

Preface

"Unnice Work"

Knowledge Work and the Academy

Even this warning did not prepare Robyn for the shock of the foundry. . . . Her first instinct was to cover her ears, but she soon realised that it was not going to get any quieter, and let her hands fall to her sides. The floor was covered with a black substance that looked like soot, but grated under the soles of her boots like sand. The air reeked with a sulphurous, resinous smell, and a fine drizzle of black dust fell on their heads from the roof. Here and there the open doors of furnaces glowed a dangerous red, and in the far corner of the building what looked like a stream of molten lava trickled down a curved channel from roof to floor. . . . Everywhere there was indescribable mess, dirt, disorder

David Lodge, *Nice Work* (1988)

Was David Lodge's 1988 novel simply behind the times when it challenged its heroine, Robyn Penrose, temporary lecturer in English literature, to confront the sooty business managed by its hero, Vic Wilcox, product of a Midlands technical college? Was this the utmost challenge that Lodge could imagine for the contemporary academic sensibility: to come to grips with the realism of "smokestack" industrialism as it has appalled fiction since the nineteenth-century industrial novel (Lodge's elaborate allusion) through at least D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*? If so, then we can adequately attribute Lodge's comedy to the slow, sly romance he builds between the academy and industry (and their protagonists)—to his deft dance of opposites that at last issues, if not in a classically comic wedding, then at least

in the fleeting copulation of two faculties of expertise divorced since Victorian sages presided over the "idea of a university."

Or should we allow Lodge's minor prophets of the new world order—Robyn's investment banker brother; his financial exchange dealer consort; or, perhaps most tellingly, the "CNC," or computer-numerically-controlled manufacturing machine in Vic's factory—to shift the comedy into an altogether different register of satire? Robyn's brother says cheekily while on holiday from financial London: "Companies like [Vic's] are batting on a losing wicket. . . . the future for our economy is in service industries, and perhaps some hi-tech engineering." Vic says somberly, as he and Robyn stare across a Perspex pane at the CNC machine's inhumanly "violent, yet controlled" motions, "One day . . . there will be lightless factories full of machines like that. . . . Once you've built a fully computerised factory, you can take out the lights, shut the door and leave it to make engines or vacuum cleaners or whatever, all on its own in the dark." "O brave new world," Robyn responds.¹

To glimpse even peripherally such a brave new world order is to recognize that Lodge's last, best joke—so cruel that only his furiously contrived happy ending can salve the bite of the satire—is the obsolescence of the entire, tired opposition between the academy and industry. "Shadows" of each other, as the novel calls them, Robyn and Vic both inhabit a twilight order on the other side of the Perspex—or more fittingly, computer screen—from true *post-industrial* night. That night, which in its own eyes seems the dawning of a new enlightenment, is knowledge work, and the information work that is its medium. Knowledge work is the *Aufhebung* of both academic "knowledge" and industrial "work."

"We grew up in the Industrial Age," Thomas A. Stewart writes in *Intellectual Capital: The New Wealth of Organizations* (1997):

It is gone, supplanted by the Information Age. The economic world we are leaving was one whose main sources of wealth were physical. The things we bought and sold were, well, *things*; you could touch them, smell them, kick their tires, slam their doors and hear a satisfying thud. . . .

In this new era, wealth is the product of knowledge. Knowledge and information—not just scientific knowledge, but news, advice, entertainment, communication, service—have become the economy's primary raw materials and its most important products. Knowledge is what we buy and sell. You can't smell it or touch it. . . . The capital assets that are needed to create wealth today are not land, not physical labor, not machine tools and factories: They are, instead, knowledge assets.²

The clarion call of the new millennium is clear: *Let the academies have pure ideas. Let the Third World (represented in Lodge's novel by the swarthy, immigrant underclass who serve Vic's factory) have pure matter work. You, the New Class destined to inherit the earth (or at least cubicle), you who are endowed with the inalienable right to process a spreadsheet, database, or report: have you counted your knowledge assets today?*

But this is too facile a caricature of the age of knowledge work. Just as Lodge's academic romance can be read in different tones, so too can our contemporary romances of knowledge work. I refer to the immensely influential and best-selling works of fiction-blended-with-realism—let us loosely call them “novels”—by the Victorian sages of our time: management “gurus” (Stewart among them). The mold, as John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge note in their survey of the genre, was set in 1982 by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, Jr.'s best-selling *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies*.³ The genre came into its own in the early 1990s, with the appearance of works of wide impact such as these:

Michael Hammer and James Champy, *Reengineering the Corporation: A Manifesto for Business Revolution*

Joseph H. Boyett and Henry P. Conn, *Workplace 2000: The Revolution Reshaping American Business*

Robert M. Tomasko, *Downsizing: Reshaping the Corporation for the Future*

William H. Davidow and Michael S. Malone, *The Virtual Corporation: Structuring and Revitalizing the Corporation for the 21st Century*

Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*

Don Tapscott, *The Digital Economy: Promise and Peril in the Age of Networked Intelligence*

Tom Peters, *Liberation Management: Necessary Disorganization for the Nano-second Nineties*

Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization*

Peter F. Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society*

“These books,” Armand Mattelart comments, “which enjoyed a transnational readership far broader than just business executives, provided a medium for the followers of the new business doctrine,” “a veritable cult of enterprise, bordering on the religious.”⁴ And this is not even to mention the new journalism of business that, everywhere we look—in newspapers,

magazines, cable business channels, and ordinary TV news—amplifies the dominant fictional realism of our times by rehearsing the mantra of right-sizing, just-in-time delivery, flat-structuring, disintermediation, flexibility, teamwork, lifelong learning, diversity management, and (that ultimate arbiter of collective fiction) shareholder value—all instantiated in networked information technology, or “IT.”

Inverting my questions about Lodge, we may pose the following puzzles for the postindustrial business imagination. On the one hand, is the new business literature simply ahead of (rather than, as with Lodge, behind) the times when it promises an age of business that is all information processing? Is the new business literature, in other words, what the word *virtual* may really mean—posthistorical? “When someone asks us for a quick definition of business reengineering,” Hammer and Champy declare in their *Reengineering the Corporation*, “we say it means ‘starting over.’ It doesn’t mean tinkering with what already exists or making incremental changes that leave basic structures intact.” Peter F. Drucker, the dean of U.S. management theory, sums it up: “Innovation,” he says, “means, first, the systematic sloughing off of yesterday.”⁵ Read virtually or posthistorically in this way, the business bestsellers are utopian prophecies of what Michael Derouzos calls *What Will Be*, and Bill Gates refers to as *The Road Ahead* (to cite two titles from the affiliated genre of information-technology prophecy).⁶

On the other hand, is the new business literature so dystopian (pessimistic about the future, where Lodge’s minor prophets are optimistic) that its real subject is the impassibility of history? Witness, for example, the rhetorical dependence of the genre not just on broad denunciations of traditional ways of living and working, but also on long catalogs of specific historical “obstacles.” “So, if managements want companies that are lean, nimble, flexible, responsive, competitive, innovative, efficient, customer-focused, and profitable,” Hammer and Champy ask, “why are so many American companies bloated, clumsy, rigid, sluggish, noncompetitive, uncreative, inefficient, disdainful of customer needs, and losing money?” The answer is history: “Inflexibility, unresponsiveness, the absence of customer focus, an obsession with activity rather than result, bureaucratic paralysis, lack of innovation, high overhead—these are the legacies of one hundred years of American industrial leadership.”⁷ Similarly, we can take the measure of how Davidow and Malone’s *The Virtual Corporation* excoriates old ways of doing things from the following excerpt, in which history is purely a process of decay:

Here in the United States, [the] sense of distortion and confusion, mixed with considerable fear, has become an uncomfortable part of our daily lives.

Everywhere there is a disquieting sense of decay—in government, within boardrooms, on shop floors. . . .

One by one our industries are losing competitiveness and market share to industries of other nations. Our government seems more concerned with lifelong job security for politicians and spending money it doesn't have than in enhancing the economic prosperity of the citizenry. Our manufacturing sector often insults consumers with shoddy products and workers with unearned executive compensation—and then blames its woes on foreign competition. By the same token, workers are frequently unmotivated and selfish compared with their foreign counterparts; and consumers have in the past replaced good sense and security with almost pathological acquisitiveness.

Meanwhile, our major cities, once the jewels of our culture, have become violent, ungovernable places perpetually teetering on bankruptcy.⁸

Education, of course, comes in for special attention as the very pharaoh of decadent old ways. A plague on education, Boyett and Conn thus say, or, to be exact (citing the business spokesmen they quote in their chapter on education), schools are a "national disaster," "a third world within our own country," "the American dream turned nightmare," "the greatest threat to our national security," and so on.⁹

To emphasize such harsh, corrosive, often satiric denunciation, we recognize, is to see that the new business literature walks the dark side of the street (the "road ahead") of prophecy. From this perspective, works in this genre are fire-and-brimstone jeremiads damning sinners in the hands of an angry global competition. Gurus are not seers of the new millennium. They are witnesses to a damned history that is everywhere and nowhere, present in every manifest obstacle imposed by the past, yet profoundly unknowable in the discourse of knowledge work except as monstrous other. History is an imaginary Third World—a reservation for peoples who remain historical—couched within the First World itself. It is the other of the future.

To reflect on the relation between knowledge work and the academy today, in short, is to discover a profound ambivalence. I raise questions of stance or tone about Lodge's novel and the new literature of business not to suggest that such questions can be firmly decided. Rather, the considerable vitality of both the novel and the business discourse I cite depends precisely on their undecidability. Comedy or satire, prophecy or jeremiad: the underlying contradictions glossed by these modes are structural. As such, they are best approached in the spirit not of decision but of suspense. We are, after all,

on the scene of the abiding suspense of the contemporary middle class, which is even more structurally contradictory than the original white-collar class of the twentieth century. To be a white-collar or salaried worker in the 1950s, for example, was to stake the entirety of one's authority not on the self-owned property, business, goods, or money of the predecessor entrepreneurial classes of the nineteenth century, but on an existentially anxious property of "knowledge" that had to be re-earned from scratch by one's children.¹⁰ Thus was laid the foundation for the overdetermined relation between business and education. But to be a professional-managerial-technical worker now is to stake one's authority on an even more precarious knowledge that has to be re-earned with every new technological change, business cycle, or downsizing in one's own life. Thus is laid the foundationless suspense, the perpetual anxiety, of "lifelong learning."

Understanding knowledge (and information) work from the point of view of the academy, therefore—and especially understanding the contemporary relation between knowledge work and the academy—means exploring a complexly ambivalent zone of antipathy, cross-purposes, and also, at times, unexpected sympathy. To do so requires the opposite of the decisiveness heard so preemptively—to cite an important example—in the "Final Report of the MLA Committee on Professional Employment" (1998), a white paper commissioned by the Modern Language Association to suggest ways to ameliorate the "job crisis" in the humanities. However acute, consistent, or substantial its recommendations may be (or not), the "Final Report" is clearly fighting the last war when it legitimates itself in its preface:

Lawmakers call for greater productivity on campus, and advisers trained in business management counsel various forms of "downsizing." In numerous instances, indeed, formal commissions, college presidents, boards of trustees, and the media have pressed for a new efficiency in higher education based on corporate models in which students are defined as "clients" or even "products" and academic institutions are regarded as sites of production. But *of course* the object of business corporations is to make a profit, while the object of institutions of higher education is to acquire and disseminate knowledge as well as, most important, to develop in students sophisticated intellectual strategies they will use for the rest of their lives, in and out of the workplace.¹¹

The Maginot Line here, of course, is the "of course" that refuses at all costs to acknowledge the complexity of the contemporary overlap between the work of education and the knowledge work of business. What the perspec-

tive represented by the "Final Report" thus refuses to see is the seriousness of the challenge to academic knowledge posed by a knowledge work that has been redefined—in the mode of Fritz Machlup's and Marc Uri Porat's magisterially inclusive accounts of knowledge industries—as both a practical *and* intellectual pretender to the academic throne.¹² In the academy, educators have long been accustomed to accommodating the *practical* logic of business, as personified comfortably and endogamously in those whom they love to hate—administrators.¹³ To follow the lead of both the "Final Report" (in its discussion of "careers outside the academy") and the Presidential Forum at the 1998 Modern Language Association convention, the humanities are just now thinking about going exogamous—that is, asking business nicely for work as part of a general enterprise of "going public."¹⁴ But what has been generally missing is any engagement with the full *intellectual* force of business in its new persona as knowledge work.

My meaning is illustrated by a single passage from one of the most influential and widely cited gospels of the new knowledge work, Peter Senge's *Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (1990). This is how Senge defines his fifth, climactic discipline of business change, "Metanoia—A Shift of Mind":

When you ask people about what it is like being part of a great team, what is most striking is the meaningfulness of the experience. People talk about being part of something larger than themselves, of being connected, of being generative. It becomes quite clear that, for many, their experiences as part of truly great teams stand out as singular periods of life lived to the fullest. Some spend the rest of their lives looking for ways to recapture that spirit.

The most accurate word in Western culture to describe what happens in a learning organization is one that hasn't had much currency for the past several hundred years. It is a word we have used in our work with organizations for some ten years, but we always caution them, and ourselves, to use it sparingly in public. The word is "metanoia" and it means a shift of mind. The word has a rich history. For the Greeks, it meant a fundamental shift or change, or more literally transcendence ("*meta*"—above or beyond, as in "metaphysics") of mind ("noia," from the root "*nous*," of mind). In the early (Gnostic) Christian tradition, it took on a special meaning of awakening shared intuition and direct knowing of the highest, of God. "Metanoia" was probably the key term of such early Christians as John the Baptist. In the Catholic corpus the word metanoia was eventually translated as "repent."

To grasp the meaning of "metanoia" is to grasp the deeper meaning of "learning."¹⁵

For the humanities scholar, there is inexpressible irony in the thought that the single most influential contemporary visionary of the One Life and Imagination (as the Romantic poets called it) should be a management guru.¹⁶ Senge offers a whole scholarship of, and about, learning *bypassing* academic historical knowledge in favor of a fantastic pastiche of classical, Christian, and (the real school of his work) New Age lore. It would be easy for the professional scholar to demystify Senge's lore (etymological speculation on the meaning of words, after all, has been one of the preferred gambits of deconstruction). But this would miss the point, which is that the academy can no longer claim supreme jurisdiction over knowledge. The narrowness of much contemporary academic research is perhaps precisely what allows Senge to claim high-court jurisdiction in the breadth and daring of his intellectual-cum-practical will to know what it might mean to "know."

We are now in a position to understand why a serious study of knowledge work from the perspective of the academy is necessary. Scholars are themselves knowledge workers in a complete sense: they are intellectuals, but they are also middle managers responsible for an endless series of programs, committees, performance reports, and so on.¹⁷ More important, their entire mission is the education of students who, however diverse their backgrounds, are destined for service in the great, contemporary prosperity corps of knowledge work. (Even students who aim for more idealistic, Peace-Corps-style service in government, nonprofit, or low-profit sectors are likely to experience the increasing colonization of all work by the principles and technologies of corporate knowledge work.) Only if scholars now think about business as an intellectual *and* practical partner in knowledge work, therefore, can the critical issues in the relation of the academy to business be joined. Asking business for nice work need not mean selling out, but only if the contemporary academy engages business in a full act of critique in which it both gives and takes. Such reciprocal critique cannot even be initiated unless it is elevated to the proper level, where scholars first assume that the academy and business have a common stake in the work of knowledge and, second, ask, "What *then* is the difference?" What is the postindustrial, and not nineteenth-century, difference between the academy and the "learning organization"?¹⁸

Since the mid-twentieth century, we may reflect, the U.S. academy has increasingly understood its business to be the education of "all"—or at least as many of the "all" as a relatively liberal notion of the white-collar middle

class (and its more recent New Class techno-managerial-professional overlords) can accommodate. But now knowledge work has called the academy's bluff. Here is a partial listing of the areas of knowledge production that Machlup included in his 1962 survey:

Education (at home, on the job, in church, in the armed services, elementary and secondary, higher)
 Research and development (basic, applied)
 Media of communication (printing and publishing, photography and phonography, stage and cinema, broadcasting, advertising and public relations, telephone, telegraph, and postal service)
 Information machines (instruments for measurement, observation, and control; office information machines; electronic computers)
 Information services (legal, engineering and architectural, accounting and auditing, medical, financial, wholesale trade)

Now that knowledge—in its training, exercise, and possession—really is presumed ideologically, if not in fact, to be the business of “all,” and especially of business, how will be the academy adapt to its diminished role as one among many providers in a potentially rich and diverse—but also potentially impoverished and culturally uniform—ecology of knowledge? In the “knowledge economy,” education occurs across a whole lifetime in an unprecedented variety of social sectors, institutions, and media: not just schools, community colleges, and universities, but also businesses, broadcast media, the Internet, even the manuals or “tutorials” that accompany software applications. Education, in other words, is now a decentralized field where no one institution individually corners the market and where we encounter a dizzying dispersion of the kinds and scales of learning—all the way from educational programs leading to degrees to CNN “factoids” leading only to the next commercial.¹⁹ What voice will brave, dear Temporary Lecturer Robyn Penrose have in the cacophonous new world of knowledge work? In broader terms, how can society create the most inclusive, flexible, and intelligently interrelated mix of educational options to take care of all its citizens hungry to “know”?²⁰

What is the idea of knowledge work? What is its relation to the knowledge of the humanities in the contemporary academy? And how does focusing specifically on “information work”—on its technologies, techniques, and, ultimately, culture—help us understand that relation?

Chapter 1

The Idea of Knowledge Work

To understand knowledge work from the perspective of the humanities, let us start by reviewing in a single frame of analysis three explanations of the concept that arose independently and largely in ignorance of each other. Two are academic approaches characteristic of the humanities in their now prevailing cultural critical personality. The third is the neo-corporate business thesis that seems destined to buy out the others. Where there was “identity group” and “cultural class,” there will now be only that elementary unit of corporate knowledge work, the team.

Subject Work

Recall, to begin with, that since about 1980 the dominant, if unwitting, explanation of knowledge work in the humanities, especially in literature departments, has been the cultural criticism of identity and subject. Sketched very broadly, the paradigm of 1980s-style cultural criticism was as follows.¹

The paradigm started with the assumption that cultural value—or, put negatively, discrimination—is determined by social structure. Specifically, value is “constructed” by a structure whose implicit or explicit patterning after some hard-core segment of society (e.g., economic structure, patriarchal family structure) made it seem a unitary regime of social “containment” no matter what the evidence of inner “subversion.”² An example of such a formulation is Foucault's social “discursive

formation" as it became identified in common academic usage with the penitentiaries or bedlams that Foucault made into such strange attractors. Discursive formations were poststructuralist in their constitutive inner contradiction or scandal, but they were also palpably structuralist in their characteristically all-of-a-piece historical behavior. (In the standard narrative: first there was one discursive regime or "episteme" that hung all together, then another . . .)³ Of course, social constructionism that hung all together in this way ran the risk of being intolerably reductive and totalizing. Therefore (and here we glimpse the pertinence of the problem of knowledge work), cultural criticism in the 1980s found it crucial to introduce within social determination at least the *thought* of indeterminacy, by foregrounding the mediating role of "ideological state apparatuses," "representations," "mentalities," and other dream-states of *imaginary* constructionism supervised by such "relatively autonomous" institutions of identity formation as the church, school, or media.⁴ To restage the well-known Althusserian scene in which a policeman hails someone walking on the street ("Hey, you there!"): no wires are necessary for society to jerk one around because one's body is already wired that way by one's own head, by one's inculcated sense of who one is (e.g., a responsible citizen).⁵

My anatomization here of a body subordinated to a head is indicative. Though much cultural criticism argued that ideology manifests itself first of all in bodily constructions of gender, ethnicity, and race, the body as register of ideology has always been an emanation of the real point of ideology critique—figuratively, the head.⁶ The ultimate aim of 1980s-style cultural criticism, in other words, was the point-singularity or black hole of the imaginary named "the subject," for which identity groups (gender, ethnicity, race) were the social event horizon.⁷ Knowledge work was a subject or identity work as vast as all culture. It was everywhere.

More complexly, subject work was both an intense localism rooted in the "here and now of my life story" and a strangely generalized localism ("the personal is the political"). Like a Hollywood movie, it played *locally everywhere*—and thus, to advert to the well-known impasse of social or political "agency" in cultural criticism, also apparently nowhere in particular (thus necessitating the supplementary notion of the Foucaultian "specific intellectual" to locate sectors where knowledge work could be seen to concentrate in active fashion, as in Hollywood itself in my analogy).⁸

The exact personality of such generalized localism may be demonstrated by comparison with the (alleged) essentialism of nationalist and identity politics—uncanny doppelgängers that steadily lost credibility in the academy even as they flourished in other arenas throughout the 1980s. We can

grasp the underlying similarity between these two otherwise antithetical stances by recalling their classical precedent. In classical and neoclassical philosophy, the paradox of local yet also general identity had been assuaged, if not solved, by premising a universal "nature" embracing all. (For Sir Joshua Reynolds, for example, "the perfect state of nature" guarantees that just "as there is one general form, which . . . belongs to the human kind at large, so in each of these classes [the specific types of human kind] there is one common idea and central form, which is the abstract of the various individual forms belonging to that class.")⁹ Right-wing nationalism updated classicism by supposing instead that general-local identity was grounded within a *nativist* version of nature: "the American character," which was both particular (even regionalist) and somehow universal ("when in the course of human events . . ."). Essentialist identity politics then arose precisely to challenge the melting pot of nationalist nature through "groupisms" that imposed a different standard of nature. Decried by the cultural right as tribalism, yet also comprehensible as a return to a purer, city-state classicism, groupism on this model closed the contradiction between the local and the general—"me and my group," on the one hand, and universal human rights, on the other—on the basis of a hybrid cultural/biological "nature" (the essential nature of "woman," "African American," and so forth).¹⁰

Caught in the contest between nationalist and identity group essentialisms, constructivist cultural criticism in the 1980s sympathized fitfully with the latter. But really, it threw out both as twin horns of the same dilemma of chauvinism, leaving apparently no ground at all to take a stand upon.¹¹ All the grounds of human "nature" were removed from identity, and the relation between "me and my group" and the world was thus radically destabilized. While the relation did not become any more or less fundamentally contradictory, it became more dynamic, unfixed. Cultural criticism sometimes stressed the particularity of "my (group's) life story" and sometimes the generality that identity is universal.¹²

Now we can understand the less noted role of *cybercultural* criticism as it emerged in the mid-1980s to mid-1990s among communications scholars and sociologists of cyberspace as well as such literary or cultural critics of digital technology as J. David Bolter (*Turing's Man*), Michael Heim (*Electric Language*), George P. Landow (*Hypertext*), Mark Poster (*The Mode of Information, Second Media Age*), Howard Rheingold (*The Virtual Community*), Allucquère Rosanne Stone (*The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*), and Sherry Turkle (*Life on the Screen*) (in the company of others like Donna Haraway, who revised identity in light not just of information culture but of technoculture generally). As has become even clearer

in subsequent cyber- and new-media theory (for example, the many essay collections that have appeared with *culture* in their titles), cybercultural criticism was the flank movement of cultural criticism that pivoted the whole problem of the missing ground of identity toward the information front and, on that front, found a concrete way to think about the radical instability of constructed identity in terms well suited for the new millennium.¹³

It did so by unfolding the “locally everywhere” subject as the “virtual” subject. In the tradition of Marshall McLuhan writing about “typographic man” versus the “extensions of man,” the object of study in much cybercultural criticism was presumed from the first to be the subject—that is, the sensorium, cognition, affectivity, or identity of cyber-citizens and cyber-authors and -readers compared to their predecessors. Perfectly expressive is Mark Poster’s concern that “super-panoptic” databases will construct subjects as “dispersed identities,” or the pronounced anxiety of both advocates and foes of new media over the “erosion” of the textual “subject” (e.g., George Landow or Michael Heim on the authorial self, or Sven Birkerts in “Paging the Self: Privacies of Reading”).¹⁴ But as heard precisely in such epithets as *dispersed* or *eroded*, the assumption was that the virtual subject is centered not on any essential ground (and certainly not any natural or national ground) but instead on empty ground. This empty ground is the “network.”¹⁵ Identity in this thesis is schizophrenically both local and general, both locked in solitude before a “personal computer” and (like the users Turkle studies “cycling,” “morphing,” or “slipping” between “multiple” virtual personae) driven to distribute itself compulsively over the wires everywhere.¹⁶ In between the local and general is the postnatural and postnational network (more accurately, Inter-network) that is the great contemporary construction. What is the ontological, social, political, economic, and other status of this construction? What, in other words, is networked identity when—following the original military specifications for the Internet (then the ARPAnet)—such identity is so dynamic and flexible that it can route around interruptions in system integrity as big as a nuclear strike? Borrowing from poststructuralist theory, cybercultural criticism provided an essentially negative answer—what such identity was not. It was not centered identity, stable identity, and so on.

By way of illustration we can recall all the fictional “shape shifters” or “morphs” who suddenly appeared in mass media in the early 1990s: computer-morphed singers in music videos; the morph villain from the future in *Terminator II*; the morph security expert on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* who periodically lost his shape and had to sleep in a bucket; the net-

worked, all-assimilating Borg on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, who were really a collective morph; or even the comic morph represented by Jim Carrey’s bizarrely flexible bank account manager in *The Mask*.¹⁷ Cybercultural criticism wanted to know who the morph was who occupied all those security-expert, networked, managerial, and other flexible information jobs.

(New) Class Work

A second explanation of knowledge work also arose in the academy, but from the direction of sociology rather than literary cultural studies. This understanding, while originally of 1970s vintage, crossed disciplinary boundaries into general intellectual prominence in the early to mid-1990s just in time to tell us who the morph was: the white-collar professional/managerial/technical class, or “New Class.” I refer to New Class critique together with the related “cultural capital” approach to class experience—a set of revisionary assumptions and methods about social stratification that came powerfully to bear on literary studies in 1993 in John Guillory’s *Cultural Capital* (and that had previously made inroads in cyber- and technocultural studies in Andrew Ross’s *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* and Myron C. Tuman’s *Word Perfect: Literacy in the Computer Age*).¹⁸

For convenience, I will treat the broader and narrower aspects of such critique in succession: first, the general sociology of culture-based class distinctions proposed by Pierre Bourdieu; then, the more specific sociology of the New Class. Both levels of the critique can be said to be constitutionally amorphous. To borrow a term that Loïc J. D. Wacquant applies to Bourdieu, their logic is fuzzy.¹⁹

In the Bourdieu variant, which is the major influence on Guillory’s book, social distinction is distributed unequally on the basis of a fuzzy logic “general” economy of capital (simultaneously economic, cultural, social, and symbolic).²⁰ This economy is organized not so much by total social structure or system as by a more shapeless version of structure, social “fields.” Defined by occupational, professional, institutional, and/or geographical boundaries, social fields resemble the cultural critical notion (some would say caricature) of structure because they are determinative.²¹ But fields are unlike structure because they have no necessary coherence, either internally or in external relation to some social totality patterned after a master field. “Every field,” Bourdieu writes, “constitutes a potentially open space of play whose boundaries are *dynamic borders* which are the stake of struggles within the field itself.”²² So fuzzy are such fields that Bourdieu’s characteristic tables and

diagrams of multivariant analyses are really not a method but a world-view: the fields creative of social reality behave like quantum shells that are knowable only statistically and diffusely.²³

Consequently, the issue of the totalistic determination of a subject by a structure is from the first a nonissue for Bourdieu. Determination may act in certain fields in certain ways and in specific combinations with other fields (and with historical change) to give particular people distinction. But there is nothing certain or even interesting to say about *overall* social determination as such, other than that it is statistically "overall." The entire epicyle of "imaginary" (in)determination that 1980s-style cultural criticism added to its Ptolemaic system to resist totalizing determination is thus moot. Not only does Bourdieu have no use for the imaginary, he actively prosecutes it in favor of his thesis that fields affect human experience through the opposite of the body as register of ideology—the body *without* ideology. In his characteristic idiom, social fields are inhabited "organically" and "durably" by "incorporated" "bodily practice," "sense," and "disposition" to create a gigantic end-run around the head called *habitus*. *Habitus* is the body-resident instantiation of practical beliefs, or *unimaginary* ideology, that Bourdieu calls *doxa*: "the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field to which it is attuned, the preverbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense."²⁴ (As we will see later, however, the question of the imaginary in such analysis returns when the field in question is information.)

Now we can bring the Bourdieu paradigm to its head, which is not the figurative head at all but something much fuzzier. What is the identity of *habitus*? Not subjectivity at all, but a different kind of body (rather than head) politic. "To speak of *habitus*," Bourdieu argues, "is to assert that the individual, and even the personal, the subjective, is social, collective. *Habitus* is a socialized subjectivity."²⁵ *Habitus* confers the identity that throughout Bourdieu's work goes by the name of "class *habitus*" or *cultural class*—the fuzzy, lifestyle version of economic class.²⁶ Like subjectivity, cultural class is as vast as all culture because class work is locally everywhere. But the class concept is designed from the ground up to stratify the local by distinct levels and sectors—dominant, petit bourgeois, and working class, with their component occupations—so as to scale up to the general system of class relations with articulated precision (in contrast to the more or less uniform "difference" celebrated by subject critique).²⁷ As instanced in the educators Bourdieu studies in *Distinction* and *Homo Academicus*, therefore, class work may occur everywhere, but knowledge work is a sector within that universality positioned exactly with reference to other sectors. Rather than being a free-

floating imaginary performed by anyone and everyone who has a subject, it is a discrete set of practices performed by a designated class rooted in a particular if widespread *habitus* of educational, linguistic, occupational, political, musical, gustatory, and other commonplaces.

Yet however divergent its emphases, the thesis of cultural class also ultimately converges with that of the subject. Given that cultural capital is expressly *not* just material capital (and *habitus* therefore not just the body but also practice, sense, and disposition), cultural class is clearly not essentialist class. Instead, class for Bourdieu is open to the same style of instability we saw in subject critique. Consider, for example, the oscillation between (in my notation) Bourdieu's emphasis on [a] the local individual and [b] the general system in the following set of passages from *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, where the oscillation has an energy and abruptness that exceed the carefully balanced pendulum swings by which Bourdieu sometimes consciously practices hermeneutics ("a sort of hermeneutic circle . . . an endless to and fro movement in the research process that is quite lengthy and arduous").²⁸

The notion of field reminds us that the true object of social science is not [a] the individual, even though one cannot construct a field if not through individuals, since the information necessary for statistical analysis is generally attached to individuals or institutions. [b] It is the field which is primary. . . . [a] This does not imply that individuals are mere "illusions," that they do not exist: [b] they exist as *agents*—and not as biological individuals, actors, or subjects—who are socially constituted as active and acting in the field.

[a] *Habitus* is not the fate that some people read into it. Being the product of history, it is an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not eternal! [b] Having said this, I must immediately add that there is a probability, inscribed in the social destiny associated with definite social conditions, that experiences will confirm *habitus*, because most people are statistically bound to encounter circumstances that tend to agree with those that originally fashioned their *habitus*.

[a] In truth, the problem of the genesis of the socialized biological individual, [b] of the social conditions of formation and acquisition of the generative preference structures that constitute *habitus* as the social embodied, is an extremely complex question.

This study [one “recently launched on the experience of ‘social suffering’”] is premised on the idea that [a] *the most personal is [b] the most impersonal*, that many of [a] the most intimate dramas, the deepest malaises, the most singular suffering that women and men can experience find their roots in [b] the objective contradictions, constraints and double binds inscribed in the structures of the labor and housing markets, in the merciless sanctions of the school system, or in mechanisms of economic and social inheritance. . . . Armed with full knowledge of [a] the individual’s social trajectory and life-context, we proceed by means of very lengthy, highly interactive, in-depth interviews aimed at helping interviewees discover and state [b] the hidden principle of their extreme tragedies or ordinary misfortunes; and at allowing them to rid themselves of this external reality that inhabits and haunts them, possesses them from the inside, and dispossesses them of initiative in their own existence in the manner of the monster in *Alien*.²⁹

The abruptly self-interrupting rhythm of such a locution as “It is durable but not eternal! Having said this, I must immediately add . . .” may be likened to Bourdieu’s image of that brilliantly realized morph subject, the creature in *Alien*. Individual identity is breached from within by a principle of general sociality that—as in the exoskeletal hideousness of the creature bursting from its victim’s chest cavity—is nothing other than pure exteriority. Local being bonds to general being, in other words, on the grounds of a common essence (we are all food for the monster) that is an *alien* essence.

More could be said about how the lack of natural essence destabilizes the local/general relation in Bourdieu. Take the instability of national essence in his work, for example. Premised on class rather than nation, identity for Bourdieu is geopolitically unpredictable. On the one hand, he is always careful to root his analyses of social distinction firmly in a particular nation, France. His conclusions, he thus qualifies, are local, not general. On the other hand, there is an unsettling tendency in his writings (and certainly in his reception) to reach across national borders toward general class experience. “This book will strike the reader as ‘very French,’” he begins in the preface to the English-language edition of *Distinction*, only to continue: “But I believe it is possible to enter into the singularity of an object without renouncing the ambition of drawing out universal proportions.” There may thus be “structural invariants” and “equivalent institutions” bridging France and America.³⁰

It would be stretching it to compare Bourdieu at this point so fully to subject critique that the logical outcome would again be cybercultural criti-

cism (as best instanced here, perhaps, by the Bourdieu Forum list on the Internet, which in the past has made the nationality of class an explicit topic). Still, we can spot the basic congruence of Bourdieu’s class thesis and the network thesis in a passage like the following: “a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. . . . The social cosmos is made up of a number of such relatively autonomous social microcosms, i.e., spaces of objective relations that are the site of a logic and a necessity that are *specific and irreducible* to those that regulate other fields.”³¹ Identity is locally specific and irreducible. But it is also generally comparable to “other fields” because it exists on the plane of abstract, empty continuity that is the “network” of “social space and its transformations” (so titled in a chapter of *Distinction*).³² At once postnatural (nonmaterial) and postnational, such social space is Bourdieu’s network. As he says at one point in *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, “I have analyzed the peculiarity of cultural capital, which we should in fact call *informational capital* to give the notion its full generality, and which itself exists in three forms, embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.”³³ It is almost as if Bourdieu were equating “network” specifically with the Internet.

That so much of Bourdieu’s work focuses on intellectuals indicates the degree to which his sociology dovetails with New Class critique.³⁴ New Class critique began when class theorists observed that the emphasis of old-style Marxism on binaristic struggle between capitalists and workers had been fatally embarrassed by a massive extrusion of the middle class in the twentieth century—knowledge workers, who had come to bulk so large and influential as a group that they seemed to crowd out all others.³⁵ Defined most narrowly, the New Class refers to our current elite or ruling class: the professionals, managers, technical intelligentsia, intellectuals, semi-autonomous credentialed employees, and others who constitute the upper and middle crust of the “new middle class.” Or rather, since the term *new middle class* was coined to refer to the salaried middle class that emerged early in the twentieth century from the older, entrepreneurial and small-farm middle classes, we can say that the New Class is the second-generation or *new* “new middle class.” Defined more broadly, the New Class overlaps complexly and sometimes undecidably with what may be called its “trailing edge”: clerical and other clean-collar service workers who identify (or are identified) with the code of professionalism but who do not enjoy the full perquisites of that

status. Both the higher and lower strata of the class have a stake in “knowledge work”; whether we should stress their differentiation or commonality depends on the context of discussion.³⁶

The main thesis about the New Class, especially in its Marxist or leftist variants (most famously, Alvin Gouldner’s *Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*), is remarkably similar to Bourdieu’s fuzzy logic in relation to subject critique. Again, the premise is that cultural value stems from a general economy of cultural or “human capital” (“moneyed capital is . . . a special case of capital”). Again, this economy is thought to be organized not so much by totalizing social structure as by the evidentiary basis of New Class critique—occupational fields.³⁷ Such fields are so far from being total that there is no consensus about the nature of the structural whole they piece together. As epitomized in Val Burris’s comparative chart of several New Class theories, for example, views of the modern social whole are contradictory (fig. 1.1). Crucially, there is marked disagreement over where to draw the line between socially higher and lower occupations, which results in the divergence between the narrow and broad definitions of the New Class I referred to above and also touches upon the key structural contradiction underlying the whole discussion. On the one hand, salaried knowledge workers are in the camp of capitalist owners because they supervise wage workers—to the extent that expertise-based control has actually replaced ownership-based control in most major enterprises. On the other hand (a circumstance only partially mitigated in high-tech firms by the distribution of stock options to nonexecutives), they are largely excluded from actual ownership and are therefore themselves ultimately vulnerable to exploitation.³⁸ Owning a capital of pure knowledge that “cannot be hoarded against hard times” and whose reproduction requires education and self-discipline “visited, in each generation, upon the young as they were upon the parents,” as Barbara Ehrenreich puts it, knowledge workers are “an insecure and deeply anxious” elite.³⁹ No wonder that in some circumstances and at some times, knowledge workers act like owners, while at other times they behave like proletariat. And so, too, with their politics, which has been of particular interest to the left: today knowledge workers are left, tomorrow right-leaning.⁴⁰

Consequently, the cultural critical hypothesis of the imaginary is hardly needed to mediate structural determination. When indeterminacy is the structural condition, the thought of indeterminacy is redundant. The extent to which ideology critique effectively drops out of the equation in New Class theory is thus striking. Mental work is the crucial fact, but such work clearly has nothing to do with the work of the imaginary, even when (as in

Detailed Class Fractions	Poulantzas's Classes	Mills's Classes	Ehrenreich's Classes	Carchedi's Classes	Wright's Classes
Managers and Supervisors	New Petty Bourgeoisie	New Middle Class	Professional-Managerial Class	New Middle Class	Managers and Supervisors
Professional and Technical Workers				Proletariat	Semi-auton. (credentialled) Employees
Routine Mental Workers		Proletariat	Proletariat		
Unproductive Manual Workers	Proletariat				
Productive Manual Workers	Proletariat	Proletariat			

Figure 1.1 Burris's table of alternative models of class divisions among salaried workers
From Val Burris, “Class Structure and Political Ideology,” *Insurgent Sociologist* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 33.

Gouldner’s thesis) it carries the potential for vanguardist resistance to determination. Mental work remains foremost an occupational phenomenon whose significance lies more in the demographics of *work* than in the uniqueness of *mental* work. The New Class notion of mental work is thus broadly aligned with Bourdieu’s antimentalist habitus (though here again, recentring the discussion on information work will require that mentality be reconsidered). In Gouldner’s influential explanation, for example, knowledge work is primarily a linguistic habit. It is rooted in a shared “culture of critical discourse” that originates in schooling to inculcate habits of analytical distance, judgment through rationality (as opposed to authority), technical mastery, professional autonomy, and other ultimately class practices.⁴¹ Mentalism is a way of life.

To bring the argument to its head is therefore again to skip the head for a different order of identity, named in “New Class” itself: a revisionary notion of “class.” New Class critique, we may say, is a method that has been dragged protesting from economically grounded class analysis to what seems to some of its practitioners the Never-Never Land of a new class concept—not just a concept of the New Class but a new concept of class. Depending on which theorist one reads, the class of knowledge workers is just an assemblage, a “weakly formed class,” or, in Erik Olin Wright’s important formulation, a “contradictory class.”⁴² It is the class of morphs, or amorphous class. Yet the whole point is that such amorphousness is concretely fractionable and locatable, sector by sector. Knowledge work may be as vast as all culture because it is everywhere. But instead of being “locally everywhere,” as in subject critique, now it is sociologically everywhere, in a man-

ner to be counted in such places as the central office, the branch office, the line, and so forth.

Yet however different its emphases from those of cultural criticism, New Class critique is also like Bourdieu's approach in finally converging with the thesis of the constructed subject. It does so because the void essence that underlies its "weakly formed" class is susceptible to the same unstable relation between local and general identity we previously witnessed. Here the postnational aspect of the problem is most salient. On the one hand, Gouldner throughout localizes the New Class by nation (the New Class of the United States, USSR, Japan, France, and so on).⁴³ On the other hand, his overall goal is to elide the "nation" concept altogether to generalize upon what he calls in the subtitle of his book the "international class contest of the modern era." The New Class is thus a phenomenon of "all countries that have in the twentieth century become part of the emerging world socioeconomic order," he says on page one. Sometimes, then, the New Class seems very local (a matter of particular occupations in particular cultures), and sometimes it appears hyperbolically global. In this and other ways, the New Class is permanently "under construction."

Ultimately, we might reflect, New Class critique matches the dimensions of any of modernity's great, universalizing theories of civilization—but with a postmodern, localizing twist.⁴⁴ Civilization on this model means the tidal ebb of unconscious work and the emergence of a global condition that the Enlightenment had once called reason; Freud, repression; Weber, instrumental rationality; and Foucault, discipline or power/knowledge. New Class theory—in a dark *ricorso* to the Enlightenment that incorporates all the more sinister modern theories en route—simply accounts it "knowledge." Thus Gouldner's oft-cited evaluation of the New Class perfectly captures the mixed bright and dark, Enlightenment and twentieth-century hue I indicate: the New Class, he judges, is an embryonic "universal class" that, while "profoundly flawed," is also "the most progressive force in modern society and . . . a center of whatever human emancipation is possible."⁴⁵ Yet the universal class is local and limited, too: it is "elitist and self-seeking and uses its special knowledge to advance its own interests and power."⁴⁶

New Class critique originated before the era of server-client and personal computing that made the network (as we will see in more detail in chapter 4) the avatar of unstable local/global identity. But again, as with Bourdieu, we may notice that the "universal class" that is "elitist and self-seeking [in its use of] special knowledge" is identical to the virtual subject studied by cybercultural criticism. The New Class is the shapeshifter seen in the deliberately underdrawn characters of Scott Adams's *Dilbert* comics, where

weakly individuated office workers (characterized more by occupational stereotype than personality) occupy a common, generic space of information technology. When the identity group becomes "class" and ideology becomes "habitus" or "the culture of critical discourse," then subjectivity morphs into the networked collective subjection that may be called, in every sense of the word, *corporate*.

Teamwork

Finally, then, we must consider a third major explanation of knowledge work that brings the approaches of subject critique and cultural class critique into their sharpest contemporary focus. It is this model above all that raises our present idea of knowledge to the pitch of millennial consciousness. I refer to the new or postindustrial corporatism, which argues (in what Christopher Newfield calls the deliberately "prophetic" tones of "the business future") that both the constructed, dispersed subject and the weakly formed, contradictory class described by subject critique and New Class critique, respectively, have been surpassed by a single kind of amorphous knowledge entity: the "networked," "web," "flat," "fishnet," "cluster," "relational," "virtual," "crazy," "boundaryless," "democratic," "teamwork," or "learning" corporation.⁴⁷ Among these terms symptomatic of what Dirlik calls "postmodern" corporatism, I will emphasize *teamwork*, because neo-corporatism puts flexible worker teams at the base of all its network structures, and *learning*, because teamwork is presumed to be all about—and only about—knowledge.⁴⁸

The event that calls forth the new corporatism, of course, is the massive change in the status of knowledge work that has occurred since the 1970s and 1980s. In that earlier era, itself emergent from what Theodore Roszak calls the personalism of 1960s counterculture, not just academic subject critique and New Class critique but the whole popular media myth of the "me" generation arose on the assumption that a universal knowledge identity or class was coming into being.⁴⁹ Given the seeming *fait accompli* of a consciousness- or expertise-based culture (opposites in Roszak's analysis, siblings from my perspective here), knowledge's emancipatory potential seemed to be the issue. Could consciousness be liberating? Could expertise be vanguardist? But now a great, mind-numbing retrenchment has come. That retrenchment is restructuring or downsizing, the U.S.-led (but increasingly global) systemic reorganization of knowledge work that—together with such corollaries as total quality management, just-in-time production, outsourcing, flex-timing, and, above all, information technology (IT)—has

been overtaking all our major public and private sectors (corporate, government, military, academic, media, medical, and so on). First, the 1981–82 U.S. recession gave rise to a burst of enthusiasm for IT and “demassing layoffs” in the industrial equipment and commodity-oriented manufacturing sectors. Then the recession of the early 1990s prompted a gold rush toward ever more IT and increasingly pervasive, if also more surgical, “reengineering,” “flattening,” “optimizing,” “rightsizing,” “decruiting,” “disintermediation,” “unassignment,” and “proactive outplacement” layoffs.⁵⁰ This continued through the “jobless recovery” of the mid-1990s to the enigma of job creation along with downsizing in the late 1990s and early 2000s.*

The rationale for all the wirings and firings lagged behind events briefly, but then arrived so fulsomely and confidently across all the major registers of social experience (whether the mass media or specialized sector discourses) that in Bourdieu’s terms it might well be called our postindustrial doxa or foundational belief. It would be tempting to play this explanation on multiple tracks. For example, we could stay with academic theory by reading such severely revisionary accounts of New Class critique as Stanley Aronowitz and William DiFazio’s *Jobless Future* (1994) or Nicholas Garnham’s “Media and Narratives of the Intellectual” (1995)—both of which are acutely attuned to the twin phenomena of contemporary IT and downsizing. We could branch out to academic administration by attending to the rationales for decreased staffing and increased IT in major university systems during the 1990s (often issued under the credo of “corporatization”).⁵¹ From there, it would be just a short jump to the controversies generated by consolidations in such other IT-intensive sectors as the military, health industry, and media.⁵² Clearly relevant as well in the mid-1990s was the credo of smaller government in the Republican-dominated 104th U.S. Congress, accompanied by heavy-handed legislation of IT and telecommunications, on the one hand, and intended purges of smart people (whether intellectuals or bureaucrats), on the other.

But I believe we must focus on the corporate sector, whose present *conceptual* and not just practical influence most academics have barely begun to recognize even amid the clamor over the corporatization of the university. As Michel Vilette puts it, “The field of management has contaminated all segments of society and is perceived as a universal cultural model.”⁵³ The corporate sector is where the new paradigm of IT-enabled knowledge *as* knowledge (and not just as the bottom-line mentality academics customarily dismiss) has been fashioned for wholesale application to other realms—

* See appendix B for a chronology of downsizing.

even to the extreme, for instance, of such unabashedly corporatist imitations as the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Just in Time (JIT) initiatives in higher education.⁵⁴ I will therefore choose as my object of study precisely the kind of business literature I cited previously. In their sum, the prolific business bestsellers of the 1990s and after—by Hammer and Champy, Boyett and Conn, Tomasko, Davidow and Malone, Senge, Tapscott, Peters, Katzenbach and Smith, Drucker, Stewart, and others—are not just revisionary in their view of business and society but treat revisionism itself as the organizing principle of business and society. As Robert Johansen and Rob Swigart put it in their *Upsizing the Individual in the Downsized Organization* (1994), this is the revolution of the “re-word preachers”: “restructuring,” “reinvention,” “redesign,” “reengineering,” and “recession.”⁵⁵

Of course, books on management theory (the work of the “witch doctors,” as Micklethwait and Wooldridge dub them) do not by themselves tell the whole gospel of the new business—even when filled with case histories, adopted by companies as official or semi-official organizational literature (put on every desk like Gideon Bibles of the cubicle), and used to authorize the most massive, far-reaching changes in the lives of institutions and individuals.⁵⁶ This is because they represent only the orthodoxy of the new corporate doctrine. In its broader lineaments, however, postindustrialism is indeed a doxa, which like any such belief—as we learn from Guillory’s extension of Bourdieu’s analysis—is a three-body problem of orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and (as Guillory terms the New Critics’ reaction to modern industrial rationality) “paradox.” We can adapt such a three-body theory of doxa for our purposes by first detailing the problem in Bourdieu’s and Guillory’s terms and then significantly updating those terms.

Doxa, we heard Bourdieu say, is “the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense.” Or a bit more fully: “In the extreme case, that is to say, when there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization (as in ancient societies) the natural and social world appears as self-evident. This experience we shall call *doxa*, so as to distinguish it from an orthodox or heterodox belief implying awareness and recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs.”⁵⁷ Doxa is thus belief that is not just undeclared but—unlike the controversies of orthodoxy and heterodoxy—never even seems to require declaration because it simply is the uncontroversial state of things or, more accurately, the underlying eternal or natural condition that makes the current state of things possible. This is credence so deep, as Bourdieu likes

doxa

to say, that it is "incorporated" in bodily habit. By contrast, orthodoxy and heterodoxy urge changes in habit. They point in one direction or another to some supra- or subculture's version of truth (e.g., the assertive cultures of the clergy, business gurus, or youth).

Guillory adds the following complication to adapt the argument to modern societies (where doxa "is condemned . . . to complex relations with both orthodoxy and heterodoxy") and especially to the early and mid-twentieth-century milieu of the New Criticism (the topic of his most immediately relevant chapter). Doxa in itself may be undeclarable, he says, but it may be "gestured" toward in modern times by the apparent elision of both orthodoxy and heterodoxy that the New Critics called paradox. "Paradox names the very condition by which the poem [in a New Critical reading] does not *name* the truth to which it nevertheless gestures," Guillory observes. Or again: "The condition of paradox is precisely the fact that a certain truth (*doxa*) stands alongside (*para*) the poem itself."⁵⁸ The paradox that surpasses understanding (which the New Critics also called "irony," "ambiguity," and so forth) is thus itself neither ortho/heterodox opinion nor doxa, neither a polemical view of the truth nor truth direct. Rather, to follow Guillory's explication of "gesture," it is a position formed in the wake of orthodoxy and heterodoxy (the literary criticisms of the T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis years, the *I'll Take My Stand* politics of Southern Agrarianism) by redirecting controversial opinion into a now apparently undecidable intuition of the truth analogous to—but as if displaced anamorphically from—the doxa at the center of all truth.⁵⁹ It is as if paradox says, "I cannot point to the truth on the right (orthodoxy) or the left (heterodoxy), but the very fact that I cannot point to the truth is *like* the truth, which never points but simply is ["ontologically," John Crowe Ransom said in his *New Criticism*]."

Yet, we must quickly add, precisely because New Critical paradox stood in the wake of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, its gesture could not be free of tendentiousness. The New Critics could not abide the prevailing doxa of modern times: the industrial-scientific rationality that the Southern Agrarians (from whom the New Critics emerged) called Northernism. What the New Critics' cherished paradox gestured toward, then, was not the truth but a slant vision of truth according to which the very action of gesturing was as dogmatic as any attempt by orthodoxy or heterodoxy to point to polemical versions of truth. Specifically, gesturing was opposed to making a point in rational (logical, scientific) propositions.⁶⁰ As Guillory thus summarizes the New Critical position: "The teacher or interpreter of the poem can only point to the truth which must not be spoken, but the very unspokenness of that truth elevates it to a status vastly greater than that of scientific truth, which

always falls to the level of mere fact."⁶¹ Like orthodoxy and heterodoxy, paradox displaced the central doxa toward a supra- or subcultural viewpoint (first southern, later academic), but unlike orthodoxy and heterodoxy, it was able to use its apparent undecidability or lack of a point to mimic centrality. The cult of paradox thus became a strangely orthogonal double or "recusant" of doxa, to adapt Guillory's concluding characterization of the New Criticism.⁶² It was a shadow doxa.

To adapt the logic of doxology for our purposes now requires two additional steps. The first is to update the paradigmatic scene of doxa from Bourdieu's "ancient societies" directly to modern industrialism (rather than doing so at one remove via the New Critics). This requires looking beyond the New Critical poetic analysis of modernity to parallel analyses by early twentieth-century sociologists, "critical theorists," and others concerned with the broad underpinning of industrial society in rationality.⁶³ The most convenient way to do so is to update the two poles of the recognizably Cartesian dilemma fused within Bourdieu's notion of doxa: the objective "world," on the one hand, and "practical sense" or "subjective principles of organization," on the other. For objective world in an industrial context, we may say "technology." And for practical sense, we may say "technique" (the repertory of modern rationalized procedures, routines, protocols, standards, codes). The doxa of industrialism, then, is the unquestioned *alignment* of technology and technique under the assumption that the fundamental value is efficiency or productivity. The governance of such alignment is management; and the institution of that governance is the modernization of Bourdieu's "incorporation"—the corporation. This is the overall doxological ensemble that Herbert Marcuse spoke of in the 1940s as "technological rationality" (also "technological truth," "technics," "the apparatus"), and which Jacques Ellul called in the 1950s the total life of "technique."⁶⁴ Of course, a paradox within technological rationality gestured as much toward alternative rationalities as did the New Criticism. That paradox was leisure, which craved ease of entertainment as desperately as the New Critics craved difficulty of interpretation. But unprotected by the recusancy of the academy, leisure was effectively harnessed to the system through the regularized division of life into weekday work and weekend leisure, so that leisure not only alternated with work but complemented it as consumption to production.⁶⁵

The second step needed to adapt the logic of doxology to our context is to shift the scene from modern industrialism to postindustrialism. At this point, paradox becomes central in a manner not readily off-loaded to the academic margins or time-shifted to the weekend. Unlike industrialism, postindustrialism is a technological rationality that integrates in its core—

within the technology and techniques of *information*—a paradox whose critical potential cannot be off-loaded, time-shifted, or differentiated as consumption because it is central to the processes of information technology-enabled production.

Preliminary to my thought here is Castells's crucial insight into the distinction between postindustrialism as a mode of production and informationalism as what he calls a "mode of development."⁶⁶ While the collapse of any viable, competing Soviet or statist mode of production now makes it seem that postindustrial capitalism and information technology are simply dual aspects of a single event, Castells argues, modes of production and modes of development are logically separate. "Capitalist restructuring" and "the rise of informationalism" are distinct, he says, "and their interaction can only be understood if we separate them analytically."⁶⁷ Put another way, the co-evolution of advanced capitalism and informationalism proceeds not by necessity but by historical contingency:

What truly matters for social processes and forms making the living flesh of societies is the actual interaction between modes of production and modes of development, enacted and fought for by social actors, in unpredictable ways, within the constraining framework of past history and current conditions of technological and economic development. Thus, the world, and societies, would have been very different if Gorbachev had succeeded in his own *perestroika*, a target that was politically difficult, but not out of reach. Or if the Asian Pacific had not been able to blend its traditional business networking form of economic organization with the tools provided by information technology.⁶⁸

Keeping in mind this analytical distinction between postindustrialism and informationalism, we can see that the technologies and techniques of IT are not necessarily fused to the doxa of postindustrialism (restructuring, reengineering, lean production, and all the rest of the new management dicta). As a mode of development, IT also generates what amounts to a semi-autonomous doxa (a *belief* in information or in technology), akin to the faith that a rural laborer in revolutionary France, about to burn the house of the nearest aristocrat, might have expressed by picking up a pitchfork and saying, "This is what I believe." The challenge posed by dumb, contrarian uses of agrarian technology to production during the French Revolution is potentially the same challenge posed by the much "smarter" technologies and techniques of IT to postindustrial capitalism during the information revolution. Shrouded in glossy plastic and glass, softened with beige colors or occa-

sionally dramatized in matte black, touched with the magic of winking LED lights, and, above all, plugged through the slenderest of wires to a network that is what Steven Johnson calls our contemporary understanding of infinity, the computer that sits on our desk is not just a tool.⁶⁹ It is a shrine of belief whose inner doxological structure, when we look at it closely, is seen to coincide not necessarily but only contingently with the new business plan for the future. To use an expression that recalls clearly the lineage of pitchfork, pike, and hammer and sickle in the background, the computer is both a tool and a "hack" of advanced capitalism.

A full statement of the inner doxological structure of information will need to wait for a social history of information technology (which I sketch in Part II of this book), but it will be useful here to anticipate some main points. First, if we were to define the semi-autonomous doxa of information strictly on the premise that information is something we *consume*, like news or entertainment, then we might say that our current fundamental belief is that all useful knowledge (what Bourdieu calls "practical sense") simply coincides with the "objective" world as that world comes to us mediated through information technologies whose real-time, interactive quality neutralizes the sense of mediation and so constitutes the *meaning* of objectivity. (The sense of being "live" on today's news broadcasts, for example, is conveyed by such unedited, real-time effects as the percussion of wind upon a journalist's microphone—a phenomenon that has no natural counterpart and thus amounts to a *technology* of natural reality. "Real-time" or "live"—no matter how mediated—simply is the same as "real" or "true.") Information consumed without concern for technological mediation, we may thus say, is our contemporary habitus. It is the habitual information environment in which "subjective principles of organization" (as Bourdieu puts it) are deeply informed by a world defined as technology-object. If there is also a strong sense of dissonance in such habitus (the conviction that IT overwhelms us with a "data smog" of mere facts that don't make sense), then such dissonance is subsumed within what could be called the general consonance of dissonance (the "expected" meaninglessness of the contemporary world).⁷⁰ We might think by comparison of "common sense" in pre-industrial societies. Common sense may have appeared only in the contradictory maxims, proverbs, clichés, and other incoherent bric-a-brac of practical knowledge (e.g., "look before you leap," but "he who hesitates is lost"). Yet any dissonance bowed to an overall faith in consonance named Nature or God.⁷¹

But, secondly, any such characterization of information as a habit of consuming objectivity would be incomplete if we did not immediately move beyond the perspective of consumption to the greatest habit of contemporary

postindustrial life—work. What is missing thus far in my rendering of the doxa of information is the viewpoint of production rather than consumption, the viewpoint that makes information the hallmark of knowledge work.⁷² Adding the vantage point of production changes the feel of information considerably. In this light, there is less faith that the latter-day Nature or God—the corporation—can overcome the fundamental dissonance of the information technology it manages. While the technological mediation of information is often largely camouflaged in the sphere of consumption, the technological *management* of information has certainly not been so in the sphere of production. From the viewpoint of production, the doxa of information may be defined as follows (using phenomenological vocabulary drawn from Shoshana Zuboff's interviews with early business computer workers who said their computers let them "see it all").⁷³ Information is at once an emancipatory, quasi-transcendental "vision" of the total system of technological rationality (like opening a file directory on a company computer and suddenly seeing a list of all related files) and a frustrating sense that one is seeing only disassociated pieces of the big picture (mere facts and data) because the principle of *managed* information aggressively denies access to that total vision. Information systems are designed to enable real-time, interactive connectivity; synopticism is their premise and goal. Yet, paradoxically, such systems are also designed to resist connectivity in the name of what James R. Beniger, in his expansively conceived *Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society*, simply terms "control" and what the workaday corporate world now calls "security."⁷⁴ If the network is our contemporary intuition of infinity, then its boundlessness is matched by an equally infinite, equally unreal hunger for security—indeed, for what amounts to a metaphysics of security (paradoxically secure yet connected) compensating symbolically for all the other vulnerabilities of life in the post-Cold War era of global connections: immune systems, national borders, jobs, and so on. This is the fundamental meaning of the password that is the first information demanded of a user when logging onto a system. As the sign of the metaphysics of security, the password is a piece of pure information that is ideally unrecognizable in *any* real-world context or pattern of information (e.g., "mKiJ84sY"). While users wish their passwords could be habitual to the way they work and live, actually—as anyone knows who has ever forgotten a password or been forced to change passwords on systems with automatic expiration rules—passwords are never habitual unless they contravene security. Passwords are oaths to a transcendental security.

While the doxa of information may be central to the doxa of postindustrialism, then, there is a curious doubling within such centrality that makes

information (at once synoptic and quarantined, visionary and blind, connected and secure, managerial and managed, transcendental and paranoid, free and enslaved, decentralized and centralized) also the *paradox* of postindustrialism.⁷⁵ Such an information paradox is our latter-day, secular recusancy—rusticated not just to the academy (though it is there, too) but to a simultaneously empowered and resentful culture of knowledge named "cool" within the center of knowledge work. Such paradox, as I foreshadowed in discussing Bourdieu and New Class theory, restores the relevance of the specifically mental character of information work. While mentality as such may now be a category mistake when thinking about knowledge work as *work*, the very irrelevance (and sometimes irreverence) of such mentality—an excess of knowledge about the connectivity of information that the *management* of information deems a "hack"—grants the knowledge worker the mental distance needed to "gesture" beyond the doxa of postindustrialism to the semi-autonomous para-doxa of cool.

By reserving room for such paradox in what might otherwise seem either too dogmatic a rehearsal of business orthodoxy or, criticizing it from a humanities viewpoint, too reductive a heterodoxy, we can now recount the basic thesis of the management bestsellers. On the one hand, it has become orthodox that in the age of global competition knowledge work is essential—so much so that such work has caused a foundational shift in the "being" of business organizations.⁷⁶ Where once matter was the essence (in the industrial age a corporation not only processed matter but *was* its material factories, inventory, and people), now matter work is for the developing world. If the U.S.-led West is to stay ahead of the rest of the world, so goes the thesis, *postindustrial* corporations must de-essentialize themselves until they are nothing but information processing or (since durables and consumables must still be produced) at least matter that can be made to act like information processing—that is, plants, goods, and people endowed with the quick-turnaround responsiveness, flexibility, and ultimate eraseability of bits.⁷⁷

This leads to the basic logic of downsizing. Picture the postindustrial corporation as an optical fiber or superconducting wire designed for resistance-free flow of information—an alignment of technology and technique so perfect that it is free from the friction of matter. The ideal organization is one that has stripped out all intermediary levels of equipment, inventory, processes, organizational units, and people so that the information necessary to produce, for example, a new car flows laterally between customers, sales, design, plant, and suppliers with the speed of light. Everyone and everything is part of an information network whose basic units are flexible team workers incessantly communicating with each other and with the

larger organization. So, too, any vertical hierarchy remaining in the flattened organization is greased for information flow: the ideal CEO communicates with operations directly or through severely pared down middle management layers. The image of an optical fiber or superconducting wire is not far from the literal truth. Enabling the mania for information flow from the mid-1980s on (and achieving dominance in the networked 1990s) was a symptomatic form of corporate IT: local area networks, groupware, intranets, collaborative project schedulers, conferencing programs, and other such team communication products. "Hey, look," IBM's Lotus division declared in a 1996 advertisement for its SmartSuite programs: "Another software ad promising to get everyone working together in *complete harmony*. Be still, my heart." The suite included TeamReview and TeamConsolidate features. Similarly, Microsoft pitched its Project program under the slogans "Graphical views let teammates visualize where the project is going" and "Keep everyone moving on the same track with open lines of communication."⁷⁸ Information flow is everything.

And so, too, according to the orthodoxy, knowledge workers shall be everything. The information flow thus envisioned can function only if the network is operated at all its nodes by super-informed people able to subsume the roles of laid-off middle managers. Every teamworker in the new regime, therefore, is trained and equipped for smart work. According to what Katzenbach and Smith call "the wisdom of teams," there will be frequent team brainstorming meetings, perpetual retraining motivated by "pay for knowledge," and constant dissemination of company-wide philosophy and performance data. "The newest and lowest-level employee," Joseph Boyett and Henry Conn say in *Workplace 2000*, "will be expected to know more about the company that employs him or her than many middle managers and most supervisors knew . . . in the 1970s and 1980s."⁷⁹ At the top of the hierarchy, the CEO must also be personally super-informed. Reappropriating many of the middle management and even clerical techniques that, as Zuboff observes, were spun off from the executive position during earlier stages of office automation, he or she becomes something like an ultra-clerk able to make fluent use of company IT (e-mail, spreadsheets, databases, charting programs, project schedulers) to gain instantaneous apprehension of what scores of underlings once would have taken weeks to synthesize.⁸⁰

The entire organization, in sum, will live or die by the current *idée fixe* of lifelong learning. As Boyett and Conn note, "Continuous learning will become commonplace to create a more flexible work force, provide employees with the skills necessary to take advantage of rapidly changing technology, and prepare employees for new jobs inside or outside the company when

their old jobs are replaced by technology or eliminated due to changes in customer demands."⁸¹ Not surprisingly, then, the jeremiad of neo-corporatism in book after book concerns the failure of traditional education to prepare the new force of smart workers. Instead, we learn, the new corporation must shoulder this responsibility and become, in Peter Senge's now famed phrase, the "learning organization." This is "where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together."⁸² To academic ears accustomed to the rhetoric of commencement ceremonies, this may sound like wholesale appropriation of the educational mission, and that is exactly what it is. Tom Peters opens a section of his *Liberation Management* by redefining Stanford University as the creation of a great "information organizer" (Leland Stanford). That stroke accomplished, the conclusion follows with pitiless efficiency: "Organizations are pure information processing machines—nothing less, nothing more."⁸³ With similar efficiency, Don Tapscott's section entitled "Learning Is Shifting Away from the Formal Schools and Universities" enumerates the astounding growth of "formal budgeted employee education" and then makes an aggressive comparison: the numbers, he says, represent "the equivalent of almost a quarter of a million additional full-time college students—thirteen new Harvards. This is more growth in just one year than the enrollment growth in all the new conventional college campuses built in the United States between 1960 and 1990."⁸⁴ No longer *veritas* or *lux et veritas* on university seals, in short, but the brilliant insignia of the new corporate enlightenment: "Intel," "Sun," "Lucent," and so forth.

So much for the new orthodoxy. But the new corporatism can also be viewed from a considerable heterodox angle (as is often the case in mainstream media coverage of downsizings). The heterodox view is that as knowledge work gains in value, knowledge workers are systematically devalued.⁸⁵ In the corporatist prophecy, that is, the millennium is when someone must be damned for the corporation to be saved. The simplest case concerns the damned middle managers, who when laid off in the millions are by and large irrevocably shunted off the track of traditional job security and career growth into a wholly different school of hard knocks—one of nervous corporate job-hopping and/or high-risk independent business, purely lateral career movement, permanent re- or deskilling, and long-term salary and benefits reduction.⁸⁶ More complex is the case of knowledge workers who remain behind in a firm as "survivors." Greater information work assigned to fewer workers, of course, is in one sense vastly empowering (to use the precious human resource term).⁸⁷ Instead of laborers chained to piecemeal tasks, multi-competent work teams are now supposed to oversee projects holisti-

cally with perspective on total company strategy. And instead of bureaucratic managers overseeing their small piece of turf, the managers who remain ostensibly have greatly increased "spans of control," more flexibility in their new roles as "facilitators" or "coaches" of work teams, and more cross-field expertise gained on "management teams."⁸⁸ But clearly also, eating of the apple of postindustrial knowledge is not without pain. On the line, as Boyett and Conn put it, "tremendous responsibilities will be shifted to workers and their peers. . . . This new and expanded role for employees will exert enormous pressures on employees and companies alike to invest in education and retraining."⁸⁹ As spelled out by the refrain in the business books, "some" will not adapt: that is, not all workers will be willing or able to commit to lifelong learning, ever quicker just-in-time production, riskier evaluation and pay schemes pegged to team- and company-wide performance, and, in general, what has been called management by stress. In middle management, similarly, increased spans of control and flexibility are accompanied by the classic symptoms of corporate demassing: multi-tasked overwork, anxiety over nontraditional management roles (what exactly is a facilitator?), worry about late career retraining, broken faith in the firm, and so on.⁹⁰

Yet, despite critique in the press and elsewhere, and even during the tight labor market of the late 1990s (boom times when many firms struggled to hire or retain scarce skilled workers while *simultaneously* downsizing), the new corporatism has not seriously had to acknowledge heterodoxy about restructuring as anything more than a public relations problem.⁹¹ And it has certainly not had to accommodate the possibility, as academic cultural criticism might put it, that the knowledge workers it employs could be meaningfully contestatory. Neo-corporatism assumes fundamentally that total determination is a done deed, enforced by global competition, and that dissent among employed individuals, groups, or classes is largely irrelevant. More accurately, it would be too facile to say that the new corporatism never accommodates any critique. Criticism from individuals within the restructured corporate system takes the visible form of messages posted by disaffected employees to company e-mail systems or online public forums, memos leaked to Web sites such as InternalMemos.com (affiliated with the Fucked-Company.com site), legal actions for distresses ranging from wrongful termination to stress injuries, internal hacking of company IT, and even "whistleblowing" complaints to public authorities.⁹² Yet such critique tends to be normalized either as routine or exceptional "disgruntlement." The salient fact is that the most significant internal critiques of the corporation, even if ultimately motivated by the wish to mollify individuals and thus to fend off legal or political scrutiny, are those whose policy implications emerge

on a different level than that of the individual. Representative are the social policy issues that William Davidow and Michael Malone pose in their last chapter when they ask if the "virtual corporation" can be "virtuous," or the recommendation by Herman Maynard, Jr. and Susan Mehrstens that "fourth wave" corporations must "make the intellectual shift from wanting to beat the competition to wanting to serve the world."⁹³ Equally symptomatic is the increasing formal attention of corporations to "business ethics" and "business and society" agendas.⁹⁴ Insofar as the new corporatism accommodates a critique of restructuring, it bypasses the individual and projects the problem onto the abstract plane of the *whole corporate entity*.

Such a focus on the overall corporation goes to the heart of the matter. At this point in our review of explanations of knowledge work, we can ask: What is the ultimate point of the new corporatism? The point, which will strike humanities scholars with force in the wake of subject and cultural class critique, is precisely *neither* the subject nor class. Rather, it is the "dispersal," "weakness," or "contradiction" of both (as characterized by academic theoreticians), extrapolated to become the total negation of both—that is, the whole corporate entity. The new corporatism, in other words, is at once the logical extreme and the annihilation of identity and New Class critique. It is the subsumption of identity and class. Here we might turn to two of the diagrams that neo-corporatist literature frequently uses to visualize its new world order: Don Tapscott's fivefold scheme of corporate identity (from the "Effective Individual" up to the global "Internetworked Business") and Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps's similar scheme (from the "Small Group" up to the "Economic Megagroup") (figs. 1.2, 1.3). In this corporatist order, we recognize, the fundamental move is made when identity is from the first swallowed alive by the cult of the team (and thereafter, as Susan Albers Mohrman and colleagues call it in their definitive work on the topic, the higher forms of "team-based organization").⁹⁵

What is a team? The positive answers offered by business are many and complex. In the terms I have developed here, the team is the unit of ephemeral identity that most flexibly fuses technologies and techniques into skill sets (called "innovation," "creativity," or "resourcefulness") adapted to the changefulness of the global economy. But in our current context the negative answer is the most compelling: by definition a team is *not* an identity group, and it is assuredly *not* a class formation.

Yet we must rethink the notion of negation if we are to avoid relapsing into once robust but now increasingly hapless modes of describing social "hegemony" and class "oppression" in the oppositional (or dialectical) terms of "them" versus "us" or big "company" versus little "worker." What is

THE EXTENDED ENTERPRISE

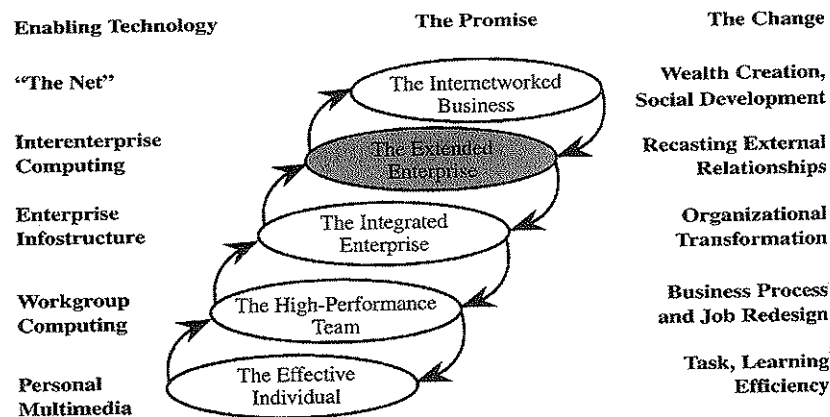


Figure 1.2 Tapscott's "Extended Enterprise"

From Don Tapscott, *The Digital Economy: Promise and Peril in the Age of Networked Intelligence* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996), p. 85. Copyright 1996 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

distinctively new about contemporary corporate "identity management," as Thomas B. Lifson calls it, is that it does not so much master, marginalize, discriminate against, or exclude group and class identities as *take them over*, complete with their contestatory force (thus harnessing "diversity" to "competitiveness"), through that most powerful manner of postindustrial negation—simulation.⁹⁶ The team is designed to "simulate away" identity groups and class by incorporating them.

To understand how this is possible, we must examine the antihistoricism of business prophecy. As should already be clear, this antihistoricism is so profound—yet often also so automatic and slick—that it might be likened to a shrink-wrapped, one-minute version of Alvin Toffler's *Third Wave* bundled together with Francis Fukuyama's *End of History and the Last Man*. On the menu bar of each of the business bestsellers, as it were, there is a big button marked "Delete History." For example, consider the precision model of historical obsolescence offered by Maynard and Mehrtens's *Fourth Wave*: "The First Wave of change, the agricultural revolution, has essentially ended and will not be of concern here. The Second Wave, coincidental with industrialization, has covered much of the Earth and continues to spread, while a new, postindustrial Third Wave is gathering force in the modern industrial nations. We see a Fourth Wave following close upon the Third."⁹⁷ The possi-

TEAMNETS ALONG THE ORGANIZATIONAL SCALE

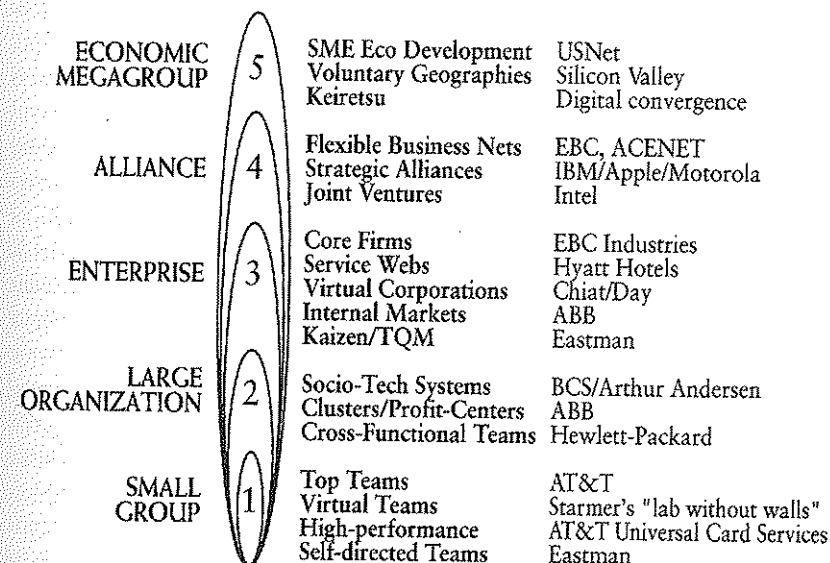


Figure 1.3 Lipnack and Stamps's "Teamnets along the Organizational Scale"

Reprinted, with permission, from *The Age of the Network: Organizing Principles for the 21st Century* by Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, p. 98. Copyright © 1994 by Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps.

bility that the agricultural revolution may just now be reaching broad expanses of the globe in complex collaboration with the industrial revolution (tractors in Africa, for example) is moot: in this starkly unlayered view of history, the world is a diskette that can be reformatted any number of times. Change, we heard previously, means "starting over," "the systematic sloughing off of yesterday." Hammer and Champy add: change must be "fundamental," "radical," "dramatic."⁹⁸

We might put the case in largest view as follows. Recall the succession of universalizing theories of civilization I earlier recited under the names of reason, repression, instrumental rationality, knowledge/power, and knowledge work. Contemporary management theory (descendant of the "managerial demiurge" C. Wright Mills identified in his classic study of the white-collar middle class) is the latest claimant in this Enlightenment genealogy.⁹⁹ As perhaps the most unmediated of antihistoricisms since the French Revolution (which presumed to throw out the relevant past to start over again in French Revolutionary Year One), management theory reveals with stark clarity that its universalism, progressivism, and rationalism re-

solve at base into a neo-Enlightenment theory of history. This theory (in a severe truncation of Fukuyama's thesis) holds that the only significant history is the end of history, or Reason. That end may be imagined at the teleological close to history, but more ordinarily it is implanted as a sort of temporary telos in every point of significance in history. History in this view (and even in its counter-Enlightenment critique, as in Foucault) is finally all about "epochal," "revolutionary," or "epistemic" moments of change, when history effectively starts anew—when historicity itself, in other words, disappears from or, in the modern critique, becomes repressed in the apparatuses of Reason. Our greatest contemporary holdover from the Enlightenment is thus the belief that civilization is managed history. Whether one champions or critiques it, civilization is the faith that history can be rationally managed. Insofar as history from another point of view is precisely that which is *unmanageable* and *irrational* (revolutionary mobs, the unconscious, Unreason, etc.), it must finally be managed through the overthrow/repression of history itself. ("Management is the organ of institutions," Peter Drucker writes, "the organ that converts a mob into an organization, and human efforts into performance.")¹⁰⁰

That much contemporary management theory in the Tom Peters mold appears to dance on the Bastille in its ludic celebration of "chaos" management and other forms of organizational irrationality is not an exception to the rule but the crowning instance of the institutional recapture of disruptive history (as heard of old in such formulae as "The king is dead, long live the king!" or its revolutionary variant, "The king is dead, long live the people!"). Irrationality in all its terrible energy is now to be harnessed *within* the organization as the means of strong, rational management—especially as personified in the form of a charismatic leader able to rationalize otherwise irrational total changes of "organizational culture."¹⁰¹ (Thus occurs one of the outstanding contradictions of recent management theory: its simultaneous worship of decentralization and, often in a separate chapter, of executive "leadership.") Postindustrial management is the *ne plus ultra* of the restructuring revolution initiated by the French Revolution with all its radical political, economic, geographical, calendrical, military, educational, and other re-engineerings.

Now we can understand why those immediate predecessors to academic subject critique and cultural class critique—so-called "essentialist" identity politics and traditional Marxism, respectively—seem so distinctly unenlightened at present. These perspectives were predicated above all on remembering the historical struggles of peoples and classes, to the point that the process responsible for "dispersed" identity (as subject and New Class critique

calls it) was experienced historically as the saga of diaspora.¹⁰² By extension, we also understand what the postindustrial corporation must do to manage identity groups and classes so thoroughly (in a constructionism that is the extreme of subject and cultural class critique) that it elides their last vestiges. It has to hide their history. Just as the French Revolution attempted to suppress the historical identity of estates and regions to ensure that everyone, high and low, Parisian and provincial, would be fraternal, so now the new corporation does the same for subject groups and classes.

But there is a difference. The French Revolution substituted for historical identity a representation of national identity that was, first of all, what recent scholars of the period have called "theatrical" representation. The new representative politics of the nation-state, in other words, was theater at the same time that it was political reality, and one could only be fraternal if one "performed" the role, complete with improvised clothes and speech forms, of *citoyen*.¹⁰³ In contrast, postindustrial corporations substitute for historical identity another style of unreal identity that makes even the posthistorical or "eternally modern" nation-state obsolete (and implies instead the globalism that is now the necessary complement to any progressive nationalism). In the postindustrial version of the local/general problem, multinational corporations base themselves on the local *and* the global, the intra- *and* the international, to the exclusion of the nation concept in the middle, which now appears merely as a regulatory obstacle or trade barrier.¹⁰⁴ Such corporations create a *postrepresentational* identity that is not so much theater as what postmodern theorists call simulation (e.g., Baudrillard's *Simulations*). Simulation is representation backed up by no reality—or, what is the same, by "mass" realities too simultaneously local and global for representations of nation-state vintage to capture. On the side of consumption, for example, the pattern was set early on by cable TV channels that reached out from local markets (the city of Atlanta, for example) to blanket the world. On the side of production, the cellular unit of such corporate simulated identity is the team. At once local and global, here at home and there in Japan, teams are a fraternity that bypasses both the essential nation and, arising to contest the melting-pot identity of such nation, essential group and class formations.

To say that the team simulates away identity, then, is to say that it deletes the historical identity of the folk's habitus, or (as the Birmingham cultural studies group termed it) customary corporation, and then preempts the recapture of that identity by the great political, economic, media, and other institutions of the nation-state era that had arisen specifically to manage that recapture—that is, to modernize and bureaucratize the folk.¹⁰⁵ Identity is recaptured instead for a new, "flexible" bureaucracy—the team corpora-

tion—designed to forge no recognizable national, group, or class identification at all (“our country/group/class: love it or leave it”), but instead simulated identification with the team, simulated identification with all the higher organizational forms of the team corporation depicted in figures 1.2 and 1.3 (enterprise, alliance, megagroup), perhaps even simulated identification with global competition itself (“global competition: love it or leave it”).

Consider, therefore, the recent fate of identity groups and classes in the corporation. In regard to groups, the most instructive instance is U.S. diversity management. Diversity management theory arose in several works of 1991—most influentially, R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr.’s *Beyond Race and Gender*, David Jamieson and Julie O’Mara’s *Managing Workforce 2000*, and Marilyn Loden and Judy B. Rosener’s *Workforce America!* It has since swollen into a whole movement of studies, guidebooks, video series, training programs, and corporate initiatives.¹⁰⁶ Prompted by the highly influential forecast of future demographic diversity contained in the 1987 Hudson Institute report *Workforce 2000*, the movement explicitly discounts diversity efforts driven by statutes redressing past discrimination. Instead, it makes diversity all about present business self-interest.¹⁰⁷ To cite the subtitle of Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowe’s *Diverse Teams at Work*, it is about “capitalizing on the power of diversity.” Or as Roosevelt Thomas puts it: “Burning the increasingly diverse human resource fuel” and unleashing the “power that all the various groups in our national work force have to offer” is “an opportunity for competitive advantage.”¹⁰⁸ “Workforce 2000,” in other words, means that topics such as “Slavery Pre-1861,” “Railroads 1860s,” “Ellis Island 1892–1954,” or “California 1990s” are not to the point—except insofar as their power may be drilled out of the historical ground, clarified of their dinosaur identities, and pumped into a corporate engine that had run on gas but now must guzzle any diesel, methane, or perhaps even gasohol fuel. However, we cannot be content with mere bumper-sticker labels for the history that is thus rejected—part of the “Workforce 2000” mindset itself—if we are to grasp the exact manner in which diversity management expends the past to compete in the present. What is the relevant history that is distilled out of the picture?

The broadly historical intent of the question will be served if we answer it this way: identity groups as we now know them originally arose on the industrial age “line” or “shift” populated in different ways by emigrants from the Old World to the New, the South to the North, and the country to the city.¹⁰⁹ Previously, the identities of many of these migrants had been rooted in agrarian age work formations on the order of the yeoman “household”

(the extended family with or without live-in servants).¹¹⁰ Together with its clan, village, parish, estate, and other envelopments, such household culture was saturated with the kind of blood, kin, religious, gender, language, *paisan*, and other solidarities that would later be called “race,” “ethnicity,” and so on. But crucially, such solidarities were not in themselves racial, ethnic, gender, or other constructs in our sense. Constructs of this modern sort only became experientially real in dislocation from their original location—that is, in the diaspora that transplanted the household onto the line/shift as a fragmented social system needing to be reconsolidated in a new set of cultural formations in competition with those of other diasporic groups.¹¹¹ “Experientially real” in my phrasing here means that, while dislocation de-realized known cultural reality, it was compensated for by an abiding sense of history, a sense that the process of reality-turning-unreal (historical change) was a deeper reality cognate with identity. “Everything we once knew is gone and we are as strangers in this land,” history says, “and therefore we are who we are.”

The working subject, in other words, knew that it was a subject only insofar as it was part of a “people” or “tribe” who, in a daily reenactment of their diaspora, all went on the line/shift together. This is why the Fordist-Taylorist line in its heyday was not just dehumanizing, no matter how much it demanded that the lived reality of human technique mold itself to inhuman technology. Exile from one’s humanity simultaneously created the sense of a whole working-class neighborhood away from neighborhood, a community with so much potential for solidarity that it could have its own after-hours hangouts, charities, bowling leagues, youth subcultures, and so on (though cultural solidarity, we note, was often effectively quarantined in “leisure”).¹¹²

[We now know how diversity management must proceed. Increasingly, it concentrates on team building or, in the now standard terminology, creating “diversity teams.”¹¹³ For the team concept is the perfect way to deinstall not so much the actual line/shift (U.S. auto makers, for instance, did not adopt the Swedish innovation of station-based assembly) as the *relation* between the worker and the line.¹¹⁴ Join the team: leave your identity group and history behind to enlist in a “small group culture” so semi-autonomous that it meets, talks, works, and plays together and even has the celebrated power to “stop the line.” Once team culture is in place, then all the rest of downsizing culture follows: smart work, flexible competence, flat management, and so on.] The general principle, in other words, is to couple diversity to the total restructuring effort. Thus witness Thomas’s restructuring of the “empowerment” concept in *Beyond Race and Gender*.

Another word for the process of tapping employees' full potential is "empowerment". . . . In fact, a managing diversity capability is implicit in several innovations already in process in progressive organizations. Some corporations, for example, are moving to "push decision making down." Others are implementing "total quality" initiatives. Still others have downsized their work forces in search of greater efficiency and productivity. All of these initiatives, however they differ, have one aspect in common: Their success depends on the ability to empower the total work force.¹¹⁵

So, too, Anthony Patrick Carnevale and Susan Carol Stone assert that diversity corresponds point by point to "total quality management," "reengineering," and other major restructuring imperatives. The real work of achieving diversity, it is now believed, lies in achieving a proper team and corporate culture in the first place.¹¹⁶

The real work, then, is *capitalizing* the concept of culture so that the pure business culture that remains at the end of the process becomes definitive of all culture. Such capitalization may be read everywhere in the implementation agendas that diversity management issues for diversity "inventories," "networking," mentoring, or training exercises. I take as illustration the section titled "Archaeology 101: Creating a Team Culture" in Rafael Gonzalez and Tamara Payne's essay "Teamwork and Diversity." "Team culture," Gonzalez and Payne list, "is a structure of experience that gives individuals":

- [1.] A sense of who people are
- [2.] A sense of belonging
- [3.] A sense of behavior and an understanding of what they should be doing
- [4.] A set of problem-solving tools for daily coping in a particular environment
- [5.] The capacity and mechanisms for transmitting coping skills and knowledge¹¹⁷

We can parse this definition of culture into two main components, as follows. One is customary culture or culture as a way of *being*: "who people are" and "belonging" (1, 2). The other is a way of *doing* and, in particular, of doing business: the functionalism (3) and technological rationality (4, 5) whose specifically postindustrial form is the frictionless alignment of technology and technique called "smart work." Building a team culture means adapting the notions of customary culture and technological rationality so that they slot easily into each other—ways of being into ways of doing busi-

ness. Put differently, both customary and business cultures must jack into a common model of capital specifically wired for postindustrialism. To adopt a governing metaphor whose relevance will become clear later, the particular cultural platform no longer matters if all equipment for being and doing links up through standard protocols to the same router.

Starting with nos. 1 and 2 above, we see that customary culture is jacked into capital in a single bold move: it is put in present tense ("who people *are*"). History is thus cut out of the circuit so cleanly that we might almost miss its absence for lack of obvious torn edges. Yet this one move makes possible the entire procedure of diversity management, which we might imagine on the basis of our governing metaphor, as follows. Picture history as an original "file" on a cultural "server" that must be transmitted to the corporate server by TCP/IP protocol (the Internet file transmission protocol according to which information is broken into discrete packets, routed or switched semi-autonomously over the Net, and then reassembled at the other end). Now take a single, instantaneous cross-section of the network carrying the transmission. The result is an impression of multiple strands and nodes, each holding discrete, self-contained packets that are not only oblivious to other packets from their file but may be intermixed with other files. Just so, the standard procedure of diversity management is to approach culture as disassociated traits (cultural packets) that do not appear to cohere logically because their historical "roots" (an older metaphor for networked identity) lie concealed.¹¹⁸ In Gonzalez and Payne's own metaphor, therefore, diversity management is an archaeology limited to a single layer in a dig: it is the archaeology of the present. Here, for example, is what "Archaeology 101" uncovers in "team members' cultural norms": greetings; dress and appearance; breaks, mealtimes, food; timeliness, time needs; relationships with co-workers; definition of family and roles of family members; primary values; beliefs; celebrations.¹¹⁹ Thus "dress and appearance" are discovered lying in one spot; "breaks, mealtimes, food" in another; relics of "beliefs" and "celebrations" in a third. A gigantic amplification of such archaeology occurs in Gardenswartz and Rowe's *Managing Diversity and Diverse Teams at Work*. Packed with worksheets for profiling workers as aggregates of space sense, communication habits, dress and appearance, eating customs, time consciousness, and so on, such books demonstrate that, despite the best holistic intentions, diversity management always seems to come down just to managing piecemeal the way people say hello, shake hands, eat, and keep their appointments.

From the accountant's rather than the archaeologist's viewpoint, that is the whole goal of the exercise. The goal is to download human resources into the corporation less as a stockpile of raw psychology (the "empowerment,"

"sensitivity," and so on that human resource theory had nurtured) than as capital. Or, rather, "stockpile" with its just-in-case philosophy is here exactly the wrong notion of capital. The goal is instead to make human resources conform to the nervous, jumpy, constantly assembled and reassembled, just-in-time capital of postindustrialism. As Avery Gordon comments in her insightful critique of diversity management, "to the extent that the cultural reorganization of the corporation fastens on the element of variability, it is consistent with the metaphysics of capital-logic: mobility and flexibility. The hypermobility of capital and the transcoding of flexibility into a new form of social regulation find a consonance in the notion of corporate culture."¹²⁰ Why should the new corporations accommodate diverse cultural identity, in other words? Not just because it is moral, legal, or even psychologically effective to do so, but because when cultural identity is managed as traits that are modular, flexible, and just-in-time, it doesn't matter which cultures from Workforce 2000 enter the mix: it is all grist for the lean production mill. We might translate affirmative action for the new millennium as follows: *We affirm the right of workers to carry around only as much of their inventory of customs as needed, to adapt their customs [now called "skills"] as flexibly as possible to the final arbiter of custom, the customer, and then to turn around on a dime to adopt entirely new configurations of customs as needed [called "changing one's culture"]*.

Such a post-ethical and -statutory approach to affirmative action, of course, might still ring hollow to anyone who expects capital to be justified even minimally on customary cultural grounds. Therefore, we must now turn to nos. 3–5 in Gonzalez and Payne's definition to observe that, even as diversity management retools the notion of custom to suit corporate culture, so it reciprocally alters the idea of corporate culture to accommodate custom. Or rather—and this is its real power—it inflates corporate culture until it subsumes culture at large and becomes self-legitimizing.

We will need to attend more fully to the theory of corporate culture in Part II. For the moment, we may note that the inflation I indicate is implicit in Gonzalez and Payne's prefatory statement that "when you create a work community . . . you're actually developing a culture," or again "work communities are a microcosm of life."¹²¹ Such inflation is also evident in other works of diversity management that explicitly define culture as all technological-rational—for example, Harris and Moran's *Managing Cultural Differences*: "culture is a distinctly human capacity for adapting to circumstances and transmitting this coping skill and knowledge to subsequent generations" and "in essence, human beings create culture . . . as an adaptation to their physical or biological environment."¹²² Crucial in this regard is the way diver-

sity routinely disappears into its purely technical lookalike, "diversity of talent and expertise." For example, Davidow and Malone in their section "The New Breed" document the need to hire from an increasingly multicultural workforce and then, in the next section, "Teamwork," immediately transpose diversity into this purely "talent"-oriented notion: "the empowerment of employees, combined with the cross-disciplinary nature of virtual products, will demand a perpetual mixing and matching of individuals with unique skills. These individuals, as their talents fit, will coalesce around a particular task, and when that task is completed will again separate to reform in a new configuration around the next task. The effect will be something like atoms temporarily joining together to form molecules, then breaking up to form a whole new set of bonds."¹²³ Diversity in this mold is not multicultural because it is not *any* cultural in a customary sense. It is constructed not so much out of men and women as from culture-bare "atoms" (a common trope).¹²⁴ These are "configured" around totally ad hoc tasks, and assisted in their chemistry by totally ad hoc social supports (the "parties, hoopla, and celebrations" that Katzenbach and Smith and others say are vital to high performance teams).¹²⁵ The team thus disintegrates all bonds of race, ethnicity, gender, and so on to create just-in-time or on-the-fly cultures diversified by "skills" and "talents" oriented toward maximizing results.¹²⁶ Such capitalization of customary culture is legitimate because *all* culture is merely a modular capital of techniques, skills, and talents.

The appropriateness of subordinating archaeology, atoms, and so on to our governing technological-rational metaphor of jacks, networks, and TCP/IP protocol can now be explained. Davidow and Malone's "atoms," we note, are subordinate to "bits" in their overall depiction of the virtual corporation as all about information. Similarly, Gardenswartz and Rowe's master trope turns out to be "cultural programming": "All of us are programmed by cultural 'software' that determines our behaviour and attitudes."¹²⁷ The image that best describes culture as understood by diversity management is indeed a network through which culture circulates in packet-traits of instantaneous, historyless (called on the Internet "stateless") information. The great *allegory*—and not just medium—of postindustrial capital, in other words, is digital. According to the allegory, just as all good capital is as uniform yet flexible as a bit, so, too, all good culture is as uniform in its multiculturalism as Silicon Valley technoculture. Not enough color? Just use the managerial equivalent of a graphics program like Photoshop to change the "palette" of traits, apply a "filter," and instantly repixelate the image. A million different images of culture result, yet—and this is why such images are finally simulations of culture—all the differences turn out to be part of the same culture

of information management. Not accidentally, we notice, the final consequence of the “diversity” = “diversity of talent” thesis is that diversity inevitably expands to include everyone. All differences are technical, after all. Here is Roosevelt Thomas, for example, on who gets to count as diverse:

Diversity includes everyone; it is not something that is defined by race or gender. It extends to age, personal and corporate background, education, function, and personality. It includes lifestyle, sexual preference, geographic origin, tenure with the organization, exempt or nonexempt status, and management or nonmanagement. It also shows up clearly with companies involved in acquisitions and mergers. In this expanded context, white males are as diverse as their colleagues.¹²⁸

Lewis Brown Griggs opens the door even wider:

I believe *diversity* should be defined in the broadest possible way. Not only does *diversity* include differences in age, race, gender, physical ability, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic class, education, region of origin, language, and so forth but also differences in life experience, position in the family, personality, job function, rank within a hierarchy, and other such characteristics that go into forming an individual's perspective. Within an organization, diversity encompasses every individual difference that affects a task or relationship.¹²⁹

Diversity of this sort, as Gardenswartz and Rowe put it in the title of one of their sections, sees “Each Individual as a Culturally Diverse Entity.”¹³⁰

In the end, however one may admire the practical achievement of diversity management (its success in adapting diversity to business self-interest must account in large part for the tenacity of corporate diversity initiatives during the political backlash against affirmative action in the United States beginning in the mid-1990s), it is accurate to say that the team culture and corporate culture it molds are only a simulated culture with a simulated diversity, which might be called a “monoculture of diversity.”¹³¹ In an unusually self-reflective section titled “Team Building: Is the Whole Idea Culturally Biased?” Gardenswartz and Rowe stop to consider an objection raised by a minority worker hostile to teams. Their discussion is worth quoting at length:

When a colleague of ours was called to facilitate intergroup problem solving between an Anglo and a Latino group, the leader of the Latino group didn't want to participate. He saw team building as one more Western invention

that he didn't want or need. Was he right? The answer to this question is both yes and no. His perception that team building is a culturally biased intervention is accurate in three significant ways:

1. It is a linear, American intervention, designed to “fix” dysfunctional work groups or teams. It is reflective of the mainstream American culture's need to problem-solve whatever ails it and, in so doing, make it better.
2. The directness of the team-building method reflects the directness of American mainstream culture. . . .
3. Team-building priorities differ. Mainstream America values both task accomplishment and satisfying relationships, but good relationships are not viewed as an end in themselves. . . . In most of the world, relationships have intrinsic merit. . . .

. . . In spite of these examples of team building, American-style, a part of the answer to the question . . . is still no, in the sense that every culture wants work groups to function productively, profitably, collaboratively, and harmoniously. The goal of having productive work teams is universal. It is the process of how to achieve this goal that has many cultural variations.¹³²

What is most worth remarking here is the way the whole issue of multiculturalism—as opposed to universal culture—has become undecidable. All cultures are different, and yet to the extent that all cultures want to achieve productivity and profitability, they will end up being quintessentially American. Mainstream American culture, in other words, gets to be both a distinct cultural identity (Yankee practicality and problem solving) and something universal. It sets the pattern for an undecidable multi-/monoculture unlike any previously known: a simulated culture so big with ethnic, racial, and gender identity groups, yet neutral with respect to those groups, that it is not just “beyond race and gender” but *beyond culture*. In Harris and Moran's words, “team culture” testifies to “a universal microculture of work.” Or, as they prophesy with chilling matter-of-factness: “a unique global culture with some common characteristics may be emerging.”¹³³

So, too, the case is abundantly clear in the context of class. In examining diversity management, we have already encountered notions of class complexly interwoven with ethnicity, race, gender, and language. That Thomas's and Griggs's expansive definitions of diversity can simply list “management or nonmanagement” and “socioeconomic class” among other categories of identity is one evidence. Another is the chapter “Hierarchy and Class” in

Katherine Esty, Richard Griffin, and Marcie Schorr Hirsch's *Workplace Diversity*, or the chapter on diversity and unions in Carnevale and Stone's *American Mosaic* (which reminds us that not just management but also blue-collar organizations began by excluding minorities).¹³⁴ My own earlier argument regarding the transition from line or shift work to teamwork links the notions of group and class because the line was the locale not just of ethnicity or gender but of working-class identity. The subsequent drift of the team concept to the white-collar tiers then does not so much dilute the pertinence of specific class experience as steep it in the complexity of overall U.S. class history—in particular, the history by which the executive sphere successively ejected from itself routine functions that became niches for ever more *déclassé* lower management and clerical populations (among whom, to factor in the extra complexity of generational history, were included the descendants of blue-collar diasporic workers for whom degraded clerical or management occupations were a step up).¹³⁵

As complex as the relation between class and identity groups may be, however, we can make good sense of it here—at least for the purpose of explaining one part of the relevant class history—by resolving that relation into a fundamental similarity between class and identity groups. Both are founded on identity by *classification*. Classificatory identity, as it may be called, is the sense that one's identity, whether manifested in social group or class, ultimately rests on a difficult equilibrium between being assigned a position in a hierarchy and actively staking out such a position ("my place on the line," "my shift," "my job description"). The history that makes me part of "my group," in other words, is cognate with what makes me part of "my class," because both are at base histories of negotiating the fulcrum point "mine" in a world where the real leverage is corporate.

The best history to study in this regard is that of the unions. I refer in particular to the long struggle of U.S. organized labor in the twentieth century to win work rules and job classifications that—in what is only apparently a contradiction—expressed the solidarity of the working class through a perpetual contest of status differentiation within the class. The success of this struggle may be measured in the now familiar tangle of workplace regulations specifying myriad job classifications (welder, fitter, assembler, set-up man, and so on), decreeing which classifications can perform exactly which jobs, and laying down the law of seniority governing the "bumping," or hierarchical reassignment, of workers.¹³⁶ In regard to the solidarity of the class as a whole, however, this struggle also drew a firm line between working class and management in the aftermath of the infamous "straw boss" period between 1910 and 1930—when the U.S. auto industry, for example,

raised the proportion of foremen to line workers by 50 percent and allowed foremen to form cadres of "working leaders" to manage insidiously from within the ranks.¹³⁷ The internal and external faces of the classification struggle—of differentiation from others in the same class and of differentiation from other classes—were homologous. Bumping and other such practices of internal status contest could be brutal, but they reveal that workers identified with each other as a class *contra* management only insofar as they could stake out their position on the line or shift according to openly understood, fair rules that applied class-wide without the toadyism, favoritism, and arbitrariness endemic to the straw boss system.

Given this history, it should be clear that the impact of the new team concept that U.S. factories cloned from the paradigm-setting Toyota/GM NUMMI plant in Fremont, California (which began operations in 1984), was devastating. To hear management tell it, the team concept was good on all counts. It empowered workers democratically in the new spirit of corporate correctness, which was then also cutting back on such perks as separate cafeterias for separate ranks.¹³⁸ And it did so in strict conformity with the total restructuring effort to "flatten" everything for reasons of the bottom line. By definition, after all, the team concept declassifies or, as it is called, "broadbands" workers. Only thus can high-performance teams be assembled from cross-disciplinary and cross-rank skills and talents.¹³⁹ At once a gesture toward egalitarianism and a legitimation of severe reductions in the number of job classifications, the team concept seemed to corporations a win-win deal.

But from the perspective of its union detractors, just as obviously, the broad band team concept could seem a losing proposition precisely because it deleted the entire apparatus of classification earned through class struggle by flattening everyone to the status of all-purpose, anonymous worker in an ant hive. A key work to read in this regard is a book co-authored by two former auto workers: Mike Parker and Jane Slaughter's *Choosing Sides: Unions and the Team Concept* (1988). Throughout this simultaneously factual/statistical and scathingly ironic study, there runs a deep current of anger against declassification.¹⁴⁰ First, Parker and Slaughter serve up a nice parody of the management vision of teamwork:

Team members are multiskilled or cross-trained so they can help each other out and do different jobs as the situation requires. The teams handle many of the foreman's previous functions. . . . Foremen become "advisers" or group leaders for several teams.

Dignity and respect are the new bywords. Management respects workers' knowledge, while workers come to understand the real problems faced by the company.

*Barriers crumble: foremen take off their neckties; time clocks are eliminated; workers and management share the same cafeterias, parking facilities and bathrooms.*¹⁴¹

Then, with relentless energy, they prosecute this vision on the grounds that “drastic reduction of classifications” and “interchangeability” of workers are about nothing other than dismantling the hard-won classification, work-rule, and seniority regulations that once protected workers from arbitrary treatment and straw boss infiltration. Nor is the effect merely symbolic or trivial. According to time-motion studies of just-in-time assembly lines, Parker and Slaughter assert, the result of the team concept is a regime of “management by stress” that puts more physical and mental pressure on workers than even the original Fordism-Taylorism could manage.¹⁴²

The ironic effect of such reverse labor history, as labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein puts it in an essay included in Parker and Slaughter’s book, is that “the corporations’ recent efforts to combine and eliminate job classifications represent an effort to restore to lower level management [i.e., foremen and straw bosses] much of the shop authority they were forced to relinquish when the UAW won bargaining rights in the late 1930s.”¹⁴³ That is, teams of “flexible,” diversely talented workers presided over by a “team leader” or “facilitator” seem to reproduce exactly the earlier exploitative conditions that fomented organized labor in the first place. Now that the team concept tried out on blue-collar culture has been transposed to managerial and professional levels, the same reverse history applies even to white-collar cultures. Here, the deinstallation of assembly lines pegged to classified occupations has its analog in the deinstallation of “linear process flows” pegged to professional identities. Where once work flow proceeded in distinct, ordered stages of design, engineering, manufacture, distribution, sales, and so on, such that the underlying group identities of workers came to be overlaid by discrete professional identities, now “concurrent engineering,” “design for manufacture,” and “point of sale” intervention have scrambled everything up.¹⁴⁴ Join the team, and leave behind both one’s ancestral identities and the carefully nurtured professional identities that once allowed second- or third-generation descendants of diaspora to gentrify their ancestry.

The result for both the working and white-collar middle classes is that class solidarity has transmuted into the simulation of solidarity that Charles C. Heckscher terms—in a phrase that erases itself even as we speak it—the New Unionism:

As craft gave way to industrial unionism, so industrial unionism will, I believe, be replaced by *associational* unionism—a form more appropriate to

rapid economic change, flexible systems of management, and shifting employee loyalties. . . . Concretely, it can be glimpsed in efforts by many corporations and an increasing number of unions to establish direct worker participation on the shopfloor; in the expansion of joint committees at different levels of decision making; in the growing willingness to reduce the emphasis on fixed work rules and contractual uniformity; and in the growing assertiveness of many associations of white-collar and semiprofessional employees in response to their lack of effective voice.¹⁴⁵

As Boyett and Conn summarize, Heckscher “forsees a kind of ‘associational unionism’ that encompasses a greater number of employees, not just traditional ‘workers,’ and is more decentralized and flexible. He notes that the American tradition and labor law recognizes—even insists upon—a clear distinction between workers (labor) and management. . . . Yet, [he] argues, in the new organization ‘the lines between management and workers are blurred.’”¹⁴⁶ “Associational unionism,” we recognize, means simulating away class-based unionism. Associational unionism is how blue-collarers are assimilated to the New Class (accepting, for example, not just new work rules but new paradigms of collaboration with management).¹⁴⁷ Then because the New Class, in its internal confusion of manager and laborer identities, is itself out of joint with traditional class logic, in the end it is how blue-collarers and white-collarers alike are assimilated to the class of those who have *no* class. The assemblage or “weakly formed” class of the New Class, in other words, proves to have been from the first a patsy for the new corporatism because it was always really only a nascent team. We recognize the assemblage class of those with no class by their characteristic lumpen-managerial dress in the most enlightened Silicon Valley corporations: the dressed-down, tieless, casual look epitomized in the jeans and open-necked shirt that Marc Andreessen, co-founder of Netscape Communications Corp., wore on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1996.¹⁴⁸ Looking at this portrait of Andreessen, one sees blue-collar, managerial, and capitalist-owner classes all rolled up in one.

Whether we turn our gaze upon identity groups or class in the new corporatism, the “same” look of simulated identity thus stares out at us—the same composite, repixelated, and endlessly mutable monoculture of diversity backed up by no more history than a daily backup of the hard drive. This is a homogeneity of culture that far exceeds in its impact the consumer culture regularly targeted by both academic and mainstream critics of mass media and mass marketing. This is the homogeneity of *producer* culture.¹⁴⁹

One more step in the argument, and we will be done. It is on the transnational scale that we find the clearest confirmation that suppressing history

allows neo-corporatism to simulate away cultural identity in favor of a monoculture of diversity. In the theater of the multinationals, monocultural diversity is called "global competition."¹⁵⁰ No testimony is more compelling in this regard than Joel Kotkin's *Tribes: How Race, Religion, and Identity Determine Success in the New Global Economy* (1992), a work whose hybrid status as an academic and business book allows us to see both the massive fact of history behind the new global economy and the consequences of the subtraction of that history.

On the one hand, Kotkin's book is properly described as scholarly because it offers one of the few researched, historical studies of the rise of the new corporatism to make it onto store bookshelves alongside bestselling works of business literature. Indeed, Kotkin's entire philosophy of business is a philosophy of history. *Tribes* traces the long history of five peoples—first the Jews and then the Anglo-Americans, Japanese, Chinese, and sub-continental Indians—to show that a particular evolution of ethnicity has positioned, or is positioning, these history-laden "tribes" as the standard bearers of today's networked, global enterprises. All these peoples, according to Kotkin, share the following characteristics:

1. A strong ethnic identity and sense of mutual dependence that helps the group adjust to changes in the global economic and political order without losing its essential unity.
2. A global network based on mutual trust that allows the tribe to function collectively beyond the confines of national or regional borders.
3. A passion for technical and other knowledge from all possible sources, combined with an essential open-mindedness that fosters rapid cultural and scientific development critical for success in the late-twentieth-century world economy.¹⁵¹

We recognize here the basic components of Gonzalez and Payne's definition of team culture (a sense of "who people are" and "belonging" combined with technological rationality). And yet, although Gonzalez and Payne's idea of culture lines up virtually point by point with Kotkin's, there is no real comparison, for Kotkin's basic position throughout is that all of the above—a strong sense of ethnic identity, of belonging even amid global dispersion, and of the value of smart work and lifelong learning—inhere in a deep sense of cultural history founded on the experience of diaspora (a perhaps overly broad concept in Kotkin that includes the emigration not just of the dispossessed but of colonizers and even Japanese managers, who rotate out to foreign countries in a "diaspora by design"). Fleshing out his account with details

gathered from the centuries, Kotkin allows us to understand in a profound way why a certain kind of ethnicity is still central to the new corporatism. Clearly, for example, global competition in the 1980s and early 1990s was from the U.S. viewpoint really competition against the "Japanese," who were less a nation than the ethnic and racial way of life that reasserted itself precisely in the extinction of sovereign nation immediately after World War II.

Yet Kotkin's book balances its orientation toward the past with a progressivist, future-directed argument, which aligns it with the millennial business bestsellers. Kotkin dissolves the notion of ethnicity even as he gives historical evidence for it. Thus, while the Jews receive the place of ancestral honor in his book (the first case study after the introduction), the logical center of his argument lies in the succeeding chapter on the British, whom he tethers to the Americans to create a general category of the Anglo-Americans.¹⁵² Here he draws on the ideas of R. H. Tawney, Max Weber, and others to argue that the business acumen accompanying the British on their great adventure of imperialism was originally a particular kind of ethnicity consisting in equal parts of religious and commercial fervor. Imperialism and global business expansion were the "Calvinist diaspora."¹⁵³ But the unique quality of British and Yankee ethnicity was that it deployed itself in ways that ultimately transcended the history of blood ties and religion (though not language) until it simply *became* world business culture:

Unlike other empires, whose legacies follow racial bloodlines, bureaucratic systems or great religious concepts, the practical and commercial character of the British diaspora brought in its wake something more subtle, yet arguably more essential to the operations of modern society. In a host of critical fields—from accounting and advertising to culture, science, and, finally, the operations of government—the Anglo-Saxons created standards not just for their own race, or for their colonies, but also for the entire modern world. Even the very word *international* sprang from the writings of British eighteenth-century philosopher Jeremy Bentham.¹⁵⁴

In a particularly interesting discussion, for example, Kotkin notes that British accounting techniques reflected an essentially ethnic mindset (accounting was "quasi-religious" for the English and Scots), which from the nineteenth century on became the global mindset. As it were, Anglo-Saxon-Celtic Calvinism (supplemented by the commercialism of other dissenting sects) powered a diaspora of accounting standards and British bookkeepers that gave modern technological rationality its very "account" of rational value, monetary or otherwise. The magnification of ethnicity this implies is

particularly clear in the following passage, from Kotkin's interview with an Indian partner in the historically crucial Price Waterhouse firm. In this passage, British accounting (and the entire British way of doing business) appears at once as culturally neutral and as an exact replacement for subcontinental ethnicity: "I am more committed to Price Waterhouse than to my wife and family. It's in my blood. I think it's a great organization. Here if I am good, I rise. If I'm poor, I fail. I don't need a godfather. And if my son joins, he gets to be partner only if he performs to standards. That's not the way things usually work in India." In the entirety of its institutions, instruments, methods, ethics, and language, in other words, corporate globalism as we now know it is ethnic. "Even today," Kotkin says, "when mastery in many of the industrial arts has passed to Asia, British- and American-descended firms continue to establish the basic standards in how business is conducted and managed worldwide."¹⁵⁵

From this logical center of his book, everything else follows, for Kotkin's basic understanding of the evolution of world business toward the new millennium is that such recent or emergent global business tribes as the Japanese, Chinese (and Taiwanese), and Indians are "new Calvinists." While driven by unique histories and ethnicities of their own, they either chose or were forced (e.g., by the outcome of World War II) to accept as their channel of expression the global ethnicity of the Anglo-Americans—even to the point of adopting English, now the idiom of technological rationality, as the world business language.¹⁵⁶ Each saga that Kotkin tells, therefore, is a variation on the story of how, for their own purposes, with their own accents, "new Calvinists" and "new Americans" learned to inhabit the business techniques and technologies of the diasporic WASPs. As Kotkin summarizes, marking an exact pivot point between past-oriented historicity and "twenty-first-century" prophecy:

Just as Roman systems of law and government became the foundation of the major European nation-states and a broad range of Chinese traditions shaped the development of the Asian tributaries of the *t'ien hsia*, or "All-under heaven" empire, so the Anglo-American systems have been incorporated by the new players in the evolving global economic system.

In the twenty-first century, we are likely to see the further development of this multiracial world order running along British-American tracks of market capitalism, political pluralism and cultural diversity.¹⁵⁷

And so the juggernaut of history keeps rolling on its tracks inexorably toward the new millennium. There, we are to enter a postindustrial promised

land or golden mountain where (and this is the *ne plus ultra* of the simulation I indicate) ethnicity and class will simply *be* global business culture and vice versa, where ethnicity and the new corporatism are indistinguishable. Thus in Kotkin's pages (and even more so in other business writings that unreflectively refer to *keiretsu*, *chaebol*, and other Japanese or Korean terms for business networks and conglomerates) it is at last radically ambiguous whether the Japanese are organized *ethnically* into extended fealty/family groups governed by the ethos of *ie* or *corporately* into the tightly knit, mega-industry groups called *keiretsu*. So, too, it is radically ambiguous whether clannish ethnicity or corporate identity is the agenda of such organizations as "rotating credit associations among Japanese and Chinese, *kye* among Koreans and the *susus* of West Indians."¹⁵⁸ (Attesting further to this ambiguity is the undecidable Western discourse of "corruption"/"inefficiency," at once Calvinist moral and technological rational, often used to analyze such formations.) Bloodless and featureless the great international businesses may seem, but the more complex reality is that they are compounded from both ethnic diaspora and enterprise networking in a manner now so globally standard that the line between "tribe" and "corporation" is inscrutable.

Harris and Moran write in their book on managing multinational cultural differences:

The transnational corporation that moves beyond the culture of a single country and operates comfortably in the multicultures of many nations obviously will develop a unique microculture of its own. Its organization model and environment will reflect the synergy of the diverse macrocultures in which it functions, as well as the varying managerial approaches to business, government, and people. Thus, far-flung business activities require a new organizational culture that is able to accommodate itself to cross-cultural realities.¹⁵⁹

The monoculture of diversity that is team culture at the local level converges with the monoculture of diversity that is corporate culture at the global level. Thus does the new corporation take over all identity positions, saturating the field of identity from local to universal so as to leave customary identity groups and classes no room to stand except in the corporation. Such is the sameness of difference in a world without history. Such is what Hammer and Champy, in the subtitle to *Reengineering the Corporation*, call "A Manifesto for Business Revolution." A specter is haunting Europe, Marx and Engels said. But their vision of a specter was based on a historical vision of class experience. The historyless specter now haunting the United States and much of the world besides is one that may *seem* to have the lumpen-

ethnic traits of Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, Indians, and so on, but in reality washes out both ethnicity and class to focus on technological/technical structures and processes. After all, the neo-corporatist perception of global competition characteristically makes the history of foreign peoples invisible (subordinating it to the concept of "customs" or "traits") so as to obscure that those peoples may have their own equivalents of internal identity groups and class formations. Global competition thus always resolves into the challenge to workers to be as minimalist in identity—that is, to be as self-sacrificing, to work as hard, to save as much—as zero-people, or so they seem, in the Far East or elsewhere.¹⁶⁰

It is as if one were to take a magnet and drag it across the face of a diskette: knowledge as we now understand it is the function of a civilization that believes it is headed toward what cyberpunk writers like William Gibson (*Neuromancer*) and Neal Stephenson (*The Diamond Age*) vividly imagine to be corporate "arcologies," "claves," and "phyles" appropriating all that remains of historical groups, classes, and nations. Erase the history file; make room for the people of the phyles.

"X"

The merger of the new corporatism with academic subject critique and cultural class critique, I believe, puts in place the last piece we need to characterize our contemporary understanding of knowledge work. In a purely academic idiom, we might equate the kind of merger I indicate with *sous rature* in literary theory. As in some Shelleyan "Triumph of Life" (as read by Paul de Man), our contemporary understanding of understanding arises when the subject is at once erased and simulated (Shelley: "masked") by the New Class, and then both subject and class are in turn masked by the new corporation. Such is the real-life deconstruction of knowledge that is the Triumph of the Corporation. Indeed, perhaps that is how Shelley's late Enlightenment poem, with its unfinished vision of multitudes driven before the chariot of Life, would have had to be completed: upon the clarification that the ultimate multitude, and life, is corporate. Capping the sequence of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment theories of civilization I earlier cited,* the new corporatism is an end-of-history vision of civilization that throws into the dustbin of history not only all its predecessors but also the very notion of relevant

* See page 34 above.

history. History conceived as erasure—the disfiguration of one age by another—itself operates under the sign of erasure.

Now, perhaps, we can understand the true meaning of the emancipation proclamation of the information age first uttered in 1984 by Stewart Brand, publisher of *The Whole Earth Catalog*: "information wants to be free."¹⁶¹ In the era of the Whole Earth Corporation, "information wants to be free" is ultimately how we are no longer allowed to say "we" want to be free. "We," the subject and class of information culture, come fully to know our world only in the blinding moment of illumination when the world network routes around our knowledge—that is, the *us* in our knowledge that Fukuyama (in the other half of his thesis) terms "the struggle for recognition" and Castells (in the second volume of his *Information Age* trilogy) calls "the power of identity."¹⁶² We do not even need the hyperbole of cyberpunk science fiction, with its unerring instinct for the mutilation of subjects (e.g., the silicon-punctured bodies and flat-lined subjectivities of Gibson's *Neuromancer*), to grasp the intensity of our loss—nor the uncanny double of that intensity, the blurred anomie of it all. "X" marks the spot where the whole generation of incipient knowledge workers in the United States succeeding the baby boomers—the generation caught in the "pipeline" from education to the corporation—has been deleted from the network.¹⁶³ Indeed, we may speculate that the purely generational identity of "Gen X" (and now "Gen Y" after them) looms large at this moment precisely because it is an empty solidarity reflecting—as if in cyberpunk "mirrorshades"—the hollow form of the corporate world's own generational identity as "workforce 2000." "We" are no more than this transient moment when we have nothing more in common—as Jean-Luc Nancy might say in his *Inoperative Community*—than our finitude, our extinction, our "death."¹⁶⁴

My tone is once more elegiac. But that is because the fatal problem with which I began has been resumed at another level. The "death of literature," we now know, cannot be understood except against the background of the death of knowledge in the information age—that is, the dying of "our" knowledge into a paradigm of knowledge work that grants us virtual freedom only by freeing us from all those things once thought to give freedom its point. Like refugees of consciousness embarked on the diaspora of the new millennium, we are given the opportunity to be free of our identity, settled home, peoples, security, everything. Or at least such would be the most heterodox critique of the doxa—the total identification of culture with technology and technique—posited by the new corporatism. Representative of such heterodoxy is Jeremy Rifkin's *End of Work*, which argues elegiacally

that perhaps the only thing “we” have left is a sense of worthlessness internalizing the end of history that he calls the “end of work”:

The death of the global labor force is being internalized by millions of workers who experience their own individual deaths, daily, at the hands of profit-driven employers and a disinterested government. They are the ones who are waiting for pink slips, being forced to work part-time at reduced pay, or being pushed onto the welfare rolls. With each new indignity, their confidence and self-esteem suffer another blow. They become expendable, then irrelevant, and finally invisible in the new high-tech world of global commerce and trade.¹⁶⁵

What is bleakest about this vision is the utter poverty of collective identity in Rifkin’s analysis—the way in which he is interested only in “individual deaths” of “confidence and self-esteem” (merely the inverse of economic individualism) because even the possibility of a group or class experience of loss is unthinkable.

So what is a knowledge worker—in school, looking for work, at work, or laid off from work—to do? How to think and feel and live amid such loss of identity and history so as to make reparation, to seek what one of our earliest poets of knowledge work, William Wordsworth, called “abundant recompence”?¹⁶⁶ And how to do so, moreover, without being nostalgic for foreclosed group and class identities in a manner that would inauthentically mime the great fundamentalist, nationalist, and ethnic reactionisms of peoples of the world *excluded* from “knowledge” (as Castells so eloquently studies)? After all, the situation of someone whose identity is excluded precisely through being included in the pipeline of knowledge work is different. Even if someone in this position is heterodox enough in relation to “team culture” to mourn the culture of identity groups and classes, he or she is increasingly powerless to believe that such identity formations can any longer meaningfully organize the experience of work except insofar as they are accommodated within the new corporation as simulacra of themselves (i.e., as a “diversity” of “skills”). Just as literature is dead while the value of the literary may yet survive to seek new forms, as I have suggested, so groups and classes among knowledge workers have now been neutralized where they most count—in the culture of production—even as the need for the identity function they once supplied continues unabated.

Or rather, since the technological rationality of a phrase like *identity function* is symptomatic of the evacuation of knowledge worker identity, per-

haps we would do better to think of the hunger for identity that survives within the pipeline as a craving for a restorative ethos preliminary to any particular identity or function—an ethos, in particular, able to withstand the otherwise relentless ethos of postindustrialism. For make no doubt: the right life that can now make the knowledge worker not just informed but well informed must be a whole *ethos* (Greek, “custom, character”) able not just to live with, but to make a life of the great succession of *ethoi* that have been cumulatively recruited to industrialism and postindustrialism to achieve the present spirit of technological rationality: Weberian “Protestant ethic,” Schumpeterian “creative destruction,” Japanese *Wa* or Chinese neo-Confucianism (as pressed into service to explain the then blossoming “Asian economic miracle”), and now Castells’s “spirit of informationalism.” “What is, then, this ‘*ethical foundation of the network enterprise*’ this ‘*spirit of informationalism*’?” Castells asks, and answers (I quote more fully a passage touched upon earlier):

It is a culture, indeed, but a culture of the ephemeral, a culture of each strategic decision, a patchwork of experiences and interests, rather than a charter of rights and obligations. It is a *multifaceted, virtual culture*, as in the visual experiences created by computers in cyberspace by rearranging reality. It is not a fantasy, it is a material force because it informs, and enforces, powerful economic decisions at every moment in the life of the network. . . . The “spirit of informationalism” is the culture of “creative destruction” accelerated to the speed of the optoelectronic circuits that process its signals. Schumpeter meets Weber in the cyberspace of the network enterprise.¹⁶⁷

We can go right to the heart of the paradox of contemporary identity by inverting Castells’s question in this way: not “what is [the] ethical foundation of the network enterprise” or “spirit of informationalism,” but what ethical foundation enables identities to live an *un-networked* and *counter-informational* fantasy *within* the spirit of informationalism? What room might there be for a counter-ethos within the dominant ethos of informationalism that spends its days and nights locked within the cubicles of postindustrialism but also “gestures” all the while that it is something else—something like what Raymond Williams called a “structure of feeling” that, if it can no longer be identity or class in customary ways, can nevertheless reconstitute the *basis* for a renewed folk identity? Ethos, after all, is not in itself identity but the inchoate coming-to-be or basis of identity; it is identity at the point

of emergence from collective, undifferentiated doxa.* As such, it necessarily participates in the paradoxical logic of doxa outlined earlier. Even the dominant postindustrial ethos is constantly shadowed by internally displaced ethoi that, if not revolutionary or even aggressively subversive, nevertheless have an unsettling neither/nor status. If there is to be what I called a right life of information that can make the knowledge worker not just informed but, in a fundamental sense, *well* informed, such rightness must lie precisely in a paradoxical ethos or shadow doxa flourishing within the Valley of Death of contemporary knowledge—one that from the viewpoint of the new corporation both does its job and seems to gesture toward some contrarian reserve of knowledge of the sort that William R. Paulson and J. Hillis Miller, in their works on the role of literature in the information age, call respectively a “noise of culture” and a “black hole.”¹⁶⁸

It is upon such a contrarian “unknown ethos” or “ethos of the unknown” secreted within knowledge work, I believe, that the humanities and arts (and my special concern, literary study) must now come to bear or not at all. For the humanities and arts, this is where the contest for “humanity” now lies: to educate the ethos of the unknown that broods within knowledge work so that it is not also the same as an ethos of unknowing, of resenting the fated life of knowledge work so much that one could “care less” for knowledge. After all, even the mass ethics visible in such TV sitcoms originating in the 1990s as *Friends* (where an ensemble cast playing the part of Gen Xers at once enacts and repairs the concept of “team”) entertains an abiding inquiry into what being well in the age of the well informed really means. Why not the humanities and arts, too, informed as they are by a history (e.g., literary history) able to testify to so many alternative experiences of identity, community, knowledge, action, work, feeling, and reparation? Why not the humanities and arts, too, especially since in the academy they are already in the pipeline alongside—but profoundly separated from—the paradoxical contemporary ethos of disenchanted knowledge whose name we have only to utter to realize how difficult is the task of reparation: *cool*?

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* *Ethos* in this book is a flexible term that, depending on context, expands to be as capacious as “Zeitgeist” and contracts to be as specific as “ethic” or “aesthetic.” A fuller gloss would triangulate the term somewhere in the midst of Williams’s “structure of feeling,” Bourdieu’s “habitus,” Habermas’s “lifeworld,” and Gouldner’s “culture of critical discourse.” These concepts vary in their emphasis on the visceral versus rationalist, collective versus individual, and preverbal versus articulate poles of social experience (and are incommensurable in other ways as well). But it is precisely such variance that I mean *ethos* to designate because the concept is best understood dynamically. *Ethos* locates the *process* of emergence (and submergence) where identity at once cleaves from and to inchoate social experience. Cool is thus an ethos, not an identity.