

# Dystopian Imagination, Organization Theory and Richard Rorty

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## Abstract

Cultivating a dystopian imagination cannot be made from within the paradigmatic science of organization theory, hereafter paradigm. The source of the doom cultivation has to originate from the outside and be allowed inside as a basic premise. Otherwise, the clash between the premises of the paradigm and nature cannot be overcome. In this article, I position myself as an anti-essentialist, arguing that the world needs to be redescribed time and again (Czarniawska, 2001). Importantly, there needs to be richness among the redescription attempts. To achieve richness in stories about the world, the pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty had hope in the ironists (Rorty, 1989). In this essay, I even put my hope in the ironists who are misfits, outcasts, and drunkards, and use the documentary “To Stay Alive” and the musician Miland “Mille” Petrozza as case in point.

## Keywords

Dystopian imagination, arts, antiessentialism, ironists.

## Introduction

The clash in this essay occurs between organization theory and nature, where the former participates in destroying the latter. This claim does not hold true for all parts of the collective of organization, nor the researchers committing themselves to it.<sup>2</sup> However, it carries weight with regard to what I call the paradigmatic science of organization theory, hereafter referred to as the paradigm (cf. Kuhn, 1962/1996).

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<sup>2</sup> The paradigmatic science of organization theory is identified as an interdisciplinary collective that explores and seeks to understand and explain different forms of organizations and ways of organizing, a loose assembly with rather distinct purposes – call it management and managerialism. The theory part in organization theory is approached broadly in this essay. The reason for this is that there is no specific meaning attached to theory in organization theory, since it differs widely within and between epistemological communities (Harding, 1986) and between individual researchers (Corvellec, 2013). The definition used here is broad: theory as a practice of doing – to understand, explain, or any other mode of investigation – and that this practice has effects on what it sets out to study – a performative view on science (Latour, 1987). The problem, then, is not merely the way in which a science describes what it sets out to study – the ostensive view on science – but that it changes the very thing it describes (Latour, 1987).

The challenge I present for the paradigm is to allow for dystopian imaginations that *should never be*, but which it states *can never be*, to be part of its basic premises. Only then can radical responses be crafted within and by the paradigm to overcome the clash with nature. If this occurs, then the call from organization theory to deal with dystopias is not a futile project (McManus, 2022).

Strategically speaking, I target the paradigm, and when viewed from the paradigm's horizon, my arguments are "far-out." Why should they listen? But what is the alternative? To talk to an already convinced audience – in this case, ironists who use arts and artists, and maybe even misfits, outcasts, and drunkards – seems rather pointless. I am motivated to turn to the paradigm because it has cracks. Cracks are hopeful and they should spur us ironists to keep talking to the paradigm.

The clash between the paradigm and nature is located between the premises of the paradigm and nature. Below, I develop a condensed set of premises for each of them.

## The Clash Between the Premises of the Paradigm and Nature

The paradigm is epistemologically bound to the Enlightenment – reason and progress and its essentialist belief that nature can be mirrored (Rorty, 1979/2009) – and to the part of the Enlightenment that sought to tame and dominate nature (Arendt, 1958/1998, Jonas, 1979/84, von Wright, 1993). Therefore, the paradigm's relation to nature is played out in terms of dominance, control, forecasting, linearity, logic, order, probability, and risk. The ontological core of the paradigm is anthropocentric, i.e., humans are centered as an end in themselves.

Consequently, nature is cast outside the moral universe (no end in itself) and is justified only to meet human ends. Even though the paradigm has different assumptions of ontology, it is limited to ontological plurality, providing endless different perspectives on nature but with nature as a passive, single object (Mol, 2002, Jensen & Yashar, 2023). The paradigm is ontologically bound to the promise and mental image of nature as a cornucopia.

Organization is derived from organon, which can have various meanings, such as a musical instrument or a biological organism – an organ of the body that arranges itself to be fit for life. In the paradigm, organon primarily takes on the meaning of "tool." The tool-making discipline, homo faber, stands in stark opposition to nature and natural life (Jonas, 1979/1984). More importantly, the core tools constructed by the paradigmatic tool organization theory embed themselves in larger societal programs. The prime examples and testament of the enormous success of the paradigm are its usefulness to capitalism and communism. Both engage with nature through exploitation; the green track record for both is lethal, seemingly founded on a death drive in Freud's terminology (Jensen, 2024).

I use the term "nature" as an umbrella term, comprising, first, the human construct of the earth system, including the sun and the moon, and second, as a proxy for scientifically observed general laws in the universe (e.g., gravity, the second law of thermodynamics). The premises of nature seem to be that it has no epistemology and is ontologically multiple (Urry, 2003). Events in nature are non-linear, and strange relations come into being and disappear (Jonas, 1979/1984). With the rise of human science and technology, humans manipulate on a grand, but not omnipotent, scale (Arendt, 1958/1998).

Due to nature' premises, it is in rapid disintegration because of human exploitation; cracked, distorted, tilted, and unsettled (Haraway, 2016). It is a very real probability that ecosystems will collapse, giving rise to uncontrollable domino effects (Jonas, 1979/1984, all IPCC reports, starting from 1990, alert us to this; Skoglund & Jensen, 2013).

A synthesis can now be made. Nature gives us no choice; we have to abandon epistemology and allow ontology to multiply. The Earth is an open system where the observed second law of thermodynamics permeates (at the end of the day, however, gravity wins). The energy transfer in the universe, as well as energy transfers on planet Earth, cannot be completely efficient. Max Planck's proposition states that humanity can never complete its utopian dream of using more and more energy in a way that produces "no effect except the raising of a weight and cooling of a heat reservoir" (quoted from English Wikipedia<sup>3</sup>). Open systems strive toward increased disorder, and on planet Earth, it is only photosynthesis that can slow down this irreversible process. Human projects based on reason and progress, organization theory included, put the second law of thermodynamics, thus disorder, to hyper-speed.

This is the fundamental clash between the paradigm and nature. There are then two choices:

- Continue the road to ruin in company with other nameable – and powerful – properties of humanity.
- Fundamentally change the paradigmatic tool organization theory and the tools it makes.

## Dystopia and the Paradigmatic Science of Organization Theory

Dystopias are popular these days and unsurprisingly the paradigm has turned to it, e.g., the 17th Organization Studies Summer Workshop on "Utopias and Dystopias: Organization Studies in a Brave New World?" (18-20 May 2023, Athens, Greece). What would happen if the paradigm would attempt to use dystopias?

You might think it will not, but paradigms strategically attempt to incorporate challengers to mend the cracks and prolong their existence (Kuhn, 1962/1996). At least those challengers that are not too far out (as I earlier assumed my attempt was). Take, for example, what happened to sustainable development, watered down to the extent that it has lost its significance. It is justified to state that sustainable development has turned into an "anything goes" phenomenon (Banerjee, 2003; Jensen, 2024).

The paradigm will make use of dystopia. After all, it is a fine line between transdisciplinarity and academic imperialism. The result will be that dystopian imaginaries are colonized and utterly drained. Why are they drained? To be able to answer this question, I must turn to dystopia and ask what it is. Dystopia "is not the opposite to utopia. The contrary of utopia (no place) is our reality (this place); dystopia is a displacement of our reality" (Norledge, 2021, p. 2)

Dystopias displace reality. They are paralogical, located "outside" the epistemology and ontology of the paradigm (Lyotard, 1979/1987; see also Czarniawska, 2001). Paralogy can mean

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<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second\\_law\\_of\\_thermodynamics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_law_of_thermodynamics), Planck's statement.

“false or specious reasoning” (Oxford English Dictionary<sup>4</sup>) or (from Webster’s Third New International Dictionary):

- *Paralogos* – unexpected and unreasonable.<sup>5</sup>
- *Pa-ral-o-gism* – a fallacious argument.<sup>6</sup>
- *Pa-ral-o-gize* – to reason falsely; to draw conclusions not warranted by the premises.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, dystopia is a stranger to the scientific method of the paradigm; dystopias cannot be falsified (e.g., Popper), nor verified (e.g., positivism, Marxism, structuralism), nor can it be interpreted (e.g., social constructivism, hermeneutics, postmodernism). The premises of the paradigm do not allow for the kind of imagination required by dystopia; there is no room for the possibility of a displaced reality. Consequently, when the paradigm takes on dystopia, it has to transform it to the point where it becomes non-dystopian.

Bound to the enlightenment – reason and progress – and the anthropocentric core gears the paradigm towards blissful utopian ideas and promises (Bacon, 1627/1979; Ambjörnsson, 2004), e.g., technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, and decision-making, management, and leadership. Even if disturbances are allowed for, it is allowed only within the premises that human affairs cause temporarily but always reversible negative effects (Jonas, 1979/1984; von Wright, 1993; Jensen, 2007).

Dystopian imagination is, of course, never about bliss. Cultivating the kind of dystopian – doom-like – imagination we are talking about here cannot be made from within the paradigm. The cultivation of doom has to originate from the outside and be allowed inside as the paradigm’s basic premise.

Here, the ironists, including even the misfits, outcasts, and drunkards, play an essential role. They provide useful dystopian imaginaries, allowing for the possibility that current events in nature are displaced from reality in ways that can only be imagined through acts of refraction, i.e., “presenting recognizable yet transformed imaginary worlds that can be in some way connected to a specific ‘real-world’ spatio-temporal present.” (Norledge, 2021, p. 3)

I hope that the paradigm can recognize the usefulness of an abundance of rich dystopian stories. If this eventually happens, there is nothing normal left. Precisely, the paradigm status of the essentialist hope and the plural view on nature is then a matter of history. Following the pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty, this does not imply a turn to solipsism, nor does it empty the paradigm of anything real and functional. It is far from that, but that is another story (one that Rorty defends well from a pragmatist standpoint, see especially 1979/2009; 1991a).

To support my argument that the paradigm has to allow for dystopian imaginations, I draw below on Richard Rorty.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.oed.com/dictionary/paralogy\\_n?tl=true](https://www.oed.com/dictionary/paralogy_n?tl=true)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paralogical>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paralogism>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paralogize>

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## Sliding on the Shoulders of Richard Rorty

One thread in the writings of Richard Rorty is straightforward: the world is out there, and humans, with their imagination, apparatuses, and language cannot mirror reality (Rorty, 1979/2009). Essentialist projects, whether scientific or not, based on e.g., truth, reality, or “essence,” “nature,” and “foundation” (Rorty, 1989, p. 189) are not useful in pragmatic vocabulary. Importantly, Rorty are critical of the essentialist “project of science,” which does not imply that particular observations of, say, nature or the universe are not practical and, in that sense, useful (more on the particular meaning of useful in Rorty’s pragmatism soon).

It seems useful to construct the earth as an earth system – including the sun and the moon – to increase our understanding of how human science and technology impact Earth. There are also many ways in which technologies function well when using the second law of thermodynamics, or gravity, for that matter. Anti-dualists like Rorty specifically target dualistic distinctions, particularly the Platonic ones (Rorty, 1999), and ask us to abandon having hope in essentialist science for radical change.

An anti-essentialist, pragmatist stance argues that the world needs to be redescribed time and again (Czarniawska, 2001). Importantly, there needs to be richness among the redescription attempts. To achieve this richness, redescrptions from outside the domain of essentialist epistemology and ontology are especially useful. Useful redescrptions, for Rorty, are primarily those that increase tolerance and solidarity in society (Jensen, 2013; Jensen & Sandström, 2013), including here less damaging ways in which humans interfere and interact with nature, and that strengthen democracy and democratic institutions (Rorty, 1999).

To achieve richness in stories about the world, Rorty had hope in the ironists. In his book *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989) this is personified by different thinkers that “ironically” redescrbe the world (e.g., Michel Foucault, which Rorty, of course, in his useful manner turns upside down and inside out; other thinkers meet the same fate, e.g., Derrida, Heidegger, etc.; see also 1991b).

The ironists are the type of people who are “never quite able to take themselves seriously because always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of themselves” (Rorty, 1989, p. 74). The ironist is the opposite of “common sense” (Rorty, 1989, p. 74), and therefore the ironist does “not take the point of discursive thought to be *knowing*, in any sense that can be explicated by notions like ‘reality,’ ‘real essence,’ ‘objective point of view,’ and ‘the correspondence of language of reality.’” (Rorty, 1989, p. 75)

Thus far, things have been quite straightforward (most likely because I am not a professional philosopher but an ironist at work), but it becomes fuzzier (pragmatists are fuzzyists too, Rorty, 1991a). I entered this text convinced that Rorty had written somewhere that he not only had hope in art and artists (e.g., novelists, poets, painters, musicians, sculptors, etc.) but more specifically addressed that he rather had hope in misfits, outcasts, even drunkards, etc., than in essentialist scientists. I have checked and I cannot find such an argument. It turned out to be too good to be true.

Perhaps I slide down the shoulders I am trying to stand on when pursuing this non-existing Rortyan argument here, having hope in ironists who are misfits, outcasts, and drunkards. But maybe not. After all, Rorty’s pragmatism is about obscuring essentialist boundaries and dualisms (Rorty 1979/2009), and why should he, or any pragmatists for that matter, rule out anyone?

If, for example, indigenous cosmology proves to be a useful story on how to live and respect a damaged earth (Denzin, Lincoln, & Tuhiwai Smith, 2008; Haraway, 2016), then I cannot see why Rorty would object. Rorty, of course, used ironists who are well-known artists or intellectuals, but I will here provide less evident examples of ironists. I believe that misfits, outcasts, and drunkards have experiences of being in the world that differ from those of privileged ironists.

Beforehand, I must apologize the reader for my usage of Rorty. I am mainly using his book *Irony, Contingency, and Solidarity* as fuel for thought about dystopian imagination, where, in fact, he mainly discusses utopian imagination (perhaps except for his usage of George Orwell). Rorty also writes a lot about irony and ironists that I do not pay attention to, nor do I give detailed attention to specific discussions on poets. After all, what I base my text on is Rorty's anti-essentialist position and his hope in ironists as such.

## Poet's Attack!

Iggy Pop and Michel Houellebecq cooperated in the documentary "To Stay Alive: A Method" (2016, directed by Erik Lieshout, Arno Hagers, and Reinier van Brummelen). Essentially, it is about pain and suffering. The documentary is a mix of Iggy's life and songs ("Open Up and Bleed," "I Want to Go to the Beach") and Michel's life and essay "To Stay Alive" (1991). Iggy and Michel appear in the documentary and no doubt they are ironists.

Regarding Iggy, it is quite safe to say that even though he is considered some kind of cultural icon (primarily for his torso and rampant behavior on stage and for being one of the last strung-out survivors), he is still an ironic outsider (who, time and again, tries to play by commercial rules only to fall back on his ironic disgust for normal life in general and business-like life in the arts in particular).

Michel Houellebecq is another, not so straightforward case, primarily because he has been referenced in organizational theory, where he is, e.g., believed to be a utopian, a hedonist, and a Buddhist (Cnossen, Dekker & Taskin, 2017). In popular debate, he has been labeled many other, much less flattering, things. I guess this can never be settled. To me, Houellebecq is an ironist leaning towards dystopia (see also Iggy's upcoming explanations about being a poet).

However, the other individual life stories present in the documentary are more interesting: ironists that are misfits, outcasts, and drunkards. In the documentary, all the participants talk, among other things, about troubled lives and how to become a poet (they also discuss other kinds of artists). I will focus on one of the characters.

Vincent is a 53-year-old painter who talks about two kinds of artists – the revolutionary and the decorator. Vincent does not believe in the revolutionary artists; they are mainly reinstalling the same. He instead says "I think I am a decorator. A decorator of made-up spaces." Vincent tells us that his art is about decorating something without any clues on what, where, why, when and for whom to decorate. He is looking for displacements of reality, decorating the unimaginable horrible. Iggy, who is the narrator in the documentary, tells us that this requires the artist to:

Belong to nothing, or else belong and then immediately betray. No theoretical engagement should hold you up for very long. Militancy makes one happy and yours is not to be happy. You're on the side on unhappiness, you are the dark advisory.

Suffering is the source from which to imagine, decorate the unimaginable horrible. Turning to poetry and to poets specifically, we are told by Iggy that:

All suffering is good. All suffering is useful. All suffering is a universe. [...] Do not pursue knowledge for its own sake. All that is not perceived directly from a motion is in poetry of no value. Emotions break the causal chain. [...] To learn how to become a poet is to forget how to live.

He continues:

You must attain the point of no return. [...] Every great passion opens up a prospect of eternity. [...] Likewise, every great passion leads ultimately to a zone of truth. To a different space. An extremely painful one, but from which one you could see far and clearly. [...] Not that you have the least cause for hope. On the contrary, know that you will be very alone. Most people come to terms with life or else they die. You are living suicides.

Why inflict such a burden on oneself, we may wonder. It is primarily about the decorating artist's right to exist as a human. However, we are also told that such an existence is powerful. Iggy tells us:

All societies have their point of least resistance, their wounds, put your finger on the wound and press down hard. Delve into the subjects that no one wants to hear about. The other side of the scenery. Insist upon sickness, agony, ugliness. Speak of death and oblivion, of jealousy, of indifference, of frustration, of the absence of love.

The requirements to imagine, refract, and displace, as told in the documentary, contain, but are not exclusively restricted to; belong to nothing, immediately betray, you are the dark advisory, forget how to live, you will be very alone, a living suicide. The "lives and crimes" of the elite ironist, as portrayed by Rorty, are radically different, but both kinds are powerful advisers: "not because they have special access to moral truth but because they have been around." (Rorty, 1989, p. 80)

As made plain by Iggy, ironists humiliate, and as Rorty (1989) notes: Who wishes to be re-described? What the ironists in the documentary "Staying Alive" then deliver is humiliating but useful stories; useful because the ironists here have a dystopian "sense of common danger" (Rorty, 1989, p. 91), "making sure that she [or he] notices suffering when it occurs." (Rorty, 1989, p. 93) At the end of the documentary, Iggy is walking with the other characters and with a curious look on his face he exclaims: "Poets – attack!"

After this attempt at providing a generic description of the ironist as a misfit, outcast, or even drunkard, I will next turn to an outcast and misfit (the drunkenness I do not know about) who, among other things, also specifically targets ecological doom. Throughout the band Kreator's career, the creative force has been Miland "Mille" Petrozza, born in 1967 in Germany. Kreator is primarily a speed metal band but experienced a period of playing slower, industrial metal. The band started in 1982, adopting the name Kreator in 1984.

As I have come to understand, Mille stepped up as the sole author of the lyrics from the fourth album. The lyrics on the first four Kreator albums ("Endless Pain," 1985, "Pleasure to Kill,"

1986, “Terrible Certainty,” 1987, “Extreme Aggression,” 1989) engage with dystopian themes – as angst, terror, and pollution – but it is not until the fifth album (“Coma of Souls,” 1990) that dystopian imaginaries become a main narrative. On the first album (“Endless Pain”) Mille was 18 (and the other band members about the same age), on the fifth, he was 23.

Mille’s imaginary of a dystopian world did not become more sophisticated from “Coma of Souls” and onward; rather, it became more concentrated. Ever since, Mille (and Kreator) have focused on dystopian imagination. The first song from “Coma of Souls” is “When the Sun Burns Red.”

Savage heat is searing  
Global warming has begun  
Mother Earth is reeling  
No protection from the sun  
Forest fires are raging  
while the rivers turn to ice  
Foolish man creating  
other Nature’s cruel demise

Hailstorms, tornadoes  
Cold spells, untimely frosts  
Heat waves and blizzards  
Global death’s the cost

Faces the end of time  
As we plunge headlong towards the day  
Can’t deny the signs  
When the sun burns red  
the earth will turn  
from blue to grey

Winter turns to summer  
Then the seasons disappear  
No one needs a prophet  
To explain what’s all too clear

Oceans overflowing  
Islands drowning everywhere  
Leaders wouldn’t admit it  
Now they’re crying in despair

Hailstorms, tornadoes  
Cold spells, untimely frosts  
Heat waves and blizzards  
Global death’s the cost

Face the end of time  
As we plunge headlong towards the day  
Can’t deny the signs  
When the sun burns red  
the earth will turn  
from blue to grey

Now rain shall wash away sad remains of  
man  
Cities once so proud will crumble into sand  
Buildings all collapse when all is done and  
said  
The guilty ones will die with the innocent...  
When the sun burns red

Mille is an ironist who cultivates a displaced, doom-like imagination of the world. This dystopian imagination of global warming – “global death is the cost” – came out in 1990, the same year as the first report was published by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The timing is interesting but global warming was, of course, not unknown at that point in time.

According to Stockholm University,<sup>8</sup> the Swedish Nobel prize winner Svante Arrhenius made estimates already in 1896 of how much the earth’s average temperature would increase if the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere were doubled. He explicitly related the combustion of fuels to the climate effect. A leap in time: In the eighties, Al Gore tried to persuade Congress in the USA that the greenhouse effect was real. He was ridiculed.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.su.se/>

The IPCC's first report on climate change (1990) seriously engaged with global warming, but it was riddled with technical, essentialist jargon (risk assessments, calculations, but not unknown unknowns, etc.) and a tone of optimism. Since then, the technical jargon has remained, but the tone has changed. The window of opportunity is closing, and the estimated degrees of warming have risen. Optimism is still there; climate change can be mitigated (Skoglund & Jensen, 2013). On the other hand, Mille talks about the extinction of life and that the extinction process will be painful, and ultimately both the guilty and the innocent will die.

Mille sings, "No one needs a prophet to explain what's too clear" in "When The Sun Burns Red." This seems true enough, i.e., the forecasting attempts made by essentialist prophets, which Rorty (1989; 1991a) provocatively calls metaphysicians. Milles unfiltered dystopian imagination is that of the decorator, and on this record and throughout his career, his art displaces reality in multiple ways: ecological disaster, gross inequalities, war-ridden geopolitics, totalitarianism, nuclear war, total disorder, and hordes of chaos, and much more. As an example, take the song "Civilization Collapse" from the album "Phantom Antichrist" (2012):

Let there be darkness	There will be darkness
Let there be blood tonight	There will be blood tonight
Let there be riots	Now let the riots begin
Come start the fires tonight	Convulsed by protest
Can't you see our people have got no choice but to fight them back?	At civilization collapse
Can't you see the change of consciousness demands a total attack?	Monumental terror
Total attack	Spreading like a pestilence
	From suburbs to the center
	Of colossal arrogance
Finally they're swarming in	Cascade of aggression
A long forgotten youth	Merely harvest seeds of hate
The cause of inequality	Storming the barricades
A paradise for few	Cities of inception
Superior, inferior	burn to ashes in one night
A vast insanity	Emperors crying at this grand historic sight
When justice is tyranny	Entering a death spiral tonight they see their fate
Anarchy is breaking out	doomed to reincarnate
Destruction marks their way	
Burning temples turning into dark crypts of decay	There will be darkness
The mighty are the fallen now	There will be blood tonight
The weak are on the hunt	So let the riots begin
Battle on many fronts	A social unrest
	At civilization collapse

The unimaginable horrible is not, has never been for Milles, a single issue, nor does it come in the plural; the dystopian imagination is multiple.

Is there hope in the lyrics of Kreator? Of course not, and besides, that is not the point of dystopian imaginaries. There is refraction, displacement, and decorative imagination that can

be useful in the pragmatist sense of the word (Rorty, 1989). However, useful stories are hopeful as such. More on this in the next section.

## Dystopian Hope for the Paradigmatic Science of Organization Theory

Ironic poets and other artists are attacking with dystopian imaginaries – meanwhile, the destruction of nature rages on. Where are the tipping points? What happens then? These are questions that science asks but knows so little about and to which there are no essentialist, useful answers. The paradigm needs a richer palette of stories; one that is especially useful, as argued in this article, is dystopian imaginations as provided by ironists, especially those imagined by the outcasts, misfits, and drunkards.

The bottom line is that if the paradigm wants to use dystopias, it has to let itself be attacked by opening up for the “ontological politics” (Mol, 1999, or the “politics of what,” Mol, 2002). It requires humbleness to accept that neither science in more general terms nor the paradigmatic science of organization theory specifically is omnipotent about what is at stake when nature seems to give in.

Awkwardly, as it should be when parody is playing a part in the events, there is hope (Czarniawska, 2001). Hope that the paradigm can become humbler and refrain from producing its own take on dystopia (draining it from all that is dystopic) and instead bring in and use the unfiltered dystopian imaginaries as a basic premise. It seems rather strange, right? To find hope in dystopia? What I mean to say is that dystopias can be useful, and useful stories are part of a pragmatic arsenal that replaces “closure with openness” (Rorty, 1999, p. 88) and metaphysical “certainty with [pragmatic] hope.” (Rorty, 1999, p. 32)

Allowing for unfiltered dystopian imagination provides a richer base for asking: “What ought to be done?” The question is inherently ethical, and questions about “the good is inevitably multiple” (Mol, 2002, p. 177; Rorty, 1999). I imagine that organization theorists situated outside the paradigm can assist the ironic poets in attacking the paradigmatic science of organization theory, but I believe it can only be done by allowing arts and dystopia to be a basic premise of the attempt (I think Gatto, 2020; 2023 and parts of Parker, Fournier & Reedy, 2007, are examples of such attacks).

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