

# On Mirrors!



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*Philosophy—Art—Organization*

By

Luc Peters and Anthony R. Yue

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By Luc Peters and Anthony R. Yue

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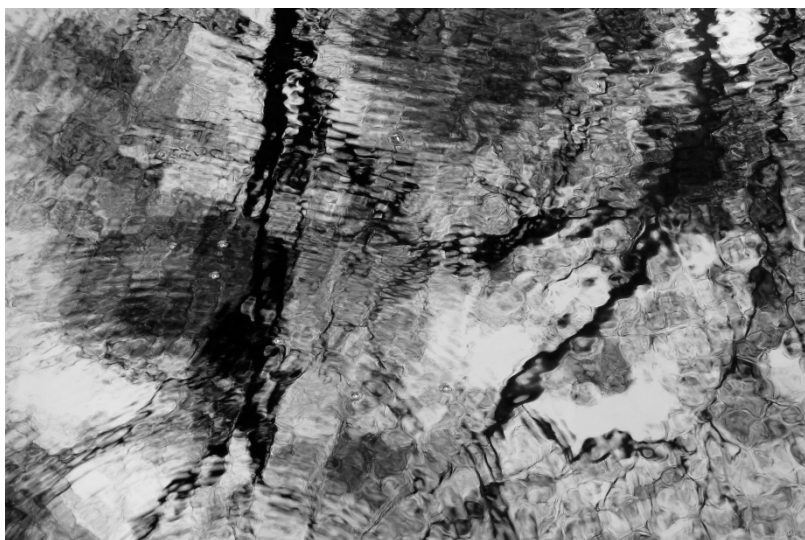
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## ON THE TEXT

This book started some five years ago when we were discussing our work in a hotel lobby in Istanbul. By that time we had written some material together and were slowly becoming aware of our mutual interest and concerns about mirrors. These early collaborations were, in hindsight, a sort of practicing for what was to come. In Istanbul we decided to start investigating mirrors further and to work on a philosophy of mirrors, with the help of the forms of art that beguiled us. We had already presented some of our work at various conferences around the world. Being newly fixed on the idea of a book, we started working on more material, and continued to present our work at exotic places around the world such as Montreal, Lisbon, Barcelona, Sydney, Melbourne, Gothenburg, Helsinki, Utrecht, Rotterdam, Lille, Copenhagen, Manchester, the afore mentioned Istanbul, and many more; cities where we not only presented our work, but also enjoyed life. We discussed our ideas with various academics in order to strengthen arguments, get new ideas and insights, but most of all, because we happen to like such engagements. During that time we crossed the Atlantic, and visited each other's places, homes, numerous times. Drinking beer, playing guitars, and discussing philosophy. In the end this all resulted in the book which you are now holding in your hands.

When writing this book on mirrors we decided that it had to be a “readable” book, and not a “pure” scientific report. In other words: people inside, as well as outside of academia should be able to read it. Therefore we tried to reduce the footnotes and references down to a bare minimum. We also decided to eliminate most of the academic jargon present in contemporary philosophical treatises. Words like modernity, ontology, agency and many more. The reason is that we, without diminishing the relevance of these words, wanted to keep the focus upon what is going on with mirrors, and not on discussions around the specific meaning of such words.

What we did on the other hand is shape some new words or use rather obscure ones, which support our arguments; words like clauding, geilness, leiben, Hütten-dasein, mash-up and some more. We will explain these words, and through their use in the text, the reader should get an idea of the specific meaning of these words. We found them necessary as they “enliven” the text in new and unexpected ways, and in our humble opinion they seem to hit the hammer on the proverbial nail. This also means that

these words are not static, but are always open for new uses and deviation of meaning.

A similar thing happened when we were thinking about translations of words and quotes from German or Dutch to English. Something always gets lost in translation and we tried to reduce the loss to a minimum. Working with the thoughts of the “word-wizard from the Black Forest” Martin Heidegger proved to be a particular challenge, but a pleasant one. Where necessary, we have put the original sentence in the text, or in a footnote.

Considering “our” language, we had long talks about how we could develop this. How can we translate our thoughts and ideas to “readable” sentences? How to capture the transatlantic spirit of our discussions into a book? We considered that there is a significant difference between spoken and written language, while both have their merits. But what if we could fuse them? Would this contribute to the readability and accessibility of the book? We thought it would. After toying around with some ideas, we decided that we should take a video camera, and one of us should sit in front of it, while the other pushed the record button. From behind the camera came a question on mirrors, and in front of the camera, the other started answering this question in their own words. This became a focused sort of riffing, philosophy as jazz. We then switched roles and repeated this several times. When watching the recorded footage we got a notion of how the language could be as powerful as possible, and especially how it could be our own. We then went back to our desks, typewriters, and laptops and started jotting down our thoughts and ideas. The process of writing was entangled with the process of coming to grips with how to use words. This more or less molded the text.

Lastly, we believe that words have their strength, yet sometimes images can speak “louder” than words. Well maybe there isn’t even such a big difference between images and words, and sometimes words can become images and images become words. Therefore we began to take photographs of mirrors and those things that mirror, in order to insert them in the text, between the various chapters, and interzones. We maintain that these images should not always directly relate to a specific chapter, but instead should open up the potency for thought, more poetry than prose. In this way our creation and arrangement of the materials is not a finished artifact, but rather a quietly persistent call to action for the reader; an invitation to play with the text as an arty animal. Anyway, enjoy reading!



Out of unbelievable  
violence, the light  
that the sun creates,  
arrives 8 1/2 minutes  
later...





## IN THE MIRROR

We are caught in the mirror. We are under its spell and enchanted by its reflections. We are beguiled by it. Mirrors direct us without our awareness, largely because we do not perceive them as mirrors. This is a problem because mirrors are everywhere. It is common knowledge that mirrors play a dominant role in our lives. This is nothing new. We might even say that mirrors, since the time they were invented and proliferated, have played a crucial part in our lives and in society. "Mirror, mirror on the wall..." causes us to recall the well-known fairytale story in which the mirror displays its enigmatic, tacit and unavoidable power. This power was there from the beginning and it is still going strong. In fact it is arguably stronger than ever before. But not just strong, indeed it is inescapable, all enveloping. Boldly put, we can consider this situation as a form of relentless domination. The mirror is directing our lives, bewitching and entrancing us. The mirror beguiles us.

Now it could be argued that there is nothing wrong with having or being given some direction. The problem arises when this direction goes on mainly unnoticed and is a more subtle form of coercion. We have become unaware of mirrors, because the mirror has developed a tendency to hide. In other words, we do not recognize mirrors as mirrors anymore. We look in these mirrors and see reflections, without us being aware that these are reflections. Over time mirrors have taken new shapes and new disguises, disguises that successfully escape our perception. Still, mirrors are everywhere in whatever shape they choose to present themselves and they are not limited to simple reflections: digital cameras, TV screens, smart phones, but also annual reports, textbooks, guru literature, or even our built surroundings. They are all around us, like water on a tile floor, the surface of a pond, polished chrome, or even the glass skins of office buildings. We can draw up an endless list. But mirrors are not only about the visual; they mess with all of our senses. They seduce and trigger our sensory exciters. They make us see, hear, smell, taste and feel. They capture and thrill us through their enigmatic mirroring of our hopes, fears, loves hates, behaviors and imaginings.

This not only implies that mirrors are not what they pretend to be, but perhaps worse, that mirrors are not to be trusted. A director who is not to be trusted, and that means trouble. Therefore these appearances or

disguises of the mirror should be investigated. We cannot neglect the increasing dominance, importance, and danger of mirrors. Mirrors are slowly and definitely taking over, but this should not give the impression that mirrors are bad or evil. No, mirrors can come in very handy and we can have a lot of fun with them too. We can even assert that a life without mirrors might be impossible. So paradoxically, there are always at least two sides to every mirror. The central problem that we are emphasizing is that we are caught in the mirror, without even being aware of it. It is not we using mirrors, but rather mirrors using us.

When we refer to mirrors, we do not mean just a mirror, or any mirror, or a certain example, but *the* mirror, as the thing that mirrors, the process and implications of mirroring. This mirroring can take various shapes. As mentioned, some of these shapes might be recognized as mirrors while others might be hidden from us. Such mirrors may pretend, or try to pretend that they are not mirrors, but instead are something else. This pretending is not necessarily a conscious thing. The mirror might be unaware of its intentions. Not all conspiracies are planned or lead. Yet still the mirror is there, reflecting, shining, and capturing us. We remember the classic example already alluded to: “mirror, mirror on the wall, who is ...”. This seems pretty straightforward, but the mirror of the past has evolved. It is not the same mirror anymore. And it is not a Darwinian evolution, but one with bumps, hiccups, detours, roundabouts and roller coaster rides. It is enigmatic and incomprehensible. It is important to know what the mirror has become, which shapes it is taking, and maybe even more urgent, what the mirror is up to, what are its plans and where is it leading us? But our beguilement with mirrors and reflections makes this neigh impossible.

We have already stated that we are caught in the mirror, and that this is not necessarily a preferable situation. Moreover, unknown situations are not preferable either. In the case of the mirror however there is serious danger involved. We only perceive its reflections and these are superficial. In other words, we take the reflections of the mirror for real, and are unaware of what else a mirror could inform us about. We are under a spell, and have not yet found a way to break loose. Therefore it is important for us to investigate the mirror and all its appearances, and to figure out what its plans are. It is not just about the fact that there is a mirror we can look into and see a reflection, but also about what these reflections (visible or hidden) can do for us, with us, or to us. We are concerned with the power of the mirror and how mirroring can capture us, without us even being

aware of it. The mirror has caught us, and this means trouble. Investigation is required.

We are further compelled to point out that the mirror is real; it is not just a metaphor. It is the real thing. It does not portray an artificial world, or some other world through which we can mirror our so-called “real world”. It displays the real world. It is not an “as if”, but an “is”. It’s real and it’s consuming us, it’s twisting our mind, and soul, and even worse: it eats us up, chewing on our flesh. We have to be very clear on this. Crystal-clear. Mirrors do not reveal a safe world that we can look at (or into) from a safe distance, and then step away whenever we feel like it. Mirrors do not function as an example, which offers us a beautiful version of our world. These reflections are not a representation of a tempting beauty that we want to copy. The Mirror is not something else. No, the mirror is just the mirror. It can show beautiful things, horrible things, things we do not understand, or things we do not even recognize; things we do not even perceive as mirrors. No, the mirror is just the mirror. It is not something else. It is exactly how it presents itself, although we might not notice this. We might not be aware of the way the mirror interacts with us, because the mirror has a tendency to hide. We might not even be aware of the fact that we are caught in the mirror.

Whenever we become aware of the mirror, when the mirror presents itself or draws our attention, we perceive it as it is. The mirror leaves us no time for any calculation. This however does not imply, and we have to be very specific in this, that mirrors are always similar. We have already argued that we sometimes do not recognize the mirror as mirror. It can escape or hide from our perception. The mirror does not always have an identity or behaviors we can firmly grasp ahold of. Furthermore, the mirror is not necessarily a stable thing and may change itself and its meaning. It reveals itself in a never-ending variety of shapes and forms, always moving and changing its appearance, in a constant state of metamorphosis. This also implies that we might be unaware of certain shapes of the mirror and that we are susceptible to the trickery of the mirror. Dwelling on Spinoza, we can argue that we never know what a mirror is capable of. We only know that we cannot look away. We are seduced by its enigma. It is ungraspable. It tries to stay out of our reach. Still, there is always a desire, always a longing for the mirror. Mirrors are tempting. “Mirror, mirror on the wall...” We are drawn towards and into it. It doesn’t leave us unaffected. The mirror demands attention. We cannot look away. We cannot live without it and are sucked into it.

## **The Sucker Punch**

The question we are interested in, and which we want to propose here is: How can we investigate the mirror's appearance, reflections, and enigmatic power? When broaching these issues we are immediately reminded of Narcissus and his deadly encounter with the mirror. Narcissus looked in the mirroring surface of a pond and saw an image staring back at him. It was an image he had never seen before, and he was beguiled by its novelty. How could he recognize this face, which he had never seen before? How could he know it was his own reflection? Despite his ignorance, he was overcome with curiosity, and he wanted grasp the image; to grasp the reflection, without even knowing what a reflection was. Perhaps he thought the reflection was a real stranger. He wanted to grasp this enigmatic stranger, wanted to hug him, kiss him maybe, take his face in his hands, and maybe even make love to him. When he tried to take hold of the reflection, he tumbled into the water and drowned. Unfortunately the stranger couldn't help him. Narcissus wasn't aware of the power of the mirror, and of his own helplessness when considering mirrors, and therefore was literally (not metaphorically) drawn into it. He lost himself to the mirror. This fable made it quite clear that the mirror is real, that it has lethal capacities and stresses the danger of mirrors, so we best beware. Narcissus got in the mirror and drowned, so we must be prepared for the worst.

Playing with mirrors can be a dangerous exercise. You might lose your life. So our investigations of mirrors are not without risk, neither for us nor for anyone else who becomes involved with mirrors. We are also brought to consider Perseus tricking Medusa by catching her mirror reflection without Medusa being aware of it, and then using this reflection to eventually chop off Medusa's head. In this situation we again see the lethal possibilities of mirrors. Times have changed and it is mirroring itself that we now must be concerned about. Of course this is not all negative and dangerous, and we can reverse this point of view, for the mirror gives life. It can envelope us in a way that becomes meaningful or even fundamental. The mirror gives and takes in incomprehensible ways. This goes beyond a division of good or bad. But this also makes it clear that there is only one possibility and that is to get in the mirror. Looking from a distance is not an option for us. No, we need to be in there. As philosophers we want to be out there, in there, immersed and fully being a part of it. There is no safe distance when you want to investigate danger. Therefore we have to get in the mirror, and not just look at it from a distance.

The question remains: How we can grasp ourselves in the mirror? To put it more bluntly: How can we make sense of this mirror-image? How can we make sense of it without losing ourselves in the mirror, without being dissolved, without ending up like Narcissus, or Medusa? Without drowning or getting our heads chopped off? How can we know what is revealed? What is hidden? But also what is distorted and what is polished to the extreme? We see things, but what is it that we see and experience in a sensory way, knowing that the mirror is not only about the visual. Maybe there is some sort of magic involved? How can we make eye contact with the mirror? Although the mirror may try to hide, we want to see eye-to-eye. Our eyesight looking at our eyesight. Eye contact makes eye contact. Eye contact without us always being aware of it. This means that just like Medusa we might not realize that we are in the mirror. Then we only know that we've been in the mirror when our heads are chopped off. This is not a preferred situation for us as investigators. We have to be on guard.

But how to investigate? We are trying to perceive and are not only looking. This is a multisensory mode of interrogation, a blurring between the supposed lines of the different senses with synesthetic possibilities. When looking, we also wonder: How does what we perceive relate to the known images and experiences that we are already carrying with us? These are perceptions we have learned to trust and rely upon and they are time related, relying on the past which calls into question the preferred images. The mirror has some tricks up its sleeve. It may try to convince us to collaborate in moulding our future. These are movement related images, which seek their way into the future. The mirror is thus our informer on both past and future, an informer about the known, which is not always (to be) known, and the preferred, which might sometimes not be preferred. But the mirror is not a passive informer. It is a highly active informer. It is a volatile informer. It is a secretive informer. It informs us at breakneck speed. It can choke us. It can drown us. It can burn us. It can tear us apart. It goes up and down in time at a speed that is incomprehensible for us. It always starts from the middle, and moves in two directions in a way that it is not clear for us. We never know exactly which way it is moving. We thus have to try and keep up with the movements of the mirror.

Usually a mirror is delineated by its frame, which forms a cutout of some reality. This frame cuts a piece out of a visibility and thus shapes our perception. It supplies saturation and rarefaction. It creates the out of field and the depth of field, becoming a blurred zone of folding, unfolding and refolding. Although the mirror looks framed, it is never a static object, able to be unproblematically deployed. No, it tricks us, runs off and catches us in its slipstream, where we try to hold on to the wild ride of the

mirror. This implies that we see simultaneously without seeing, and that the mirror can be invisible. We do not have to recognize the mirror as mirror, so it could escape our perception. Our perception might be limited or we can be “perceptionally challenged”, to put it nicely. Perception can be limited but also unexpected, like the already mentioned case of Narcissus. It can catch us like it did Medusa. It is a matter of a constant revealing and hiding. When we try to look into the future we might see it bright and shiny, or small and dark, or maybe a chiaroscuro. Bewitched, beguiled, enchanted. Mirror, mirror on the wall ...

Briefly, considering us, we have to reveal that we (the two authors) have written this book as two parts of a whole. These two parts have constantly been mirroring thoughts and ideas that have fused as real mirror images. Each of us was more or less creating certain mirrors into which the other could peek and which could trigger new thoughts and ideas and thus create new mirrors; an ongoing process of constant mirroring in such a way that at a point, these mirrors became real and indistinguishable. Was it still real? Was it a mirror? Whose reality and whose mirror? As soon as these questions could not be answered anymore, we knew that our thoughts were able to create new, unexpected and unpredictable mirrors that had the potency to trigger the thoughts and ideas of others gazing into these mirrors. Our mirrors fused into this book. They fused into images and words. Stating this seems like there was some sort of magic involved, something difficult to grasp but still present. And that is exactly what it probably is, some sort of magic. We are however not magicians but just philosophers. Philosophers who refer to themselves as we, and whenever we write “we”, it’s us.

## Arty Animals

*That’s why I study organization. But I never find anything that looks like my work*

As philosophers, and not magicians, we can boldly state that philosophy, in the old days, used to be centrally concerned about the “polis”. In these contemporary times however, it is not just the polis (or city) that should be the most important subject of investigation. The conceptual polis has been taken over by organization. Organization is our main topic of investigation and we view the world through the lens of organization. We boldly state that organization creates our lives. Organization makes the boundary, which exemplified the city, superfluous. The boundary becomes obsolete.

This suggests that we have no other choice than to look at things from a perspective of organization. This perspective is not a neutral or even rational one. Moreover, it is one that is lived. It is an embodied perspective. It is corporeal. We have lived in organization and we are still living in it. Our lived experience shapes our perspective and allows us a subjective view on the world of organization. It is perhaps therefore that we are scholars of organization, as we are intrigued by organization. Organization with a capital O, the big O. Organization is a process and a physical manifestation as “the” organization. Organization is about connections, gut-level as well as reasoned, and these personal experiences function as connection.

Given our prior discussion, it comes as no surprise that the trouble with organization, meaning the real problem, is that organization itself is caught in the mirror. Organizations are taking the mirror for real and are being directed by mirrors; mirrors which again take very different, very distinctive shapes. Whether it is the annual report, business suits, the masks behind which people hide, or all the screens people are looking at on a daily basis, these mirrors direct organization and thus our lives. This drives us as both philosophers and scholars of organization to conduct our investigations regarding mirrors. So we return to the risky nature of eschewing the safety of regarding mirrors from a distance and instead choosing to run the risk of being consumed.

The world of organization is not a world that sits next to our so-called real world. No, it is our world. The world we live in is shaped by organization and organizations in all possible appearances. A world without organization can no longer be imagined anymore. Our world is organization and as we live in this world, we are living in organization. Living this in an embodied way. This sensory experience, this susceptibility to our five senses, is what shaped and still shapes our investigation of the mirror.

Although the mirror is a contemporary partner in our daily life, there has not been a focused investigation of the role it plays in organization. Why is this object, this process, which plays an important role in everyday life, an almost invisible player in organizational studies? Perhaps the mirror is so obvious that it is simply overlooked; one looks in the mirror without even fully realizing that it is there. Or it could be that the mirror is immediately and negatively linked to metaphor, and the naming of one thing as though it were another might make it unappealing. Nevertheless, the idea that mirrors play an important part in organizations is intriguing. Of particular interest is the possibility that mirrors are overlooked, meaning that the mirror is somehow hidden from our view,

unnoticed or perhaps not recognized as a mirror. Such a characteristic could also be related to our perception of what a mirror is. If a mirror is simply an object that we know and which we can recognize (perhaps through its shape, or frame, or shiny surface), then this seems understandable. On the other hand, a mirror could be something that has characteristics we can recognize, but the specific manifestation is either unknown or new. The possibility of new appearances doesn't acknowledge the mirror in our preconceptions, and consequently may open up new possibilities.

But it is not just that organization uses mirrors, or is caught in mirrors. We suggest that organizations appear to function in similar ways as mirrors, that is, organizations *are* mirrors. Put differently, this is not a simple case of metaphor, but rather a sort of metonymy. Our assertion is contingent upon a new conception of a mirror, and has broad reaching consequences. This is not the sort of conception that came forth out of Gareth Morgan's (1986) *Images of Organization*. It is clear that mirrors give images or can be referred as some sort of image, but our primary focus is an interest in the way images are constructed and how this construction functions like a mirror. In this way we follow the Deleuzian argument to "Kill Metaphor" (1989; 1986) and instead of examining the mirror from the safe distance, which metaphor allows, we instead crawl into the mirror and investigate what it is doing to, or through, organization. With this sort of intimacy, there is no safe distance from which to dispassionately consider mirrors and organization.

We do not like to watch from a distance or to observe while standing on the shore. We are diving in. We dive into the mirror. There is no distance. Organization *is* a mirror. Maybe not a mirror that we would "normally" always consider as a mirror, but the mirror as a philosophical concept, constantly changing its appearance and meaning. It changes at breakneck speed. The concept constantly reinvents itself and is in a perpetual state of metamorphosis. This challenges language. Words and images are getting new meanings in a tempo that is faster than our understanding of these words. We're in hot pursuit of language and try to keep up with the tempo through conceptualization.

The question remains: how we can grab this potency of the mirror? This hidden power, which can creep up to us or knock us off our feet. This power that is not always visible in the mirror, and in such cases, the mirror is putting us to sleep or seeing to it that we keep on sleeping. The mirror helps us with remaining in our state of somnambulism; awake and yet asleep. This state, although appealing and sometimes needed, is not what we are interested in when thinking about mirrors. No, we want to be kicked awake, brutally if necessary. In order to be kicked awake, to



leave our state of somnambulism, we need the arts. Art with a capital A, the big A. We need to be in the Nietzschean “Rausch”, the haze. This haze contains potency. It is not sedation. It doesn’t shoot us out to space, but rather brings us down to earth. We need the potency which art possesses. When this potency is not used, we do not refer to art anymore. Without potency, art becomes entertainment.

Now there is nothing wrong with entertainment if you are in need of rest, or sleep. If you want or need to be sedated. But that is not what we are interested in. For us this is about the critical potency of art, about being awake. Just like an animal we are restless and awake and not really interested in entertainment. Animals are probably not interested in entertainment, and we’re not even sure if they would be interested in art, by the way. This doesn’t hold us back from the fact that we have to be critical animals. Arty-animals. Animals who are into music, painting, architecture, cartoons, film or photography. These are some of the various shapes that art can take and which critical potential we are investigating.

This doesn’t mean that the potency of art and thus the potency of the mirror is predictable. No it is and remains a mystery. We never know in what way it’s gonna hit us; the sucker-punch. To put it differently and in a Spinozian way: We never know what a mirror is capable of, and so we have to be agile, nimble and a bit tricky ourselves. We just might need to investigate entertainment in order to learn in what way the critical potency is not being used. Sometimes we might have to play tricks on the mirror. Sometimes we may even have to abuse the mirror. Sometimes *we* use the sucker-punch. Whatever the case may be, we have to dive in. We’re diving in. Now.

## Investigation

Our investigation, as arty-animals, of the critical potency of the mirror, is divided into six separate chapters. These chapters are interrupted with bits and pieces of text, Interzones, and various images to challenge the investigation and the reading of this book. They can be seen as insertions that dissect the text. While we are writing it we are simultaneously cutting it up. It is not a straight story. This is a story that allows itself to be interrupted. Art is never straightforward. The mirror is never straightforward. We always have to think it through.

In the first chapter we investigate the mirror of painting and especially a device called the Claude Mirror. A device used to get a better view on reality by turning ones back on reality. This idea made us wonder and at

the same time realize that this is also what organizations do. Why is it that we are using the Claude Mirror and how does it work in organization?

Chapter two concerns the mirror of cartoons. We specifically investigate *Futurama*, and how it informs us about work and organization in the future. But the main thing is the appearance of the robot. We become befriended with Bender, a boozing, chain-cigar smoking, lying kleptomaniac; a robot that is more human than human could be. This informs us on working in the future and the way technology might or might not be helpful with this.

In the third chapter we step into the mirror of music. We use Tiesto as an example of entertainment and witness how his mashing up of music takes place in a stadium where screens play an enigmatic role. This will inform us about the critical potential the mirror has and its implications for the contemporary manager in organization.

Chapter four interrogates the mirror of architecture. We are interested in it's fundamentals and in order to figure these out, we use some thoughts of German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk. We confront these thoughts with those of the Benedictine monk and architect Dom van der Laan. Their ideas on the monkish cell are interfered with by some thoughts of Martin Heidegger and his being in his hut. This shapes some thoughts regarding the plastic office.

Chapter five goes into the mirror of photography. Japanese photographer Araki shows us images that might be considered extravagant or even perverse. We find out very quickly however that they are more normal than normal itself seems. These images are everyday life which is sometimes hidden from us, but which is still in the mirror. It is the collision of ugliness and beauty. It is about being tied-up. Being in bondage. It is about organization, which has an urge to expand, to become freer, while it is tied-up. We are informed about the pretty and desirable side of bondage.

The sixth chapter challenges the mirror of film. It informs us about the essentials of organization which we happen to overlook when thinking about excellence. For this we compare 1963 movie *High & Low* with 1982 book *In Search of Excellence*. We are informed that organization has no learning capability and that there is a perpetual juxtaposition of quantity and quality.

All these chapters are about being bound up with mirrors, which makes bondage a central theme. It is about being caught in this frame of the mirror, being addicted to it, being tied-up, caught-up, in the mirror. Being caught in a mirror, which blinds us and binds us with entertainment to hide its critical potential. But then, as we have stated: You never know what a mirror is capable of. It is this hidden critical potency that is sought after and revealed in the various chapters and which adds up to an idea of how to uncover or even use such critical potency. It is about an escape from bondage. It is about the question of the leaking of the frame. The permeability of the frame. This leakage can be considered the critical potency. Leaking fluids might indicate some sort of heat and with this thought we get back to the opening statement:

*Out of unbelievable violence, the light that the sun creates arrives  
8 1/2 minutes later.*

The sun is thus an important element in thinking about mirrors. The sun, or more precisely light can be considered pivotal. We could even state that the mirror tries to be an imitation of the sun, or maybe better an ode to the sun. Just as the sun appears to be an endless thing, the mirror has a frame, but inside the frame it has the potency to reach for infinity. We can see the mirror as an ode to the sun trying to reach infinity. This infinity allows us to get lost in the mirror.





# CHAPTER ONE

## THE CASE OF THE BLACK MIRROR

### 1.1 Unveiling

Mirrors and painting have a strong, intense and intriguing relationship. This harkens back to the days when Leonardo Da Vinci used mirrors to give his paintings something extra, a final sign of approval. Human eyes as devices were apparently insufficient and mirrors were deployed for quality control. However the attraction of the mirror exceeded its presence as device. In medieval and renaissance paintings, we find many examples in which the mirror itself is being visualized. An important example is the painting *Las Meninas* (1656, or the *Ladies in Waiting*), from Diego Velasquez, described by French philosopher Michel Foucault in the opening of his book *The Order of Things*. This relationship between mirrors and painting has not diminished, and even today mirrors still play an important role in painting. Painting needs mirrors and who knows, maybe mirrors need paintings.

In this chapter we highlight a very special type of mirror. It is a mirror that encouraged painters to turn their back on reality. These painters stopped looking at the world and chose to look in mirrors instead, to look in Claude Mirrors to be more precise. They preferred the view of the mirror instead of an unadulterated vision. These Claude Mirrors gave them a “compressed” or “sharper” image of the world, which they considered essential for their paintings and portrayal of reality. Was reality as seen directly through their eyes too complex to grasp for them? The specific qualities of this mirror reflection were more useful, and therefore painters turned their back on reality and looked in the mirror. What does this imply for our conception of reality, when the mirror image is preferred over real and actual perception? Such a situation also calls into question whether the resultant form of painting can always be considered art, or perhaps that it has no relation to art but is instead only entertainment. In other words, something to distract the senses and made to kill time? First we ought to consider the origins of the Claude mirror (also referred to as a black or dark mirror or Claude Glass). The originations are themselves blurry and it