy/diseased, as culture primitive/sophisticated, and as psychic prison free/incarcerated.

3.4.5   The Structure of Synecdoche II: Rhetorical Inducement

Burke's concept of rhetorical inducement can be explained through the etymological root of synecdoche as provided by the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*: "from Greek *synekdochē*, from *syn-* + *ekdochē* sense, interpretation, from *ekdechesthai* to receive, understand, from *ex* from + *dechesthai* to receive; akin to Greek *dokein* to seem good". By incorporating all these suggested elements, a useful interpretation might be "a received interpretation that seems good". The "seeming good" element, akin to the Greek term *dokein,* is a vital component of Burkean synecdoche. To return to Lanham (1991), a synecdoche has been judged good by the court and consequently accepted and embedded into social consciousness.

For Burke, the adequateness of any given chosen terminology can be measured through the terminology's ability to rhetorically induce action. Burke defines rhetoric as "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions [or attitudes] in other human agents" (Burke 1969: 41). Action occurs when a human has made a motivated decision to act. For Burke, a terminology is inadequate if it cannot induce human agents to action. For example, Burke would

regard the *organisation as machine* metaphor as inadequate and deflective in some settings and for some people, because workers, a vital and human part of the organisation, are excluded from meaningful action, being conceptualized and perceived as insensible parts of the machine. However, at a managerial level (*managing an organisational machine*), where the managers are in charge of keeping the machine working and effective, technicians preventing it from becoming broken and inefficient, it induces action. A similar accusation can be made against the behaviourism-influenced organism metaphor, in which workers are expected to respond to motivational rewards as rats would in a laboratory experiment, and the managers are the laboratory technicians directing the rats hither and thither. Durkheim's the "physician" and the "patient" provides another common figurative interpretation. These metaphors are rhetorically powerful at managerial level, and have been judged good by that section of society, but flawed and inadequate at workforce level.

While the machine/organism metaphors **do** induce some people to act, their "mechanisms" may **not** induce other people to act because it neglects agency, meaning, experience of conflict, appears inhumane etc., etc. Consequently, it is perhaps better to regard metaphors not as good or bad, but as sometimes persuasive and sometimes not. It seems that Burke's concept of adequacy has to be related to the culture, audience and situation, rather than being "inherent" in the vocabulary, meaning that consideration has to be given to the forms and degrees of resonance that are being claimed to be present or absent. Although I have employed it as an illustration, the manager/worker contrast is, in reality, far too simple and "realist", and, to an extent, betrays Burke's vision.

In *Images of Organization*, the brain and culture metaphors might be seen as inducing action in workers and management. Themes of learning (e.g. in Stata and Almond 1989: 39; Druskat and Pescosolido 2002; Van den Bossche, Gijselaers et al. 2006), decision-making (e.g. in Schweiger, Sandberg et al. 1986; Cannon-Bowers, Salas et al. 1993; Larson, Foster-Fishman et al. 1994) or information processing (e.g. in Griffith and Neale 2001; Cronin and Weingart 2007; Dreu and Carsten 2007) have been applied to workers and management

through the concept of teamwork. [21]   Likewise, as late 20th Century / early 21st Century Organisational Studies research has repeatedly illustrated (e.g. in Pettigrew 1979; Deal and Kennedy 1982; Ray 1986; Beyer and Trice 1987; Dellheim 1987; Knights and Willmott 1987; Golden 1992; Martin 1992; O'Reilly and Chatman 1996; Brown 1998; Deal and Kennedy 1999; Martin 2001; Robertson and Swan 2003; Willmott 2003; McLoughlin, Badham et al. 2005; Kunda 2006), organisational members of all levels seem to be comfortable with the representation of organisation as culture metaphor.

3.5   Confronting the Persuasive Power of Synecdoche: The Burkean Ironic Perspective

3.5.1   The Tragic Acceptance of Synecdochic Fallibility

Burke claims that people's orientation towards a culture can be understood via acceptance frames, being "more or less organized systems of meaning by which a thinking man [sic] gauges the historical situation and adopts a role with relation to it" (Burke 1984: 5). Burke argues that a tragic acceptance of the normative dualism of synecdoche, perceives everything arranged through a "natural" hierarchy (see Burke 1984: 54-59, for his discussion of comic and tragic frames of acceptance). [22]   Within this tragic structure, everything is framed around good or bad actions. For example, organisational heroes might cure organisational ills and maladies, make courageous decisions, and contribute to a harmonious and life-affirming culture. Organisational monsters or villains might be part of the disease undermining organisational success, cowardly following the crowd and the primitives who will not adapt to organisational ways. Such a hero/monster dichotomy can inform managerial gurus' presentations, as illustrated in Clark and Salaman's description of guru's tales being "of miraculous strategic virtuosity, of heroic organisational turn-rounds, of battles with organisational monsters (poor quality, poor service levels, huge inventories, etc.)" (Clark and Salaman 1998: 151).

Within the tragic frame, certainly in its simplest interpretation, the heroes become exemplars for future action and the monsters get cast out as scapegoats. However, as Wess (1998: 121) notes, a

> barometer of a text's position in its culture is "tragic ambiguity." Is the tragic hero a heretic or a prophet? Is the hero purely a negative example that serves to reaffirm a hegemonic regime? Or is the hero a prophecy of an alternative regime on the horizon of history? [...] If it's easy to answer such questions, the tragedy gravitates toward either of the ends [the sacrifice of the hero or the victim]. If it's hard, it's in the ambiguous middle range.

This 'tragic ambiguity' results in inevitable compromises of implementation, which Burke terms the 'bureaucratization of the imaginative'; meaning a degree of disillusionment and sense of betrayal is soon to follow. This is followed by guilt and blame, mortification and victimization, as the search for redemption occurs. In such ambiguous implementation, any character can become the victim. For Burke, the scapegoating of individuals who might be guilty of nothing other than human qualities of foolishness, myopic vision, or mistaken direction is inherent to the tragic acceptance frame.[23]

The normative dualisms of synecdoche inform the entelechy of tragic acceptance. A key part of irony is drawing attention to how the "negative" side of the dualism plays a "positive" role, an outcome that is inevitable in "action", and, in so doing, mocks the tragic, with an emphasis on the foolish nature of ignoring its own pretensions. As Burke points out, while its normative dualisms make it inherently persuasive, synecdoche is *highly susceptible to irony* for the same reasons, as "at every point the paradoxes of the synecdochic present themselves to the critic for analysis [...] we should "ironically" note the function of the disease in "perfecting" the cure, or the function of the cure in "perpetuating" the influences of the disease" (Burke 1941: 432). Burke employs a "perspective by incongruity" to reveal these paradoxes and push a system of belief or interpretive scheme to its limits by deliberately creating effects which escape its means of formalization. As Bygrave (1993: 16) writes, the perspective by

incongruity is "a trope of translating the terms of an argument, has the aim of reconciliation; it puts the materials for tragedy under the sign of comedy."

3.5.2   Comic Acceptance and Irony as a Perspective of Perspectives

In looking at Burke's influence on the organisational theatre metaphor, Boje and colleagues write

> In the Tragic Frame the heroic agent is magnified as embodying the historical drama (e.g., Hitler and Stalin). The tragic scene is accepted by the agent (character): "what can we do, but nothing at all?" The Comic Frame accepts the feebleness of the anti-hero, caught in acts of "happy stupidity" partaking in Carpe Diem (snatching in the Ode, whatever mild pleasures are at hand) (Boje, Luhman et al. 2003: 6).

Burke explores what it means to be a comedic anti-hero of literature in actual human society and the transformative potential of such a stance. As Jordan (2005: 266) notes, Burke explores "how adherence to a 'comic frame' may correct the problems associated with maintaining certain attitudes." For Carlson, the comic frame is "the most humane frame for understanding and acting in society" (Carlson 1988: 447), considering "human life as a project in 'composition', where the poet works with the materials of social relationships" (Burke 1984: 173). Comic acceptance operates on the understanding that humanity is good, but flawed, considering social ills to be the result of "human error, not evil". It points out that those on the opposing side are not monstrous or villainous, but working towards a value they have, mistakenly or not, perceived as good.   As Wess notes in his evaluation of Burkean rhetoric, "comedy's smile demystifies without the corrosive effects of demystification that is socially disintegrative, even diminishing the demystifier along with everyone else" (Wess 1996: 85). Bygrave (1993: 17) writes "the [comic frame] implies something resolved rather than the movement of resolution." Comic acceptance recognizes that both the opposing forces and the group to which one belongs are fallible.   Whereas the tragic frame establishes a relationship of victim and

oppressor, with victims sacrificed to maintain the status quo or oppressors sacrificed to bring about a change, in the comic frame the weaknesses lie in human folly and unseen situational ironies.[24]

To shift from tragic to comic acceptance, Burke turns to irony in a move supportive of Morgan's focus on the partiality, distortion and fallibility of metaphors and his vision of developing a theoretical plurality of many metaphors. Burke claims

> Irony arises when one tries, by the interaction of terms upon one another, to produce a development which uses all the terms. Hence, from the standpoint of this total form (this "perspective of perspectives"), none of the participating "sub-perspectives" can be treated as either precisely right or precisely wrong (Burke 1941: 432).

Burke states "all the sub-certainties [must] be considered as neither true nor false, but contributory (as were we to think of the resultant certainty or "perspective of perspectives" as a noun, and to think of all the contributory voices as necessary modifiers of that noun)" (Burke 1941: 433). In Burke, tragic acceptance cannot enable the perspective of perspectives, as it acknowledges the symbolic entrapments of the representation, whereas the comic frame, standing outside one perspective as a "perspective of perspectives", is acutely aware of these tragic entrapments. As Bygrave notes, this interpretation seems to have an Olympian quality, in which "irony may become tautology; the end of incongruity is congruity" (Bygrave 1993: 68). However, he further suggests that Burke long-defended against this critique, arguing that

> The movement from 'conflict' to 'communication' is always a movement that goes back beyond the acknowledgement of competing interests... The discomfiting comfort of perspective by incongruity—or of debunking, or muckraking—requires that it be set against a synthesizing or essentializing role for the interpreter (Ibid).

Olson and Olson (2004: 27) make a similar, albeit more poetic, point, writing

> at irony's core is a "strategic moment of reversal" that takes a dialectic to
> its farthest terministic origins. Considered as a situated instance of
> perspective by incongruity, irony simultaneously suspends discordant
> meanings in a delicious moment of symbolic realization that is also the
> point farthest from symbolic resolution. Like a rubber band stretched to
> its utmost, irony captures and can prolong that point at which
> incongruous meanings are poised in mutually informing, yet unresolved
> symbolic tension.

Crable (2000: 330) puts it another way still, drawing attention to the necessity
for the perspective of perspectives to have a dramatistic quality, arguing "these
approaches [individual perspectives and synecdoches] can contribute to our
understanding of human motivation—but only when arranged synoptically, by
the dramatist". Indeed, when discussing the construction and maintenance of
the ironic "perspective of perspectives", Burke, as already noted, looks at
perspectives as if they were characters in a drama, with all the dramatic
characters possessing different interpretations of the action that, if taken
seriously, would offer wildly different readings.[25]

The strategy for living of the comic acceptance frame is informed by the tactics of
the anti-hero of comedic ironic mode literature (see Frye: 1957, to be discussed
in depth in the next chapter). It is the ironic "perspective of perspectives"
wrapped up in the comic performance of a Jacobean gallant, a Spanish picaro, a
Puck or Ariel, a seemingly foolish and minor-to-the-plot character whose jokes,
witty remarks and sarcastic asides hide a keen intellect and clarity of vision
lacking in more sober characters, and who is eventually revealed to be pulling
the plot strings all along.[26] Burke notes why and how we ignore such characters
in favour of more sober, leading characters. Burke argues that, in general, we
watch a drama through the eyes of the "most representative" character, who "has
a dual function: one we might call embodying one of the qualifications necessary
to the total definition, but is "substantial" as embodying the conclusions of the
development as a whole" (Burke 1941: 437). The desire to make the most

representative character substantial results in the dissolving of irony. Burke writes

> Irony is sacrificed to "the simplification of literalness" when this duality of role is neglected (as it may be neglected by either the reader, the writer, or both) (Burke 1941: 437).

Boje (2001) makes a similar point in his analysis of organisational ante-narratives, in which he argues that organisational reality consists of fragments of competing and contradictory figurative language drifting about, only getting reassembled into any kind of order by an organisational researcher intent on imposing some metaphorical purity.[27] Burke also notes that the dominant perspective is only temporary, pointing to the inherent tragic dimension of any social perspective, and how an ironic perspective notes that the same conditions that gave rise to its dominance will inevitably undermine it from within.

> We may state with confidence, for instance, that what arose in time must fall in time (hence, that any given structure of society must "inevitably" perish). We may make such prophecy more precise, with the help of irony, in saying that the developments that led to the rise will, by the further course of their development, "inevitably" lead to the fall (Burke 1941: 437).

To avoid these temptations, Burke notes "that only through an internal and external experiencing of folly could we possess (in our intelligence or imagination) sufficient "characters" for some measure of development beyond folly" (ibid: 432). To explain the external experiencing of folly, Burk considers that any notion of ironic superiority can only arise out of the amalgamation of the foolish attraction to synecdochic entrapments we observe in others, arguing

> "Superiority" [...] can arise only in the sense that one may feel the need of more characters than the particular foolish characters under consideration. But in one sense he can never be superior, for he must

realize that he also needs this particular foolish character as one of the necessary modifiers (Burke 1941: 435).

To explain how we experience folly internally, Burke addresses humility and superiority, explaining that the ironist remains humble because he recognizes he is reliant on these foolish perspectives to have a hope of grasping the "perspective of perspectives'. Burke writes

> True irony, humble irony, is based upon a sense of fundamental kinship with the enemy, as one needs him, is indebted to him, is not merely outside him as an observer but contains him within, being consubstantial with him (Burke 1941: 435).

For Mahan-Hays and Aden (2003: 38) this statement considers the choice an ironist must make to either "Move Up and Look Down" on society and the benighted mob, or "Be With" them, noting

> Those who choose "Moving up/Looking Down" favour a detached, superior attitude; they seek hierarchical distinctions from others and a means of positioning. Those who choose "Being With" favour an intimate, collegial attitude; they seek connections with others as a means of positioning.

The former is perspective without performance, a theoretical understanding of the figurative entrapments of human society with no means of transforming them, on par with Harvey-Brown's sociological irony, Nietzsche's Apollonian irony and Flaubert's impassive irony (see pages 26-26). The latter intermingles them both, merging the performative techniques of a facilitating comic ironist (see *Chapter Four, 4.6.3 below*) with the reflective clarity of a theoretical ironist. It is both inside and outside, a witty way of undermining and overturning perspectives in an attempt to make everything come out all right in the end.

3.6   Conclusion: Merging Perspective and Performance into Personality

By employing a Burkean perspective, it is possible to see that Gareth Morgan has employed an ironic perspective on organisations, but not an ironic performance. Morgan overviews how to make a metaphor strange by directly drawing attention to its limitations and suggests a theoretical perspective of perspectives, positioning metaphors as necessary yet fallible, distorting and flawed, and then using other equally necessary and equally flawed perspectives as necessary modifiers. Cliff Oswick has introduced performance into the picture, analysing how to make metaphors strange by employing irony as a subversive and mocking tool to draw attention to paradoxes and anomalies. However, because both Morgan and Oswick are ultimately unable to explain why metaphors induce strong beliefs and defensive reactions, they fail to adequately explore how and why the ironic performance needs to employ mocking techniques. By employing Burke, I have hoped to show how, in combination, Morgan and Oswick's work can be further developed into a sophisticated and complex understanding of the ironic perspective in organisational scholarship.

In drawing on Burke's analysis of the persuasive impact of synecdoche and the tragic 'entelechy' built into elaborated metaphorical perspectives, analysis moves from a cognitive-analysis of metaphor to analysis of and reflection on the human drama of a 'strong' rhetorical world. In adopting this perspective, it becomes clear that the cognitive-analytic focus of Morgan and Oswick only takes us so far. Irony is more than that. It informs an attitude towards and related strategies for living. Consequently, as Burke shows, and as de Man argues (2.2.1 above), irony cannot be understood merely as a trope in the same way metaphor is. It is a reflective attitude towards the conservative enthusiasm of metaphor elaboration that perceives the fallibility of metaphorical thought, the folly of becoming caught up and entrapped within it, and develops a performance that is both a means of transmitting and basis for living with such an understanding. It takes figurative language out of the laboratory and the clutches of overly enthusiastic technicians elaborating a new "metaphoric conceit" and building new theoretical models and places it in the hands of dramatic actors who must

live and cope with the fallibilities of its metaphorical insights and the folly of those who believe in them. The remainder of the thesis examines how this might be achieved.

4 Characters of the Ironic Mode in Kunda's Engineering Culture

4.1 Introduction: Kunda's Ironic Organisation Selves

In his seminal ethnography, *Engineering Culture*, Gideon Kunda introduced the concept of an ironic organisational self. Perhaps due to the American tendency to focus on a performative interpretation of irony ("being ironic", in the tradition of "verbal" or "rhetorical" irony), the ironic self has been characterized as using irony as a way of protecting an "authentic self" from the overbearing expectations of greedy institutions, either as an effective or ineffective tool of cynical rejection or means of sarcastically commenting on organisational ambiguities, absurdities and contradictions. Although Kunda can be read as influencing and supporting such an interpretation, a deeper reading of the data of *Engineering Culture* goes beyond such a theoretical straightjacket, revealing multiple types of ironists who employ irony not just to defend the self or sarcastically comment on absurdities and ambiguities, but as a strategy for authentically coping and living with them.

Employing the literary critic Northrop Frye's concept of the "ironic mode" of literature, this chapter examines *Engineering Culture* as introducing an array of characters common to the ironic mode into Organisational Studies, including "blank cypher" heroes, a range of "blocking imposters" (*alazons*) and "clever", "witty" or "wise" ironic "facilitators" (*eirons*). In particular, I wish to argue that there are four types of eirons in *Engineering Culture*:

- The *author-eiron*, indirectly commenting on the absurdity of the culture;
- The *sarcastic-eiron,* wittily commenting on the action but not partaking in it;
- The *trickster-eiron,* who employs an ironic performance to move the action forward in support of the goals of a "hero"; and
- The *wise-eiron*, who pulls the strings from behind the stage and predicts the outcome of the plot.

In noting the different types of "eironic" man in Kunda, I am following Fine and Martin's (1990) method of deconstructive ethnography, in which they examined Erving Goffman's sarcasm, satire and irony in *Asylums* (Goffman 1961a). Applying such a method to Kunda, theoretically Goffmanesque in his interest in role distance, and stylistically Goffmanesque in that his writing is a genuine pleasure to read, seems very apt. I am not, however, following Fine and Martin's focus on the multi-dimensionality of writing style, in which they argue that Goffman's chapters are written differently; some dominated by sarcasm, others by satire and others still by irony. Instead, I suggest that *Engineering Culture,* especially the 2006 revision, should be read as an ironic tragedy interspersed with comedic moments. In pursuing such a reading, it is possible to reveal how the eiron is not *just* a nihilistic game-player poking fun at organisational zealots, or a manipulative trickster setting up hubristic fools for a fall, but sometimes *also* an "authentic sophisticate" who employs ironic tricks and techniques to partake in the action without losing his sense of self or undermining his own authenticity.

4.2   The Restricted View of Kunda's Ironic Organisational Self

Kunda summarizes the ironic organisational self as somebody who has "internalized ambiguity, [made] the metaphor of drama a centrepiece of their sense of self, who question[s] the authenticity of all beliefs and emotions, and who find[s] irony in its various forms the dominant mode of everyday existence" (2006: 216). Kunda's observations on the pervasiveness of ambiguity, ambivalence, drama and cynicism reflect, and have been reflected in, a number of Organisational Studies texts. Observations on the pervasive ambiguities and ambivalences of normative programmes as "happy slavery", (Willmott 1993), and involving inescapable, overbearing and intrusive familial-like pressure to conform (Barker 1999; Gabriel 1999; Sewell and Barker 2006a), are accompanied by general observations about such phenomena as part of identity regulation in general (Alvesson and Willmott 2002), and religious-like commitments to certain management practices (Bernstein 1996; Pattison 1997) or the corporation itself (Arnott 1999). In addition, *dramaturgical and dramatistic theories* remain strong across Organisational Studies, in research on

the organisation as theatre metaphor (Mangham and Overington 1987; Boje, Luhman et al. 2003; Clark and Mangham 2004; Cornelissen 2004; Oswick, Mangham et al. 2013), management consultancy (Clark and Salaman 1998; Poulter and Land 2008), bureaucracy (Rosen 1985), management education (Leberman and Martin 2005), artistic forms of organisational theatre (Schreyögg and Höpfl 2004), and having been recently applied to subjects as diverse as business networks (Lowe, Purchase et al. 2012), change management (Badham, Mead et al. 2012), leadership (Sapounas 2010; Wilson 2013), employee performance in AGMs (Biehl-Missal 2012) and complex organisations (Clegg and Baumeler 2012). Moreover, *scepticism and cynicism* have been central themes in the work of David Collinson (1992), Catherine Casey (1995), Paul du Gay (1996), and Peter Fleming and Andre Spicer (Fleming and Spicer 2003; Fleming and Spicer 2005; Fleming and Spicer 2007) who describe workers expressing incredulity about official culture, humorously mocking any overly-enthusiastic engagement or attempts to express or design or invoke the practices, structures and beliefs that are intended to engender such an attitude.

While Kunda's "ironic self" resonates with each of these themes in contemporary Organisational Studies, when irony is mentioned, it is restricted to being a supportive tool facilitating dramatic detachment or cynical resistance. For example, Fleming and Sewell (2002) see the ironic disposition as being an instrumental element of Švejkian resistance and Fleming and Spicer have regularly positioned irony as a tool of cynical resistance (Fleming and Spicer 2003; Fleming and Spicer 2007). This restricted instrumental interpretation of irony is perhaps not surprising given Kunda's theoretical resources on irony, Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* and Wayne C. Booth's *Rhetoric of Irony,* are only presented in a footnote in which Kunda claims that, "the various relations of members and meanings and the stance members assume toward their production of versions of organisational reality resemble what Frye (1957) calls the 'ironic mode' and Booth (1974) terms 'unstable ironies'" (Kunda 2006: 275). As the chapter illustrates, Kunda's focus on Boothian unstable ironies as jokey but ultimately meaningless asides results in his interpretation of irony being informed by a restricted "Boothian" stance within Frye's "ironic mode".

Consequently, while the sarcastic-eiron character resonates throughout his work, Frye's other characterizations, while present in *Engineering Culture*, tend to be lost to its broader thematic focus on lost utopia and the gradual realizing of a dystopian reality

4.2.1 Frye's Ironic Mode and Its Characters

Frye's "ironic mode" is a particular type of narrative characterised by two key features. Firstly, traditionally characterised as "dramatic irony", is the elevation of the author and reader above the struggling hero(es)-character(s). Consequently, the author and reader know more about the action than the characters themselves. Secondly, there is a clash between utopian hopes, promises and aspirations, and dystopian realities and potentials. The character-heroes grapple with an attempted realisation of utopian hopes, frequently failing to understand their situation or the consequences of their actions. In ironic tragedies the character-hero falls, rejected by society and collapses into a dystopian reality. In comedies, the character-hero finally triumphs, being accepted into society and realising some aspect of their utopian dreams.

In ironic mode drama, there are three core character types. Firstly, there is the hero of the drama, who is "inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity" (Frye 1957: 34).[28] Such heroes are consubstantial with the readers, who feel they would be in the same situation if the norms of greater freedom (i.e. reading the text rather than being the subject of the text) were removed. Examples might be Doctor John Watson, frustrated and confounded by Sherlock Holmes' extraordinary abilities, or P.G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster, forever at the mercy of the manipulations of his aunts. Consequently, the nominal hero of the ironic mode is often, although not always, a "blank cypher", not particularly aware or even very interesting. This is contrasted with a range of far more colourful supporting characters, such as Sherlock Holmes, Professor Moriarty, Irene Adler, Jeeves, Bertie's formidable aunts and range of ridiculous friends. It

is they that significantly influence the plot unwinding around the hapless narrator.

As the above suggests, the ironic mode is more concerned with the rich array of supporting characters rather than with the hero or narrator himself. One character type is the aware "eiron" or "self-deprecating cognoscenti", who either make commentaries on the performance or assists the character-hero. I have employed some definitional terms to better differentiate between Frye's brief analyses of the types (Frye 1957: 173-175). The *trickster-eiron* either exercises his wily ways to facilitate the "blank cypher hero's" progress, or is the hero in his own right, often portrayed as a cunning and elegant "rake" achieving his way in the text. The *wise-eiron*, often an older figure, pulls the strings from behind the stage and emerges as the key manipulator towards the end of the drama. The *sarcastic-eiron* does not participate in the action, making negative, cynical and sarcastic comments from the side. Although all these figures can and do use performative irony, parody and satire, for the sarcastic eiron it is his or her sole function/activity. If, for the moment, we regard the "eirons" as voices within the text, then we can also regard the author's voice as that of another "eiron", who, self-deprecatingly disavowing any knowledge other than that allowed through observation, crafts out a drama in which the absurdities of the situation and foolishness of the characters are crystal clear to the sophisticated, attentive reader.

Arrayed against these "eironic" figures, are the "blockers" – alazons (boastful imposters) - who self-confidently proclaim the utopian vision, seeing themselves and others as realising the ideals, while denying or refusing to give voice to questions, contradictions, downsides or discontents. In Frye's analysis, these take the form of the heavy father figure, the boastful soldier, the obsessed pedant, and the learned crank.

Alazons (Boastful imposters)	• Senex iratus (heavy father figure) • Miles gloriosus (boastful soldier) • Learned crank • Obsessed pedant
Eirons (Self-deprecating cognoscenti)	• Author-eiron (commentator) • Sarcastic-eiron (commentator) • Trickster-eiron (in the action) • Wise-eiron (in the action)

Figure 4.1: The Characters of Frye's Ironic Mode

4.2.2 Kunda's Sociological Interpretation of the Ironic Mode

If we apply Frye's treatment of the "ironic mode"[29] to help analyse Kunda's *Engineering Culture*, we uncover a drama in this classic form. In terms of dramatic plot, we find utopian pronouncements of the normative regime and uncover dystopian consequences of burnout, drunkenness, work/life imbalance, an ongoing background of uncertainty and anxiousness, and a total to partial loss of a coherent sense of self and purpose. We have, in our cast of characters, the "alazons": the cultural commentators, the heroic executives, and the human resource professionals extolling the virtues of the utopian dream, and unaware, unable to cope with, or repressing any awareness of, its downside. Kunda's drama is also clearly within the author/reader ironic mode, with the author revealing (and the audience witnessing) the unwitting actions of the character-heroes as they pursue their utopian dreams, urged on by the alazons, yet having to grapple with the often unvoiced and frequently unrealised downsides. Where the situation becomes more complex, however, is in Kunda's treatment of the hero in the ironic mode, and the eirons.

For Kunda, the character-heroes are divided into two types. There is a tragic "failing self", who suffers from "burnout" attributed to "loss of the required capacity of self-management: maintaining boundaries and managing role distance" (Kunda 2006: 198) and a "successful self" "founded on control of the

balance of role embracement and role distancing and the ability to maintain and display an air of ambiguity" (ibid). In making this analysis, Kunda explicitly draws on Booth's concept of "unstable" irony, which treats irony purely as a performative tool. Kunda documents his "successful" character-heroes as employing this tool, but does not restrict the critique to irony as rhetoric, but rather views the character-eirons as some kind of "unstable ironic" self – as he puts it, "an ambivalent, fluctuating, ironic self, at war with itself and with its internalized images of self and other" (ibid: 212). While he documents ambivalence and the use of irony as a performative tool, he provides less detail on the nature of the "self" wrestling with this ambivalence and employing such a tool. As a result, the reader is arguably led into a tragic interpretation of these character-heroes by two cultural "background assumptions" (Alexander 1987) in the American ironic tradition. These are, firstly, Booth's (1974) critique of "unstable irony" as an inferior and suspect performative tool reflecting, arguably, an "anti-rhetoric" strand in Western philosophical thought (Lanham 1993; McCloskey 1994); and secondly, an established resonant critique of the "soullessness" of an inauthentic performative self, reflecting an embedded Western "anti-theatrical prejudice" (Barish 1981), and exemplified in the purported inner emptiness of Whyte's (1957) "organisation man", Riesman's (2001) "lonely crowd", Maccoby's (1976) "gamesman", Lasch's (1978) narcissistic "gamesmen" and "corroded" characters, and Sennett's self-destructive "ironic man" ((1998: 116).

In Frye's terms, it is as if the "sarcastic-eirons", who traditionally stand at the side, have become the tragic character-heroes. In Kunda's analysis, however, it is a sarcastic-eiron with a difference. While Frye's sarcastic-eiron is a purely negative and cynical figure making comments from the side, Kunda's "Boothian" anti-hero embraces as well as distances him/herself from the new corporate culture, so "both attachment and detachment are evident, positive and negative emotional orientations are simultaneously expressed, and constructing a self is a problematic and disjointed endeavour." (Kunda 2006: 215-6). The ultimately negative Boothian spin remains, however, in the representation of this character type as involved in an "unstable" "problematic and disjointed endeavour", as an

organisational self "who question[s] the authenticity of all beliefs and emotions" (Ibid: 216). What Kunda's "Boothian" influenced deployment of Frye neglects, however, are the two other eironic characters in Frye's pantheon - the "trickster" and the "wise" eiron. To address this gap, I will employ Frye's discussion of the dimensions and characters of the ironic mode as an analytical lens through which one can read *Engineering Culture*.

4.3 The Dimensions of Frye's Ironic Mode in Kunda's Engineering Culture

4.3.1 1992's Engineering Culture: Utopian Dreams and Dystopian Fears

Frye's ironic mode is concerned with a frustrated apocalypse (from the Greek *apocálypsis*, meaning un-covering), in which a disclosure of knowledge, at first perceived as revelatory and emancipating, is revealed to be deceitful and tyrannous. The ironic mode examines the fear of human society falling back into barbarism and tyranny, enlightened aspirations forgotten and achievements turned to dust through hedonistic pursuits and self-interested actions. Frye explains the ironic mode fearing "the world of the nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion; the world as it is before the human imagination begins to work on it and before any image of human desire, such as the city or the garden, has been solidly established; the world also of perverted or wasted work, ruins and catacombs, instruments of torture and monuments of folly" (Frye 1957: 147).

Kunda presents micro and macro variations on this theme; a concern about the legitimacy of the promises made by the strong culture movement supported by a comparison with his experiences as an Israeli citizen struggling to make sense of Israel's relationship with modern American and conservative Zionism. Writing at the height of the strong culture movement, Kunda is motivated to produce a balanced, sober and sceptical response to the "massive outpouring of promises [...] made in the name of the high-tech way of life—of a new era, new work organizations, a new man and woman; of huge profits, futuristic innovation,

94

humane working environments, and happy, productive workers" (Kunda 2006: vii). Kunda's scepticism is centred on questions of whether the new form of organisation is an enlightened representation of enhanced freedom at work, or the emergence of a novel, dark and manipulative type of tyrannical authoritarianism. He states

> On the one hand, we are afforded apocalyptic visions and dark warnings of tyranny, domination, and oppression. On the other hand, we find images of utopia and promises of an organisational society without discontents: a "you can have it all" world that fulfils the dream of release from the constraints of limited opportunity (Kunda 2006: 223).

Within this utopian/dystopian frame, Kunda investigates the degree to which the experience in working in such a culture is productive, creative and emotionally rewarding or one of mental suffering and marginalization. Kunda parallels these concerns with his personal experiences as an Israeli citizen facing the dream and threat of America, the "dangerous temptation either to 'Americanise' Israel or, more drastically, to commit the ultimate betrayal and emigrate" (Kunda 2006: 239).[30]

4.3.2   2006's Engineering Culture: Faded Faith and Self-Interested Hedonism

When discussing his inspiration for his theory of modes, Frye acknowledges the metahistorical theories of Vico, Toynbee and Spengler.[31]   Writing "I have never been very clear about the shape of the history of literature, apart from the shape of history in general", Frye acknowledges that Spengler "provided the basis for the conception of modes", especially the idea of organic cultural growth and aging (Frye 1976: 113). This debt is explicit in Frye's claim that "such modes tend to succeed one another in historical sequence" (Frye 1957: 366). Although I will more fully deal with metahistory in *Chapter Five*, it is worth noting here that some metahistorical theorists see ironic consciousness emerging as a culture based on religious piety is succeeded by one characterized by self-interested hedonism.[32]   Kunda gives his own particular spin on this idea of a

developing "ironic-hedonistic" stage in his portrayal of the state of managerial development that has occurred *since* his documentation of the ironic selves at Tech. As he writes:

> over the last two decades a new, radically different managerial paradigm seems to have gained ascendancy in American managerial rhetoric. Instead of the corporate culture terminology and its image of the organization as a value-driven community of work based on long-term affiliation and loyalty, one finds the market as a root metaphor for organizational life. Here, the organizational world and its employee relations are described as a system of exchange in which employers and employees contract with each other on a temporary and limited basis, and loyalty from both sides is reduced to notions of maximization of efficiency, productivity, profit and income. Instead of the powerful images of love, marriage, family, indeed even religion, used by proponents of the cultural paradigm to justify strong and long-lasting connections between employers and employees, we find an imagery of hedonistic and self-serving individualism, resting, it seems, on mutually beneficial, yet nonbinding one-night stands (Kunda 2006: 230).

The rise of hedonism and self-serving individualism, as observed by Kunda and being increasingly documented by organisation scholars such as Peter Fleming (see *Chapter Five*), is located within this greater metahistorical framework informing Frye's theories. Kunda's 1992 character drama seems to be situated in the early stages of the fall, in which an awakened ironic consciousness is revealing the inadequacies of the apocalyptic promise but has yet to significantly undermine it. In contrast, his 2006 revisions hint at a more developed dystopia of fallen leaders, collapsing institutions and self-interested egoism.   As Frye (1957: 147) notes, as religious piety fades into ironic consciousness society becomes "held together by a kind of molecular tension of egos, a loyalty to the group or the leader which diminishes the individual, or, at best, contrasts his pleasure with his duty or honour." He states

one individual pole is the tyrant-leader, inscrutable, ruthless, melancholy, and with an insatiable will, who commands loyalty only if he is egocentric enough to represent the collective ego of his followers. The other pole is represented by the pharmakos or sacrificed victim, who has to be killed to strengthen the others. In the most concentrated form of the demonic parody, the two become the same (Frye 1957: 148).

The 2006 version of *Engineering Culture* can be read as a demonic parody, in which the CEO of Tech (the "name" of the researched organisation), Sam Miller, is eventually sacrificed to strengthen the greater Tech good. Focusing on *Engineering Culture* purely as the tragedy of Sam Miller does not, however, do Kunda's elegant writing or multi-dimensional observations justice. As Frye notes, there are two interpretive distinctions of the ironic mode, the "tragic" and the "comic". If the hero becomes isolated from society, then the mode is tragic irony; if accepted, then the mode is comic irony. Although it is far easier to read *Engineering Culture* as an ironic tragedy, there are comic elements that can prompt a more nuanced interpretation.

4.4 Engineering Culture as Ironic Tragedy with Comic Interludes

4.4.1 Ironic Tragedy in Engineering Culture

A tragic interpretation of *Engineering Culture*, in which the heroes are condemned to failure, isolation and a possibly dystopian future, is the more "obvious" one. Frye writes

the central principle of tragic irony is that whatever exceptional happens to the hero should be causally out of line with his character. Tragedy is intelligible because its catastrophe is plausibly related to its situation. Irony isolates from the tragic situation the sense of arbitrariness, of the victim's having been unlucky, selected at random or by lot, and no more

deserving of what happens to him than anyone else would be (Frye 1957: 40).

There are two themes in ironic tragedy, the fallen leader and the isolated individual. As noted above, *Engineering Culture* can be read as the "fall of a leader (he has to fall because that is the only way in which a leader can be isolated from his society)," which "mingles the heroic with the ironic" (Frye 1957: 37). Initially, Sam Miller informs the central moral purpose of the entire organisation, wanting to build an engineer's playground permanently imbued with an innovative, start-up mentality and a creative mindset, producing beautiful and technically excellent products that make a significant difference to wider society. Miller's motivation for founding Tech is framed by his desire for promoting the aesthetic qualities of technical innovation, stating

> In the university nobody cared. I wanted people who wanted to be artists. So we started Tech (Kunda 2006: 113).

He further demands that Tech makes a significant social contribution, its goal not

> just to make money or just to sell technology, but rather to do something which is unique and make an important contribution to our customers. Our mission, our contribution to society, our vision, is to offer to society our technology, which we see as being the answer to the major problems of the world in this area (Kunda 2006: 60).

Miller has a tendency to wax lyrical about Tech's greater contribution to society, stating in his opening address to new employees that

> We almost have a moral obligation to society. We owe it to society to do it. We told them what to do; now we must show them how! What is most important is where your heart is (Kunda 2006: 73).

Tech was already beginning to struggle, hinting at Miller's eventual fall from

grace, when *Engineering Culture* was first published (Kunda 2006: 228). The fallen leader motif fully resonates in Kunda's 2006 revision. He reveals how Miller, once described as one of the leading entrepreneurs of the 20th Century, started to be damned by critics for his poor leadership style, inadequate management skills and foolish cultural vision, eventually resigning from the company he had founded and led for over thirty years in a last desperate act to try and keep it alive. Tech further declined in his absence, remaining unprofitable, then downsizing, before eventually being taken over by a company that was a start-up when Tech was at its peak (Kunda 2006: 229).

Engineering Culture could also be read as the ironic tragedy of the isolated individual, revealed through examples of individual employees discarded and burnt out by the culture's demands. For Frye, the victim of an ironic tragedy is

> neither innocent nor guilty. He is innocent in the sense that what happens to him is far greater than anything he has done provokes, like the mountaineer whose shout brings down an avalanche. He is guilty in the sense that he is a member of a guilty society, or living in a world where such injustices are an inescapable part of existence (1957: 40-41).

The reader, sympathizing with the plight of the victim, turns on the society itself, wanting to challenge it and destroy it, so such pointless tragedies can no longer occur. With the tragic hero undone and many tragic victims dead, divorced, suicidal or otherwise mentally ill, perhaps that is Kunda's point?

Kunda provides a stereotype of the ironic victim in his description of Rick, who, burnt out and drinking heavily, was removed from his position as a manager of a failing project. Sitting in front of blank computer terminals and silent phones, Rick

> appears to feel used, betrayed, manipulated, even oppressed: living in an "aquarium," constantly watched, driven to drink. If one wished to make a case that the culture is a guise for a benign yet invasive tyranny, he would

99

be a prime example. Yet even as he expresses the pain of his situation, he is concerned with finding another job at Tech, plans to stay, expresses a certain gratitude to the company for providing help and tolerating failure, and cannot refrain from making an ironic observation about the company - the hallmark of successful membership. Indeed, he has made his burnout and alcoholism quite public. His personal suffering is an indication - to himself and to others - of the lengths to which he is willing to go in his desire to succeed, to contribute to the company, to adopt the member role (Kunda 2006: 19-20).

Other examples of the victim appear in the section on *Failing Selves*, in which employees suffer burnout, experiencing alcoholism, insomnia, mental and physical illness, divorce and suicide (Kunda 2006: 198-204).

4.4.2 Ironic Comedy in Engineering Culture

It would be a stretch to read Engineering Culture as a comedy. Given the fall of Sam Miller and the broken victims described above, the overall plot is undoubtedly tragic. However, that does not preclude some brief comic interludes. Frye suggests there are three comic themes in the ironic mode; the expulsion of a malevolent pharmakos, the absurd undermining of snobbery by a clever outsider, and the mocking of misplaced sentimentality.

Frye notes that "in studying ironic comedy we must start with the theme of driving out the pharmakos from the point of view of society" (Frye 1957: 40). In ironic comedy, the scapegoat (or pharmakos) is often a manipulative character who, through underhanded scheming, tries to prevent the hero from realizing his goals. Frye points out that the sophisticated audience of an ironic comedy will "realize that murderous violence [of the malignant pharmakos] is less an attack on a virtuous society by a malignant individual than a symptom of that society's own viciousness" (Frye 1957: 48). It is possible for such a reading to emerge in Kunda. He draws attention to the darker side of the culture, as "highly

competitive, hard, merciless, and dangerous" (Kunda 2006: 200), referencing the tactics of deliberately inducing burnout in other members of the culture, writing that "'setting up' - deliberately causing someone to fail - is a well-known and often used tactic in the political battles between peers" (Kunda 2006: 201). As one manager reveals

> They are out to get you, sharpening the knives. You are a violinist, and if the string breaks, that is it; you've had it. You are as good as lost. […] there are people nipping at your heels, holding a gun against your head (Kunda 2006: 200).

Whereas a naïve reading sees blacker-than-black villains obstructing whiter-than-white heroes, a sophisticated audience condemns the society whilst enjoying the trickery of the setup and, recognizing that the pharmakos is both a victim and symptom of societal norms, "forgives" him for his transgressions.

Secondly, in "the comedy of manners, the portrayal of a chattering-monkey society devoted to snobbery and slander […] the characters who are opposed to or excluded from the […] society have the sympathy of the audience" (Frye 1957: 48). In such comedies, the absurdity of the society is revealed by illustrating how it treats the, in comparison, noble outcasts, being already driven out or never to be accepted pharmakos. Kunda draws attention to marginal members, who are not constrained by ideological role demands, and temporary workers, who are "fully exempt from membership and its deeper implications" (Kunda 2006: 209). Kunda develops sympathy for these characters by revealing their near invisibility, the mind-numbingly boring and often humiliating routine of their work and the near impossibility, even if they become full members, of throwing off their previous background. He refers to secretaries displaying semi-visible and "easy-to-ignore versions of the "secretary's lament": poems, comic strips, and sayings that depict the annoyances and grievances of secretarial life" (Kunda 2006: 206), "people hav[ing] a mindset against the secretaries" (Kunda 2006: 208) and secretaries describing themselves as "peons" (Kunda 2006: 209). Temporary workers are described by full members as uncooperative, disloyal,

and "just not Techies" (Kunda 2006: 209), unnoticed, dirty and replaceable. Despite their marginality, Kunda illustrates how office cleaners can mock the artificial cheerfulness of Tech culture and induce sheepish recognition by questioning displays of earnest involvement (Kunda 2006: 211-212). Kunda further induces sympathy for the excluded temps by illustrating how a temporary secretary, who had been working at Tech for two years, burst into tears when she did not receive a Christmas turkey from Tech, despite doing exactly the same job as contracted employees (Kunda 2006: 213). The accepted culture is made to look absurd through this author directed sympathy, in which the already-excluded pharmakos are dignified, whereas central culture members are foolish and vainglorious.

Thirdly, in "ironic comedy directed at the melodramatic spirit […] one notes a recurring tendency on the part of ironic comedy to ridicule and scold an audience assumed to be hankering after sentiment, solemnity, and the triumph of fidelity and approved moral standards" (Frye 1957: 48). There is certainly a degree of melodramatic attention to heroic morality and sentimental emotionality revealed in Kunda's research into the senior management team's formal and informal discussions of Tech and its culture. For example, Sam Miller, states

> We're told that in many religions, maybe particularly Christianity, humility, searching, the pilgrim looking, is the model of life. In Peters' book *In Search of Excellence*, his answers are sometimes too simple, but the title is interesting: the search for excellence. In every part of the company, every one of us, we're still just pilgrims looking (Kunda 2006: 63).

The Vice-President of Human Resources similarly drifts into melodramatic tones, exhorting Tech employees "to follow the first rule, which at High Technologies is to do what's right, the honest thing in all situations" (Kunda 2006: 64). In such a comedy, audience members lusting after sentimental morality are the targets. To ironicise the sentimentality, it is necessary for more sophisticated audience

members to laugh at and mock at statements the more naïve take at face value. Kunda's final chapter has large sections in which sentimental statements about the excellence of Tech and its culture are sarcastically mocked or satirized by the internal audience, the lower level manager and employees (Kunda 2006: 160-216). If the sophisticated external audience is convinced by the mockery of the internal characters, then the ironic interpretation of the executives and managers as sentimental, hubristic alazons is achieved, making them the should-be-driven-out pharmakos without the author-eiron having to give his own judgment on the matter.

4.5 The Characters of the Ironic Mode I: Heroes and Alazons

4.5.1 The Hero as a Blank Cypher

As already noted, the hero of ironic mode literature is either a "blank cypher", whose life is at the mercy of external forces beyond his control, or, as a trickster eiron, somebody clever and witty enough to stop those forces from consuming him and attain some kind of personal goal. In *Engineering Culture*, Kunda frames the character and performance of the hero in terms of two discourses. On one hand, he presents the organisational hero as artistic, plural, dramatic, elegant, nuanced, witty, and self-consciously aware. He is capable of creating "artistic depictions of the self" through a "collage constructed of a variety of materials" (Kunda 2006: 197), possessing a "controlled self-consciousness", an "appropriate and timely use of an ironic stance, and the ability to shift frames and stances", which are all "considered signs of elegance" by other employees (Kunda 2006: 157). Such elegance manifests in a "smile, a raised eyebrow, a dramatic pause, [or] a well-placed word", appreciated by an "audience adept at reading such nuances and typically impatient with disruptions or eager for scapegoats" (Kunda 2006: 107). I will discuss this more "elegant" or "witty" hero in a later section on the organisational eiron.

This elegance discourse is juxtaposed against a "bondage, absurdity and frustration" discourse, in which Tech employees are portrayed as fighting a never-ending and ultimately unwinnable battle with the darker elements of

103

organisational life. In this discursive representation, "the authenticity of their own (and others') experience is simultaneously prescribed and cast in doubt: life as theatre becomes an all-encompassing reality: and the ability to establish a life and a self independent of the corporation's influence is diminished" (Kunda 2006: 225). For Kunda, the hero at Tech is always treading a fine line that he demarcates as lying between these two discursive representations of their role i.e. an organisational existence that is "an active and artful construction, a performance, a tightrope walk, a balancing act of organizational reality claims, fluctuating between contradictory modes of relating to the organization and always faced with the threat of burnout, or the exposure of its own illusions" (Kunda 2006: 216).

The "blank cypher hero" of the ironic mode, albeit one tinged with some trickster or sarcastic tendencies, is captured in Kunda's description of Tom:

> Many at Tech would consider Tom a standard success story, a living affirmation of "the culture" and the claims of its proponents. On the face of it, he appears to have successfully incorporated the member role. The company and his work seem to be central to his sense of self. He works hard and seems to enjoy it. He is emotionally committed. He considers himself and is acknowledged to be, self-directed, capable of "making things happen," and in need of little explicit supervision. He sees the freedom as a source of creativity and opportunity, beneficial both to him and to the company. Income is important, not only in material terms, but also as a symbol of recognition and inclusion. Yet, as Tom's recollection of his burnout episode suggests, there is a darker side to life at Tech, and its signs are never too far from the surface. For Tom it has perhaps receded into the past, now no more than a war story and even a source of pride. Nevertheless, he appears at times wary and watchful, even cynical or ironic (Kunda 2006: 18).

Tom is a "blank cypher hero", employed as an example of a successful project manager (34, 37, 92), consultant and trouble-shooter (41), potential manager

(42), and strong-minded critic, advocate and member of the culture (50-52).[33] However, having been a central character, he virtually disappears from the text after page 52, his role completed.[34] Whether he survives is not a central concern. What does become central is the vast array of supporting characters who frame, facilitate and challenge the hero's attempts to maintain an elegant balance between becoming a hubristic, organisational zealot, treated as a fool by the witty masses, or burning out and suffering addiction, divorce or suicide. The societal expectations that constrict and construct the hero are transmitted through the alazons, who exhibit a one-dimensional faith and pride in a certain way of doing things, which, in consequence, presents almost insurmountable obstacles to the hero. In *Engineering Culture*, this "one best way" originates in the CEO's vision, gets re-expressed by the board and management team, validated by academic and popular studies, and hammered home by corporate trainers and human resource teams.

4.5.2 The Senex Iratus (Heavy Handed Father Figure)

The vision, philosophy or religion of Tech is centred on its CEO, Sam Miller, seen as the originator of the culture who preserves its ethos and actively promotes its ideology. Kunda notes, "Sam Miller prides himself on the company's flexibility and ability to adapt to the rapid and unpredictable changes that are characteristic of the high-tech industry" (Kunda 2006: 257). His presence is everywhere; in recorded messages at official events, on video monitors dotted throughout the organisation, in the company magazine, and the wider press (Kunda 2006: 50-53, 59-65, 84, 87, 113). As Kunda notes he is regarded as being firmly in control, "a legend in his time" and "Tech personified" (Kunda 2006: 27 & 84).

This all-encompassing presence has a darker side, with the press characterizing him as a dominating figure, and the threat of going to him used to put the fear of God into underperforming managers and employees. His heavy-handed domination manifests when his vision is expressed in less than praiseworthy terms as "slogans" and "the party line" (Kunda 2006: 173), or when Miller

105

interferes with production, thinking nothing of "personally redesigning products before they are shipped, or of intervening in the most nitty-gritty details of product development" (Kunda 2006: 28).   One manager tells Kunda "I've threatened people with talking to Sam Miller. It works!" (Kunda 2006: 111) and another "steps back against the wall, raises his arms, and remains for one second in the crucified pose, recognized by all as the penalty for tangling with Sam" (Kunda 2006: 140). This fear of reprisal can influence business decisions, even when the only source is unsubstantiated rumour, with a project kept open and funded because "Sam Miller has been overheard to mention his interest" in the technology (Kunda 2006: 37).

4.5.3   The Miles Gloriosus (Boastful Soldier)

Senior management exhibits similar levels of pride (Kunda 2006: 61-68).   One vice-president tells Kunda "my vision of a beautiful company is one where individuals, when they go home at night, feel that they have really made an impact, that they have been able to accomplish something, and they feel proud of themselves and proud of the company they work for" (Kunda 2006: 66).   A senior manager takes this even further, stating

> Have you ever had the experience of going to the corner store and being asked by the proprietor, "Where do you work?" If you say Chipco or Caltech, chances are the proprietor will say, "Oh, they are good companies!" But if you say High Technologies, chances are he will say, "Oh, that's a great company!" and you get a little chill of pride that runs up and down your spine because you know that there is something that sets us apart from the rest. And in that difference lies greatness and the potential to be unique (Kunda 2006: 66).

Similar examples are dotted throughout the various Tech handbooks and guides. One senior Vice President even employs a military metaphor when he discusses how to motivate the workforce, referring to them as being "in the trenches" (Kunda 2006: 5).

106

4.5.4   The Learned Crank

Although there are no examples of the Learned Crank[35], as a specific persona, Kunda notes the tainted voices of experts and academics (Kunda 2006: 77-87). When analysing the internal voices of expertise, Kunda notes that they "present what appears to be a relatively independent perspective, a "scientific" description of the company in which the ideological facade is acknowledged and made to creak a little, common-sense knowledge and everyday terminology are used, and moralistic exhortations are toned down, if not eliminated" (Kunda 2006: 77). However, he tempers this by illustrating the partisan perspective, pointing to how management funds and censors inquiries, how findings complement and substantiate management's objectives and ideas, and how experts demonstrate their knowledge by quoting Tech heroes and high-status outsiders (Kunda 2006: 77-78). Academic research on Tech is also presented through a tainted lens, firstly by Kunda's scepticism about its promises (Kunda 2006: vii), and secondly, despite its claimed descriptive neutrality, by its focus on revealing the "naturalness" of the family metaphor and the effectiveness of developing strong emotional ties between employees and the organisation (Kunda 2006: 78-79).

This is extended by Tech's use of the more popular managerial literature, which claims that "rich nurturing culture[s]" result in excellent organizations (Kunda 2006: 80), demonstrates that Tech's "fetish for reliability" and "quixotic zeal" for quality are desirable traits (Kunda 2006: 81), and argues that cultures that invoke strong beliefs and feelings will, without question, enhance performance and economic success (Kunda 2006: 83). Likewise, press cuttings from business periodicals, local newspapers and high-tech trade magazines illustrate that, despite repeating images of pain and anarchy, Tech is "sleek", "streamlined", "a threat to competitors", "doing well", employing "fiercely loyal" staff working with a "missionary zeal" whilst still maintaining "a balance between the social part of one's life and the work part of one's life" (Kunda 2006: 84-87)

4.5.5   The Obsessed Pedant

Much of the alazonry in Tech is displayed through the obsessed pedantry of "senior management, [which] with the help of staff members charged with expressing their managers' ideas, has gone through numerous iterations of proposal and discussion and spent many hours debating the appropriate formulations [of Tech's philosophy] - a process somewhat cynically referred to as 'wordsmithing' by those who are sceptical of the corporate 'love of wisdom'" (Kunda 2006: 261). Pedantry also manifests through overt culture-loving displays and studies that provide in-depth detail of the formal and informal rules and regulations of Tech and its culture. The persona of the obsessed pedant is Ellen Cohen, the resident "culture expert."   Much of Ellen's job is to document the successes of the culture.   This documentation takes the form of highly detailed points or lists about the day-to-day experience of working for Tech. She also arranges culture boot camps and workshops. She explains:

> "I'm funded to do culture now. Some people didn't believe it had any value-added. But I went off and made it happen, and now my workshops are all oversubscribed! I'm a living example of the culture! Now I do a lot of work at home. Isn't this company super?" (Kunda 2006: 6)

Her obsession with how the senior management frame the culture is revealed in her rapt attention to their formal presentations and related jargon, when she notes down "super quotes", jargon sayings and corporate buzzwords (Kunda 2006: 105). This enthusiasm is juxtaposed with the reactions of two engineers, who refer to the same speeches being sleep inducing, interminable propaganda (Kunda 2006: 105).   Indeed, Ellen's enthusiasm is often perceived as incongruous and discomforting, even in formal presentations about the culture.

> "We're looking at behaviour, at people. What is the characteristic of people at Tech?" She waits, marker in hand, with a warm, inviting-looking smile, nodding in anticipation, perhaps indicating the signs of affirmation she is looking for. Her question hangs. No answers. Some coffee sipping.

"You feel like you've all been chosen, right?" she says, nodding her head more vigorously and still smiling. Still no replies. The stony silence highlights the incongruity of her demeanour, but she persists. "What else? What are people like at Tech?" (Kunda 2006: 110).

When, in the same presentation, Ellen begins to espouse the "We are a Family", no lay-off policy, she is aggressively challenged by a girl working at corporate, who argues that nobody in the senior management really believes that stuff and are guilty of in-fighting and refusing to take responsibility. Ellen cuts her off with yet another paean to the excellence of Tech when juxtaposed against any of the alternatives (Kunda 2006: 111-2).

4.6   Deepening Kunda: Organisational Eirons in Engineering Culture

There are two types of eiron in the "ironic mode", an "external commentator" eiron and the "in the action" eiron. "External commentator" eirons do not take any part in the plot itself, instead revealing how the actions of the characters, while perhaps seeming logical to the characters themselves, are in fact absurd and foolish. "In the action" eirons are characters in the play that can perceive the action from a more elevated perspective than the alazons or "blank cypher hero" and can thus facilitate his journey, or, in the case of the trickster eiron hero, plot their own successes.

There are two strong external commentaries in the text; Kunda's own commentary on the unintended consequences of strong culture programs, and that of the Tech members who poke fun at those taking the culture too seriously and/or the absurdities of the culture itself. The supposed difference between these two commentaries can be explained through Booth's theory of stable and unstable irony (Booth 1974). Kunda provides the stable irony, an intentional, covert, stable and finite attack on strong culture programs that reveal them to be creating precisely the opposite conditions to those that were intended. The members provide the unstable irony, employed by Kunda as evidence that the strong culture programs were producing ambivalent, ironic selves, which were

also seen as sarcastic, dramatized attacks against the absurdities of the culture by those partaking in the action but not believing in it.

Frye regards the "in action" eirons, especially the "trickster" variant, to be relatively well-rounded characters (unlike the sarcastic-eirons, whose only function is to poke fun). Although Kunda does present a number of examples of such character types, his use of Booth's "unstable irony" restricts the ironic actions of members merely to witty, sarcastic commentaries on Tech's culture. Consequently, he fails to attribute to them a more aware ironic consciousness that melds an elegant ironic performance with a tempered ironic stance, tending to treat them as manipulative Machiavels or naïve theoreticians, rather than the central facilitating characters of the ironic mode.

4.6.1 Kunda: The Author-Eiron

Frye notes that a central eiron of the ironic mode is the author of the fiction.[36] For Frye, the ironic fiction-writer

> deprecates himself and, like Socrates, pretends to know nothing, even that he is ironic. Complete objectivity and suppression of all explicit moral judgments are essential to his method. Thus pity and fear are not raised in ironic art: they are reflected to the reader from the art. When we try to isolate the ironic as such, we find that it seems to be simply the attitude of the poet as such, a dispassionate construction of a literary form, with all assertive elements, implied or expressed, eliminated (Frye 1957: 40-41).

Kunda is not being ironic in the sense of saying one thing and meaning another, but ironic in his perspective, revealing the fallibility and folly of the "unwitting victims" via a morality tale that "exudes" values, whilst refraining from being moralistic in any direct way. Kunda is a craftsman rather than creator; renouncing rhetoric, moral judgment and cultural idols, retreating fully from the text, making "the minimal claim for his own personality and the maximum for his art" (Frye 1957: 60) and crafting out "tiny flashes of significant moments" which

reveal the meaning of the culture in its entirety (Frye 1957: 61). He avoids direct statements and makes no predictions, juxtaposing images without making assertions about their relationship and regarding his audience as "an initiated group aware of a real meaning behind an ironically baffling exterior" (Frye 1957: 61).

 Kunda's unwillingness to directly influence ongoing plotlines at Tech is further revealed in his confessional, when he refers to himself as an "unstructured observer" (Kunda 2006: 241), expresses relief that his "promised feedback session never materialized, forgotten or considered unnecessary by management" and notes that he "did not stay in touch with any of the people [he] had worked with in the field" (Kunda 2006: 247). Likewise, his unwillingness to take a stance is revealed, when, on re-evaluating *Engineering Culture*, Kunda asks his reader to interpretively fill in the blanks.

> I have no doubt there are many other ways to read this book and interpret what is said in it. The text and its significance are now in the hands, perhaps minds, hopefully hearts of its readers (2006: 236).

What opinion the author-eiron might hold is revealed in the quality of the interpretation of the text, i.e. the quality of the reader, supporting Frye's argument that "the sophisticated irony *merely states*, and lets the reader *add the ironic tone* himself" (1957: 41 (italics mine)).[37] Although Kunda's sophisticated ironic perspective thus informs *Engineering Culture*, from another point of elevation, it might be interpreted as being relatively non self-reflexive about his own fallibility and folly (as detailed in Woolgar's (1983) and Latour's (1983) critiques on Brown's (1977) theory of sociological irony (See *Chapter Two, 2.2.2 above*)).

4.6.2   The Sarcastic-Eiron

Frye regards the sarcastic-eiron as a relatively underdeveloped character whose role is merely to poke fun at the foolish actions of other characters, doing little to

advance the plot and generally just operating as comic relief. This type of eiron is, however, the central eironic figure in *Engineering Culture*, appearing in four forms; through permanent artistic displays bemoaning the stupidity of organisations in general and Tech's management in particular, via cutting comments about the overenthusiastic embrace of the culture, accentuating the perceived gap between "creative" engineers and non-engineer types, such as sales, marketing and management, and those who wittily draw attention to the darker side of working for Tech.

The overarching sarcastic attitude to the management of high-tech organisations, and Tech in particular, is revealed through comic strips, clever sayings and ironic take-offs of Tech's slogans posted on office walls of non-managerial class employees (Kunda 2006: 195). Alongside these humorous comments and pictures is a more sophisticated, and anonymous, critique of the Tech management model.

> On a filing cabinet just outside the entrance to the office someone has placed the "management model." It is a plastic toy in which little penguins appear to be climbing up a mountain. It could be activated by pouring water onto the penguin track, which would make the little penguins move slowly up the mountain and then slide down in an endless circle. Above it a large sign says: "Management model. Makes a lot of noise, climbs Heartbreak Hill, and gets absolutely nowhere." To that someone has added: "I know. But don't you just love to watch?" (Kunda 2006: 195).

Others are less circumspect and openly critique the message of senior vice-presidents, drawing attention to the meaninglessness of their platitudes and the lack of content of their rhetoric.

> Prominently posted in front of the office is a personalized form letter from a senior vice-president thanking the recipient for contributing to the success of a sales event. The recipient, an engineer, adds in a scrawl: "What kind of nerds run this company? I was only there for a few hours.

112

No wonder Tech stock is down!" Posted next to it is a copy of a recent Engineering newsletter. On the front page is a lead article by a VP calling for excellence. It has been circled and a yellow note attached: "Tech's answer to Chiptech's Journal of R&D" (Kunda 2006: 195).

Similar attitudes towards management's obsession with the culture occur in and around formal boot camps and culture workshops. Some employees refuse to go, regarding the formalization of culture as "happy horseshit" and "the old song and dance" that you hear about anyway (Kunda 2006: 98). Others who do go object to the over enthusiasm of the presenters and other participants, whispering their barbed commentary to others sitting nearby and pleading that the presenter will "Gimme a break!" (Kunda 2006: 99). Critique can also surface in the formal space, as revealed when Ellen Cohen tries to get feedback on what culture actually means. Although the general response is uncomfortable silence, one young engineer replies "Fungus. I had a culture for my senior science project. But my dog ate it" (Kunda 2006: 109-110)

The supposed difference between the culturally worshipped "creative" engineer and non-engineer employees also gets satirized in these ritual presentations. For example, when one speaker begins her question by stating "I'm not an engineer, but . . . ,", she quickly gets cut off by the presenter squealing "So get out!" in an exaggerated high voice, which Kunda interprets as "an attempt to parody accepted practices and points of view" (Kunda 2006: 117). This differentiating between engineers and others plays a big part in another presentation, in which Mike, a salesman, employs a highly dramatized presentation style that cheekily undermines the supposed pretensions and assumptions of the engineers.

First, he comments on his three-piece suit: "You can tell I'm from Sales, right? I'm dressed to the image," and then jumps to the side, pretends to be an engineer looking at Mike the salesman, and pulls a face suggesting laid-back disdain mingled with feigned horror. "Jerk!" he says to the audience. He laughs quickly, and leaps back into his earlier position (Kunda 2006: 118).

113

Later, after suggesting that some of the engineers should think about becoming salesmen "he jumps aside, imitating a distressed engineer: 'What?! And compromise my soul? Lie?? Never!!!! I'd rather die!' (Kunda 2006: 121).[38]

Darker sarcasm emerges when members jokily refer to the possibility of burnout, losing one's job, political manoeuvring and the risk in standing up to the higher echelons of management. The tendency of Tech employees to backstab project managers is commented upon by employees and manager alike when John, a project manager, approaches his project team in the middle of an animated discussion, to be met with a dramatically stage whispered "Quiet, don't talk, John is coming!" When John responds: "Careful, you'll burn me out!" he and his team laugh (Kunda 2006: 96). In a similar incident, two at conflict project managers face-off with the following exchange:

> Jack, I'd like a one-on-one with you soon; we have some stuff we need to do. Off-line."
> "I don't have my calendar here."
> "Oh. The old 'I forgot my calendar' routine, huh?" (Kunda 2006: 132).

Similarly dark images of organisational chaos and stressed, long-suffering employees are surfaced in a formal presentation, when the presenter opens his presentation with a personal testimony, stating, "I have been fired once, unfunded twice, reorganized twice. I was moved like a piece of old meat, and when I finally found something..." There is no need to finish the sentence as someone from the audience, aware of the nuance, shouts out "They cancelled it!", provoking laughter in recognition (Kunda 2006: 124).

There is even an organisational-wide acceptance of the sarcastic-eiron. At the end of a presentation highlighted by conflict between the presenter and a project leader, the program manager calls for a lunch break. Noting that the ritual frame that checks the potential for unencumbered commentary is now absent, she tells employees to "Have those conversations that you were dying to have", which provokes gentle laughter (Kunda 2006: 147). Likewise, playful or openly

114

subversive newsletters are circulated, and Sam Miller's vision has been light-heartedly, if respectfully, spoofed in a document entitled "The Sayings of Chairman Sam" (Kunda 2006: 261).

4.6.3　The Trickster-Eiron

For Frye, the trickster-eiron plays an integral part of the plot. He has been represented in many forms; the tricky slave in Roman plays, the rascally confidence man of Renaissance literature, the gallants, rakes and wits in English Reformation and Jacobean plays, the Spanish gracioso, Beaumarchais's Figaro, the clever detective of modern fiction, typified by Sherlock Holmes and Columbo, the clever valet, typified by P.G. Wodehouse's Jeeves, the "nerdy hero" in mid-1980s US comedies such as *Porky's* and *Revenge of the Nerds*, or the "witty anti-hero" of the *Police Academy* series, and in "spirit of comedy" characters such as Shakespeare's Puck and Ariel. These characters are either entrusted with hatching the schemes which bring about the hero's victory" (Frye 1957: 173) or, as heroes themselves, cheekily outwitting the villains and achieving their rightful reward. For Frye the eiron as facilitator of the "blank cypher hero" and the heroic trickster eiron are different characters, but in Kunda, as already suggested, they can be seen as being different aspects of the same person.

Kunda provides a couple of examples of a trickster-eiron disarming powerful others with his fake ignorance and controlled façade. For example, one employee attributes his success in handling his managers to never showing he is feeling anything, keeping a straight face and confusing them. Another employee puts on a highly dramatized dumb-engineer act:

> I'm gonna go into that meeting and put on my dumb-engineer act. Ask them for help with the people issues, the politics, ask for advice. [Opens eyes wide, parodying the performance.] 'Gee, I dunno. . . .' And be very grateful. 'Thanks guys!' By the time I'm through, they'll recommend I do what I've already done. And with Sam-well, he is very manipulative, but I've learned the most effective way to deal with him. I'm totally naive. I

115

say: 'I don't understand, Sam. Didn't you say that. . . . I thought that. . . . Explain it to me, Sam.' It disarms him. And he isn't used to it. Everybody is so afraid of him! (Kunda 2006: 186).

Kunda, supporting a tragic reading of *Engineering Culture* in which the penchant for deceitful manipulation is a symptom of the wider culture, tends to colour such actions with dark undertones, illustrating how the same employee reveals he is equally comfortable in using fake praise and false enthusiasm to manipulate perceived competitors into failing:

And in the meanwhile I'm positioning Paulson to be the proponent for the X-101 strategy. I slap him on the back on every opportunity, tell him how great he's doing, how excited we all are with what he is doing-and I'm distancing my organization from the project. So when it blows up, you know damn well who Sam is going to turn on!" (Kunda 2006: 186).

For Tech employees, this type of character is perceived as being common to any high-tech firm, being the "type of individual who is aggressive and involved, looks loyal, puts in a lot of time, but underneath the surface is self-serving and owes allegiance only to himself" (Kunda 2006: 185). The ability to recognize and cope with such characters is seen as a sign of hard-won experience or maturity. One employee notes,

Before I take anyone's advice, or react to yelling and screaming, I think about what their agenda is. The people skills are important here; I learned that the hard way. I'm suspicious. All of a sudden my boss is being a good guy, being nice. He's learning to put on that act. That means I have to be even more careful now (Kunda 2006: 185).

If the examples above position the trickster-eiron as a heroic figure, the following reveals the trickster-eiron as facilitator to a "heroic" other (in this case his manager).

My job is to read and interpret the numbers. I keep track of them all, and then I whisper in his ear when to get angry. People start getting midnight calls. We put the fear of God in them. It spreads the pain through the system. Nail a few people to the wall and drive a spike through their heart (Kunda 2006: 183).

Although such an interpretation has Machiavellian overtones, it is equally applicable to the actions of the trickster-eiron in helping a heroic character achieve noble objectives (in this case achieving organisational goals) by doing all the dark backstage deeds for him.

4.6.4   The Wise-Eiron

Whereas the sarcastic-eiron focuses on a particular performative approach and the trickster-eiron uses dissimulation to deal with immediate situations, the wise-eiron can be read as focusing on the long game. The wise-eiron is a retreating paternal figure, often an old man, who withdraws from the action at the beginning and returns to sort out the situational chaos of the protagonists at the end. This character, while arguably present, is not well sketched in Kunda, being limited to the "withdrawn" voice of a few of his documented characters. Indeed, the wise-eiron probably cannot fully emerge in the original 1992 publication of *Engineering Culture*, only in the 2006 version, in which Sam Miller has resigned, Tech culture is no more and some wise employees can be seen as having accurately predicted the outcome. Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing if they managed to save themselves and others before Tech's demise.

In Kunda's analysis of cognitive distancing (Kunda 2006: 178-181), he states that disputing the ideology "suggests that one is "wise" to what is "really" going on". Kunda notes that "being 'wise' implies that despite behaviours and expressions indicating identification, one is also fully cognizant of their underlying meaning, and thus free of control: autonomous enough to know what is going on and dignified enough to express that knowledge" (Kunda 2006: 178). "Possible" wise-eirons can be interpreted via three types of cognitive distancing (Kunda

2006: 178-181); the cynic, who interprets organisational rhetoric as part of a wider-scale manipulative tyranny; the detached theoretical observation of the pragmatist, who perceives the culture as an imperfect attempt to capture the confusing reality of a high-tech organisational environment, and the "commonsensical" cultural critic, who has a vision of how the culture might be made better and more effective.

Wise cognitive distancing takes on a cynical flavour when the uniqueness and supposed morality of Tech is exposed as being a cynical façade.   In one such example, the acceptable practice of going to Sam Miller to complain about your manager and expose his failings undermines the very morality Miller preaches

> You can go into Sam's office if you're not happy about a supervisor. I've heard of someone who has done it. Of course, nothing might get done. In this group, 'do what's right' means 'make your manager visible' (Kunda 2006: 178).

The wisdom of not buying into the "morality" of the culture emerges in the epilogue, when Kunda points to the recent emergence of market-orientated cultures, "characterized by low commitment, the absence of loyalty, and high mobility" (Kunda 2006: 233).

The more pragmatic flavour interprets Tech Culture as "a way to control people, to rationalize a mess, to get them to work hard, and feel good about it", being "part truth and part lie" (Kunda 2006: 179). A similar interpretation contrasts the official line about Tech being informal and relaxed with the actuality of a hierarchical status system.

> The company may appear informal, loose. Open offices, first names. But there is a very distinct status system here. People always ask who you work with. They won't ask you your title or your rank, or look at the size of your office. Once they have you placed, they will treat you accordingly (Kunda 2006: 179).

The wisdom of maintaining this interpretation is revealed in the post Miller reorganisation of Tech, when the new president announced "from now on definitions of authority and responsibility will be clearer at all levels of the hierarchy" (Kunda 2006: 228).

The cultural critic draws parallels between American culture and the culture of Tech. Tech can be accused of either imposing or betraying American values. For one engineer, Tech's Christian Puritanism is at odds with its multi-cultural workforce (Kunda 2006: 179). For another, the company is not being hard-nosed enough, importing too many touchy-feely group orientated practices, which are interpreted as harming the company's long-term viability.

> I have a mixed reaction to layoffs. Sam Miller says things like 'moral obligation' to employees, but it isn't consistent with American culture. American culture is individualistic. No layoffs are suited to the Japanese. It's consistent with their culture: paternalism, traditions. It's a long time coming getting rid of poor performers. The question is: is it worth betting the company? He feels it is big enough to absorb the slack. He feels he has responsibility; I respect him for that. But I respectfully disagree. Making a profit and carrying the deadwood don't go together (Kunda 2006: 179-180).

Once more, the wisdom of such a stance is revealed in the epilogue, when Tech, unable to replicate its previous technological innovations "began to close or sell unprofitable units and to implement, for the first time in its history, and with the enthusiastic approval of the investment community, a process of extensive "downsizing"" (Kunda 2006: 229).

4.7   Conclusion: A Sophisticated View of Ironic Organisational Men

As Frye notes (1957: 47), the sophisticated audience of ironic mode literature are informed by "major arts of the ironic age, advertising and propaganda" which

"pretend to address themselves seriously to a subliminal audience of cretins, an audience that may not even exist, but which is assumed to be simple-minded enough to accept at their face value the statements made about the purity of a soap or a government's motives" (1957: 47). Frye queries if any such people exist, hinting that a central element of *sophisticated audience irony* is the degree to which it protects people from becoming "cultural dupes" (Hall 1980) in the real world through reflexive decodings of texts, situations and actions. As the sections on trickster and wise eirons suggest, some members of Tech are simultaneously actors acting out the expected plot and an ironically sophisticated audience evaluating their performance and the performance of others, similar to Boal's spect-actors (Boal 1992: xxx)[39]. Indeed, Kunda (2006: 158) refers to members' evaluating each other and themselves. For Frye, some type of critical reaction is expected from an audience with even minimal ironic sophistication, who "realizing that irony never says precisely what it means, take[s] these arts ironically, or, at least, regard[s] them as a kind of ironic game" (1957: 47). Indeed, outside of the enthusiastic alazonry of senior management, which Kunda covers in his chapter on ideology, it is difficult to interpret the reactions of any of Kunda's subjects as being uncritically accepting of all the structures and practices of Tech culture.

By writing in the ironic mode, Kunda automatically assumes his audience is sophisticated enough to "get" irony. His expectations of the qualities of his readership parallel his celebration of cynicism, scepticism, doubt, and detachment when part of an academic perspective on a modern organisation. In Kunda we see the merging of two types of Frye's eiron, the author-eiron who reveals the absurdity of a situation that frustrates and bonds lesser men, and a wise seer who, foreseeing the oncoming storm, indirectly turns our attention to the building clouds, facilitating our potential escape if we are clever enough to deconstruct the warning. The paradox we are facing is how the self-same cynicism, scepticism, doubt, and detachment, celebrated as academic achievement and good readership, is perceived in situ as producing sarcastic, nihilistic, manipulative eirons poking fun at sentimentality and zeal. Kunda asks us to be ironically sophisticated at a perspective level, to see the storm

approaching, but not to employ irony at a performative level to cope with its battering wind, as if that is somehow lessening.

If we accept that organisational eirons are game-playing nihilists sarcastically poking fun and a dark force that should be expelled, then the cynicism, scepticism, doubt and detachment that Kunda celebrates at an academic level will surely perish at the organisational level. The expulsion of the organisational eiron, coolly at home in the booming confusion, manipulative politics and hot emotionality of organisational life, whilst eliminating self-interested Machiavellians and game-playing nihilists, would ultimately leave us with no choice but to passively hope for a new mythology of organisations and another apocalyptic promise, reliant on the next organisational guru's assurances. Rather than launching ourselves into a never-ending spiral of naïve visions undone by inevitable cynical realization, our hopes and aspirations dashed against an all-too human reality, it might be more beneficial to treat the eiron as not just the deceitful dissembler or mocking nihilist, although we must be wary of both, but also a sophisticated in situ critic of organisational living.

5 The Temper of the Times: Irony and Decadence in the work of Peter Fleming

5.1 Introduction: From Incivil To Restless Decadence

The previous chapter explored the nature of the "ironist" in modern organisations by drawing on Northrop Frye to re-examine Gideon Kunda's concept of the ironic self. Kunda's study was, however, conducted in a strong culture environment that, as Kunda (2006: 230) himself notes, is often absent in contemporary organisations. This chapter extends the discussion by locating major debates and discussions of irony and ironic characters in what I have termed a "decadence discourse". Within this discourse, discussions of irony and ironists are located in broader views of stages or cycles of societal development. From the classical writings of Giambattista Vico onwards, this discourse views irony as a common stance in societies developing or dominated by a decadent turn. Decadence is not, however, simply equated with a collapsing, de-energized culture, but is also energized by some characters expressing great concern about the loss of possibilities in that culture. Irony, in this discourse, is structured by and used to frame both an incivil reaction to decadence, in which nothing is taken seriously other than self-interested desires, and a restless reaction, in which a critically charged, seriously playful irony is employed as a challenge to the former limited and negative approach.

The focus of the chapter is on how Peter Fleming's body of work documents the dimensions of decadence in contemporary society and organisations, focusing in particular on the manifestation of artificiality, curiosity, egoism, and perversity. The chapter seeks to locate, and expand upon, Fleming's contribution, by turning to the work of philosophers of the "decadence discourse", most notably Giambattista Vico, but also Frederick Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard. Each of these philosophers located the emergence of irony as an accompaniment to societal decadence. Within this view, each positioned irony in binary terms as, on one hand, a purely negative force that destroys cultures, manifesting in nihilism and self-interested manipulation, yet, on the other hand, as a deeper,

critical and serious temper that facilitates the culture's ongoing survival by playfully challenging its excesses and extremes. Drawing on a detailed examination of Fleming's work, the argument of this chapter is that the surface appearance of a critical organisational study focused on the limited, negative and "bad" irony of "incivil decadence", needs to be counter-balanced by an appreciation of the "other side" of irony, as the balanced, poised or nuanced response of an "authentic restless ironist" confronted by this "incivil decadence". By setting current debates on irony within this long standing discourse, the chapter highlights both the historical character and location of irony and its interpretations, as well as the intertwining of both "negative" ("bad irony") and "positive" ("good irony") characters and stances.

5.2 Irony in a Decadent Age

> Irony? There is little wisdom either in recommending irony as a way of dissociating from the world or in demystifying any such stance, when irony is the most documented feature of postmodernist consciousness.

This quote, taken from Cohen and Taylor's introduction to the second edition of *Escape Attempts* (Cohen and Taylor 1992: 13), frames the issues in this chapter. Although I agree with the claim that irony is the most documented feature of postmodernist consciousness, I would contend that this documentation focuses on a limited interpretation of irony, driven by the particular performative stance of the American interpretation of irony. As discussed earlier, a broader interpretation has historically challenged this more limited version of irony. To comprehend how these interpretations clash and interrelate, it is necessary to move outside the discourse on irony as a postmodern phenomenon and situate it within an established and cyclical "decadence discourse" viewing irony as a battle between a "balanced" and rampant "limited" irony in what is purported to be a declining civilization.

Decadence commonly refers to luxurious self-indulgence and is often used to describe a decline due to an erosion of moral, ethical, or sexual traditions. For

our present purposes, however, we will be adopting the alternative view outlined by Jacques Barzun in his "stunning" and "peerless" (Everdale 2000) opus, *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life, 1500 to the Present*,

> All that is meant by Decadence is "falling off." It implies in those who live in such a time no loss of energy or talent or moral sense. On the contrary, it is a very active time, full of deep concerns, but peculiarly restless, for it sees no clear lines of advance. The loss it faces is that of Possibility. The forms of art as of life seem exhausted, the stages of development have been run through. Institutions function painfully. Repetition and frustration are the intolerable result. Boredom and fatigue are great historical forces (Barzun 2000: xvi).

In *Decadence: A Philosophical Inquiry*, Joad (1948) supports Barzun's notion of energetic or active decadence in his claim that "experience is valuable or is at least to be valued for its own sake, irrespective of the quality or kind of the experience", resulting in the flux of the experience becoming an end value in life (Joad 1948: 64). The decadent, weary of his own time, searches for new and original experience, whilst pining for a former age of tradition and traditional values.[40] Likewise, Cohen writes

> The Decadent [...] wages a guerrilla war against the dominant culture. He defines himself through conflict and contrast. [...] He expresses his contempt for prevailing values and sensibilities and asserts his sense of superiority and the amorality of art. This aggressive stance toward society conveys [his] alienation. At the same time, however, the attack, often in the form of intimate self-revelation, suggests both engagement in one of its most direct forms, and powerful communication, rather than the silence of separation (Cohen 2012: 215).

Barzun argues that the two great forces that generate tensions in this discourse are primitivism and emancipation. On one hand, cultural critics begin to

postulate that "the savage with his simple creed is healthy, highly moral, and serene, a worthier being than the civilized man, who must intrigue and deceive to prosper" (Barzun 2000: xvi). Such feelings have been expressed by what Barzun and many others have termed the cult of the Noble Savage, which, Barzun claims, significantly pre-exists Rousseau, and has been re-expressed, for example, in Edward Carpenter's *Civilization: Its Causes and Cure,* and the flower power movement of the 1960s (Barzun 2000: xvi). On the other hand, the emancipatory potential of the civilized society is praised and pursued. Barzun claims "Techno-science and democracy […] grip people's imagination and inflame their desires. The whole world wants, not freedom, but emancipation and enjoyment. And the West is the corner of the globe whose peoples, borrowing freely from all others, have shown the way of achieving the one and given the means of possessing the other" (Barzun 2000: 799). Feelings about the nobility and honour of primitive people are juxtaposed against what Frye (1957) terms the "ironic arts" of a techno-scientific, democratic, civilized, urbane society, which is also accompanied by misdirection, deceit, dissembling and Machiavellian trickery. Barzun claims that this tension "is shown by the deadlocks of our time: for and against nationalism, for and against individualism, for and against the high arts, for and against strict morals and religious belief" (Barzun 2000: xv).

The recognition of this tension – a broad societal version of what Barley and Kunda (1988) refer to as "cultural antimonies", and by Gratton, Voigt and Erickson (2007) as the "cultural fault-lines" within a community – helps to illuminate not only the ambiguous and contradictory dynamics of "decadence", but also the appreciation and role of irony and "ironic characters" in the modern society of organisations. In a negative and restricted view of an "incivil decadence", rampant irony is perceived an absolute infinite negativity, "spin all the way down" (Purdy 1999: 10) undermining the value system that underpins established culture without offering anything meaningful in its place. Within this broader view of "restless decadence", and the tensions and contradictions within it, this "negative" view is accompanied by a more "balanced" irony, reacting against the negative self-interested and nihilistic performative irony of the

125

decadent culture, yet aiming to create a space in which ironic techniques are employed in the pursuit of authenticity, sincerity and emancipation.

5.3 Contemporary Contestations in the Interpretation and Use of Irony

As this section illustrates, the different interpretations of irony in contemporary society can be broadly seen as contributing to this "incivil v restless" tension. On one hand, irony is treated as evidence of the decay of cultural values and the erosion of civilization. On the other hand, it is interpreted as evidence of the energetic, sophisticated and powerful resistance to these decaying and erosive forces. While irony does not offer solutions to the problems of decadence, it creates space for energetic, creative and critical reactions to emerge.

5.3.1 The Simple Negativity of "Bad" Irony

> Postmodern irony is allusive, multilayered, pre-emptive, cynical, and above all, nihilistic. It assumes that everything is subjective and nothing means what it says. It's a sneering, world-weary, *bad* irony; a mentality that condemns before it can be condemned, preferring cleverness to sincerity and quotation to originality. Postmodern irony rejects tradition, but offers nothing in its place (Winokur 2007).

This "bad" interpretation pervades much contemporary commentary on irony. In reflective popular media debates, although postmodern irony was conceived of as a rehabilitative agenda and a weapon against hypocrisy (Wiley 1997), David Foster Wallace argues it has become oppressive and institutionalized, illustrating how "the ability to interdict the question without attending to its subject is, when exercised, tyranny. It is the new junta, ushering the very toll that exposed its enemy to insinuate itself" (Wallace 1993: 68). In a conversation with Larry McCaffery, Wallace states that "irony's useful for debunking illusions, but most of the illusion-debunking in the U.S. has now been done and redone … now what is there to do? All we seem to want to do is keep on ridiculing the stuff" (McCaffery 1993: 147). He positions postmodern irony as the cause of the contemporary

predilections of "sarcasm, cynicism, a manic ennui, suspicion of all authority, suspicion of all constraints on conduct, and a terrible penchant for ironic diagnoses of unpleasantness instead of an ambition not just to diagnose and ridicule but to redeem" (ibid: 146-7).   This reduction of irony is popularly lamented elsewhere. For example, the American writer, Phoef Sutton (2000), argues that we should:

> Pity poor irony. Irony used to be a rebellious stance, a way of looking at an ordered world through a cracked mirror, a way of bursting balloons filled with pompous hot air. But what does one do when irony becomes the norm? When there is no orderly world to mock? When everybody wants to be Groucho and no one is willing to play Margaret Dumont? You end up with a world in which everyone wants to be the hippest one in the room, in which comedy becomes so superior and distant it seldom stoops to being funny. A world in which irreverence itself becomes meaningless because nothing is revered. A world like the one we're in now.

From this perspective, postmodern irony enables individuals to coolly avoid issues of importance, acting as a substitute mechanism for personal involvement in civic, religious or moral arenas.   The distance and critical self-reflection that attaches to postmodern irony leaves the practitioner of irony caring about little more than self-appearance. Purdy describes the post-modern ironist thus:

> The ironic individual practices a style of speech and behaviour that avoids all appearance of naïveté – of naïve devotion, belief or hope. He subtly protests the inadequacy of the things he says, the gestures he makes, the acts he performs. By the inflection of his voice, the expression of his face, and the motion of his body, he signals that he is aware of all the ways he may be thought silly or jejune, and that he might even think so himself. His wariness becomes a mistrust of language itself. He disowns his own words (Purdy 1999: xi).

For the postmodern ironist, nothing is taken seriously and everything treated ironically except the stance of taking everything ironically itself. Purdy observes that the essence of this type of irony is "a quiet refusal to believe in the depth of relationships, the sincerity of motivation, or the truth of speech-especially earnest speech". The ironist takes for granted that the self is "all spin, all the way down" (ibid: 10). Consequently, "an endless joke runs through the culture of irony, not exactly at anyone's expense, but rather at the expense of the idea that anyone might take the whole affair seriously" (ibid).

This perspective has also pierced academia. In detailing a debate between academics drawn to postmodern themes, Gergen (1991) illustrates how this form of irony is clever and fun, yet simultaneously tedious and nihilistic:

> … one of the participants was not only thinking about the topic; he was [...] 'living it'. For him, every logically coherent proposal put forward by his companions was but a new toy. Each was a target for puns, wordplay, or ironic caricature. For a time the deconstructive antics were enjoyed by all. But *slowly,* as the luncheon bore on, it became clear that no 'serious discussion' was possible. This customary form of pursuit, while fulfilling to many scholars, was 'out of bounds.' To underscore the postmodern dilemma most poignantly, it became apparent that should all participants 'go postmodern' in this way, we would be reduced to an empty silence. The postmodern player exists, after all, in a symbiotic relationship with 'serious culture.' Without others to play the part of 'foolish fools', there are no opportunities for the heroic one. (Ibid: 193-4)

As Gergen's example illustrates, this extreme postmodern interpretation of irony ironically makes serious irony defunct, merely a method of being "cool" and "witty" that lacks a cutting edge (Hutcheon 1993) or a Socratic interrogation of the truth.[41] As Kierkegaard notes "irony does not necessarily mean that the earnestness is excluded" (quote taken from Cappelørn and Deuser 2006: 259).

Organisational research has seemingly fallen into the same perspective on irony as a "bad" thing, with "undesirable" instability a central theme. For example, Kunda (2006) introduced organisational ironists elegantly balancing displays of engagement and sarcastically noting organisational absurdities, but having no method of creating stable alternate meaning (Kunda 2002: 158). Although those following Kunda have not consistently employed the term irony to describe not fully engaged yet not fully resistant employees, they have tended to interpret such employees as somehow lacking, suggesting that while employees can perceive the paradoxes and contradictions of organisational life, they are incapable of dealing with them. For example, Knights and McCabe's (2000: 1504-1507) bewildered employees struggle to deal with a perceived gap between management's exhortation to embrace teamwork and their day-to-day working existence because they cannot see the difference between the formalized focus on the expectations of behaviour and the way they have always behaved. Casey's (1995) capitulated selves confuse the disciplining and corporate shaping of self with their pursuit of self-directed interests and goals, and Collinson (1992; 1994) illustrates how factory workers employ working-class machismo to mock "effete" managerial actions but have no useful alternate interpretations.[42]

5.3.2 The Balanced Interpretation

There is, however, another interpretation or strand of irony, in which those who cannot "get" or "do" irony are seen as lacking in sophistication or intelligence. This is often reflected in the clichéd critique of Americans, that they "don't do irony." For example, the American travel writer, Bill Bryson (1998), after years of living in the UK, relates how his Britishly attuned irony went completely over the head of his American audience and how he 'could have kissed' a New York cab driver who replied to the query "Are you free?", with "No, I charge like everybody else." In a possibly apocryphal story, the British actor, Tim Curry, on being asked what he most missed about the UK, instantaneously replied, "irony" (Duffy 2004). The song "Ironic" by the Los Angeles based Canadian Alanis

Morisette was universally derided for not featuring one example of irony in her list of ironic situations.[43] For Christina Odone (2001), the failure of Americans to appreciate irony is because they

> don't like humble pie: they regard themselves-collectively and individually-as Number One; and they approach their selves, their countrymen, and every institution with a corresponding degree of seriousness. History, economics and geopolitics have schooled them in self-importance: every little thing they say, every little thing they do, has worldwide implications. When Americans slip on a banana skin, the rest of the world breaks its legs. Conscious of their global role, Yanks uphold this earnest ethos.

Many commentators have questioned the stereotyped portrayal of the "non-ironic" American dupe versus the "ironic" "sophisticated" Brit or European. As part of this debate, a more nuanced and multi-faceted notion of irony and its benefits as well as drawbacks has emerged. At one level, as Zoe Williams argues, America not doing irony is "absolute moonshine, since the consummate and well-documented superiority of US telly over British telly is largely due to their superior grasp of irony" (Williams 2003). According to the writer, actor and comedian, Simon Pegg, many American TV shows, whilst having "their own cultural and emotional specificities" "display a highly sophisticated sense of irony" (Pegg 2007).[44] Pegg sums up the differences between the cultures, saying, "it is true that we British do use irony a little more often than our special friends in the US. It's like the kettle to us: it's always on, whistling slyly in the corner of our daily interactions. To Americans, however, it's more like a nice teapot, something to be used when the occasion demands it" (Pegg 2007).[45]

A Google Scholar search for "American irony" and "British irony" reveals a similar theme. British irony is interpreted as the sensibility that helps "Britons deal with their collective sense of loss: loss of empire, loss of the moral high ground, loss of economic and military credibility, loss of ignorance" (Brassett

2009: 221; see also Steele 2010). Texts on American irony are far more varied in the phenomenon it addresses, explaining why it is a useful perspective to employ on American history (Niebuhr 2008), democracy and politics (Dye, Schubert et al. 2011), regulatory reform (Horwitz 1991), ethnicity (Chock 1987), slavery (Owens 2008) and federalism (Kaczorowski 1996). The discussions of American irony reveal it to be a phenomenon reflecting and reinforcing unexpected ambiguities in American life and history rather than being simply understood as culturally absent or embedded as a hardwired coping device. Willett (2008), for example, argues that irony and laughter is a vital but often unrecognized and unappreciated component of American liberty.

The tensions circling irony within America were captured in the aftermath of the World Trade Centre attack, when the prominent American critic Richard Rosenblatt (2001) proclaimed "One good thing could come from this horror: it could spell the end of the age of irony." The feeling that irony had stopped America taking serious threats seriously was widespread. Graydon Carter (2001), of *Vanity Fair*, announced, 'There's going to be a seismic change. I think it's the end of the age of irony. Things that were considered fringe and frivolous are going to disappear." Camille Dodero echoed the prevailing feeling in the *Boston Phoenix* (Dodero 2001), stating "Maybe we've just witnessed the end of unbridled irony. Maybe a coddled generation that bathed itself in sarcasm will get serious. Maybe we'll stop acting so jaded and start addressing the problem." Even the iconic ironist, Jon Stewart (2001), opened his first post-9/11 show with an earnest, tearful and non-ironic speech. However, he followed his sincerity with a statement that drew a line in the sand, "Even the idea that we can sit in the back of the country and make wise cracks... which is really what we do. We sit in the back and throw spitballs-but never forgetting that it is a luxury in this country that allows us to do that. That is, a country that allows for open satire."

Stewart's identification of satire and irony with Western freedom and democracy was paralleled in other sections of the media. David Beers' (2001) hoped that the tragic events of 9/11 would wipe away shallow, nihilistic irony and instead replace it with "a golden age of irony. The real stuff. The kind of irony that drove

Socrates' queries, the irony that lies at the heart of much great literature and great religion, the irony that pays attention to contradictions and embraces paradoxes, rather than wishing them away in an orgy of purpose and certainty." Purdy, famous for denouncing irony, seemingly paradoxically joined the side of the pro-ironists in calling for a serious irony to quell the overzealous passions of an angry America, arguing that "in peaceful and prosperous times, [irony is a way of] keeping the passions in hibernation when there is not much for them to live on, but another kind of irony can also work to keep dangerous excesses of passion and self-righteousness and extreme conviction at bay."[46]   Graydon Carter also backtracked and, claiming misquotation, stated that what he really said was "Ironing is dead. Not irony. Ironing."   This brief debate perfectly captured the ambivalence towards irony in contemporary USA.   One side believes irony is a danger to cultural values, taking nothing seriously, blurring the distinction between joke and menace and a stance of vain stupidity, whereas for the other it is a fundamental ingredient of Western freedom.[47]

5.3.3   The Rise of Sincerity in the "Age of Irony"

Another debate in the American media has cast light on how "the age of irony" is being interpreted ten years on. Writing in the *New York Times* in late 2012, the Assistant Professor of French and Italian at Princeton, Christy Wampole, claims that the contemporary "age of irony" informs a deep aversion to risk, being a function of fear, pre-emptive shame, cultural numbness, resignation and defeat (Wampole 2102). Arguing that contemporary irony is of a deeper hue than its historical counterparts, Walpole claims irony has "leaked from the realm of rhetoric into life itself", resulting in the "vacuity and vapidity of the individual and collective psyche", "rampant sarcasm and unapologetic cultivation of silliness" and a "self-infantilizing citizenry." She was immediately challenged by the writer, John D. Fitzgerald, who argues that the current generation "prioritized being close to God and having a good family life above anything else", whereas the previous one prioritized "making lots of money" (Fitzgerald 2012).

For Fitzgerald, the contemporary ethos "is a joining together of irony and sincerity" that, when combined, "form a movement of astonishing power."

One development informing Fitzgerald's critique has been termed the "New Sincerity", first employed as a criticism of a number of rock groups reacting against the ironic attitude of prominent punk rock and New Wave bands (Shank 1994: 148-149, 271). It began to be applied to art and literature in the mid-1990s (Collins 1993), and has become an increasingly employed term when describing the ethos of American and European movies of the late 20th-early 21st century (Hancock 2005; Yurchak 2008). The stuckism art movement's Remodernism manifesto[48] calls for the reintroduction of spirituality into art to escape the limits of cynicism and irony (Evans 2000). David Foster Wallace (1993) predicted such a movement would emerge as a reaction against the tyrannical irony of late 20th Century America, arguing

> The next real literary "rebels" in this country might well emerge as some weird bunch of anti-rebels, born oglers who dare somehow to back away from ironic watching, who have the childish gall actually to endorse and instantiate single-entendre principles. Who treat plain old untrendy human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverence and conviction. Who eschew self-consciousness and hip fatigue. These anti-rebels would be outdated, of course, before they even started. Dead on the page. Too sincere. Clearly repressed. Backward, quaint, naive, anachronistic. Maybe that'll be the point. Maybe that's why they'll be the next real rebels.

Kelly (2010) argues that Wallace's prediction has come true and that contemporary America is experiencing a theoretical reconceptualization of sincerity which is challenging the emphasis on authenticity in conceptions of the self. Yurchack has connected this movement to the popularity and development of "reality television, Internet blogs, diary style 'chicklit' literature, [and] personal videos on You-Tube" (Yurchack 2008: 258). Van Poecke (2010/11) draws attention to the influence of folk music and acoustic instruments in a new sense of romanticism expressed in contemporary music movements,

imaginatively entitled *Freak Folk* (Dunaway and Beer 2010: 169) or the *New Weird Generation*. In Christianity, this ethos is expressed in the fast growing Renewalist movement, which argues for a return to the literal reading of the bible and teaches "that the power of the Holy Spirit is manifested through such supernatural phenomena as speaking in tongues, miraculous healings and prophetic utterances and revelations" (Suro, Escobar et al. 2007: 35).

While this movement can be seen as, and has an obvious aspect of, an "anti-irony" sincerity, it also has a more subtle dimension of balancing irony and sincerity, scepticism and faith, performance and authenticity. In philosophy, Vermeulen and den Akker (2010) have attempted to outline the contours of this emerging structure of feeling through the concept of metamodernism. Drawing from Hutcheon's argument that postmodernity's moment has passed (Hutcheon 2002: 165-166), metamodernity is an alternative to the intrinsically meaningless hedonistic ecstasy or existential anguish of Lipovetsky's hypermodernist society (Lipovetsky, Charles et al. 2005) or the haphazardness, evanescence and anonymity of Kirby's digimodernist society (Kirby 2009). Arguing that the "metamodern is constituted by the double-bind of a modern desire for *sens* and a postmodern doubt about the sense of it all" (Vermeulen and Van Den Akker 2010: 6), they suggest a series of strategies that combine serious, sincere solutions and an intellectual awareness of irony and scepticism has emerged in the 21st Century art world. They argue that metamodernism is expressed in an emergent neoromantic sensibility, concluding that metamodernism sits 'hypersensitively' between modern utopian art and literature and dystopian postmodern equivalents.

As Hutcheon points out, there is nothing new in this debate, with the contemporary age joining "just about every other century in wanting to call itself the 'age of irony'" (1994: 9). However, the above reveals how certain dimensions in the debate cluster around an aesthetics/morality hub. Both Wampole and Fitzgerald agree that irony is harmful to the "sincere" self and fear that it will erode American culture values. While this remains a current worry for Wampole, one dimension of the New Sincerity/metamodernist movement is a

belief that an already vibrant reaction to widespread cultural irony has manifested as a heartfelt desire to return to previous modes of existence via the merging of ironic sensibility and romantic sentimentality. This returns us to the "incivil v restless" dimensions of decadence discussed earlier, in which some form of "restless" "balanced" irony is required to counter the rampant "limited" irony of the "incivil" majority. Whether any of the above referenced authors have captured the nuances of this restless response is not of great importance. What is important is that they are beginning to map out the terrain upon which some form of "incivil v restless" ironic tension is emerging.

5.4   Incivil and Restless Decadence Discourses in Organisational Studies

5.4.1   The Dimensions of Decadence

While most Organisational Studies scholars have not examined such nuanced dimensions of irony, with limited interpretations dominating, it is possible to map out the dimensions of decadence in critical organisational literature and plot the emergence of these different types of irony accordingly. This decadence discourse can most usefully be employed to help frame the dis-identification debate in Organisational Studies.   In this debate, discussions of ironic and performative practices have been treated as (i) contributory to the reproduction and enhancement of managerial control (see, for example, in Kunda's observations of the ironic performances of the engineers at Tech, or Ezzamell, Willmott and Worthington's (2001) and Collinson's (1992) examination of worker counter culture against the perceived all-talk and no-action of the management[49]), (ii) potentially useful resistance (e.g. Fleming and Spicer's early work on cynicism, especially via their emphasis on the possibility of "satirical critique" and Švejkism being appropriate, even radical, forms of resistance[50]), and, more recently, (iii) self-alienating (Fleming and Costas 2009).

The central contributor to this debate is the London based, New Zealand born scholar, Peter Fleming. In works such as *Contesting the Corporation*, *Authenticity and the Cultural Politics of Work*, *Charting Corporate Corruption* and *Dead Man Working*, his general outlook is pessimistic, full of dark and depressing hues,

invested with images of fake or false selves, tinselled artificiality, crisis, suicide, zombies, death, oppression, slavery, humiliation, exploitation, Big Brother, discontentment, faeces, corruption and guilt. The dominant tenor of Fleming's corpus illustrates the fear of a dystopian existence emerging out of a foolish and fallible utopian vision via his analysis of how organisational theories that ostensibly support and develop practices of increased personal freedom, termed "Just Be Yourself...Or Else!" by Fleming (2009: 7), actually result in the dehumanization of the self, the loss of autonomy and the eroding of the private social environment (Fleming 2009). Having long been a key voice on organisational cynicism (Fleming and Sewell 2002; Fleming and Spicer 2003; Fleming and Spicer 2005; Fleming and Spicer 2007; Fleming and Sturdy 2009), Fleming's work has crystalized around themes of deception, corporate corruption and the end of corporate responsibility (Fleming and Zyglidopoulos 2008; Fleming and Zyglidopoulos 2009), sexuality in the workplace (Fleming 2007) and the infantization and disenchantment of employees (Fleming 2005; Fleming and Sturdy 2009; Cederstroem and Fleming 2012). Following from the above, I would like to suggest that Fleming's corpus could be regarded as documenting the dimensions of decadent organisations.

Fleming's work certainly contains the two distinct flavours of decadence suggested by Barzun, an incivil decadence discourse of boredom, frustration, withdrawn nihilism and self-interested deception, and a restless decadence discourse, in which energetic resistance and cynical reason (Sloterdijk 1988) enables a positive critique of previous cultural knowledge that informs and/or suggests possible coping strategies, such as those exhibited by Luhmann's "gypsies of reason" (Moeller 2012), Berger and Luckmann's (1995) "virtuosos of pluralism" or Bauman's (1993) "ambivalent stranger". Although Fleming's endorsement of the possibility of "satirical critique" and Švejkism being appropriate, even radical, forms of resistance (Badham and McLoughlin 2005) might be seen as embracing the optimism of the latter, his more recent work increasingly documents the conditions of the former, and thus seems progressively bleak and pessimistic.

This shift can perhaps be explained by Fleming's move towards Žižek from Sloterdjik. Žižek argues that Sloterdjik's concept of kynicism "represents the popular, plebeian rejection of the official culture by means of irony and sarcasm", confronting the "pathetic phrases of the ruling official ideology - its solemn, grave tonality - with everyday banality and to hold them up to ridicule, thus exposing behind the sublime noblesse of the ideological phrases the egotistical interests, the violence, the brutal claims to power" (Žižek 2008: 26). Lamenting the lack of impact of such a traditionally useful tactic, he states that totalitarian ideology "is no longer meant, even by its authors, to be taken seriously - its status is just that of a means of manipulation" (Žižek 2008: 27). Similarly, Cohen and Taylor state "the tricks, routes and programmes of the elite have become better known (if not actually available) to all (thus reducing any privileged status they might have had as escape scripts)" (Cohen and Taylor 1992: 17). Ironic performance saturates such a world, exhibited as self-interested manipulation by the elite and nihilistic withdrawal by those who have "called the game". Within these dimensions, perhaps not surprisingly, Fleming has moved away from discussing the more nuanced dimensions of irony and increasingly employed and critiqued the limited American performative interpretation of irony detailed in the previous chapters.

For example, in Fleming's initial discussion of irony as a component of Švejkism, irony is a performative tool that can help individuals disengage and capture fleeting moments of freedom from a coercive, authoritarian environment (Fleming and Sewell 2002). In this interpretation, ironic disengagement has a strong ethical dimension, with Švejk re-engaging with "another register of organizational life" (Fleming and Sewell 2002: 860) and abandoning his ironic dissembling when its outcome is likely to hurt the victims of the disciplining authority (Fleming and Sewell 2002: 864). Although the Švejkist interpretation is sometimes maintained in Fleming's later work, in which irony, alongside humour, cynicism and scepticism, is treated as a tactic of escape from the realities of power and "company-sponsored" identities of the contemporary corporate environment (Fleming and Spicer 2007: 29), it also takes a darker hue, with Fleming investigating how an over earnest attachment to the tactics of dis-

identification risks workers experiencing their nominal "authentic" self as "something alien and foreign" (Costas and Fleming 2009: 354). Even though his work shifts to this bleak, almost nihilistic pessimism, Fleming does, however, albeit often implicitly, present examples of the more nuanced forms of irony detailed above and throughout this thesis.

To attempt to further illustrate the relationship between a nuanced reading of irony and the dimensions of "incivil v restless" decadence in Fleming's corpus, I will employ the themes overviewed in British literary critics' examination of the motivations of the Victorian writers of decadent literature as an analytical lens on his work.[51] Writing on *The Victorian Temper*, Jerome Hamilton Buckley investigates how the writers of decadent literature were "animated by a conscious will to explore the dark underside of experience, with which the Decadent himself associated immorality and evil" (Buckley 1951: 230-231). Brown largely agrees via his contention that English decadence was centred on diabolism and artificiality, expressed via literary sophistication, boredom, lassitude, an unquenchable desire for new sensations, perversity, and neurotic interests (in Goldfarb 1962: 372). For Ryals, decadence is similarly characterized by "an emphasis on the pleasure of the senses; a fascination with the morbid, the strange, and the un-natural; the tendency to remain passive in the face of action and to preconceive reality" (in Goldfarb 1962: 373), occurring when "the strange turns into the grotesque" (Ryals 1958: 92) Goldfarb argues that decadent literature "is animated by the exploration of immoral and evil experiences", never preaching morality nor insisting upon ethical responsibilities and "characterized by artistic concern for the morbid, the perverse, the sordid, the artificial, the beauty to be found in the unnatural, and the representation of the cleanliness in unclean things, [..] a self-conscious and weary contempt for social conventions such as truth and marriage" (Goldfarb 1962: 373). For those writing at the height of the British decadent movement, Max Beerbohm claims the central motif is artifice (Beerhohm 1894), Robert Hichens illustrates unconventional and exhibitionist behaviour (Hichens 1895), John Davidson (1895) and Jocelyn Quilp (1894) examine immorality , and G. S. Street looks at the lust for unusual experience (Street 1895). Attempting an

overview of the era, the writer, journalist and bibliophile, Holbrook Jackson (1964) suggested that decadent literature was characterized by artificiality, curiosity, egoism, and perversity. [52] It is these four themes through which I will examine Fleming's corpus.

5.4.2   Artificiality and Authenticity

The tension between authenticity and artificiality has perhaps been the most dominant theme of Fleming's career. For Fleming, authenticity is the state of being "true to oneself" and "sincere, honest and genuine in contrast to fake, insincere and untruthful", exhibited via a crafted "imaginary" or constructed "real" self which emerges from and is maintained by "the collage of discourses that people feel best renders their biographical and existential situation" (Costas and Fleming 2009: 357-358). Whilst accepting that the notion of authenticity is problematic in its assumptions that the truth of oneself is situated entirely at the individual level and is thus ignorant of an "otherwise historically constructed identity", Fleming regards authenticity as "a kind of crafted 'imaginary' that allows one to know 'who I really am' in the past, present and future tenses" (ibid: 358). In doing so, he follows Collinson's (2003) claim that people significantly understand their working life in terms of real or authentic selves versus fake or false selves.

Fleming argues that the "authentic self" is under threat from the dehumanizing practices of the contemporary workplace, which sucks time and vitality, corrodes character and alienates and subjugates workers (Fleming 2009: 2). He pursues two sub-themes; cynical practices of dis-identification against the imposed "self" of corporate culture and the fake authenticity of the "just be yourself" movement. Within this theme, Fleming has positioned the performative dimension of irony as a tool of cynical resistance (Fleming and Spicer 2003; Fleming 2005) and a method facilitating fleeting escape attempts (Žižek 2008) from organisational normative expectations (see Fleming and Spicer (2007) for a comprehensive overview). He argues that the self suffers a "chronic sense of inauthenticity" (Fleming 2009: 26), and "feelings of being fake, lacking individuality, and a

139

cynical division between 'who they really are' and the prescribed corporate self" (ibid: 32). This observation has been furthered by a focus on how ironic detachment risks total alienation not just from societal norms but from the "real" self as well, resulting in a despairing and all-encompassing nihilism and possible related psychological breakdown (Costas and Fleming 2009).

Fleming has extended this theme beyond the strong culture movement that dominated the eighties and early nineties to examine how employees express sceptical apprehension regarding management promises towards developing more humane, fun or ethical organisational environments. Fleming centres his attack on cultures of "fun" in which employees are encouraged to "just be yourself" (Fleming 2005; Fleming 2009; Fleming and Sturdy 2009). He argues that the only way in which an organisation can cultivate and perpetuate a "culture of fun" is to encourage people to adopt fake and shallow personalities, which they paradoxically achieve by allowing employees to "be themselves", encouraging workers to express life-style diversity (i.e. sexual preferences and sub-cultured identities), consumerism (i.e. "cool" dress codes), leisure activities (i.e. parties and alcohol), and rituals of fun (i.e. fancy dress days and game days) (Fleming 2009: 28 & 56). Fleming reveals how employees working in such a culture object to its 'plastic', 'fake', 'cheesy' and 'shallow' artificiality, before arguing that such a culture lacks authenticity or sincerity and is constructed to beguile employees into subjectively conforming to the company's rules (Fleming 2009: 72). Attempts to create a fun environment or manage a fun activity are regarded by employees as pretentious and lacking honesty.

Examining the corporate reaction to these critiques of inauthentic artificiality, Fleming looks at arguments that consumers are increasingly demanding so-called authentic products and services, supported by an authentic marketing movement that guides companies away from "fake", "superficial" or "phoney" adverts and branding (Fleming 2009: 103). He reveals that this authenticity is difficult to achieve in the face of the inbuilt reflexivity and cynicism of contemporary consumers, which, especially for the younger generation, is often directed at capitalism. Drawing on Boyle (2004), Fleming illustrates how

organisations try to sell to the cynical anti-capitalist youth by making their products seem rebellious, employing images and representations of "sports players who break the rules, former terrorists, reformed criminals and mild Mafiosi" (ibid: 106) in their branding. Following Frank (1997) and Liu (2004), Fleming calls this the 'corporatization of cool' (Fleming 2009: 102).   These punked up hipsters, rejecting capitalist values in preference of a carefully cultivated image of coolness and detachment, are rebels without a cause, trapped in an ironic situation in their rejection of capitalism as they are increasingly embraced and targeted by its practices.

5.4.3   Curiosity and Creativity

Fleming (2009) illustrates how being "yourself" has been conceptualized as contributing to practices of curiosity, such as innovation and creativity. He draws attention to how technological pacing, bureaucratic formalization and cultural normalization are perceived as anathema by creative corporations such as Google, who regard quirkiness, wackiness and weird self-expressionism as crucial to creative success. Tracing out the literature that tracks and contributes to this development, Fleming notes that Semler (1993) and Bains (2007) have both argued that traditional control methodologies are not just passé, but possibly invocative of managerial incompetence. He further illustrates how the onetime guru of strong culture, Tom Peters, has bought into this movement in his arguments that out-dated management control restricts the natural capacity of humans to be innovative, curious and imaginative beings. Indeed, Peters (2003) now advocates that organisations hire and reward zanies, nutters, freaks and mavericks who can express their natural, creative curiosity in organisational environments reminiscent of "joyful anarchies".

Fleming highlights the aesthetic origins of this direction, referring to Deal and Kennedy's (1999) assumption that a high "Fun Quotient" will lead to playful workers falling in love with the company, Kane's (2005) examination of and call for the rise of a corporate "play ethic", Florida's (2002) overview of the rise of the creative class, and the encouragement to engage in organisational fun even in

141

structured workplaces. Implicit themes of encouraging an anti-social decadence emerge when Fleming extends on this theme into literature that examines and calls for the nurturing of troublesome, insolent and anti-authoritarian employees (Sutton 2002), the "industrialization of bohemia" and the recruitment of people with countercultural and anti-capitalist tendencies (Liu 2004).   This movement is also captured in Brook's (2000) characterization of BoBos (bourgeois bohemians), who combine "the free-spirited, artistic rebelliousness of the bohemian beatnik or hippie with the worldly ambitions of their bourgeois corporate forefathers" and sport "unconventional job titles as 'creative paradox', 'corporate jester' or 'learning person'" (Wittstock 2000).

What might be termed *branded or brand irony* informs the "fake" or "faked" authenticity of Generation Y hipsters (Fleming 2009; Fleming and Sturdy 2009) and the organisations trying to sell to or employ them.   Writing "how are we to make sense of 'critique' when even Tom Peters is celebrating anti-managerialism, 1968-inspired subversion (around cynicism, irony, sexuality, and parody), and expressions of anti-bourgeois chic?" Fleming's work outlines how an ironically informed ambivalence towards cultural values is reconceptualised as the defining ethos of Generation Y'ers, turned against the capitalist values that the strong culture movement so expounded.   Employers are encouraged to nurture such characters by letting them "be themselves" and allowing them to openly exhibit these anti-capitalist feelings in order to use them for capitalist purposes. Fleming suggests that these supposedly authentic elements of self are actually inauthentic, arguing that the self becomes so obsessed with appearance, experience and the aesthetic pleasure of work that ethics and values are deemed irrelevant. This set of cultural characteristics is tapped into when organisational consultants ironically craft out images that are perceived by consumers to be invocative of the organisation's authentic, anti-capitalist instincts.

5.4.4 Egoism and Corruption

A more recent theme in Fleming's work is an examination of the rapid increase in the ease, severity and pervasiveness of corporate corruption, in which the opening four chapters of *Charting Corporate Corruption* examine the egoism of corrupt individuals. In examining this aspect of Fleming's work, I am supporting the relationship between egoism and "sophisticated corruption" by employing Rachels' definition of egoism as endorsing selfishness but not foolishness (Rachels 2008), and the Randian notion that it is irrational and immoral to act against one's own best interests (Smith 2006). In doing so, the dissembling trickery Fleming notes when discussing the antics of Enron's Andy Fastow and Barings' Nick Leeson can be interpreted, at least by those following such an ethos, as acceptable techniques of rationality.

Drawing attention to the lavish and exceedingly conspicuous lifestyles of individuals that have been charged with corrupt practices, Fleming argues that the highly ambitious were more likely to "transgress moral codes, competitively stab colleagues in the back, and make dubious decisions relating to asset-stripping [and] disinvestment" (Fleming and Zyglidopoulos 2009: 27-28). Employing Enron as a central example, Fleming examines how its ideology of "greatness", cultivated throughout the company by propaganda campaigns, contributed to its downfall. Unwilling to admit that he could be wrong or that he broke the law, the now-jailed CEO, Jeff Skilling, was unfaltering in his belief that Enron was doing the right thing, arguing in his testimony that he was immensely proud of Enron and how it was a first-rate example of American capitalism in action, "changing an industry, creating jobs, helping resuscitate a stagnant energy sector, and, by bringing choice to a monopoly-dominated industry, [...] trying to save consumers and small businesses billions of dollars each year" (ibid: 46). Fleming takes a different perspective on the CFO, Andy Fastow, presented via an evocative image of egoistic immorality, in which

> Fastow himself comes across as a scoundrel with few scruples about the
> harm he was causing others. Moreover, as Fastow fools his audience and

manipulates the figures in such a brazen fashion, the physicality of the man himself exudes badness, a kind of devilish spark reminiscent of the protagonist in the film American Psycho: handsome, intelligent and assertive, yet devious, wily and patently dangerous (ibid: 17).

Fleming aims other barbs at the finance industry, noting that vindictive traders gaining pleasure not just from their huge illegal profits, but also from the distress and discomfort that their practices caused to others (Fleming and Zyglidopoulos 2009: 52-67). He reserves the most vitriol for the Barings Bank "rogue trader", Nick Lesson, whose loss of $800 million resulted in the collapse of the 230-year old merchant bank.   He draws attention to Leeson's boastful, obnoxious arrogance, greed and dishonesty, arguing, "Leeson's arrogance was notorious – he thought he could manipulate the markets single-handedly since he was such an important player on the floor".   Leeson's arrogance, lewd behaviour (he drunkenly exposed himself a group of airline hostesses)and dishonesty (he lied his financial history in his application form) were ignored because of his "success" on the trading floor, which resulted in cult-like admiration from fellow traders and a laissez-faire attitude from superiors. Indeed, the more Leeson got away with his actions (hiding his losses in a secret account), the more contempt he felt for his superiors' incompetence and the greater his fraudulent and extravagant behaviours.

Although Fleming does not explicitly discuss irony in his work on corruption, this dimension positions irony as a tool of deception and dishonesty, with employees using wily, deceptive, devious techniques to get away with corrupt and unscrupulous practices that support an extravagant lifestyle (Fleming and Zyglidopoulos 2008; Fleming and Zyglidopoulos 2009; Zyglidopoulos, Fleming et al. 2009).   For example, Fleming describes Nick Leeson as   "cunningly dissembling the facts with charm, deflection and plain fraud" (Fleming and Zyglidopoulos 2009: 53), and Fastow's "discourse and demeanour betray[ing] the figure of a Machiavellian schemer who would not think twice about wrecking the company in order to make more money" (ibid: 17).

5.4.5 Perversity and Sexuality

There are a number of themes in Fleming's work that, depending on your moral compass, could be considered under the broad banner of perversion (e.g. Fleming 2007; Di Domenico and Fleming 2009; Cederstroem and Fleming 2012). He draws attention to the permissive attitudes in an Australian call-centre, in which displays of sexuality were acknowledged as a positive feature of company life, with the "sexually charged" call-centre floor being "a fruitful space to proposition the opposite sex for a date" (Fleming 2007: 247). Risqué and highly sexualized clothing was permissible, even encouraged, with workers dressing in "low-cut tops and short skirts", the gay contingent being "very out" and not having "to hide the fact that they are gay", to the extent they could dress in drag at the office party. Although many employees celebrated such practices, Fleming notes that others found the atmosphere sleazy and lecherous, using the derogatory term "'meat market' (a bar or nightclub where people come to specifically pick up dates) [...] to describe some aspects of organizational life" (Fleming 2007: 249). Fleming particularly notes the comments of one group of friends who discussed co-workers being "sluts" and "sleazy guys", attacking the "out there" behaviour of gay employees, and rephrasing the company slogan of "Fun, Focus and Fulfilment" to read "Fuckwits, Faggots and Freaks" (Fleming 2007: 250).

More recently, Fleming has turned his attention to perversions external to organisations and drawn parallels between them and organisational practices (Cederstroem and Fleming 2012). Of these, the most evocative compares the visit of Humping Hank to the Wild Horse brothel in Nevada to the experience of emotional capitalism, a culture in which "emotional and economic discourses and practices mutually shape each other", manifesting in intimate relationships being increasingly defined by economic and political models of bargaining, exchange and equity (Illouz 2007: 5). Hank

> does not fuck the prostitutes like the unrefined truck drivers who call in
> for a big steak, three beers, and a straight lay. Instead, Hank spends long

nights with his 'girlfriend', watching TV, eating popcorn, kissing and hugging, talking about their future, laughing, before time runs out, and he is kissing his beloved goodnight, often with tears in his eyes (Cederstroem and Fleming 2012: 36).

Arguing that "our authenticity is no longer a retreat from the mandatory fakeness of the office, but the very medium through which work squeezes the life out of us" (ibid), Fleming discusses escape attempts via similarly perverse imagery, in which workers retreat into a form of adult babyhood, retreating from the pressures of work into nappies and total dependence on others, the mimicking of death in flotation tanks (or, as Fleming calls them, "tanks of death"), self-destructive journeys involving fortunes spent on drugs and prostitutes, and a sadomasochistic assisted suicide.

While Fleming notes the irony of grown men wanting to behave like babies, or organisations treating employees like babies (in one example, salesman are made to wear diapers, eat baby food and are spanked), he seems confused by the ambiguity of the irony, failing to see how grown men can have a car, job and wife, yet be sincere about wanting to behave like babies during downtime. It seems to me that Fleming has perhaps not gone quite far enough in following through on the nihilistic dimension of irony when querying these acts. As critiqued by Kierkegaard (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1987), the irony of the aesthete manifests as an inexhaustible demand for new experiences that informs a seemingly exotic or bohemian lifestyle, but quickly sinks into dangerous nihilism.[53] As Kierkegaard notes, aesthetic irony leaves you with no means to choose between activities as it reduces all possible choices to absurdities. With no means of determining between one choice or another, all lifestyle choices become possibilities, informed only by the desire to stave off frustration, boredom and, eventually, nihilistic despair. It seems as if Fleming might be noting the progress of postmodern irony from a once hopeful critique to the spiralling nihilism, hopeless absurdity and suicidal surrender of one mired in the excesses of incivil decadence.

5.4.6 Nuanced Ironic Characters in Fleming's Decadent Organisations

As the above illustrates, although Fleming implicitly or explicitly notes various different types of irony, he restricts a multi-layered view of "decadence" in favour of a more traditional and narrower pessimistic worldview of the contemporary era. No matter how hard employees try to disengage, dis-identify and attempt escape, Fleming provides us with an image of them eventually crushed into apathetic and exhausted zombies by the contemporary organisational environment. However, his observations on irony, while initially explicit and focused, have increasingly become lost amidst the bleakness and despair. The darkly Machiavellian and spiralling nihilistic irony and demonic forms of incivil decadence overpowers the self-preserving, comic, reflective and resistant irony of restless decadence his earlier work hints at. If, as I have suggested, limited and rampant irony should both present in such conditions, Fleming's work, at best, only sketchily addresses it. With no other organisational scholar coming close to Fleming's level of analysis of decadent organisational conditions, I need to move beyond Organisational Studies to flesh out the ways in which balanced and limited irony have been seen to manifest and inform decadent societies. To do that and situate and critically reflect on Fleming as a scholar of restless and incivil decadence, I will explore the work of four metahistorical theorists, the High Renaissance Neapolitan philosopher/philologist Giambattista Vico and his modern interpreter Hayden White, and the Danish and German philosophers Søren Kierkegaard and Freidrich Nietzsche.

While it seems that Nietzsche and Kierkegaard never read Vico, his work anticipates their own metahistorical perspectives and is the first to link the emergence of an ironic consciousness with unfettered cultural decadence. In Vico, irony and decadence accompany a particular temper of the times that emerges as a society moves away from being a religious culture into an urban and urbane civilization. He juxtaposes the idea of simple negativity against a more tempered Christian irony, suggesting that that there is always a "tension" in the analysis (c.f. recent Romanticism and public debate theories). By using

147

Vico and the Nietzschean and Kierkegaardian ideas he anticipates, it is possible to illustrate how the simplified incivil decadence discourse is always accompanied and confronted by a more complex and restless perspective that incorporates a complex third way irony, and which can facilitate our seeing Fleming's "decadent stage" within a broader outlook.

5.5   Vico's Ironic Consciousness and the Decadence Discourse

Although Vico is not a commonly cited philosopher in the organisational domain (with the notable exception of Skjoldberg's *The Poetic Logic of Administration* (2002)) his reputation as a forefather of constructivist thought is well-established. For example, Isaiah Berlin writes, "Vico's claim to originality will stand scrutiny from any point of vantage. His theories of the nature and development of the human mind, of culture, society and human history, are audacious and profound" (Berlin 1976: 3). Mali is in full agreement, writing, "Vico's 'discovery' is akin to what modern theorists of culture would eventually proclaim as their own major discovery, namely - to use Wittgenstein's words - that 'a whole mythology is deposited in our language'. On a more fundamental level, this discovery suggests that Vico, like many modern interpretive social theorists, could establish his New Science only after he had taken a linguistic turn: he saw that inasmuch as the world in which men live is a world of institutions based on language, the task of the human sciences most resembles, and must be modelled on, the interpretation of texts" (Mali 1992: 4). According to the Bergin and Fisch, whose translation of the Third Edition of Vico's *New Science* is generally considered the definitive English version of the text, "Vico's New Science is acknowledged today to be one of the few works of authentic genius in the history of social theory" representing the "most ambitious attempt before Comte at a comprehensive science of human society and the most profound analysis of the class struggle prior to Marx" (Vico, Bergin et al. 1944: 450).

When writing of Vico, it is equally necessary to take into account the work of the historian Hayden White, who has most conspicuously injected Vico's thought into modern historical debate. Dominick LaCapra notes that "No one writing in this country at the present time has done more to wake historians from their dogmatic slumber than has Hayden White" and that "one might, without undue hyperbole, state that White's writings have helped to reopen the possibility of thought in intellectual history" (Lacapra 1983). White's corpus addresses the "crisis of historicism", which specifically pertains to "moral concerns about the ironic condition of historical studies and is characterized as a 'condition of Irony'" (Herman Paul, quoted in Ankersmit, Domanska et al. 2009: 12). To make Vico relevant to modern organisational scholarship, I will largely follow White's interpretation of Vico, as White ostensibly based the formal structure of *Metahistory* around Vico's framework of developmental cultural consciousness, (see Vickers 1988; Jacoby 1992 for discussion and critique of White's tropological formalism).

Vico postulates "the mode of social organization of a given stage of cultural development is analogous to the modes of relating the unknown or problematical aspects of human experience to the known or cognitively secured aspects of it characteristic of the four master tropes" (White 1978: 209). As White notes (1978: 209), Vico's originality lies in his

> use of the topological analysis of figurative language for the construction of a model by which both the stages in the evolution of consciousness can be defined and the transitions from one to another of them can be accounted for in terms of "the modifications of the human mind. As a theory of the historical development of human nature from bestiality to civilization, the New Science asserts a strict analogy between the dynamics of metaphorical transformations in language and the transformations of both consciousness and society. This is Vico's dialectic, which is not a dialectic of the syllogism (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) but rather the dialectic of the ex-change between language and the reality it seeks to contain

STAGE	RELIGIOUS	HEROIC	HUMAN	REPRISE
Transition	Metaphor to metonymy	Metonymy to synecdoche	Synecdoche to irony	
Subphase	Birth and growth	maturity	Decadence and dissolution	
Type of human nature	poetic	heroic	human	§916-18
Type of society	theocratic	aristocratic	democratic	§925-27
Type of language	mute	heraldic	articulate	§928-31
Type of law	divine	contractual	forensic	§937-40
Type of reason	divine	natural	civil	§947-51
Type of writing	hieroglyphic	imaginative	vulgar	§932-35

Figure 5.1: Vico's Stages of Civil Development, from Hayden White's *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978: 209). Paragraph citations from *The New Science of Giambattista Vico. Translated from the third edition, 1744, by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1948)

The building blocks of this framework are located in Vico's claim that cultural consciousness develops along a strict motivational pattern, in which "men first feel necessity, then look for utility, next attend to comfort, still later amuse themselves with pleasure, thence grow dissolute in luxury, and finally go mad and waste their substance" (Vico, Bergin et al. 1944).   This motivational development has two outcomes. Firstly, it underpins the general nature of the people inhabiting a culture, being "at first crude, then severe, then benign, then

delicate, finally dissolute" (ibid). This cultural evolution is accompanied by the transformation of language from poetic form, in which thought is non-reflective, to ironic form, in which it is reflective. Vico's theory of master tropes enables him to model and describe the structural characteristics of ancient societies and employ it as a schema for relating the phases through which they pass during their evolution.

5.5.1   The Ironic Consciousness of Reflexive Societies

White summarises this schema as having three transitional stages:

> 1: The transition for primal metaphorical identifications by naming external reality in terms taken from the most particular and most sensible ideas of the part of the body and emotional states to metonymic reductions is analogous to the transition in society from the rule of the gods to the rule of aristocracies
>
> 2: The transition from metonymic reductions to synecdochic constructions of wholes from parts, genera from species, and so on is analogous to the transition from aristocratic rule to democratic rule
>
> 3: The transition from synecdochic constructions to ironic statement is analogous to the transition from democracies ruled by law to the decadent societies whose members have no respect for the law (White 1978: 209)

The final transition into irony and decadence occurs when "judgment without reflection, shared by an entire class, an entire people, an entire nation, or the whole human race" (Vico, Bergin et al. 1948: 57) begins to be reflected on by an emergent philosophical class. For Vico, reflective thought undermines all attempts at "literal" description, as it necessarily exposes the errors of the previous figurative descriptions of reality. This rejection of what Vico terms "poetic knowledge" can be seen in Plato's treatment of Homer. Writing "praisers of Homer who say that this poet educated Greece, and that in the management

and education of human affairs it is worthwhile to take him up for study and for living, by arranging one's whole life according to this poet" (606e1–5), Plato sets himself against "all of 'poetry,' contending that its influence is pervasive and often harmful, and that its premises about nature and the divine are mistaken" (Griswold 2012).

There are two stages in the development of ironic consciousness, which might be termed a **reflective earlier stage and a reflexive later stage**. The reflective stage can be related to philosophers' initial critique of figurative language, which casts previous religio-poetic descriptions of reality into doubt, revealing their errors and false assumptions. Vico sees philosophy as necessary towards maintaining social order in the earlier reflective stage, arguing

> since virtuous actions were no longer prompted by religious sentiments as formerly, philosophy should make the virtues understood in their idea, and by dint of reflection thereon, if men were without virtue they should at least be ashamed of their vices. Only so can peoples prone to ill-doing be held to their duty. And from the philosophies providence permitted eloquence to arise and, from the very form of these popular commonwealths in which good laws are commanded, to become impassioned for justice, and from these ideas of virtue to inflame the peoples to command good laws (Vico, Bergin et al. 1944: 380).

For Vico, the early stage of reflective thought (the emergence of philosophy) is focused on a virtuous idealism.[54] However, over time once virtuous philosophies fall into corruption and scepticism, with "learned fools [...] calumniating the truth" and the emergence of a "false eloquence, ready to uphold either of the opposed sides of a case indifferently" (Vico, Bergin et al. 1944: 380). This, for Vico, is the move from philosophical reflection to ironic reflexivity.[55] He writes "irony certainly could not have begun until the period of reflection, because it is fashioned of falsehood by dint of a reflection which wears the mask of truth" (Vico, Bergin et al. 1948: 118). Ironic reflexivity is the linguistic by-product of the move to reflective thought, where poetic knowledge, previously accepted

without question, is increasingly seen as being fallible and foolish. In explaining this, White states that "ironic speech implicitly invokes the distinction between truthful and false speaking and thus points to the distinction between literal and figurative representation, thereby constituting the basis of all those sciences which, through use of stipulated meanings, consciously seek not only to make true statements about the world but also to expose the error or inadequacy of any given figurative characteristic of it" (White 1978: 208). I do not see White as suggesting that there is an accurate, non-figurative language, merely that the by-product of philosophical reflection and the quest for an error-free language inherently highlights the distortion of figurative language, positions it as error, undermines it through "clarity", makes absurd the whole value-system of the culture, and thus gives birth to irony. Verna and Danesi seem to agree with this reading, stating that "it [is] only after the recognition of disparities between figurative representations of reality and their referents they were meant literally to characterize that irony becomes a cognitive possibility" (Verna and Danesi 1995: 228).[56]

Ironic reflexivity occurs when the philosophers' reflection on the errors of the culture's value system begins to inform other sections of the public sphere. The reflective techniques employed to undermine false poetic truths in the search for virtuous idealism and philosophical truths get applied to politics, business, art, and oratory. Self-interested individuals, having no interest in cultural ideals and philosophical virtue, use reflexive techniques to persuade and influence. For Vico, this shift from philosophical reflection to commonplace reflexivity ushers in a period in which "peoples so far corrupted had already become naturally slaves of their unrestrained passions-of luxury, effeminacy, avarice, envy, pride and vanity-and in pursuit of the pleasures of their dissolute life [fall] back into all the vices characteristic of the most abject slaves (having become liars, tricksters, calumniators, thieves, cowards and pretenders)" (Vico, Bergin et al. 1944: 380). He states that such people

> have fallen into the custom of each man thinking only of his own private
> interests and have reached the extreme of delicacy, or better of pride, in

which like wild animals they bristle and lash out at the slightest displeasure. Thus in the midst of their greatest festivities, though physically thronging together, they live like wild beasts in a deep solitude of spirit and will, scarcely any two being able to agree since each follows his own pleasure or caprice. By reason of all this, providence decrees that, through obstinate factions and desperate civil wars, they shall turn their cities into forests and the forests into dens and lairs of men. In this way, through long centuries of barbarism, rust will consume the misbegotten subtleties of malicious wits, that have turned them into beasts made more inhuman by the barbarism of reflection than the first men had been made by the barbarism of sense. For the latter displayed a generous savagery, against which one could defend oneself or take flight or be on one's guard; but the former, with a base savagery, under soft words and embraces, plots against the life and fortune of friends and intimates (Vico, Bergin et al. 1944: 381). [57]

As this quote illustrates, Vico sees man in Hobbesian terms, needing some form of 'external constraint' to live socially, which is, for Vico, a blind unquestioned faith in religion. Without this faith, the 'delicate passions' dominate, and society devolves into an ironically charged 'war of all against all'.

5.5.2   The Tensions of Vico's Ironic Consciousness

Despite this pessimism, it is possible to interpret Vico as "paving the way" not just for the "incivil decadence discourse" but also the alternative "restless decadence discourse" in which irony is not just dissembling and sneering hedonism, but the necessary ethical stance from which one can challenge and confront the excesses of incivil decadence by suggesting that it is possible to have a combination of "sincerity" and "irony", or an irony tempered by some commitments to meaning. Convinced that the Christian religion is informed by the divine revelation of God to the Hebrew culture in a manner that gentile cultures were not (White 1978: 214-217), Vico divides non-Christian ironic

154

consciousness from Christian ironic consciousness. For non-Christian gentile cultures, Vico asserts that the move into ironic consciousness is the first stage of their inevitable decline, decay and collapse. In such cultures, irony is merely self-interested deception. However, the Christian culture, inspired by genuinely divine revelation, is, for Vico, immune to such a collapse (White 1978: 214-217). Vico considers Cartesian philosophy arrogantly dismissive in its rejection of inspired religious truth, arguing that a Christian philosophy must take into account both philological history and scientific rationalism.[58] Consequently, there are two forms of irony in Vico; 1) the ironic reflexivity of non-divine cultures, which is negative and destructive and 2) an ironic perspective on language and philosophy, which aims at preventing erroneous direction and maintaining the culture. For gentile cultures, irony results in decadence, decay and collapse.[59] In Christian culture, irony questions and tempers the excesses of religious fundamentalism or arrogant philosophical interpretations of reality.

Ultimately, Vico posits that the undermining of religion is associated with an undermining of figurative language, which follows two directions: a critique of all foundations or a tempered "Christian" reflexivity. This duality is perhaps best retraced in modern debate in Jacob and Smith's (1997) argument that contemporary public culture combines romanticism and irony, which partially captures the idea of a fluctuation within irony between a negative debunking and a romantic non-ironic heroism. More notably, Vico's analysis of the different forms of irony present in decadent cultures provides the initial foundations for recognizing the societal conditions leading up to this type of "swing" and anticipates a number of "discourses of decadence" that have further illustrated the tensions and dimensions of religious virtue, ironic consciousness and decadence. These theories grapple with how ironic consciousness simultaneously engenders the risk of a cultural collapse (the incivil decadence discourse), or are evidence of an energetic stirring for a beneficial societal change (the restless decadence discourse).

One approach explains irony through dialectic, in which irony is the "negative" that illustrates the decadence of society but also part of a "positive" solution. In

these theories, the "age of irony" and its associated decadence is an inevitable but surmountable obstacle on the way to a perfected "good" society. As de Man (1996: 170) notes

> The third way of dealing with irony (and this is very much part of the same system) is to insert ironic moments or ironic structures into a dialectic of history. Hegel and Kierkegaard, in a sense, were concerned with dialectical patterns of history, and, somewhat symmetrically to the way it can be absorbed in a dialectic of the self, irony gets interpreted and absorbed within a dialectical pattern of history, a dialectics of history.

This line of thought was perhaps initiated by the German philosopher Fichte, who, seeing his age as having "absolute indifference towards all truth, and of entire and unrestrained licentiousness" (Fichte and Smith 1806: Lecture 1), conceived it a temporary condition prior to the establishment of epochs of reason and art. Although Fichte did not explicitly reflect on irony, his work was hugely influential to those that did, especially Freidrich Schlegel, whose understanding of irony was, according to Hegel, "an offspring of Fichte's philosophy" (Behler 1988: 57), an interpretation that still receives much support in contemporary scholarship (De Man and Warminski 1996; Breazeale and Rockmore 2010). Furthermore, Fichte was hugely influential on the development of Hegel's dialectic (De Man and Warminski 1996; Limnatis 2010). Indeed, the debate surrounding what is often termed "post-Fichtean irony" (Possen 2009) is arranged around whether irony as a tool of Hegelian dialectic can advance the concretization or substance of a thesis (as in Hegel's discussion of Socratic irony in Hegel, Haldane et al. 1995) to improve a civilization through philosophical reflection, or whether it purely negates, requiring some other form of passion or energy to advance a culture (the position taken by Schlegel and Kierkegaard, to be discussed in depth in the next chapter).

For the German Romantics, this passionate advancement occurs through the renewal of the "spirit" of traditional cultures and people. For example, Herder

(1968) argues that all human structures become oppressive after a few generations, resulting in depravity, apathetic living, slavery, and oppression of the best persons, suggesting such tendencies can be countered by an investigation into the traditional inner spirit of a people. Herder's interpretation guided Romantic historiographers and writers, informing the fairy tales of the Grimm brothers (1812), the nationalistic histories of Macaulay (1800-1859), Schiller's (1759-1805) Wilhelm Tell (1804) saga, Goethe's (1749-1832) Goetz von Berlichingen (1773) and his transcription of the Beowulf epic (1818), with each seeking to rejuvenate and unify present culture under the banner of a shared past.

Attempting to systemize reflective dialectic and passionate Romanticism, Hegel (1956) argues that the rise of reflective thought ushers in a period of decadence before a well constituted polity can be established. Hegel claims that a nation is moral and virtuous when pursuing its grand objective. However, when the grand objective is achieved, the spirit of the people disappears, ushering in a period dominated by material cravings, bestial instincts, and self-interested desire. Ultimately, Hegel claims this unhappy consciousness can be overcome by making the private interests of the people commensurable with the common interests of the state. In this thesis, irony, as a tool of ethical philosophy, disables and eventually destroys reflexive ironic consciousness.   In very different ways, Durkheim and Marx could be seen as providing alternative developments upon the same vision, haunted by "going back to the past" while trying to improve the conditions of society – Durkheim, through the strengthening of the communal moral code, albeit in a reduced and general form appropriate to an "organic" and "specialised" society, and Marx through the achievement of a higher phase of communism beyond the embedded conflicts, privatization and contradictions of divisive class based societies.

5.5.3   Energetic Passion and Detached Irony: A Third Way

Critique of this romanticised vision of modern progress emerged in the work of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.   Kierkegaard also examines cultural decadence,

claiming that "the present age is essentially a sensible, reflecting age, devoid of passion, flaring up in superficial, short-lived enthusiasm and prudentially relaxing in indolence" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1978: VIII 65). Hong sums up Kierkegaard's opinion of Denmark as being "characterized by disintegration, the dissolution of organic social structures, the process of levelling generated by envy and resentment, the nullification of the principle of contradiction, and domination by the media and a formless, abstract public. Devoid of essential passion, the age is marked by reflection in two ways: indecisive deliberation ("reflection") and the imaging ("reflexion") of the decadence of the age in private, domestic, and social-political life" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 2000: 252). For Kierkegaard, reflection is a passionless apathy, in which the higher classes reflect on societal conditions but let everything remain, having no willingness for action or change, anticipating possibilities but having no desire or capacity to drive them through, and refusing to make decisions. As Cruysberghs (Cruysberghs, Taels et al. 2003: 12) notes, for Kierkegaard, the problem is "that on the one hand this tendency to reflect on anything presenting makes any action impossible whereas, on the other hand, there is no serious action without reflection"

However, for Kierkegaard, the art of living cannot be informed by a blind or immediate decision making. It requires the highest possible level of reflection before a decision to act can claim even the minimum degree of authenticity (ibid: 13). Consequently, a reflective society has a bright side, which provides "the condition for a higher meaningfulness than that of immediate passion" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1978: VIII 90). Kierkegaard argues that enthusiasm is required to drive reflection beyond itself, allowing the endurance of reflection to the end by; a) giving up the finite to focus on the infinite, and b) returning to the sphere of existence to adjust one's existence to one's infinite reflections in order to make decisions and act (Cruysberghs, Taels et al. 2003: 14). When there is not enough enthusiasm to make this reflective meaningfulness active, society degenerates. The dark side of reflection is revealed through reflexion, the artistic imaging of the decadence of the age, in which the stagnation, abuse, corruption, evasions, and chattering gossip of a reflective society is revealed in its art forms. This artistic depiction emerges out of and seeps back into the

actuality of society and the concrete attributes of domestic and social life, positioning rampant, limited irony as evidence of and contributory to the decline of a culture and an enthusiastic, passionate, "mastered" irony as necessary to push the decline into a fall so a newly energised actuality can arise. Kierkegaard's enthusiastic ironic consciousness is formed through the ethical and moral dimensions that an incivilly decadent ironic consciousness rejects. Kierkegaard blends ironic reflexivity and romantic communalism, writing "in an era of negativity the authentic ironist is the hidden enthusiast (just as the hero is the manifest enthusiast in a positive era)" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1978: VIII 77). Irony becomes the necessary ethical stance to take against the rampant limited ironic consciousness of a decadent society. Kierkegaard writes that "like secret agents [ironists] are unrecognizable, not according to private instructions from God, for that in fact is the situation of the prophets and judges, but they are unrecognizable (without authority) because of their apprehension of the universal in equality before God, because of their acceptance of the responsibility for this at all times, and thus they are prevented from being caught off guard and becoming guilty of conduct inconsistent with their consistent intuition" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1978: VIII 100) . Although, as outlined in *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard seems to treat irony as either aesthetic and decadent or ethical and rejuvenating, it is more useful to approach it as 'both/and'. An ironic hero must be equally at home in with the practices and techniques of aesthetic (or incivil) decadents while being able to take an infinitely reflective perspective on the type of culture their self-interested, limited irony is producing. As the next chapter illustrates, maintaining both positions simultaneously became Kierkegaard's life task.

Nietzsche perhaps goes further still, aiming at a return to the values of Ancient Greek culture rather than Herder's culturally specific German spirit or Kierkegaard's personalized Christianity. Nietzsche writes, "nothing has preoccupied me more profoundly than the problem of decadence" (Nietzsche and Kaufmann 1992: 1238). Indeed, as Bernheimer (2002: 7) points out, Nietzsche boasted that he was the highest authority concerning matters of decadence. De Huszar (1945) notes, Nietzsche's reading of decadence is broad,

perceiving it as a general undercurrent informing any philosophies, religions or arts that spring out of weakness.   Nietzschean decadence has two dimensions, (i) the theoretical man, anti-musical, anti-lyrical, anti-artistic, anti-Dionysian, and essentially anti-Greek in his negative attitude toward life and (ii) Christian morality which "negates life" and "condemns its qualities" being "the product of decadents who were not content to fashion Christian values for themselves but succeeded in avenging themselves upon life by making the strong and healthy sick too" (ibid: 260-261).

Nietzsche argues that philosophers are not equipped to counter decadence, being either "in need of his philosophy, whether it be as support, sedative, or medicine, as salvation, elevation, or self-alienation" or regarding it as "a fine luxury, at best the voluptuousness of a triumphant gratitude, which must inscribe itself ultimately in cosmic capitals on the heaven of ideas" (in The Gay Science, quote taken from Huszar 1945: 259). His contempt for Christian morality emerges in his complex description of the decadent man who, regarded by his culture as a "good man", teaches morality, but according to Nietzsche, in actuality offers "false coasts and assurances" (Nietzsche and Kaufmann 1992: 1576). Nietzsche describes a typical decadent as possessing "a sense of necessity in his corrupted taste", claiming it as a "higher taste" and knowing how to get "his corruption accepted as law, as progress, as fulfilment" (Nietzsche and Kaufmann 1992: 1255). He writes

> The good are unable to create; they are always the beginning of the end; they crucify him who writes new values on new tablets; they sacrifice the future to themselves - they sacrifice all man's future. The good have always been the beginning of the end. And whatever harm those do who slander the world, the harm done by the good is the most harmful harm (Nietzsche and Kaufmann 1992: 1255).

Such a man can only ascend to high rank at the expense of his countertype, the man that is "strong and sure of life" (Nietzsche and Kaufmann 1992: 1577). For

Nietzsche, as decadence is "the degenerating instinct that turns against life with subterranean vengefulness" (Nietzsche and Kaufmann 1992: 1466), he rejects a philosophical or religious solution, treating it as a physician would a fight against a disease, aiming to cure values "born of a life in decline" that are "consequently hostile" to life itself.

Nietzsche's interpretation of the irony of a decadent age is revealed in his profound ambivalence to Socrates. According to the leading Nietzschean scholar, Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche interprets Socrates as being a "decadent philosopher who cannot cure his own decadence but yet struggles against it", an instrument of Greek disintegration, positioning rationality at any price against the excesses of instinct (Kaufmann 1974: 406). However, Socrates is also the embodiment of Nietzsche's highest ideal, "the passionate man who can control his passions" (Kaufmann 1974: 399). As Kaufmann explains, Nietzsche sees Socrates' absurd rationality turning the techniques of decadence, such as irony, dissimulation, sarcasm and parody, against decadence itself. Nietzsche writes

> At the time of Socrates, among men of fatigued instincts, among the conservatives of ancient Athens who let themselves go . . . irony was perhaps necessary for greatness of soul—that Socratic sarcastic [boshaft] assurance of the old physician and plebeian who cut ruthlessly into his own flesh, as well as into the flesh and heart of the "nobility," with a glance that said unmistakably: "Don't try to deceive me by dissimulation. Here we are equal" (*Beyond Good and Evil*: 212, quoted in Kaufmann 1974: 404).

For Nietzsche, Socrates' absurd rationality curbed the excesses of the instincts in an age of disintegration and degeneration. However, because it originates in the same ironic, dissembling techniques of incivil decadence, Socratism is decadent itself, unable to produce a real cure, only making possible an eventual regeneration through an eventual negation that might not emerge for centuries.[60]

For Nietzsche the solution was the controlled transmission of enthusiastic passion. He tasked himself to become the first philosopher who could correct the ongoing Socratic decadence of German philosophical thought. He praises cynicism, writing of his books "here and there they achieve the highest thing achievable on earth, cynicism" (Nietzsche and Kaufmann 1992: 1444), but, ultimately, regards it as having no practical tactic that can actively confront decadence. Consequently, he launches himself into the task of negating cultural decadence through the ironic negation of societal conditions, which becomes, for Nietzsche, a kind of yes-saying positivity. He writes "I contradict as has never been contradicted before and am nevertheless the opposite of a no-saying spirit" (Nietzsche and Kaufmann 1992: 1567) and that he was the first philosopher to construct "a formula for the highest affirmation, born of fullness, of overfull-ness, a Yes-saying without reservation, even to suffering, even to guilt, even to everything that is questionable and strange in existence" (Nietzsche and Kaufmann 1992: 1461). His last book ends with a simple question and a four-word summary of his mission to reintroduce pre-Socratic Greek joyousness into the decadent Germanic-Christian culture, "Have I been understood? - Dionysus versus the Crucified" (Nietzsche and Kaufmann 1992: 1562).

5.6   Conclusion: Towards a Restless Authentic Irony

The incivil decadence discourse's notion that ironic distance from reality inevitably becomes an empty nihilism, rather than, as in the restless decadence discourse, a playful creativity, presumes that blind obedience is necessary, and separation from it is, somehow, inevitably bad. As this seems to be explicitly related to some idealized view of a healthy "authenticity", the critical and sophisticated ironic stance of a restless decadent, full of energetic artificiality and creative curiosity, has come to be regarded as inauthentic. The dominant perception that the ironic stance is either deceitful or nihilistic is located in the incivil decadence discourse. In this pessimistic interpretation, ironic consciousness is innately bad, leading to destructive hedonism, nihilism and the end of civilization. However, a competing notion of an engaged, passionate, creative and tempered ironist emerges from other more positive interpretations

162

of the role of irony in decadent societies. For example, Christian-Vichean irony tempers the excesses of rampant Cartesian rationality with a deep appreciation of the philological roots of a culture. For Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, tempered irony can challenge incivil decadence and "bad", or reflexive, ironic consciousness and facilitate a move towards a more energized society.

Although Organisational Studies has provided theoretical insight and empirical evidence of the self-interested deceitful irony of decadent, corrupt organisational leaders and employees, researched the disengagement and dis-identification techniques and escape attempts of organisational members desperately searching for authenticity, and worried about the nihilistic "spin all the way down" interpretation of irony that accompanies the fear of a retreat into dystopian existence, it has not adequately captured the nuanced, balanced or tempered conceptualizations of an ironic consciousness framed by the Scylla of unrestrained passion and the Charybdis of destructive nihilism. By reading Fleming as the scholar *par excellence* of organisational decadence through the restless decadence frame, Organisational Studies scholars might find themselves wrestling with the same issues as Vico, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, in which the emergence of an incivilly decadent ironic consciousness, populated by deceitful dissemblers and nihilistic aesthetes, is not in question, but what to practically do about it very much is. As much as Fleming's continuing illustration of organisational decadence is an empirically useful examination of the conditions that surround the emergence of this cultural ironic consciousness and its characters, as hinted at by Gabriel (2013), it currently provides no hope that there is a way out of this mess.[61] If Vico, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard are correct, a deeper comprehension of a more complex, third way irony as an authentic response to inauthentic rampant limited irony, rather than being merely dissembling trickery or nihilistic mockery, might help inform a practically useful escape attempt.

6 Beyond Švejkism: Socratic Irony as a Strategy for Living

6.1 Introduction: Towards a Potential Ironic Exemplar

> A great epoch calls for great men. There are modest unrecognized heroes, without Napoleon's glory or his record of achievements. An analysis of their characters would overshadow even the glory of Alexander the Great. Today, in the streets of Prague, you can come across a man who himself does not realise what his significance is in the history of the great new epoch. Modestly he goes his way, troubling nobody, nor is he himself troubled by journalists applying to him for an interview. If you were to ask him his name, he would answer in a simple and modest tone of voice: "I am Švejk (Hašek and Selver 1939: 3).

Although there have been a number of portrayals of overly cynical interpretations of "bad" and overly romanticized interpretations of "good" irony in organisational scholarship, there are few examples of an ironist that embraces the complexities of irony as discussed in this thesis. The best available example is Fleming and Sewell's Good Soldier Švejk, based on Josef Hašek's book about a Czech foot soldier resisting the authoritarian demands of the Austro-Hungarian Army.   As Fleming and Sewell note, "An underlying tactic of Švejkism is "disengagement", whereby the self is detached from the normative prescriptions of managerialism through irony and cynicism (Fleming and Sewell 2002: 860). Although Švejk is a good example of a "complex" ironist, he is a purely literary figure that has not attracted a great deal of detailed debate or analysis. Furthermore, there is a tendency to portray him as a negative resistor who does not want to change the status quo and is simply interested in self-preservation (e.g. Fleming and Sewell: 865). Consequently, to explore complex irony, a better exemplar is required. Drawing from the widely held claim (e.g. Knox 1972; Kierkegaard, Hong et al 1989, Vlastos 1991; Lefebvre 1995; Colebrook 2004) that all debates on irony should start with Socrates, the chapter positions Socrates as such an exemplar. In doing so, it illustrates that the current

controversies over Socrates address the major areas of tension in the thesis, e.g. the ironic perspective, performance and personality; their relationship; the tensions surrounding the interpretation of an ironist's motivations; and how one addresses these tensions in a fluid and processual view of irony. This chapter is structured to provide an exemplary model for discussions of irony as a "strategy for living", without suggesting that such a perfect model can or should exist in reality.

In investigating how Socrates employed irony as a *strategy for living*, the chapter examines three interrelated aspects of Socratic irony. Firstly, through the work of the leading Socratic scholars Karl Popper, Gregory Vlastos and Alexander Nehamas, the chapter examines the moral and epistemological dimensions of debates around Socrates' philosophy. Secondly, through the work of Cicero and the Roman satirists, the once highly influential but now generally unread Third Earl of Shaftesbury, and Jonathan Swift, it examines the character and controversies that surround the performative or rhetorical aspect of Socratic irony. Thirdly, it looks at the explorations of irony as an aesthetic and ethical strategy for living, and the challenges and dangers of such a stance, that accompanied the rebirth of interest in the character of Socrates in Germanic and Danish philosophy in the early-mid nineteenth century. The chapter concludes by drawing attention to the degree to which each tradition of thought has matured into a vision of a third-way Socratic irony, as exemplified by Kierkegaard, that delicately balances its tendencies towards superiority and nihilism.

6.2   Irony and The Good Soldier Švejk

6.2.1   A Positive View of Organisational Ironists

Pre-dating and following Kunda, Organisational Studies has worked from an strong explicit or implicit image of an unstable sarcastic-eiron who notes the absurdities of organisational life but is unwilling or incapable of doing anything about them (Kondo 1990; Casey 1995; Barker 1999; Collinson 2003; Fleming and Spicer 2003; Kunda 2006). Scholars with a more positive perspective on

irony have tended to focus on its use as an academic perspective or lens on organisational contradictions (Trethewey 1999; Sewell and Barker 2006b), situational ironies (Johansson and Woodilla 2005; Warren 2005), knowledge transfer (Mir 2005) or dissimulation (Contardo 2005), as a reflective or dissonant trope (Skoldberg 2005; Sewell and Barker 2006), or, within organisations, as an element of humour (Hatch 1997; Caldas and Wood Jr 2005). Although some research on its strategic use has moved towards the notion of a more positive organisational ironist, it has tended to restrict irony to the Rortian (Rorty 1989) perspective-heavy, performance-empty ironism (Dewandre 2005), an overview of effective tactics of performative irony that contains no direct linkage to the ironic personality (Wasson 2005), or a tool of feminist scholars or managers (Brandser 2005; Johansson and Woodilla 2005; Wahl, Holgersson et al. 2005) to be picked up and discarded as and when required. The few scholars who have attempted to positively conceptualise the organisational ironist have perhaps veered too far. Wallace and Hoyle's "principled infidels" (2007) and Badham and McLoughlin's (2005) "ironically engaged" managers and employees are interpreted as middle-management "organisational heroes" overcoming the blindness of upper management and the resistance of employees to craft out wonderfully creative solutions to problems that were previously unapparent. These figures are romanticized, with the attendant problems of irony, such as the risk of despairing nihilism or powerful sanction, swept into a corner and forgotten.

6.2.2   The Nuanced View: The Good Soldier Švejk

The exception, and perhaps the most nuanced analysis of an organisational ironist, in which dimensions of nihilism, danger, creativity and heroism merge, is found in Fleming and Sewell's comparison of organisational disengagement with the Jakob Hašek's *Good Soldier Švejk*, which details the actions of a foot soldier in the Austro-Hungarian Imperial Army during the First World War (Fleming and Sewell 2002). Like the heroes of the ironic mode (see *Chapter Four*), Švejk is an unknowable blank cypher, a character whose motivations are hazy and actions shaped by those of the more colourfully detailed alazons that litter the landscape

of the novel. Wastell, White et al. write "nowhere does Hašek disclose what Švejk really thinks or feels, or anything very much about his interior or antecedent self. We can only suspect concealed motives but are never told" (Wastell, White et al. 2010). Likewise, Stern writes "there is thus a secret at the core of Švejk's character, but that secret is shared by no one" with nobody, not even the reader, sure if Švejk is "plain bloody hopeless", somewhere between a "congenital idiot," "malingerer of feeble mind," and "certified moron" or a simple, honest, wide-eyed, good-hearted naïf, or "hopeless with intent", an "opportunist of tiny opportunities", possessing subversive wisdom and indestructible good-humour (Stern 1968).[62] The ambiguity of the psychologically unexamined and unknowable Švejk prevents the reader from ever being completely sure whether he is a simple-minded fool lucking out of dangerous situations, or a dissembling trickster craftily undermining the war effort while keeping himself alive in the process. [63] Seemingly reading Švejk through the "hopeless with intent" frame, Fleming and Sewell (2002) employ Švejkism as a coverall term for resistance to disembodied and unobtrusive forms of control, drawing attention to flannelling, a type of resistance in which the authorities cannot punish without ironically undermining their own beliefs and principles.

The Švejkian Perspective*:* The Švejkist perspective involves perceiving "a conflict of moralities, an ambiguity of interests, a potential argument about where duty lies" (ibid: 864) within "a complex and dynamically asymmetrical power relationship where [Švejks] can neither use overt oppositional force to protect themselves nor make recourse to the moral 'high ground'" (ibid: 865). The Švejkist exercises "a level of cognition that operates beyond the limits imposed in the organization". Fleming and Sewell regard this cognition as sceptical and/or cynical, seeing "through the rhetoric to a deeper meaning where the language of mutual interests reveals the very opposite of what it professes" (ibid: 868). While this is an ironic perspective of sorts, it seems to be seeing the "real meaning" of the organisation in domination and repression rather than noting the multiplicity, confusion, chaos and foolishness of fallible concepts and foolish hubris, akin to Burke's tragic acceptance rather than his comic corrective (see *Chapter Three*). This tragic reading of Švejk, while valid in Fleming and

Sewell's attempt to make Švejk relevant to the scholarship of organisational resistance, does seem to contradict the comic nature of the novel and Švejk's jesting buffoonery. As Švejk says "That's why I say that people have their failings, they make mistakes, whether they're learned men or just damned fools who don't know any better" (Hašek and Selver 1939: 67).

The Švejkian Performance: Švejk notes incongruity and contradiction but recognizes that if he points it out too explicitly, he is likely to be repressed and sanctioned. Švejks employ guile, cunning and an ironic style that extends beyond normal "irreverent humour and mockery", which frames their performance (ibid: 865). Bailey writes that the Švejk's performance is "offered as a joke, something that need not be taken seriously; which is, of course, a neat piece of mystification. Do not take seriously the fact that we behave as if we do not take the organization seriously!" (Bailey 1993: 77). Its intention is to show contempt or disrespect to the norms of the organisation in such a way that "the authorities are part of the audience but cannot acknowledge the fact without confounding their own beliefs or principles" (Fleming and Sewell 2002: 866). Fleming and Sewell describe Švejks as "adlibbing around a script largely authored by other organizational playwrights: and employing irony as a sharp instrument that provides a means of challenging sacred norms inherent in that script in a manner that would be "considered illegitimate if expressed in any other way" (ibid: 865). For example, to escape police custody, Švejk happily signs a statement admitting he killed the Archduke Ferdinand, which results in his being sent for medical examination for lunacy. In this examination, he answers questions with riddles or nonsensical answers, resulting in his being sent to a lunatic asylum instead of prison. He escapes from the lunatic asylum by convincing the doctors he is a malingerer rather than a lunatic by consistently illustrating his presence of mind, resulting in his being sent back to police custody. He escapes police custody by praising the Emperor to a large crowd when under police escort, resulting in the police letting him go as a patriot while not being sure if his expression of patriotism was meant ironically or not (Hašek 1962: 33-109)

The Švejkian Personality: Within the paper, Fleming and Sewell begin to

168

tentatively point to some aspects of personality as suggested through a Socratic performance. The Švejk has an ironical disposition, being an eiron or "dissembling trickster" who "feign[s] ignorance with the intention of luring [his] antagonist into revealing the basis of their argument, thereby holding it up to ridicule" (Fleming and Sewell 2002: 867). He risks being overpowered by this disposition, often unable to stop dissembling even when it is obvious that continuing will result in his certain doom (ibid: 866). Here the Socratic ironist and the Švejkist begin to merge. Socrates refused to stop dissembling, even during his trial, resulting in his execution (although, as many note, it is possible that he decided to die in the last act of his extended ironic performance). Although Švejk ends up in a prisoner-of-war camp, and is thus seemingly doomed, Hašek died before completing his book, so we are never sure if Švejk would have saved himself through continued dissembling. As Fleming and Sewell note, this tragic possibility is tempered by a carnivalesque sensibility that attempts to comically invert the usual hierarchy, and a stance positioned somewhere between open protest and stubborn disobedience (ibid: 865).

6.2.3 Beyond Švejk

Although Hašek's book is regarded as one of the great anti-war novels (James 2004), perhaps, as James notes, because of its stilted translation into English, it has only engendered a certain, somewhat limited, amount of literary debate. Despite these limitations, Fleming and Sewell's overview of Švejk is a useful example of organisational scholars going outside traditional Organisational Studies debates to illuminate the complexities of the ironic personality. The introduction of Švejk has added nuances to the ironic personality that supplement Kunda's unstable, sarcastic eirons and nihilist-cynics in a lonely crowd. What he provides us with, in contrast, is an image of a trickster gently mocking the seriousness of others, yet managing to direct the twists and turns of events while doing so while presenting a face of such comic and simple buffoonery that nobody believes him capable of ironic manipulation.

However, these initial insights have remained somewhat restricted, driven in

part by the directions Fleming and Sewell subsequently followed.   Whereas
Sewell has pursued the positive dimensions of irony through his interest in
tropes and an ironic perspective revealing organisational contradictions,
Fleming has pursued the negative, having increasingly positioned irony as a
performative tool of cynical resistance, dis-identification and self-alienation. In
order to revisit their initial insights into a nuanced ironic personality or
character, it is necessary to tie them back together.

Given that Švejk is written as a classically "blank cypher" ironic hero (as
discussed in *Chapter Four*), and is undeniably a fictional character, it is
impossible to significantly deepen an understanding of the ironic character
through further analysis of his personality. We must move to another ironic
character outside Organisational Studies, the "real" fictional, or "fictional" real
character that Fleming and Sewell have already suggested provides the
dialectical basis for Švejk's ironical disposition, the Ancient Greek philosopher,
Socrates. In doing so, we follow Gouldner's call to apply the concerns of ancient
Greek philosophy to contemporary social theory, in particular, his argument that

> Despite the emphasis on the dialectic as impersonal method, it is also
> intrinsic, even if implicit, to the Platonic dialogue that Socrates himself
> makes a difference as an individual. His person and character are deeply
> involved in the whole change process and in the outcome. We get
> involved in trials, dilemmas, anxieties, and ambitions that we are made to
> feel are Socrates'; and it makes a difference who he is and that it is he,
> rather than someone else, who feels them, for it is through our
> identification with him that we become increasingly aware that these
> problems are also ours. The dialectic as method is never presented as a
> machine which produces identical results without regard to the character
> of the men who operate it. (Gouldner 1967: 265-266)

By moving from Švejk to Socrates, I critique the narrow view of Švejk as basically
a "debunker" in Sewell and Fleming's treatment, meaning he gets seen as a
"tragic" rather than "comic" figure, and, ultimately suggest that the limited

understanding of the ironist in Organisational Studies is rooted in the failure to go beyond this view.

6.3   Irony, Rhetoric and Philosophy

The call to return to Socrates is mirrored by those discussing irony in philosophy and literary criticism. In his essay on the classifications of irony, Knox (1972) argues that every serious discussion on irony must start with an evaluation of Socrates. Colebrook agrees, arguing "it would seem to make sense, then, to look at Socrates as the very beginning of irony. For it was in Plato's Socratic dialogues that irony referred to both a complex figure of speech and the creation of an enigmatic personality" (Colebrook 2004: 5). Kierkegaard's (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989) *The Concept of Irony*, has the sub-heading, *with constant reference to Socrates*, making Socrates the centre point for every discussion on irony in all its dimensions. Lefebvre (1995) and Vlastos (1991: 29, 44) go further still, claiming that not only does Socrates' irony establish Western sensibility, but it is the birth of philosophy, ethics and consciousness. However, employing Socrates as an exemplar of irony is not without its difficulties. For one thing, the "biographer" of Socrates, Plato, rejects the idea that Socrates was an ironist. Secondly, interpretations of Socrates abound, with "a swirl of voices surrounding" Socrates trying "to explain who he was and how he came to be that way" (Nehamas 1998: 9).

It is perhaps useful to organise these voices around a "rhetoric versus philosophy" tradition, paying close attention to the split between the sophists and the philosophers drawn up and emphasized in Plato's life-long defence and interpretation of Socrates. Prior to Socrates, the term sophist (wise man or one who has wisdom) was applied to anyone who could exhibit knowledge about a certain craft, including poets, sages, seers and prophets. However, by Socrates' time, the central characteristic of a sophist was the ability to use words in a persuasive manner, satirized by Aristophanes in *The Clouds* as being able to "make the weaker argument seem stronger". Aristophanes' attack, and other historical evidence, suggests the Athenians felt the sophists were intellectually

devious and morally dubious. Socrates was accused of being a sophist by Aristophanes, an accusation that stuck for many years, as illustrated by the famous orator Aechines, who told a jury in 345 B.C.E. (54 years after Socrates' death), "Men of Athens, you executed Socrates, the sophist, because he was clearly responsible for the education of Critias, one of the thirty anti-democratic leaders."

Plato's mission was to defend Socrates against these charges of sophism and it is for this reason he cannot countenance that Socrates is an eiron/ironist. He centres this defence on the purity of philosophy versus the impurity of sophism and rhetoric. The first documented usage of the term rhetoric (*rhêtorikê*) is in Plato's *Gorgias* (449a), and it has been argued that Plato coined the term (Schiappa 1990). In his quarrel against rhetoric and sophism, Plato suggests rhetoric is a type of poetry (*Gorgias* 502c), and that there was "an old quarrel between philosophy and poetry" (*Republic* 607b5-6). Plato's stance, and subsequent interpretations of it, has been defined by Barish (1981: 5) as an "anthitheatrical prejudice", or "a haunting acknowledgement of the potency of the theatre leading to an all the more stinging repudiation of it". This antitheatrical prejudice covers poetry, rhetoric and theatre/drama. Plato attacks the classic poetry of Homer, which shaped the popular culture, and the poetry of his time, which he believes is pervasive and harmful, and wrong about nature and the divine. This attack includes any form of theatrical performances that transmits poetic knowledge (as presented in the discussion on Vico in *Chapter Five*), such as plays and recitals. As discussed in Chapter Two, the eiron originates as a character in the Greek plays contemporary to Socratic Athens. The notion that Socrates is an ironist or employs irony to persuade is an anathema to Plato and must be entirely rejected in defence of his honour. Plato sets himself against two forms of poetic persuasion; the classic poems, which educate the young into believing cultural falsehoods and the contemporary poets or reciters of poems, whose plays and performances have a real effect on the disposition of their audience.

For Plato, rhetorical techniques have been devised from poetic techniques, having the same potential to emotively persuade people to accept falsehoods in the political arena. This presented a challenge to the development of "real" knowledge, which occurs through the process of philosophical discovery. In overviewing Plato's distinction, Ramage, Callaway et al. (Ramage, Micheal Callaway et al. 2009: 54) write

> The end of reasoning for philosophy is some sort of discovery—of truth, of reality, or of the good—which will then be known and shareable. For rhetoric on the other hand, the end of reasoning is a choice; to be sure the choice *may* bring us closer to truth, reality or the good [...] but it is the *act itself*, performed in a particular time and place to bring about a particular outcome, not knowledge for its own sake, that motivates the process (italics mine).

This distinction plays out fully in *Gorgias*, in which rhetoric is interpreted as being a specific worldview, quarrelling with philosophy over the character of nature, the existence of moral norms, the connection between happiness and virtue, the nature and limits of reason, the value of reason in human life, and the nature of the self. The quarrel between rhetoric and philosophy is arranged around Socrates' query concerning "how one should live one's life", either a life of "politics ", understood as the pursuit of power and glory, and informed by the persuasive art of rhetoric, or a life of philosophy, straining and seeking for truth and knowledge.

However, in practice, the distinction becomes blurred. Socrates often strays into rhetorical persuasion and employs poetic myths to make his points. Furthermore, Plato betrays his own attack on rhetoric with his *Socratic Dialogues,* considered by many to be the greatest rhetorical and poetic texts in philosophical history. In developing a substantive theory of knowledge (Theory of Forms), Plato is also forced to deal with the problem of persuading others to listen to him, so requires a concept of what is philosophic or "good" rhetoric, against the "bad" rhetoric of the sophists (as discussed in Chapter Three). As he describes it in *Phaedrus*, good rhetoric occurs when "[...] a speaker should have

good knowledge of the subject discussed, a good understanding of logical proof, and a knowledge of human psychology that makes it possible for arguments to be adapted to an audience." (Kennedy 2009: 42). Although Plato disavows Socrates' irony, it has become a central tenet of post-Platonic debates of Socrates. Why and how Socrates employed irony and the relationship between Socratic philosophy and rhetoric has been debated by commentators in Socratic and post-Socratic Athens (e.g. by Thrasymaschus, Alcibiades and Aristotle), Imperial Rome, Jacobean England, Romantic and post-Romantic Germany, 19th century Denmark, and by contemporary philosophers.

6.3.1   Locating the Debate: The Socratic Mission

The central problems of interpreting Socrates' irony have generally been arranged around his disavowal of knowledge and habit of speaking ironically. There is a general acceptance (e.g. in Sesonske 1961; Burnet 1968; Guthrie 1971; Kahn 1981; Brickhouse and Smith 1983) that Socrates' irony emerges from his "divine mission", imparted by the Delphic Oracle of Apollo, outlined in *The Apology* (all quotes from Platonic dialogues are taken from Plato, Bury et al. 1914).[64] Informed "there was no one wiser" than him, Socrates pondered

> "What in the world does the god mean, and what riddle is he propounding? For I am conscious that I am not wise either much or little. What then does he mean by declaring that I am the wisest? He certainly cannot be lying, for that is not possible for him." And for a long time I was at a loss as to what he meant; then with great reluctance I proceeded to investigate (Apology 21b)

His investigation involved questioning Athenians having a reputation for wisdom to try and understand how he was wiser than they (Brickhouse and Smith 1983). He realizes that although they have knowledge of techniques or crafts or are capable of writing great verse or speeches, none could transfer these skills to other areas of knowledge, especially that of *arête*. *Arête* is excellence of any kind,

i.e. being the best you can be, or reaching your highest human potential. [65]   For Socrates, any conflation between technical, rhetorical or poetic knowledge and knowledge of a general *arête* is akin to madness (this interpretation taken from Guthrie 1971: 87-88; more fully explained in Brickhouse and Smith 1983, especially Section III, 663-665). Socrates eventually determines that wisdom is an awareness of ignorance and the humility to accept this awareness.

> As I went away, I thought to myself, "I am wiser than this man; for neither of us really knows anything fine and good, but this man thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas I, as I do not know anything, do not think I do either. I seem, then, in just this little thing to be wiser than this man at any rate, that what I do not know I do not think I know either (Apology 21d)[66]

Confronted by the revelation that what is commonly believed to be wisdom is its opposite, Socrates is placed in a very complex position. He is unable to directly explain this insight to the rest of Athenian society, as its most prominent citizens proudly believe themselves wise (e.g. Thrasymachus, Hippias, Ion and Euthyphro in Geach 1966; Chappell 1993; Boyd 1994; O'Grady 2005).[67] He thus indirectly tries to reveal this understanding to those he encounters.[68] Debates on Socratic irony are located around this unique perspective on wisdom, his indirect, dissembling, yet charming and jesting form of communication, and his struggle to live virtuously within these tensions.

6.3.2   Interpreting Socrates

The voices interpreting Socrates and his irony are arranged around this tension. As rhetorical and philosophical traditions challenge the "traditional knowledge" of a culture, embedded in religiously informed value systems and maintained by an aristocratic elite, explicitly expressing opinions sourced in philosophical discovery or a deconstruction and use of rhetorical persuasion carries an attendant risk. A wise philosopher, it may be argued, has to be adept at verbal irony in order to avoid the backlash from those threatened by his or her

revelations. A wise rhetorician may also be reflective about the need for "counter-persuasiveness", and the controlled dissonance of irony may be a logical "persuasive" stance, "hiding" not just to avoid an authoritarian backlash but also to "jar" unreflective minds out of their lack of reflection into attention and response.

Socrates' usage of irony as part of his philosophical, ethical and rhetorical stance has long been debated, specifically around whether he employed irony for eristic, elenctic or maieutic purposes.

- **Eristic:** the art or practice of disputation and polemics characterized by disputatious and often subtle and specious reasoning (from Greek *eristikos* fond of wrangling, from *erizein* to wrangle, from *eris* strife)

- **Elenctic:** argument of disproof or refutation; cross-examining, testing, scrutiny esp. for purposes of refutation

- **Maieutic:** relating to or resembling the Socratic method of eliciting new ideas from another, from Greek *maieutikos* of midwifery

For those seeing irony as an eristic technique, Socrates employs it when enjoying argument for its own sake and only being interested in winning the debate (Burnet 1968; Guthrie 1971). For those seeing irony as an elenctic technique, Socrates logically disproves arguments in order to produce an empty space in which a further journey of discovery can begin (e.g. the early Platonic Socrates in Vlastos (1991)). For those seeing irony as informing maieutic, Socrates logically disproves arguments in order to give birth to the truth latent in the mind through innate human reason (e.g. the later Platonic Socrates in Vlastos (1991)).

In philosophical debate on Socrates, philosophers with an epistemological focus have tended to regard irony as a technique of eristic whilst accepting, sometimes somewhat grudgingly, that it may be a necessary component of Socrates' attempt to reshape philosophical thought when confronted by hostility (e.g. Hegel, Haldane et al. 1995). Philosophers with a more ethical focus have challenged the eristic dimension of performative irony by interpreting Socrates' irony as

evidence of his humility and providing an acceptable rhetorical method for uncovering and communicating the hubris of others. (e.g. Popper 1966; Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989; Vlastos 1991; Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1992). Classical Roman and Anglo-Saxon thinkers have taken a somewhat maieutic focus, positing that Socrates' irony is employed as a sophisticated device to protect men of elegant reason and "sublime" knowledge from the violence and boorishness of vulgar society or the whims of dictatorial rule (e.g. Cicero and Jones 1776; Cicero and Yonge 1877; Cicero, Rackham et al. 1942; Shaftesbury and Klein 1999). For the German Romantics, Socratic irony seems to be a creatively elenctic search for knowledge and beauty, underpinning the challenge and process of self-expression, self-understanding and self-creation when confronted by profane conceptual interpretations or definitions of reality (Schlegel and Firchow 1971). Each tradition has produced thinkers that have moved beyond this focus on Socrates' irony being merely a performance or perspective. For such thinkers, Socratic irony represents a complex and sophisticated strategy of living, responding to an ironic perspective on social life and human existence that posits a universal "cosmic" gap between human aspirations and achievements. It is perhaps useful to delineate these traditions into three Socratic types, the Humble Philosopher posited by ethical philosophy, the Elegant Sophisticate posited by Classical Roman and Anglo-Saxon rhetorical philosophy, and the Authentic Artist of the Self posited by Germanic Romantic philosophy.

For those focusing on Socrates as a Humble Philosopher, Socrates is interpreted as challenging the authoritarian hubris of corrupt social authoritarianism and all those claiming they have certain knowledge. For such critics, Socrates is neither an overly light sophist nor an overly heavy philosopher, but the instigator of a "third way" social and moral critical stance. For Alexander Nehamas, Socrates' strategy of living through irony makes him more than just a humble ethical philosopher. To Nehamas he is an exemplar of the art of humble philosophical living in ambiguously dangerous environments. Those seeing Socrates as an Elegant Sophisticate perceive him as being a pragmatic political critic betwixt and between dictators and the rule of the mob, or a satiric critic attacking the

pretensions of foolish philosophers and the devious manipulations of corrupt knaves. The elegant Socrates employs irony to protect the sublimity of his knowledge from these uncouth and deceitful others. For Jonathan Swift, however, the adoption of Socrates as a satirical role model means rejecting Utopian ideals but refusing to partake in political dissembling. As it is impossible to critique this world without either befouling oneself in its horrors or becoming foolishly enraptured with a sublime vision, Swift tasks himself (and other ironic commentators) to develop a mental utopia in which a social critic can safely retreat when the follies and vices of the lived-in world are too much to bear.

For the Romantics, taking a stand against an obsessive faith in science and industrialism and the crassness and ugliness of the mob, Socrates is an Authentic Artist of the Self. Coming out of the romantic expressivity tradition (Taylor 1979), this equates authenticity with the increased self-understanding and self-expression of individuals and communities, a process that occurs in a dialectical fashion through expression, critical reflection and then re-expression. Artistry of the self involves self-expression and self-realization, employing concepts of beauty and aesthetics to guide the process of self-creation whilst avoiding alienation. In this tradition, the self-realizing artist-philosopher reveals the folly of the scientists and philosophers and the corrupt politicians claiming to stand for the common good. However, the heavy philosophical interpretation of irony divides the tradition. Grappling with the authentic artist and the dialectic, the Hegelian interpretation ends up veering closely to the science and philosophy that the Romantics are criticizing. In contrast, Schlegel's seriously playful irony risks going into a negative spiral, in which the ironist's soul is eventually corrupted by the unending unstableness of irony. Whilst early Romantic debates on Socrates romanticized his character and his irony, they faltered when confronted by the real possibility of untethered aesthetic irony leading to nihilism and despair, as perhaps outlined in Berlin's critique of the movement.

Each tradition moves from perceiving irony as a performative technique towards treating it as a strategy for living that informs a nuanced interpretation of a pragmatically human Socrates coping with a society obsessively claiming or

chasing wisdom but paradoxically embodying and producing foolish hubris or self-interested sophistry. As the following section indicates, these traditions cross-pollinate, with the epistemological philosopher posited by the later Plato and Hegel informing the possible Socrates of ethical and Romantic philosophy, and the possible Socrates of Roman/Anglo-Saxon philosophy influencing the development of the Germanic Romantic version of Socrates. The tensions that we have identified within each interpretation of Socrates' strategy for living have been fully addressed, and for some tamed, by Kierkegaard's response to Romanticism, where he argues that ironic agility prevents earnestness and seriousness of all kinds, even to irony itself. Kierkegaard's Socrates, a reaction to such tensions, deeply engages with society in an ethical process of "knowing oneself" and trying to become the most complete person possible.

6.4   The Humble Philosopher: Epistemological, Moral or Silent

6.4.1   Socrates as Epistemological Philosopher

As discussed above, for Plato, constrained by the Athenian interpretation of *eironeia* as 'sham humility', Socrates is categorically not an *eiron* (see Santas 1964; Irwin 1979; Plato and Taylor 2009 for contemporary interpretations of a non-eironic Socrates), but an educator-philosopher charged with leading Athenians towards objective, divine knowledge.[69]   Likewise, Hegel denies that Socrates is a mere dissembling eiron (Hegel, Haldane et al. 1995). This denial relates to Hegel's definition of irony, in which, following the philosopher, Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger (1780-1819), is "infinite absolute negativity." For Hegel, this positions irony and the negative as the final and absolute movement, negating the philosophical Idea, reducing it to a subjective whim of an individual, to reconstruct it again, only to negate it, and so on (Hegel and Knox 1975 especially his discussions on Fichte, Schelling and Schlegel 7iii).[70]   This meant any philosopher could negate the concept of beauty and truth in general and turn them to subjective forms. Following this critique, Hegel develops a negative and positive stance towards irony, the former coming from its flippant debunking of all philosophy, and the latter seeing the "constructive criticism" of irony as part

179

of the dialectic to achieve philosophical truth. Hegel rejects irony as a serious philosophical perspective, arguing:

> This irony is thus only a trifling with everything, and it can transform all things into show: to this subjectivity nothing is any longer serious, for any seriousness which it has, immediately becomes dissipated again in jokes, and all noble or divine truth vanishes away or becomes mere triviality (Hegel, Haldane et al. 1995: B1a).[71]

However, Hegel regards Socratic irony as having two purposes, being a "manner of speech" keeping dialectic in action through "pleasant rallying", and illustrative of "his opposition of subjective reflection to morality as its exists, not a consciousness of the fact that he stands above it, but the natural aim of leading men, through thought, to the true good and to the universal Idea a way of negating the abstract to lead to the concrete" (Hegel, Haldane et al. 1995: B1a). Irony in this sense is a central tool of philosophical inquiry, undermining the false abstract, but in a pleasant and witty enough way for the holder of the now negated belief to accept the negation without recourse to violence. Irony as a performative tool and irony as Socratic playfulness are inherent in the interpretation, but only as servants to the serious pursuit of the philosophical journey. The end-point of this journey is to design and develop a utopian society in which irony of any kind is obsolete. The irony of the philosopher is unnecessary because society is openly informed by philosophical ideals and philosophers can thus speak directly without fear of sanction. Likewise, the ironic tricks and dissembling of rhetorical persuasion are unnecessary because the societal form is perfected and self-interested politics no longer an issue.

6.4.2   Socrates as Moral Philosopher

Opposing the authoritarianism of Plato's and Hegel's idealistic, utopian philosophy, Popper draws attention to "the Socratic demand that the responsible statesman should not be dazzled by his own excellence, power, or wisdom, but that he should know what matters most: that we are all frail human beings"

(Popper 1966: 137). He argues that Plato's interpretation of Socrates as a magical epistemological sage betrays Socrates' "world of irony and truthfulness and reason" (Popper 1966: 137). Popper's Socrates is "an ethical reformer, a moralist who pestered all kinds of people, forcing them to think, to explain, and to account for the principles of their actions" (Popper 1966: 23) and a political critic who enthusiastically attacks governments of any persuasion for shortcomings (Popper 1966: 112). Popper is not, however, primarily focused on the morality of these interventions, but on the limited and provisional nature of knowledge and how one attends to and recognises this. He then turns to a good 'open' society based on this view of the world, being anti-historicism and anti-authoritarianism (Bertrand Russell has much the same view (Russell 1996)). Whereas Popper does not make a significant attempt to explain Socratic irony, the above quotes suggest that he would, similarly to Plato and Hegel, be opposed to any use irony as the rhetorical tricks of the statesman overwhelmed by his own self-importance and corrupted by power. He is, however, supportive of an irony of truth and reason, which undercuts the former's arrogance, is capable of undermining the former's irony by employing the same techniques against them, and has the potential to also challenge and question any philosophical arrogance claiming privileged and certain access to the "good" and the "true".

Vlastos' social criticism is located in his interpretations of (and support for) the "actual" Socrates of the earlier Platonic dialogues, and his understanding (and opposition to) "Plato's" Socrates in the later dialogues. Whereas "Plato's" Socrates is a philosopher of morality, epistemology, science, language, religion, education and art, a metaphysical elitist confident in his knowledge, expounding truth, and critical of democracy as the worst of contemporary forms of government, the "actual" Socrates possesses no concrete theories, seeks rather than expounds knowledge, is populist, has no interest in mathematics or natural sciences and is critical of any "self-interested" politics (Vlastos 1991: 47-49). This critique is sourced in Vlastos' relating Socrates' irony to his moral philosophy and ethical teaching in the early dialogues. Vlastos attributes Socrates' disavowal of possessing knowledge as *only* relating to the objective knowledge of the gods (Vlastos 1991; Vlastos and Burnyeat 1994). For Vlastos,

Socrates' grasp of human wisdom is unsurpassed (Vlastos 1985).

> [Socrates] can hardly bring himself to believe that his own understanding of the good life, chancy, patchy, provisional, perpetually self-questioning, endlessly perplexed as it is, should have any value at all in the eyes of the god who enjoys the unshaken heart of well-rounded truths – the perfect security, the serene completeness of knowledge… low as his own moral insight must rank by the god's absolute standards, it is still superior to any alternative open to man and earns the god's praise because it is humble. Drained of any epistemic presumption, aware of his own ignorance, he is aware that he has no knowledge (Vlastos 1991: 64).

From here, Vlastos vehemently detaches Socratic irony from claims that it is akin to deception and sophistry, as posited by Dodds (1959), Friedlander (1964) and Guthrie (1975). He states that Socrates' irony relates to his opening up multiple interpretations of possible actions to be internally debated before one decides on how to act with virtue. Informed by Socrates' excellence in the practical usage of performative irony, this ironic reaction to ethical absolutism is also roughly synonymous with Popper's critical Socrates.

Vlastos' and Popper's Socrates believes moral excellence can be taught (Popper 1966: 111-112). Vlastos (Vlastos 1991: 31) argues that Socrates educates through "complex irony", which he states is unique in Ancient Greek literature. Complex irony reveals ambiguity in how the deconstruction of a vulgar but meaningful-at-surface-level statement uncovers a deeper underlying, perhaps more sublime, second layer of meaning. Although the surface meaning has a degree of truth, so does the deeper, which Socrates' privileges while still retaining the degree of truth in the surface meaning. Vlastos illustrates this through Socrates' description of his features as "beautiful", arguing that if the interpretation of "beautiful" is allowed to mean "well made for their required function" then Socrates' widely-spaced eyes and big nostrils, enabling broad vision and deeply healthy breathing, can be seen as being as beautiful as culturally accepted interpretations of beauty (Vlastos 1991: 31).   This

multiplicity of perspectives, in which a deeper interpretation undercuts a superficially surface interpretation, anticipates Hutcheon's deep and superficial ironies (Hutcheon 1994: 106). For Vlastos, the central complex ironies in Socrates' life are his disavowal of knowledge and teaching. In the moral domain, he cannot know anything with certainty, **but** his method can, by debunking the claimed certainty of established beliefs, in favour of provisional beliefs established with a more reflective, self-critical stance. He does not teach in the sense he does not transfer knowledge, **but** he does make learners "aware of their own ignorance", "enable[s] them to discover for themselves the truth the teacher held back" and evokes and assists them with "their own effort at moral self-improvement" (Vlastos 1991: 32).

6.4.3   The Silent Socrates

The most recent contribution to this debate has moved beyond the discussions of the "actual" Socrates by drawing attention to Socrates' essentially fictional nature. Nehamas (1998) illustrates that we can and do read so much into Socrates, because he is only known to us through fictional representation, making the role of the debates over Socrates constructivism ironic in itself. In making the fictional element of Socrates explicit, Nehamas rejects claims that Socrates is epistemologically or morally perfect, arguing he is darker, an ever unknowable mystery of persistent silence, having written nothing himself, and that what we know of him is in the literary creations of Aristophanes, Xenophon and Plato. He writes the "philosophers of the art of living keep returning to Plato's Socratic works because they contain both the most coherent and the least explicable model of a philosophical life that we possess. Like a blank sheet, Socrates invites us to write; like a vast stillness, he provokes us into shouting. But he remains untouched, staring back with an ironic gaze, both beyond his reflections and nothing above their sum total" (Nehamas 1998: 9). For Nehamas

> Socrates is the prototypical artist of living because, by leaving the process he followed absolutely indeterminate, he also presents its final product as nonbinding: a different procedure, with different materials, can create

183

another life and still be part of his project. To imitate Socrates is therefore to create oneself, as Socrates did; but it is also to make oneself different from anyone else so far, and since that includes Socrates himself, it is to make oneself different from Socrates as well (Nehamas 1998: 11).

In Nehamas, the silent Socrates is ever unknowable, yet simultaneously an exemplar for the art of living. The capture of the actual Socrates is unachievable, because we cannot know him and emulating him in any simple sense is unfeasible, yet he remains worthy of pragmatically creative use. He invokes us to critically challenge our actual beliefs, values and behaviours with style and humour, and to create ourselves as unique rather than socially determined beings in the process of so doing. Nehamas moves the discussion outside of a debate on the nature of the "actual" Socrates and challenges us to use writings on Socrates to inspire us to live Socratically in modern conditions. As the following sections illustrates, rhetorical and aesthetic debates on Socratic irony anticipated Nehamas' call and, perhaps, even made some significant strides in illustrating how this might actually be possible in a practical sense.

6.5   The Elegant Sophisticate: The Satirist amongst Knaves and Fools

In the more rhetorically focussed tradition of thought, initiated by urbane Romans (e.g. Cicero, Quintilian and the Roman satirists) and advanced in Jacobean England (especially by the Third Lord Shaftesbury), Socrates' ethical sublimity is contrasted to the boorishness of a vulgar society that will violently silence ethical criticism if it is direct and overt. Investigating how to safely transmit ethical and sublime observations, an oratorical interpretation of Socrates examines how his stylish and/or satiric presentation of criticism could minimize the risk of retaliation. However, the tendency of Roman and Anglo-Saxon ethicists to presume that in this process one's own ethical sublimity was an achievable goal was an object of critique in Jonathan Swift's subsequent satires, each of which examines the difficulty of critiquing social reality without slipping into the folly of believing one has a solution or being corrupted and

befouled by the practices of self-interested ironic sophistry (especially *Tale of the Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*, as discussed by Craven (1992) and Traugott (1961)).

6.5.1 The Perfect Orator

The Roman senator and rhetorician, Cicero, greatly admired Socrates, describing him as "the first to call philosophy down from the heavens and set her in the cities of men and bring her also into their homes and compel her to ask questions about life and morality and things good and evil" (Cicero and King 1927: 434-435).[72] He further argues that the perfect orator possesses great knowledge in ethical principles, law and history, plus a perfect command of rhetorical technique.[73] In *De Oratore*, he employs Socrates as a potential model for the perfect orator, but is unable to reconcile Socrates' failure to successfully defend himself at his trial with the rhetorical technique required of the perfect orator. Cicero overcomes this issue in *Brutus*, written nine years after *De Oratore*. In *Brutus*, Cicero distinguishes between types of rhetoric, detaching the bad rhetoric of the Sophists from the good rhetoric employed by the school of those who had listened to Socrates' criticism of the Sophists, i.e. Isocrates' School of Eloquence (Cicero and Jones 1776: 262-266).[74] In simple terms, this means that the "bad" rhetoric of the sophists has been replaced, through Isocrates' teachings, by the "good" rhetoric Socrates outlines in *Phaedrus,* in which the good orator is has knowledge of the subject, logical proof that his arguments are correct, and a psychological overview of his audience, enabling him to understand how to best persuade them. With this move, Cicero makes Socrates the founder of good oratory and also of reliable and grounded philosophy.[75] For Cicero, oratory in Socrates' time had been corrupted by the techniques of the sophists, who are eloquent but unlearned. Socrates separates wisdom from sophistic oratory, meaning he cannot employ eloquence to defend himself in his trial, but must appeal to the truth. Consequently, he could still be the "perfect orator" whilst failing to defend his life. As subsequent orators have learned from Socrates' critique of sophistry, in which good rhetoric is always informed by philosophical knowledge, eloquence has been rightfully reattached to learning, resulting in the potential emergence of the perfect orator who necessarily has

185

the knowledge of a philosopher and a total command of eloquent delivery. For Cicero, eloquent wisdom is a combination of philosophical depth and rhetorical awareness, with good rhetoric informed by philosophical knowledge and linked to learning.

While this exemplification of Socrates is foreshadowed by Plato's description of Socrates as being "the best and wisest and most righteous man" (Plato, Bury et al. 1914: 118a) and Aristotle's description of him as a great soul (from Nicomachean Ethics 4.3 and discussed in depth by Howland 2002), Cicero is the first to determine that Socrates' irony is a central characteristic of his greatness. In Cicero's discussions on Socrates (Cicero and Miller 1913; Cicero, Rackham et al. 1942; Cicero and Annas 2001), Socrates' *irony is* a quality to be admired. Cicero writes

> "Urbane is the dissimulation when what you say is quite other than what you understand... In this irony and dissimulation Socrates, in my opinion, far excelled all others in charm and humanity. Most elegant is the form and seasoned in seriousness. (Cited in Vlastos 1991: 28)[76]

Despite possessing a wealth of good qualities, Cicero's Socrates disavows them to avoid arrogance, haughtiness and pride. He has a temperate, good-humoured mien even under extreme provocation, employing ironic wit to reveal the foolish prejudices of those opposing him.[77] The Socratic orator is witty and urbane, good-humoured and jesting, temperate under provocation, plays the fool yet remains credible both inside and outside his performance, treading the fine line between being dismissed as an idiot or punished as a subversive. In this ironic performance, Socrates exemplifies lightness and humility, the urbane sophistication that informs his approach to philosophical knowledge.

6.5.2   The Jesting God

Cicero's interpretation was maintained through Roman satire (see Freudenburg 2001 for an overview of Roman satirical writing).[78] Although little remains of

Lucilius' (the originator of the genre) output, Guilhamet (1985) illustrates how fragment 709 acknowledges his debt to Socratic writings and that the tenor of the work suggests that Socrates was considered the dominant figure of the satiric form. Lucilius' successor, Horace, attends to the problem of Socrates being sophisticatedly ironic yet the victim of Aristophanes' satire (especially Book Two of The Satires, Horace and Alexander 1999). Anderson (1963) persuasively illustrates how Horace employs dramatic irony in the style of the Platonic dialogues to set things straight. Socrates is no longer the butt of satire, but the moral ideal, able to face up to ironic situations by seeing clearly.[79] The specific view of Socrates as a jesting, bumbling ugly fool masking moral goodness and virtuous wisdom repeats throughout Roman and European satire.[80] For Erasmus, Socrates' "external jesting gave him the air of a clown", behind which was a "a god rather than a man, a great lofty and truly philosophic soul, despising all those things for which other mortals jostle and steer, sweat and dispute and struggle-one who rose above all insults, over whom fortune had no power, and who feared nothing" (Erasmus and Philips 1967: 78-79). Rabelais described Socrates as "always laughing, always drinking glass for glass with everybody, always playing the fool, and always concealing his divine wisdom", a persona which masked "a heavenly and priceless drug; a superhuman understanding, miraculous virtue, invincible courage, unrivalled sobriety, unfailing contentment, perfect confidence, and an incredible contempt for all those things men so watch for, pursue, work for, sail after, and struggle for" (Rabelais and Cohen 1955: 37).[8182] In this interpretation, Socrates' great soul is located somewhere between his foolish demeanour and his profound philosophy. Shifting too far in either direction risks the foolishness undermining his insight, or his confidence in his profundity shifting into philosophical arrogance.

6.5.3 The Soft Irony of the Gentleman Philosopher

The divine Socratic personality preserved in the satirical tradition crystallized and divided during the raillery and satiric attacks of the Restoration wits (Hayman, 1968), in which English writers and philosophers such as Lord Shaftesbury[83] (see Craven 1992 for an overview of Shaftesbury's reaction to the

satire of the age), Joseph Addison and Richard Steele (examples of their work in Addison and Steele 1711; a critical overview of their influence in Bloom 1996) reacted against the cynicism and vitriol of, amongst others, Thomas Hobbes (Hobbes' satirical aethism is detailed by Martinich 2003: 19-39; Martel 2007: 25-26) and Jonathan Swift (especially in the following works: Swift 1939; Swift, Davis et al. 1959; Swift 1980).[84] Although we commonly associate Swift's biting satire with irony, it is Shaftesbury that carries Cicero's Socrates into the modern arena. Cicero's influence on Enlightenment English society was prevalent in the training and improvement of English gentlemen (Ustick 1932; Schwalb 1950). Consequently, a core motivation of the Restoration wits was "the amalgamation of philosophy and breeding" (Klein 1994: 27), summed up in Addison's borrowing of Cicero's phrasing:

> It was said of Socrates, that he brought Philosophy down from Heaven, to inhabit among Men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and Coffee-Houses (in Spectator No. 10, March 12, 1711, cited in Klein 1994: 36).

Like Addison, Shaftesbury wanted to extricate philosophy from academic institutions and private interests, and make it active in the world (Klein 1994: 37-38). To achieve that, he tried to reconcile his natural wit and humour with the maintenance of a properly serious attitude towards philosophy. Here Cicero is extremely useful to Shaftesbury. Both were influenced by the Stoics' philosophy that how a person behaved was more important than what he said (Sellars 2006: 32) and the necessity of overcoming destructive emotions (Russell 1945: 252-270). Both had to reconcile the Stoics' aversion to irony with a natural wit, which, in Shaftesbury's case, leant itself to satire, a form of writing that he considered too unserious for philosophy (Hayman 1970; Wolf 1993).[85] He thus determined to detach urbane and witty philosophy from the acidic satires and raillery common to the age. To achieve his goal of developing a society of cosmopolitan, mannered, urbane and sophisticated gentlemen philosophers, Shaftesbury tried to distinguish between the irony of Socrates and

the irony of the satirical writing of the age. He makes two moves to achieve this. The first move privileges Xenophon's Socrates, characterized by practicality, self-control and piety (see Xenophon and Macleod 2008), over the more rebellious and confrontational Platonic Socrates. He then employs Aelian's unreliable account of Socrates (Aelian and Fleming 1576), in which Aristophanes was hired by enemies of Socrates to discredit him, illustrating how Socrates emerged from the experience with a heightened rather than diminished reputation.

Ultimately, Shaftesbury wrestles with the same foolishness versus profundity dilemma that emerged in the Roman satirical tradition, noting that Socrates

> was not only contented to be ridiculed; but, that he might help the poet as much as possible, he presented himself openly in the theatre; that his real figure (which was no advantageous one) might be compared with that which the witty poet had brought as his representative on the stage. Such was his good humour! Nor could there be in the world a greater testimony of the invincible goodness of the man or a greater demonstration, that there was no imposture either in his character or opinions (Shaftesbury and Klein 1999: 17).

Shaftesbury's Socrates is unbending against the foolish opinions of the masses, the self-interested Machiavellianism of manipulative politicians, and the spiteful attack of the satirist, who he sees as employing a thoroughgoing negative irony that mimics the style of the great authors he admires to entertain the masses through the mockery of the elite. Forced to endure satirical and political attacks on his ideas and character, he employs an ironic mask to hide emotionality, remaining dignified and urbane, no matter how ill society treats him.[86] Shaftesbury writes

> that sort of dissimulation which is consistent with true simplicity: and besides the innocent and excellent dissimulation which Socrates used, remember that other sort (not less his) which hides what passes within, and accommodates our manners to those of our friends and of people

189

around us, as far as this with safety can be allowed (Shaftesbury and Rand 1900: 182).

From here, Shaftesbury can reconcile his own tendencies towards ironic wit with his desire to be a serious philosopher. He sums up his interpretation of the Socratic personality and performance in this passage

> Remember, therefore, in manner and degree, the same involution, shadow, curtain, the same soft irony; and strive to find a character in this kind according to proportion both in respect of self and times. Seek to find such a tenor as this, such a key, tone voice, consistent with true gravity and simplicity, though accompanied with humour and a kind raillery, agreeable with a divine pleasantry (Shaftesbury and Rand 1900: 193).

Through Shaftesbury, the ironic Socrates enters the modern arena not as a bare-footed, poorly clad philosopher, but as the exquisitely mannered, good-humoured, aesthetic urbane of Cicero. Shaftesbury's interpretation of the urbane ironic Socrates was hugely influential to subsequent debates on his character in continental Europe.[87]

6.5.4 The Hard Irony of the Satiric Critic

A second dimension of Shaftesbury's Socrates is the serious, critical human being standing up against the witty, disruptive troublemaker. Shaftesbury explicitly separates urbane irony from what he regards as the infantile buffoonery of late 17th Century / early 18th Century satirical authors (Klein 1994: 209), of whom Jonathan Swift was the foremost proponent.[88] Indeed, the central confrontation between Shaftesbury's seriously critical gentleman employing a soft, urbane irony, and the troublemaking, taking no prisoners, politically sharp critic who is equally a jesting, joking, farting and belching buffoon occurs in Swift's texts.[89] Swift's Socrates emerges from the acidity of the Roman satirists and the Platonic Socrates that so enraged political society he had to be silenced. Prior to Swift, satire was viewed as a "corrective" art form that exposed the self-interested

190

hubris of immoral elites, resulting in their expulsion and a return to a harmonious and fair society. Discussing the "satiric frame of mind", Knight (Knight 2008: 1) argues that Swift's *Tale of the Tub* is a "central and almost defining satire" that puts an end to the principal assumption of the corrective purpose of satire by writing "satire that at once ensures that we shall inescapably see ourselves, and is at the same time a satire to end all notions of 'correction'" (Lawler 1955, quoted in Matz 2010: 3). For Greenberg (2011: 3-4) and Miller (1997: 184), Swift is the first "moral menial', a class of people who have "to get morally dirty to do what the polity needs them to do." Although such ironists are revelatory, they are too humble to correct, as correction would merely make them the now self-interested target of the next ironist's pen. Arguing that society needs such moral ironists to function, Miller observes that "despite the fact that we need to attract people to this kind of labor, we still hold them accountable for being so attracted" (Miller 1997: 184).[90] Swift writes of the consequence himself, identifying with the broom that cleans up hidden corners of corruption but is befouled in the process ("Meditation on a Broomstick"), and being the topic of both idle gossip and eulogy ("Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift").

Swift's Socrates was a resistor against tyranny and a humble moral philosopher (Traugott 1961: 535). Swift writes

> I do not think a philosopher obliged to account for every phenomenon in nature, or drown himself with Aristotle for not being able to solve the ebbing and flowing of the tide. Socrates, on the other hand, who said he knew nothing, was pronounced by the oracle to be the wisest man in the world (quoted in Davis 1963: 247).

> But what I blame the philosophers for (although some may think it a paradox) is chiefly their pride (quoted in Davis 1963: 247 & 248).[91]

Swift's Socrates fully emerges through his dual opposition to the corruption of politicians (see Peterson 1967; Higgins 1994 for an overview of his political

satire) and Shaftesbury's zealous Neo-Platonism in *Tale of the Tub* (discussed at length in Craven 1992). For many, including Swift himself, *Tale of a Tub* is his most brilliant work (see Elliott 1951: 441; Swift, Guthkelch et al. 1958: xix). It is a widely accepted claim that the central chapter of the book is *A Digression on Madness*, of which two thirds is an attack on Shaftesbury (Elliott 1951: 450; Levine 1991: 216; Craven 1992: 85-108). For Swift, Shaftesbury represents two categories of modern madness; "imperial conquests immemorial (government)" and "new philosophical systems (learning)" (Craven 1992: 89). Swift asserts that Shaftesbury's zeal for advancing a new ethical philosophical system has blinded him to the realities of the lived-in-world. Shaftesbury is deceived by his own sensuous existence, treating its "artificial mediums, false lights, refracted angles, varnish, and tinsel" as real ideals, whilst ignoring the "spectacle of horror" of human society. Swift "mock piously asks for relief from the philosopher's tortured reasoning and pleads for recognizing the omnipotence of self-deluding, sensual human nature" (Craven 1992: 98), writing:

> And he whose fortunes and dispositions have placed him in a convenient station to enjoy the fruits of this noble art, he that can with Epicurus content his ideas with the films and images that fly off upon his senses from the superfices of things, such a man, truly wise, creams off Nature, leaving the sour and the dregs for philosophy and reason to lap up. This is the sublime and refined point of felicity called the possession of being well-deceived, the serene peaceful state of being a fool among knaves.

6.5.5 Socrates and Gulliver: A Strategy for Living in an Imperfect World

In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift wrestles with the problem of how to occupy the gap between the visionary fool and the scheming knave without slipping into misanthropy and total alienation, to bridge "the ironic disjunction between the impossible truth, utopia, which cannot be ignored, and the shadowy actuality, England, which cannot be got rid of" (Traugott 1961: 536). Although Swift avoids becoming a scheming knave by satirizing the corruption of the political classes, he has to craft out a way of achieving this without becoming a visionary

fool aiming at an impossible reformation (e.g. Shaftesbury) or a nihilistic cynic debunking for debunking's sake. According to Traugott (1961), Gulliver is the answer. During his travels, Gulliver discovers the cunning reality of English society whilst also becoming utterly contemptuous towards any visionary scheme of reforming it. He retires from the world of human affairs, aware that if he takes part in society and tries to cure it of its madness he will rave alongside those he is trying to help. Traugott compares Gulliver's realization that a human utopia is impossible with that of Socrates, who, accepting that the ideal and real remain irreconcilable, states of the idealized Republic "the city whose foundation we have been describing, has its being in words: for there is no spot on earth, I imagine where it exists" (Traugott 1961: 558).

Claiming that Socrates and Swift grapple with the double perspective of comedy and realism, Traugott argues that Gulliver is the fictional mad, ridiculous idealist that Swift must create to avoid being sucked into nihilistic cynicism invoked by his unremitting ironic and satirical attacks on the world. Swift poignantly illustrates that a Gulliver-in-the-world would be mad, ridiculous and alienated, capable only of retiring from human affairs. Traugott claims that Swift avoids Gulliver's alienation and withdrawal, living in the world "by playing the fool and not being one, by keeping utopia a city of the mind, where ... Lemuel Gulliver can live" (Traugott 1961: 564). The ability to retreat into an internal utopia guards Swift against the choices of being "a shifty, time-serving politician, so accommodating that he loses his identity, or on the other, a machiavel for whom any means is justified" (Traugott 1961: 563), and protects him from relapsing into absurd idealism or misanthropic cynicism.[92]

6.6   The Authentic Artistry of the Self

While Swift and Nehamas provide, respectively, practical and theoretical examples of what it might mean to live Socratically, neither examines the nihilistic danger of being seduced and consumed by the ironic perspective. It is almost as if the witty performance is *per se* enough to protect the "good", "clever" ironist from its self-interested nihilism. The problems accompanying the notion

193

of taking seriously the absolute infinite negativity of irony are not truly considered. To examine these problems, we must move into the third tradition of thought, that of the authentic artistry of the self, which opposes Hegel's interpretation that Socrates' irony was only an instrument of philosophy, not a strategy for living. The critique exposes the tensions of the ironic personality, its playful and creative agility tempered by the risk of nihilistic despair. The work of Freidrich Schlegel illustrates the difficulty in employing irony as a strategy for living, suggesting that while it offers an exhilarating balance between self-creation and self-destruction it ultimately ends in madness and nihilistic despair. The work of Søren Kierkegaard, influenced by Socrates, and critical of yet inspired by the debate between Hegel and Schlegel, addresses this descent into nihilism and suggests a complex philosophical-emotional solution.

6.6.1 Seriously Playful

Traditionally considered the father of Romantic irony (Furst 1981; Garber 1988: 293; Dane 1991: 74), Freidrich Schlegel's significance and originality cannot be overstated. Strongly influenced by Herder's theory of history (von Schlegel and Koerner 1977: xxxxi) and the literary output of Shakespeare and Goethe (Wilson 1909), Schlegel reacted against systematic philosophy's restrictions on the human spirit, imagination and creativity (Forstman 1968: 151). Mellor defines Schlegel's Romantic irony as having two modes, the philosophical and the literary/aesthetic, thus:

> Romantic irony, then, is a mode of consciousness or way of thinking about the world that finds a corresponding literary mode. The artist who perceives the universe as an infinitely abundant chaos; who sees his own consciousness as simultaneously limited and involved in a process of growth or becoming; who therefore enthusiastically engages in the difficult but exhilarating balancing between self-creation and self-destruction; and who then articulates this experience in a form that simultaneously creates and de-creates itself is producing the literary mode that Schlegel called romantic irony. As a literary mode, romantic

194

irony characteristically includes certain elements: a philosophical conception of the universe as becoming, as an infinitely abundant chaos; a literary structure that reflects both this chaos or process of becoming and the systems that men impose upon it; and a language that draws attention to its own limitations (Mellor 1980: 24-25).

By interpreting irony as the central component of both great art and philosophy, Schlegel makes an emphatic defence of the ironic perspective in philosophy. Schlegel positions irony as the philosophical Ideal, a negative mirror of Hegel's positive Ideal, in which irony is merely a performative tool. For Schlegel, "philosophy is the real homeland of irony, which one would like to define as logical beauty: for wherever philosophy appears in oral or written dialogues — and is not simply confined into rigid systems— there irony should be asked for and provided" (Schlegel and Firchow 1971: 148 (Critical Fragment 42)). He makes a clear distinction between the transcendental ironic perspective of an artist-philosopher and the ironic performance, appropriated by even the "averagely gifted Italian buffo" (Schlegel and Firchow 1971: 148 (Critical Fragment 42)). For Schlegel, an ironic perspective influences the character of the artist-philosopher, being "the mood that surveys everything and rises infinitely above all limitations, even above its own art, virtue, or genius" (Schlegel and Firchow 1971: 148 (Critical Fragment 42)). Although Schlegel has respect for rhetorical irony, "which, sparingly used, has an excellent effect, especially in polemics", it is nothing when compared to "the sublime urbanity of the Socratic muse, it is like the pomp of the most splendid oration set over against the noble style of an ancient tragedy" (Schlegel and Firchow 1971: 148 (Critical Fragment 42)).

For Schlegel, literary irony presents an inherently limited perspective that opens up the possibility of the infinity of other perspectives via an inevitable dynamic between infinite philosophy and finite poetry. Strathman confirms this view, describing the ironist as

constantly shuttling back and forth between philosophy and poetry;

making a way along a path between reason and madness. The madness in question here would be the madness of words, which insistently interrupt the philosopher's arguments. This is the piece, the fragmentary edge that never quite fits, the word or question one can never quite suppress (Strathman 2006: 40).

Schlegel defines this constant movement as the "clear consciousness of eternal agility, of an infinitely teeming chaos" ((Schlegel and Firchow 1971: 100 (Ideas 69)). The ironic perspective informs the poetry of philosophical dialogue and dialectic debate, but is too agile to be trapped by its conclusions. Schlegel examines the problem of maintaining an ironic perspective, a problem that, significantly, he fails to solve. Schlegel says that Socratic irony

> is meant to deceive no one except those who consider it a deception and who either take pleasure in the delightful roguery of making fools of the whole world or else become angry when they get an inkling they themselves might be included (Schlegel and Firchow 1971: 13 (Critical Fragment 108)).

This statement condemns both the Greek youths who mimicked Socrates' ironic performance to mock and those who were angered by the recognition that he did not think them wise. Schlegel offers a preferred description, in which the ironic perspective becomes a central focus:

> In this sort of irony, everything should be playful and everything should be serious, everything guilelessly open and everything deeply hidden. It originates in the union of *savoir vivre* and scientific spirit, in the conjunction of a perfectly instinctive and a perfectly conscious philosophy. It contains and arouses a feeling of indissoluble antagonism between the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and the necessity of complete communication (Schlegel and Firchow 1971: 13 (Critical Fragment 108)).

Schlegel highlights the extremely complex double-bind of irony, in which the two

opposites in ironic statements either exist simultaneously, "being playful and being serious" or annihilate the other "he is being ironic, thus means this, thus ending the irony".   Schlegel believes it is impossible to reach a synthesis between the dialectic of serious/playful. As no interpretation can exhaust their meaning, they exist in permanent antagonism. As Albert (1993: 831) notes,

> The reason for this is that it is not so easy to decide for or against the presence of irony. Those "in the know" may be themselves the object of the speaker's irony if, for example, he feigns irony to deceive them but is in fact perfectly serious (already an "irony of irony" if one reads the expression as an objective gerund: a double irony). This, however, does not mean that those who had not seen any trace of irony in the first place have gotten it right and feel in control, because there is just as little certitude for this as for the other possibility. There is no way to stop this constant back-and-forth other than a purely arbitrary choice, but on the way to it all those who consider irony "deception", whether they thought they were on the privileged side or not, are in for an unsettling experience.

The determination of some listeners to know the right or wrong interpretation of the irony (Schlegel terms them "harmonious bores" (Schlegel and Firchow 1971: 13 (Critical Fragment 108))) illustrates the tensions of ironic communication. Oscillating between reading the text playfully or seriously dizzies the bores, until, exhausted, they eventually give up and blindly pick a position. Even for the ironist, maintaining balance and poise is not an easy task, requiring the "incredibly difficult but not impossible dual awareness that everything one believes is both true and false" (Mellor 1980: 13). As Schlegel warns, "irony is something one cannot simply play games with. It can have incredibly long-lasting after-effects" (Schlegel and Firchow 1971: 267 (On Incomprehensibility)).

Schlegel illustrates how an ironic perspective requires an eternally moving ironic performance with no fixed meanings and no stable self. As discussed by de Man

(see *Chapter Two*), the Schlegelian self is infinitely agile, ""a man who can take on all selves and stand above all of them without being anything specific himself, a self that is infinitely elastic, infinitely mobile, an infinitely active and agile subject that stands above any of its experiences" (1996: 175). The performative dimension of Schlegelian irony allows such a self to craft out poetic representations of a self for any situation, treating them as purely aesthetic identities, beautiful in composition but ethereal, destroyed without hesitation when the next opportunity for self-creation appears on the horizon.

6.6.2   The Considerable Possibility of being Overwhelmed by Irony

The idea that the ironic self is infinitely agile underpins the problems of controlling irony, with the self, addicted to irony's infinite possibilities, risking falling victim to nihilistic despair. Schlegel terms the considerable possibility of being overwhelmed by irony 'Unverstandlichkeit,' the impossibility of understanding. Ironic seduction leads towards a succession of 'infinite possibilities'. Eventually it threatens to fall into absurdity, inhibiting the ironist from making informed choices, as he has doubts about every option and cannot qualify them. Frazier (2006: 106) and Brad (2004: 417-419) call this *pure irony*, being a "radical and thoroughgoing stance of critical disengagement from human society", "an incoherent and thus, unrealizable stance" and '"morally enervating, psychologically destructive", culminating in "bondage to moods". Incapable of taking anything in earnest bar irony itself, pure ironists

> fundamentally want to be free from the obligations, restrictions, and long-term commitments that accompany taking seriously one's given place in a complex social order. They want to have the benefits of living in a social environment in which other persons take these frequently burdensome obligations seriously. However, they themselves do not want to be confined by such things (Brad 2004: 421).

The incoherence of this position, in which the ironist, in taking nothing seriously must still take irony seriously, leads to the ironist disengaging from every

possible worldly engagement as it becomes serious. In treating nothing seriously, pure ironists "become nothing," pursuing whatever they happen to desire, having no overarching, long-term commitments, and eventually succumb to exhaustion and for the sake of novelty, ultimately "let fate and chance decide" for them what to do. It regards the world through "transcendental meaninglessness". Ultimately, the pure ironist has allowed the ironic perspective and its demonstration of infinity to overpower him. Everything once held dear has been negated and everything that could be held dear in the future is subject to the same pressures that have already overwhelmed everything else. The ironic perspective and performance that once enthused, entertained and enthralled him now serve to send his exhausted self into a spiral of nihilistic despair. Ultimately, there is every possibility that Schlegel was eventually overwhelmed by irony, choosing to give up on his aesthetic project rather than suffer such a fate.[93]

6.7 Kierkegaard: Merging Perspective, Performance and Personality

When discussing the problem of pure irony provoking a descent into nihilism, Kierkegaard is more colourful than Schlegel, arguing that irony, "like that old witch, continually makes the very tantalizing attempt to eat up everything first of all and thereupon to eat itself up – or, as in the case of the witch, eats up its own stomach" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: XIII 150). The early Kierkegaard momentarily condemns Socrates for falling victim to ironic seduction, negating everything and unable to change Athens for the better.

> He kept on using this tactic until the very last, as was especially evident when he was accused. But his fervour in this service consumed him, and in the end irony overwhelmed; he became dizzy, and everything lost its reality (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: XIII 262).[94]

As he subsequently notes, this dismissal of irony as a defect of Socrates is only a momentary slip in his thesis. The remainder of his thesis and his subsequent career investigates the difficult task of living ethically when confronted by the

199

constant risk of succumbing to the complete critical disengagement with the world that an ironic stance risks.

6.7.1 Private Irony, Public Irony

In discussing irony, Kierkegaard, as the full title of his thesis, *The Concept of Irony, with continual reference to Socrates*, suggests, is examining how Socrates employed irony as a strategy for living, and how to recreate it in modern conditions. As briefly sketched out in the previous chapter, Kierkegaard's ironic perspective, similar to the Socratic perspective on Athens, reflects on the increasing decadence of Danish society, which manifests as (i) the apathetic reflectivity of its leaders, who endlessly reflect on possible actions while never acting, and (ii) its transmission into wider Danish society, resulting in mocking laughter at those acting with any sincere enthusiasm and what Kierkegaard terms "blather and grinning [as] public opinion" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1998: XIII 551). Kierkegaard perceives these conditions as emerging from the Hegelian conflict mediating synthesis requiring no individual choice outside of submitting to the will of the Idea (*Geist*)[95] in the public sphere and related aesthetic contemplation, which, accepting the Ideal, turns reflection inwards, examining the self's actions only in terms of self-creation, not in terms of ethical living. He argues that these conditions have resulted in "the entire population of a city [Copenhagen], [becoming] "ironic" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1998: XIII 550). He argues

> Irony presupposes a very specific intellectual culture, which is very rare in any generation—and this chaos of people consisted of ironists. Irony is unconditionally unsocial. Irony that is in the majority is eo ipso [precisely thereby] unconditionally not irony. Nothing is more certain, inasmuch as it is implicit in the concept itself. Irony essentially tends toward the presence of only one person, as is indicated in the Aristotelian view that the ironist does everything for his own sake — and here an enormous public, arm in arm in bona caritate [good-naturedly], had become, damned if it hadn't, ironic (Ibid).

This recognition that irony had manifested across Copenhagen society resulted in Kierkegaard classifying a number of different types of irony; the pure irony of aesthetic contemplation, focusing only on the artistry of self-creation, and thus lacking the ethically charged reflection of Socratic irony; an enthusiastic irony, which does ethically reflect on the problems of society, but betrays itself by positing a solution; and a "mastered" irony, in which the ironist, like Socrates, can employ the mockery, sarcastic and jesting buffoonery of the ironic performance to hide the earnestness of his serious ethical reflection on society without assuming he can solve its problems and become a heroic figure to more limited ironists through the mastery of the ironic performance.

6.7.2   Kierkegaard's Ironic Performance

As revealed in *The Point of View*, Kierkegaard's entire aesthetic output and public persona is an extended ironic performance intended to illustrate the horror of aesthetic immediacy and the limits of the public irony of Copenhagen.   His aesthetic period (from *Either/Or* to *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*) involves his applying ironic misdirection in pseudonymous works that overtly seem to support societal mores, whilst, for the discerning reader, revealing the existential horror of the actuality. In his journals he writes:

> As is well known, my authorship has two parts: one pseudonymous and the other signed. The pseudonymous writers are poetized personalities, poetically maintained so that everything they say is in character with their poetized individualities; sometimes I have carefully explained in a signed preface my own interpretation of what the pseudonym said. Anyone with just a fragment of common sense will perceive that it would be ludicrously confusing to attribute to me everything the poetized characters say (Kierkegaard 1834-1854: X6 b145 1851).

Kierkegaard also developed a public persona that entirely matched the character and witty, performative but limited irony of aesthetes. He writes

I dare say it has been of one opinion about me: I was a street-corner loafer, an idler, a flâneur [lounger], a frivolous bird, a good, perhaps even brilliant pate, witty, etc.—but I completely lacked "earnestness." I represented the worldly mentality's irony, the enjoyment of life, the most sophisticated enjoyment of life—but of "earnestness and positivity" there was not a trace; I was, however, tremendously interesting and pungent (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1998: XIII 548).

The same witty, jesting, reflective tools of his extended faux aesthetic performance (or *incognito* as Kierkegaard puts it) also help him reflect on how to act ethically in any given situation.   Instead of using ironic techniques to transform temporary enthusiasms to absurdities ad infinitum, Kierkegaard employs them like Vlastos' moral Socrates, ethically reflecting on a multiplicity of potential actions to "know oneself" without collapsing into action-paralysis or assuming that these reflections can result in the construction of a better societal form.

6.7.3   Kierkegaard's Concept of Ironic Agility

Kierkegaard grapples with the problem of living with the absolute infinite negativity of the ironic perspective without sinking into the nihilism of endless self-creation or naïve ironic enthusiasm.   In addressing this, Kierkegaard first expands upon Solger's and Hegel's definition of irony as "absolute infinite negativity":

It is negativity, because it only negates; it is infinite, because it does not negate this or that phenomenon; it is absolute, because that by virtue of which it negates is a higher something that still is not. The irony established nothing, because that which is to be established lies behind it (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: XIII 335).

Kierkegaard defines the ironic subject as standing in opposition to his contemporary actuality (the societal conditions of his time).

If we turn back to the foregoing general description of irony as infinite absolute negativity, it is adequately suggested therein that irony is no longer directed against this or that particular phenomenon, against a particular existing thing, but that the whole of existence has become alien to the ironic subject and the ironic subject in turn alien to existence, that as actuality has lost its validity for the ironic subject (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: XIII 333)

Although the ironic subject can reflect on this actuality, he is unable to advance a thesis towards a new ideality. For the ironic subject

the old must be superseded; the old must be perceived in all its imperfection. Here we meet the ironic subject. For the ironic subject, the given actuality has lost its validity entirely; it has become for him an imperfect form that is a hindrance everywhere. But on the other hand, he does not possess the new. He knows only that the present does not match the idea. He is the one who must pass judgment. The ironist […] has stepped out of line with his age, has turned around and faced it. That which is coming is hidden from him, lies behind his back, but the actuality he so antagonistically confronts is what he must destroy; upon this he focuses his burning gaze (ibid: XIII 334).

Like Schlegel, Kierkegaard regards agility as a central component of irony. He moves beyond Schlegel in his argument that the ironist's "incessant agility allows nothing to remain established" but equally "cannot focus on the total point of view that it allows nothing to remain established" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: XIII 270). For Kierkegaard this agility means the ironist cannot be seduced by an "infinity of possibilities", and thus cannot relapse into the nihilistic horror of irony, the risk of which resulted in Schlegel giving up on his project. The incessant agility ensures that the ironist is always deeply engaged with something in the world rather than consumed by the ironic perspective – though the ironic perspective means that he can never become unreflective about the thing he is engaged with or to external systematic ideals.

6.7.4 Knowing Oneself through Irony

Kierkegaard focuses on how the agile individual becomes a "whole and unified self" rather than a Schlegelian self struggling to grapple with the seductive negativity of irony (and perhaps falling victim to it) or a Hegelian idealist employing irony as a performative tool of a system building enterprise. Kierkegaard arranges irony around the infinite, radical, qualitative difference between God and man. He concludes that although one cannot hope to know God (to avoid Kierkegaard's Christian apologetics, we might substitute "a perfect moral being"), one can "know oneself". "Knowing oneself" is the subjective individualism that, for Kierkegaard, is the root of Socratic ethics. Kierkegaard's interpretation of irony centres on subjective individuality through his claim that "no genuinely human life is possible without irony" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: XIII 326). He clarifies this in *The Concept of Irony*, stating "just as philosophy begins with doubt, so also a life that may be called human begins with irony" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: XIII 6).   He further writes:

> Anyone who does not understand irony at all, who has no ear for its whispering, lacks eo ipso [precisely thereby] what could be called the absolute beginning of personal life. Anyone who does not understand irony...lacks the bath of regeneration and rejuvenation... that rescues the soul from having its life in finitude. (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: XIII 326-327)

Frazier (1996: 134-148) interprets a "genuinely human life" to mean an "ethical life" and the Kierkegaardian interpretation of irony that makes it possible, "mastered irony". This type of irony "makes a movement opposite to that in which uncontrolled irony declares its life. Irony limits, finitizes, and circumscribes and thereby yields truth, actuality, content; it disciplines and punishes and thereby yields balance and consistency" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: XIII 326). Frazier (2006: 136) argues that this balance "is the mean between the radical disengagement of a pure ironist and the unreflective social conformity of a commonplace person." Kierkegaard claims that this balance

requires a playful relationship with the negative, ostensibly by becoming ironic about irony.

> Irony is the infinitely light playing with nothing that is not terrified by it but even rises to the surface on occasion. But if one does not speculatively or personally take nothing in earnest, then one obviously is taking it lightly (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: XIII 342).

This light, playful irony is, for Kierkegaard, the irony of Socrates and the requirement for living a human life. For Kierkegaard, this irony is the origin of ethical subjectivity, the moment when a reflective individual, confronted by authoritative descriptions, starts to question their nature. Kierkegaardian irony is employed as a counterweight to the ethical individual commitments and responsibilities shifting into un-reflexive motion, with subjective responsibilities and commitments in turn guarding against the individual being devoured by irony. The Kierkegaardian Socratic personality is delicately poised between the two points, using irony as a position against external dogma and inner lapses into un-reflexive motion, but balanced by a sense of ethical responsibilities to the lived-in world.[96]

6.7.5 Beyond Irony: Living an Ethical Life

Kierkegaard argues that irony occupies "the transition zone between aesthetic and ethical modes of existence." Stepping into the ironic transition zone enables one to move beyond aesthetic immediacy but does not guarantee the subsequent movement into the ethical. The most immediate risk is that the ironist employs irony as a form of self-absorbed reflection and dissembling trickery to achieve self-interested goals, as discussed in *Either/Or* (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1987)). Consequently, Kierkegaard notes that you cannot be sure an ironist is an ethicist, but that ethical reflection cannot occur without first having made the move into irony. Even if the ironist moves beyond this, a deeper risk emerges, in that the ironist becomes earnest about irony. Kierkegaard argues that

Schlegel's and Solger's consciousness that finitude is a nothing is […] earnestly intended ... Ultimately the ironist always has to posit something, but what he posits in this way is nothing. But then it is impossible to be earnest about nothing without either arriving at something (this happens if one becomes speculatively earnest about it) or despairing (if one takes it personally in earnest) (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: XIII 342).

Kierkegaard makes clear that the "pure irony" that consumed Schlegel emerges from taking it personally in earnest. In contrast, Hegel's speculative earnestness requires the negative to be a serious tool of inquiry. Both get trapped in an idealistic relativity; for Schlegel the negative ideal in which the ironic perspective is transcendent, and Hegel into a positive ideal, in which irony serves an "eventually to be reached" utopian reality. For Kierkegaard, earnest ironists have "not made the movement of infinity" and thus enthusiastically but foolishly insist that they can reshape the world. The earnest ironist

bawls out in the world early and late; always in his swagger-boots, he pesters people with his enthusiasm and does not perceive at all that it does not make them enthusiastic, except when they beat him. No doubt he is well informed, and the order calls for a complete transformation—of the whole world. Indeed, it is here that he has heard wrongly, because the order calls for a complete transformation of oneself (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1992: VII 439).

The "mastered" ironist does not try to transform society, but transforms himself and his entire relationship with society, no matter what shape that society might have. Any other stance is overly earnest, risking the fall into despair or the elevation into enthusiastic overconfidence. Once one has made the complete transformation of oneself, he has mastered irony and cannot be caught in a foolish relativity. For Kierkegaard

irony emerges by continually joining the particulars of the finite with the ethical infinite requirement and allowing the contradiction to come into

existence. The one who can do it with proficiency and not let himself be caught in any relativity, in which his proficiency becomes diffident, must have made a movement of infinity, and to that extent it is possible that he is an ethicist. Therefore the observer will not even be able to catch him in his inability to perceive himself ironically, because he is also able to talk about himself as about a third person, to join himself as a vanishing particular together with the absolute requirement—indeed, to join them together (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1992: VII 436-437).

Kierkegaard points to a complex relationship between irony and the ethical. By mastering irony, one becomes an ironist and an ethicist. Irony as a perspective is necessary to move beyond being caught in a foolish relativity or being seduced by irony, and irony as a performance is necessary to maintain an ethical stance in a world full of limited ironists. This returns us somewhat to Vlastos and Popper's Socrates, who employs irony as the perspective behind and the technique of his endless practice of negation, which he pursues to ensure his actions are moral and good. The mastered/ethical ironist is thus capable of resisting foolish relativity in pursuit of an eternally ethical relationship with the world, whereas the common/limited ironist is not.

6.8   Conclusion: Between Social Conventions and Destructive Nihilism

Kierkegaard's final claim is that the "mastered" ironist of an ironic age moves beyond irony into comedy. The ironist's refusal to take any element of the actuality he is negating seriously positions him as a comic figure, a buffoon who cannot be serious about anything. However, despite this seeming total lack of seriousness, the practice of living ethically in the negated space does absolutely engage him. Of this comic element, Kierkegaard writes

> The ethicist, however, is sufficiently ironical to be well aware that what engages him absolutely does not engage the others absolutely... Now the comedy starts, because people's opinion of a person like that will always be: for him nothing is important. And why not? Because for him the

ethical is absolutely important: in this he is different from the generality of people, for whom so many things are important, indeed, almost everything is important—but nothing is absolutely important (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1992: VII 438-439)

It is in this final reflection on irony, in which comedy and ethics merge, that Kierkegaard takes us towards understanding how an examination of Socrates re-examines and deepens Fleming and Sewell's Švejk. Švejk is undoubtedly a comic, buffoonish figure seemingly only out to save his skin and avoid doing his duty, having no greater ethical purpose. However, as Fleming and Sewell note, he is not short of an ethical sensibility. He certainly has some notion of solidarity, never pulling "his cons, ruses and stunts at the expense of his 'comrades', his hapless fellow foot soldiers of the Imperial Army" (ibid: 864). Furthermore, he is reacting against an imposed authoritarianism of a foreign power forcing him to fight in a war that will not improve his life, or that of any of his fellow Czech citizens, in the slightest. His comic buffoonery, in which he seems, at first glance, takes nothing seriously, might well be the incognito of a highly developed ethical irony that, in extreme circumstances, can be expressed in no other way. By accessing the array of debates around the irony of Socrates to position the Socratic eiron as an alternative to the Švejkian buffoon, irony reasserts itself, transforming the resistant, work-shy buffoon into a serious critic and ethicist. Socrates is simultaneously a jesting, good-hearted, and ugly buffoon, an urbane sophisticate, a satiric critic, and an authentic artist of the self, all wrapped together through his mastery of irony. With so many interpretations and no way of adequately picking between them, the role of irony as informing a strategy for living crystallizes.

As Nehamas, Swift and Kierkegaard implicitly or explicitly illustrate, without irony one is locked into the immediate and cannot seriously question the imperfections of social convention. An ironic critique of social convention brings with it an enthusiasm for change and a desire to enthuse others. This enthusiasm is foolish, as the changed actuality it engenders will inevitably be as fallible as the one it replaces. However, absolute ironic detachment results in a

total divorce from and a destructive relationship with actuality, resulting in nihilistic despair. With no access to or hope of a perfect form, nihilism is inevitable. Nehamas' "silent Socrates", Kierkegaard's "unknowable god", or Swift's "unobtainable utopia" are the ever-inaccessible perfect constructs that are necessarily present in the corner of the mind to prevent an ironist from slipping into madness, ridiculousness or nihilistic despair when confronting the absurdity of human belief. An ironist with such a construct cannot blindly follow social conventions or slip into nihilism. Instead of working towards a new actuality, he takes a subjective stance on all social conventions in the current actuality, questioning them individually against the impossibly perfect construct of the mind, and acting in accordance with the reflective outcome.

Taking irony seriously involves wrestling with a number of tensions. The ironic performance risks being interpreted as subversively undermining the interests of the elite, self-interestedly promoting an agenda, and evidence of inherent untrustworthiness. In many cases, these interpretations will be valid. However, regarding irony as only informing the above risks reflective critical examinations performed through irony being lost in the wide interpretations of irony as a mocking or nihilistic un-seriousness. As Kierkegaard and Nietzsche note, in a decadent age of rampant but limited irony, strategically living through irony in the Socratic manner is perhaps the only authentic choice available, simultaneously a protection for the self against powerful others, a technique of rationality that can combat their pronouncements, and a method of creating the self that is not restrained by authoritarian or illegitimate societal expectations. Interpretations of irony will always swirl around these tensions, making the decision to employ irony for whatever reason inherently risky on many levels. As Socrates discovered, retribution can be permanent.

7 Conclusion: Beyond a Smirk or a Sneer

As the thesis abstract stated, this thesis has attempted to remain true to the spirit of irony by being open ended rather than closed off. Each chapter has examined the relevance of irony to certain organisational debates before concluding with suggestions that further research might take in terms of treating irony as a character or personality rather than through the currently restricted view of irony as a performance. *Chapter Two* attempts to frame this issue by defining irony as being a combination of perspective, performance and personality, examining the emotional reactions of powerful others to extended ironic performances and the tactical challenges of maintaining an ironic strategy for living in such conditions. *Chapter Three* suggested that research into metaphors of organisation might benefit from thinking of irony as more than just a reflective perspective and subversive performance, and positioning it as also informing the actions of comic-ironists correcting the flaws, foibles, fallibilities and foolishness of those entrapped in or seduced by metaphorically influenced organisational description. *Chapter Four* suggested that the current conceptualization of organisational ironists is restricted and limited and that further research might be able to understand how trickster or wise organisational ironists, rather than being evidence of deceit, nihilism or cynical resistance, might make a substantive difference to organisational behaviour. *Chapter Five* suggested that decadent societal conditions produce a range of different types of ironists and that organisational scholarship needs to be able to determine between deceitful, limited ironic characters who employ irony to pursue self-interested goals, nihilistic games players who poke fun merely for the sake of poking fun, and restless authentic ironists, who temper their irony with a demand to move beyond the incivil decadence of current societal conditions. *Chapter Six* examines this further, suggesting that restless authentic ironists, constantly wrestling with tensions of nihilism and superiority, and coping with public interpretations of their irony as deceitful, anti-democratic, self-interested or incivil mockery, temper the potential nihilistically destructive excesses of an ironic stance with some form of hypothetical yet unachievable image.

The thesis is, in essence, making a call for more empirical research into how a variety of ironic characters do and might operate within contemporary organisations. This will mean greater examination of the practices of self-interested Machiavellian dissembling, understanding how a culture of mockery can produce destructive nihilistic outcomes, highlighting and critiquing the superior ironic perspective sometimes informing organisational ethnographies, noting how similar ironic perspectives are adopted by "superior" organisational actors, and then further investigating how a more sophisticated, complex, "mastered" ironist might be pragmatically coping with these conditions in a meaningful way. Whilst some of these interpretations have already generated some research, the notion of a societal-wide ironic consciousness or ironic mode informing the restricted *and* complex forms of irony addressed throughout this thesis is absent from the literature.

The problem for such research is that complex irony will be difficult to identify as it is likely to be hidden by an equally sophisticated ironic performance and muddied and clouded by the more deceitful and nihilistic interpretations of irony endemic to the wider culture. Research of this ilk needs to play a long game, becoming deeply immersed in organisational life in order to examine and evaluate the long-term strategies of various ironic character types. If I were to summarize this call, it would be for the emergence of a second Erving Goffman, who can surreptitiously research an organisation without its members realizing that they are the objects of the research. This might be better described as an ironic organisational researcher researching ironic organisational employees. I suspect that the long-term nature of this research, and the objection of ethical committees, will make the rise of a new Goffman a pipe dream, so, hopefully, other methodologies might be able to fulfil the requirements. Although this thesis has not pointed towards what they might be, they are certainly in need of some careful consideration.

Another aspect of the thesis, as exemplified by Schlegel and Kierkegaard, points to the impossibility of taking irony seriously without becoming an ironist oneself.

From my own perspective, I have worked hard over the last few years trying to develop a "conference character" who is playful and, hopefully, urbane, listening with genuine interest to presentations and always being ready with an authentic question that addresses the author's work, rather than trying to impose my own views on the matter, which will be as equally error-laden and biased as any weakness I might have found in the argument. To summarise, I have tried to become a type of trickster-eiron as detailed in *Chapter Four*, employing an engaged but playful querying of knowledge to push people beyond their current comprehensions, rather than sarcastic-eiron mocking from the sides or an author-eiron sure of his superior knowledge and clarity of perspective. I hope I have succeeded, at least somewhat, in this task, and not irritated too many people with my incessant questioning and light mockery. The thesis, as such, contributes to my extended ironic performance as a strategy for living in the organisational studies environment, part of it, but not capturing it in entirety. Likewise, the three interventions in the appendices comprise my attempts to ironically intervene in organisational research, in colloquiums, journal articles and book chapters.

Somewhat in relation to this, a second call in the thesis is for organisational scholarship to become more complexly ironic itself in a return to academia's Socratic roots. This requires developing an organisation environment in which playful, humorous, critical and sometimes satirical debate is encouraged, whilst maintaining civility and appreciation of the hard work and serious intentions involved in producing academic articles, books and conference papers. It must encourage reflection on the flaws, foibles, fallibility and foolishness of its own constructs, recognizing that academia is not immune from the mistaken directions, chaotic errors and foolish hubris that afflict the wider human race. Indeed, as *Chapter Three* tries to illustrate, academic blindness and related moments of incivility might be a consequence of its enthusiastic elaboration of novel concepts. It calls for academics to take their research seriously, but not to be afraid to play around with it or get upset if others interpret it in unexpected ways, to accept that its inevitable errors were made in good faith and respond with style and grace to the critiques of others. It calls for civility and elegance in

questioning the errors of others, even if they were incivil and crude when questioning yours.

Despite hoping that these wider calls to action might eventually be heard, I need to take into account that this is merely a PhD thesis, not the call to arms of an established academic voice. Consequently, I would like to conclude the conclusion by briefly returning to my original intention of illustrating how irony is more than a nihilistic smirk, self-interested sneer or inauthentic performance. If I have convinced you, at least at times, that irony is something more, then all my effort has been worthwhile.

8 References

Abrams, M. H. and G. G. Harpham (2005). A glossary of literary terms. Australia ; London, Thomson Wadsworth.

Addison, J. and S. R. Steele (1711). The spectator, Sam. Buckley, at the Dolphin in Little Britain; and sold.

Aelian, r. c. and A. Fleming (1576). A Registre of Hystories, conteining martiall exploites of worthy warriours, politique practises of civil magistrates, wise sentences of famous philosophers, and other matters manifolde and memorable ... deliuered in Englishe ... by Abraham Fleming. B.L, ff. 178. For Thomas Woodcocke: London.

Akutagawa, R. (2007). Rashomon and seventeen other stories, Penguin UK.

Albert, G. (1993). "Understanding Irony: Three Essais on Friedrich Schlegel." Mln **108**(5): 825-848.

Alexander, J. C. (1987). The Centrality of the Classics. Social theory today. A. Giddens and J. H. Turner. Cambridge, Polity.

Alexander, J. C. (2003). The meanings of social life : a cultural sociology. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press.

Alvesson, M. (1993). "Organizations as rhetoric: Knowledge-intensive firms and the struggle with ambiguity." Journal of Management Studies **30**: 997-997.

Alvesson, M. (1993). "Organizations as rhetoric: Knowledge‐intensive firms and the struggle with ambiguity." Journal of Management studies **30**(6): 997-1015.

Alvesson, M. and D. Kärreman (2000). "Taking the linguistic turn in organizational research challenges, responses, consequences." The journal of applied behavioral science **36**(2): 136-158.

Alvesson, M. and H. Willmott (2002). "Identity Regulation as Organizational Control: Producing the Appropriate Individual." Journal of Management Studies **39**(5): 619-644.

Anderson, W. S. (1963). "The Roman Socrates: Horace and his Satires." Critical Essays on Roman Literature **2**.

Ankersmit, F. R., E. Domanska, et al. (2009). Re-figuring Hayden White. Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press.

Arnott, D. (1999). Corporate cults: The insidious lure of the all-consuming organization, American Management Assoc.

Auslander, P. (1997). From acting to performance : essays in modernism and postmodernism. London, Routledge.

Babcock, B. A. (1980). "Reflexivity: Definitions and discriminations." Semiotica **30**(1-2): 1-14.

Badham, R. and I. McLoughlin (2005). "Ambivalence and engagement: Irony and cultural change in late modern organizations." International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management **5**(4): 132-143.

Badham, R., A. Mead, et al. (2012). "A dramaturgical approach to the practice of managing change." The Routledge Companion to Organizational Change: 187.

Bailey, F. G. (1993). The kingdom of individuals : an essay on self-respect and social obligation. Ithaca ; London, Cornell University Press.

Bains, G. (2007). <u>Meaning Inc: The Blue Print for Business Success in the 21st Century</u>. London, Profile Books.

Ballinger, F. (1991). "Ambigere: The Euro-American Picaro and the Native American Trickster." <u>Melus</u> **17**(1): 21-38.

Barish, J. A. (1981). <u>The antitheatrical prejudice</u>. Berkeley ; London, University of California Press.

Barker, J. R. (1999). <u>The discipline of teamwork: participation and concertive control</u>, Sage.

Barley, S. R. (1983). "Semiotics and the study of occupational and organizational cultures." <u>Administrative Science Quarterly</u>: 393-413.

Barley, S. R. and G. Kunda (1992). "Design and Devotion: Surges of Rational and Normative Ideologies of Control in Managerial Discourse." <u>Administrative Science Quarterly</u> **37**(3): 363-399.

Barrett, F. J. and D. L. Cooperrider (1990). "Generative metaphor intervention: A new approach for working with systems divided by conflict and caught in defensive perception." <u>The journal of applied behavioral science</u> **26**(2): 219-239.

Barzun, J. (2000). <u>From dawn to decadence : 500 years of Western cultural life : 1500 to the present</u>. London, HarperCollins, 2001.

Baumgartner, J. and J. S. Morris (2006). "The Daily Show Effect Candidate Evaluations, Efficacy, and American Youth." <u>American Politics Research</u> **34**(3): 341-367.

Beerhohm, M. (1894). "A Defence of Cosmetics." <u>The Yellow Book</u> **1**(1).

Beers, D. (2001). Irony is dead! Long live irony! <u>Salon.com</u>.

Behler, E. (1988). The Theory of Irony in German Romanticism. <u>Romantic irony</u>. F. Garber. Budapest, Akade.

Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann (1995). <u>Modernity, pluralism and the crisis of meaning</u>, Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers Gütersloh.

Berlin, I. (1976). <u>Vico and Herder : two studies in the history of ideas</u>. London, Hogarth Press.

Bernheimer, C., T. J. Kline, et al. (2002). <u>Decadent subjects : the idea of decadence in art, literature, philosophy, and culture of the fin de siecle in Europe</u>. Baltimore, Md ; London, Johns Hopkins University Press.

Bernstein, P. L. (1996). "The new religion of risk management." <u>Harvard business review</u> **74**: 47-133.

Beyer, J. M. and H. M. Trice (1987). "How an organization's rites reveal its culture." <u>Organizational Dynamics</u>.

Biehl-Missal, B. (2012). "Using artistic form for aesthetic organizational inquiry: Rimini Protokoll constructs Daimler's Annual General Meeting as a theatre play." <u>Culture and Organization</u> **18**(3): 211-229.

Birdsall, V. O. (1970). <u>Wild civility : the English comic spirit on the Restoration stage</u>. Bloomington ; London, Indiana University Press.

Black, M. (1954). <u>Metaphor</u>. Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society.

Black, M. (1962). Models and Metaphors, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Black, M. (1979). "More about metaphor."

Blackburn, A. (1979). <u>The myth of the picaro: Continuity and transformation of the picaresque novel, 1554-1954</u>, University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill.

Blanchot, M. (1993). The infinite conversation. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

Block, P. (1988). The empowered manager, Jossey-Bass San Francisco, CA.

Bloom, E. (1996). Joseph Addison and Richard Steele: The Critical Heritage, Routledge.

Boal, A. (1992). Games for actors and non-actors. London, Routledge.

Boje, D. M. (1991). "The storytelling organization: A study of story performance in an office-supply firm." Administrative Science Quarterly: 106-126.

Boje, D. M. (1994). "Organizational Storytelling The Struggles of Pre-modern, Modern and Postmodern Organizational Learning Discourses." Management Learning **25**(3): 433-461.

Boje, D. M. (1995). "Stories of the storytelling organization: a postmodern analysis of Disney as "Tamara-land"." Academy of Management Journal **38**(4): 997-1035.

Boje, D. M. (2001). Narrative methods for organizational & communication research, SAGE Publications Limited.

Boje, D. M. (2008). Storytelling organizations, SAGE Publications Limited.

Boje, D. M., J. T. Luhman, et al. (2003). "A dialectic perspective on the organization theatre metaphor." American Communication Journal **6**(2): 1-16.

Booth, W. (1972). Burke's Way. The structuralist controversy : the languages of criticism and the sciences of man. R. Macksey and E. Donato. Baltimore, Md., Johns Hopkins University Press.

Booth, W. (2004). My Life with Rhetoric. A companion to rhetoric and rhetorical criticism. W. Jost and W. Olmsted. Malden, MA, Blackwell Pub.**:** xvi, 522 p.

Booth, W. C. (1974). A rhetoric of irony. Chicago ; London, University of Chicago Press.

Booth, W. C. (1983). "The empire of irony." The Georgia Review **37**(4): 719-737.

Bourgeois, V. W. and C. C. Pinder (1983). "Contrasting philosophical perspectives in administrative science: A reply to Morgan." Administrative Science Quarterly **28**(4): 608-613.

Boyd, T. W. (1994). "Where Ion stood, what Ion sang." Harvard Studies in Classical Philology **96**: 109-121.

Boyle, D. (2004). Authenticity : brands, fakes, spin and the lust for real life. London, Harper Perennial.

Brad, F. (2004). "Kierkegaard on the Problems of Pure Irony." Journal of Religious Ethics **32**(3): 417-447.

Brandser, G. C. (2005). Irony: A critical strategy or a source of academic identity. Irony - its use and potential in organization theory. U. Johansson and J. Woodilla. Malmö : Liber

Brassett, J. (2009). "British irony, global justice: a pragmatic reading of Chris Brown, Banksy and Ricky Gervais." Review of International Studies **35**(1): 219-245.

Breazeale, D. and T. Rockmore (2010). Fichte, German idealism, and early romanticism. Amsterdam, Rodopi.

Brickhouse, T. C. and N. D. Smith (1983). "The Origin of Socrates' Mission." Journal of the History of Ideas: 657-666.

Brickhouse, T. C. and N. D. Smith (1994). Plato's Socrates, Oxford University Press New York.

Brooks, D. (2000). Bobos in paradise : the new upper class and how they got there. New York ; London, Simon & Schuster.

Brown, A. D. (1998). Organisational culture. London, Financial Times Pitman.

Brown, A. D. and K. Starkey (2000). "Organizational identity and learning: A psychodynamic perspective." Academy of Management Journal **25**(1): 102-120.

Brown, J. S. and P. Duguid (1991). "Organizational learning and communities-of-practice: Toward a unified view of working, learning, and innovation." Organization Science **2**(1): 40-57.

Brown, R. H. (1977). A poetic for sociology : toward a logic of discovery for the human sciences. Cambridge [Eng.] ; New York, Cambridge University Press.

Brummett, B. (1976). "Some implications of" process" or" intersubjectivity": Postmodern rhetoric." Philosophy & Rhetoric **9**(1): 21-51.

Bryson, B. (1998). Notes from a big country : notes on returning to America after twenty years away. Bath, Chivers, 1999.

Buchanan, D. and R. Badham (2008). Power, Politics, and Organizational Change: winning the turf game, SAGE Publications Limited.

Buckley, J. H. (1951). The Victorian temper : a study in literary culture. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Burke, K. (1941). "Four master tropes." The Kenyon review **3**(4): 421-438.

Burke, K. (1945). A grammar of motives. [S.l.], [s.n.].

Burke, K. (1957). The philosophy of literary form : studies in symbolic action. New York, Vintage Books.

Burke, K. (1962). A grammar of motives, and A rhetoric of motives. Cleveland, World Pub. Co.

Burke, K. (1968). Dramatism. International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. New York.

Burke, K. (1969). A rhetoric of motives, Berkeley, London: University of California Press.

Burke, K. (1970). The rhetoric of religion : studies in logology. Berkeley ; London, University of California P.

Burke, K. (1984). Attitudes toward history, University of California Pr.

Burnet, J. (1968). Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato, Macmillan London.

Burton, R. (1621). The anatomy of melancholy, what it is, with all the kinds, causes, symptomes, prognostics, and several cures of it. In three partitions. With their several sections, members, and subsections, philosophically, medicinally, historically opened and cut up. By Democritus Junior. ... In two volumes. London, printed for Longman, Rees, Orme.

Butler, H. E. (2010). The Instituto Oratoria with an English Translation by H E Butler, BiblioBazaar.

Bygrave, S. (1993). Kenneth Burke : rhetoric and ideology. London ; New York, Routledge.

Caillois, R. (2001). Man, play and games. Urbana, Ill., University of Illinois Press ; Wantage : University Presses Marketing.

Caldas, M. P. and T. Wood Jr (2005). What's all the laugh about? How consultants react to irony and jokes about their profession. Irony - its use and

potential in organization theory. U. Johansson and J. Woodilla. Malmö : Liber

Calhoon, R. P. (1969). "Niccolo Machiavelli and the Twentieth Century Administrator." Academy of Management Journal **12**(2): 205-212.

Cannon-Bowers, J. A., E. Salas, et al. (1993). "Shared mental models in expert team decision making." Current issues in individual and group decision making: 221-246.

Cappelørn, N. J. and H. Deuser (2006). Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook, 2006, Walter de Gruyter.

Carlson, A. C. (1988). "Limitations on the comic frame: Some witty American women of the nineteenth century." Quarterly Journal of Speech **74**(3): 310-322.

Carter, G. (2001). Unknown. Inside.com.

Casey, C. (1995). Work, self and society : after industrialism. London, Routledge.

Cassirer, E. (1953). The philosophy of symbolic forms. New Haven,, Yale University Press.

Cederstroem, C. and P. Fleming (2012). Dead man working. Alresford, Hants, Zero.

Chappell, T. D. (1993). "The virtues of Thrasymachus." Phronesis **38**(1): 1-17.

Chock, P. P. (1987). "The irony of stereotypes: Toward an anthropology of ethnicity." Cultural Anthropology **2**(3): 347-368.

Christensen, L. T. g. and J. Cornelissen (2011). "Bridging corporate and organizational communication: review, development and a look to the future." Management Communication Quarterly **25**(3): 383-414.

Cicero, M. T. and J. Annas (2001). On moral ends. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Cicero, M. T. and E. o. t. I. T. Jones (1776). Cicero's Brutus, or, History of Famous Orators: also, his Orator, or Accomplished Speaker. Now first translated into English, by E. Jones. London, B. White.

Cicero, M. T. and J. E. King (1927). Tusculan Disputations. With an English translation by J. E. King, William Heinemann: London; G. P. Putnam's Sons: New York.

Cicero, M. T. and W. Miller (1913). Cicero. De officiis. With an English translation by Walter Miller, William Heinemann: London; Macmillan Co.: New York.

Cicero, M. T., H. Rackham, et al. (1942). Cicero: De Oratore ... Books I, II, with an English translation by E. W. Sutton ... Completed, with an introduction, by H. Rackham. (Book III, together with De Fato, Paradoxa Stoicorum, De Partitione Oratoria. With an English translation by H. Rackham.), 2 vol. William Heinemann: London; Harvard University Press: Cambridge.

Cicero, M. T. and C. D. Yonge (1877). Cicero's Tusculan Disputations; Also, Treatises On The Nature Of The Gods, And On The Commonwealth. New York, Harper & Brothers.

Clark, T. and I. Mangham (2004). "From Dramaturgy to Theatre as Technology: The Case of Corporate Theatre*." Journal of Management Studies **41**(1): 37-59.

Clark, T. and G. Salaman (1998). "Creating the right impression: towards a dramaturgy of management consultancy." Service Industries Journal **18**(1): 18-38.

Clark, T. and G. Salaman (1998). "Telling Tales: Management Gurus' Narratives and the Construction of Managerial Identity." Journal of Management Studies **35**(2): 137-161.

Clegg, S. and C. Baumeler (2012). "From Life in Cages to Life in Projects: Metaphors for Moderns1." Understanding Organizations in Complex, Emergent and Uncertain Environments: 185.

Clegg, S. R., M. Kornberger, et al. (2005). "Learning/Becoming/Organizing." Organization **12**(2): 147-167.

Cohen, M. D., J. G. March, et al. (1972). "A garbage can model of organizational choice." Administrative Science Quarterly **17**(1): 1-25.

Cohen, P. K. (2012). John Evelyn Barlas, a Critical Biography: Poetry, Anarchism, and Mental Illness in Late-Victorian Britain, Rivendale Press.

Cohen, S. and L. Taylor (1992). Escape attempts : the theory and practice of resistance to everyday life. London ; New York, Routledge.

Colebrook, C. (2002). Irony in the Work of Philosophy. Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press.

Colebrook, C. (2004). Irony: the New Critical Idiom. London and New York, Routledge.

Collins, J. (1993). Genericity in the 90s: Eclectic Irony and the New Sincerity. Film theory goes to the movies. A. P. Collins, J. Collins and H. Radner. New York ; London, Routledge.

Collinson, D. (1994). Strategies of Resistance. Power, Knowledge and Subjectivity in the Workplace. Resistance and Power in Organizations. J. M. Jermier, D. Knights and W. R. Nord. London & New York, Sage**:** 25-68.

Collinson, D. and J. Hearn (1994). "Naming men as men: implications for work, organization and management." Gender, Work & Organization **1**(1): 2-22.

Collinson, D. L. (1992). Managing the shopfloor : subjectivity, masculinity, and workplace culture. Berlin ; New York, Walter de Gruyter.

Collinson, D. L. (2003). "Identities and Insecurities: Selves at Work." Organization **10**(3): 527-547.

Conger, J. A. and R. N. Kanungo (1988). "The empowerment process: Integrating theory and practice." Academy of management review: 471-482.

Contardo, I. (2005). Using irony to uncover the dissimulation game between the Harvard Business School and The McKinsey Company: Investigating the interstices of knowledge management. Irony - its use and potential in organization theory. U. Johansson and J. Woodilla. Malmö : Liber

Cornelissen, J. P. (2004). "What are we playing at? Theatre, organization, and the use of metaphor." Organization Studies **25**(5): 705-726.

Cornelissen, J. P. (2005). "Beyond compare: Metaphor in organization theory." Academy of Management Review **30**(4): 751-764.

Cornelissen, J. P. (2008). "Metonymy in Language about Organizations: A Corpus‚ÄêBased Study of Company Names." Journal of Management Studies **45**(1): 79-99.

Cornelissen, J. P., C. Oswick, et al. (2008). "Metaphor in organizational research: context, modalities and implications for research‚Äîintroduction." Organization Studies **29**(1): 7-22.

Costas, J. and P. Fleming (2009). "Beyond dis-identification: A discursive approach to self-alienation in contemporary organizations." Human Relations **62**(3): 353.

Crable, B. (2000). "Burke's perspective on perspectives: Grounding dramatism in the representative anecdote." Quarterly Journal of Speech **86**(3): 318-333.

Craven, K. (1992). Jonathan Swift and the millennium of madness: the information age in Swift's A tale of a tub, Brill Academic Pub.

Cronin, M. A. and L. R. Weingart (2007). "Representational gaps, information processing, and conflict in functionally diverse teams." Academy of Management Review **32**(3): 761-773.

Cross, A. (1998). Neither either nor or: The perils of reflexive irony. The Cambridge companion to Kierkegaard. A. Hannay and G. D. Marino. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Cruysberghs, P., J. Taels, et al. (2003). Immediacy and reflection in Kierkegaard's thought. Leuven, Leuven University Press.

Cyrano de, B., J. P. Collet, et al. (1968). Les États et empires de la lune et du soleil. Paris,, Larousse.

Czarniawska, B. (1997). Narrating the organization: Dramas of institutional identity, University of Chicago Press.

Czarniawska, B. (1999). Writing management: Organization theory as a literary genre, Oxford University Press.

Czarniawska-Joerges, B. (1998). A narrative approach to organization studies, Sage.

Czarniawska-Joerges, B. (2004). Narratives in social science research, Sage.

D'Angelo, F. J. (1992). "The Four Master Tropes: Analogues of Development." Rhetoric Review **11**(1): 91-107.

Daft, R. L. and R. H. Lengel (1986). "Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design." Management science **32**(5): 554-571.

Dane, J. A. (1991). The critical mythology of irony. Athens ; London, University of Georgia Press.

Davidson, J. (1895). A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender, which lasted one night and one day: with a history of the pursuit of Earl Lavender and Lord Brumm by Mrs. Scamler and Maud Emblem ... With a frontispiece by Aubrey Beardsley. London, Ward & Downey.

Davis, H. (1963). A Tale of a Tub and other Early Works 1696-1707. The Prose Writings of Jonathan Swift. H. Davis. Oxford.

De Man, P. (1983). "The rhetoric of temporality." Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism **2**: 187-228.

De Man, P. (1996). "The Concept of Irony." Aesthetic Ideology.

De Man, P. and A. Warminski (1996). Aesthetic ideology. Minneapolis ; London, University of Minnesota Press.

Deal, T. E. and A. A. Kennedy (1982). Corporate cultures : the rites and rituals of corporate life. Reading, Mass., Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

Deal, T. E. and A. A. Kennedy (1999). The new corporate cultures : revitalizing the workplace after downsizing, mergers, and reengineering. London, Texere, 2000.

Dellheim, C. (1987). "The creation of a company culture: Cadburys, 1861-1931." The American Historical Review **92**(1): 13-44.

Den Uyl, D. (2001). <u>Foreword to Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, volume 1</u>. Indianapolis, Liberty Fund.

Derrida, J. (1987). <u>The post card : from Socrates to Freud and beyond</u>. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Dewandre, N. (2005). Ironist Europe: When the onlyway to be is to be and not to be. <u>Irony - its use and potential in organization theory</u>. U. Johansson and J. Woodilla. Malmö : Liber

Di Domenico, M. and P. Fleming (2009). "It's a guesthouse not a brothel': Policing sex in the home-workplace." <u>Human Relations</u> **62**(2): 245-269.

Di Mauro-Jackson, M. M. (2008). <u>Decadence as a Social Critique in Huysmans, D'Annunzio, and Wilde</u>, University of Texas at Austin.

Dodero, C. (2001). Gen (X + Y) + WTC = ? <u>Boston Phoenix</u>. Boston.

Dreu, C. K. D. and K. Carsten (2007). "Cooperative outcome interdependence, task reflexivity, and team effectiveness: A motivated information processing perspective." <u>Journal of Applied Psychology</u> **92**(3): 628.

Druskat, V. U. and A. T. Pescosolido (2002). "The content of effective teamwork mental models in self-managing teams: Ownership, learning and heedful interrelating." <u>Human Relations</u> **55**(3): 283-314.

Du Gay, P. (1996). <u>Consumption and identity at work</u>. London, Sage.

Duffy, J. (2004). Do the Americans get irony? <u>BBC News Online</u>.

Dunaway, D. K. and M. Beer (2010). <u>Singing out : an oral history of America's folk music revivals</u>. New York ; Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Duncan, H. D. (1962). <u>Communication and social order</u>. New York,, Bedminster Press.

Dye, T. R., L. Schubert, et al. (2011). <u>The irony of democracy: An uncommon introduction to American politics</u>, Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Elliott, R. C. (1951). "Swift's Tale of a Tub: an Essay in Problems of Structure." <u>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</u>: 441-455.

Erasmus, D. (1785). <u>The praise of folly. Translated from the best Latin edition of Erasmus, by W. Kennet, ... Illustrated with fifty curious cuts, by ... Hans Holbeine. To which is prefixed, the author's epistle to Sir Thomas More. And the life of the author, by Thomas Brown</u>. London, printed and sold by J. Barker.

Erasmus, D. and M. M. Philips (1967). <u>Erasmus on his times : a shortened version of the 'Adages' of Erasmus</u>. London,, Cambridge U.P.

Evangelista, S.-M. (2009). <u>British aestheticism and Ancient Greece : Hellenism, reception, gods in exile</u>. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Evans, K. (2000). <u>The Stuckists : the first remodernist art group</u>. [Great Britain], Victoria Press on behalf of superHUMANism.

Everdale, W. R. (2000). Idea Man. <u>The New York Times</u>. New York, The New York Times Company.

Fabiani, P. (2009). <u>The philosophy of the imagination in Vico and Malebranche</u>, Firenze University Press.

Farrell, T. B. (1976). "Knowledge, consensus, and rhetorical theory." <u>Quarterly Journal of Speech</u> **62**(1): 1-14.

Farrenkopf, J. (2001). <u>Prophet of decline : Spengler on world history and politics</u>. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press.

Fichte, J. G. and W. o. E. Smith (1806). <u>The Characteristics of the Present Age. Translated by W. Smith</u>.

Fine, G. A. and D. D. Martin (1990). "A Partisan View: Sarcasm, Satire, and Irony as Voices in Erving Goffman's Asylums." Journal of Contemporary Ethnography **19**(1): 89-115.

Fish, S. E. (1989). Doing what comes naturally : change, rhetoric and the practice of theory in literary and legal studies. Oxford, Clarendon.

Fitzgerald, J. D. (2012). Sincerity, Not Irony, Is Our Age's Ethos. The Atlantic.

Fleming, P. (2005). "Kindergarten Cop: Paternalism and Resistance in a High, Commitment Workplace." Journal of Management Studies **42**(7): 1469-1489.

Fleming, P. (2005). "Metaphors of Resistance." Management Communication Quarterly **19**(1): 45-66.

Fleming, P. (2007). "Sexuality, power and resistance in the workplace." Organization Studies **28**(2): 239-256.

Fleming, P. (2009). Authenticity and the cultural politics of work : new forms of informal control. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Fleming, P. and G. Sewell (2002). "Looking for the Good Soldier, Svejk: Alternative Modalities of Resistance in the Contemporary Workplace." Sociology **36**(4): 857-873.

Fleming, P. and A. Spicer (2003). "Working at a cynical distance: Implications for power, subjectivity and resistance." Organization **10**(1): 157-179.

Fleming, P. and A. Spicer (2005). "How objects believe for us: applications in organizational analysis." Culture and Organization **11**(3): 181-193.

Fleming, P. and A. Spicer (2007). Contesting the corporation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fleming, P. and A. Sturdy (2009). "Just be yourself!" Employee Relations **31**(6): 569-583.

Fleming, P. and S. C. Zyglidopoulos (2008). "The escalation of deception in organizations." Journal of business ethics **81**(4): 837-850.

Fleming, P. and S. C. Zyglidopoulos (2009). Charting corporate corruption : agency, structure and escalation. Cheltenham, Edward Elgar.

Florida, R. L. (2002). The rise of the creative class : and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life. New York, Basic Books.

Forstman, H. J. (1968). "The Understanding of Language by Friedrich Schlegel and Schleiermacher." Soundings **51**(2): 146-165.

Foucault, M., J. P. S. K. C. M. G. Fitzpatrick, et al. (1972). The archaeology of knowledge ... Translated ... by A. M. Sheridan Smith. London, Tavistock Publications.

Frank, T. (1997). The conquest of cool : business culture, counterculture, and the rise of hip consumerism. Chicago ; London, University of Chicago Press.

Frazier, B. (2006). Rorty and Kierkegaard on irony and moral commitment : philosophical and theological connections. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Freudenburg, K. (2001). Satires of Rome: Threatening Poses from Lucilius to Juvenal, Cambridge University Press.

Friedländer, P. (1964). Plato. New York,, Harper & Row.

Friedländer, P. and H. Meyerhoff (1969). Plato. 3 : The dialogues, second and third periods. [S.l.], Princeton U. Pr.

Frye, N. (1936). "Wyndham Lewis: Anti-Spenglerian." Canadian Forum **16**.

Frye, N. (1940). "War on the Cultural Front." Canadian Forum **16**.

Frye, N. (1957). Anatomy of criticism : four essays. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Frye, N. (1976). Spiritus mundi : essays on literature, myth and society. Bloomington ; London, Indiana University Press.

Furst, L. R. (1981). "Who Created "Romantische Ironie"?" Pacific Coast Philology 16(1): 29-37.

Gabriel, Y. (1999). "Beyond Happy Families: A Critical Reevaluation of the Control-Resistance-Identity Triangle." Human Relations 52(2): 179-203.

Gabriel, Y. (2013). "Book Review: Dead Man Working and The Outsourced Self: Intimate Life in Market Times." Organization Studies 34(5-6): 855-859.

Garber, F. (1988). Romantic irony. Budapest, Akade Kiado.

Geach, P. T. (1966). "Plato's" Euthyphro": An Analysis and Commentary." The Monist 50(3): 369-382.

George, A. L. and T. J. McKeown (1985). "Case studies and theories of organizational decision making." Advances in information processing in organizations 2(1): 21-58.

Gergen, K. (1991). The Saturated Self. New York, Basic Books.

Gergen, K. J. (1991). "The saturated self : dilemmas of identity in contemporary life."

Gibbs Jr, R. W. (1993). "Process and products in making sense of tropes."

Gifford, D. J. (1974). "Iconographical notes towards a definition of the medieval fool." Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 37: 336-342.

Gill, M. B. (2011). Lord Shaftesbury [Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury]. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2011 Edition). E. N. Zalta.

Goffman, E. (1961a). Asylums : essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates. Garden City, N.Y., Anchor Books.

Golden, K. A. (1992). "The individual and organizational culture: Strategies for action in highly-ordered contexts." Journal of Management Studies 29(1): 1-21.

Goldfarb, R. M. (1962). "Late Victorian Decadence." The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 20(4): 369-373.

Gooch, P. W. (1987). "Socratic Irony and Aristotle's" Eiron": Some Puzzles." Phoenix 41(2): 95-104.

Gouldner, A. W. (1967). Enter Plato: classical Greece and the origins of social theory. London,, Routledge & K. Paul.

Gratton, L., A. Voigt, et al. (2007). "Bridging Faultlines." MIT Sloan Management Review.

Greenberg, J. D. (2011). Modernism, satire, and the novel. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Gregor, I. (1966). "Comedy and Oscar Wilde." The Sewanee Review 74(2): 501-521.

Griffith, T. L. and M. A. Neale (2001). "8. Information processing in traditional, hybrid, and virtual teams: From nascent knowledge to transactive memory." Research in organizational behavior 23: 379-421.

Griswold, C. L. (2012). Plato on Rhetoric and Poetry. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. E. N. Zalta.

Griswold, W. (1983). "The devil's techniques: Cultural legitimation and social change." American Sociological Review: 668-680.

Guilhamet, L. (1985). "Socrates and Post-Socratic Satire." Journal of the History of Ideas: 3-12.

Guthrie, W. K. C. (1971). A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume 3, The Fifth Century Enlightenment, Part 2, Socrates, Cambridge University Press.

Guthrie, W. K. C. (1975). A history of Greek philosophy. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Guthrie, W. K. C., Socrates, et al. (1958). Socrates and Plato. (The John Macrossan Memorial Lecture, 1957.), pp. 27. University of Queensland Press: Brisbane.

Hackforth, R. (1933). The composition of Plato's Apology, University Press.

Hall, S. (1980). "Cultural studies: Two paradigms." Media, culture and society **2**(1): 57-72.

Hammermeister, K. (2002). The German aesthetic tradition. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Hancock, B. M. (2005). "A Community of Characters - the Narrative Self in the Films of Wes Anderson." The Journal of Religion and Film **9**.

Hartman, J. C. (1986). The Politics of Decadence: The Political and Social Ideas of Sade, Gautier, Baudelaire and Flaubert, University Microfilms.

Harvey Brown, R. (1983). "Dialectical Irony. Literary Form and Sociological Theory." Poetics Today **4**(3): 543-564.

Harwood, J. T. (1982). Critics, values, and Restoration comedy. Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press.

Hašek, J. and P. Selver (1939). The Good Soldier Schweik ... Illustrated by Joseph Lada. Translated by Paul Selver. [An abridged version of vol. 1-3.]. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books.

Hatch, M. J. (1997). "Irony and the Social Construction of Contradiction in the Humor of a Management Team." Organization Science **8**(3): 275-288.

Hayman, J. G. (1970). "Shaftesbury and the Search for a Persona." Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900 **10**(3): 491-504.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1956). The philosophy of history. New York, Dover Publications Inc.

Hegel, G. W. F., E. S. Haldane, et al. (1995). Lectures on the history of philosophy. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press.

Hegel, G. W. F. and T. M. Knox (1975). Aesthetics : lectures on fine art, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1975(1988-1991).

Heracleous, L., T. Keenoy, et al. (2003). "DIALOGUE." Academy of Management Review **28**(2): 190-197.

Herder, J. G. (1968). Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind, UMI.

Herrick, J. A. (2005). The history and theory of rhetoric : an introduction. Boston, Allyn and Beacon.

Hichens, R. (1895). The Green Carnation. New York, D. Appleton & Company.

Higgins, I. (1994). Swift's politics: a study in disaffection, Cambridge University Press.

Hochschild, A. R. (2003). The managed heart : commercialization of human feeling. Berkeley, Calif. ; London, University of California Press.

Holland, G. S. (2000). Divine irony. Selinsgrove, PA

London ; Cranbury, NJ, Susquehanna University Press ;

Associated University Presses.

Holt, J. (2007). <u>The Daily show and philosophy : moments of zen in the art of fake news</u>. Oxford, Blackwell.

Horace and S. Alexander (1999). <u>The complete Odes and Satires of Horace</u>. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.

Horvath, A. (2007). "The Trickster Motive in Renaissance Political Thought." <u>Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai-Philosophia</u>(1-2): 79-95.

Horwitz, R. B. (1991). <u>The irony of regulatory reform: The deregulation of American telecommunications</u>, Oxford University Press, USA.

Howland, J. (2002). "Aristotle's Great-Souled Man." <u>The Review of Politics</u> **64**(1): 27-56.

Huszar, G. d. (1945). "Nietzsche's Theory of Decadence and the Transvaluation of all Values." <u>Journal of the History of Ideas</u> **6**(3): 259-272.

Hutcheon, L. (1994). <u>Irony's edge : the theory and politics of irony</u>. London ; New York, Routledge.

Hutcheon, L. (2002). <u>The politics of postmodernism</u>. London, Routledge.

Hyde, L. (1997). <u>Trickster makes this world: Mischief, myth, and art</u>, Macmillan.

Illouz, E. (2007). <u>Cold intimacies : the making of emotional capitalism</u>. Cambridge, Polity.

Irwin, T. (1979). <u>Plato's moral theory: the early and middle dialogues</u>, Clarendon Press.

Jackson, H. (1964). <u>The Eighteen-nineties. Prelude to the nineteen-hundreds. The recapture of something of a remarkable era</u>. Berkeley Heights, Oriole Press.

Jacobs, R. N. and P. Smith (1997). "Romance, Irony, and Solidarity." <u>Sociological Theory</u> **15**(1): 60-80.

Jacoby, R. (1992). "A new intellectual history?" <u>The American Historical Review</u> **97**(2): 405-424.

Jakobson, R. (1962). <u>Selected writings</u> S-Gravenhage, Mouton & Co.

Jakobson, R. and M. Halle (1956). <u>Fundamentals of language</u>. 's-Gravenhage,, Mouton.

James, C. (2004). The Model of a Soldier (but No Model Soldier). <u>The New York times</u>. New York, The New York Times Company.

Jameson, F. (1998). <u>The cultural turn : selected writings on the postmodern 1983-1998</u>. London, Verso.

Janik, V. K. (1998). <u>Fools and jesters in literature, art, and history : a bio-bibliographical sourcebook</u>. Westport, Conn. ; London, Greenwood Press.

Joad, C. E. M. (1948). <u>Decadence. A philosophical inquiry</u>. London, Faber & Faber.

Johansson, U. and J. Woodilla (2005). Dramas of Teamwork Training: Ironies of canned and Structured Programs. <u>Irony and Organization</u>. U. Johansson and J. Woodilla. Malmo, Liber/Copenhagen Business School Press.

Johansson, U. and J. Woodilla (2005). Irony - its use and potential in organization theory. <u>Irony and organizations : epistemological claims and supporting field stories</u>. U. Johansson and J. Woodilla.

Jordan, J. (2005). "Dell Hymes, Kenneth Burke's" Identification," and the Birth of Sociolinguistics." <u>Rhetoric Review</u> **24**(3): 264-279.

Jung, C. G. and R. F. C. Hull (1972). <u>Four archetypes : mother, rebirth, spirit, trickster</u>. [S.l.], Routledge.

Juvenalis, D. J. and S. H. Jeyes (1885). The Sixteen Satires of Juvenal. A new translation; with an introduction, a running analysis, and brief explanatory notes, by S. H. Jeyes. Oxford, J. Thornton.

Kaczorowski, R. J. (1996). "Tragic Irony of American Federalism: National Sovereignty versus State Sovereignty in Slavery and in Freedom, The." U. Kan. L. Rev. **45**: 1015.

Kahn, C. H. (1981). "Did Plato Write Socratic Dialogues?" The Classical Quarterly **31**(2): 305-320.

Kane, P. (2005). The Play Ethic: A Manifesto for a Different Way of Living, Macmillan UK.

Kaufer, D. S. (1977). "Irony and Rhetorical Strategy." Philosophy and Rhetoric **10**(2): 90-110.

Kaufer, D. S. (1981). "Understanding Ironic Communication." Journal of Pragmatics **5**(6): 495-510.

Kaufer, D. S. (1983). "Irony, Interpretive Form, and the Theory of Meaning." Poetics Today **4**(3): 451-464.

Kaufmann, W. A. (1974). Nietzsche, philosopher, psychologist, antichrist. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.

Kaul, A. N. (1970). The action of English comedy : studie in the encounter of abstraction and expence from Shakespeare to Shaw. [S.l.], Yale U Pr.

Kelly, A. (2010). David Foster Wallace and the New Sincerity in American Fiction. Consider David Foster Wallace: Critical Essays. D. Hering. Austin, SSMG Press,**:** 131-146.

Kennedy, G. A. (2009). A new history of classical rhetoric. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.

Kierkegaard, S. (1834-1854). Journals & Papers of Søren Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard, S. (1941). "Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans, by David F Swenson." Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941): 309.

Kierkegaard, S., E. H. Hong, et al. (2000). The essential Kierkegaard. Princeton, N.J. ; [Great Britain], Princeton University Press.

Kierkegaard, S., H. V. Hong, et al. (1978). "Two ages : the age of revolution and the present age : a literary review." Kierkegaard's writings(14): xii, 187 p.

Kierkegaard, S., H. V. Hong, et al. (1987). "Either/or." Kierkegaard's writings(3-4).

Kierkegaard, S., H. V. Hong, et al. (1989). "The concept of irony, with continual reference to Socrates : together with notes of Schelling's Berlin lectures." Kierkegaard's writings(2).

Kierkegaard, S., H. V. Hong, et al. (1992). "Concluding unscientific postscript to Philosophical fragments." Kierkegaard's writings(12).

Kierkegaard, S., H. V. Hong, et al. (1998). "The point of view." Kierkegaard's writings(22).

Kirby, A. (2009). Digimodernism : how new technologies dismantle the postmodern and reconfigure our culture. London, Continuum.

Klagge, J. C. and N. D. Smith (1992). Methods of interpreting Plato and his dialogues, Clarendon Press.

Klein, L. E. (1994). Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England, Cambridge University Press.

Knight, C. A. (2008). The literature of satire. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Knights, D. and D. McCabe (2000). "Bewitched, bothered and bewildered: The meaning and experience of teamworking for employees in an automobile factory." Human Relations **53**(11): 1481-1517.

Knights, D. and H. Willmott (1987). "Organizational culture as management strategy: a critique and illustration from the financial services industry." International Studies of Management and Organization **17**(3): 40-63.

Knights, L. C. (1966). Restoation Comedy: The Reality and the Myth. Restoration Drama : modern essays in criticism. J. Loftis. [S.l.], Oxford University Press.

Knox, N. (1961). The word 'Irony' and its context,1500-1755, Duke U.P.;Cambridge U.P.

Knox, N. (1972). "On the Classification of Ironies." Modern Philology **70**(1): 53-62.

Koestler, A. (1964). The act of creation. New York,, Macmillan.

Kondo, D. K. (1990). "Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace."

Kreuz, R. J. and R. M. Roberts (1993). "On Satire and Parody: The Importance of Being Ironic." Metaphor and Symbolic Activity **8**(2): 97-109.

Kunda, G. (2006). Engineering culture : control and commitment in a high-tech corporation. Philadelphia, Pa., Temple University Press ; Chesham : Combined Academic [distributor].

Kunda, G. and S. Barley (1988). Designing devotion: corporate culture and ideologies of workplace control.

Lacapra, D. (1983). Rethinking intellectual history : texts, contexts, language. Ithaca, Cornell U.P.

Lakoff, G. (1993). "The contemporary theory of metaphor." Metaphor and thought **2**: 202-251.

Lakoff, G. (1996). Moral politics: What conservatives know that liberals don't, University of Chicago Press Chicago.

Lakoff, G. and M. Johnson (1980). Metaphors we live by, Chicago London.

Lakoff, G. and M. Turner (2009). More than cool reason: A field guide to poetic metaphor, University of Chicago Press.

Lanham, R. A. (1991). A handlist of rhetorical terms. Berkeley, Calif. ; Oxford, University of California Press.

Lanham, R. A. (1993). The electronic word : democracy, technology, and the arts. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Larson, J. R., P. G. Foster-Fishman, et al. (1994). "Discussion of shared and unshared information in decision-making groups." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology **67**(3): 446.

Lasch, C. (1978). The culture of narcissism : American life in an age of diminishing expectations. New York, Norton.

Latour, B. (1983). Give Me a Laboratory and I Will Raise the World. Science Observed: Perspectives on the Social Study of Science. K. Knorr-Cetina and M. Mulkay. London, UK: Beverly Hills, CA, Sage Publications**:** 141-170.

Lauer, Q. and G. W. F. Hegel (1983). Hegel's idea of philosophy with a new translation of Hegel's Introduction to the history of philosophy. New York, Fordham University Press.

Leberman, S. I. and A. J. Martin (2005). "Applying dramaturgy to management course design." Journal of Management Education **29**(2): 319-332.

Lefebvre, H. (1995). Introduction to modernity : twelve preludes, September 1959-May 1961. London, Verso.

Lefstein, A. (2012). "The regulation of teaching as symbolic politics: rituals of order, blame and redemption." Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education(ahead-of-print): 1-17.

Lévi-Strauss, C. (1963). Structural anthropology. New York, Basic Books.

Levine, J. M. (1991). The battle of the books : history and literature in the Augustan Age. Ithaca, N.Y. ; London, Cornell University Press.

Levinthal, D. A. and J. G. March (1993). "The myopia of learning." Strategic Management Journal **14**(S2): 95-112.

Limnatis, N. (2010). The dimensions of Hegel's dialectic. London, Continuum.

Lipovetsky, G., S. Charles, et al. (2005). Hypermodern times. Cambridge, Polity.

Littman, D. C. and J. L. Mey (1989). "The Nature of Irony: Toward a Computational Model of Irony." Journal of Pragmatics **15**(2): 131-151.

Liu, A. (2004). The laws of cool : knowledge work and the culture of information. Chicago ; London, University of Chicago Press.

Loftis, J. e. (1966). Restoration Drama : modern essays in criticism. [S.l.], Oxford University Press.

Lowe, S., S. Purchase, et al. (2012). "The drama of interaction within business networks." Industrial Marketing Management **41**(3): 421-428.

Lucian, o. S. and L. Casson (2008). Selected satires of Lucian. New Brunswick [N.J.], AldineTransaction.

Luft, S. R. (2003). Vico's uncanny humanism : reading the New science between modern and postmodern. Ithaca, N.Y. ; London, Cornell University Press.

Maccoby, M. (1976). The gamesman : the new corporate leaders. New York, Simon and Schuster.

Macksey, R. (1972). Concluding Remarks. The structuralist controversy : the languages of criticism and the sciences of man. R. Macksey and E. Donato. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press.

Mahan‐Hays, S. E. and R. C. Aden (2003). "Kenneth Burke's "attitude" at the crossroads of rhetorical and cultural studies: A proposal and case study illustration." Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports) **67**(1): 32-55.

Mali, J. (1992). The rehabilitation of myth : Vico's "New Science", Camb. U. P.

Mangham, I. L. and M. A. Overington (1987). Organizations as theatre : a social psychology of dramatic appearances. Chichester ; New York, Wiley.

March, J. G. (1976). "The technology of foolishness." Ambiguity and choice in organizations **69**: 81.

March, J. G. (2006). "Rationality, foolishness, and adaptive intelligence." Strategic Management Journal **27**(3): 201-214.

March, J. G. and J. P. Olson (1983). "Organizing political life: What administrative reorganization tells us about government." American Political Science Review **77**(02): 281-296.

Marinatos, S. (1939). "The volcanic destruction of Minoan Crete." Antiquity **13**(52): 425-439.

Markova, I. (2003). Dialogicality and social representations : the dynamics of mind. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Marshak, R. J. (1993). "Managing the metaphors of change." Organizational Dynamics **22**: 44-44.

Marshall, A. (2007). Vilfredo Pareto's sociology : a framework for political psychology. Aldershot, Ashgate.

Martel, J. R. (2007). Subverting the Leviathan: Reading Thomas Hobbes as a radical democrat, Columbia University Press.

Martin, J. (1992). Cultures in organizations: three perspectives, Oxford University Press.

Martin, J. (2001). Organizational culture: Mapping the terrain, Sage Pubns.

Martinich, A. P. (2003). The two gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on religion and politics, Cambridge University Press.

Mazzarino, S. (1966). The end of the ancient world, Faber.

McCaffery, L. (1993). "A Conversation with David Foster Wallace." The Review of Contemporary Fiction **13**(2).

McCloskey, D. N. (1994). Knowledge and persuasion in economics. Cambridge England ; New York, NY, USA, Cambridge University Press.

McLoughlin, I. P., R. J. Badham, et al. (2005). "Cultures of ambiguity: design, emergence and ambivalence in the introduction of normative control." Work Employment Society **19**(1): 67-89.

McLuhan, M. (2011). Counterblast : 1954 edition. Berkeley, CA, Gingko Press.

McMillin, S. (1997). Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy. New York ; London, W.W. Norton & Co.

Meisel, J. H. (1962). The Myth of the Ruling Class, etc, Ann Arbor.

Mellor, A. K. (1980). English romantic irony. Cambridge, Mass. ; London, Harvard University Press.

Merry, R. W. (2005). Sands of empire : missionary zeal, American foreign policy, and the hazards of global ambition. New York, Simon & Schuster.

Miller, C. (1993). Giambattista Vico : imagination and historical knowledge. Basingstoke, Macmillan.

Miller, W. I. (1997). The anatomy of disgust. Cambridge, Mass. ; London, Harvard University Press.

Mir, R. (2005). How does one pour tea into a cup that is already full? A narrative about ironic knowledge transfer. Irony - its use and potential in organization theory. U. Johansson and J. Woodilla. Malmö : Liber

Moeller, H.-G. (2012). The radical Luhmann. New York, Columbia University Press.

Morgan, G. (1980). "Paradigms, metaphors, and puzzle solving in organization theory." Administrative Science Quarterly: 605-622.

Morgan, G. (1983). "More on metaphor: Why we cannot control tropes in administrative science." Administrative Science Quarterly **28**(4): 601-607.

Morgan, G. (1986). Images of organization. Beverly Hills ; London, Sage.

Morgan, G. (1993). Imaginization: The art of creative management, Sage Newbury Park, CA.

Morgan, G. (1996). "An afterword: Is there anything more to be said about metaphor." Metaphor and organizations: 227-240.

Morgan, G. (2011). "Reflections on Images of Organization and Its Implications for Organization and Environment." Organization & Environment **24**(4): 459-478.

Muecke, D. (1983). "Images of Irony." Poetics Today **4**(3): 399-413.

Muecke, D. C. (1969). The compass of irony, London: Methuen & Co.

Muecke, D. C. (1982). Irony and the ironic. London, Methuen.

Musson, G. and S. Tietze (2004). "Places and spaces: the role of metonymy in organizational talk." Journal of Management Studies **41**(8): 1301-1323.

Neal, A. (2007). How skeptics do ethics : a brief history of the late modern linguistic turn. Calgary, Alta., University of Calgary Press.

Nehamas, A. (1998). The art of living : Socratic reflections from Plato to Foucault. Berkeley ; London, University of California Press.

Niebuhr, R. (2008). The irony of American history, University of Chicago Press.

Nietzsche, F. W., R. Geuss, et al. (1999). The birth of tragedy and other writings. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York, Cambridge University Press.

Nietzsche, F. W. and W. A. Kaufmann (1992). Basic writings of Nietzsche. New York, Modern Library.

O'Grady, P. F. (2005). "Hippias of Elis."

O'Reilly, C. A. and J. A. Chatman (1996). "Culture as Social Control: Corporations, Cults, and Commitment." Research in Organizational Behaviour **18**: 157-200.

Odone, C. (2001). The bleakest link. The Observer.

Olson, K. M. and C. D. Olson (2004). "Beyond strategy: a reader‐centered analysis of irony's dual persuasive uses." Quarterly Journal of Speech **90**(1): 24-52.

Ortony, A. (1993). Metaphor and thought. Cambridge England ; New York, NY, USA, Cambridge University Press.

Oswick, C., P. Fleming, et al. (2011). "From borrowing to blending: Rethinking the processes of organizational theory building." Academy of Management Review **36**(2): 318-337.

Oswick, C. and D. Grant (1996). Organisation development : metaphorical explorations. London, Pitman.

Oswick, C., T. Keenoy, et al. (2002). "Metaphor and analogical reasoning in organization theory: beyond orthodoxy." The Academy of Management Review **27**(2): 294-303.

Oswick, C., I. L. Mangham, et al. (2013). "Dramaturgy, dialogue and organizing." Text/Work: Representing Organization and Organizing Representation **7**: 219.

Oswick, C., L. L. Putnam, et al. (2004). "Tropes, discourse and organizing." The Sage handbook of organizational discourse: 105–127.

Owens, H. P. (2008). Perspectives and Irony in American Slavery, Univ. Press of Mississippi.

Pattison, S. (1997). Faith of the Managers: When Management Becomes Religion, Continuum.

Pavlovskis, Z. (1968). "Aristotle, Horace, and the ironic man." Classical Philology **63**(1): 22-41.

Pegg, S. (2007). What are you laughing at? The Guardian.

Persius and B. L. Gildersleeve (1875). The Satires of A. Persius Flaccus. Edited by B. L. Gildersleeve. New York, Harper & Brothers.

Peters, T. J. (2003). Re-imagine! London, Dorling Kindersley.

Peterson, L. D. (1967). "Swift's Project: A Religious and Political Satire." Publications of the Modern Language Association of America: 54-63.

Pettigrew, A. M. (1979). "On studying organizational cultures." <u>Administrative Science Quarterly</u> **24**(4): 570-581.

Pettigrew, A. M. and A. M. Pettigrew (1973). <u>The politics of organizational decision-making</u>, Tavistock London.

Pettit, A. (1997). <u>Illusory consensus : Bolingbroke and the polemical response to Walpole, 1730-1737</u>. Newark, University of Delaware Press ; London : Associated University Presses.

Pfeffer, J. and G. R. Salancik (1974). "Organizational decision making as a political process: The case of a university budget." <u>Administrative Science Quarterly</u>: 135-151.

Pinder, C. C. and V. W. Bourgeois (1982). "Controlling tropes in administrative science." <u>Administrative Science Quarterly</u>: 641-652.

Plato <u>Republic</u>.

Plato <u>Symposium</u>.

Plato, R. G. Bury, et al. (1914). <u>Plato. With an English translation by H. N. Fowler (W. R. M. Lamb and R. G. Bury) and an introduction by W. R. M. Lamb</u>, 10 vol. William Heinemann: London; Macmillan Co.: New York.

Plato and E. R. Dodds (1959). <u>Gorgias</u>. Oxford,, Clarendon Press.

Plato and C. C. W. Taylor (2009). <u>Protagoras</u>. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Poecke, N. v. (2010/11) "The New Weird Generation." <u>Notes on Metamodernism</u>.

Popper, K. R. (1966). <u>The Open society and its enemies. (Fifth edition, revised.)</u>. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Possen, D. D. (2009). Soren Kierkegaard and the Very Idea of Advance Beyond Socrates. <u>Philosophy</u>. Chicago, Illinois, Chicago. **PhD**.

Poulter, D. and C. Land (2008). "Preparing to work: dramaturgy, cynicism and normative control in the socialization of graduate recruits in management consulting." <u>Culture and Organization</u> **14**(1): 65-78.

Preminger, A. and T. V. F. Brogan (1993). <u>The new Princeton encyclopedia of poetry and poetics</u>. Princeton, N.J. ; Chichester, Princeton University Press.

Purdy, J. (1999). <u>For Common Things: Irony, Trust, and Commitment in America Today</u>, Knopf.

Putnam, L. L. (2004). "Dialectical tensions and rhetorical tropes in negotiations." <u>Organization Studies</u> **25**(1): 35-53.

Quilp, J. (1894). <u>Baron Verdigris : a romance of the reversed direction</u>. London, Henry & Co.

Quintilian and F. Loretto (1974). <u>Institutio oratoria X</u>. Stuttgart, P. Reclam.

Rabelais, F. o. a. and F. J. Broadhurst (1951). <u>The heroic deeds of Gargantua and Pantagruel</u>. [S.l.], Angus & Robertson.

Rabelais, F. o. c. and J. M. Cohen (1955). <u>The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel ... Translated and with an introduction by J. M. Cohen</u>. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books.

Rachels, J. (2008). Ethical Egoism. <u>Reason and responsibility : readings in some basic problems of philosophy</u>. J. Feinberg and R. Shafer-Landau. Belmont, Calif. ; London, Wadsworth.

Ramage, J., Micheal Callaway, et al. (2009). <u>Argument in Composition</u>. West Lafayette, Indiana, Parlor Press.

Ray, C. A. (1986). "Corporate Culture: The last frontier of control?" <u>Journal of Management Studies</u> **23**(3): 287-297.

Rebhorn, W. A. (1988). <u>Foxes and Lions: Machiavelli's Confidence Men</u>, Cornell University Press Ithaca, NY.

Reddy, M. J. (1979). "The conduit metaphor: A case of frame conflict in our language about language." <u>Metaphor and thought</u> **2**: 164-201.

Riad, S. and E. Vaara (2011). "Varieties of national metonymy in media accounts of international mergers and acquisitions." <u>Journal of Management Studies</u> **48**(4): 737-771.

Richetti, J. J. (2005). <u>The Cambridge history of English literature, 1660-1780</u>. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Riesman, D., T. Gitlin, et al. (2001). <u>The lonely crowd: A study of the changing American character</u>, Yale Univ Pr.

Robertson, M. and J. Swan (2003). "Control - what control? Culture and ambiguity within a knowledge intensive firm." <u>Journal of Management Studies</u> **40**(4): 831-858.

Rorty, R. (1967). <u>The Linguistic turn : recent essays in philosophical method</u>. Chicago, Chicago University Press.

Rorty, R. (1980). <u>Philosophy and the mirror of nature</u>. Oxford, Blackwell.

Rorty, R. (1989). <u>Contingency, Irony and Solidarity</u>. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Rosen, M. (1985). "Breakfast at Spiro's: Dramaturgy and dominance." <u>Journal of Management</u> **11**(2): 31.

Rosenblatt, R. (2001). The Age of Irony Comes to an End. <u>Time</u>.

Russell, B. (1945). <u>A History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the earliest times to the present day</u>. New York, Simon & Schuster.

Russell, B. (1996). <u>Roads to freedom</u>, Psychology Press.

Ryals, C. d. L. (1958). "Toward a Definition of Decadent as applied to British Literature of the Nineteenth Century." <u>Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism</u>: 85-92.

Sackmann, S. (1989). "The role of metaphors in organization transformation." <u>Human Relations</u> **42**(6): 463-485.

Said, E. W. (1994). <u>Representations of the intellectual</u>. London, Vintage.

Santas, G. (1964). "The Socratic Paradoxes." <u>The Philosophical Review</u> **73**(2): 147-164.

Sapounas, N. V. (2010). Leadership and leadership dramaturgy in Greek organizations, University of Exeter.

Schiappa, E. (1990). "Did Plato Coin Rhêtorikê?" <u>American Journal of Philology</u> **111**: 157-170.

Schlegel, C. W. F. v. and P. E. Firchow (1971). <u>Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments. Translated with an introduction by Peter Firchow</u>, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Schlegel, F. (1991). "Philosophical fragments.".

Schmid, S. (2002). "Byron and Wilde: The Dandy in the Public Sphere." <u>The Importance of Reinventing Oscar: Versions of Wilde During the Last 100 Years</u> **61**: 81.

Schön, D. (1993). Generative Metaphor: A perspective on Problem-Setting in Social Policy. <u>Metaphor and Thought.</u> A. Ortony. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press**:** 254-283.

Schön, D. A. (1963). "Champions for radical new inventions." <u>Harvard business review</u> **41**(2): 77-86.

Schreyögg, G. and H. Höpfl (2004). "Theatre and organization: Editorial introduction."

Schwalb, H. M. (1950). "Cicero and the English Gentleman." <u>Classical Journal</u>: 33-44.

Schweiger, D. M., W. R. Sandberg, et al. (1986). "Group approaches for improving strategic decision making: A comparative analysis of dialectical inquiry, devil's advocacy, and consensus." <u>Academy of Management Journal</u> **29**(1): 51-71.

Sedgewick, G. G. (1967). <u>Of irony: especially in drama</u>. [Toronto], University of Toronto Press.

Sellars, J. (2006). <u>Stoicism</u>, University of California Press.

Semler, R. (1993). <u>Maverick! : the success story behind the world's most unusual workplace</u>. London, Century.

Sennett, R. (1998). "The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New capitalism."

Sesonske, A. (1961). "Plato's Apology:" Republic" I." <u>Phronesis</u> **6**(1): 29-36.

Sewell, G. (1995). On the Possibility of a Sociology of Workplace Surveillance. <u>American</u>

<u>Sociological Association Annual Meeting.</u> . Chicago, IL.

Sewell, G. and J. Barker (2006a). "Max Weber and the irony of bureaucracy." <u>Social theory at work</u>: 56-87.

Sewell, G. and J. R. Barker (2006). Max Weber and the Irony of Bureaucracy. <u>Social Theory at Work</u>. M. Korczynski, R. Hodson and P. Edwards. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Sewell, G. and J. R. Barker (2006b). "Coercion Versus Care: Using Irony to make Sense of Organizational Surveillance." <u>Academy of Management Review</u> **31**(4): 934-961.

Shaftesbury, A. A. C. E. o. (1999). <u>Characteristics of men, manners, opinions, times, etc</u>. Bristol, Thoemmes.

Shaftesbury, A. A. C. E. o. and L. E. Klein (1999). <u>Characteristics of men, manners, opinions, times</u>. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Shaftesbury, A. A. C. E. o. and B. Rand (1900). <u>The life, unpublished letters, and philosophical regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury</u>. London, Swan Sonnenschein.

Shaftesbury, A. A. C. E. o. and B. Rand (1999). <u>The life, unpublished letters, and philosophical regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury</u>. Bristol, Thoemmes.

Shank, B. (1994). <u>Dissonant identities : the rock'n'roll scene in Austin, Texas</u>. Hanover, NH, University Press of New England.

Singh, J. V. (1986). "Performance, slack, and risk taking in organizational decision making." <u>Academy of Management Journal</u>: 562-585.

Skoldberg, K. (2005). Postmodernism as organizational ricorso: The 'final' trope of irony. <u>Irony - its use and potential in organization theory</u>. U. Johansson and J. Woodilla. Malmö : Liber

Sloane, T. O. (2004). Rhetorical Selfhood in Erasmus and Milton. <u>A companion to rhetoric and rhetorical criticism</u>. W. Jost and W. Olmsted. Malden, MA, Blackwell Pub.**:** xvi, 522 p.

Sloane, T. O. (2006). "Constitutive rhetoric". Encyclopedia of Rhetoric. T. O. Sloane. Oxford University Press., The Midnight University.

Sloterdijk, P. (1988). Critique of cynical reason. London, Verso.

Smith, K. G., C. M. Grimm, et al. (1991). "Organizational information processing, competitive responses, and performance in the US domestic airline industry." Academy of Management Journal 34(1): 60-85.

Smith, T. (2006). Ayn Rand's normative ethics : the virtuous egoist. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Snell, R. S. (2002). "The Learning Organization, Sensegiving and Psychological Contracts: A Hong Kong Case." Organization Studies (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG.) 23(4): 549-569.

Spengler, O. and C. F. Atkinson (1926). The decline of the West. New York, A. A. Knopf.

Srivastva, S. and F. J. Barrett (1988). "The transforming nature of metaphors in group development: A study in group theory." Human Relations 41(1): 31-63.

Stata, R. and P. Almond (1989). "Organizational learning: The key to management innovation." The training and development sourcebook 2.

Steele, B. J. (2010). "Irony, emotions and critical distance." Millennium-Journal of International Studies 39(1): 89-107.

Stern, J. P. (1968). "War and the Comic Muse: The Good Soldier Schweik and Catch-22." Comparative Literature 20(3): 193-216.

Stewart, J. (2001). The Daily Show. New York.

Stewart, J. (2003). Kierkegaard's relations to Hegel reconsidered. Cambridge, UK ; New York, Cambridge University Press.

Stewart, J. (2008). Kierkegaard and his German contemporaries. Aldershot, England ; Burlington, VT, Ashgate.

Stewart, J. A. (1892). Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Stolnitz, J. (1961). "On the significance of Lord Shaftesbury in modern aesthetic theory." The Philosophical Quarterly 11(43): 97-113.

Stoppard, T. (1967). Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. London, Faber.

Strathman, C. A. (2006). Romantic poetry and the fragmentary imperative : Schlegel, Byron, Joyce, Blanchot. New York, State University of New York ; [Bristol : University Presses Marketing distributor].

Street, G. S. (1895). The autobiography of a boy : Passages selected by his friend. [S.l.], John Lane.

Suro, R., G. Escobar, et al. (2007). "Changing faiths: Latinos and the transformation of American religion." A Pew Hispanic Center Report.

Sutton, P. (2000). Porn and Bimbos to the Rescue. San Francisco Chronicle. San Francisco, Hearst Communications.

Sutton, R. I. (2002). Weird ideas that work : 11 1/2 ways to promote, manage and sustain innovation. London, Allen Lane.

Swift, J. (1939). A tale of a tub: with other early works, 1696-1707, B. Blackwell.

Swift, J. (1980). A modest proposal, Forgotten Books.

Swift, J., H. J. Davis, et al. (1959). Gulliver's travels: 1726, Blackwell.

Swift, J., A. C. L. Guthkelch, et al. (1958). A Tale of a Tub. To which is added The Battle of the Books and the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit ... Together with The History of Martin, Wotton's Observations ... Curll's Complete Key

&c. The whole edited, with an introduction and notes historical and explanatory, by A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith. Second edition. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Szerszynski, B. (2007). "The post-ecologist condition: irony as symptom and cure." Environmental politics **16**(2): 337-355.

Tainter, J. A. (1988). The collapse of complex societies. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Tarrant, D. (1938). "The Pseudo-Platonic Socrates." The Classical Quarterly **32**(3/4): 167-173.

Taylor, C. (1979). Hegel and modern society. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Tell, D. (2004). "Burke's encounter with ransom: Rhetoric and epistemology in "four master tropes"." Rhetoric Society Quarterly **34**(4): 33-54.

Teloh, H. (1981). The development of Plato's metaphysics, Cambridge Univ Press.

Tinker, T. (1986). "Metaphor or reification: are radical humanists really libertarian anarchists?" Journal of Management Studies **23**(4): 363-384.

Toker, C. W. (2002). "Debating "what out to be": The comic frame and public moral argument." Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports) **66**(1): 53-83.

Traugott, J. (1961). "A Voyage to Nowhere with Thomas More and Jonathan Swift:" Utopia" and" The Voyage to the Houyhnhnms"." The Sewanee Review **69**(4): 534-565.

Trethewey, A. (1999). "Isn't it Ironic: Using Irony to Explore the Contradictions of Organizational Life." Western Journal of Communication **63**(2): 140.

Tsoukas, H. (1991). "The missing link: A transformational view of metaphors in organizational science." Academy of Management Review: 566-585.

Tsoukas, H. (1993). "Analogical reasoning and knowledge generation in organization theory." Organization Studies **14**(3): 323-346.

Tushman, M. L. and D. A. Nadler (1978). "Information processing as an integrating concept in organizational design." Academy of Management Review: 613-624.

Ustick, W. L. (1932). "Changing ideals of aristocratic character and conduct in seventeenth-century England." Modern Philology: 147-166.

Van den Bossche, P., W. H. Gijselaers, et al. (2006). "Social and cognitive factors driving teamwork in collaborative learning environments team learning beliefs and behaviors." Small group research **37**(5): 490-521.

Vermeulen, T. and R. Van Den Akker (2010). "Notes on metamodernism." Journal of Aesthetics & Culture **2**.

Verna, A. and M. Danesi (1995). An overview of recent Anglo-American Vico scholarship for the contemporary behavioural, social, and cognitive sciences. Giambattista Vico and Anglo-American science : philosophy and writing. M. Danesi. Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter.

Vickers, B. (1988). In defence of rhetoric. Oxford, Clarendon.

Vico, G., T. G. Bergin, et al. (1944). The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico. Translated ... by Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin. [With an introduction and notes by M. H. Fisch, and with a portrait.]. Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press.

Vico, G., T. G. Bergin, et al. (1948). <u>The New Science of Giambattista Vico. Translated from the third edition, 1744, by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch</u>. Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press.

Vlastos, G. (1982). "The Socratic Elenchus." <u>The Journal of Philosophy</u> **79**(11): 711-714.

Vlastos, G. (1985). "Socrates' Disavowal of Knowledge." <u>The Philosophical Quarterly</u> **35**(138): 1-31.

Vlastos, G. (1987). "Socratic irony." <u>The Classical Quarterly</u> **37**(1): 79-96.

Vlastos, G. (1991). <u>Socrates : ironist and moral philosopher</u>. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Vlastos, G. and M. Burnyeat (1994). <u>Socratic studies</u>. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

von Schlegel, F. and E. F. K. Koerner (1977). <u>Über die Sprache und die Weisheit der Indier</u>, John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Wahl, A., C. Holgersson, et al. (2005). Irony as a feminist strategy for women managers. <u>Irony - its use and potential in organization theory</u>. U. Johansson and J. Woodilla. Malmö : Liber

Wallace, D. F. (1993). "E unibus pluram: Television and US fiction." <u>Review of Contemporary Fiction</u> **13**: 151-151.

Wallace, M. and E. Hoyle (2007). "An Ironic Perspective on Public Service Change." <u>Managing Change in the Public Services</u>

Walton, D. N. (2007). <u>Media argumentation : dialectic, persuasion, and rhetoric</u>. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Wampole, C. (2102). How to Live Without Irony. <u>The New York Times</u>. New York.

Warren, S. (2005). Humour as a Management Tool? The Irony of Structuring Fun in Organizations. <u>Irony and Organizations</u>. U. Johansson and J. Woodilla. Malmo, Liber/Copenhagen Business School Press.

Wasson, C. (2005). An anthropological eye on theories of organizational irony. <u>Irony - its use and potential in organization theory</u>. U. Johansson and J. Woodilla. Malmö : Liber 51-63.

Wastell, D., S. White, et al. (2010). "Children's services in the iron cage of performance management: street‐level bureaucracy and the spectre of Švejkism." <u>International Journal of Social Welfare</u> **19**(3): 310-320.

Weick, K. E. and L. D. Browning (1986). "Argument and narration in organizational communication." <u>Journal of Management</u> **12**(2): 243-259.

Welsford, E. (1961). <u>The fool: His social and literary history</u>, Doubleday.

Wess, R. (1996). <u>Kenneth Burke : rhetoric, subjectivity, postmodernism</u>. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Wess, R. (1996). <u>Kenneth Burke: Rhetoric, Subjectivity, Postmodernism</u>, Cambridge University Press.

White, H. V. (1973a). <u>Metahistory: the historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe</u>. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

White, H. V. (1973b). "Foucault decoded: Notes from underground." <u>History and Theory</u> **12**(1): 23-54.

White, H. V. (1978). <u>Tropics of discourse : essays in cultural criticism</u>. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

Whyte, W. H. (1957). <u>The organisation man</u>. London, Jonathan Cape.

Wilde, O. (1991). <u>Aristotle at Afternoon Tea</u>, London, 4th Estate.

Wiley, D. (1997). Interview - David Wallace Foster. <u>The Minnesota Daily</u>.

Willett, C. (2008). Irony in the Age of Empire: Comic Perspectives on Democracy and Freedom, Indiana University Press.

Williams, Z. (2003). The Final Irony. The Guardian.

Williamson, O. E. (1993). "Calculativeness, trust, and economic organization." JL & Econ. **36**: 453.

Willmott, H. (1993). "Strength is Ignorance, Slavery is Freedom: Managing Culture in Modern Organizations." Journal of Management Studies **30**: 515-552.

Willmott, H. (2003). "Renewing *Strength*: Corporate culture revisted." M@n@gement **6**(3): 73-87.

Wilson, A. M. (1909). The principle of the ego in philosophy with special reference to its influence upon Schlegel's doctrine of" ironie", GE Stechert & Co.

Wilson, N. (2013). "Interaction without walls: Analysing leadership discourse through dramaturgy and participation." Journal of Sociolinguistics **17**(2): 180-199.

Winokur, J. (2007). The Big Book of Irony, St. Martin's Press.

Wittstock, M. (2000). Are you a BOurgeois BOhemian? The Observer.

Wolf, R. B. (1993). "Shaftesbury's just measure of irony." Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900 **33**(3): 565-585.

Wolin, R. (2001). The rhetorical imagination of Kenneth Burke. Columbia, S.C., University of South Carolina Press.

Woolgar, S. (1983). Irony and the social study of science. Science Observed: Perspectives on the Social Study of Science. K. Knorr-Cetina and M. Mulkay. London, Sage.

Xenophon and M. D. Macleod (2008). Apology and Memorabilia I. Oxford England, Oxbow Books.

Yoffee, N. (1979). "The decline and rise of Mesopotamian civilization: An ethnoarchaeological perspective on the evolution of social complexity." American Antiquity: 5-35.

Yurchak, A. (2008). Post-Post-Communist Sincerity: Pioneers, Cosmonauts, and Other Soviet Heroes Born Today. What is Soviet now? : identities, legacies, memories. T. Lahusen and P. H. Solomon. Berlin, Lit ; London : Global [distributor].

Zimmerman, M. A. (2000). Empowerment theory. Handbook of community psychology, Springer**:** 43-63.

Žižek, S. (2008). The sublime object of ideology. London, Verso.

Zyglidopoulos, S. C., P. J. Fleming, et al. (2009). "Rationalization, overcompensation and the escalation of corruption in organizations." Journal of business ethics **84**(1): 65-73.

9 Notes

[1] A modified version of this paper was initially presented at the 2011 APROS conference winning a Best Paper in stream award.

[2] Source: http://www.wolfgnards.com/index.php/2010/08/27/the-irony-of-the-ironic-hipsters-don-t-understand-irony

[3] Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nT1TVSTkAXg

[4] Source: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/irony

[5] It is worth noting that in their analyses of performative irony, Booth (1974: 2) and Hutcheon (1994: 3) clearly state that they are not discussing cosmic irony.

[6] Although Plato does not regard Socrates as practicing *eironeia*, Xenophon most certainly does. Despite Xenophon's Socrates generally being dour, serious and earnest, he does, at times, appear ironically playful. For example, when he visits Theodote (*Memorabilia*, Book II, Chapter XI), he uses ironic misdirection in his description of his philosopher companions as his 'own girlfriends (*philai*) who won't leave [him] day or night, learning from me filtres and enchantments' (ibid: 3.11.16). Theodote is able to perfectly deconstruct the message. This is not the insulting *eironeia* of pre-Socratic Greece, but something far more akin to modern interpretations. Socrates is not deceiving her and expects her to understand and enjoy the hidden meaning.

[7] Unfortunately, Aristotle's full treatise on the *eiron* has been lost to posterity, so determining his exact definition is impossible. It is, however, noticeable that this more sympathetic treatment did not immediately find converts. Aristotle's contemporary, Theophrastus, portrays the *eiron* as loving mystification, being of "a polite indifference, an unwillingness to be drawn into what, after all, does not concern him" and a lazy man (Pavlovskis 1968: 26). Aristotle's eiron also seems to have had little influence on Ariston, who regards the eiron as disagreeable, offensive, putting on a false front, without an attractive quality and having a propensity for evil (Pavlovskis 1968: 26). The Stoics completely rejected irony, stating that "for no one manly [*eleutheros*] and grave [*spoudaios*] engages in irony" (von Arnim quoted in Pavlovskis 1968: 26).

[8] As with Greek theatre, historic tragedies were succeeded by fantastical comedies populated by caricatures. The plays increasingly became about "men and women who live in London, care for sex and money, and make fools of one another if not of themselves" (McMillin 1997: ix). Witty anti-heroes (wits, rakes and gallants) used trickery and masquerade to cuckold and rob vainglorious fops and fools. Of the new fashion, the English poet Sir Phillip Sidney writes that the business of plays is

> to expose the Singularities of Pride and Fancy, to make Folly and Falsehood contemptible, and to bring every Thing that is Ill Under Infamy, and Neglect (quoted in Harwood 1982: 2)

The most admired quality of the hero is not virtue, but his witty ability to obtain his goals. Knights (1966: 11) observes that the fools are distinguishable from the heroes only "by the discrepancy between their ambitions and achievement, not because their ambitions are puerile" and Kaul (1970: 94) maintains that "however much the manner might differ

superficially, the purposes and the pursuits [of hero and fool] are identical." Of the witty protagonist, Birdsall (1970: 20) writes

> The Restoration comic hero does not turn the world of inherited rules upside down merely for the smutty or destructive fun of it. If he is self-consciously wicked, it is because the prevailing system has proved repressive of his *élan* vital and hence prompts him to demand more flexible and expressive forms. For him the only true morality is living well and fully.

[9] The notion of a carnival trickster is also well-established, with Caillois describing carnivalesque play figures as being synonymous with tricksters or fools, able to challenge authority and power inside the boundaries of the carnival that "do not entail any consequences for ordinary life" (Caillois 2001: 131). Further, Welsford illustrates the "lord of misrule" and his role in French carnivals (Welsford 1961: 208-9), while Jung (Jung and Hull 1972: 135) and Hyde (1997: 185) also reference carnivals in discussing the trickster.

The trickster is a universal figure, present in African, North American and European folklore. Indeed, Jung presents the trickster as a cultural archetype that "haunts the mythology of all ages, sometimes in quite unmistakable form, sometimes in strangely modulated guise (Jung and Hull 1972: 140), whereas Gifford presents it as a catchall concept for all forms of medieval foolery (Gifford 1974). Griswold also regards the trickster as being a 'universal figure in folklore" (Griswold 1983: 669)669. The trickster's relationship with the sham dissimulation or artful trickery of the *eiron* is explicit in Griswold's description. She describes him as a

> weak character who uses his cunning to triumph over the strong. Tricksters are bundles of contradictions: foolish yet clever, irresponsible yet cultured heroes responsible for human existence; greedy, erotic, duplicitous; often unsuccessful yet wholly never defeated; and immensely entertaining (Ibid)

The fool is considerably more Western-centric than the more universal trickster, being commonly represented through the "court fool" or jester of the English and French Renaissance. For Welsford, the "court fool" is a mass of contradictions, simultaneously the object and maker of jokes, the least important figure in court yet the only one who can mock the king. He is a lucky scapegoat who takes on the King's bad luck in exchange for his own good luck, an "inspired madman" skilled at poetry and/or clairvoyance, "nimble of wit" yet physically gross (Welsford 1961: 76 & 52). His relationship with the eiron is through his naiveté being a "convenient cloak for unscrupulous trickery" (Ibid: 32). Welsford describes fools as being marginal and unimportant, for it was only from the margins that they could mock with safety, and only through being unimportant able to say important things. Although the modern fool no longer contains these contradictions, being unserious and unwise, examples of modern fools illustrating morality through foolishness abound. Chaplin's tramp, Barth's Goat-Boy and Twain's Huckleberry Finn are all foolish fools who, while not being self-aware, perform actions that are replete with wisdom for the ironically informed audience.

[10] Source: http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=LatinAugust2012&getid=1&query=Quint.%209.3.47

[12] The idea that playing a comic fool can facilitate survival has perhaps been best exemplified in modern literature by Joseph Heller's Catch-22 character, Orr, who made himself look physically foolish by stuffing apples into his cheeks, employed Socratic questioning to turn what seemed to be simple facts into paradoxical conundrums, making it look as if he is incapable of understanding the simplest of things, and portrayed himself as technically incompetent, a poor pilot who continually crashes his plane. It transpires that Orr's idiocy is feigned and his frequent crashes practice crashes, so when he had a chance of flying near neutral territory, he could crash safely and escape the war. His physical and verbal performances of foolishness supported the popular conception that he was an idiot and a terrible pilot, whereas, in fact, he was following a sophisticated escape plan all along.

[13] Black's dismissal of the substitution and comparison views of metaphor in preference for an analytical and cognitive, non-literary perspective, influenced a new breed of scholars who almost completely ignored the rhetorical and literary tradition. For example, although, in *Metaphor and Thought* (1993), which overviews the most influential essays and ideas of the non-literary perspective, only one author (Gibbs Jr 1993) references any key rhetoricians. Black (1962) and Ortony (1975) never once refer to any rhetorical scholars in the papers regarded as seminal influences on metaphor research in Organisational Studies by Oswick, Fleming et al (2011). Consequently, metaphor research in Organisational Studies has rarely taken notice of rhetorical scholars either. For example, Cornelissen (2004; 2005) does not reference any rhetoricians in his analyses of the comparison and interactive views of metaphor, despite one of his subject metaphors (organisation as theatre) having "entered organisation studies through the dramatistic writing of [the literary critic] Kenneth Burke" (Clark and Mangham 2004: 37). Cornelissen and Oswick (2008) do not reference any rhetorical scholars or authors in their overview of metaphor in organisation studies. Nor does Oswick, Fleming et al's (2011) discussion of borrowed theories of metaphor in organisation studies. Christiensen and Cornelissen's (2011) paper on metaphors and metonymies in Organisational Studies in the *Management Communication Quarterly Special Issue on External Organisational Rhetoric* does not mention one traditional rhetorician.

[15] From my perspective, Burke discusses the dynamic interrelationship of the master tropes in formal terms in *Four Master Tropes*. In the first half of *Grammar*, he presents a sociological methodology (the Pentad) through which a researcher can perceive the influence of the master tropes in human action and motivation, being essentially a method of revealing tropes for sociological scholars (attention must be drawn again to the fact that Burke was writing before the linguistic turn and attacking behaviourism in social sciences). In the second half of *Grammar*, Burke empirically examines how schools of philosophy have tropologically shifted over history and how humans act in accordance to whatever tropological form is dominant. In a *Rhetoric of Motives* (1969), Burke overviews the tricks and techniques of rhetoric that accompany tropological shifts.

[16] The central motivation of Burke's work was his desire to make dramatism the preferred method of explanation for human behavior (especially discussed in Burke 1941; Burke 1962; Burke 1968). The argument he advances from the 1930s to the 1960s anticipates the linguistic and cultural turns of the social sciences (Booth 1972; Macksey 1972; Fish 1989; Wess 1996). Confronting the excessive belief in the natural sciences to explain human behaviour, arguments for an increased focus on and the recognition of the importance of language, culture, drama, art and poetry saturate Burke's work. In the post-modern milieu, the importance of language and culture has generally been re-established in the social sciences, despite ongoing contestations (Rorty 1967; Jameson 1998; Neal 2007). Although

Burke's work anticipates and contributes to that debate, its attacks on scientific behaviourism are somewhat dated.

[18] A specific focus on metonymy informs Barley's (1983) reflection on how metonymy generates meaning within the greater context of organisational semiotics, Musson and Tietze's (2004) examination of how metonymic chains can reflect, reify and simplify the symbolic order of the organisation, and Cornelissen's (Cornelissen 2008) analysis of metonymy in a study of company names. Less explicitly, much of the work on the comparison and interaction view of metaphors can also be interpreted as collecting metonymies (e.g. in Srivastva and Barrett 1988; Sackmann 1989; Barrett and Cooperrider 1990; Tsoukas 1991; Alvesson 1993; Marshak 1993; Tsoukas 1993; Oswick and Grant 1996; Oswick, Keenoy et al. 2002; Oswick, Putnam et al. 2004) (e.g. Cornelissen 2004; Cornelissen 2005).

[19] Within the nonliterary, cognitive and analytical interpretation of figurative terms commonly employed in Organisational Studies (as overviewed in Ortony's *Metaphor and Thought* (Ortony 1993)), the difference between metonymy and synecdoche is insignificant. Indeed, following the analytical/cognitive tradition, most Organisation Studies research has treated metonymy and synecdoche merely as "special cases" of metaphor. In Organisation Studies, the difficulty of separating metonymy and synecdoche influences Hamilton's analysis of synecdoche in employment relations, and Riad and Vaara's (Riad and Vaara 2011) analysis of metonymy in international mergers, in which, following Jakobson (1956; 1962) and Lakoff (1980), they include synecdoche in the broader connotation of metonymy.

[20] Unfortunately, they do not manage to reduce this confusion and can in fact be accused of contributing to it. Their basic misunderstanding of these and other tropes becomes increasingly obvious in their set of examples.

[21] Lay knowledge of and insights into the brain and associated concepts such as cybernetics, holograms, mobots, information processing technologies, or theories of learning is likely to be restricted. It is unlikely that such technically demanding metaphors such as brain and hologram can ever become persuasive at an organisational level, being restricted to the rarefied atmosphere of academic debate. Morgan seems to agree, employing a "spider-plant" metaphor to transmit the insights of the brain metaphor in a consulting setting (Morgan 1993).

[22] Burke (1984) argues that each symbolic representation of reality can be either rejected or accepted. Rejection frames can be euphemistic, debunking and polemic. The euphemistic is a supernaturally/religiously charged frame that hides, covers up or misnames the flaws, fallibilities and ills of the current representation of society under the guise of a perfect afterlife. The debunking frame attacks the representation without having anything better or positive with which to replace it. The polemical frame is absolutist, allowing only one point of view, which is defended as the only possible correct one, with opposing views attacked for their flaws and foibles. Although perspectives informed by such frames are always in action, Burke has little interest in them, seeing them as foolish, destructive or nihilistic.

[23] In Burke's words, "Here are the steps In the Iron Law of History That weld Order to Sacrifice: Order leads to Guilt (for who can keep commandments!), Guilt needs Redemption, (for who would not be cleansed!) Redemption needs Redeemer, (which is to say, a Victim!) Order, Through Guilt, To Victimage (hence: Cult of the Kill)" (Burke 1970: 4-5).

[24] The ultimate goal of Burke's comic frame is to develop a "maximum consciousness", from which man can "'transcend himself" to recognize and correct "his own foibles" (Burke 1984: 171). For Burke, the comic corrective involves a "reaffirmation of the foibles and quandaries that all [humans] (in their role as "symbol-using animals") have in common" (Burke 1970: 5). As Lefstein (2012: 2) summarises, "these foibles and quandaries include (a) a desire for order, hierarchy and perfection; (b) the concomitant frustration of this desire, as a result of disorder, imperfection and transgression; (c) guilt and blame, which result from imperfection; and (d) the process of assuming guilt and/or allocating blame, through mortification and/or scapegoating". The comic frame attends to this because, as noted by Duncan (1962), the comic clown is "a caricature or a complete negation of our virtues", able to purge injustices as he takes them on, who, "following ridicule and castigation" can "reunite with the community to atone for their sins through dialogue" (Toker 2002: 63) 63. Carlson argues that the clown embodies the errors of the social order by taking them to hilarious extremes, before distancing himself so the ills may be purged from the system. Social recognition that "everyone contains the clown within" (Carlson 1988: 312), allows him to return to the system as "the heart opens to the great clown, and respect passes into love. A peculiar love perhaps, for it is tinged with laughter" (Duncan 1962: 412).

[25] Such perspectivism has been explored in Akira Kurosawa's exploration of Ryunosuke Akutagawa's *Rashomon* (Akutagawa 2007), a cinematic and literary investigation of how the same incident could be interpreted completely differently by different characters. Likewise, Tom Stoppard reinterprets the action in Shakespeare's Hamlet through the eyes of two minor characters in his play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (Stoppard 1967).

[26] In *Attitudes to History*, Burke suggests that "attitude" and "strategy" are synonymous. As Wolin (2001: 100) notes, by attitude, Burke means "a general disposition (involving thought and action) to respond (by thought and action) in a particular way. For Burke, dramatic stories provide "equipment for living" or "strategies that we use for engaging others' rhetoric and/or our own experiences" (Mayan-Hays and Aden 2003: 35). In *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, he suggests "art forms like 'tragedy' or 'comedy' or 'satire' would be treated as equipments for living, that size up situations in various ways and in keeping with correspondingly various attitudes" (Burke 1973: 304).

[28] Dramatic heroes can either be superior in kind to other men and his natural environment (gods), superior in degree to both (magical human), superior to other men but not his environment (leader), superior to neither (one of us), or inferior.

[29] Frye describes a mode as "a conventional power of action assumed about the chief characters in fictional literature, or the corresponding attitude assumed by the poet toward his audience in thematic literature" (Frye 1957: 366). The other modes are myth, romance, high mimesis and low mimesis.

[30] A related theme is the tension between the demands of traditional Zionism and the emergence of the modern, secular Israeli identity (Kunda 2006: 240).

[31] Frye declared that Spengler's *The Decline of the West* had "become inseparable from our present modes of thinking" (Frye 1936: 21) later referring to "Spengler's irrefutable proof of the existence of organic culture growths" (Frye 1940: 144).

[32] The ironic mode also explicitly rejects that the author should be his own subject, the fictional hero of the romance and an extraordinary person of sound psychological health and

fascinating subjective insights who is capable of great individual creativity. Indeed, the ironic mode operates as a corrective epiphany to the above, turning attention to the hubris and pride of such an individual and illustrating how they will lead to his downfall. This epiphany manifests in the heroic creators of the previous mode being re-scripted as proud, foolish and vainglorious alazons.

[33] Indeed, the opening few pages of chapter 3 (50-52) provide a description of Tom's immediate experience of Tech, notably the only section of the book having such a structure.

[34] There is one example of a "Tom" getting heated up in a presentation and having an altercation with a colleague. However, unlike every other reference to Tom, the surname (O'Brien) is not referenced, so it is not certain whether Kunda is referring to the same character.

[35] Frye is not very precise when explaining exactly what a Learned Crank is. It seems to be an eccentric and educated zealot, especially one with an aptitude for clever turns of speech.

[37] Kunda's writing is nothing if not sophisticated, as supported in Martin's (2001) analysis of Kunda's ability to incorporate all the styles of "culture-writing" while also making a number of sociological in-jokes.

[38] Mike is an interesting character type, a sarcastic-eiron, who merges the quick-witted asides of the sarcastic-eiron with the heroic ability to maintain balance between burnout victimhood and zealous alazonry. He blurs the boundaries between an elegantly balanced organisational hero, a fun poking sarcastic-eiron, and the trickster-eiron as a hero in his own right. In this instance, I have highlighted his witty asides and dramatic on-stage, off-stage performance, but could equally argue that his performance is a clever strategy enabling him to maintain his somewhat unique position as "the salesman who can speak to engineers".

[39] Boal locates the essence of theatre in self-consciousness with the provision that "the actions of the spect-actor are played out in a communal setting, to be perceived and addressed by a group of spect-actors all engaged in similar self-conscious activity" (Auslander 1997: 99).

[41] Indeed, at the hands of acute observers of human actions, such as Jerry Seinfeld and Ricky Gervais, who take a meta-ironic stance on the ironic stance, post-modern irony is exposed as vapid, insipid and nihilistic.

[42] Unlike Kunda's subjects, who display a wide spectrum of interpretations and deconstructions of management and organisation, Collinson's subjects are, at least at first glance, content to follow a single and stable interpretation. However, a deeper reading illustrates the different interpretations that lie between the management and machismo poles. This reading reveals employees stuck in the gap between these poles being just as lost, lonely and confused as those described by the previous researchers.

[43] Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/3433375.stm

[44] I find it hard to disagree, and would indeed add a few other examples of superior American irony to the mix (e.g. *South Park*, the wonderful and horribly under-appreciated *Community*, the *Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, the *Colbert Report*, *Real Time with Bill Maher*). In contrast, outside of the work of Gervais, Pegg, Chris Morris and Armando Iannucci, I find it hard to get enthused about irony on British television.

[45] Pegg supports his claim with the following example:

> Take this exchange that took place between two friends of mine, one British (B), the other American (A):
> B: "I had to go to my granddad's funeral last week."
> A: "Sorry to hear that."
> B: "Don't be. It was the first time he ever paid for the drinks."
> A: "I see."

[46] Source: http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/24/business/nation-challenged-commentators-pronouncements-irony-draw-line-sand.html

[47] This contemporary divide on irony is given intellectual weight by Edward Said's Reith Lecture of 1993, later to form the backbone of *Representations*, in which he re-presented the nemesis of the modern intelligentsia as:

> *The insiders, experts, coteries, professionals who …mould public opinion, make it conformist, encourage a reliance on superior little bands of all-knowing men in power. Insiders promote special interests, but intellectuals should be the ones to question patriotic nationalism, corporate thinking, and a sense of class, racial or gender privilege (Representations xiii (Said 1994))*

The anti-ironists are the gang in power, a group of 'hard-headed pragmatists and realists who concocted preposterous fictions like the 'New World Order' or the 'clash of civilizations'. The ironists, in Said's terms 'public intellectuals', possess a certain style, having 'neither offices to protect them nor territory to consolidate and guard; self-irony is therefore more frequent than pomposity' (ibid: xviii).   The post 9/11 ironic/anti-ironic landscape is driven on one hand by powerful 'experts' insisting on immediate and pragmatic action whilst being opposed by pluralist, critical thinkers who questioned their motivations and reasoning.

[48] http://www.stuckism.com/manifest.html#remod

[49] According to Badham and McLoughlin (2005), the incorporation of workers through these cynical values has been seen as a "safety valve", in which the workers, feeling that they remain "free" in their cynicism, do not rebel against management demands (e.g. Rodriguez and Collinson 1995), or as "positive/negative liberty", in which employees endorse the positive nature of the company because it allows them to maintain such contradictory views (e.g. Wilmott 1991).

[50] From this perspective, cynical resistance can threaten management's attempts to obtain identification, often leading to disruptive acts of symbolic "overidentification", help the employee to retain a subjective sense of an independent self while working within managerial directives, or externalize disbelief through the approximation of anti-corporate slogans and accusations of stressful workplaces. This view adopts a more positive view of anti-authoritarian cynicism, irony and guile, perceiving it as an "embodied ethic" (Fleming and Sewell 1991: 869).

[51] Much of the serious research aimed at identifying the practices and style of decadent individuals and writers crystallized around the authors of late 19th Century fin-de-siècle movement, specifically in German aesthetic philosophy and British literature. As the scholar of the German Aesthetic tradition, Kai Hammermeister (2002), illustrates, German aesthetics

initiated as a science of sensual cognition and a theory of art (ibid: 7), that was intended to strengthen the rationalist system by "including neglected elements that should ultimately serve to further the cause of rational cognition", especially that of "beautiful thinking". Instead of producing dry logicians, early German aesthetic philosophers posited the "felix aestheticus, the successful aesthetician, who combines attention to and love for the sensory world with the faculty of rational cognition" in whom "'aesthetic enthusiasm' reunites artistic emotionality and cognitive achievements", separated since Plato's criticism of artistic inspiration (mania) interfering with rationality (Ibid: 9-12). In the UK, this German intellectualism manifested in the idea that classicism, as embodied in ancient Greece, could be reformulated into a radical ideal which could enable the criticism of one's own culture. The aesthetic universals of ancient Greece were seen as a permanent value juxtaposed against historically contingent and unstable social, political and moral codes.

Both German and British intellectuals looked towards Ancient Greece, and Greek aesthetics, looked to Ancient Greece as the idealised homeland and trans-historical guarantor of artistic culture and civilised values. In the latter half of the 19th Century, the focus of aestheticism shifted away from the beauty of Greek art towards a "Science of antiquity" (*Altertumswissenschaft*), which emphasized the unity of the various disciplines of the ancient world (Evangelista 2009). Aesthetic attention turned to questions of gender and sensuality, the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure, and "art for art's sake", in which the moral values of society had no say. Aesthetic writers tried to upset religious and sexual orthodoxies, encouraged readers to rethink the relationship between art and morality and the place of art in public life, radically reform cultural and social practices, and push for increased individuality, and personal and sexual freedom. These writers suffered a severe critical attack from conservative forces, which positioned an anti-aesthetic Philistine-esque mindset as being "sane in mind and healthy in body", the character of a " good citizen" and a form of "critical intelligence predicated on the very standard of narrowness against which the aesthetes had fought" (Ibid: 159). Evangelista further writes that conservatives claimed that they had always known that 'the idea at the root of the aesthetic craze was morbid, uncleanly, and unnatural and had nothing in common with the loveliness and the healthiness of fine art' (Ibid). Such hostile critics, who wanted to draw attention to their attacks on morality, ethics and tradition, used the term decadent to abuse and attack the European and British Aesthetic movements. However, later aesthetic writers, notably Charles Baudelaire and Oscar Wilde, proudly adopted the term to signify their rejection of banal progress (Hartman 1986; Di Mauro-Jackson 2008: 44).

[53] Kierkegaard distinguishes between forms of aestheticism, ranging from unrefined immediacy to refined immediacy. Unrefined immediacy satisfies cravings that do not require taste or cultivation (i.e. casual sex, drugs). Refined immediacy contemplates and cultivates enjoyments for maximum pleasure.

[54] One problem for Vico occurs in philosophers' arrogant desire to construct an error-free language and the belief that philosophical language can capture the truth. Vico's attack on philosophical arrogance is generally assumed to be a critique of the Neapolitan Cartesians' belief that their linguistic revolution is more capable of capturing the truth than the poetic language it is displacing (e.g. in Miller 1993; Luft 2003; Fabiani 2009).

[55] Although translations of Vico refer to reflective rather than reflexive language throughout, modern definitions of the terms would suggest reflexivity is a better match for this later stage of ironic consciousness. The interpretation I am employing is the one common to

anthropology posited by Babcock, which involves varieties of self-reference in which people and cultural practices call attention to themselves (Babcock 1980).

[56] A secondary, less problematic development is, as Markova notes, that Vichean irony is a necessary component of reflective thought, being a "meta-communicative ability, i.e. the ability to reflect on one's own and on others' communication" (Markova 2003: 63). Dane agrees, noting that Vichean irony is "the endpoint of culture and the reflective mode in which science and history must be written" (Dane 1991: 160).

[57] This element of Vico's theory is contributory to and supported by a tradition of thought looking at cultural collapse through class conflict, societal contradictions, elite mismanagement and/or misbehavior that accompanies rational complex societies (Tainter 1988: 42). For example, Marrizano attributes the rise of moral decadence to the decline of 1st Century Italy (Mazzarino 1966: 21, 32-33)**,** and Sallust ascribed Roman decadence to the loss of virtue (in Mazzarino 1966: 27), as did other Roman authors (ibid: 53, 55). Marinatos (1939) argues that the Minoan civilization lost prosperity and power as a result of its increasingly decadent tendencies. Yoffee (1979) discusses how Mesopotamian writers claimed that the impiousness of their kings resulted in the decline of their civilization. Machiavelli argued that the Romans loss of virtue resulted in the dissolution of the empire (Tainter 1988). For Machiavelli, 'virtue begets peace, peace begets idleness; idleness, mutiny; and mutiny, destruction.' But then: 'ruin begets laws; those laws, virtue; and virtue begets honor and good success' (quoted in Meisel 1962: 262). Paredo furthered Machiavelli's observations regarding the necessity of "confidence trickery" in a decadent society (Marshall 2007). Mystical factor theory (Tainter 1988: 74) also links decline to decadence by drawing attention to the decay of religious value through impiety and loss of virtue.

[58] As White notes, Vico's philosophical and philological merging is unique amongst enlightenment thinkers.

[59] Markova (2003) argues that Vico's is the first modern epoch in which philosophers investigated subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and that "the literature of his time was full of various characteristics of interpersonal relations, like deception, pretence, insincerity and differences between what was real and what only appeared to be real" (ibid: 64).

[60] Nietzsche hugely influenced Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, a theory of cultural cycles that spans human cultural development from Babylonian to Western cultures (Farrenkopf 2001). Spengler (1926) describes classical culture shifting from the early cultural awakenings of the Greeks into the soulless intellect of the Roman world-city civilization. Spengler aims his final barbs squarely at urbane sophisticates, suggesting that their individualistic rational and value-free mentality undermines previously vital cultural values.

> Its uncomprehending hostility to all the traditions representative of the culture (nobility, church, privileges, dynasties, convention in art and limits of knowledge in science), the keen and cold intelligence that confounds the wisdom of the peasant, the new- fashioned naturalism that in relation to all matters of sex and society goes back far to quite primitive instincts and conditions, the reappearance of the *panem et circenses* in the form of wage-disputes and sports stadia--all these things betoken the definite closing down of the Culture and the opening of a quite new phase of human existence--anti-provincial, late, futureless, but quite inevitable. (Spengler and Atkinson 1926: 33-34)

The sophisticated urbanes contemptuously reject the traditions and norms of the past, undermining the tenets that enabled civilization to flourish. Personal taste absorbs public style, and methods and techniques of art, literature and music go in and out of fashion, losing in the process any deepness of significance. Inhabitants of such a civilization become, "unspiritual, unphilosophical, devoid of art, clannish to the point of brutality, aiming relentlessly at tangible successes, they stand between the Hellenic Culture and nothingness" (Spengler and Atkinson 1926: 104).

Although Spengler did not read Vico and does not refer to an ironic consciousness, Northrop Frye's metaphor of the cycle derives chiefly from Spengler, and his ironic mode parallels Spengler's final stage. More recently, the political historian, Robert W. Merry summed up Spengler's concept of civilization as the petering out of the passion for creative expression, the deterioration of folk traditions and innocent enthusiasm, replaced by "the domain of a few rich and powerful "world-cities," which twist and distort the concepts of old and replace them with cynicism, cosmopolitanism, irony and a money culture" (Merry 2005: 26).

[61] One reason for this solution-free approach perhaps relates to Organisational Studies only fully capturing one dimension of the rich tradition of irony and decadence, meaning that the dominant "bad irony" frame has removed any ability to explore such issues. Another reason, of course, might be that for the balanced ironic stance to be successful, the balanced ironist must be, in Kierkegaard's terms, a "secret agent", which might be problematic to effectively research.

[62] Having described Švejk great man in the preface, Hašek introduces him in the novel proper as having been declared "chronically feebleminded" by the army.

[63] As Frye's (1957) analysis of the ironic mode would suggest, Švejk's unknowable character is juxtaposed against the almost grotesque colourfulness of the other characters in the novel, such as the pedantic secret policeman Bretschneider, the corrupt prison officer Slavik, the drunken chaplain Katz, the womanizing company commander Lukas, the idiotic Colonel von Zillergut, and ambitious careerist Sagner.

[64] Note that I am ignoring Xenophon's description of what happened at the Oracle. Kierkegaard explains why Xenophon is untrustworthy when it comes to discussing Socrates' irony, writing "As a preliminary, we must recall that Xenophon had an objective (this is already a deficiency or an irksome redundancy)—namely, to show what a scandalous injustice it was for the Athenians to condemn Socrates to death. ...for Xenophon defends Socrates in such a way that he renders him not only innocent but also altogether innocuous—so much so that we wonder greatly about what kind of daimon must have bewitched the Athenians to such a degree that they were able to see more in him than in any other good-natured, garrulous, droll character who does neither good nor evil, does not stand in anyone's way, and is so fervently well-intentioned toward the whole world if only it will listen to his slipshod nonsense" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: 15).

[65] Nehamas (1998: 78) argues that *arête* should be translated as the quality that makes something an outstanding member of the group to which it belongs

[66] Socrates goes so far as to apply this insight to his own pretensions to knowledge in *Gorgias* when, in one exchange, Socrates debates with himself. He constructs a thesis and suggests that in every other debate on this thesis, his opponent has not been able to refute it without making himself look ridiculous. Consequently, he claims that the thesis is "held

firm and fastened—if I may put it rather bluntly—with reasons of steel and adamant "(Gorgias 509a). He immediately follows this claim by saying that "my story is ever the same, that I cannot tell how the matter stands" (Gorgias 509a).

[67] Although, as Nehamas points out, Euthyphro is almost undoubtedly a fictional character.

[68] The problem he has to overcome is that those he confronts are proud of and assured in their own claims to knowledge. Socrates has two methods towards confronting this stance, the elenchus of the early-Platonic dialogues (overviewed in Vlastos 1982: 107-132), in which he refutes their claims, and the maieutic in the later-Platonic dialogues (overviewed in Klagge and Smith 1992), in which he leads them towards divine knowledge. He is not very successful, leaving many people upset and confused, while influencing the youth of Athens to employ similar ironic performances to make elder, traditional Athenians look foolish. Unfortunately for him, some young Athenians interpreted his perspective and performance as attacking democratic values and practices, rising up against democratic leaders, and others deemed Socrates, as the reason for these uprisings, a danger to democracy (see Popper 1966: 168-169 for a brief overview of this argument).

[69] In discussing the Platonic Socrates, I am following an established convention that the Socrates of the early dialogues was closer to the historical Socrates than that of the later dialogues, in which he becomes a mouthpiece for Plato's ideas (Tarrant 1938; Popper 1966; Irwin 1979; Teloh 1981; Klagge and Smith 1992; Brickhouse and Smith 1994). I do not, however, regard the Later-Platonic Socrates to being purely Plato's mouthpiece, but instead regard him as the result of Plato's struggle to understand the ironic Socrates (as in Nehamas 1998). In this sense, the Platonic interpretation of the Socratic personality is no different from the more modern interpretations, an attempt to work out what he means when he disavows knowledge and virtue, yet lead a more virtuous life than any of Plato's contemporaries. Whether you follow Popper's argument that Plato completely betrays Socrates in these later dialogues (Popper 1966), or that he slowly evolves his thought to reach such an interpretation (Friedländer and Meyerhoff 1969; Nehamas 1998), the Later-Platonic Socrates is a vital influence on modern debates on irony. He is not being ironic when he states he knows nothing, because of Plato's two epistemological arguments, outlined in Meno, Symposium and Theatetus.

In these dialogues, Plato gave a particular philosophical support for Socrates, whereby the Socratic 'method' was a means for debunking false knowledge without implying that there is 'no knowledge'. Indeed, Plato claims there is such a philosophical knowledge. There is no unanimity, however, on whether Socrates believed in such 'objective' knowledge. Despite this, Plato's defense of his debunking irony works for those who do assume such a knowledge.

[70] Hegel had little time for Schlegel. Hegel writes: These three points comprise the general meaning of the divine irony of genius, as this concentration of the ego into itself, for which all bonds are snapped and which can live only in the bliss of self-enjoyment. This irony was invented by Friedrich von Schlegel, and many others have babbled about it or are now babbling about it again (Hegel and Knox 1975: 66).

[71] Kierkegaard argues that Hegel confuses Platonic and Socratic irony, and, as a consequence, "both ironies become more a manner of conversation, sociable pleasantry, and not that pure negation, not the negative attitude" (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1989: 329).

[72] Cicero, was born into a tradition in which ethicists were "confronted by a variety of theories offering different answers to the questions of how best to live and how properly to conceive of the overall, ultimate goal in living (Cicero and Annas 2001: xviii)." His interest in philosophy was a "serious engagement with ethical theories [that] involves learning not just what the positions are, but the arguments for and against adopting them" (Ibid: xii). Ancient ethical theories, however, do not aim to produce all-purpose answers to practical questions, answers available to anyone who reads the book. Rather, the point is to get the learner to understand the theory in such a way that they internalize it and are thus able to reason in accordance with it. What answers this produces will, of course, depend on particular lives and their circumstances, something about which not much that is useful can be said on a general level. The theories Cicero presents take it that the most important thing in your life is to become a virtuous person and so to live and act in a morally worthy way; but you can only achieve this for yourself, by understanding the theory and using it to transform your life.

[73] Cicero had a problem in employing Socrates as an exemplar for his ethical inquiries. Philosophers had been banned from the city of Rome by the Senate and there was a general distaste for Greek philosophical speculation (Cicero and Miller 1913: x). Furthermore, because of his opposition to the Sophists, Socrates was commonly regarded as an anti-rhetorician.

[74] In introducing this argument, Cicero claims that Socrates was the "the most accomplished writer we have in the way I am speaking of" (Ibid: 265).

[75] He argues that the ideal form of oratory descended from Isocrates, who critiqued the Sophists at length, and was prophesized by Socrates to be the greatest of all orators through combining his eloquence with his natural gift of philosophy.

[76] I am employing Vlastos's translation here (1991: 28). Miller's (1913: 403) translation is: Irony too gives pleasure, when your words differ from your thoughts, not in the way of which I spoke earlier, when you assert exactly the contradictory … but when the whole tenor of your speech shows you to be solemnly jesting, what you think differing continuously from what you say … my opinion is that Socrates far surpassed all others for accomplished wit in this strain of irony or assumed simplicity. This is a choice variety of humour and blended with austerity and suited to public speaking as well as to the conversation of gentlemen.

[77] Cicero positions Socrates' irony and dissimulation as evidence for his humanity and moral philosophy, and employs them in his self-characterizations in the *Tusculan Disputations* (Cicero and King 1927). He maintains his exemplification of Socrates throughout his life when, in exile and in constant fear for his safety, he writes:

> But it is a fine thing to keep an unruffled temper, an unchanging mien, and the same cast of countenance in every condition of life; this, history tells us, was characteristic of Socrates (Cicero and Miller 1913: 91).

[78] Although it is generally accepted that discussions on irony were restricted entirely to Quintilian's tropological definition until the early eighteenth century (Dane 1991; Colebrook 2004), figurative irony is implicitly maintained in Roman and European satire.

[79] Horace's technique of employing dramatic irony to resolve a situation echoes through the work of the later Roman satirists, who consistently treat Socrates as an object of reverence.

Although the later Roman satirists, Perseus (Persius and Gildersleeve 1875) and Juvenal (Juvenalis and Jeyes 1885), both pictured Socrates as an exemplar of wisdom and self-abnegation, it was with the work of Lucian (Lucian and Casson 2008) that Socrates becomes a primary fictional character of satire. Although Lucian's Socrates is often portrayed disrespectfully, Lucian also uses the fate of Socrates to indict Athenian society, and in extension society in general, for putting Socrates to death, and in this way contributes to the lengthy historical tradition of using irony as satire.

[80] Leon Guilhamet (1985: 5) explains which Socratic methods the satirists borrowed:

> The instruments (sometimes techniques, sometimes ideas or themes) of Socratic irony which bear a relationship to later satiric themes and techniques are: the elenchus, the protreptic monologue, the maieutic method, the role of gadfly, the bantering style, and, finally, the Silenus image.

[81] This interpretation of Socrates was prominent in satirical works such as *The Praise of Folly* (Erasmus 1785 [1511]), *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Rabelais and Broadhurst 1951 [1532-53]), *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Burton 1621), and Cyrano's *Les Etats et Empires de la Lune* (Cyrano de, Collet et al. 1968 [1656]).

[82] Rabelais also makes analogies between the Socratic personality and the structure of satiric writing. For Rabelais, the title of a satiric work should be "commonly greeted, without further investigation, with smiles of derision", but, on reading one should "discover then that the drug within is far more valuable than the box promised; that is to say, that the subjects here treated are not so foolish as the title on the cover suggested" (Rabelais 1951: 37). Rabelais' influence on Swift emerges in Swift's choice of unusual pseudonyms (e.g. Lemuel Gulliver, Isaac Bickerstaff, M.B. Drapier) and, at-first-glance, unserious book titles (e.g. Tale of the Tub, Gulliver's Travels, A Modest Proposal).

[84] Whereas Addison and Steele defended traditional values with temperate Christian banter, Shaftesbury's Stoicism resulted in a more refined response (Wolf 1993).

[85] Roman satire was a post-Cicero development.

[86] Given the degree by which members of the Scribelius Club, notably Pope and Swift, attacked Shaftesbury, perhaps such a conception is not that surprising. Shaftesbury was determined to stand tall under the attacks on his philosophy and bear it with good humour and Stoic resilience.

[87] Even though Shaftesbury is no longer read, he was one of the most important philosophers of his day, exerting enormous influence throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on discussions of morality, aesthetics and religion (Gill 2011). As Den Uyl notes, "other than Locke's Second Treatise, Shaftesbury's Characteristics ... was the most reprinted book in English in the [eighteenth] century" (Den Uyl 2001: vii). If anything, his influence was even greater in continental Europe, especially Germany. Of Shaftesbury, Stolnitz (1961: 97) writes:

> He exercised a profound influence on the continental, particularly the German thinkers of his century - Herder, Lessing, Schiller, Kant, Goethe. And he has always been highly esteemed by the Germans. Herder ranked him with Spinoza and Leibniz; von Stein, in his history of modern aesthetics, pays more attention to Shaftesbury than to any other British thinker.

[88] In *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, Shaftesbury writes: They have hitherto scarce arriv'd to any-thing of Shapeliness or Person. They lisp as in their Cradles: and their stammering Tongues, which nothing besides their Youth and Rawness can excuse, have hitherto spoken in wretched Pun and Quibble. Our Dramatick SHAKESPEARE, our FLETCHER, JONSON, and our Epick MILTON preserve this Stile. And even a latter Race, scarce free of this Infirmity, and aiming at a false Sublime, with crouded Simile and mix'd Metaphor, (the Hobby- Horse, and Rattle of the MUSES), entertain our raw Fancy, and unpractis'd Ear; which has not as yet had leisure to form it-self and, become truly musical? (Shaftesbury 1999: 217).

[89] Shaftesbury was the most deeply troubled of Swift's targets and responded to the barbs immediately, denouncing the then unknown author of a *Tale of the Tub* as a "shameful priest, a deist, a heterodox freethinker, or an atheist." Swift's main attack on Shaftesbury in *Tale of the Tub* crucially covers Swift's wider condemnation of the battle between religion and philosophy and the tyranny of modernism.

[90] Shaftesbury's aesthetic irony was hugely influential towards modern European interpretations of irony. Shaftesbury's aesthetic interpretation of Socrates treats the self as a canvas, an elegantly mannered gentleman affecting an aesthetic disinterest of the world. This interpretation can be seen as a founding influence on British dandyism, perhaps reaching its zenith with Oscar Wilde, whose life project, according to Gregor, was to find "a world fit for the dandy to live in; fit, in the sense that such a world would help to make clear the meaning of the dandy" (Gregor 1966: 501). Wilde's description of Lord Goring in *The Ideal Husband* epitomizes the elegant, aesthetically disinterested but intellectually brilliant protagonist that was central to the British aesthetic movement.

> Enter Lord Goring. Thirty-four, but always says he is younger. A well-bred, expressionless face. He is clever, but would not like to be thought so. A flawless dandy, he would be annoyed if he were considered romantic. He plays with life, and is on perfectly good terms with the world. He is fond of being misunderstood. It gives him a post of vantage … One sees that he stand in immediate relation to modern life, makes it indeed, and so masters it (ibid: 510 & 512).

Shaftesbury's British aestheticism was also hugely influential in continental Europe, and a precursor to the German Romantics philosophical investigations of irony.

[91] In one of his most Swiftian moments, Gulliver reveals his detestation of pride, saying, "I am not in the least to be provoked at the sight of a lawyer, a pickpocket, a colonel, a fool, a lord, a gamester, a politician, a whore-master, a physician, an evidence, a suborner, an attorney, a traitor, or the like; this is all according to the due course of things: but when I behold a lump of deformity and diseases both in body and mind, smitten with pride it immediately breaks all the measures of my patience (Swift, Davis et al. 1959: 350).

[92] Traugott (1961) extends this observation by borrowing from Thomas More's description of how an ironic philosopher needs to shift his stance and performance according to the "drama being played":

> There is another philosophy that is more urbane, that takes its proper cue and fits itself to the drama being played, acting its part aptly and well. This is the philosophy you should use. … You ruin a play when you add irrelevant and jarring speeches,

even if they are better than the play. So go through with the drama in hand as best you can, and do not spoil it because another more pleasing comes into your mind (ibid: 539).

Traugott's (1961: 543) Swift is 'a great ironist who knew how to find out the truth by acting in the drama being played.'

[93] In his later years, Schlegel converted to Catholicism and became increasingly conservative in his political writings. The later Schlegel, Blanchot (1993: 352) writes, is

> a diplomat and journalist in the service of Metternich, surrounded by monks and pious men of society, [is] no longer anything but a fat philistine of unctuous speech, lazy, empty, his mind on food, and incapable of remembering the young man who had written: 'A single absolute law: the free spirit always triumphs over nature.

[94] Initially influenced by Hegel, Kierkegaard first regards Socrates' absolute indifference towards positively revolutionizing Athens by forcing its citizens to confront its imperfection as a defect.

> Influenced as I was by Hegel and whatever was modern, without the maturity to comprehend greatness, I could not resist pointing out somewhere in my dissertation that it was a defect on the part of Socrates to disregard the whole and only consider numerically the individual. What a Hegelian fool I was~ It is precisely this that powerfully demonstrates what a great ethicist Socrates was (in Stewart 2003: 17).

Read with the later Kierkegaard in mind, in which Socrates' unwillingness to systematize is evidence of his great ethical stance rather than a defect, Kierkegaard's interpretation of Socratic irony as individual subjectivity fully escapes the Hegelian grasp.   Kierkegaard contests Hegel's claim that Socratic irony helped make the abstract concrete, arguing that "Socrates' undertaking was not to make the abstract concrete, but to let the abstract become visible through the immediately concrete"(in Stewart 2008: 122).

[95] Aesthetic contemplation is a problem for Kierkegaard as it leads to blind obedience to the Idea and the loss of individual choice. Kierkegaard (Kierkegaard, Hong et al. 1987) overviews aesthetic contemplation in *Either/Or, in which he* sketches out the differences between a Hegelian aesthete, *Either (A)*, and his ethical opponent/friend, *Or (Judge Wilhelm)*. In a series of letters to each other communicating the respective value of their life choices, the aesthetes life is portrayed as being defined by immedia*cy* (the failure to reflect seriously upon the nature of one's way of living), seeing the outer existence as more important (the self is entirely subject to external factors), accepting passively that life is based entirely upon external factors, tending to avoid commitments as they are seen as boring, and leading to the eventual exhaustion of aesthetic pleasure, boredom and despair.

In contrast, the ethical existence is portrayed as being defined by *critical reflection* (the ability to make and take moral responsibility and accountability for his life choices), seeing the inner existence as more important (the self shapes one's own character, values, inclinations, and personal identity; thus, the self is partially subject to internal factors), being willing to take active control of one's life, treating commitments as cornerstones of a responsible ethical way of existence, and striving to become a better human being through taking an active role in shaping oneself and one's manner of life. The ethical life requires a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to a variety of ethical social institutions (i.e.

marriage, friendship, and vocation), employing self-denying actions to fulfil personal obligations.

[96] It is worth briefly commenting again on the Nietzschean Socrates. Like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche saw himself as a Socratic figure challenging hubristic German philosophy. Whereas Kierkegaard was merely trying to combat Hegelian influence on the Danish Lutheran church, Nietzsche's ambitions were truly Socratic in scale, wanting to combat and correct German philosophy, Christianity/Christendom and hubristic German nationalism, and replace it with a better alternative. Nietzsche's ambivalence to Socrates has been widely documented. His admiration for Socrates as an opponent of unreflective cultural norms is tempered by his distaste of German systematic philosophy and European Christianity, which, for him, are the eventuation of the Socratic intervention into Greek culture. He damns Socrates for overthrowing the vibrant, healthy Greek culture and religion, as exemplified by Dionysius, with theoretical, systematic philosophy, as exemplified by Apollo, and the sickness and sin obsessed Christian religion. He further damns Socrates for having to resort to irony and the dialectic to make a difference, arguing it is the technique of the powerless and unworthy of great men. However, he wants Socrates to live again through him. Nietzsche perceives of himself as a modern Socrates, not constrained by irony and dialectic, but a Zarathustran over-mensch striding powerfully down from his serene mountain top to confront the errors of the Christian-philosophical world and the Germans hubristic praise of their own cultural excellence. The result of the Socratic-Nietzschean-Zarathustran intervention would be the rebirth of tragedy, the return to the joyful laughter of Greek culture and the abandonment of Christianity. The Nietzschean Socrates is not ironic in an opposing way to the Hegelian Socrates being not ironic. The Hegelian Socrates is a serious philosopher employing irony as a performative tool to construct a systematic philosophy. The Nietzschean Socrates has an ironic perspective on everything German and everything Christian, seeing it as producing the opposite to its aims.