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The magic of organization. Introduction

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1. Introduction

**Hugo Letiche, Stephen A. Linstead and
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PRELUDE

The question of magic should be taken seriously and rethought today, and in particular in connection with financial management and organization. Magic has long been seen as irrationalism or primitivism, and then in a postmodern moment it was framed as renewed creativity and innovation. We believe that a third phase must be opened. Today, magic should be investigated as illuminating the investigation of other possibilities of being. Debates typical of our period centre on: (i) the ‘motility’ of the economy and of business, and the accompanying (black) ‘magic’ of financialization; and (ii) the roles of researchers’ concepts, assumptions, and reflexivity in research, and especially and with regard to organization and business studies. ‘Magic’ powerfully addresses these concerns.

To amplify, we are convinced that the theme of magic has gained new urgency in the contemporary context. Back in the 1980s and 1990s magic belonged to postmodern playfulness. Epistemological critique of Modernism was the creative and experimental ‘kid on the block’. Magic as the hidden opponent to rationality, objectivity, and subject/object dualism was a hot item. Magic assumes human intervention in nature, that is, that people can change their luck, fate or circumstance by ‘magically’ influencing the workings of the physical world. Modernist science is based on radical division between consciousness and the objects of consciousness. What is studied is supposedly not interfered with by the observer; the results of scientific research are to be considered ‘objective’ and can even lead to universal ‘laws’. Magic throws a spanner (or a wand?) in the works – what if people can willfully influence the ‘laws of nature’? What if magicians can really manipulate the goings on of the material world? What if what we feel, will and desire can actually influence the working of nature? The dominant research paradigm, based on the superiority of objectivity above subjectivity, the separation of consciousness from the object of consciousness, the necessity of rationality and rejection of irrational-

ity, has no sympathy for magic. While early Christianity recognized the power of magical beliefs and rituals and incorporated the ‘Old Religion’ based on the white Wiccan magic of natural forces into the Christian calendar, and went to great lengths to demonize and punish the black demonic magic of witchcraft and wizardry, (Protestant) Christian and Enlightenment culture has been characterized by its rejection of anything like magic. Things like ‘voodoo’ are typified as ‘primitive’ and in every way seen to be inferior.

If one wants to rile Modernism and horrify the tenets of science, taking magic seriously is certainly a potent way to do so. Magic can be understood as the reverse side of everything Modernist science tries to be; and it has thus been denigrated, dismissed and totally rejected. If one wanted to try pataphysics – that is, explore forms of logic that exceed everything established and acceptable – one couldn’t push the boundaries further than to ‘invite magic to the table’. But the exhilaration of postmodern enthusiasm lies far behind us. Magic as intellectual play is not on the agenda of the all too serious post-2008 world of crisis, oligarchy, conflict, globalization and uncertainty. In the world of today, magic needs to re-enter the debate from another perspective. On the one hand, magic is an alternative word for creativity, unexpectedness and innovation; magic is all about making the unexpected happen. But, on the other hand, the unexpected may be threatening, destructive and violent. Ideas such as ‘creative destruction’ really are quite magical. What is being stated: are we going forwards or backwards, innovating or demolishing, are we creatives or do we trash other ideas? Likewise, ‘globalization’ seems to mean anything, but, equally shared responsibility and worldwide common cause. Political and business rhetoric may have always been magical; but who, right now, are the winners and losers of the performance? And to quote from *Hamlet*, if there really is something ‘rotten in the state of Denmark’ does it need more rationality or more affect, objectivity or commitment, realism or fancy, to get seen and addressed? Without wanting to thrash judicious understanding, where will we be without empathy and the magic of compassion and responsiveness? Magic is all about awareness of self and other, nature and society, emotion and occurrence. All the writers in this book agree that in our times magic is about something that is currently very crucial. But they disagree about its causes, effects, significances and qualities. There is a lot to debate right now about magic; right now, because the hegemony of ‘naturalism’ and of the Modernist research paradigm is perhaps more uncertain than at any time in a century. For some, magic is a word pointing to needed creativity; but for others it is just another way to disguise and hide abuse; and for some, it points to human–world unity and radical eco-awareness. The differences are enormous and very significant.

One strand of thought identifies magic with Artaud’s ‘theatre of cruelty’ (see Höpfl, Chapter 10 in this book), where lived awareness is opposed to dead

repetition. Another form of magical social critique is to be found in Magic Realism (see Letiche, Chapter 11 in this book), which is a product of the political and cultural periphery. Magical realism, and in fact non-anthropological attention in general to magic, has often come from outside the Euro–American zone of economic and political power. Awareness of magic comes from the outer margins of social thought, where dialogical research has flourished (see Moriceau, Chapter 9, de Loo et al., Chapter 5, Guillet de Monthoux, Chapter 13 and Letiche on Viveiros de Castro, Chapter 8 in this book). Magic is anything but mainstream; it is an outsiders' logic. It writes differently and critically; it disturbs and problematizes the dominant rationalist logic (see Lazarin in this volume). In fact, writing and expression are a theme central to this book. Do we write Modernistically or do we write differently; how and why?

Living in the era of financial capitalism, it is appropriate that several chapters in this volume look to accounting, accountability, traders, markets and risk as their focus (see Case and Pelzer, Chapter 6, Lightfoot and Lilley, Chapter 7 and de Loo et al., Chapter 5). It is here that we find the (all-)powerful magic of our times. The globalized, financialized firm is creative, innovative and entrepreneurial, that is, it is magical. But is this our boon or curse? (See Berg, Chapter 2, Fairhead, Chapter 3 and Munro, Chapter 4 in this book.) Does magical creativity serve mankind or endanger its very existence? Is magic delusional skullduggery and 'fake-news', or is it the stuff of renewal, innovation and success? Are the social-economics of perennial change purely repressive and unjust, or do they generate new wealth and opportunities? Once we acknowledge that business success is somehow magical, does that unnerve us or soothe us? Does the recognition of magic broaden the possibilities for change for the good, or make exploitation and repression all the easier? The authors take differing positions and are not in agreement over what the acknowledging of the magical element in management signifies for human well-being.

The debates about magic have to do with human agency – is humanity part and parcel of all that is alive and/or does the human will extend to all of nature? Are humanity and the world one event, process, set of interactions; that is, is the holism identified with magic justifiable, correct and pertinent? Can we will natural phenomena? Is human consciousness split off from all the rest of existence or are we truly natural beings linked in every way and form to the rest of existence? Modernism's refusal of magic has to do with the setting of rigid boundaries between self and other, consciousness and the world, subject and object. What is magic? It is boundaryless-ness. Many of the contributors to this book explore boundaries and their negation.

In the remainder of this introduction, we develop the description of three phases of research's relationship to magic: Modernist hostility, postmodern celebration and contemporary ontological reassessment. Then we present four contemporary discourses on magic: in praise of innovation, driven by manage-

rial opportunism, inspired by psychology and ultimately the turn-to-ontology in anthropology. We explain our selection for the two that seem to us to be the most serious and deserving of further reflection. Finally, we introduce the structure of the book and indicate what the chapters that make up this book have to say.

THREE PHASES OF MAGIC: IRRATIONALISM, INNOVATION & CREATIVITY, 'BEING'

Having provided the reader with a short introduction to the themes of this book, we now turn to its intellectual context. We believe that the crux of contemporary debate about magic has to do with human power, influence and agency. Has humanity taken on a dominant role that is problematic, if not downright destructive? Is the problem with Modernist rationality, in contrast to magic, that it asserts too little power to humanity or too much? Magic sees mind and world as interrelated and asserts that consciousness can make a difference in our material circumstances. Fate, destiny and events can be willed, in or out of existence. But nature can just as well foil, master or dominate human will. In magic, the human–world relationship is a two-way street full of surprises and uncontrolled possibilities. The magical world is unstable, dynamic and unpredictable. But is that good for human flourishing? Magic potentially destabilizes established power. For those whose politics focus on the ravages of the unilateral uses of power by one set of folk upon another, one economic system (capitalism) on the others (so-called pre-capitalist), magic is the wild card. Does it give us the liberation from hierarchy and bureaucracy that we desperately need, or does it plunge us into irrationalism and the darkest depths of distortion and populism? If the hegemony and logic of power, exploitation and domination has not been broken – and, if anything, it has become broader, encompassing questions of identity, gender and welfare – is it time to try magic? If we are on the lookout for non-exploitative ways of thinking and forms of expression that represent the subaltern, where ever she/he may be found, then the revalorization of magic as an authentic and genuine form of reflection may be just what we are looking for. Thus, a theme of this book is that of (human) power and magic, and corresponding assumptions about power and reality.

Magic as an explicative of approbation has frequently been used to describe reactions to new products and services, and to derivatives and financialization. Supposedly, change has so accelerated that the amazing, unheard of and fantastic regularly need to be realized for success (Rosa 2015; Lesserich et al. 2015). The study of innovation and creativity is often linked to that of magic. While aspects of the metaphor are apt, the destructive and uncontrollable dimensions

to magic, are often avoided and ignored. We doubt that you can turn magic on and off again at will as if magic could be under managerial control.

The study of magic and organization did go through a postmodern phase where magic was understood as hyperreal simulacra. But there was very little specifically about magic in this analysis; magic was understood as just another instance of the spectacle society. We think that magic is really much more than that. The innovation and creativity metaphor certainly is very much with us today; while the Neo-Marxist or postmodern denunciations of performativity have diminished. The assumptions of Enlightenment Modernism, presupposing linear rational stages of development and continual progress towards prosperity in a just society, are also, now, far less prevalent. 'Magic' has become less a term of social or cultural critique and more an issue of relatedness, asking: how are humans related to life itself, is the individual 'will' linked to the environment, is change paranormal? Basically, is Modernist rational 'being' the only sort of 'being' possible? Claiming that alternative constellations of 'being' exist, which need to be studied, is no longer off-the-wall. The turn-to-ontology in anthropology has opened the way to taking possible alternative structures of 'being', including those of magic, seriously. Thus, magic may not just entail staged illusions or primitive failures of observation and logic, as prevailing opinion has claimed. Radical relatedness may be manifest in forms we have not been able or willing to address.

In Part I of this book, we begin with chapters examining and critiquing creativity and imagination seen as magic-related; and in Part II, we present radical reinterpretations of magic and of the 'being' of change, especially in organization. In the studies of magic, by the anthropology of the early twentieth century, magic was debunked as immature or faulty cognition; though this 'move' is a hundred years old, and is extremely culturally self-congratulatory, it is still with us. Seeing magic as a metaphor for what is false, manipulative and phantasmagoric, but nonetheless powerful and even culturally dominant, is a way of taking magic somewhat seriously; but it posits a polarity between truth and magic, the real and the imaginary, the advanced and the primitive. Magic as postmodern hyperreality made its point; but it did not leave behind it many ideas or proposals for improved action or for the restoration of agency. The postmodern phase never produced a discourse of magic of its own; but subsumed magic to political and cultural concerns without developing new insights about magic as such. The historically dominant examination of magic coming from classical anthropology, is based on dichotomies between rational thought and primitive superstition, and between the analysis of cause and effect versus speculative ideas of relatedness, as well as the opposition of science to wishful misconception. Magic supposedly is crude thought, produced by cultures who know no better and are incapable of developing more realistic models of the world.

A third phase in the study of magic, we believe, is just dawning; and it is characterized by the ability to identify the ontological underpinnings and dimensions of consciousness' link to circumstance, as well as of life's embeddedness in living environments and how the self is related to the Other. The conjoining of the pairs can be understood as 'magic'. This book is coming at a moment when a phase is just opening up to research and reflection about magic; the book aims to contribute to this development.

There have been exceptions to the dismissal of magic; that is, anthropologists who acknowledged that magical thought was more sophisticated than was mostly admitted and who wondered if there was not a lot more magic in our trust in causality than we wanted to admit. Psychoanalysis in particular stressed the presence of magical thought in so-called advanced cultures. There are perhaps more forces, drives and magical forms of logic in how people perceived one another and themselves, than is commonly admitted. The 'I' or ego may well be magical constructs that are far less stable or rational than is pretended. But as long as the paradigm of 'humanity rules nature' reigns supreme, and the environment is understood to be so many resources to be exploited for economic gain; magic, understood as powers of existence that defy human control and mastery, will be scoffed at. In magic, we are confronted by forces that are not under rational control. We may be able to will those forces in and out of action; but the forces themselves exist beyond the rational linear model of science. The magical world is haunted, possesses spirits, and can be uncanny. Unexplainable possibilities of relatedness are reappearing in current anthropological studies. And this is how magic has re-emerged and enters our research agenda.

FOUR DISCOURSES OF MAGIC

In this section we position our book in the context of the contemporary study of magic. The approaches or 'discourses' are varied, while some statements seem close to self-evident, some appear over-stated and not legitimate, and some are very new, fragile and incomplete; crucially there are those coming from the heart of a flourishing and theoretically dynamic phase of innovation in anthropology. In our preparation and design of this book, we have identified four discourses of magic. The book focuses on two of these. The first discourse of magic (1) seems to be present in all studies of magic and organization or business; it centres on the assertion that contemporary society demands rapid change and innovation, whereby magic serves as a metaphor for the mindset required in the contemporary social-economic context. Derived from, and close to this argument; there are authors who have produced a second discourse (2) championing business practices modelled after forms or aspects of magic. Some of this work is careful and serious; but some of it promises

wonders based on very suspect claims. In some trade books or popular publications, the magical dimensions to business success, are described, detailed and championed as qualities of superstar performers with super success. Implicitly, it is assumed that business and society are grounded in the autonomous self-interested individual, where the illusionist or magician serves as a model of the superstar, who triumphs leaving everyone else awed behind. In the race to success, only the few magically get ahead; supposedly, we need to model ourselves after their accomplishments. Pursuit of creativity and innovation sound morally uplifting; but an individualistic culture that lionizes superstars and subsumes relationships and community to inequality, and worships the 'bitch goddess of success', is ethically very suspect.

Whatever its social significance, magic is cognitive dynamite. Exactly what is it that can transcend linear logic or require creative destruction and/or consciousness' leap into the unknown? In the fairly common discourse of magic as necessary to innovation, it is implied that the magic is under control and is socially and economically benign. But as one radicalizes magic and grants it more importance and power, the possibility that the magic will return to haunt you, increases. Can superstar leaders, for instance entrepreneurs, traders or CEOs, be identified with illusionists without assuming that we have lost all rational or democratic control over the economy? Identifying an element of magic in innovative thinking is qualitatively a very different thing from identifying leadership and corporate governance with magic. The first is claiming common ground in the pursuit of creativity, but the second proposes a radical extrapolation of magic to society with weighty consequences. This book begins with the discourse (1) of creativity and its magical dimensions, but rejects the extrapolation to the belief (2) in individualized power, as the desirable or necessary business model. While the second discourse of superstar leadership is a radicalization of the first discourse's claim of contemporary dependency on creative innovation, the first discourse does not assert magic as the *primus inter parus* of managerial action.

There is a broad acknowledgement of a tamed, domesticated and seemingly a safe sort of magic, which is to be used to further economic and business success. This is the innovation and creativity paradigm where 'magic' is a word for thought and action that transcends the purely linear or logical in the production of new products and services, and of new economic systems and practices of finance. If change is not only possible, but essential, there have to be sources of action that are not purely causal and that can exceed purely rational occurrence. Magic can be introduced as the term for what makes change and originality possible. Such a concept of magic typifies what we have identified as the first discourse (1) of magic. The issue of whether rationality has to be transcended for creativity or change to exist is old enough, but it was not a central theme in the early anthropological study of magic. Concern

for some sort of necessary irrationality to be able to achieve economic and organizational change, was not part of the mindset of the late-nineteenth or early twentieth century. Economic development and progress were conceived of as rational; and when not rational (as in Marx's analyses), as something that should be made rational or 'scientific'. The idea that change inherently upsets the linear rational order of things flies in the face of the assumption that developmental stages are themselves rational steps, leading away from ignorance and to enlightenment.

The embrace of magic, as needed to make the unexpected and new occur, is linked to the contemporary mindset where history is not thought to possess an inevitable telos. The new has to be created, it is not inevitable. History is no longer seen as the logical progression of phases leading to a better (or even ideal) condition. But if innovation is a product of human action, action which needs to be described as magical; then there are accompanying dangers of excess. A mad magician may destroy society and drive people to insanity. The contemporary discourse of magic understands magic in terms of facilitating necessary innovation and creativity in business and society, but does it not produce a doubleganger where magic destroys instead of innovates; perhaps the magician is a mad dictator? All-powerful magicians can be a force for good, but their powers are frightening and certainly not democratic. This discourse of the hyper-successful and powerful magician – that is, CEO, political leader or whatever – forms the crux to what we identified as the second (2) discourse of magic.

Magic is a very attractive theme in business studies because it endorses the assumption that marvelous results can be willed into existence. Magic celebrates at least the pretense that the power of the human will can prevail over every obstacle. In magic, the laws of physics and of nature, and of the economy, are all subsumed to human desire and determination. It needs to be explicit that such acknowledgement of magic is not something innocent or unimportant. If you take magic seriously everything else will not stay the same. But what some popular management books or articles pretend is that one can have one's magic as a force to make things happen, and experience no boomerang or kickback directed at oneself; that is, the magic will somehow do what you want it to do without having any uncontrolled effects on one's own position. It is as if one can turn the magic on and off as one wants. Indeed, stage magic is meant to thrill its audience, but to have no further importance in their lives. Competitors do not fall sick, the elements do not rebel, jealousy does not turn nasty. But in real magic, all these things do happen. The pretence that one can have one's magic and be immune from its powers, we believe is really very questionable.

For those who see magic as an apt paradigm for business success and the role of the creative CEO, financier, speculator or entrepreneur, the path from

the study of great illusionists to the examination and celebration of business leaders is direct and can be presented as more or less self-evident. This line of logic is especially strong in trade-books or magazine articles such as in *Fast Company* (Yaniv 2014) or *Businessweek* (Edwards et al. 2008). The move from magic to business, is asserted to be illuminatory; business success depends on achieving innovation as inspired by the great illusionists. The acceptance of the move from the illusionist to economic success via ‘magic’ may be common enough in some trade books, but it is certainly not characteristic of more serious academic writing.

Morey, Burger and McLaughlin’s (2018) trade book *Creating Business Magic* is paradigmatic in how it claims that the illusionist is the model for the business leader. In addition, the authors’ own logic really is magical: supposedly, by identifying with the magician one can become successful. Nowhere in the book is stage magic actually explored or analyzed. How illusions are made, practiced and performed, is short-shrifted. On the one hand, the book lionizes the illusionist; but on the other, it focuses more on the audience that is enthralled and amazed, than on the actions of the illusionist. Creating and enacting stage magic is hard work, wherein the same illusions get performed night after night. There is little or nothing spontaneous in the illusionist on stage. Backstage there may be enormous creativity and ingenuity; but on stage it is total control and discipline that is required. If collective creativity and the pursuit of rapid change is one’s paradigm, then the illusionist is not an appropriate metaphor. Morey, Burger and McLaughlin, to cite their cover text: ‘How the power of magic can inspire, innovate, and revolutionize your business’, do not focus on the power of the illusionist as a performer, or the illusionist as a performative model; but on magic as witnessed by the spectator. It is not the metaphor of how magic is made that is lionized, but how magic is seen (or consumed) by audiences. In the book, the reader is not invited to identify with the illusionist or shaman, but, in effect, with the shaman’s victim. Being bewitched, if you believe in ‘white magic’, may be an empowering and marvellous experience – perhaps everything you ever wanted to see happen, happens. If you want your competitors to leave town, they do so; if you want the prices of your raw materials to drop, they do so, etcetera. But all of this has nothing to do with how stage illusionists create and enact their performances. In the book, there is the claim that the illusionist or shaman possesses extraordinary powers, but when one looks carefully at the text, it is really the lucky bystander, reaping in all sorts of benefits by being bewitched, who is centre stage.

Morey, Burger and McLaughlin’s business ‘strategies’ are dubious clichés; they admonish us to forget reality, reboot aspiration, imagine first, disorganize innovation, cheat preemptively, redirect our audience, grab the dialogue, overcome and prevail. None of the nitty-gritty of the making and performing of an

illusion is here. Admittedly, all these phrases could be part of a creative effort, just as well as part of a chaotic and messy failure. In their text, everything is directed towards competition and winning. Illusionists have to transcend their own abilities to surmount physical and mental barriers to make their illusions work. The audience sees the results of the design process, but in principle, nothing of that process itself is meant to be visible. The consuming of magic really is very different from the making of magic. By confusing the two, magic can be portrayed more as extraordinary, than as the hard work that it really is. The interactive and cooperative work characteristic of illusionists is opportunistically confused with the competitive logic of 'being the best' in business.

Illusionists are artisans who share secrets and form a sort of guild. Magicians design and carry out their illusions; the managerial division between 'hands and minds' which is so characteristic of business is utterly absent. Between a corporate CEO and a company's customers there are layers of organization – R&D, suppliers, marketers, production, distribution channels etcetera. The magic of exceptional creative business results, demands the drawing of all of these layers into a creative process; but in popular management literature there is only the genius on the one hand and success in the marketplace on the other. There is no organization in between. Perhaps that is why magic is such an attractive metaphor for the trade books, none of the complicated nitty-gritty of actually running an organization is included in the metaphor. There is the genius of the illusionist and the magical results of success, and nothing left in between.

Morey, Burger and McLaughlin identify extremely successful CEOs with magic – Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, etcetera, are supposedly paradigmatic for the link between business and magic. The authors, we are repeatedly told, have been consultants to Apple, Nike and Coca-Cola; claiming thereby to be part and parcel of the episteme of exceptional success. That Apple produces its products via FoxComm, in conditions of more or less slave labour; that Nike has repeatedly been accused of unethical labour practices, and that Coke tries to addict the poor of this world to its formulae, are issues unimportant to the writers. Riches, success and power are all that count. They assume, that you, the reader, share their values. Extreme economic success supposedly is a magical good that every business leader aspires to. Winning and being a winner are the goal – and winning is like pulling off a stunning magical trick, the audience is thrilled and applauds. That I have been cursing the PC I am now writing on for days because of how Apple has tried to imprison me in their control, hampering my work; or that I feel myself seduced by Apple design to the point that I become co-responsible for indefensible factory conditions, are facets the authors refuse to face up to. They have fetishized business success, in effect claiming that because they have consulted to the hyper-successful, they know how to produce hyper-success.

Contagion is a classical magical principle. If you want to be as strong as an oak tree carry an acorn at all times with you; or if you want to be as agile as a rabbit, have a rabbit's foot in your pocket. Physical contact with the desired object purportedly transfers the desired magical quality to you. But negative qualities also get transferred – sickness or bad luck can be wished upon you. In the logic of magic, health, prosperity and disaster, can all be magically transmitted from the one person to the other. Morey, Burger and McLaughlin promise that if you follow their (magical) formulae, success will be visited upon you. Because they have consulted iconic CEOs and politicians, they can transfer the magic gained by being close to these semi-gods to their readers. With a mixture of common sense and name-dropping, they claim to be able to make the magic of the hyper-rich and successful work for whomever buys their book. These claims seem confused and the logic flawed. Here the magic as creativity argument is used in a flaky and deceitful way.

The idea that there is a magical dimension to business and organizational innovation and creativity is perfectly understandable. But the principle as we have seen can easily be degraded into mumbo-jumbo and trickery. Creativity is complicated; organizational order cannot sustain very much of it. Many observers of contemporary society claim that the pace of change has been accelerating constantly for the last fifty years and that we are in a crisis of change where change is out of control, and where we are in a social context that defies reason and rational awareness (Rosa 2015; Lesserich et al. 2015). The principle of constant change is not innocent; it may threaten all efforts at democratic control or of the planning of social existence. Creativity may not always be such a good thing; constant change may not be something to applaud. Magic may indeed, as the Enlightenment thought, be a very dangerous and threatening thing. But that current economies demand rapid product development and seem to thrive on change, does seem to be the case. Thus, it may indeed be true that constant innovation is a necessity in our culture. Magic as a social or cultural metaphor is clearly significant; but in its trivialized forms, it may do more harm than good. In its more serious and careful forms, it may pose many more questions and raise far more doubts than some realize.

According to positive science, magic is characterized by false claims and fakery. None of magic's claims supposedly are true – the illusions are manipulations of perception or mere sleight of hand. For the one, magic is primitive superstition and false belief; while for the other, to cite Shakespeare, 'There are more things in heaven and Earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy' [of science]. Typical themes demanding attention are: 'Is awareness really rational?'; 'Can human drives actually be contained in purposeful and intentional boundaries?'; 'Is self-awareness all that rational and inevitable; or does it entail nonrational leaps of faith?'. They have to do with fundamental existential questions about human cognition, knowledge and relatedness.

These are debates crucial to human functioning and self-awareness; but they are not of a 'Whether I have a job tomorrow' sort of applicability.

Research into magic, for instance by psychology and anthropology, has produced very different sorts of discourses. The discourse of business innovation and creativity is more pragmatic than reflexive. It is about new products and services and organizational leadership and success. Exemplars like Apple, Facebook, Amazon or Microsoft are portrayed as entrepreneurial and organizational triumphs. Not complexity, uncertainty and paradox, but purposefulness, intentionality and accomplishment; are studied. The discourses of business success differ in kind from those of psychology or anthropology; the former are presented as models to be followed and the latter as issues to be investigated. Social Studies' discourses of magic explore the manifestations and nature of human social existence. They inquire into the sources of identity and the assumptions required for thought to function. They question what identity is, how it is formed, and what are its purposes. Business studies have mainly been interested in exploiting the pragmatics of magic without going too far into questioning what it is or what difference it makes. Social studies are much more committed to understanding and awareness, as well as to the exploration of possibilities and alternatives. The social studies discourse of magic is reflexive and questions what magic tells us about human identity, society and possibilities. There are costs and consequences to engaging in magic; it is not without dangers and risks to self, Other, relatedness and society. These factors are mostly ignored in business's rush to exploit magic's use value. Business discourse tends to the pragmatic, being grounded in problem solving and directed to successful organizing and leadership. The need for creativity and innovation in contemporary business gets addressed; anarchy and the lack of control are avoided and abhorred. Magic is portrayed as a conduit between managerial control and organizational change. But between magic and the managerial decision makers, we see a difficult and paradoxical set of relationships. Magic may delegitimize hierarchy, destabilize expectations and make reward systems problematic.

Because the psychology of magic is not a theme or discourse that has touched strongly on organizational or business studies, and in fact it has remained fairly under-developed, it has not become a focus for our work. Gustav Kuhn's book (2019) *Experiencing the Impossible: The Science of Magic* is exemplary for the current study of magic by psychology, where magical illusions are analyzed as products of the magician's manipulation of perceptual psychology. The illusions supposedly work because human perception and consciousness can be controlled, directed and made to see some things and not others. Illusions thus are products of perceptual manipulation, whereby the audience thinks that it sees one thing, but reality is that another thing is present and/or has happened. The links to popular management literature in marketing and strategy are very

strong; if one can control consciousness and direct it to one's goals, one can sell what one wants to sell and/or get an organization to think and believe what one wants to be thought and believed, gaining control over the other's actions. Most management literature that cites magic is about control of customers and/or employees. It sees the illusionist as a model for the manager. On the one hand, the control over customers and employees is a very attractive option for managers, but on the other, there is an unsettling (normally at least somewhat hidden) assumption that management is based on lies, manipulation and trickery. The psychological study of perception and consciousness is linked, hereby, to the development of managerial control.

Contrastingly, the current discourse in anthropology on magic, addresses principles of relatedness, responsibility and identity, that are obviously crucial to critical organizational studies and form a crucial focus for us. Turn-to-ontology anthropology engages with the ontological question of human causality – human/human, but also, human/animal, human/nature and human/the material. Here the questions address a causal relationship – what causes what, and how can causality be understood as mutual relatedness and multiple determinism. If Newtonian causality is too reductionist, and there really are more forms of relatedness and potentia than what simple billiard ball logic admits, then what is possible or probable? What can humanity and 'nature' mean to one another; what are the possibilities of being, with which we share existence? Here the possibility of more than Newtonian physics, or meta-physics, is open for consideration. More worlds, causalities, forms of consciousness and possibilities of logic, are considered. Metaphysics is taken seriously – options that exceed Newtonian physics are not brushed off as primitive or superstitious, but are considered as theoretically worth investigating. Our book takes the turn-to-ontology in contemporary anthropology as an important source for rethinking 'magic'.

However, we must acknowledge that when we turn to the social sciences and their relationship to magic, we discover much disdain and dismissal. Social science is supposedly rational, logical and realistic; while magic is irrational, associative and fantasy-driven. Magic as a form of consciousness and thought can be an object for psychological study. But almost all attention by psychology to magic has scorned it as primitive, immature and not really worth investigating. But if magic is crucial to necessary innovation and creativity in contemporary society, as our first discourse asserts, how do we understand the difference between magic and not-magic? If creative thought and action, leading to innovative action, are a social-economic necessity; exactly how does creative thought differ from not, or less, creative thought? If we posit at least two different types of thought, are they characterized by two separate psychologies? But the assertion that there are at least two different psychologies flies in the face of most contemporary academic psychology. Psychologists

seem to assume that human perception is one thing; that is, there is one way of perceiving and processing information, and of knowing. Gustav Kuhn, in *Experiencing the Impossible* (2019), as a psychologist who has analysed how magic functions, assumes that there are principles of human perception and cognition that magicians exploit in order to perform their illusions. By positing the unity of human psychology, the principles of perception and cognition are considered to be universal. Magic merely exploits weaknesses and prejudices in human mental processing to achieve its effects. Magic is an ‘untruth’ made possible by how human mental practices are attuned to some circumstances and practices, and not fitted-out for others. This argument leaves very little space for the assertion that magic is a model of creative or imaginative thought of great value to business and society. It emphasizes the parallels between how illusionists deceive their audiences and how corporations and politics succeed. Magic is portrayed as the art of deception whose irrationality and deceit really ought to be combatted.

Contrastingly, Jean-Paul Sartre’s early studies of phenomenological psychology (1936a, 1936b, 1938, 1940) defended magic as a leap between different levels of awareness. Sartre claimed that simple stimulus/response perception was qualitatively different from consciousness, which again was of a different order from the reflexivity of the Ego or ‘I/me’ complex. This thought is enjoying deserved renewed attention (Louis Tas 1967 republished 2009 and Daniel O’Shiel 2019). For Sartre, there are actually three psychologies: (i) the psychology of immediate perception [sitting on a terrace, outdoors, shirtless; it is very warm; there are some very loud birds here to be heard]; (ii) the psychology of consciousness [trying to clarify some complicated ideas, the definitions demand care as the writing proceeds], and (iii) the psychology of the ego or ‘I’ [I am someone with strong opinions who has from his youth been drawn to phenomenology]. For Sartre, the move from the one psychology to the other is magical. There is no logic, necessity or ultimate rational cause necessitating the existence of the three levels; or to how humanity operates within them.

Sartre investigated the psychology of absence and that of becoming-possible, which entails wish-fulfilment and the escape from the present. The emotionality of being gripped by something that is absent, and of letting one’s feelings take over, has its risks; but just this magic may be crucial to the pursuit of creative change. The tight link between what one wills and what one feels, between desire and emotion, is childlike; it has something of the child’s cry for parental attention about it, where the cry is coupled for the child to the reality of being attended to. This is indeed, magic. But the cultivating of the absent as necessarily present, is also a key principle to creativity. We believe that the psychology of innovative action inherently contains magical aspects and that realism alone will not facilitate exceptional results. Sartre really was on to something when

he stressed how the psychology of an openness to absence, and attachment to what one wills to be extant but is not really present, is both childlike and fundamental to creativity. Unfortunately, the field of the exploration of the psychology of business and organizational creativity, is little developed; and despite the possibilities we have pointed to, remains yet to be explored.

Mainstream experimental psychology, as it has been represented here by the psychologist Gustav Kuhn (2019), we believe has got it all wrong; level one of S/R cognition is not the only sort of psychology; creativity and innovation have to do with the operations of consciousness and the 'I' or 'Ego' (Sartre's levels two and three). While we are passionate about this debate in psychology, it is not the subject of this book. Sartre's psychological triad and the magical connections between the levels has not yet been sufficiently addressed in business or organizational studies to warrant a book. Furthermore, O'Shiel's effort to examine marketing, based on Sartre's typology, falls flat – we fear he just does not know the critical marketing literature well enough to carry it off. To use his example, selling Volkswagens to Americans in the 1960s, given the car's pedigree, was indeed challenging and the ads were very clever – but what thought processes, awareness or psychology underpinned either the makers or the consumers of the ads, is not adequately addressed by O'Shiel. Most research psychology merely dismisses magic as irrelevant and attempts to avert attention to it; while phenomenology, however interesting its results, has more or less been marginalized.

An approach to magic informed by anthropology is crucial to this book: are populations who believe in magic primitive and lacking in their development or is there a fundamental human truth to magic that demands our attention? Early anthropologists assumed 'us and them' – or the developed versus the primitive. But they did accept that the beliefs of peoples studied were complex and deserved concentrated research attention. Throughout its history, anthropology has become less and less ethnocentric, whereby magic has gained a new hearing. Magical beliefs are different from mainstream Eurocentric rationality; but does that make them beyond the pale? In a turn-to-ontology, contemporary anthropology has come to radically question the beliefs underpinning researchers' assumptions, and has opened itself to understanding the forms of 'being' assumed by the researched. It is this turn-to-ontology which has inspired the second section to our book. If creativity and innovation are really so important, then economic success would seem to depend on magical thought. If magic is not just a superficial metaphor, but really a fundamental factor in the success or failure of our institutions, what does that signify for the rationality and the top-down leadership models of our culture? You cannot think like an engineer and run your business like one, and really believe that creativity and innovation depend on magical thought and/or being, without enormous inconsistency and

self-contradiction in your beliefs. Is the magic metaphor very superficial, or is there really something fundamental afoot?

Our choice has been to assume that magic really can be powerful. Creativity and innovation are not tame; the ability to see another world than that of the present is extraordinary. The 'being' of magic is challenging, demanding, unsettling and apart. Such 'being' destabilizes Modernist certainties and truths. The turn-to-ontology movement in anthropology produces exciting new insights into magic and its significance. The discussion of magic as inspired by the turn-to-ontology, or the acceptance of the possibility of fundamentally other forms of 'being' to the Modernist one, has been chosen for exploration and amplification in this book. We believe it is the most challenging and interesting contemporary approach to the study of magic. It is here that we encounter the investigation of alternative ontologies; magic demands serious investigation of experiencing that Newtonian prejudices do not permit. Linear logic does not explain the unexpected, not-yet-thought, or the fundamentally new. The turn-to-ontology in anthropology is just what we need to open up the study of alternative thought forms and to address difference in a far more radical way than has been prevalent in Modernism.

Summing up, the innovation and creativity (1) argument, has been repeated and exaggerated in much applied or popular management (2) literature; in effect, there is a sort of sliding scale between these two discourses. The second is an exaggerated and uncritical version of the first. The approach to magic that sees magic as a question of imagination is in a complex relationship to those

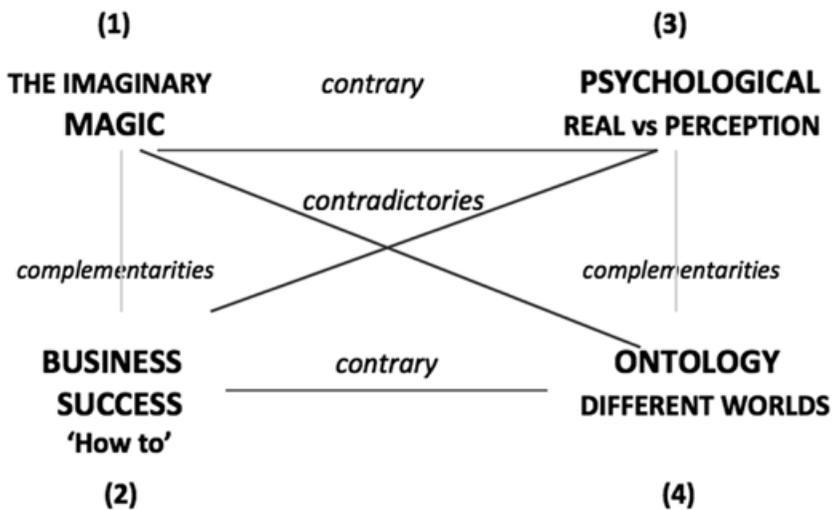


Figure 1.1 Semiotic square pertaining to magic

studies of magic (4) that think that magic reveals alternative ways of ‘being’ or of ontology. Maybe magic is not just an aspect of our normal rationality or of contemporary business as usual, but entails a far more radical awareness of what thought and collective being can be. The ‘use magic to innovate’ school, tends to approach magic opportunistically, that is as something you can turn on or off as needed to achieve business success. But this may be a crucial mis-estimation of how significant and fundamental magical thought really is; as well as a very narrow ethnocentric way of seeing the world. Magic as the revelation of alternative ontologies destabilizes Modernist assumptions of rationality and logic; demanding alternative research in psychology of which there is still far too little; luckily anthropology has more to offer us. Putting all of this into a semiotic square, one arrives at the model (see Figure 1.1).

FURTHER OUTLINING OF THE BOOK

In this book, we review the necessity of innovation and then focus on the nature of the fundamentally alternative assumptions that this entails. As we have seen, the argument that asserts a need for imagination to survive economically, actually is in tension with the dominant social science study of magic. The manipulation and influencing of awareness is typified in most social science as a fundamental ‘untruth’ demanding to be criticized. Magic may create ‘alternative’ acts of perception, but it is in essence false perception. Modernist social science radically closes the door on any other perceptual order than the rationalist one.

As writing about magic in business studies almost always begins in the same place – the claim of a need for surprising innovation and startling discovery to achieve contemporary business success – we will begin there as well. We believe that the innovation/creativity argument is at its most interesting, not when denied or when you try to limit it as much as possible; but quite the opposite, when you explore its most powerful possible consequences. This, we claim, actually happens when you participate in the anthropological turn-to-ontology research, as we do in Part II of this book. As already indicated, what we see as the most important work in the psychology of creative awareness, explores stages of awareness. Complex and creative action is not about stimulus/response or basic perceptual activity, it entails consciousness, and awareness of an ‘I’ or ego that sees, feels, knows and partakes of being.

If present-day society demands imagination, innovation and astounding results, then just doing the same things over and over again, and trusting to proven patterns, will not ensure success; in fact, it probably will not even provide for continuity. Organizations supposedly have to innovate to prevail. Magic, as the principle of wonder, of the unexpected, and of surprise; thereby has become an organizational necessity. If you are looking for a metaphor for

the changes in action and thought demanded of business today, then you may have to look to magic. Illusionism may produce stunning effects, such as David Copperfield's making the Statue of Liberty disappear, but it is all illusion. The preparation, as well as exactitude of the performance required of the illusionist, is anything but spontaneous. Illusionists are highly trained performers who perfect their routines down to the smallest details. Stage magic is anything but 'real-life'; it is made up of orchestrated impressions, and is chimera all the way down. Control and manipulation of the audience's attention and awareness is crucial to the effects achieved.

In the first part of this book, the allegory of magic as creative action and renewal is investigated. It is and remains the primary cause for linking the realms of magic and business. But our authors disagree about the appropriateness and nature of the connection. Can magic be seen as a real model of inspiration for innovation, or is it a false path wherein distortion, wheeler-dealing, and trickery are unjustly being celebrated? Are illusionists good models for business leadership or an anathema for liberty, cooperative action and stakeholder awareness? Are successful illusionists apt role-models or really more Las Vegas glitter than substance?

The magic of desire, fulfilment and enticement, brings issues of 'false needs' and 'manipulated desires' to the table. Is the operation of the marketplace a sufficient guarantee of accountability? If a purchase is made is this proof of the buyer's free will; when and why is the marketplace 'free'? Can and do corporations control the populace's awareness; are we witness to dependent or captured consciousness? Is there corporate magic that so powerfully controls individual will, that one has to speak of subjugated awareness? Magic has always implied the loss of the individual will and of being possessed by something outside of oneself. Is magic able to manipulate identity, desire, and aspiration so successfully that corporate self-interest prevails above all other forms of consciousness? One chapter in this book explores this terrain in order to critique the innovation and creativity theme; but marketing and magic, with a strong element of postmodern theory, is not our focus. This is not a book about (post-)postmodern organization or marketing, or about enchantment and the sociology of consumption such as found in the writing of Eric Arnould (Arnould et al. 1999; Arnould & Thompson 2018; Arnould & Cayla 2015). This is a line of research that touches upon so-called 'experiential marketing', which can be grouped under the 'experience economy' and related to 'luxury brand marketing' (Atwal & Williams 2009; Schmitt 1999; Cova 1996; Pine & Gilmore 1998, 1999; Holbrook & Hirshman 1982). Moeran and de Waal Malefyt (2018) have recently produced a book wherein (essentially) anthropologists (though some work in business schools) reflect on marketing – from goods to ideas, and politics to futurology. Ours is not such a book. The authors who have taken part in our project have all worked in the field of organi-

zational symbolism and (almost all) of them have taught business students. Furthermore, our distance to postmodernism is significant. However astute or clever some of the postmodern critique may have been, it seems to have ended up hermetically enclosed in itself.

Following the categorization, visualized above in the semiotic square, this book is in two sections; one from the left side of the semiotic square and one from the right side. In the first, the identification of magic with creativity, innovation and experimentation is explored. The phrase 'It is magic!' has often been used in business as a form of approbation. Here 'magic' is a celebratory exclamation of praise, often of business and its leadership. During the last twenty years, it has been common in business studies to identify social progress, inspiration and success, with originality in the marketplace. Business it was claimed produced the dynamism and inventiveness needed to create welfare and progress. The identification of business and its leadership with dynamic change and wealth creation, is an assumption that certainly is not shared by all. For some, the magic of business always was 'black magic'.

The second use of 'magic' in our book comes much more from anthropology than business studies. The turn-to-ontology has opened up new lines of research and reflection. 'Magic', here, has to do with radical human interrelatedness with surroundings, environment and Other. In the dominant Modernist research tradition, human subjectivity and emotionality is fundamentally alien to objectivity and scientific truth. The idea that human will or desire could have causal links to natural events was taboo. Human thought and emotion supposedly had no influence on material reality and the laws of the physical world. Nature followed its own laws, irrespective of the human will. For instance, human desire, dances or spells cannot make it rain – to believe the opposite, was superstitious and vulgar. Developed peoples and thought, know and respect the divide between human subjectivity and natural objectivity. But this radical dualism has come in for theoretical critique, as anthropologists have come around to taking alternative ontologies seriously. Maybe the universe is not some sort of Newtonian clockwork of strict causal relatedness; maybe mutual relatedness between the material and consciousness really does exist. This turn to reconsidering some basic ontological assumptions in the light of the study of peoples who have constructed different theories of reality than the Euro-centric one, sheds a very different light on 'magic'. Magic may be another word for radical interrelatedness. Here, 'magic' refers to mutuality in causality, and emergence as a key ontological principle. Magic then becomes a central concept for understanding contemporary environmental issues and the Anthropocene. When magic is used in this way, human–world interrelatedness, and causality grounded in interaction between the material and the alive, become the focus. Linear causality, determinism and top-down regimes of power are criticized for not respecting mutuality, relationship or interaction.

Thus, two different but interrelated universes or worlds of magic are explored in this book. The first is about illusions and it is grounded in the influencing of perception. It is the world of stage magicians but also of magic as a managerial tool. The second is about alternative ontologies to the Newtonian causality wherein every effect is posited to have an in principle knowable cause; and reality is understood as an enormous cause and effect chain, which once set in motion, proceeds along deterministic lines. Complexity theory and quantum mechanics insist that the Newtonian assumption of causality does not apply to the universe as such, but only to fairly local earthbound phenomena; and that the relationships that exist between things can be so complex and interrelated that any simple assumption of causality cannot be sustained: asserting 'there is more under heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy' (Shakespeare, in *Hamlet*).

Summarizing, in the first section of this book, we present authors who focus on magic or the illusion as ways of making successful business happen. This entails some very paradoxical ideation, as it assumes that 'thinking out of the box' or being creative and innovative can be compared to the perfection and performance of an illusion. But are illusions ultimately a lie or not? When one assumes the illusion as one's paradigm, one assumes that something that is meticulously prepared and orchestrated is the model for 'magic'. If 'magic' is genuinely dedicated to the creation of the new or the previously unknown, it must break with Newtonian causality, and embrace the possibility of the unexpected, indeterminate and genuinely unpredictable. The paradox of much management literature, when it comes to magic, is that it wants the indeterminant but as under-control. Management wants creative industry, it wants renewal and reinvention, but it wants all of these under a strict regime of three-month figures, assuming that the organization exists for the benefit of its shareholders. Thus, it wants open causality or goals, on the one hand; and a very closed causality or set of goals, on the other. In the first section to this book this tension or paradox plays a crucial role. The illusionist can be a hired-hand who can be told when to appear, how long to perform and what the results ought to be. But real magic, or the causing of the really unexpected and innovative, cannot be similarly commanded. Social theorists like Chiapello and Boltanski (2006) can assert that companies (capitalism) seek to absorb any and all creativity and make it work for corporate gain. But even if they are right, this is a question after the fact of inclusion and of adjusting to what has been created; their argument does not apply to the acts of creation as such. It is one thing to say that capitalism can absorb all opposition and innovation to its benefit; and something very different to say that capitalism is inherently (at least now) creative and innovative. Once one says that capitalism requires innovation to proceed, as some of our authors claim, then the issue of how 'magic' is to be incorporated in the complex organization of the global firm becomes crucial.

The anthropological tradition confronts us with very different concerns. If more worlds, logics and causalities are possible, how do we determine what is to be done? If TINA (there is no alternative) is fundamentally ontologically a lie, then what 'being' is to prevail and why? Or is 'being' really terrorized by economic interest and are human possibilities more impossibilities than possibilities? Normal business studies just assume a single ontology; that of economic growth, profit and GNP. But the Anthropocene is challenging that. As I [the first author of this Introduction] write, Australia is literally on fire. Can the coal interests, coupled to media dominance by the owners who deny the existence of an environmental crisis, retain their stranglehold on that country? And with the coronavirus causing panic, are globalized supply chains sustainable? Are there other principles of awareness and action than those defined by oligarchs, vested interests, the carbon-based economy, and other representatives of the economic order? Magic is all about reimagining human/world relatedness and listening to relatedness in other ways.

Writing from a business and organization perspective, but in the contemporary context of financialized capitalism, the more applied chapters in this book are mostly about finance, traders and accountants. Several contributions seek to update the theme of magic in relationship to the financialization of society. Ever since the crisis of 2008 revealed that our contemporary economy may be characterized as one huge Ponzi scheme, the issue of trying to understand the contemporary role of accounting and financial management has gained in urgency. Do 'traders' have any idea what they are doing, or is it all magic to the actants? Is new regulation possible, probable and effective – can contemporary financialized capitalism be understood and/or controlled? Do we need a new Book of Spells? Can the technologies of quantification and control be used to address instead of to repress pressing problems? In a series of chapters the authors address these themes.

To explore the themes of business magic and the social critique of its practice, and the positive and negative interpretations of the magic of innovation, the authors have explored a variety of contexts, from financial management to research methods, to the arts. The book includes several chapters of applications. Here the writers illustrate how 'magic' plays itself out in a variety of contemporary settings. Business may claim to be rational, economists may assert that the market represents the finest of all rationalities; but leadership, entrepreneurship and the world of derivatives, all seem of owe more to 'im-magic-nation' than to enlightenment rationality. Likewise, in research, interdisciplinary awareness, and high theory, we meet up with magic seen as a source of creativity or as a curse to understanding.

To repeat: in the first part of the book the focus is on magic understood from the perspective of contemporary business practice; the second part of the book is more speculative, focusing on re-understandings of magic. The first part

of the book addresses the presence of magic in organizations, either as a necessary, positive, lively, creative and imaginative power; or as propaganda, distortion and chicanery. The second part presents magical thought as a source of relatedness and novel 'being' in art, research and philosophy, where magic implies the presence of the supernatural, spiritual, vitalist, and/or other, all too often absent, affective dimensions.

What ideas for business and organization research do we link to the concept and phenomenon of magic? The first part is introduced by **Per Olof Berg** (Chapter 2), presenting a treatise in defense of 'magic' as imagination, wherein he argues that the necessary imagination and creativity needed for contemporary business success cannot do without it. Organizations need more magic! He asserts magic's positive and necessary role in innovation, creativity and in an economy of rapid change. The five ensuing chapters debate the pros and cons of the assertion. **James Fairhead** (Chapter 3) reflects on the current idealization of trickster corporate chieftains, and sees the origins of going astray in the figure of the Renaissance magus. A genealogy of magical practices is able to discern the invention and growing acceptance of their servant image-magicians, acting as public relations and image builders, leading nowadays to corporate 'kitschification', with its ability to simplify, prettify and occlude from view its ugly agendas, an endeavour made all the more powerful by the age-old willingness of the magician's victim to be fooled. This state of affairs, it might seem, is rendered marginally more tolerable by the historical fact that it is ultimately the magician, too, who often ends up suffering from his tricksterism. **Iain Munro** (Chapter 4) then underscores the importance of certain magical ideas in the work of Marx and Weber (fetish and charisma), and examines the persistence of alchemical and astrological notions in modern business thinking with Knowledge Management and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator as examples. **Ivo de Loo, Alan Lowe and Philip Smith** (Chapter 5) explain how accounting can stage illusory views of performance, identified by critical accounting as *representationalism* and *performativism*. Drawing on two cases, they argue that accountants can magically save or ruin a business: reports and reporting are all too close to being magic tricks. **Peter Case and Peter Pelzer** (Chapter 6) see the numbers and reports used for risk management as ritual enactments: that is, as a way to exorcise the demon of risk, instead of dealing directly with it. Because risk management remains an art of divination, the daily management of risky undertakings, according to them, rests on practical mastery, a *metis* necessary to diagnose, evaluate and manage risk. Finally, **Geoff Lightfoot and Simon Lilley** (Chapter 7) delve into the magical thought and performance of traders and financial management. They see that a kind of staged magical show is being performed here. The appearance of magic enables one to keep opaque the actual workings of the

sophisticated algorithms and issues of human limitations. The (all too) human interventions are concealed and kept behind the curtains.

The second part of the book is introduced by **Hugo Letiche** (Chapter 8), who focuses in his contribution on recent developments in social studies and especially anthropology in the study of magic. He reveals how 'magic' has been transformed from the pariah of social sciences to become a site of exciting new research. The lessening of Eurocentrism as a dominant attitude has led to a radical rethinking of magic, pointing to a new spirit of concept creation, which tries to free itself of the ethnocentric and naturalist prejudices of the traditional conceptualizations of magic. The five ensuing chapters discuss departures and experiments with magic. Here the focus is on how the renewal of perspective can contribute to new thought and research. **Jean-Luc Moriceau** (Chapter 9) highlights the magic tricks taught in doctoral training, to make interpretation disappear and transmute 'data' into hard science. He proposes to educate the researcher's gaze with magical realism, and to attribute prestige less to the researcher than to the researched. He focuses on Alphonso Lingis as a role model. Following this, **Heather Höpfl** (Chapter 10) depicts Artaud's desires and rejections of both religion and magic, and how this translated in his theatre and life. She emphasizes the connection, in Artaud, of erotic corporeality to spirituality. **Hugo Letiche** (Chapter 11) then uses Cortazar's magical realism to explore a path away from Modernist rationalism. He finds there, playfulness, creativity, desire and fertility; but questions the absence of agency to which the path leads. **Michael Lazarin** (Chapter 12) makes us aware of the presence of absence, and the link with the ghostly figures who inhabit our lives. He explores desires for contact with the other of presence in Heidegger's assertion that the West no longer knows how to think, and in what Japanese poetry and theatre try to communicate. He finds solace in the quest for ghosts and in mourning. Finally, **Pierre Guillet de Monthoux** (Chapter 13) retraces how the encounter between Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari re-introduced magic, that is, awakening, creativity and productivity, into a philosophical landscape whose disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) had led to a certain sleepiness. This was achieved in particular thanks to an oscillation (*schwung*) between the binary opposites of a Badiou and the formalism of a Céline.

The **Afterword**, in the place of a conclusion, explores how the editors think that the study of magic can proceed, highlighting the potential of magic in support of critical thought. In many of the chapters, the more socio-economically critical the author was, the more magic was rejected. We question that logic and point to alternatives for further exploration.

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