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James Dennis LoRusso 07/17/2014

**The Libertarian Ethic and the Spirit of Global Capital:
Post-Industrial Spirituality of the American Workplace**

By

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Doctor of Philosophy

Religion

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The Libertarian Ethic and The Spirit of Global Capital: Post-Industrial Spirituality of the American Workplace

By

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M.A., Georgia State University, 2008
B.A., Georgia State University, 2001

Advisor: Gary M. Laderman, Ph.D.

An abstract submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney Graduate School of Emory University
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Abstract

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By James Dennis LoRusso

In recent decades, the business world has demonstrated an elevated interest in the role that "spirituality" might play in the workplace. Corporate executives, researchers in fields such as management and organizational behavior, and popular authors suggest that recognizing the "spiritual" dimensions of work can not only have a positive effect on employee morale, but simultaneously elevate productivity as well as bottom-line profits.

Although scholars of religion have asserted a number reasons for this trend, their explanations prove myopic. I contend that "workplace spirituality," as it has been dubbed, is neither a coherent religious movement in its own right, nor is it merely the extension of the church into business, as others have suggested. Instead, my analysis, which employs ethnography as well as social history, reveals something more basic has changed over the last half century in the way Americans think and behave towards work, and these changes remain inextricably bound to large-scale socio-economic trends over the latter half of the twenty-first century. It is part of a shift from a national economy defined by heavy industry, to a globalized one driven by high technology, finance, and mass consumption. New forms of work that depend greatly on interpersonal skills and emotional labor have risen to the fore. Amidst these new forms of work, I argue, some Americans have turned to rhetorics of spirituality to understand the role of work in their lives, in the society, and in the world.

This dissertation, however, pushes the discussion further, to elucidate the political dimensions of workplace spirituality. Neoliberalism, a range of pro-business attitudes that seeks to minimize government intervention into the economy, is an integral and underappreciated component of workplace spirituality. The rhetoric of spirituality at work embraces the "spirit" of global capitalism; it celebrates the power of business, operating under the auspices of deregulated markets, to advance human material and spiritual progress. Moreover, it instills within its practitioners a libertarian ethos that valorizes personal responsibility and affords individuals with a sense of power and significance in a world shaped less by nation-states and increasingly dominated by the dynamics of a global marketplace.

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 1: The Welfare State and Its Discontents 22

The American Workplace in 1950 25

Agency Panic and Fears of the Welfare State 30

Human Freedom and a Nascent Neoliberalism 39

CHAPTER 2: Work in Post-Industrial America: Towards a Humanistic Capitalism 47

Abraham Maslow and the Humanistic Work Ethic 51

Willis Harman: Post-Industrial Spiritual Prophet 58

Subjective Knowledge, Spirituality, and Post-Industrial Society 63

The Legacy of Willis Harman 66

CHAPTER 3: Management, Spirituality, and Religion: Business Scholarship as Theology 73

The Servant Leader 75

Spirit at Work 79

Workplace Spirituality as Theology 85

CHAPTER 4: Zen and the Art of Micro-processing: Liberating the Entrepreneurial Spirit in Silicon Valley 103

Steve Jobs: The Seeker Entrepreneur 106

Spiritual Bricolage 112

The "Reality Distortion Field" 114

Les Kaye: Zen and Work 118

CHAPTER 5: Looser selves, Freer Markets 129

A Texas-Sized Counterculture 132

A Turn to the Political Right 136

The Genesis of Conscious Capitalism 141

Mapping a Post-Industrial Habitus 144

CHAPTER 6: Not the Usual Suspects: Real Estate Rabbis, Monastic Managers, and Spiritual Salesmen in the Big Apple 149

The New York Groups 151

Competing Aims 153

Class Power, The Great Recession, and Neoliberalism 163

CHAPTER 7: SACRED COMMERCE: Neoliberal Spiritualities in a West-Coast Coffee Chain 177

Café Gratitude and Sacred Commerce 178

Spiritual Rhetoric at Café Gratitude 182

Embodying Neoliberalism 188

Abounding River 192

CONCLUSION 199

BIBLOGRAPHY 209

Figures

Figure 1 166

Introduction

On the second Thursday of every month, the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce hosts a "brown bag" lunch called "Spirit at Work… A Continuing Conversation." According the Chamber website, the hour-long session, facilitated by the Reverend Sarah Hargrave, brings together "partners and friends to discuss ways to incorporate our spirituality and awareness into our work, business or profession."[1] Rev. Hargrave, the proprietor of her own consulting firm, offers similar workshops monthly throughout the greater San Francisco Bay Area. The Golden Gate Center for Spiritual Living, where she works as a staff minister, describes her as "a rare combination of ordained minister, entrepreneur, and former corporate executive" and a "pioneer in the field of spirituality in work and business."[2]

However uncanny Hargrave's work might appear, discussions about the role of spirituality at work are anything but "rare" in contemporary American business. She is joined by a host of other consultants around the country who offer similar services to their clientele. Janice Marturano, for instance, works as the executive director at the Institute for Mindful Leadership, a non-profit firm that offers a variety of courses and retreats that promote "mindful leadership."[3] A former

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[1] "Spirit At Work: A Continuing Conversation," *San Francisco Chamber of Commerce*, accessed 15 April 2014, http://members.sfchamber.com/events/Spirit-at-Work-2462/details.
[2] "Rev. Sarah Q. Hargrave, Staff Minister," *Golden Gate Center for Spiritual Living*, accessed 16 April 2014, http://www.ggcsl.org/ministry/rev_hargrave.htm.
[3] "Definitions," *Institute for Mindful Leadership*, accessed 12 April 2014, http://instituteformindfulleadership.org/definitions/.

executive at General Mills, Marturano has provided this training for a number of major corporations, including Proctor & Gamble, Target, and the American Red Cross.[4] The World Economic Forum (WEC) in Davos, Switzerland even featured one of her workshops, "Finding the Space to Lead," at their meeting in 2013.[5]

In fact, since the economic crisis of 2007-09, the World Economic Forum has taken a keen interest the role that spirituality and religion might play in shaping the global economy. They launched the Global Agenda Council on Faith and Values in 2009 to address the ethical deficiencies that contributed to the collapse of financial institutions and housing markets.[6] Moreover, their annual meetings now include not only corporate executives and political leaders but also representatives from religious and spiritual organizations. The Archbishop of Dublin, a founder of a Zen Buddhist Center in New Mexico, and Evangelical Christian minster, Jim Wallis, were among the attendees of the 2011 WEC Conference and in January of 2014, actress Goldie Hawn opened the morning session with a guided meditation for approximately sixty participants.[7]

The inclusion of religious dignitaries and spiritual practices on the agenda of the WEC suggests that interest around spirituality at work and in business extends beyond a handful of isolated spiritual entrepreneurs like Rev. Hargrave. Rather, it

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[4] "Clients," *Institute for Mindful Leadership*, accessed 12 April 2014, http://instituteformindfulleadership.org/clients/.
[5] "Courses and Workshops," *Institute for Mindful Leadership,* accessed 12 April 2014, http://instituteformindfulleadership.org/course-and-workshops/.
[6] Dan Gilgoff, "How Davos Found God," *CNN: Belief Blog*, 28 January, 2011, http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/01/28/how-davos-found-god/.
[7] Larry Elliott and Jill Teanor, "And breathe…Goldie Hawn and a monk bring meditation to Davos," *The Guardian*, 23 January 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/jan/23/davos-2014-meditation-goldie-hawn.

has blossomed since the early 1990s into a widespread social movement within the global business community. The years leading up to the millennium witnessed the rise of a number of formal and informal groups seeking to introduce spirituality into business. Throughout the decade, the World Bank, for instance, sponsored weekly meetings of the Spiritual Unfoldment Society, a group that promoted "personal transformation through self-knowledge, understanding, and awakening higher consciousness;"[8] The Academy of Management (AOM) established the "Management, Spirituality, and Religion Group" as a regular component of its annual conferences beginning in 1999; and in 1996 the popular *Chicken Soup* series of self-help books first published *Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work*.[9]

While the last decade of the twentieth century was a turning point for the movement, it was equally a time of rapid social, economic, and political change in the United States. The decade opened with the collapse of Soviet-style socialism, a series of events that seemed to mark the moral and economic superiority of the free enterprise system. Popular songs like Jesus Jones' "Right Here, Right Now" (1990), which celebrated the possibilities of peace and prosperity in a post-Cold War world, became anthems embodying the spirit of these years, and political scientist Frances Fukayama boldly declared that the triumph of Western liberal democracy signaled the "end of history."[10]

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[8] Richard Barrett, "Spiritual Unfoldment at the World Bank," *Paraview*, 1998, accessed 14 April 2014, http://www.paraview.com/features/unfolding.htm.
[9] Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Maida Rogerson, Martin Rutte, and Tim Clauss, *Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work*, (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communiations, 1996).
[10] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and The Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

Confidence in capitalism permeated all sides of the American political spectrum as well. In 1992, With the election of Bill Clinton, the first US President born after the Second World War, even the Democratic Party largely abandoned its calls for greater regulation of the economy and robust welfare programs and adopted attitudes more sympathetic to "free trade" and market-based solutions to social problems.

Technology, particularly with the introduction of the Internet, promised to unleash pent up entrepreneurial energies and rip away the barriers insulating corporate domination of the global marketplace. Business executive Don Tapscott declared in *The Digital Economy: Promise and Peril in the Age of Networked Intelligence* (1997) that this new economy "is turning the world upside down" and demanded that businesses rethink time-tested strategies, adopt new organizational forms, and replace traditional management with "transformational leadership."[11]

Into this milieu of reform-mindedness entered voices who proclaimed "spirituality" as the missing ingredient in the new, dynamic marketplace. Researchers Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton exemplified these sentiments in their influential study, *A Spiritual Audit or Corporate America* (1999):

> This age calls out for a new "spirit of management." For us, the concepts of spirituality and soul are not merely add-on elements of a new philosophy or policy of management. Instead, they are the very essence of such a philosophy or policy. No management effort can survive without them. We refuse to accept that whoe

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[11] Don Tapscott, *The Digital Economy: Promise and Peril in the Age of Networked Intelligence*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 6.

organizations cannot learn ways to foster soul and spirituality in the workplace. We believe not only that they can but also that they must.[12]

Despite the disillusionment stemming from, first, the bursting of the so-called "dot.com" bubble and, later, the financial crisis of 2007-09, interest in spirituality at work, if anything, has continued its march from the margins to inhabit a central place in the business world. Not only do prominent companies like Google and Apple offer courses on contemplative practice, but even business schools are joining the fray. The Sam Walton School of Business, for example, established the Tyson Center for Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace in 2009, allowing academics and business leaders to pursue research and students to enroll in elective courses that explore the role of spirituality in business.[13]

How and why has "spirituality in the workplace" become such an important topic of discussion in recent decades? Researchers from across various disciplines, from organizational behavior and management to comparative religion, have proposed a range of answers to this vexing question. By far, however, the most prolific body of scholarship emanates not from the study of religion, but from business researchers. In *A Spiritual Audit*, Mitroff and Denton blame modernity for fostering an unnatural schism between "spirituality" and "work." The rationalization of all areas of social existence into distinct spheres (work and leisure, sacred and secular, public and private, etc.) renders an individual's experience of life as schizophrenic. "For organizations to erect walls in the way of

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[12] Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: A Hard Look at Spirituality, Religion, and Values in the Workplace*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Boss Publishers, 1999), 14.
[13] *Tyson Center for Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace*, accessed 12 April 2014, http://tfsw.uark.edu/.

everyday spiritual development," they argue, "goes against the grain of deep human needs and puts an intolerable burden on individuals."[14]

Judi Neal, a scholar of organizational behavior and founder of the *International Association for Spirit at Work*, credits changes to the "psychological contract for work" since the late 1980s with spurring interest in integrating spirituality and work. Unlike earlier expectations that an individual would labor in a single career for the duration of his or her life, people now work in an environment rife with downsizing, mergers, and continuous change. As a result, Neal claims, individuals no longer look to organizations for meaning but within themselves, "from their spirituality."[15]

Although coming somewhat late to the discussion, a handful of scholars of religion likewise attempt to uncover the reasons behind the movement's expansion. Sociologist of Religion, Douglas Hicks, offers one of the earliest detailed examples of comparative religious scholarship in his 2003 book, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership*. Hicks locates the roots of contemporary discourse on spirituality at work in earlier mid-century popular Christian discussions on the topic. Significant social changes, particularly new immigration patterns and the entry of women and minorities into the workforce, have led to greater religious diversity in organizations. Consequently, the discourse has moved

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[14] Mitroff and Denton, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America*, 7.
[15] Judi Neal, *Edgewalkers*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 9.

beyond the confines of largely white, Protestant males to acknowledge a host of voices.[16]

In *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement*, ethicist David Miller situates the genesis of what he terms the "Faith at Work Movement" in the late nineteenth century with the so-called Social Gospel Era. He emphasizes the character of the movement as "lay-driven" with only scant participation from official Christian denominations. It is not until the mid-1980s, however, Miller suggests, that the "Faith at Work" movement truly begins. Baby-boomers were seeking meaning and purpose at work, and moreover, "tectonic changes in information technology, telecommunications, transportation, manufacturing, globalization, and political ideologies began to challenge old paradigms and fundamentally transform how we work and the society in which we live."[17]

More recently, Lake Lambert's *Spirituality, Inc*. (2009) similarly argues for the Protestant Christian Roots of "workplace spirituality." Although he distinguishes Miller's Christian-centered "faith at work" movement from the more generic "spirituality" he investigates, Lambert nevertheless sees each as historically linked. He traces current American attitudes about work to Puritan notions about work as "vocation" or "calling" and sees the shades of these ideas at the core of both movements. *Spirituality Inc.* links workplace spirituality historically to "a larger economic movement known as 'welfare capitalism' in which corporations rather

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[16] Douglas Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20.
[17] David W. Miller, *God At Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.

than the state provide social services."[18] Lambert appeals to Weber's notion of "elective affinity" to argue that spirituality complements the norms and common practices associated with contemporary American business, which accounts for its growing popularity in recent decades.

While offering a more critical approach than either Lambert or Miller, Richard King and Jeremy Carrette likewise claim the presence of "spirituality" in corporate culture upholds the commercial interests of firms. In *Selling Spirituality* (2005), they see this movement not as the confluence of two distinct spheres of religion and work, but rather the co-optation of religious practices, teachings, and beliefs by the interests of neoliberal capitalism. The authors argue that in successfully commercializing "religion," businesses have pacified and depoliticized its content, resulting in a range of "capitalist spiritualities." In short, King and Carrette depict this movement as the culmination of a gradual process, extending over the modern period, in which religion becomes privatized and increasingly submitted to the logic of the marketplace. Corporations in due course have adapted "spirituality" to increase productivity and reduce workplace stresses in the pursuit of higher profits.[19]

These studies provide helpful insights about the history of spirituality at work, yet they almost seem to be describing entirely different social phenomena. When, for instance, Miller details the "faith at work movement," he is discussing something quite distinct from what business scholars typically refer to as

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[18] Lake Lambert III, *Spirituality Inc.: Religion in the American Workplace*, (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 18.
[19] Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 134.

"workplace spirituality," and this shapes the way he constructs his historical narrative. *God at Work*, he admits, "focuses largely on the Christian dimension of the movement, with recognition of and reference to other religions and forms of spirituality in the movement."[20] Consequently, he assembles a history that emphasizes a theological struggle between, on one hand, laity interested in integrating their religious commitments and their work, and on the other, denominational authorities, who remain largely unhelpful.

Business researchers, conversely, frequently position "spirituality" as something quite distinct from "religion." Mitroff and Denton, for example, claim that unlike religion, spirituality lacks a formal organizational structure. "Organizations and formal structures," they state, "are not critical ingredients in spirituality," which seems, for them, to transcend and dogma or institutional constraints.[21] Instead, Mitroff and Denton depict spirituality as a *sui generis* attribute of human experience, as, they say, "universal and timeless."[22] Armed with this definition, they can account for the growth of "workplace spirituality" as a return to a more authentic, pre-modern order before religion and work experienced an unnatural divorce.

Hicks and Lambert also prefer the term "workplace spirituality," but each hold different aims. Lambert wishes to describe workplace spirituality as "an important religious movement, shaping and being shaped by American business culture."[23] Although rooted in religious ideas, workplace spirituality in this sense implies a discrete religious movement in its own right, complete with a unique set of

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[20] David Miller, *God at Work,* 4.
[21] Mitroff and Denton, *A Spiritual Audit,* 23.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Lake Lambert, *Spirituality, Inc.,* 18.

practices, beliefs, and strategies bound to corporate culture. On the other hand, Hicks views workplace spirituality less as a distinct religious movement, but as a "religion *of* the corporation," deliberately crafted by company authorities to improve productivity and secure employee loyalty.[24] Workplace spirituality, he claims, resembles Bellah's notion of "civil religion" in which the CEO becomes high priest, and middle managers serve as "corporate acolytes."[25] Because Hick's main goal is to protect religious diversity in the workplace, he dismisses workplace spirituality as unduly exploitative and restrictive of individual religious expression.[26]

Similarly, in *Selling Spirituality*, King and Carrette echo Hick's resistance to the use of "spirituality" in corporate cultures. However, instead of "workplace spirituality," they favor the term "capitalist spiritualities" in order to emphasis how the rhetoric of spirituality obscures an underlying "neoliberal" political ideology that has taken hold globally in the wake of Communism's decline at the end of the 1980s. King and Carrette define "neoliberalism" ostensibly as an ideology that "puts profits before people, promotes privatization of public utilities, services and resources, and is in the process of eroding many of the individual civil liberties that were established under its forerunner—political liberalism."[27] In the context of the workplace, these capitalist spiritualities provide a mechanism for the release of work-induced stresses and give employees a sense of community. However, in performing these functions, King and Carrette argue, they obscure "increasingly

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[24] Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace*, 118.
[25] Ibid,
[26] Ibid, 114.
[27] King and Carrette, *Selling Spirituality,* 7.

oppressive and insecure job conditions" with which employees are faced under neoliberalism.[28] In short, *Selling Spirituality* proposes a description of spirituality at work remarkably different from other scholarship. Capitalist spiritualities are certainly not the lay-driven movement that David Miller articulates, nor are they a response to some unnatural distinction between work and spirituality. Rather, they constitute a corporate-led "takeover" over religion, or as the authors' state, "the extension of the economic rationality of the marketplace into the realm of fundamental human beliefs."[29]

Even as these wide-ranging narratives enrich our knowledge of the topic, what we understand about spirituality in the American workplace remains highly ambiguous. If it is a social movement at all, it is not the exclusive product of the Christian laity, as Miller advocates, or an independent religious tradition within American business as Lambert suggests. Moreover, it cannot adequately be explained, as business scholars assert, as some *natural* expression of human "spirituality," or reduced to an *unnatural* cooptation of religion by the marketplace. First, with the exception of King and Carrette, these scholars rely on reified concepts of "spirituality" or "religion." Business scholars like Mitroff and Denton treat spirituality as a *sui generis* phenomenon, capable of being observed, measured, and evaluated. Likewise, Miller and Lambert assume categories like "religion" or "spirituality" as obvious, as if they point to a distinct set of beliefs, institutions, and practices separated entirely from other domains of social life. Such perspectives

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[28] Ibid, 134.
[29] Ibid, 135.

simply ignore the claims of scholars like Talal Asad, who argue that concepts like "religion" are products of discourse and history.[30]

Only King and Carrette acknowledge the inherent instability of "religion" and "spirituality" and that attempts to provide comprehensive definitions leave "the impression that spirituality is somehow *really* divorced from other spheres of human life such as economics, culture, and politics."[31] Instead, they evaluate spirituality as a form of rhetoric, as a discursive invention serving particular interests in society rather than a concept that describes some trans-historical reality. This move allows them to examine the deep structures operating in American culture that link spirituality with political and economic factors.

As much as *Selling Spirituality* recognizes the shortcomings of essentialist definitions, it too yields an insufficient account of spirituality at work. The authors' narrative depends overwhelmingly on social determinism that leaves little room for any form of human agency. The agents in their arguments are not human, but rather amorphous entities such as "the market," "the ideology of psychology," or "corporate interests." Individuals stand defenseless in the face of cultural and social processes. An oppressive capitalist social structure simply dictates to its hapless victims what to believe and how to act. Yet, King and Carrette risk essentializing broad concepts like "the market" when they imbue them with an over-determining agency. They fail to realize that institutional structures like global markets, "big business," as much as "religion" or "spirituality" are themselves constructs, the meaning and boundaries of

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[30] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christainity and Islam*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 29.
[31] King and Carrette, 3.

which individuals continuously uphold and contest. In short, they ignore the fact that human beings create the social structures that, in turn, recreate them. Because *Selling Spirituality* disregards the role or human agency, it is ill-equipped to consider the complex strategies by which individuals create, reproduce, or modify the structures in which they are embedded.

Individuals and groups do figure prominently in the work of other researchers, but these studies overlook vital constituencies. The vast majority of research on spirituality at work focuses exclusively on the actions and attitudes of people who wield cultural authority (business executives, entrepreneurs, writers, etc.). As an example of this kind of scholarship, Judi Neal, in *Edgewalkers: People and Organizations that Take Risks, Build Bridges, and Break New Ground* (2006), limits her research to prominent businesspeople like Igor Sikorsky, founder of Sikorsky aircraft, or Jennifer Cash O'Donnell, former director of organizational strategy for AT&T.[32] Additionally, scholars of religion prove equally myopic in their research. *Spirituality Inc.* provides a "top-down" account of workplace spirituality, for example. Lambert discusses at length entrepreneurs like Dan Cathy, the Christian founder of Chic-Fil-A, or writers like Laurie Beth Jones, author of *Jesus CEO* (1995).

Certainly, it is individuals like these that exert an inordinate influence on shaping and driving the movement, but little, if any, research has examined how employees actually negotiate a workplace culture that self-identifies as "spiritual."

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[32] Neal, *Edgewalkers*, 16-22.

What is it like, for example, to work for a company where each Monday begins with a prayer or affirmation? These questions are ripe for exploration.

Given this wide-ranging spectrum of scholarly goals, methods, and claims, it is difficult to state with any confidence that a coherent social movement actually exists. Each of these scholars holds different ideas about who and what counts as part of the movement. Is this a "grassroots" movement as David Miller suggests? Are King and Carrette correct in their claim that spirituality at work is simply a subtle form of manipulation by powerful business interests? Or is it, as Lake Lambert asserts, a new religious movement taking shape outside traditional religious institutions?

The central aim of this dissertation is to provide a fresh perspective that builds on and challenges previous scholarship on workplace spirituality. This approach recognizes that concepts like "spirituality" and even "work" are products of history and get deployed for numerous reasons in countless contexts. I take seriously the words of Courtney Bender that we cannot study spirituality away from its specific social locations. "Extracting spirituality," she writes, "from the institutions where it is lived out distorts and mischaracterizes the phenomenon, and draws attention away from the conundrums it poses and the possibilities it allows."[33] Bender asks instead that we examine the various ways in which spirituality is *entangled* in social life, in history, and in discourse.

One goal of this project, then, is to trace the ways in which "spirituality" and "work" get entangled with one another in American culture over time. Remaining

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[33] Courtney Bender, *The New Metaphysicals*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 6.

attentive to how discourse unfolds in social life, I argue that this entanglement is intimately bound up with the social, the economic, and the political. First, during the latter half of the twentieth century in the United States, the dominant form of work shifts away from manufacturing and increasingly embraces *post-industrial* forms of work, particularly in services, high-tech, and finance. According to Daniel Bell, this transition is not merely economic but social and cultural as well. Whereas industrial work requires strict bureaucratic organization, work in a post-industrial society becomes interpersonal. The so-called "soft skills" are the supreme assets individuals carry with them into the social world.

The shift to post-industrial work remains connected with a second trend, *globalization.* Joseph Stiglitz defines globalization as "the closer integration of countries and peoples of the world, which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital knowledge, and (to a lesser extent) people across borders."[34] This expansion of production across a truly global scale coupled with improvements in technology delegates the manufacturing of goods to cheaper labor markets or to machines, and opens up space domestically for more technical, professional, and service-oriented forms of work.

Stiglitz presents globalization as a natural evolution, facilitated by the "reduction of costs" or the "breaking down of artificial barriers," but he overlooks the political dimensions of these factors. As Pierre Bourdieu reminds us, however, globalization is not simply the natural outgrowth of technological change, "but the

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[34] Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 9.

product of a policy implemented by a set of agents and institutions, and the result of the application of rules deliberately created for specific ends, namely, trade liberalization (that is the elimination of all national regulations restricting companies and their investments)."[35] Globalization, he suggests, is more than a descriptive term; it is equally a prescriptive set of policies that Bourdieu encompasses under the banner of *neoliberalism*. The term "neoliberalism" abounds with controversy and often implies a pejorative meaning. The individuals and groups labeled as neoliberal rarely, if ever, apply the term to themselves. Nevertheless, it remains a useful term to describe a range of related political ideologies that, as David Harvey suggests, "propose that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within a framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade."[36] This definition suits not only "economic liberals" like Milton Friedman, often considered the founder of American neoliberal economics, but also self-identified "libertarians" and the "anti-statist" disciples of Ayn Rand. Harvey asserts that since the 1970s, neoliberal economics have moved to the center of political discourse and provided the ideological justification for the changes wrought by globalization.[37]

Critics note that free trade and economic liberalization have rendered life for the majority of working Americans less secure and uncertain, weakened the power of nation-states in relation to private interests, and dramatically increased social

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[35] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Social Structures of the Economy*, (London: Polity Press, 2005), 225.
[36] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.
[37] Ibid, 1.

inequality with the dismantling of public welfare initiatives and labor protections.[38] Yet, such claims, no matter how appropriate, overlook the complex ways in which individuals navigate these dynamics in local contexts. As Manuel Vasquez and Marie Marquardt state, "globalization is not just about domination and homogenization. It also involves resistance, heterogeneity, and the active negotiation of space, time, identity at the grassroots, even if these negotiations occur under the powerful constraints of neoliberal markets and all-pervading culture industries."[39] Although cultural processes often uphold prevailing power structures, individuals and groups find novel ways to resist, release, and respond to these pressures.

The central argument of this project, then, is that "spirituality" and "work" became entangled during the latter half of the twentieth century precisely because it enables a range of attitudes and behaviors that accounts for this nexus of post-industrial society, globalization, and neoliberal political ideologies. "Workplace spirituality," therefore, represents not a "religious movement," per se, but rather a historically specific disposition, suited to the prevailing conditions of post-industrial life. The persons who participate in this *post-industrial spirituality* adopt an "entrepreneurial" model of the self, imagined as flexible and capable of adapting to the unpredictable whims of the global marketplace. Moreover, they learn to perceive "reality" as *radically subjective*, that one's perception wholly determines

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[38] See David Harvey, Chapter 10, "Neoliberalism on Trial," in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* for a summary of these positions. See also Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University, 1998), and Michael Zweig, *The Working-Class Majority* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012) for examples of these criticisms.

[39] Manuel A. Vasquez and Marie Friedmann Marquardt, *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion Across the Americas,* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 3.

the shape of one's life. In adopting this disposition, individuals effectively embody neoliberal virtues like personal responsibility and maximum individual liberty, and they learn to celebrate the anxieties of post-industrial life as virtues. As I shall illustrate, social anxieties like economic uncertainty becomes dynamic opportunity, and systemic inequality is redescribed as a lifestyle choice.

The first three chapters of this dissertation trace the historical circumstances out of which "spirituality" and "work" emerges as a single discourse in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Rather than beginning with religion or spirituality, Chapter One starts with "work" as its central theme. I argue that during the initial decades of the Cold War, fears of a creeping "collectivism" which threatened individual freedom underwrote widespread criticism of the welfare state generally, and the structure of work more specifically. Influential works like C. Wright Mills' *White Collar* (1951) and William Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956) cite the character of "work" in postwar America as fomenting a new "collectivist" ethic, threatening the integrity of the "autonomous individual." During the same period, Milton Friedman and Ayn Rand, two of the architects of a nascent neoliberalism, likewise denounced the welfare state as constraining of individual liberty. Although politically at odds, economic liberals like Friedman and Rand and left-leaning social critics such as Mills each rely on nostalgic images of an earlier time when work was meaningful and empowered the individual. In doing so, they helped to establish the rhetorical parameters that would drive later attempts to reform the workplace and make room for "spirituality."

Chapters Two and Three follow the formation of this discourse on spirituality in work. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, faced with inept economic policies, declining productivity, and social upheaval, American business leaders, intellectuals, and politicians looked to novel resources for solutions. Humanistic psychologists like Abraham Maslow used the rhetoric of "spirituality" to spawn the "human potential movement," and futurists like Willis Harman imagined that a spiritual awakening would inaugurate a post-scarcity world in which government regulation was unnecessary and where individuals worked solely towards self-actualization. Management theorists adopted ideas like "servant leadership" that situated conventional business concepts alongside "religious" language. Concepts like "transcendent purpose" and "spirituality" were thoroughly inscribed in popular and scholarly literature on management and business, and by the first years of the new millennium many organizations were activity advocating "spiritual" aims.

The next two chapters shift away from discourse and explores a cultural history of how the emerging post-industrial landscape is intimately tied to what Robert Wuthnow names "seeker spirituality."[40] Chapter Four focuses on a historical relationship between spiritual seeking and the burgeoning high-tech industry, examining the biographies of two key pioneers in Silicon Valley: Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple Computers, and former IBM engineer, Les Kaye. Each of these figures appealed to various "Eastern" religious teachings and practices to deal with the stresses and challenges unique to the high-tech workplace. Chapter Five sketches the emergence of a new organized movement in the business world known

[40] Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

as "Conscious Capitalism," popularized by the John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods Market. Although Conscious Capitalism is not identified explicitly as "spiritual," I illustrate how its origins lie in the "seeker spirituality" of advocates like Mackey. Not only does Conscious Capitalism promote moral leadership in business and celebrate entrepreneurs as heroes, it also promotes, I argue, a particular political project to reform society according to precepts of libertarian ideology.

While Chapters Four and Five are limited primarily to the role of entrepreneurs and individuals of some prominence, the final two chapters consist of material gathered from ethnographic research in order to gain a sense of how spirituality at work gets enacted in local settings. Chapter Six investigates a loosely structured network of small groups, workshops, and organizations in New York City where individuals come together around a shared interest in bringing spirituality into their working lives. Despite this common interest, a closer look reveals the remarkable degree of heterogeneity among participants, each of whom express unique views, religious identities, and aspirations. Yet through these differences, I argue, participants use the rhetoric of spirituality to navigate specifically the currents of life peculiar to post-industrial society. Chapter Seven relocates to the West Coast and takes a look into the organizational culture of a San Francisco-based coffee chain, *Café Gratitude*. The owners embrace a philosophy known as "Sacred Commerce," that redescribes "business as a path to spiritual awakening."[41] Employees engage in daily rituals and learn to enact behaviors that allow them to cope with the stresses inherent in the emotional labor of the service industry.

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[41] Matthew Engelhart and Terces Engelhart, *Sacred Commerce: Business as a Path to Spiritual Awakening*, (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2008).

Additionally, the owners conduct regular workshops for employees and the general public that use the rhetoric of spirituality to celebrate globalization and helps individuals embody the virtues of neoliberalism.

Through this project, I aim to provide a multi-dimensional account of how spiritual discourses and practices have arisen and continue to shape many facets of work in America. These discourses and practices are ways for individuals to gain access to "freedom" in spite of the spirit of global capital poised to undermine it. "Workplace spirituality" represents, at bottom, a series of strategies that allow individuals to overcome contradictions between, on one hand, their desire for individual empowerment and, on the other hand, the structural constraints imposed upon them by a global, neoliberal capitalism.

Chapter 1—Death of A Craftsman: The Welfare State and Its Discontents

The United States emerged from the Second World War in a unique position, as one of the few combatant nations to escape the unthinkable toll of destruction, the heaps of rubble, and the countless numbers of unburied corpses across much of Europe and Asia. Teeming with fresh confidence after leading the Allied victory in Europe and the Pacific, prospects for the future looked promising. War had brought industry out of the doldrums of depression and was being refitted to suit the needs of a peacetime economy. Factories producing tires for airplanes now provided their wares for automakers who aspired to supply every American household with one of their vehicles. The automobile boom enabled a new “suburban” landscape to blossom, far from the city center, where neatly ordered identical houses dotted once green pastures. In the cities, massive public housing initiatives arose over the urban terrain with the promise that even the poorest could rest assured of modern comforts. Women, once called upon to enter the wartime labor force, returned to the home, leaving lucrative, often unionized jobs for the men coming home from the war. The tempo of life for the burgeoning middle-class increased rapidly, as society was reordered to move large numbers of white collar men (and increasingly women) into the city every morning and back to their private enclaves each evening. With real incomes rising yearly, families set their sites on the latest labor-saving devices, and, of course, that newest of technological masterpieces: the television.

The new medium of television brought entertainment out of the public space and into living rooms. Programs like *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-66)

or *Father Knows Best* (1954-60) reflected back onto audiences an idyllic portrait of the American family. Father went "to the office" each day, while mother supervised the domestic duties, the most important of which was raising the children. Television presented the standard American family as white, middle-class, and suburban, and the significant activity of life took place at home. Only rarely do viewers see Ralph Kramden (Jackie Gleason) from *The Honeymooners* in his role as a city bus driver in Brooklyn. Work was separate from the pleasures of life. Who you were as a person was defined by your private, leisure activities, and in the new consumer economy, opportunities for leisure were increasingly available. In short, life was good.

Yet, even as popular culture might remember Ozzie Nelson (*Ozzie and Harriet*) and Robert Young (*Father Knows Best*) as icons of postwar America, these years also brought more unsettling reflections on society. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), starring Kevin McCarthy, upended the image of suburban tranquility, stoking fears that among these new planned communities, a creeping conformity and blind passivity were threatening to erase the identity of the individual. In February of 1949, Elia Kazan's production of a new play by Arthur Miller, *Death of A Salesman*, made its debut on Broadway. The play recounts the final days of Willy Loman, an aging salesmen coming to terms with the lackluster achievements of a mediocre life. The New York Times offered high praise, stating that "Mr. Miller looked with compassion into the hearts of some ordinary Americans

and quietly transferred their hopes and anguish to the theatre."[42] Indeed, Miller's dramatic genius may have been his ability to capture in the protagonist everyman, who by the mid-twentieth century, many Americans feared, was really no one at all.

Given the unparalleled affluence of the Middle America during the postwar decade, it is curious that a film about the tyranny of the suburbs or a play about the existential miseries of an average American worker should resonate so profoundly with audiences. Amidst the material abundance, Americans suspected something was wrong, that somehow in accepting the promise of consumer society, they had made a Faustian bargain, trading their freedom and liberty for the security of the post-New Deal welfare state, their individuality for a comfortable conformity. In hindsight, postwar America was a period of profound contradictions just coming to the surface. Racial segregation left minorities largely isolated from postwar prosperity; a draft drew youths into limited conflicts in far off parts of the globe; and the growing collusion of a bureaucratic state and powerful corporate interests seemed to undermine the ability of Americans to control the direction of their lives. Americans worried that large social forces were manipulating their lives, "body snatching," and that individuals were not "autonomous" but "constructed."

These fears of conformity and individuality sharply informed the way many intellectuals were thinking about work. The critique of the new middle class workplace was fundamentally a conversation about individual freedom, and the threat posed to liberty by the centralization of power into the hands of the welfare

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[42] Brooks Akinson, "At the Theater," *New York Times*, 11 Feb 1949, accessed 21 May 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/11/12/specials/miller-salesman49.html.

state and corporations. In order to understand how "spirituality at work" could become a legitimate topic in business circles, it is necessary to outline the discourse to which they were responding.

The organization of work underwent dramatic changes during the first half of the twentieth century, and thinkers across the ideological spectrum worried about the impact of the post-New Deal economy on individual liberty. Class-based arguments in works like C. Wright Mills' *White Collar* (1951) and William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956) wrestled with fears that the "administered society" undermined the dignity of the individual, just as champions of free markets, like Milton Friedman and Ayn Rand, framed their critiques of the welfare state as a struggle to restore the freedom of man. While each camp later influenced quite distinct political ideologies, the former laying the basis for the New Left and the latter contributing to a resurgence of economic liberalism, they each begin from the premise that the character of work is intimately tied to individual liberty. In critiquing the welfare state, they appealed to nostalgic images of the free laborer in a bygone age when work was meaningful, dignifying, and rewarding. This idea of work as an expression of one's humanity prepared the way for future reformers to consider the "spiritual" dimensions of work.

The American Workplace in 1950

The typical American in 1950 experienced work quite differently from that of his (and increasingly her) parents and grandparents. The growth of large industrial enterprises during the final decade of the nineteenth century had radically altered the demographics of the nation, spawning the migration from countryside to urban areas where better opportunities could be found. The new workforce exhibited greater racial and sexual diversity, and jobs became increasingly specialized. Whereas most Americans a century before spent their lives on small, independent farms, by 1900 only one-third of the labor force, around 11 million, worked the land as either proprietors or hired hands.[43] Fifty years later, this percentage had shrunk to barely twelve percent of all the labor performed in the United States.

Technological innovations were partly to blame for these changes. New machinery rendered cultivation less labor intensive, forcing workers to seek employment in burgeoning heavy industries. Manufacturing soared, and the factory became the prevailing image of the American working class during the first years of the twentieth century. In these factories, new techniques for organizing production, such as Henry Ford's assembly line or Frederick Winslow Taylor's "scientific management," were radically altering the structure of industrial work. Taylorism and Fordism broke production down into a series of "scientifically" defined units, each of which was carefully designed for optimal efficiency. The shop floor, less and less, served as the place where decisions were made, as responsibility for strategy, design, and planning moved to new kinds of workers: the technical experts and managerial specialists.

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[43] Claude S. Fischer and Michael Hout, *Century of Difference: How America Changed in the Last One Hundred Years*, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008), 107.

The revolution in the structure of work brought in its wake the growth of a massive service sector, which would eventually overtake manufacturing jobs by 1970, a trend already well underway during initial postwar period. Sociologists Claude Fischer and Michael Hout recount that "the 1950 census tabulated over 1 million sales workers in manufacturing, nearly 8 million clerical workers (up from 1 million in 1900), and 1.7 million typists and secretaries (up from 130, 000 in 1900)."[44] Increasingly, Americans were "making a living" at the office in positions that relied less on physical labor and more on working with information or other people.

While this reorganization of work generated a fleet of so-called "white collar" workers, technicians, planners, managers, and office staff, it also radically shifted the power structure in large productive enterprises. Managerial philosophies like "Scientific Management," the brainchild of Frederick Winslow Taylor, and the "Human Relations" school espoused by Elton Mayo, while they improved productivity, effectively centralized decision-making into the hands of managers and removed from workers control over their actions.

In his most well known publication, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), Taylor set out to bridge the great divide between labor and management that had marked the industrial boom of the late nineteenth century. Conducting extensive "time" and "motion" studies, he claimed to have discovered a scientifically objective means for (1) measuring the value of any given task and (2) determining the most efficient way of organizing those tasks. In doing so, Taylor aimed to

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[44] Ibid, 103.

"secure the maximum prosperity for the employer, coupled with the maximum prosperity for each employee."[45]

This focus on efficiency upended the basic structure of industrial work. Decisions about the organization of tasks, the deployment of labor, shifted away from the foreman and workers and moved into the realm of management. Consequently, for workers, jobs often became a series of rationally ordered tasks, set down by the efficiency experts and rational planners. Taylor's recipe for social tranquility, in the end, served to centralize authority increasingly into the hands of managers.

Rather than reducing tensions, the centralization of decision-making and the routinization of work created new kinds of stresses between labor and management. Workers now held less authority over their activities and work demanded less skill, lowering morale and, in the end, decreasing productivity. Sociologists like Elton Mayo set out to uncover solutions to these new issues. The "Human Relations" movement, which he in part founded, sought to overcome the anxieties of this reorganized production. Mayo's decade long study of the Hawthorne Plant between 1924 and 1932 revealed that productivity and morale suffered primarily because workers felt marginalized and underappreciated. What they needed, he recommended, was simply more attention and recognition from their superiors. Mayo and the Human Relations School had found a way to circumvent the shortcomings of philosophies like Scientific Management, which left individuals feeling alienated from their work.

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[45] Frederick Winslow Taylor, *Principles of Scientific Management*, (Lexington, KY: ReadAClassic.com, 2010), 1.

These new ideologies for organizing and managing production brought about a new efficiency craze during the first decades of the twentieth century that would transform the fundamental manner in which organizations were run. Historian Judith Merkle describes how "articles describing and explaining Scientific Management flourished not only in technical and semitechnical journals, but in intellectual magazines, ladies' magazines, and in the sensational yellow press. The boom was on."[46] Merkle argues that this craze extended far beyond the borders of business and into public administration, not only in the United States but across the developed world. Taylorism, for example, heavily influenced German industry and even served as the ideological foundation for Soviet central planning under Lenin.[47]

Indeed, the social welfare programs that emerged during the Great Depression were intimately tied to this obsession with efficiency and rational planning. Through Roosevelt's New Deal, society would be managed with a series of calculated large-scale initiatives aimed at nourishing an anemic economy. This move towards a welfare state achieved full realization with the onset of the Second World War and the need to reorient the entire economic machinery for wartime production. Emerging from the conflict as an economic powerhouse seemed to confirm the potential of an economy planned and administered by close coordination between government and large private enterprise.

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[46] Judith Merkle, *Management and Ideology: The Legacy of the International Scientific Management Movement*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 58-59.
[47] See Merkle, Chapter 6, "Scientific Management and German Rationalization," and Chapter 4, "The Taylor System in Soviet Socialism," respectively.

Agency Panic and Fears of the Welfare State

The shape of postwar America, despite the unprecedented prosperity it brought to a burgeoning, mostly white middle class, was not without its detractors, however. Fears persisted that this new administered society relied too heavily on a spirit of collectivism, of conformity, and thereby posed a real threat to individual freedom, seen as a cornerstone of American liberal democracy. In a number of arenas, these anxieties made themselves known. In the political arena, Congress, following the lead of Senator Joseph McCarthy, routed out Communist sympathizers who presumably were secretly steering the United States towards a Soviet-style collectivist state. Movies such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) explored the sense that, in the new suburban lifestyle of the middle classes, some unseen power was replacing individuals with conformist and unthinking dopplegangers.

While these cultural anxieties might be reduced to Cold War worries over nuclear holocaust or a collective response to the experience of global conflict, literary critic Anthony Melley argues that these irrational postwar fears point to a much more fundamental crisis of American values, specifically around prevailing notions about the self. Melley claims that these prolific fears of conformity and the paranoid style of the period constitute a form of *agency panic,* an "intense anxiety about an apparent loss of autonomy or self-control—the conviction that one's actions are being controlled by someone else, that one was been 'constructed by

powerful external agents."[48] The Western view of the individual as "a rational, motivated agent with a protected interior core of beliefs, desire, and memories" conflicted with the everyday social experience of people living in an increasingly bureaucratic world.

In his work, *Empire of Conspiracy*, Melley demonstrates how this crisis manifests not only in popular culture, but also in academic discourse, especially in some of the most influential sociological tracts of the time. Works like C. Wright Mills *White Colllar* and William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man*, he cites, equally express this "nervousness" over individual autonomy. Although Mills and Whyte readily acknowledge the constructed dimensions of personhood, they nonetheless characterize this as a corruption of an earlier, now lost, order in which individuals were truly free and self-reliant.

Although Melley sheds light on this existential battle over an "obsolete" conception of self, he depicts the problem as philosophical and fails to explore adequately the material conditions that contributed to this crisis. I wish to suggest that at least in part, these fears illustrate a pervasive cultural reaction to socio-economic changes that had reshaped the structure and character of society in general, and work in particular, during preceding decades. They are attacking the consequences of the welfare state and are responding to the way that methods like "Scientific Management" had redistributed power at the top of organizations and social institutions. In short, their critiques should be understood as elaborate strategies to restore power to individual. In doing so, they established the

[48] Timothy Melley, *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 12.

discursive parameters for how Americans imagined the role of work in an ideal society. In protecting the autonomous individual, they constructed a picture of the worker as the empowered creator and fed an anti-institutional ethos that would shape future generations of Americans, especially how they would imagine "work."

Two works from this period, C. Wright Mills' *White Collar* (1951) and William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956), exemplify the general parameters of these critiques. Not only do both tracts reiterate the sense that contemporary society threatens individual autonomy, but they each cling to rather idyllic depictions of "work" in doing so. Work, each maintains, has become placid, mirroring a social life that has become devoid of meaning. Moreover, they worry that power has shifted from the individual to the group, endangering the foundations of American liberal democracy.

White Collar, an expose of postwar American middle class life and a somewhat cynical analysis of industrial society, traces the historical emergence of a new American archetype, the so-called "white collar" person, over the preceding century. Despite the persistence of popular images of the rugged American frontiersman, Mills claims that such icons no longer reflect the daily experience of middle class Americans, whose lives now greatly depend on the large interwoven structures of the corporate welfare state. He sees the changing character of work, therefore, as inextricably bound to this decline of individual liberty.

For Mills, work is an expression of freedom, and *White Collar* recounts industrialization as an epic tale of freedom's retreat. "The nineteenth century farmer and businessman were generally thought to be stalwart individuals—their

own men, men who could quickly grow to be almost as big as anyone else," he writes. The white-collar worker of postwar America, by contrast, "is always somebody's man, the corporation's, the government's, the army's."[49] Here, Mills directly attacks the welfare state, indicting the most powerful institutions of the post-New Deal, postwar United States: corporations, the bureaucratic state, and the military. It is these institutions that most fervently endanger individual liberty.

These institutions threaten freedom precisely because they undermine an ethic of work that Mills understands as essential for American prosperity. In making his argument, then, Mills devotes an entire chapter to the meaning of work. Beginning with the Greeks, Mills moves through Medieval Europe, the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment, constructing an elaborate mythology of how cultural meanings attributed to work have shaped societies throughout history. The independent bourgeois of past generations, he claims, drew intrinsic rewards from work, either as a religious duty (Protestant Ethic) or as a form of craftsmanship through which dignity is attained.[50] The problem for the middle classes, Mills states, stems from the utter absence of any intrinsic meaning in their work. "When work becomes just work, activity undertaken for reason of subsistence, the spirit which fired our nation to its present greatness has died to a spark."[51] Without a strong conception of work's intrinsic meaning, Mills suggests, the future of American liberal democracy rests upon fallow ground.

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[49] C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*, 50th Anniversary ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), xxii.
[50] Ibid, 218-19.
[51] Ibid, 219.

Mills erects an idealistic picture of "craftsmanship," now lost to mists of history, and which serves as a foil against the vacuous character of white-collar work. Craftsmanship, he maintains, exhibits six qualities. Foremost, it bestows intrinsic rewards, quite unlike white-collar work done primarily for "economic motives."[52] Second, whereas craftsmanship facilitates a psychological connection between producer and her product, contemporary work alienates labor from its fruits. In addition, the craftsmen is not beholden to the time scheme, organization, or control of others, but remains "free to begin his work according to his own plan."[53] Fourth, work-as-craftsmanship becomes a form of self-improvement, for "developing his own nature."[54] Fifth and sixthly, work is not sharply separated from play and leisure, but rather subsumes them; in other words, the craftsman does not "work for a living" but rather lives through his work.

In his description of craftsmanship, Mills leaves the realm of sociological analysis and enters the world of mythmaking. Although he depicts craftsmanship as a virtue lost to the past, Mills' critique of white-collar work actually functions to promote craftsmanship as an ideal for his contemporaries, as a potion to the poison of industrial society. By claiming that white-collar work has no meaning, he implicitly suggests that work *should* have intrinsic value, and in declaring modern work as monotonous and bureaucratic, Mills is stating that individuals *should* have more control, more autonomy, and more flexibility in their labors. Finally, work *should* more closely resemble leisure; it should not require the individual to leave

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[52] Ibid, 230.
[53] Ibid, 222.
[54] Ibid, 222.

behind some aspects of her personality and adopt a "professional" persona in the workplace.

White Collar, however, is mythic in a more fundamental way. For Mills, the once independent laborer, owning his own property and producing his own goods, represents the highest achievement of American liberal democracy. Yet, his account of decline of independence proves grossly myopic, as it focuses solely on the middle-class bourgeoisie. Working-classes, slaves, and women vanish in Mills' history. Moreover, he fails to acknowledge how it was the systematic removal of Native Americans that had made cheap, abundant resources available to the middle class. Mills' idyllic portrait of American liberty rests on acute forms of political and economic disenfranchisement that he fails to acknowledge.

Despite such nearsightedness, works like *White Collar* capture the anxieties running through postwar America. A number of other important studies mirror Mills' concerns about the welfare state. David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, published in the year before *White Collar*, argued that the "inner-directed" individual was giving way to an "other-directed" personality. While "inner-direction" implies self-reliance and self-regulation, characteristic of the nineteenth century, "other-directedness" denotes dependence on others and on external constraints of behavior. Under this new personality type, one can longer stand firmly as an isolated individual, empowered to use his skills and abilities to carve out a life and identity apart from the larger society. Instead, the other-directed individual must look to *society* rather than within himself for direction, for approval.

Similarly, William H. Whyte warned Cold War audiences against a creeping "Social Ethic," rapidly overtaking the traditional "Protestant Ethic" that facilitated American economic prosperity. In his best-selling study *The Organization Man* (1956), Whyte, drawing on interviews with CEOs and executives, worries that this new "Social Ethic" upends individual autonomy and repositions "Man" as merely a "unit of society."[55] The group, as opposed to the individual, serves as "the source of creativity," and the individual's most fundamental need becomes to "belong."[56] Furthermore, he criticizes attempts to achieve this group "belongingness" through "the application of science." In this final proposition, that scientific methods can facilitate the optimal functioning group, Whyte is directly attacking the application of rational planning to the organization of work and to society in general.

Indeed, he claims that the Social Ethic impacts much more than the workplace, but the entire breadth of the social order. Academia, for instance, has succumbed to the group impulse; committees of experts make the important decisions and government funding now dictates the trajectory of research. Residential patterns, as well, bear the marks of this Social Ethic. Suburbanization, Whyte argues, replete with those little boxes of identical houses, breeds homogenization and sense of classlessness. The migration out of cities forces individuals into new social relationships away from extended families and encourages one to conform to the standards of the new suburban community. Again, what concerns Whyte most here are the ramifications of these group

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[55] William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man*, New ED ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 7.
[56] Ibid.

pressures on the self-reliant individual. If a man is to become a fully realized human, he (Whyte always uses the male, third-person singular), under the new regime of belongingness, must surrender his individuality, his internally generated identity, his autonomy to the interests of the group.

For Whyte, the emergence of the Social Ethic is not merely a change, but a marked decline from an earlier golden age when the Protestant Ethic upheld the ideal of rugged individualism. At bottom, the problem lies not in the structure of society, but rather in its moral foundation. "The fault," he writes, "is not in organization, in short; but it is in our worship of it."[57] Whyte suggests that individualism must be reasserted from inside organizational life, rather than used as means to destroy it. The problem of the "organization man" is the ailment of a "middle class who have left home spiritually as well as physically, to take the vows of organization life."[58] The solution, then, requires an inner, even "spiritual," transformation, and not a change to the overarching social or political regimes. As we shall see in later chapters, this commitment to inner transformation serves as a central tenet of spirituality in the workplace.

All in all, the influence of these attacks on the welfare state should not be underestimated. Critics like Whyte and Mills echoed the sentiments of a public wary of an administered society, and established the parameters for a debate about work that would eventually look to the rhetoric of "spirituality." Broadly, they juxtaposition individual liberty against bureaucracy, and specifically, they mourn the passage of an imagined time when individuals controlled their destiny, when

[57] Ibid, 13.
[58] Ibid, 3.

work was meaningful, when it served as an expression of one's individuality, and of one's humanity.

It is important to recognize the cultural impact of this genre of social criticism. Thinkers like Mills and Whyte contributed to the ideological foundation of the so-called New Left, the cluster of social and political reform movements active during the 1960s and 1970s. The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) echoed Mills and Whyte in their founding document, *The Port Huron Statement* (1962). "Work," it reads, "is often unfulfilling and vicitimizing, accepted as a channel to status or plenty, if not a way to pay the bills, rarely as a means of understanding and controlling self and events. In work and leisure the individual is regulated as part of the system, a consuming unit, bombarded by hardsell, soft-sell, lies and semi-true appeals and his basest drives."[59] Here, SDS not only declares that work has become a form of oppression, but that this oppression specifically targets the autonomous individual. Instead, the individual is reduced to a "unit" of the group, regulated and manipulated by the powerful interests. The New Left owed a great deal to the ideological foundation laid down by critics like Mills, Whyte, and many others who worried about "the felt powerless of ordinary people, the resignation before the enormity of events," that the so-called welfare state produced.[60]

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[59] "Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society, 1962," *Humanties and Social Sciences Online*, accessed 20 June 2012, http://www.h-net.org/~hst306/documents/huron.html.
[60] Ibid.

Human Freedom and a Nascent Neoliberalism

If these critics proved persuasive to countercultural movements like the New Left, what is even more curious is how thinkers on the opposite end of the political spectrum framed their criticisms in nearly identical terms. Thinkers like Milton Friedman and Ayn Rand were proposing critiques of the welfare state that in many ways agreed with Mills and Whyte. They opposed the welfare state because it threatened individual liberty, but, unlike Mills and Whyte, declared the remedy was to be found in a purer form of free market capitalism.

Working out of a drastically different intellectual heritage, Milton Friedman, the leader of the "Chicago" school of economics, developed a critique of the welfare state that proved equally nervous about the diminishing role of individual freedom. He begins *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962), his most well known work from the period, on the premise that "to the free man, the country is a collection of individuals, not something over and above them."[61] The individual is not, just as Whyte warns, merely a "unit of society" but the singular form of agency to which all of society can be reduced. In fact, Friedman suggests that the individual is the sole actor, and that the "group," be it a country, a community, or a society, is nothing more than the sum of its parts (i.e. free individuals). The highest moral imperative from his perspective, then, should be to protect the ability of these agents to pursue their interests, to secure individual liberty.

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[61] Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*: *Fortieth Anniversary Edition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1.

Friedman's overarching concern in *Capitalism and Freedom* is the danger to individual liberty posed by the welfare state. A free society, he claims, demands that power be dispersed among the citizenry, and the policies of the U.S. government during the twentieth century have tended to work against this principle. Political hands have amassed more and more authority at the expense of the populous, which thereby reduces the potential for ordinary individuals to choose the direction of their lives. Instead, the state forces these choices on them in the name of "welfare," and for Freidman, less choice is identical to less liberty.[62]

Like Whyte and Mills, he appeals to a nostalgic view of nineteenth century America, as a period when the moral order functioned properly. *Capitalism and Freedom* attempts to "reclaim" the term "liberal" and restore its original meaning, which reformers allegedly have perverted during the twentieth century. A nineteenth century liberal, according to Friedman, understood the expansion of individual freedom as paramount, "as the most effective way to promote welfare and equality; the twentieth-century liberal regards welfare and equality as either prerequisites or alternatives to freedom."[63] In short, the so-called liberals of his day see liberty as a product of, rather than a necessary condition for individual liberty. Friedman considers this "a revival of the very policies of state intervention and paternalism against which classical liberalism fought."[64]

Although Friedman intends *Capitalism and Freedom* to be an economic critique of welfare capitalism, a deeper analysis reveals the work to be an elaborate

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[62] Ibid, 201.
[63] Ibid, 5.
[64] Ibid.

defense of a particular mode of personhood: the rational, autonomous self. He infers that "twentieth-century liberal" economic policies have hindered or prohibited economic growth, but, his conclusions prove hasty. Instead, I suggest that Friedman's claims only demonstrate that welfare capitalism constrains individual liberty, as *he has defined it*, rather than economic prosperity. In fact, his economic arguments function tautologically. He starts from the premise that society is a collection of autonomous individuals and proceeds to show how the welfare state threatens the integrity of this form of agency. Only because Friedman already assumes that a society of autonomous selves is the most prosperous society can he then argue that welfare capitalism obstructs economic growth. It is for this reason, and this reason alone, that he prefers classical liberalism. In this sense, Milton Friedman appears primarily concerned with insulating an entrenched ideology of the liberal individual.

Friedman is not, however, entirely opposed to government. Public education, infrastructure such as the Eisenhower interstate system, public health initiatives, and even the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, because they improve the environment in which economic exchange take place, are appropriate state actions. Friedman objects, rather, to measures that unduly favor some market actors at the expense of others or state interventions that stifle competition among individuals. "Government," he writes, "is essential both as a forum for determining the 'rules of the game," but should avoid playing the game.[65]

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[65] Ibid, 15.

Another popular advocate of free markets, Ayn Rand, however, does not share Friedman's views about state intervention. As a self-identified, "radical for capitalism," Rand considers any instance of government intervention as an obstruction to voluntary human action. She refers to the "mixed" US economy as a combination of "freedoms and controls," and bound to end in some form of totalitarianism.[66] For Rand, the state's only legitimate role is to use its monopoly of physical force to guarantee the individual rights of its citizens.

Ayn Rand's firm stand against "statism" might appear extreme in relation to Friedman's dispassionate resurrection of economic liberalism, but each agree that the ultimate problem of the welfare state is that it debases individual autonomy. Even though Rand is often held out as a progenitor of the right-wing libertarian movements of the late twentieth century, her ideas ironically echo the concerns of critics like Mills and Whyte, specifically, that individualism is under attack and must be salvaged from the wreckage of an administered society. While her answers might differ, Rand, perhaps even more than Mills and Whyte, exemplifies this "nervousness" that individual liberty was being traded for collective security.

A native of Russia who had relocated to the United States as an adolescent in the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution, Ayn Rand learned from an early age to look upon "collectivist" social policies with suspicion. Soviet authorities confiscated her family's business, leaving them economically deprived and ultimately motivated

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[66] Ayn Rand, "'Extremism,' or the Art of Smearing," in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, (New York: Penguin Group, 1967), 201.

to emigrate in 1926.[67] In the United States, Rand found the entrepreneurial culture a refreshing change, but also perceived in the rise of New Deal initiatives the seeds of its eventual demise. Her novels consistently glorify the virtues of rugged, American individuals over and against those who seek to pilfer the fruits of their efforts in the name of the "common good."

After her initial commercial success with the publication of *The Fountainhead* (1943), Rand would spend over a decade composing her most ambitious work, *Atlas Shrugged* (1957). Initially entitled "The Strike," *Atlas Shrugged* tells the story of a dystopian United States in the near future that features a government bent on exploiting the efforts of heroic entrepreneurs. Overregulation and welfare initiatives have left the economy in shambles, sparking the enigmatic "John Galt" to lead these entrepreneurs into a withdrawal from society. Rand portrays society as a parasitic organism, living off the undaunted achievements of the exceptional few. The welfare state, using the force of law, serves as the mechanism through which this pilfering occurs. Because society depends on these innovators for its survival, the United States falters under the self-imposed exile of the entrepreneurs.

After *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand quit fiction for public philosophy in order to advocate for the ideals in her stories. She dubbed her philosophy "Objectivism," the cornerstone of which was the veneration of the self-reliant individual. According to her diagnosis, the problem stemmed from an epistemological deficiency inherent in Western social science, particularly economics. The conventions of social science, she argued, failed on principle because they relied exclusively on a hard

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[67] Bradley Doucet, "The Life of Ayn Rand," *The Atlas Society: Objectivism in Life and Thought*, http://www.atlassociety.org/life-biography-of-ayn-rand.

determinism. “Man,” she writes, “was regarded simply as one of the factors of production, along with land, forests, or mines.”[68] In other words, social scientists incorrectly categorize living, breathing human beings as variables lacking independent agency.

In Rand’s Objectivism, “man” possesses an agency irreducible to biological or social forces. “Man’s essential characteristic,” she claims, “is his rational faculty. Man’s mind is his basic means of survival—his only means of gaining knowledge.”[69] As such, an individual’s creative capacity, one’s labor, represents the expression of this essence. Individual effort alone, then, dictates the quality of one’s life. Naturally, Rand looks to capitalism as “the only system consonant with man’s rational nature, that it protects man’s survival *qua* man.”[70] It demands that individuals assume responsibility for their own existence and rewards those that accept the challenge.

She worries, nonetheless, that a creeping “collectivism” inherent in America after the New Deal is rendering the self-reliant individual obsolete. The welfare state privileges the good of the “tribe” at the expense of the individual. However, Rand characterizes the “common good” as a rhetorical smokescreen allowing power brokers to redescribe their self-interest and shared interest. When the State attempts to define and enforce the common good, it robs individuals not only of their means, but also of their freedom to construct and pursue their own definitions of the good, which for Rand is nothing less than a form of tyranny.

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[68] Rand, “What is Capitalism?”, in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal,* 2.
[69] ibid, 7.
[70] Ibid, 12.

It comes as no surprise that Rand depicts "Big Business" as the greatest victims of the "statist" attacks on liberty. After all, it is businessmen, she posits, that create value for the rest of society, "with jobs, with their labor-saving devices, with modern comforts, and with an ever-increasing standard of living."[71] Regulation, taxation, and government-imposed economic planning deprive entrepreneurs of the just rewards of their efforts. In the end, Rand warns that attacks on business only harm society.

Ultimately, what Rand seeks is a restoration of the self-reliant individual. "Men are *not* helpless, blind, doomed creatures carried to destruction by incomprehensible forces beyond their control," she declares.[72] American culture, she worries, now asks individuals to sacrifice themselves to the group, to conform to its standards and submit to its aspirations. Instead, society should recognize and celebrate individual initiative, an environment that only a marketplace can secure.

Rand's ideas, at the time, were not well received by philosophers and economists. However, her novels and public philosophy resonated with an eager popular audience. *Atlas Shrugged* in its first run sold more than 100,000 copies and remained on the *New York Times* best-selling list for 21 weeks beginning in December of 1957.[73] She was widely received because she gave to voice to anxieties with which Americans were wrestling during the postwar years. There was a sense, many feared, that in the welfare state, something was lost, in particular the self-reliance of the individual.

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[71] Rand, "Is Atlas Shrugging?", in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal,* 174.
[72] Ibid, 181.
[73] "History of Atlas Shrugged," *Ayn Rand Novels*, http://aynrandnovels.org/learning-more/atlas-shrugged/history-of-atlas-shrugged.html.

Rand's ideas would gestate in the minds of many Americans. She acquired a devoted niche of followers, some of whom, like notable economist and future head of the US Federal Reserve Bank, Alan Greenspan, would draw upon her philosophy to shape national economic policy. Economic liberals like Rand and Freidman were unsettled by the implications of the welfare state. In particular, they brood over the suspicion that individuals can no longer dictate their course of their lives. Altough on the surface, they were political adversaries to critics like Mills and Whyte, they nonetheless begin from nearly identical concerns. The fact that these polar opposites each framed their critiques of society in similar terms clarifies the underlying cultural assumptions that were driving these discourses. First, individuals should be self-reliant and contemporary society undermined this possibility. Second, work is intrinsically meaningful and an expression of human freedom. However, the welfare state diminishes both. These shared assumptions are taken for granted; they are the anchors upon which any thinking about work could take place. Efforts to reform the workplace, therefore, would rest on these assumptions. They would seek to restore a sense of autonomy, a sense of meaning, and "spirituality" would become an important come one important rhetorical tool for achieving these ends.

Chapter 2—Work in Post-Industrial America: Towards A Humanistic Capitalism

"Business has become, in this last half century, the most powerful institution on the planet. The dominant institution in any society needs to take responsibility for the whole -- as the church did in the days of the Holy Roman Empire. But business has not had such a tradition. This is a new role, not yet well understood or accepted."[74]

--Willis Harman,
Co-Founder, World Business Academy

By the late 1960s and early, amidst political, economic, and social upheaval, reformers were actively seeking ways to address the myriad of political, social, and economic upheavals consuming the United States. Of particular importance was a perceived crisis of the American worker. Earlier criticisms had established the parameters of workplace reform. As Mills and Whyte suggested, work no longer bestowed intrinsic rewards and diminished human freedom. The strategies to improve productivity embraced this diagnosis of the problem.

On December 29, 1971, the United States Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare tasked a team of researchers to study "health, education, and welfare problems from the perspective of one of our fundamental institutions—work."[75] James O'Toole, an Oxford-educated anthropologist, led the task force that would spend nearly the next two years compiling the one of the most in-depth government

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[74] "About Willis Harman," *World Business Academy*, accessed 15 May 2012, http://www.worldbusiness.org/about/about-willis-harman/.
[75] U.S Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), xi.

studies on the institution of work, resulting in the publication of an extensive report, *Work in America,* in 1973.

President Nixon set the tone for the task force in his 1971 Labor Day address:

> In our quest for a better environment, we must always remember that the most important part of the quality of life is the quality of work, and the new need for job satisfaction is the key to the quality of work.[76]

The solution to declining economic performance, according to the administration, lay in the improving the quality of work. *Work in America*, consequently, aimed at clarifying precisely what made for a fulfilling work experience. Thus, in their research, the authors gave serious attention to the role of work in culture as well its psychological rewards.

Premised on the novel assumption that "high pay alone will not lead to job (or life) satisfaction," *Work in America* recommended a number of reforms for the workplace. It advocated for greater worker participation in decision-making and increased autonomy. The report even suggested an overhaul of the educational system to reflect the changing attitudes towards work and life more generally.[77] Drawing heavily upon humanistic psychology, O'Toole and his team considered how work affected identity, self-esteem, and even the meaning and purpose of human life. Moreover, they laid responsibility for these reforms directly on the corporations, not on government legislation.

This call for greater corporate responsibility for society was a pill that businesses could easily swallow. *Work in America* equipped businesses struggling

[76] Ibid, viii.
[77] Ibid, xviii.

to survive under the pressures of global competition with a new set of solutions that could be cost effective while improving performance. "The redesign of work, as this report spells out in detail, *can* lower such business costs as absenteeism, tardiness, turnover, labor disputes, sabotage, and poor quality, all of which is to the advantage of employers and consumers."[78] Because these solutions addressed issues beyond material rewards, they could simultaneously streamline production and increase job satisfaction without significantly impacting the cost of business.

Yet, *Work in America* also bears witness to a more fundamental change in the public discussion about work. It helped to reorient the discourse towards the primacy of the meaning and experience in work, which laid the groundwork for alternative philosophies of business, including philosophies that acknowledged the "spiritual" dimensions of work. The remainder of this chapter examines how this new emphasis on the quality of work came to entangled with the rhetoric of "spirituality." First, *Work in America* made extensive use of humanistic psychology, particularly the theories of Abraham Maslow. The concept of a "peak experience" was crucial to Maslow's ideas of "human potential." Much of his work focuses on how intuitive or revelatory forms of experience actually affect the quality of life for individuals and society. By appealing to Maslow's ideas, *Work in America* popularized the idea the religious or spiritual experience could be a legitimate attribute of work.

Second, I trace how the ideas of Willis Harman, an engineer and futures researcher who consulted with the team that compiled the *Work in America* report,

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[78] Ibid, 27.

popularized a vision of global business and post-industrial work as a moral, even spiritual enterprise. As a futures researcher, he declared that the world was moving into a new "transindustrial" paradigm, where new subjective forms of knowledge would prevail. Scientific objectivity, according to him, had been proven insufficient, leaving a spiritual deficit in the lives of people. Harman envisioned business as the leaders of this new transindustrial order. The dominant institution on the planet, global business would become the new caretakers of humanity, providing individuals with identity, community, and purpose. As Harman developed these ideas, he helped build institutions such as the Institute for Noetic Sciences and the World Business Academy, that continue to promote these ideas.

The new form of public discourse evident in *Work in America* was part of the way institutions and individual Americans responded to the larger socio-economic changes occurring in the last decades of the twentieth century. This chapter excavates the substance of some of these changes and how they birthed cultural logics that rely on the language of "spirituality" to describe work and business.

Abraham Maslow and the Humanistic Work Ethic

Work in America mentions the research of Abraham Maslow in a section discussing the "Changing attitudes towards work," which explores the reasons behind worker dissatisfaction and the measurable decline in productivity. The conundrum, according to the report, is that "the general improvements in physical conditions and monetary rewards for work" have failed to sufficiently satisfy

workers.[79] Because the report diagnoses the problem as one of worker motivation, Maslow's theories, to which human motivation is central, prove remarkably appropriate.

The authors of the study appeal to the theory for which Maslow is best known, his so-called 'hierarchy of needs,' which posits that as human beings fulfill their basic needs, they will inevitably seek to satisfy 'higher' level desires. He arranges these needs as follows:

1. Physiological Needs (food, water, etc.)
2. Safety Needs
3. Love Needs (companionship, friendship)
4. Esteem Needs (self-esteem and esteem of others)
5. Self-Actualization[80]

An individual moves from the most basic needs to ultimately realizing their human potential. This theory, then, nicely accounts for the reason workers remain dissatisfied and continue to shirk their duties despite the vast improvements in the material conditions and rewards of work. Even though jobs provide higher wages and provide retirement options, they do not foster lasting companionship, high self-esteem, or "self-actualization" for the employee. "What workers want most," according to *Work in America*, "is to become masters of their immediate environments and to feel that their work and they themselves are important—twin ingredients of self-esteem."[81] Firms, it seems, must cast a much wider social net,

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[79] *Work in America,* 11.
[80] Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50, (1943): 370-396.
[81] *Work in America,* 13.

caring not only for the physiological needs of their work force, but for their psychological and social aspirations as well.

Underneath such proclamations, however, lies an implicit assumption about human nature. These basic human needs can only be attained, Maslow states, under the proper conditions. "Such conditions as freedom to speak, freedom to do what one wishes so long as no harm is done to others, freedom to express one's self, freedom to investigate and seek for information, freedom to defend one's self, justice, fairness, honesty, orderliness in the group are examples of such preconditions for basic need satisfactions."[82] Like earlier critics, Maslow utilizes the rhetoric of "freedom" to construct his theory of motivation, and in using Maslow's hierarchy, the authors of *Work in America* effectively frame the problem of worker satisfaction as a problem of worker "freedom," or, rather, freedom to "choose." What workers need, therefore, is more choice within the confines of their jobs. They need more authority, more flexibility, more information, and less dependence on either the "higher ups" in the organization or even on the firm itself. Workers, indeed, need to be freed from the iron cage of the organization in order to achieve their fullest human potential.

Still, this connection between freedom, human aspirations, and work comes with a hidden contradiction. For his theory to function properly, Maslow must state that "Man is a perpetually wanting animal," for new desires will always arise as others are met.[83] If human beings will desire in perpetuity, then they will never be satisfied, and therefore any effort to deal with a dissatisfied workforce will end

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[82] Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," 383.
[83] Ibid., 370.

inevitably in total failure. This undermines the very logic upon which *Work in America* is built, and reveals the internal paradox in many subsequent efforts at workplace reform. The 'hierarchy of needs,' even as it stresses the 'intangible' or 'immaterial' aspirations of human beings, equally authorizes attempts to decrease the benefits of work. In other words, while it calls attention to the psychological (and even "spiritual") well-being of workers, the hierarchy simultaneously makes legitimate the lowering of wages, the streamlining of the labor force and production, or even decreasing fringe benefits, all of which would appeal to businesses and entrepreneurs seeking to survive and thrive under the conditions of uncertainty and flux prevailing at the time.

At the time, such contradictions went unstated, because the authors took for granted the material improvements in the workplace that had been achieved through earlier efforts at labor reform. They could not predict the decline of pension funds, of organized labor, or of downsizing that was only beginning to occur during the Nixon years. Nonetheless, these trends indeed would take place and Maslow's theory of human motivation provided a new metric for the workplace, one which placed more emphasis on ideas like "individual potential" or "self-respect" and less on "job security" and "competitive wages." Hence, the hierarchy of needs served, at least in some capacity, as a moral justification, as a new humanistic work ethic for the kinds of socio-economic changes brought about during the last decades of the twentieth century.

While the "hierarchy of needs" represents Maslow's most widely referenced concept, it is his notion of the "peak experience" that most clearly helped to entangle

"spirituality" and work. In *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences* (1964), he aimed to explain "religious" knowledge through the language of the behavioral sciences. He argues explicitly in fact "that new developments in psychology are forcing a profound change in our philosophy of science, a change so extensive that we may be able to accept the basic religious questions as a proper part of the jurisdiction of science, at once science is broadened and redefined."[84] Casting humanistic psychology as akin to religion, he asks:

> And if, as actually happened on one platform, Paul Tillich defined religion as "concern with ultimate concerns" and I then defined humanistic psychology in the same way, then what is the difference between a supernaturalist and a humanist?[85]

He continues:

> The big lesson that must be learned here, not only by non-theists and liberal religionists, but also by the supernaturalists, and by the scientists and the humanists, is that mystery, ambiguity, illogic, contradiction, mystic and transcendent experiences may now be considered to lie well within the realm of nature."[86]

By "the realm of nature", of course, Maslow means within the scope of empirical investigation. He envisages the humanistic psychologist as the guide for "a positive, naturalistic faith, a 'common faith' as John Dewey called it, a 'humanistic faith' as Erich Fromm called it."[87]

Maslow's new faith reduces the essence of religion down to a private psychological event, that he terms the "peak experience." "The very beginning, the

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[84] Abraham Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences*, (New York: Viking Penguin, 1970), 11.
[85] Ibid, 45.
[86] Ibid, 45.
[87] Ibid, 39.

instrinsic core, the essence, the universal nucleus of every known high religion (unless Confucianism is also called a religion) has been the private, lonely, personal illumination, revelation, or ecstasy of some acutely sensitive prophet or seer."[88] While only the exceptional few, the founders of new religions, the prophets of religious scripture, or the mystics, might experience these revelations, they nonetheless serve as the *raison d'etre* for any enduring religious tradition according to Maslow. Here, he follows in the path of earlier phenomenologists such as William James and Mircea Eliade both of whom he acknowledges in his work.

Crucially, he assumes that 'religion' is *sui generis*, as something fundamental to human life rather than a construct of western culture, as others argue.[89] In reducing religion to experience "religious experience," however, Maslow, like James, effectively undermines religious authority exterior to the individual, such as traditions, institutions, and ritual, which, of course, positions religion well within the purview of psychology. If scientists and organized religion, he writes, "accepted the primary importance and reality of the basic personal revelations (and their consequences and if they could agree in regarding everything else as secondary, peripheral, and not necessary, not essentially defining characteristics of religion), they then could focus upon the examination of the personal revelations—the mystic experience, the peak-experience, the personal illumination."[90]

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[88] Ibid, 19.
[89] The debate about "religion" as a category continues to be a source of major debate within the academic study of religion, and I will not indulge a summary of it at this time. See WC Smith, *The Meaning and End or Religion*, Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, Russell McCutcheon, *Critics, Not Caretakers*, or any number of essays by Jonathan Z. Smith as excellent examples of this type of scholarship.
[90] Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences*, 47.

In making such claims, however, Maslow sounds less like a conventional behavioral scientist than an advocate for a new "humanistic faith." When he states that organized forms of religion, their doctrines, their exterior forms, their observables, are cultural practices and beliefs that emerge out of the 'peak-experience,' he implies that his own doctrine is superior because it can account for all others (a claim that is certainly not uncommon among many religious communities). "Religion," therefore, can be left behind, in favor of a system of thought, grounded in science, but not dismissive of the objective reality of religious experience.

It is through the idea of the 'peak-experience' that religion gets linked to his theory of human motivation and, in turn, to the new ethic of work that appears in *Work in America.* He argues that the "peak experience" exhibits a number of distinct features, including: 1. The ability to perceive the universe as a whole, 2. Transcending the ego, 3. Proves life as meaningful, 4. Disorientation of time and space, 5. As intrinsically valuable, and several more.[91] Yet, these peak-experiences also create the conditions necessary for self-actualization.

> 17. In peak-experiences, there is a tendency to move more closely to a perfect identity, or uniqueness, or to the idiosyncracy of the person or to his real self, to have become more a real person.

The "real self" is Maslow's "actualized self," the individual who has realized her potential.

By linking human motivation to religion via the notion of "peak experience," Maslow's ideas are illustrative in several ways. First, his theories gave workplace

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[91] Ibid, 59-68.

reformers a remarkably concrete set of conceptual tools with which to deploy. In Maslow, both organized labor and management found a new set of values in which the *quality* of work, the experience of work, rather than its material rewards, was paramount. Second, and more importantly, in looking to Maslow, these reformers, deliberately or inadvertently, entangled the psychology of religious experience with ideas about work, formulating a new kind of discourse, which maintained that a business should be accountable for the "spiritual needs" of its labor force. Finally, Maslow's ideas serve a more general cultural function. Under the rapidly changing socio-economic conditions of the late 60s and early 70s, Maslow gave an anxious population a method for coping with these developments. Instead of lamenting the uncertainty and insecurity brought about by the social and political turmoil at the time, Maslow celebrated the flux, unpredictability and freedom of post-industrial life, where individuals could be liberated from the constraints of the welfare state. Similarly, to businesses and labor he offered a solution to the problems of productivity and worker satisfaction. His theories convinced them of the possibility that the answer to disgruntled and apathetic employees lay not in higher wages, longer vacations, or better pensions. In fact, the opposite might be true. Employees who found through their work a sense of purpose would seek longer hours on the job and measure their efforts less in terms of a paycheck. If workers gain a greater sense of autonomy, respect, and flexibility, they might more willingly accept cost-cutting measures such as "streamlining" the labor force, the replacement of pension funds with "choice-focused" options like 401K plans, and even efforts to marginalize unions as under the banner of "worker choice." While all of these trends stood on

the distant horizon in 1973, they owe much to the influence of Maslow's theories on business philosophy and society at large during the latter twentieth century.

Willis Harman: Post-Industrial Spiritual Prophet

By the time he served as a consultant for the *Work in America* report, Willis Harman had traveled an academic path that was anything but straight and narrow. Although he had been conducting futures research as the chief social scientist at the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) for several years, Harman initially attained a PhD in electrical engineering shortly after the Second World War and held a faculty position at the University of Florida, where he taught electronics and communication theory.[92] His academic career, however, proved anything but typical for an engineer and he would eventually lay the intellectual groundwork for a new vision of business, one that would combine predictive social models, transpersonal psychology, and perennial philosophy. Proponents of workplace spirituality celebrate Harman more than any other figure as a pioneer of the movement.

Harman's turn away from electrical engineering began, according to him, early. "In 1954," he recalls, "at the age of 36, I was beguiled into attending a two-week summer seminar which I now recognize was a prototype of what later came to be known by such names as sensitivity training and the human-potential

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[92] Willis W. Harman, *An Incomplete Guide to the Future*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979), xii.

movement."[93] Closely associated with the work of Abraham Maslow, the human potential movement rejects conventional empiricism as myopic and focuses primarily on the role of individual perception in determining the quality of human life. Harman's subsequent work would explore this "wholly new sense of the centrality of the task of self-discovery."[94] He joined other researchers at the time, who pursued a systematic study of consciousness, even studying the individual and social benefits of psychedelics and biofeedback.[95]

His research into consciousness included the study of religious experience. Harman shared the belief held by other perennial philosophers that modern society and its commitment to scientific objectivity had ignored the vital role that human spirituality played in human life. Like Maslow, he promoted the view that the subjective aspects of existence, particularly mind and spirit, could be put into positive service for humanity. The major thrust of Harman's futures research asserted that the world was experiencing "one of the great transformations of human history."[96] Modernity, with its devotion to reasoned objectivity was giving way to a new kind of awareness that acknowledged perception as a causal reality. "Whereas industrial society has been greatly concerned with the physical frontiers of geography and technology, in the transindustrial society concern would shift to the inner frontiers of mind and spirit."[97]

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[93] ibid, xii
[94] Ibid, xii.
[95] James Fadiman, Willis Harman, Charles Savage, and Ethel Savage, "LSD: Therapeutic Effects of the Psychedelic Experience," *Psychological Reports* 14, (1964): 111-120.
[96] Willis Harman, *Incomplete Guide to the Future*, 3.
[97] Ibid.

In this coming transindustrial society, Harman reserved a central role for business, particularly the transnational corporation, which he understood as the most powerful institution of this new era. Corporations, he claimed, would have to bear much greater social responsibilities than merely seeking profits. Partnering with nation-states, they were to be the benevolent caretakers of a global society, instilling individuals with meaning and purpose and staving off ecological disaster.

Harman's vision is clearly evident in the language of the *Work in America* report. It declares that the narrow focus of employers on profit through short-term production goals fails to address the broader impact on society. In the future, companies would need to take on much larger responsibilities. "They would no longer be considered essentially producers of goods and services, but as actors who affect, and who in turn are affected by, the major institutions of society."[98]

The report makes explicit reference to an idea proposed by Willis Harman, which he terms "humanistic capitalism" and which constitutes a central tenet of his platform for the new transindustrial era. In the midst of the social upheaval in the United States and across much of the industrialized world during the late 1960s and early 1970s, Willis Harman concluded that the vast of majority of time-tested approaches for addressing social concerns were no longer working. Redistributive economic policies had established an underclass of dependents and facilitated the breakdown of both families and communities; price and wage controls created more problems than they solved; and the cycle of mass production and consumption was leaving in its wake an ecological crisis that threatened to undermine the viability of

[98] *Work in America*, 23.

life on the planet.[99] Beneath all of these issues, Harman discerned a crisis in the "most basic assumptions, attitudes, and values held by individuals and institutionalized in the culture,"[100] and he pointed to widespread social dissent, such as the counterculture, the protests against the war in Vietnam, and the struggle for minority rights, as evidence.

Overall, he cites five major failures of the industrial paradigm:

1. *It fails to promote one of the most fundamental functions of a society, namely, to provide each individual with an opportunity to contribute to the society and to be affirmed by it in return*.
2. *It fails to foster more equitable distribution of power and justice*.
3. *It fails to foster socially responsible management of the development and application of technology.*
4. *It fails to provide goals that will enlist the deepest loyalties and commitments of the nation's citizens.*
5. *It fails to develop and maintain the habitability of the planet.*[101]

Because direct efforts at reform had failed, Harman proposed that, given the growing power of transnational corporations and weakening of the nation-state, the solution would be found in the leadership of the private sector, in a "humanistic capitalism."

As the power of industry to greatly impact human life at the local as well as the global level swelled, business would inevitably eclipse the state to become the dominant institution of society. Unlike the critical theorists, such as Mills and Whyte, who saw this as an end to freedom, Harman celebrated this trend as an opportunity for private institutions to restructure society according to a set of new humanistic ethics. First, a new "ecological ethic" must prevail, "involving

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[99] Willis Harman, *Incomplete Guide to the Future*, 22.
[100] Ibid, 23.
[101] Ibid, 25-28.

recognition of the limited nature of the natural world, and fostering a sense of the total community of man, and hence responsibility for the welfare of future generations as well as fellow man."[102] The interests of stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and the larger society, would replace the narrow self-interest of stockholders.

To complement this "ecological ethic," Harman suggested an ethic of "self-realization," which "holds that the proper end of all individual experience is the further evolutionary development of the emergent self and of the human species", and, moreover, "that the appropriate function of social institutions is to create an environment which furthers that process."[103] Here, humanistic capitalism intersects the transpersonal psychology of Maslow. Self-actualization embodies the highest order of needs for human life, for individuals and society alike. Harman, however, modifies Maslow's basic premise here, appointing the corporation as the arbiter of the actualized self and the sustainable society. He writes:

> If the "new" ethics are to become operative, the priority of corporate goals must become:
> (1) to provide satisfying and fulfilling work for management *and* other employees;
> (2) to contribute to the overall social welfare;
> (3) to engage successfully in a specific group of economically profitable activities.
>
> Those who participate in the corporation, as owners, employees, or clients, will do so through a wish to actualize these goals. Profit and capital growth will remain important, though less as ends in themselves and more as control signals. Modifications of laws regulating corporations, tax systems, anti-trust

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[102] Willis W. Harman, "The Voluntary Sector in a Time of Social Transformation," *Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 1973, 113.
[103] Ibid.

> laws, and so on will be required to make the third goal compatible with the other two.[104]

Harman envisages a new social order led by business and in which the state persists merely as a tool for structuring the marketplace according to the new ethics. Humanistic capitalism calls upon corporations to keep society running, to imbue it with purpose, and to tackle the toughest problems of the day.

Subjective Knowledge, Spirituality, and Post-Industrial Society

Humanistic capitalism was not merely a prescription for the kind of society that could resolve the dilemmas of modernity. Harman was a futurist, and he saw this instead as an organic transformation already occurring throughout the industrial world, particularly in the United States during the early seventies. Postmodern challenges to scientific objectivity and his own research into consciousness evidenced this shift to the transindustrial age. Harman declared the birth of a new epistemology, which included subjective ways of knowing, even religious experience. "A 'new transcendentalism' emerged," he claimed, "both in the general population and among a faction of scientists, which placed new emphasis of intuitive and spiritual experience. This new weight given to spiritual intuition reversed a long-standing trend toward empirical explanations and materialistic values."[105] Humanistic capitalism represented more than a hostile corporate

[104] ibid, 113.
[105] Willis Harman, *Incomplete Guide to the Future*, 3.

takeover of the planet; it was the outgrowth of a profound reorientation inwards towards radical subjectivity and spiritual knowledge.

Harman argued that scientific objectivity lay behind many of the seemingly insurmountable problems of industrial society. Constrained by its unwavering commitment to empirical observation, science maintains a deterministic worldview, rendering “free will” as “a prescientific attempt to explain behavior which scientific analysis reveals is due to a combination of forces impinging on the individual from the outside, together with pressures and tensions internal to the organism.”[106] Harman linked this determinism to the rise of utilitarian economic rationality, which presumably replaced agency with natural laws governing life. In the scientific view, legitimate knowledge stems solely from that which can be observed and empirically tested. Legitimate solutions to social problems, likewise, will be those that conform to this standard of truth.

Harman saw this as a severely limited knowledge system, one that ignored the growing body of evidence that consciousness, in fact, might actually dictate how one observes empirical data. To illustrate how this point relates to working life, Harman tells the following anecdote about two medieval stonecutters, both carrying out the same task:

> Asked what he was doing, one answered, “I’m squaring up this bloody stone.” The other replied, “I am building a cathedral.” The first was underemployed; the second was not. Is underemployment, then, a cultural artifact or a state of mind?[107]

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[106] Willis Harman, *Global Mind Change: The New Age Revolution in the Way We Think*, (New York: Warner Books, 1988) 30.
[107] Willis Harman, *Incomplete Guide to the Future*, 55.

He concludes that “clearly what counts is not so much *what* work a person does, but *what he perceives he is doing it for.*”[108] In other words, subjectivity, according to Harman, is more fundamental than the objective conditions.

Equipped with this insight, Harman could turn, as Maslow had done, to the subject of religious or “spiritual” experience. Drawing upon the likes of William James and Aldous Huxley, he argued that scientific materialism dismissed the reality of inner forms of knowledge. The emerging transindustrial paradigm was open to this esoteric wisdom and could resolve the inherent conflict between science and religion. “Wherever the nature of man has been deeply probed, the paramount fact that emerges is the duality of his experience. He is found to be both physical and spiritual, both aspects being ‘real’ and neither fully describable in terms of the other,” he writes.[109] In Harman’s description of this “perennial philosophy,” beneath the veneer of diverse religious traditions lies a common core, a “peak-experience” that imparts crucial knowledge and imbues life with profound meaning. He quotes at once from *Upanishads* and the Christian Bible in a discussion about “awareness.”[110] An excerpt from Williams James’ *Varieties of Religious Experience* stands beside a passage from the *Bhagavad-Gita* as evidence of humanity’s unlimited potential.[111] Harman seamlessly moves between various religious traditions and modern psychology, erecting an entirely new kind of discourse that privileges subjective knowledge over scientific objectivity.

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[108] Ibid.
[109] ibid, 100.
[110] Ibid, 103
[111] Ibid, 105.

This radically subjective epistemology held the answer, according to Harman, to the problems of industrial society. The perennial wisdom of intuitive or spiritual knowledge, at least as much as conventional science, would serve as the ethical guide for society, a society whose dominant institution was the corporation and whose primary activity is to work. Work, however, cannot proceed in the same manner as it had during the industrial era. Ever-expanding economic growth and material production has created the current ecological crisis. In the transindustrial age, "employment," Harman writes, "exists primarily for self-development, and is only secondarily concerned with the production of goods and services."[112] If job dissatisfaction results primarily from misperception, and if work is a form of self-development, then the worker in the transindustrial paradigm leverages the inner and spiritual forms of knowledge to achieve self-actualization. Harman's transindustrial workplace serves as the anchor for the society, from which individuals derive dignity, meaning, and purpose by acting with an awareness that reality is *radically subjective.*

The Legacy of Willis Harman

Over the years, Harman's work became increasingly fixated on the role of spirituality in business, and his concepts became even more esoteric. Through the institutions helped to build, his ideas gained momentum and traction with other thinkers. The networks he helped establish proved vital to move workplace

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[112] Ibid, 55.

spirituality from its conceptual stage to an observable social movement in the business world.

In 1977, Harman, after sixteen years with SRI International, joined the Institute for Noetic Sciences, a research organization in Northern California founded in 1973 by former Apollo astronaut Edgar Mitchell and investor Paul Temple. Harman proved an apt fit for the organization, as its research initiatives sought to apply the results of consciousness studies to social concerns. The institute declares its mission to be "broadening our knowledge of the nature and potentials of mind and consciousness and applying that knowledge to enhancing human well-being and the quality of life on the planet."[113] Even though he directed the Institute until 1996, it was the Institute's eclectic culture that would shape the direction of his research in the end.

His former employers, SRI, although it had made occasional forays into esoteric research like remote viewing during the early 1970s, had been comprised of primarily social, behavioral, and physical scientists. The Noetic Institute proved much more diverse. Edgar Mitchell, the Institute's founder, served on the Apollo 14 mission to the moon in 1971, had what he referred to as "a transformational experience" on the return journey to Earth. "I realized that the molecules of my body and the molecule of the spacecraft had been manufactured in an ancient generation of stars. It wasn't just intellectual knowledge—it was a subjective

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[113] "Consciousness Matters," *Insitute for Noetic Sciences*, accessed 5 October 2012, http://noetic.org/about/vision/.

visceral experience accompanied by ecstasy."[114] Subsequently, Mitchell embarked on a path of spiritual seeking from which he would become an advocate for a unique worldview combining mystical knowledge and quantum physics. For Mitchell, the Noetic Institute would bring together like minds who could apply this knowledge to the practical concerns of society.

The Institute's co-founder, Paul N. Temple, shared Mitchell's commitment to social progress but came from a remarkably different background. Temple was a Harvard educated lawyer who spent the majority of his career in the oil industry, representing firms such as Exxon. Yet, Temple was also deeply religious and devoted much of his energy to "Christian Leadership."[115] He continues to financially support IONS, sponsoring the Institute's Temple Awards for Creative Altruism, "presented to one or more outstanding altruists whose lives and work embody the inspirational light of unselfish service motivated by love."[116]

The influence of Temple's business-minded Christianity and Mitchell's eclectic spiritual seeking influenced the development of Harman's work. During the 1980s and 1990s, Harman increasingly singled out the business world as the locus of a new human consciousness. In addition, he became more emphatic in his claims about the role of esoteric knowledge in shaping physical reality. By the late 1980s, Harman had largely left behind his earlier views that intuitive knowledge should

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[114] Edgar Mitchell, interview by Sara E. Truman, "Samadhi in Space: an interview with Apollo 14 astronaut Dr. Edgar Mitchell," *Ascent*, 2007, accessed 1 October 2012, http://www.ascentmagazine.com/articles.aspx?articleID=195&issueID=30.

[115] Dickson Buxton and David Zweig, "Paul N. Temple," *Merchants of Vision*, 19 January, 2006, https://worldbusiness.org/publications/merchants-of-vision-january-19-2006/.

[116] "Grants and Awards," *World Business Academy,* accessed 2 October 2012, http://noetic.org/about/grants-and-awards/.

complement the physical sciences and was openly preaching a thoroughly *radical subjectivity*.

In his 1998 book *Global Mind Change*, he developed a model of metaphysical perspectives that rejected materialism altogether. At one end of the spectrum, the **M-1** metaphysic posits matter as the basis of all reality, while an **M-3** perspective "finds the ultimate stuff of the universe to be consciousness."[117] These two are mediated by a dualistic **M-2** paradigm, which gives equal weight to both spirit and matter. "The fundamental change which we are suggesting is happening in Western society," Harman writes, "can be put in terms of these metaphysics. Essentially, it is a shift of dominant metaphysic from M-1 to M-3."[118] This emerging perspective, where subjective knowledge is elementary, takes shape in discrete practices that deliberately reformulate the subject.

Harman uses a case study from the business world, the Wilson Learning Corporation, to illustrate how the M-3 metaphysic functions. Wilson offers workshops for corporate executives and subscribes to "four learnings," each intended to harness and refine inner knowledge. First, "we can *choose* to trust and not to fear."[119] Trust is something extended from within, not earned from others. Second, "each of us can discover, deep within ourselves, a sense of purpose—of having chosen to come here to do something… To structure an organization around the goal of helping each individual find and act from that deep sense of purpose is to

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[117] Willis Harman, *Global Mind Change*, 34.
[118] Ibid, 34.
[119] Ibid, 165.

assure a limitless source of motivation."[120] The third learning is to deliberately create a positive vision of the future. "The more vividly and persistently the vision is held, the stronger the tendency for it to actualize."[121] Again, perception precedes external reality and provides the filter through which experience may be interpreted. Finally, "the essence of the fourth learning is to consider *whatever* happens—success or failure, good luck or bad, opposition or unexpected help—as *feedback*, informing us on the appropriateness of the action."[122] Hence, no matter the results of one's actions, the principle that the world is at it should be is maintained, because having the correct perception of external events and a deliberate sense of inner direction take precedence over external factors, of which one has little control.

This example bares witness to Harman's growing practical interest in the role of business in leading this social transformation. In 1986, Harman founded the World Business Academy in Menlo Park, CA. According to its website, "the World Business Academy is a non-profit business think tank and network of business and thought leaders with the mission to inspire and help business assume responsibility for the whole of society."[123] Here, global corporate business represents the dominant institution of the post-industrial world, and as such, it must move beyond

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[120] Ibid, 165-6. He continues on 166 to state that "we will recognize the familiar emphasis in the Eastern traditions on nonattachment, or in the Christian tradition on 'losing all to find all.'"
[121] Ibid.
[122] ibid, 167
[123] *World Business Academy*, accessed 3 October 2012, http://www.worldbusiness.org/about/.

mere profit-seeking and assume the mantle of caretakers of the planet and human society.

The World Business Academy, along with the Institute for Noetic Sciences, continues to advocate for the social responsibility of business over the material and spiritual needs of human society. Prominent New Age thinkers like Deepak Chopra comprise its list of fellows and companies such as the Men's Wearhouse serve as sponsors for its ongoing initiatives. The unique life and work of Willis Harman has left an indelible footprint on the movement through the networks and institutions he helped to build.

In this chapter, I have explored how the public discussion of work shifted and began to incorporate ideas about "spirituality" and the intrinsic rewards of work in the turbulent years around 1970. The *Work in America* report is evidence of this entanglement, and how serious policy discussions were beginning to consider the importance of identity, meaning, and self-esteem for the experience of work. James O'Toole, who led the team of researchers, spent subsequent years advocating for a new "softer" approach to human resources in business. The new philosophy rapidly spread throughout the study of management, stated that workers not only desired economic security, but more importantly, "the need to do meaningful work and the

opportunity to grow and develop as a person," and "the need for supportive relationships."[124]

Humanistic psychology, from thinkers like Abraham Maslow, forged an unconventional metaphysic centered on consciousness. If work could be an opportunity for "self-actualization," and if "peak" spiritual or religious experience facilitated "self-actualization," then a direct link could be made between work and spirituality. The life's work of Willis Harman exemplifies the way this discursive formation intermingled and became entrenched in new institutional arrangements like the Institute for Noetic Sciences and the World Business academy. These discursive entanglements confirm the perspectives of scholars like Courtney Bender, who suggests that the language of spirituality has proliferated in a variety of institutional settings. "What we think of as the spiritual is actively produced within medical, religious, and arts institutions. It is not unorganized or disorganized, but rather organized in different ways, within and adjacent to a variety of religious and secular institutional fields that inflect and shape various spiritual practices."[125] Spirituality was becoming a legitimate form of rhetoric to discuss the problems of the American worker and, as the next chapter demonstrates, would utterly transform the study of management. By the 1990s, a full-fledged movement would emerge dedicated to a novel idea of "workplace spirituality."

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[124] "Riding the Wave of the Global Economy: *The New American Workplace*," *Soundveiw Executive Book Summaries* 28, no. 12 (2006): 2. This article summarizes the book *The New American Workplace* by James O'Toole and Edward Lawler (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

[125] Courtney Bender, *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 23.

Chapter 3—Management, Spirituality, and Religion: Business Scholarship as Theology

In 2004, the peer-reviewed *Journal of Management, Spirituality, and Religion* released its inaugural issue. It included articles from a number of scholars in management and organizational behavior, featuring titles such as "Integrating Spirituality at Work: An Interview with Ken Wilbur," and "In Search of Organizational Cockaigne: Identifying the Pillars of the Ideal Organization."[126] Since this first issue, the *Journal* has provided a vibrant forum for business scholars to exchange ideas about the role of spirituality in contemporary management. While it remains a niche subfield within organizational research, the study of spirituality in management, and more broadly, the study of "workplace spirituality, as it is often called, has blossomed since the 1990s into what is considered a legitimate topic of academic inquiry.

As the public discussion of work shifted towards a preoccupation with its "meaning" and "intrinsic rewards," and as postwar welfare state gave way to a looser, more liberalized global economy, the structure of work became equally looser, hierarchically flatter, and less stable. To many business leaders and researchers, time-tested theories of management and workplace organization seemed obsolete, and they began to search for new ways of organizing work. While Abraham Maslow and Willis Harman were articulating their new theories about human-potential in the 1960s and 1970s, business thinkers like Robert Greenleaf were constructing a new way of talking about management, which emphasized

[126] *Journal of Management, Spirituality, and Religion*, 1, no. 1 (2004).

character virtues over bureaucratic rules. Greenleaf built his concept of “servant leadership” on ideas drawn from writings that he identified as “spiritual,” and the wide success of his ideas forever transformed the study of “leadership.” The influence of servant leadership later led business scholars to look more closely into how “spirituality” could benefit businesses, employees, and even society. Over the course of the 1990s, the study of spirituality in the workplace moved from a marginal academic discourse into a coherent movement organized through professional and academic societies, scholarly journals, and research centers devoted to the topic.

While the study of workplace spirituality purports to be strictly academic, I argue that this field of study should be more appropriately understood as a form *religious* discourse. In articulating their ideas, these scholars rely on unexamined assumptions about the nature of the “self,” essentialist definitions of “spirituality,” “religion,” and “work.” Moreover, rather than investigating how, where, or when individuals and organizations incorporate “spiritual” beliefs and practices in the workplace, leading researchers tend to focus on the best strategies to implement spirituality and to leverage its benefits for business. In other words, these scholars and thinkers are not studying *about* workplace spirituality, they are constructing it through their research, resembling more closely *theology.* To borrow a concept from Russell McCutcheon, they are caretakers, not critics.[127]

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[127] Russell McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion*, (New York: SUNY Press, 2001).

The Servant Leader

Chapter 2 argued that during the early 1970s, through the work of humanists like Willis Harman and Abraham Maslow, the public discussion of work shifted towards a focus on its intangible, intrinsic rewards. Declining productivity in an increasingly competitive global market was forcing the nation to reassess traditional attitudes about jobs, and what it meant to spend one's life "at work." The social strife at the time only amplified the sense that the United States was losing its moral consensus, which presumably had held it together in times past.

In the midst of this cultural turbulence, an essay appeared that would transform popular discourse on management. Robert Greenleaf, after retiring from a long, fulfilling career as the head of management training for AT&T, published *The Servant as Leader* in 1970 at the age of 66. As he later recalled, the "concept emerged after a deep involvement with colleges and universities during the period of campus turmoil in the late 1960's and early 1970's."[128] The essay essentially offered Greenleaf's personal reflections on the makings of effective leaders, of which society, according to him, stood in desperate need. More importantly, *The Servant as Leader* stood out from the sea of competing management theories at that time because Greenleaf anchored his concepts firmly in his identity as a spiritual seeker.[129]

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[128] Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 3.
[129] Don M. Frick notes in "Robert Greenleaf: A Short Biography," that Greenleaf always understood his ideas as stemming from a "Judeo-Christian ethic," but was applicable to all traditions. Frick states that Greenleaf understood himself, not as a philosopher or theologian, "but as a businessman and *seeker*." See Don M. Frick,

By 1970, Greenleaf had already made a career out of fighting for social change. His role as Director of Management Development for one the largest communications firms in the world (AT&T) had not simply been a means to a rather lucrative paycheck with an expectation of a leisurely retirement; he saw it as part of a lifelong mission extending back to his senior year at Carleton College in Minnesota during the mid-1920s.[130] In of his courses, the elderly and particular curmudgeonly professor, he remembers, cautioned students that "we are becoming a nation that is dominated by large institutions, churches, businesses, governments, labor unions, universities—and these big institutions are not serving us well."[131] The professor continued to describe how the scholar, as a critic standing outside these institutions, could only make a limited impact. What was needed, he argued, were "people inside these institutions who are able to (and want to) lead them into better performance for the public good."[132] From these words, Greenleaf allegedly drew the inspiration for his life's work; he would work within business with the express intention of transforming it into an institution dedicated to serving society in a positive way.

The veracity of this episode aside, Greenleaf had made a name for himself in the business world as an advocate for organizational change. His biographer notes that Greenleaf facilitated the first promotions of women and minorities above semi-

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"Robert Greenleaf: A Short Biography," *Robert Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership*, accessed 12 December 2013, https://greenleaf.org/about-us/about-robert-k-greenleaf/.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 1.

[132] Ibid.

skilled positions at AT&T, and after retiring in 1964 he became a prominent lecturer, author, and teacher in corporate circles on the concept of "leadership."[133]

The Servant as Leader gave a public voice to the ideas Greenleaf had refined through his years as an executive trainer, but, unlike other works on leadership, it was intensely personal in tone. The result was a unique recipe for individual and organizational transformation that collapsed the boundaries between the "professional" and the "confessional" conceptual worlds. The essay was highly critical of both traditional business institutions and the counterculture movements of the 1960s. On one hand, he opposed prevailing ideas in organizational theory, which tended to characterize management as a specialized, technical position whose role could be broken down into discrete functions.[134] Yet on the other hand, he equally chastised reformers who merely sought to demolish the failing institutions of American society. The answer to current dysfunction, he maintained, was to be found somewhere in between. Replacing one set of institutions with another is inadequate; instead, according to Greenleaf, "everything begins with the initiative of the individual."[135]

Greenleaf's premise was simple: "*The servant-leader is servant first.*"[136] This leader is not the technical specialist outlined in Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy,

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[133] Don M. Frick, "Robert Greenleaf: A Short Biography."
[134] Chester Barnard's *The Functions of the Executive*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938 and 1968) was widely used in business schools at time Greenleaf composed "the Servant as Leader," and a prototypical example of conventional thinking about management. He defines organizations as a group of coordinated systems, that require distinct techniques in order to maintain their proper functioning.
[135] Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership,*14.
[136] Ibid, 13.

but rather akin to Weber's "charismatic leader," who invades rather than overturns bureaucracy. She is a selfless figure who possesses a special ability to perceive situations, problems, and others differently. Foremost, leadership is a form of service to others, and all the actions of great leaders stem from this first principle. The servant-leader desires not power and material wealth, but to life her peers. Greenleaf, then, lays out the various virtues of the servant-leader. She listens to others, thinks boldly, and enacts empathy. Additionally, the servant-leader exhibits exceptional, almost extra-human abilities. She has "a sense for the unknowable," to foresee beyond the conscious reality;[137] with a nod to Aldous Huxley, Greenleaf writes, "opening wide the doors of perception so as to enable one to get more of what is available," the servant-leader is imbued with a special sight.[138]

In order to animate this description, Greenleaf frames the entire essay around a character from *Journey to the East* by Hermann Hesse. He identifies the mystical Hesse as a "prophet, and himself as "seeker" who has heard his call.[139] Greenleaf depicts the central character in *Journey to the East*, Leo, as a Christ-like figure who embodies the traits of the servant-leader. Leo, the lowly servant, is revealed at the end of the novel as the hidden leader who all along has been testing the protagonist "H.H."

The Servant as Leader proved wildly popular, and in 1977 Greenleaf went on to publish a more extensive treatise, *Servant Leadership*, in which he elaborates how servant leadership applies to society more generally, in education, in churches, and

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[137] Ibid, 21.
[138] Ibid, 27.
[139] Ibid, 8.

other institutions. Although he passed away in 1990, his legacy cannot be overestimated. His ideas have been recycled again and again in subsequent management literature. A brief scan of the business section in any bookstore reveals titles like *The Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership* or *The Art of Servant Leadership*. Greenleaf established a new, more intimate way of talking about management and birthed an entire generation of thinkers who would emulate his approach. He crafted management in terms of virtues rather than concrete skills and appealed to teachings and ethics drawn from religious traditions and Western esotericism to justify his claims. Most significantly, perhaps, Greenleaf created a legitimate space for the language of spirituality in subsequent discussions about the workplace.

Spirit at Work

The American workplace underwent dramatic structural changes over the course of the 1980s. Throughout the postwar period, a loose coalition had been maintained between industry, government, and organized labor that made it possible for a typical American working for a large corporation to expect a stable career, a steadily increasing income usually based on seniority, and a pension upon retirement. As discussed in earlier chapters, this consensus began to crack in the early 1970s as global competition, runaway inflation, and chronically higher unemployment became persistant trends. Older industries gave way to new dynamic sectors such as high-tech and finance, and unions lost much of their

footing, culminating in the failed Air Traffic Controller's strike of 1981 when President Reagan fired over 11,000 workers who refused to return to the job. Looking to those sectors of the economy that were thriving, researchers and business leaders crafted new ideas about how to achieve success. The popularity of fresh perspectives such as *Servant Leadership* testifies to this grand reassessment.

One year after Reagan broke the air traffic controllers' strike, Tom Peters and Waterman published the international bestseller, *In Search of Excellence*, in which they identified the attributes of successful companies. The book was the result of an extensive, qualitative study of thriving firms from a number of industries, and it illustrates how prevailing attitudes about the workplace were shifting. Peters and Waterman assert that "innovative companies are especially adroit at continually responding to change of any sort in their environments."[140] The authors took aim directly at the rational model of bureaucratic management, which as they say, "dominates the business schools."[141] Successful companies, they maintain, are dynamic, proactive living systems; these firms operate with "loose-tight properties" where authority is decentralized and where upper management expends its efforts primarily on upholding a core set of values. Management, then, is a moral enterprise. Furthermore, the authors stress that these companies offer a high degree of employee autonomy and reward entrepreneurial risk-taking. The carrot, rather than the stick, facilitates success.

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[140] Thomas Peters, and Robert Waterman, *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 12.
[141] Ibid, 29.

The theory of the firm outlined in *In Search of Excellence*, encompasses how the changes in the structure of the economy necessitated corresponding changes to the structure and the cultural values of the American workplace. The decade of Gordon Gekko made "downsizing", "mergers", and "outsourcing" household terms. Companies restructured their staffs to run more efficiently, often opting to subcontract other firms to perform tasks previously completed in-house. Massive bureaucracies were streamlined to meet quarterly performance expectations. Salaries and wages, in the interest of productivity, were uncoupled from seniority and tied instead to performance evaluations. A workplace that celebrated autonomy, entrepreneurship, and flatter hierarchies complemented theses larger trends.

Still, this new workplace brought new challenges for workers. It made jobs, and therefore life as a whole, less secure and often imposed increased responsibility on wage earners without any corresponding authority. By the closing years of the 1980s, these complications were becoming apparent to the business world, and popular figures such as the fire-walking Tony Robbins and Steven Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989), offered an anxious public countless strategies for overcoming these anxieties. Even researchers within the Academy of Management took an interest in new approaches to effective leadership, and some of them would turn towards an even more radical notion: spirituality as an essential ingredient in this new workplace.

An important moment in the emergence of workplace spirituality came in 1992. Jay Conger, at the time and Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior at

McGill University in Montreal, had concluded that an almost impassible chasm had opened between his professional life at work and his home life. While "home can nourish my spirit through intimacy," he asserts, work "more often feels like a separate activity."[142] This sense of bifurcation extended to his misgivings about organized religion as well. As a baby boomer, Conger had drifted away from the religion of his upbringing and embraced a looser brand of spiritual seeking. He turned to Ram Dass, read the *Bhagavadgita*, and even became enthralled with neo-paganism. Still, such a relaxed, eclectic spirituality left Conger craving structure akin to the church of his youth. Because work represented his primary community outside the home, he felt that perhaps work could be a place of spiritual sustenance.[143]

In that year, 1992, Conger decided to organized a "small gathering of people interested in management and spirituality to begin wrestling with possible intersections of these two seemingly disparate worlds."[144] Although expecting only modest turnout for the conference, he was surprised at the enthusiastic response. "It was like a secret society," he remembers, "where suddenly you discover half of your acquaintances are members."[145] For one of the first times, voices came together to discuss in a formal academic setting the intersection of spirituality and work.

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[142] Jay A. Conger and Associates, *Spirit at Work: Discovering the Spirituality in Leadership*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), 6.
[143] Jay Conger, *Spirit at Work*, 3-6.
[144] Ibid, 6.
[145] Ibid, 7.

From this conference, Conger and others forged a network of like-minds that eventually resulted in the publication of a collection of essays entitled *Spirit at Work: Discovering Spirituality in Leadership* (1994). The contributors shared a sense that spirit had become detached from work in the modern world and that these two aspects of human life should be reunited. The backgrounds of the volume's contributors were diverse, ranging from Business scholars to religious thinkers. Conger recruited two of his colleagues in Organizational Behavior at McGill University, a few other independent business consultants, two Jesuit professors, and one Sociologist-turned-Quaker named Parker Palmer.

Both the conference and the subsequent book helped to birth a movement in the business world that would blossom into a much broader trend by the end of the decade. Spirituality was rapidly becoming a legitimate topic of discourse within the Academy of Management, the premier academic society dedicated to the study of business leadership. As the millennium drew to a close, researchers and business leaders began to seriously consider the relationship between spirituality and work. Studies bought to bear a number of methods, from quantitative analysis to qualitative case studies, to ponder a range of questions. Some researchers, such as Organizational Psychologist Philip H. Mirvis offered thick, ethnographically grounded theories of the self as a spiritual being, who could flourish in companies "organized along the lines of an 'unseen order.'"[146] Others applied more rigid scientific methodologies in their research. In *Capturing the Heart of Leadership* (1997), for example, Professor of Public Administration Gilbert Fairholm conducted

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[146] Philip Mirvis, "Soul Work in Organizations," *Organization Science*, 8, no. 2 (1997): 203.

surveys to discern what people mean by "spirituality" in order to determine what role spirituality might play in organizational life. He explored not only how spirituality might mitigate the anxieties of working life for employees, but also how a spiritually motivated firm might look.[147] Fairholm decried that society had relinquished its religious roots, and that the workplace had become the primary site for community, and therefore spirituality. "This is nothing less than a total reinvention of the workplace, a redefinition of work as not merely an economic site, but a prime locus of life."[148]

Perhaps the most visible and influential study at the time came from Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton, the former an organizational theorist and the latter a psychologist. *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: Spirituality, Religion, and Values in the Workplace* (1999) featured the results of over ninety interviews with executives and high-level managers of companies. Mitroff and Denton provided extensive quantitative and qualitative evidence to support their claim that "organizations must become more spiritual if they are to serve the ethical needs of their stakeholders."[149] They asserted that "spirituality" could, in fact, be quantified like any other variable, and moreover that organizations could enact specific strategies that would benefit not only the firm, but also the individual employee, the customer, and the investor.

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[147] Gilbert W. Fairholm, *Capturing the Heart of Leadership: Spirituality and Community in the New American Workplace*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 1997).
[148] Gilbert Fairholm, *Capturing the Heart of Leadership,* 12.
[149] Ian I. Mitroff and Elizabeth A. Denton, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: Spirituality, Religion, and Values, in the Workplace*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1999), xiv.

The impact of *A Spiritual Audit* peaked interest around "workplace spirituality" and prompted the academic quarterly *Journal of Organizational Change Management* to devote two entire issues to the theme in 1999. Although it remained a niche in the larger scope of business research, its proponents nonetheless had forged networks of conversation partners, out of which workplace spirituality would emerge as a legitimate subfield within the Academy of Management (AOM) and in a number of university research centers across the United States over the next decade. AOM, for example, has featured an interest group at its annual meeting since 2000 under the name *Management, Spirituality, and Religion*, and even Princeton hosts research centers dedicated the study of "faith at work."

Workplace Spirituality as Theology

The study of spirituality in the workplace has moved from a relatively informal topic of discussion to a formal academic discourse housed within institutional spaces. However, because it emerged historically out of the context of business research, workplace spirituality remains primarily the purview of scholars and thinkers trained in the study of organizations. Thus, while researchers possess a robust knowledge of organizations, they typically rely on anecdotal or popular perceptions of terms like "religion" or "spirituality" for their studies. These thinkers often overlook relevant theoretical and methodological debates taking place in the academic study of religion, leading them to pursue lines of research more properly understood as *theology* rather than *theory*.

The study of workplace spirituality, as it has evolved, should itself be characterized as theological. In this section, I explore three prominent examples from the literature to demonstrate how these thinkers are negotiating normative ideas about individual selves, work, and spirituality. First, I examine the work of Parker Palmer, whose discussion of "vocation" as a spiritual practice has informed a number of subsequent studies. Next, I explore *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America* (1999), a rigorous social scientific study of how spirituality improves workplace performance. And finally, I investigate the work of Judi Neal, a leading scholar of the topic whose direct efforts, perhaps more than any other individual, have generated interest in workplace spirituality. Understanding these examples as "theological" rather than secular studies of the workplace, sheds light on how workplace spirituality is ultimately tied to the socio-economic and political conditions of late twentieth-century America.

Parker Palmer fits the mold of a true "renaissance man" who has continuously challenged the boundaries between the religious and secular life. As a young college graduate, he briefly considered the religious life, enrolling for a year at Union Theological Seminary, before abruptly changing direction to obtain a PhD in Sociology from University of California at Berkeley in 1970. However, Palmer continued to feel that American society, with its strict delineation between the sacred and profane worlds and rigidly defined professional spheres offered him no

home. Through his struggles, he eventually carved out space for himself as a teacher and writer on the topic of "vocation."[150]

"Vocation," according to Palmer, differs from the common conception of "work," in its origins. Work is a response to need, an "action driven by external necessity or demand."[151] Vocation arises from within and expresses the inner, pure self, uncorrupted by culture. In his contribution to Jay Conger's *Spirit at Work*, a short essay entitled "Leading from Within," Palmer argues that one's vocation emerges from the inner self and too often people allow the external conditions of the world to dictate their actions in life. Leadership, accordingly, requires a spiritual journey that "moves inward and downward, not outward and upward towards abstraction."[152] Palmer employs the term, "spiritual," in a manner similar to Perennial philosophy; each spiritual or religious tradition represents a different path to an identical Truth. Subsequently, spirituality is not about ethics or living a morally good life. "The spiritual traditions are primarily about *reality*," and this reality, for Palmer, is utterly subjective.[153] He writes that the essential message of spirituality can be understood in the concept of *projection*, a term which he borrows from depth psychology. "Consciousness," he states, "precedes being, and

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[150] See Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc. 2000) in which Palmer narrates his spiritual struggle to uncover his true calling in life.
[151] Palmer, *The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity, and Caring*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 9.
[152] Parker Palmer, "Leading from Within: Out of Shadow, into the Light," in *Spirit at Work*, ed. Jay Conger (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 27.
[153] Ibid, 24.

consciousness can help deform, or reform, our world."[154] Leadership, therefore, begins in the mind with a conscious choice to see the world as it should be seen.

The self about which Palmer writes experiences freedom is an *a priori* condition of its existence. Individuals realize their freedom not through social change but through "a process of contemplation by which we penetrate the illusion of enslavement and claim our own inner liberty."[155] Palmer discusses the self as a real bounded object located in, yet wholly separate from, the world. External factors, though they may obscure this authentic self, cannot corrupt its distinctive "inborn talents."[156]

Even though Palmer's conception of the self is "not nurtured in our society," it is not rigid and unchanging but a loose, flexible self.[157] Practical spirituality, Palmer argues, allows the individual, first, to access to this authentic self, and, second, to establish a harmony between it and the external world. Knowledge of one's true self imparts knowledge of one's "rightful place in the scheme of things, its rightful relation to the prince, the people, the tree, and the task at hand."[158] In other words, the social order, its hierarchy of status, and, especially for Palmer, one's work in the world, all acquire meaning through a cultivated, spiritual awareness of the authentic self.

Ultimately, Palmer uses "spirituality," "self," and "vocation," to describe a program of *individual* rather than *social* change. However, he maintains that within

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[154] Ibid.
[155] Parker Palmer, *A Spirituality of Work,* 60.
[156] Ibid, 68.
[157] Ibid.
[158] ibid, 71.

these transformations at the individual level lie the seeds of societal healing. Healthy, spiritually astute selves exist in a symbiotic relationship with true community, and "people who know that they are embedded in an eternal community are both freed and empowered to become who they were born to be."[159] Palmer's project, therefore, does not advocate for structural social reform, but rather offers a path for "isolated individuals" to reconnect with others within the existing societal framework. Spirituality allows one to understand her true calling, which in turn accounts for one's place in an "eternal community" *that already exits*, yet, is obscured by an ailing culture of "mass conformity."[160]

In sum, Palmer views spirituality as way for individuals to overcome the distance between "work," a socially defined act of survival, and "vocation," an inborn set of dispositions and talents unique to each person. Spirituality, as he uses the term, collapses an apparent existential paradox between, on one hand, an expectation of individual autonomy and, on the other, the social constraints imposed on this expectation by redefining freedom as an inner, private state, achieved through regular spiritual practice.

Although many of his ideas are distinctive, they nonetheless reflect the broader turn in the study of management away from rational, bureaucratic models and towards a more flexible, intuitive, values-based portrait of leadership. Like Robert Greenleaf, Palmer preferred to discuss work as a moral act rather than a set of specialized functions or tasks. For him, the secret of a fulfilling working life could not be quantified or empirically measured. Instead, work, when understood as

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[159] Ibid, 156.
[160] Ibid.

spiritual, bestowed on the individual intrinsic rewards that in turn foster a better society.

Other thinkers, however, felt that spirituality in the workplace *could* be empirically captured and scientifically analyzed. Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton conducted one of the first and most influential quantitative studies of workplace spirituality. They positioned "work," "spirituality," and the "self" as dependent variables in their research, and furthermore attempted to explain the relationship between each. Their complete study, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America* (1999), established many of the parameters that have become central to the ongoing research in this area and serves as a prime example of how the study of workplace spirituality assumes a particular normative perspective of self, spirituality, and work.

A Spiritual Audit profiles the results of an extensive qualitative and quantitative study conducted over a wide range of businesses. First, Mitroff and Denton carried out in-depth interviews with a number of senior executives and high-level managers of firms. They complemented these case studies with a mailed questionnaire targeting over 2,000 human resource executives regarding the role of "meaning and purpose in the workplace."[161] In their analysis, the authors conclude that the contemporary workplace suffers from a critical lack of spirituality and that "no organization can survive for long without spirituality and soul."[162] In short,

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[161] Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton, "A Study of Spirituality in the Workplace," *Sloan Management Review*, (Summer 1999): 85. This article summarizes the results of the study outlined in their larger publication, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America* (1999).
[162] Ibid, 91.

organizations that leverage spirituality will experience happier employees and, therefore, enjoy greater financial success.

Mitroff and Denton locate the source of this spiritual deficit in the rationally ordered quality of modern society. Spirituality and work have become disassociated from one another in the contemporary world, a state of affairs that "goes against the grain of deep human needs and puts an intolerable burden on individuals."[163] While this separation may have allowed safe social spaces in which individuals could manage their spiritual lives privately, Mitroff and Denton maintain that "at our current stage of human development, we face a new challenge. We have gone too far in separating the key elements."[164] In other words, modern society has become overly rational and threatens the integrity of the individual, leaving her to live a fractured existence where work is divorced from spiritual practice. "Unless organizations become more spiritual, the fragmentation and ambivalence felt by individuals cannot be repaired."[165]

Underlying this argument, Mitroff and Denton propose a normative theory of the self. They posit the self as a single coherent unit whose "soul" represents "the deepest essence of what it means to be human."[166] Furthermore, this soul "is that which ties together and integrates all of the separate and various parts of a person."[167] As the modern world organizes various aspects of human experience

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[163] Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: Spirituality, Religion, and Values in the Workplace*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 7.
[164] Mitroff and Denton, "A Study of Spirituality in the Workplace," 91.
[165] Ibid, 7.
[166] Mitroff and Denton, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America*, 5.
[167] Ibid.

into distinct spheres, this threatens the soul, and therefore the integrity of the self. Even though this argument is logically valid, Mitroff and Denton can verify neither the existence of this soul, nor the assertion that the self, indeed, aspires to consistency.

With this view of the self in mind, they can argue that "spiritual" organizations are more successful because they more completely facilitate the integration of spirituality and work. The authors propose five ideal types of "spiritual" organizations:

1. *Religious-based organizations* (religiously affiliated organizations like Catholic charities, Mormon-based business firms, etc.)
2. *Evolutionary organizations* (firms, like the YMCA, which originate as religious but shift to a more ecumenical position)
3. *Recovering organization* (organizations that adopt the 12-step principles of Alcoholics Anonymous)
4. *Socially responsible organizations* (firms whose leaders aspire to strong spiritual principles, ex. Ben and Jerry's)
5. *Values-based organizations* (founders or heads subscribe to general philosophical principles but not explicitly identified as either religious or spiritual)[168]

Mitroff and Denton make a subtle, yet significant move here with this taxonomy. Not only do they recognize that organizations can exhibit "spirituality," but this "organizational spirituality" constitutes an inherent trait even within firms that do not identify as "spiritual." Thus, "spirituality," for the authors, refers to an objective condition of individual and organizational life, at which organizations appear more or less adept.

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[168] Ibid, 90. The examples of firms in this taxonomy are cited in the case studies provided by the authors.

If "spirituality" represents an objective quality, Mitroff and Denton set out to define and measure it with scientific precision. Relying on the results of their survey, they summarize spirituality as a highly personal, informal quality of human experience; it remains distinct from religion, not formal or organized but trans-denominational; it provides the ultimate meaning and purpose of life and the interconnectedness of all things; spirituality serves as an "inexhaustible source of faith and will power."[169] Armed with this definition of spirituality, they are now able to objectively assess the amount of spirituality present within any particular organization. In effect, they render spirituality as a categorically distinct and normally occurring phenomenon of organizational behavior.

Mitroff and Denton complement this reified notion of spirituality with a normative understanding of "work" and the workplace. The results of their research seem to demonstrate that individuals privilege the intrinsic rewards of work over any material benefits. Foremost, interviewees desired in their jobs "the ability to realize my full potential as a person," while "making money" ranked much lower. They use Maslow's hierarchy of needs to explain these results. Once the base needs of physical survival have been achieved, humans ultimately desire "self-actualization" from their experiences.[170] Even though their results conform to Maslow's model, this explanation masks an underlying philosophical bias in the study itself. Because they organized their interviews and surveys around one overarching question (what gives people meaning in their work?), they already

[169] Ibid, 89. Mitroff and Denton propose a list of the main characteristics of spirituality as a summary of their findings.
[170] Ibid, 85-6.

assume the workplace as a primary site where humans seek meaning in their lives. Mitroff and Denton admittedly ask their subjects "what gives you the *most meaning and purpose* in your job?"[171] The interviewees, therefore, are primed from the beginning to think about work in these terms. Yet, the questionnaire next asks the participants to reflect on, first, "some of the basic values which guide your life" and, finally, on the role of "religion" and "spirituality" in their lives.[172] Thus, while Mitroff and Denton claim to objectively investigate the relationship between spirituality and work, in some sense they are actively constructing this relationship for the interviewee through the survey's particular discursive moves.

The publication of *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America* proved to be a significant moment for the study of workplace spirituality. It laid the conceptual groundwork for a number of subsequent quantitative investigations and helped to legitimize the study of spirituality for empirically inclined fields such as organizational behavior. Other researchers adopted their taxonomy to explore the spiritual side of organizational culture and to effectively measure the relationship between workplace spirituality and financial success.[173] Foremost, Mitroff and Denton helped to normalize the terms of future discussions around workplace spirituality. They rendered spirituality as an objective condition of individual as

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[171] Mitroff and Denton, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America*, 188.
[172] Appendix A in *A Spiritual Audit* offers a template of the "Questionnaire on Meaning and Purpose in the Workplace" that Mitroff and Denton mailed to 2,000 HR executives, pp. 187-195.
[173] See John Millman, Jerry Ferguson, David Trickett, and Bruce Condemi, "Spirit and community at Southwest Airlines: An investigation of a spiritual values-based model," *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 12, no. 3 (1999): 221-233, for an example of how the "values-based" organization exhibits an organizational "spirituality."

well as organizational experience, and made the integration of spirituality into the workplace the primary normative aim of future research.

The work of Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton represents one important example of how scholarship on management was becoming entangled with the topic of spirituality. Yet, a quick web search of terms like "workplace spirituality," "spirit at work," or "spirituality in the workplace" will likely reveal one name above all others: Judith A. Neal, PhD. Numerous collections of essays, academic journals, and even scholarly works in religious studies have acknowledged her role as "one of the leading scholars of workplace spirituality."[174] Yet, Judi Neal has contributed more than scholarship on the topic. Through her efforts perhaps more than any others, workplace spirituality has become an integral part of the academic study of management and today constitutes the primary research focus in a number of institutional settings. In *Spirituality, Inc.: Religion in the American Workplace*, for example, religion scholar Lake Lambert stresses Neal's essential part in establishing the "Management, Spirituality, and Religion" interest group within the Academy of Management during the late 1990s. While Neal deserves credit for legitimizing the academic study of workplace spirituality, I argue that her scholarly works, like those of her peers Mitroff and Denton, rely on particular normative commitments about the self, spirituality, and work. By revealing these normative commitments, I suggest that Neal's scholarship should be readily understood as *theological*.

After earning her PhD in Organizational Behavior from Yale, Judith (Judi) Neal work professionally in business for several years, including five years as a

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[174] Douglas Hicks, *Religion and the Workplace: Pluralism, Spirituality, Leadership*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 58.

manager of organizational development and training for the high-tech research firm, Honeywell.[175] She enjoyed her job supporting the "very progressive self-managing work teams" at the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant in Illinois, primarily because, in her words, "Honeywell would let us experiment with all the leading-edge management programs before implementing them at other facilities."[176]

A major turning point in Neal's career came when she discovered that management was intentionally altering faulty ballistics data in its reports to the US military. In light of this troubling news, she made the difficult decision to become a whistleblower, and contacted Honeywell's ethical hotline. The scandal enveloped Neal in whirlwind of uncertainty and garnered retaliation from management. She claims to have found solace from these stresses in the writings of New Age author Shakti Gawain. Neal recalls how a particular chapter of *Living in the Light* taught her that "we create our own lives and that everything that happens to us is a reflection of what we need to learn."[177] Equipped with this new insight, she determined that the lack of integrity in management merely reflected similar failings in her own character. She had "wanted people to like me" and "told them what they wanted to hear," which in turn had likely contributed to the faulty inspections. From this point, Neal committed to a set of "core principles" from which she would not stray.[178]

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[175] Judi Neal, "Bio," *Judith Neal and Associates*, accessed 25 August 2013, http://www.judineal.com/pages/corporate/nealbio.htm.
[176] Judi Neal, *Edgewalkers: People and Organizations That Take Risks, Build Bridges, and Break New Ground*, (London: Praeger, 2006), 32.
[177] Ibid, 33.
[178] Ibid.

She eventually lost her position at Honeywell, due in no small part to her role as whistleblower, but she used this opportunity to bring her insights as a trainer back into the classroom as a faculty member at the University of New Haven teaching courses in management. As an instructor and researcher, Neal aspired to remedy a management culture she saw as ethically deficient, and by 1992 was actively exploring the role that "spirituality" might play in this process.[179] Inspired by the discussions emerging in the academy around "spirit at work," Neal began to develop an elaborate program from social change anchored in "spirituality."

By the late 1990s, Neal was touting the virtues of "spirituality" as an untapped reservoir for individual, organizational, and societal transformation. In a 1997 article for the *Journal of Management Education*, she advocates for the incorporation of spirituality into the teaching of management in business schools, listing a variety of resources for "managers and organizational behavior faculty who wish to teach from a more spiritual perspective."[180] She declared that "spirituality may be as much—if not more—of a driving force" than economics for social change.[181]

However, it is through her 2006 book, *Edgewalkers: People and Organizations that take risks, build bridges, and break new ground*, that her fully formed ideas are presented. *Edgewalkers*, on one hand, offers a practical guide for facilitating ethical

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[179] Judi Neal, "Bio."

[180] Judith A. Neal, "Spirituality in Management Education: A Guide to Resources," *Journal of Management Education*, 21 (1997): 121.
[181] Judith A. Neal, Benyamin M. Bergmann Lichtenstein, and David Banner, "Spiritual Perspectives on Individual, Organizational, And Societal Change," *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 12, no. 3 (1999): 175.

leadership, but, on the other hand, it equally a theological work, describing Neal's metaphysical vision of reality. Throughout the piece, she draws upon her own private perspectives on spirituality in order to build the case for a new kind of business model suitable for a global society.

According to Neal, the world is undergoing a fundamental paradigm shift, from an older materialist paradigm towards one motivated by "spirit."[182] At the center of this transition, "a new kind of human being is emerging on the planet," the *Edgewalker*, who "walks between the worlds," "between the visible and the invisible."[183] Neal characterizes the Edgewalker as a "Global Human Being" for a global age, who can cross cultures, move seamlessly between paradigms and straddle competing perspectives.[184] These individuals truly embody the "post-modern" human, moving beyond but not abandoning modern rational forms of knowing. Instead, Edgewalkers augment rational knowledge with, as Neal states, a "gut-level, shamanic" way of knowing.[185] These Edgewalkers, presumably, will lead humankind through this transitional phase, and help us to overcome our most pressing global problems.

Edgewalkers are not social reformers, but reformers of consciousness, who, like Greenleaf's servant leader, possess the ability to see things differently and to reshape reality through their efforts alone. They understand themselves as co-creators of reality, who remain attentive to their "own inner calling," "envision a desired future," and can "enlist both the physical world and the spiritual world in

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[182] Ibid, 181.
[183] *Edgwalkers*, xv
[184] ibid.
[185] ibid, 44.

order to make the future a reality."[186] Unsurprisingly, her examples of real world Edgewalkers stem almost exclusively from the business world. It is the fearless, risk-taking, and bold-thinking leaders of successful firms who are paving the path to this new, more spiritually attuned future.

In spirituality, then, Neal locates the source of individual, organizational, and social transformation, and because business represents the most powerful institution in a globalized economy, spirituality in workplace marks the central focal point of this shift. Despite her identity as a scholar of management, she employs the concept of "spirituality" in her work as both practitioner and advocate. Her theories of management are grounded in a kind of apocalyptic vision of society and a theory of self in which consciousness is the root of all reality. Furthermore, workplace spirituality for Neal symbolizes much more than a desirable business strategy; it really points the way to the salvation of humanity.

Judi Neal has tirelessly promoted and sought to institutionalize these ideas in the business community. In the mid-1990s, she founded the International Center for Spirit at Work in order to bring together likeminded advocates. Beginning in 2001, Neal and her close associate, John Renesch, created the International Spirit at Work Award (originally known as the Willis Harman Spirit at Work Award), bestowed each year on a different leader in the movement. Neal imagines workplace spirituality as the legacy of Harman's work, and the award honors "Willis

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[186] Neal, *Edgewalkers*, 63.

Harman's vision of business as the primary institution for helping to bring about a positive and healthy 'Global Mind Change.'"[187]

From 2009 to the summer of 2013, Neal served as the inaugural Director of the Tyson Center for Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace, housed in the Sam Walton Business School at the University of Arkansas. She has used the visibility of this research center, unique among public universities, as a platform to promulgate spirituality in business education. Each year, the Tyson Center hosts an annual "Wisdom at Work" conference where advocates of spirit at work can exchange ideas, and strategize for the future. All in all, Judi Neal has carried workplace spirituality from a marginal discourse among a few academics into a social movement to transform business education.

The role of spirituality in the workplace is now a vibrant and ongoing topic of inquiry within the academy. In addition to the Tyson Center at the University of Arkansas, Princeton's Center for the Study of Religion and Yale's Center for Culture sponsor "Faith at Work" initiatives. The topic has moved beyond the boundaries of business schools and meetings of the Academy of Management into a broader range of academic disciplines.

In this chapter, I outlined how the study of workplace spirituality was forged in and through the particular disciplinary history of organizational research, all within the larger context of socio-economic changes in the United States. As experts

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[187] Judi Neal, *Edgewalkers,* 11.

in management and organizational behavior lost confidence in the efficacy of prevailing theories, some of them turned to their private spiritual resources for solutions. Robert Greenleaf drew on an eclectic mixture of pop spiritual teachings and his own Judeo-Christian heritage to synthesize a novel intimate way of conceptualizing managment. During the 1990s, many theorists, like Jay Conger and Judi Neal, proposed that leadership could be explicitly "spiritual," ideas that are now accepted by many as valid theories of management.

Still, even though these scholars present the study of workplace spirituality under the guise of empirically based, objective research, the few examples in this chapter clearly reveal their normative qualities in even the most basic questions about the topic: *what is spiritual about work? How can the integration of spirituality and work benefit individuals, businesses, and society? What kinds of spiritual values and practices can be used to develop future leaders?*

To posit that "spirituality" is a bounded aspect of human experience overlooks the truly complex ways such terms are embraced, resisted, and contested. Just as scholars of religion, like JZ Smith and Russell McCutcheon, argue that "there is no such thing as a specifically *religious* social formation," I would extend this to the statements discussed in this chapter regarding "spirituality."[188] From the critical perspective of the academic, there is nothing specifically "spiritual" about work, the workplace, or organizations. When Mitroff, Denton, or Neal discuss "spirituality" as measureable phenomenon or as a characteristic of a "new human

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[188] Russell McCutcheon, *Critics, Not Caretakers*, 25.

being," they expose their own unexamined assumptions about the nature of reality, the nature of selves, souls, and spirits.

Essentially, what the individuals highlighted in this chapter mean by "spirituality" are their own eclectic beliefs and practices that they identify as "spiritual." The study *of* spirituality in the workplace should more appropriately be understood as the *practice* of spirituality at work and in management. For these practitioners, bringing "spirituality" into work is a strategy to negotiate the contours of the workplace as it continues to evolve in the post-industrial setting. Workplace spirituality offers a way for individuals to overcome the anxieties and uncertainties brought on by new looser, flatter, and fluid forms of work that have come to exemplify post-industrial America. It extends to the individual a sense of control by reconstituting her as a radical subject, who can shape reality through adjusting perception. The next two chapters will examine how "spiritual seeking" is particularly suited to the post-industrial workplace. In fact, I suggest that what Robert Wuthnow refers to as "seeker spirituality" is intimately bound up with the transition to a post-industrial economy and the rise of neoliberalism.

Chapter 4-- Zen and Art of Micro-processing: Liberating the Entrepreneurial Spirit in Silicon Valley

Beginning in 2012, Google began offering a free course on meditation to its employees called "Search Inside Yourself." Titled after a book of the same name by the course's instructor, Chade-Meng Tan, it is "designed to teach emotional intelligence through meditation, a practical real-world meditation you take with you wherever you go," according to an article in *Forbes*.[189] The program, along with a variety of other unique features of Google's workplace culture, contribute to *Forbes* naming the company as the "best company to work for" in 2013. Google provides its workforce of nearly 35,000 with a variety of amenities, entertainments, and opportunities unavailable in the vast majority of American businesses. According to the *Forbes*, "the Internet juggernaut takes the Best Companies crown for the fourth time, and not just for the 100,000 hours of subsidized massages it doled out in 2012. New this year are three wellness centers and a seven-acre sports complex, which includes a roller hockey rink; courts for basketball, bocce and shuffle ball; and horseshoe pits."[190]

Certainly, only Google's considerable profits could make possible such an elaborate array of employee benefits, however, being named the "best company to

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[189] Todd Essig, "Google Teaches Employees to 'Search Inside Yourself,'" *Forbes*, 30 April 2012, accessed 12 December 2012, http://www.forbes.com/sites/toddessig/2012/4/30/google-teaches-employees-to-search-inside-yourself/.

[190] Stephanie M. Lot, "Google Tops Fortune's Best Places to Work (Again)," *PC Magazine*, 18 January 2013, http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2414497,00.asp.

work for" also points to how Americans imagine the ideal workplace. Google offers a work environment where ideas of "work" and "play" mingle, where stress can be balanced with a relaxing massage, and even where mediation can nullify the rapid pace of each workday.

The image of the model workplace looked very different a half a century earlier. Companies such as General Motors and IBM represented the paragon of American free enterprise. These brands signified stability, efficiency, and conformity. Work was work, and leisure took place outside its borders. The idea that a business should be concerned with the daily *experience* of its workforce represents a relatively recent development.

The shift in the public discussion around work evidenced in the ideas of Willis Harman and Abraham Maslow was not limited only to business schools, official government studies, and popular writings on leadership. Rather, it was something occurring along much broader strokes of American life. The transition of the United States to what Daniel Bell terms a "post-industrial society" meant that manufacturing no longer dictated the pulse of the economy, while service-oriented jobs and newer industries like high-technology were becoming more important.

Out of these new industries would emerge ideas about work that differed starkly from the Protestant work ethic that had legitimized earlier industrial societies of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries. The centralized bureaucratic organizations of the welfare state no longer held sway over the order of things. Indeed, some of the pioneers of these business ventures were what Robert Wuthnow refers to as "spiritual seekers," who cultivated a spirituality of the

inner self and understood their careers as extensions of eclectic spiritual disciplines. In the process, they not only helped to establish new standards for business in a post-industrial society, but also changed how Americans think about the workplace.

This chapter focuses specifically on high-tech world of computers that arose in Northern California. The Bay Area was not only the birthplace of the advanced computing industry; it had, since the 1950s, also served as a hotbed for new forms of spiritual seeking, particularly around Asian religious traditions. This cultural mixture of spiritual seeking and high-tech business shaped the lives of those who worked in this environment, individuals like Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple Computer. For Jobs, a self-identified Zen Buddhist, work represented a forum in which to apply his spiritual practices, and business was a moral venture.

Next, I examine the life of Les Kaye, an ordained Zen priest who spent over thirty years as an engineer for IBM in Silicon Valley. Years before the 'hippies' took over the Bay Area during the late 1960s, he was one of many young professionals interested non-Western religious traditions. Like Jobs, Kaye understood his workplace as the "practice space" for his spiritual activities. In fact, over the years, he has been an outspoken advocate for thinking of work as a spiritual activity.

The lives of these two pioneers of the high-tech world illustrate how two seemingly incommensurable corners of American culture, spiritual seeking and the computer industry, actually grew up alongside and among one another. As the computer industry matured and gained prominence, it became a model not only for a new kind of business, but also for American attitudes towards work and spirituality in a post-industrial society.

The Seeker Entrepreneur: Steve Jobs

As a child, Steve Jobs became skeptical of the institutionalized religion of his parents. According to his biographer, Walter Isaacson, he was raised Lutheran and his parents took Jobs regularly to church until he was thirteen, when an article in *Life* magazine featuring the suffering of children in Nigeria shook his faith in a God that could allow such tragedy. After confronting the minister over the issue, Jobs made a decision to leave the church.[191] Like many of his generation, Jobs saw the church as too disconnected from the world around him. It privileged doctrine over practice, and the institution over the human being. "The juice goes out of Christianity," he told Isaacson, "when it becomes too based on faith rather than on living like Jesus or seeing the world as Jesus saw it."[192] Instead, Jobs embraced a combination of skepticism and perennial philosophy. "I think different religions are different doors to the same house. Sometimes I think the house exists, and sometimes I don't. It's the great mystery."[193]

Job's aversion to institutional religion echoes what Robert Wuthnow identifies as a cultural shift from dwelling within a religious tradition to a mentality of spiritual seeking. He suggests that "people have been losing faith in a metaphysic that can make them feel at home in the universe and that they increasingly negotiate among competing glimpses of the sacred, seeking partial knowledge and practical

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[191] Walter Isaacson, *Steve Jobs* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011) 14-5.
[192] Ibid, 15.
[193] ibid

wisdom."[194] Wuthnow provides a remarkably simple rubric: that during "settled times" individuals form stable religious communities, while "unsettled times" force them to contest prevailing traditions and work out new relationships with the sacred. Indeed, he even argues that the shift to a post-industrial paradigm, in which information, services, and other symbols that refer to processes replace the more stable, tangible signs of a manufacturing society, might be one way to understand the contemporary penchant for spiritual seeking.[195]

Yet, Wuthnow's explanation overlooks the strong tradition of individualism indicative of American culture. Spiritual seeking is nothing new to American culture, a point he readily admits, but its practice in the latter half of the twentieth century exhibits a distinctive quality. What remains unsettling, for Jobs, is not merely a new set of dynamic symbols but, more specifically, the inability of bureaucratically organized religious institutions to adequately account for and enrich the lives of real individuals. The church seems foreign and distant to individual experience, and more concerned with promoting itself than empowering its adherents. The disappointing episode with the minister taught Jobs that institutional Christianity prefers conformity to doctrine over individual thought, and trust in the institution over self-reliance. In a culture grounded firmly in the moral value of an independent, autonomous, individual, Jobs must look beyond institutions, to personal experience, for the answers to spiritual concerns.

Jobs began on this journey to find answers during his brief time at Reed College as an adolescent. Even though he dropped out after only six months, Reed

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[194] Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998) 3.
[195] Ibid, 7.

would leave an indelible imprint on Jobs' identity. He emerged from the experience as an active spiritual seeker interested, yet acutely interested in business.

Located in southeast Portland, Reed lay in the orbit of the counterculture during the early seventies. Here, Jobs encountered an atmosphere marked by experimentation, eclecticism, and openness. "There was a constant flow of people stopping by, from Timothy Leary and Richard Snyder," he recalled in an interview for *Playboy* in the early 1980s. "There was a constant flow of people questioning about the truth of life."[196]

Jobs quickly became immersed in a range of activities, experimenting with psychedelics and sex, but also with various forms of "Eastern" spirituality. Along with a tightly knit group of friends, he regularly attended a local Hare Krishna temple and vociferously digested the standard array of countercultural texts on personal spiritual fulfillment. In particular, *Be Here Now*, Richard Alpert's (aka Ram Dass) seminal text on yoga, meditation, and spiritual practice dramatically impacted his perspective on living. "It was profound," he would later say. "It transformed me and many of my friends."[197]

To be a young, middle-class college student trying on unfamiliar spiritual wares was nothing exceptional in 1972. Indeed, since the late 1960s, university campuses had functioned as hotbeds for the counterculture. Scholars typically have viewed the counterculture as a politicized movement against prevailing norms born

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[196] Steve Jobs, interview by David Sheff, *Playboy*, February 1985.
[197] Walter Isaacson, 34.

of postwar affluence.[198] Yet, Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle argue that such clean definitions overlook the ambiguous and disjointed nature of the phenomena remembered as the counterculture.

> The term "counterculture" falsely reifies what should never properly be construed as a social movement. It was an inherently unstable collection of attitudes, tendencies, postures, gestures, "lifestyles," ideals, visions, hedonistic pleasures, moralisms, negations, and affirmations.[199]

The disjointed quality of the counterculture was apparent to Steve Jobs while he was at Reed. Whereas groups like the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and events such as those at Kent State often color the counterculture as utterly political, for Jobs, it was decisively anti-political and personal. "None of the really bright people I knew in college went into politics. They all sensed that, in terms of making a change in the world, politics wasn't the place to be in the late Sixties and Seventies." Instead, he makes a curious observation about his associates. "All of them are in business now—which is funny, because they were the same people who trekked off to India or who tried in one way or another to find some sort of truth about life."[200]

One friend in particular, Robert Friedland, served as Jobs' spiritual mentor during his time at Reed. Friedland landed at Reed College after a short stint in

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[198] Theodore Roszak, who popularized the term, defined the 1960s counterculture as a movement against the prevailing norms of society born, unlike most dissent, of affluence rather than deprivation. See Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[199] Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, "Historicizing the American Countercutlure of the 1960s and 70s," in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and 70s*, eds. Peter Braunstien and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002), 10.

[200] Steve Jobs, interview by David Sheff, *Playboy*, February 1985.

federal prison for possession of 24,000 tablets of LSD while attending a small liberal arts school in Maine. When they first met, both Jobs and Friedland shared an interest in Eastern religious practices, but, according to Jobs, Friedland in short order "turned me on to a different level of consciousness."[201] "The thing that struck me," Jobs states, "was his intensity. Whatever he was interested in he would generally carry to an irrational extreme."[202]

Friedland's obsessive level of spiritual seeking, in fact, took him to India, in search of a guru. Walter Isaacson writes that Friedland, after hearing Ram Dass speak in Boston, decided to seek out Dass's teacher, Neem Karoli Baba, in the summer of 1973.[203] Upon his return, Friedland seemed changed, Jobs remembers. He had taken a new name and "walked around in sandals and flowing Indian robes."[204] It was Friedland's example that motivated Jobs, the following year, to embark on a trip to India in search of his own guru.

In addition, and perhaps more significantly for Jobs' career path, Friedland mixed his interest in spirituality with strong work ethic. During the course of their association, Friedland established a commune at a farm outside of Portland over which he held stewardship. Here, Jobs and others brought their search for enlightenment to fruition through the hard labor of the organic cider business. Friedland never lost his business acumen, and he went on eventually to become the

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[201] "Steve Jobs' college mentor was a drug dealer turned billionaire mining magnate," *Daily Caller*, 24 October 2011, accessed 14 January 2013, http://dailycaller.com/2011/10/24/steve-jobs-college-mentor-was-a-drug-dealer-turned-billionaire-mining-magnate-aapl/.
[202] Walter Isaacson, 38.
[203] Walter Isaacson, 37.
[204] Ibid.

Chief Executive Officer for Ivanhoe Mines, a major player in the global mining industry.

Jobs acquired from his mentor a set of skills particularly suited to the business world. A mutual friend of Friedland and Jobs at Reed, recalls that "Robert (Friedland) was very much an outgoing, charismatic guy, a real salesman. When I first met Steve he was shy and self-effacing, a very private guy. I think Robert taught him a lot about selling, about coming out of his shell, of opening up and taking charge of a situation."[205] Thus, Jobs' brief friendship with Friedland gave him the building blocks upon which he would later erect his iconic career. He cultivated a strong commitment to spiritual seeking that was inherently linked to the practice of work from a mentor who gave Jobs the skills he would need to found and lead a successful company.

All in all, for Jobs, the spiritual discourse of the early seventies shares cultural space with business. Reflecting on his college years, Jobs told *Playboy*, "that was a time when every college student in this country read *Be Here Now* and *Diet for a Small Planet*—there were about ten books. You'd be hard pressed to find those books on too many college campuses today. I'm not saying it's better or worse; it's just different—very different. *In Search of Excellence* [the book about business practices} has taken the place of *Be Here Now*."[206] This statement is illustrative of the discursive linkage Jobs constructs between business and spirituality.

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[205] "Steve Jobs' college mentor was a drug dealer turned billionaire mining magnate," *Daily Caller*, 24 October 2011, accessed 14 January 2013, http://dailycaller.com/2011/10/24/steve-jobs-college-mentor-was-a-drug-dealer-turned-billionaire-mining-magnate-aapl/.
[206] Steve Jobs, interview by David Sheff, *Playboy*, February 1985.

First, he situates Dass's popular work on spiritual practice alongside *Diet for a Small Planet*, Francis Lappe's major critique of industrialized food production. While the former focuses on spiritual practice and the latter on the virtues of vegetarianism, both provide alternatives to prevailing "Western" modes of thought. Placing these two works together, Jobs acknowledges each as a part of single discourse; alternative forms of spirituality and new modes of production represent different dimensions of the same discussion; eclectic spiritual seeking is also about a new way of doing business.

Moreover, although he characterizes *In Search of Excellence* as starkly different from the popular texts of his youth, Jobs nonetheless understands each as functionally parallel. *In Search of Excellence*, like *Be Here Now* and *Diet*, remains staunchly anti-establishment, encouraging a decentralized, people-centered, and values-focused form of business organization.[207] What is most interesting about Jobs' remark is that, although he admits the culture has changed, the book that most clearly stands in for the radical texts to which he was exposed during his college years is a book about management. Statements such as these, therefore, indicate that, for Jobs, spirituality is inextricably bound together with work and business.

Spiritual Bricolage

Jobs' spiritual seeking remained intensely private and was directed almost exclusively towards self-development rather than any broad social transformation.

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[207] See Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman. *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2004).

Yet, by entangling spirituality with ideas about work and business, his spiritual practices echoed the kind of radically subjective worldviews that were reformulating the public discussion around work and business at the time. Thus, when Steve Jobs brought his eclectic spirituality into his entrepreneurial activities, they shaped not only the particular aspects of his leadership but also contributed to the culture of Apple Computers.

His spiritual experiences as a young adult molded his worldview and his entrepreneurial activities. During his pilgrimage to India at the age of nineteen, Jobs acquired a robust appreciation for the difference between South Asian and "Western" knowledge systems.

> Coming back to America was, for me, much more of a culture shock than going to India. The people in the Indian countryside don't use their intellect like we do, they use their intuition instead, and their intuition is far more developed than in the rest of the world. Intuition is a very powerful thing, more powerful than intellect, in my opinion. That's had a big impact on my work.
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> Western rational thought is not an innate human characteristic; it is learned and is the great achievement of Western civilization. In the villages of India, they never learned it. They learned something else, which is in some ways just as valuable but in other ways not. That's the power of intuition and experiential wisdom.
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> Coming back after seven months in Indian villages, I saw the craziness of the Western World as well as its capacity for rational thought. If you just sit and observe, you will see how restless your mind is. If you try to calm it, it only makes it worse, but over time it does calm, and when it does, there' room to hear more subtle things—that's when your intuition starts to blossom and you start to see things more clearly and be in the present more.[208]

This alternative epistemology based on "intuition" appealed to Jobs because it could mitigate the psychological stresses of Western life. While he celebrated Western rationality, "intuition" constituted a more fundamental way of knowing and

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[208] Walter Isaacson, 48.

experiencing the world, and this, as he admits, would profoundly shape his approach to work.

Yet, Jobs easily equates his experiences of South Asian Hindu practice with the teachings found in Zen. The previous passage continues:

> Zen has been a deep influence in my life ever since. At one point I was thinking about going to Japan and trying to get into the Eihei-ji monastery, but my spiritual advisor urged me to stay here. He said there is nothing over there that isn't here, and he was correct. I learned the truth of the Zen saying that if you are willing to travel around to the world to meet a teacher, one will appear next door."[209]

Leaving commentary about Jobs' syncretism aside momentarily, I suggest that he found in each of these traditions a respect for intuitive, non-rational forms of thought. Furthermore, this passage reveals his deep sense that relying on intuition and cultivating a calm, passive awareness will affect one's experience. In other words, Jobs, like Willis Harman, believes that achieving the proper mental state can actually shape reality.

The "Reality Distortion Field"

Jobs augmented his interest in spirituality with other disciplines, including therapy. As the research of Maslow and others attest, spirituality increasingly was becoming a relevant topic for psychologists, and many spiritual seekers looked to humanistic and transpersonal psychology for empowering the self or overcoming insecurities. For instance, he partook in Primal Scream Therapy, a widely popular form of regressive therapy that prominent figures like John Lennon and James Earl

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[209] Ibid.

Jones had helped to boost by their participation in the 1970s. Created by psychologist Arthur Janov, author of *The Primal Scream*, this method posited that deep-seated pain resulted from childhood trauma, in Jobs' case, his adoption. While Jobs found it somewhat ineffective and overly simplistic, his associates reported that "he was in a different place. He had a very abrasive personality, but there was a peace about him for a while. His confidence improved and his feelings of inadequacy were reduced."[210] Together with his experiences in India and regular practice of Zen meditation, therapies like Primal Scream helped Jobs to deal with his persistent anxieties and bolstered his sense of self-reliance.

As an entrepreneur, he incorporated what he had learned into his leadership style. Jobs deliberately cultivated practices such as staring without blinking while conversing with others, or believing that he could bend the will of others to his own. As one friend remembered, "He would stare into their fucking eyeballs, ask some question, and would want a response without the other person averting their eyes."[211]

His employees at Apple began to refer to Jobs' charisma as "the reality distortion field." Bud Tribble, an early Apple associate, claimed that "in his presence, reality is malleable. He can convince anyone of practically anything. It wears off when he's not around, but it makes it hard to have realistic schedules."[212] During the development of the first MacIntosh home computer, Jobs regularly

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[210] Elizabeth Holmes, quoted by Walter Isaacson, in *Steve Jobs*, 51.
[211] Ibid, 38.
[212] Andy Hertzfeld, "Reality Distortion Field," February 1981, republished at *Folklore.org*, http://folklore.org/StoryView.py?story=Reality_Distortion_Field.txt.

refused to accept reasonable timelines or apparent technological limitations and pushed his teams to achieve seemingly superhuman feats. This undoubtedly accounts for some of Apple's success, but it more significantly points to how Jobs' spiritual practices remained integral for his approach to business.

At the core of Jobs' spirituality was a conviction that the human will transcended society. For him, a calm, focused mind could actually overwhelm external reality and will the outcome of events in spite of any apparent limits. Social conventions and rules failed to apply to the enlightened individual, and Steve Jobs perceived himself as one of the elect. Andy Hertzfeld, one of the Mac developers, summarized Jobs' exceptional self-image: "He thinks there are a few people who are special—people like Einstein and Gandhi and the gurus he met in India—and he's one of them… Once he even hinted to me that he was enlightened."[213] This self-perception implied that conventions and rules failed to apply to him, that society only imposed illusory limits on the individual. Walter Isaacson, his biographer, notes, "if reality did not comport with his will, he would ignore it… Even in small everyday rebellions, such as a not putting a license plate on his car and parking it in handicapped spaces, he acted as if he were not subject to the strictures around him."[214] Even governmental authority, thus, could not legitimately lay claim on the spiritually enlightened individual.

Overall, Jobs' spirituality embodied an anti-authoritarian, libertarian ethos. Western industrial society, due to its extreme form of rationality and desire for order, threatens the integrity of the autonomous self. For Jobs, the individual is the

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[213] Walter Isaacson, 119.
[214] Ibid.

center of the cosmos, and Western rationality supposedly perverts this natural order of things. Through his spiritual practice, Jobs learned to conquer lingering anxieties over his adoption and lack of confidence, and, thus, he was able to restore a sense of unity to his self.

Jobs saw his career as a conduit for his spirituality, and the spiritually attuned entrepreneur represented the heroic figure in this drama. Business was more to Jobs than the pursuit of wealth and power, it epitomized a great moral struggle with implications for all of humanity. "If, for some reason," he stated, "we make some giant mistake and IBM wins, my personal feeling is that we are going to enter some sort of computer Dark Ages for about twenty years. Once IBM gains control of a market sector, they almost always stop innovation."[215] He routinely countered prevailing economic logic in his business decisions, preferring product quality at the expense of affordability for the mass market or worrying over the aesthetics of the assembly line on which these products were being built.

Apple, of course, would eventually attain status as an iconic business, and Steve Jobs' "reality distortion field" would be source of tech industry gossip around the water cooler. Jobs wielded such charisma in the business world that during his later years, Apple's stock would actually rise or fall according to his physical health. He represents the quintessential seeker entrepreneur that came through the counterculture determined to bring his spirituality to the workplace, and in the process imparted this aura of sacrality to Apple's public image. Even though Jobs might be the most prominent example of how the world of high-tech and seeker

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[215] Steve Jobs, interview by David Sheff, *Playboy*, February 1985.

spirituality share cultural space, he was not the first. Long before either the counterculture or the personal computer, Silicon Valley was a place where spiritual seeking and information technology went hand in hand.

Les Kaye: Zen and Work

Kannon Do Zen Mediation Center sits on the north side of Mountain View, CA near the southern tip of San Francisco Bay. Today, Mountain View, and a cluster of other small affluent communities situated between San Francisco and San Jose, make up the area popularly dubbed "Silicon Valley." The Center operates under the guidance of longtime areas resident and ordained Zen priest, Les Kaye.

Kaye, the leader of Kannon Do since 1983, offers highly Americanized form of Zen particularly suited to spiritual seeking. Unlike typical Japanese zazen, women may participate fully in all aspects of practice and levels of leadership. Additionally, while Zen remains a monastic tradition held under the autocratic authority of the roshi (leader) in Japan, practice at Kannon Do is lay-oriented and lay-driven. As he explained to one interviewer, "when Zen hit this country, it wasn't the priests who ran out to do it, it was us. We don't have very many monastic training sessions. People aren't interested. People want to practice Zen in their lives."[216] Kaye teaches a Zen befitting the democratic and egalitarian sentiments of American norms.

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[216] Les Kaye, interview on *Dharma Web*, accessed 30 January 2013, http://www.dharmaweb.org/index.php/Les_Kaye_Roshi_-_Kannon_Do_Zen.

Additionally, his version of Zen allows spiritual seekers the authority to direct and construct their own privatized practices and beliefs.

While Kaye spends most of his time today dealing with his responsibilities at Kannon Do, for nearly three decades prior to 1983 when he took over leadership of the Center, he worked as an engineer for IBM. While being an avid Zen practitioner and hardware engineer might seem like an odd combination, Kaye perceives no conflict between his spiritual practice and his professional life. In fact, he credits IBM as the place where he learned to practice Zen. Over the years, Kaye has written and spoken prolifically on the relationship between work and spirituality, and even helped companies like Apple establish meditation centers. If any single individual can claim responsibility for Silicon Valley's taste for Eastern spirituality, Les Kaye could accept this mantle.

When moved to San Jose to work for IBM in 1956, the high-tech culture of Northern California differed markedly from the established conservative corporate environment back in New York. Barriers to entry were thin, generating an atmosphere favorable to smaller ventures. Proximity to Stanford encouraged collaboration with the university and firms often coordinated their efforts. Moreover, because projects often held tight deadlines and dealt with some of the most advanced applied technologies, these companies preferred a decentralized structure that allows for greater autonomy and flexibility.

When IBM opened a location in Silicon Valley, it emulated the other firms and adopted this novel, more flexible organizational form. Kaye recalls, "the feeling of this new IBM location was like a small start-up company rather than a vast, forty-

year-old corporation. High expectations for the innovative product were almost palpable. I could taste the ozone of excitement in the air. Career prospects seemed unlimited."[217] Although the work remained highly stressful and demanding, it nonetheless empowered engineers to direct their own work, much like the form of Zen Kaye would soon come to embrace.

According to Kaye, he first encountered Zen one evening at the house of an associate in 1961. Browsing a bookshelf, he picked up Alan Watts' *The Way of Zen*.[218] "I was fascinated to discover a dimension of living, attitude of about life, that I had not known before," he recalls.[219] "When I closed the book, I knew my technically oriented, mainstream life was incomplete, that it alone could not provide the balance I was seeking."[220] By 1966, Kaye had joined a local group of like-minded Zen enthusiasts. The group consisted largely of middle- to upper-middle class Caucasians who, like himself, were committed to exploring alternatives to the Western religious traditions from their youth.[221] As the counterculture exploded in subsequent years, established groups such as these set an example for the youth who were searching for alternative forms of spirituality.

Because engineering was a demanding career that monopolized most of Kaye's time and energy, the workplace was the logical location for him to "practice Zen in his life." Over the years, he claims, Zen transformed the way he viewed work.

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[217] Les Kaye, *Zen at Work*: *A Zen Teacher's 30-year journey in Corporate America*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1996) 2.
[218] Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen*, (New York, Vintage, 1999).
[219] Les Kaye, *Zen at Work*, 9.
[220] Ibid.
[221] "History of Kannon Do," accessed 29 January 2013, http://www.kannondo.org/about-us/history-of-kannon-do.

Instead of focusing on his career as a means to an end, or a path to wealth, Kaye learned to see his job as an intrinsically valuable activity. "I became less concerned about personal 'success' and the intricacies of business politics, becoming more interested in treating work as part of spiritual practice: focusing on the value, usefulness, and quality of my activities, creating mutually supportive personal relationships, and maintaining high professional and ethical standards."[222] Moreover, he felt that the "qualities in Zen were no different from the character traits that IBM encouraged in its people: integrity, morality, a capacity for work, self-discipline, willingness to learn, attention to detail, responsibility, and perseverance."[223] By interpreting the company's culture through the language of Zen, Kaye indicates that not only is work a spiritual practice, but this spirituality is echoed IBM's culture.

Although the workplace functioned as Kaye's "practice place," he did not announce this to his coworkers. Even though a few employees knew of his interest in Zen, Kaye speculates that they "probably did not see a connection between spiritual practice and working in a high tech, business environment."[224] Zen, therefore, was strictly a private discipline, centered on the self, and aimed at personal moral and spiritual improvement. This supports Robert Wuthnow's assertion that at the heart of seeker spirituality lies "a renewed interest in the inner self as a way of relating to the sacred."[225] Consequently, Wuthnow argues, by

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[222] Les Kaye, interview by Drew Dunn, *Crooked Cucumber*, accessed 2 February 2013, http://www.cuke.com/Cucumber%20Project/interviews/kaye-z&b.html.
[223] Les Kaye, *Zen at Work,* 54.
[224] Les Kaye, interview by Drew Dunn.
[225] Robert Wuthow, *After Heaven*, 142.

positioning the self at the center of one's spirituality, the self simultaneously becomes both the source of all suffering as well as the locus of happiness. "Ultimately, all that exists is what one is able to experience."[226] In other words, this type of inward focus on the self privileges individual perception over external reality.

In his book, *Zen at Work*, Kaye conveys a number of stories in which he uses Zen practice to realign his perception and overcome suffering in the workplace. For example, when a coworker took credit for work that Kaye had actually performed, he saw himself as the source of his anger, rather than blaming his deceitful colleague. "When I looked closely at what was really hurt, the only bruise that I could find was to my ego… If I was suffering, it was because I was allowing myself to be captive to my ego's precious image of self."[227] The problem, then, was not that a trusted friend had exploited him, but rather he had allowed his ego to obstruct his perception of the situation. "Zazen practice," he concludes, "enabled my mind to be flexible and open enough to accept a new way of seeing the situation."[228]

By the same token, having this flexible, malleable self also enabled Kaye to cope with problems of authority on the job. During one such encounter, an executive known for his short temper fiercely castigated him for writing a poorly crafted memo sometime earlier:

I was in a rage for hours afterward. Early the next morning in zazen, the incident played again and again in my mind. As if watching a movie while sitting on my

[226] Les Kaye, *Zen at Work*, 149.
[227] Ibid, 71.
[228] Ibid, 73.

cushion, I repeatedly saw how quickly I had lost my composure, how instinctively my emotions had taken over.[229]

Again, Kaye reflects the blame for his suffering back onto himself. The problem lies within. He continues:

Weeks later, when my boss confronted me again with his arrogance, I notices something that had escaped me before. I realized that his irrational anger—demonstrated by his wide eyes, distorted mouth, and tone of voice—was an expression of fear.

In one stroke, Kaye adjusts his perception in order to reclaim a sense of authority. He reformulates contempt for the hot-headed executive into pity for a fragile human being who hides behind a surly ego.

Each of these anecdotes reveals how this radical subjectivity, focused solely on individual perception, can recognize the self as a continuous source of suffering while simultaneously equipping individuals with therapeutic techniques for healing. Because the self is mutable, pain and joy simply reflect two choices, and, therefore, Zen merely invests the practitioner with the awareness that an individual always holds the power to choose either.

Over the years, and now in his role as a full-time Zen priest, Les Kaye has been an outspoken voice for work as a form of spiritual practice. He encourages firms to make space for activities like meditation and yoga, and frequently gives lectures on the spiritual dimension of work. His story exemplifies how seeker spirituality is not opposed to business, but instead has grew up with and is particularly suited to the world of information technology.

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[229] Ibid, 119.

Both Les Kaye and Steve Jobs practiced forms of seeker spirituality anchored in an Americanized Zen Buddhism that shaped their professional lives. For each of them, work constituted a forum in which to express their spirituality. Their respective styles of Zen, like other forms of spiritual seeking, were utterly private, locating the sacred within the inner self. Their practice allowed to them a sense of personal empowerment; it was a way for them to celebrate their individuality, against the outward authority. They learned that the self and its perception of external reality required constant maintenance, leading to a more malleable sense of self.

This looser self functioned differently for Jobs and Kaye. In his role as entrepreneur, Steve Jobs, through Zen, acquired intense focus and the ability to "bend others to his will" to meet tight deadlines and achieve unthinkable feats of engineering. If reality can be reduced to perception, then having the will to believe brings can manifest that vision in outer physical world. Les Kaye learned as an employee in the world of high-tech to use zazen not to influence others, but to bend his own perspective to cope with the stresses in the workplace. His practice bolstered his sense of empowerment *in spite of* forces beyond his control. Like Jobs, however, Kaye was committed to the notion that reality was subjective and that perception ultimately shaped how one experienced daily life.

Cultural theorist Sam Binkley acknowledges how this looser form of selfhood is related to aspirations of individual liberty:

> Loosening invoked the idea of a more authentic, innocent, and original source of the self and promised a way of living that was more primary and immediate but also more active and creative. Loose, hip people were empowered to make choices over aspects of their lives that squares, unreflective and constrained by habit, took only for granted.[230]

Binkley characterizes the emergence of this looser self as a response to the rapid social change and political turmoil that occurred during the 1960s. The struggle for civil rights, the unpopular war in Vietnam, and a general discontent towards all forms of bureaucracy facilitated feelings of uncertainty, and anxiety about individual freedom. As the public struggles of the late 1960s transitioned to the lifestyle revolution of the 1970s, Binkley argues, the loose self "provided a set of living techniques centered on a thematically unified philosophy of life."[231] The fact that youth culture had lost its political edge when Jobs attended Reed College seems to support this claim. Spiritual seeking, for Jobs and his friends, represented alternative way of living, of experiencing life, of self-improvement rather than social reform.

Still, as much as this new looser form of selfhood was a response to social upheaval, this looser form of selfhood, indicative of seeker spirituality, also was a part of deeper structural changes occurring in society. The high-tech firms of Silicon Valley appearing on the scene beginning in the 1950s displayed a novel organizational structure. First, firms in older, more mature industries were organized bureaucratically, with a pyramidal power structure that emphasized central control. The emerging high-tech industry, on the other hand, developed a

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[230] Sam Binkley, *Getting Loose: Lifestyle Consumption in the 1970s* (Durham: Duke University, 2007) 3.
[231] Ibid, 17.

flatter, more decentralized form that maximized the autonomy of employees. Given the nature of their work, engineers benefitted from the loosely structured environment, which gave them the latitude to apply their high level of expertise. Under this structure, workplace culture extolled pliability, egalitarianism, and liberality.

The Zen tradition that Les Kaye encountered cultivated these same virtues within the practitioner. It offered him an ethos and a worldview that could overcome the anxieties stemming from this workplace structure. The flow of work in high-tech was anything but unpredictable, and workers constantly moved from project to project in small teams with ever-shifting members. Such dynamic conditions threatened the sense of autonomy required for effective performance. Through Zen, Kaye adopted a looser self that could bolster a sense of autonomy in the midst of ambiguity. All in all, seeker spirituality complemented the experience of high-tech work because it provided individuals a practical means of embodying the virtues necessary to achieve organizational goals.

Secondly, as the high-tech industry expanded, so too did its organizational form. Sociologist Arthur Stinchecombe asserts "organizational forms and types have a history," and "this determines some aspects of the present structure or organizations of that type."[232] In other words, the historical time and place in which an organization is founded often determines the structure it will adopt. Moreover, firms, he argues, often emulate the organizational structure of other successful companies. As the prestige and influence of Silicon Valley proliferated, it exported

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[232] Arthur Stinchcombe, "Social Structure and Organizations," in James G. March, ed., *Handbook of Organizations*, (Chicago: Rand-McNalley, 1965), 153.

this decentralized, flexible form of production to other firms in the industry. Thus, not only did Steve Jobs borrow this decentralized structure for Apple from other high tech companies, other industries outside Silicon Valley have incorporated it. The casual, hierarchically flat company that values creativity, flexibility, and individuality has become one of the dominant ways of organizing a business.

In addition, the social context in which a particular organizational structure emerges remains particularly relevant. By the late 1950s, interest in Eastern religion was already a well-established aspect of the local culture. Alan Watts joined the faculty at the American Academy of Asian Studies in 1951, and Shunryu-Suzuki opened the San Francisco Zen Center just eight years later. To live in the Bay Area, especially as a professional, implied likely contact with these communities. Thus, from its early years, the culture of Silicon Valley developed alongside and in relation to a discourse of spiritual seeking. For a company like Google to offer a course on meditation is nothing new; it merely continues a much older association between computer firms and spiritual seeking.

The fact that in the twentieth-first century, workplaces like Google embody the ideal workplace for Americans illustrates a final point. "Post industrial society," as Daniel Bell argues, defines a society that has shifted away from manufacturing towards information technology, finance, and service-oriented forms of work, and certainly Silicon Valley has played a historic role in this transition during the late twentieth century. Its enormous success has given it prestige, cultural authority, and invites imitation. The shift to a post-industrial society, as others have argued, constitutes not merely a change in the mode of production but also a change in the

norms, expectations, and, indeed, the moral resources of American society.[233] As such, the industries leading this change, consequently, function as mentors for the larger society. Indeed, businesses of all shades aspire to emulate the decentralized, flexible organizational structure of high-tech firms, and American workers desire places of work that emphasize individual empowerment. As such, the moral discourses tied to Silicon Valley naturally appeal to American society more generally. The kind of spiritual seeking Les Kaye and Steve Jobs found useful for their working lives now represents a common practice for many Americans outside Silicon Valley. Post-industrial society requires a post-industrial ethic, and for some of these seeker entrepreneurs, as the next chapter explores, the relationship between spirituality and business is utterly political.

[233] Richard Sennett discusses how the "New Capitalism," driven in part by information technology, encourages "short-term thinking," "flexible labor," and an ethic of consumption." See Richard Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, (New Haven: Yale University, 2006).

Chapter 5—Conscious Capitalism: Looser selves, Freer Markets

In January of 2013, the Harvard Business Review Press published a book *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business*, co-authored by John Mackey, CEO and co-founder of Whole Foods Market, and Raj Sisodia, author to the best-selling *Firms of Endearment: How World Class Companies Profit from Passion and Purpose* (2007). The book ambitiously argues that "business leaders can liberate the extraordinary power of business and capitalism to create a better world in which people live lives full of purpose, love, and creativity—a world of compassion, freedom, and prosperity."[234] The authors prescribe four basic tenets to guide these "Conscious" businesses: higher purpose, stakeholder integration, conscious leadership, and conscious culture.[235]

On its surface, *Conscious Capitalism* resembles the countless, overabundant collection of business books, each claiming to hold the exclusive formula for success within their pages. Yet, this new book received an unusual amount of media attention upon its release, due in no small part to the controversial reputation of one of its authors, John Mackey. As the leading organic grocer in the United States, Whole Foods Market, located primarily in urban settings, attracts an ecologically health minded clientele who in the popular imagination are associated with the political left. Mackey, however, identifies, occasionally somewhat vocally, with libertarianism, an ideology often considered at odds with the countercultural

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[234] John Mackey and Raj Sisodia, *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business*, (Cambridge: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 9.
[235] Ibid, 33.

sensibilities of the organic foods industry. He invited the ire of liberal activists and politicians in the Democratic Party when he spoke out against President Obama's proposed healthcare reform bill in an editorial for the Wall Street Journal in 2009.[236] Mackey again waded into rough waters on his 2013 book tour, characterizing "Obama Care" as a form of Fascism in a radio interview.[237]

The negative press, if anything, has simply increased the visibility of the movement Mackey has helped to build. Since the mid-2000s, Conscious Capitalism has blossomed into an influential organization comprised of likeminded business leaders, self-help gurus, and intellectuals seeking to reform society through free enterprise. Each year, Conscious Capitalism hosts an annual conference, where entrepreneurs and thinkers come together in order to share their ideas and discuss strategies.

Although its main emphasis is to use business to improve society, Conscious Capitalism has a spiritual side as well, as the following testimony from on the attendees from the 2013 annual conference illustrates:

> Casey Sheahan, CEO of Patagonia, took the stage and said, "I'm going to do something somewhat risky," and then led the entire group in a guided meditation in which we envisioned and then expressed gratitude to our community, our family, and each other. The room was literally vibrating.[238]

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[236] John Mackey, "The Whole Foods Alternative to Obama Care," *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 August 2009.
[237] April Fulton, "Whole Foods Founder John Mackey On Fascism And 'Conscious Capitalism,'" *National Public Radio Morning Edition*, 16 Jan 2013.
[238] Schuyler Brown, "Magic at the Conscious Capitalism Conference in San Francisco," *Huffington Post*, 09 April 2013.

Held in a Masonic Center on California Street in the San Francisco, the Conscious Capitalism Conference offered two days of workshops featuring themes like "Storytelling," "Search inside yourself," and "Higher Purpose," where participants could discuss and cultivate new practices aimed at organizational and individual transformation.

Although its origins remain somewhat murky, the concept of "Conscious Capitalism" first seems to have emerged during the 1990s in the teachings of a Philadelphia-area investment counselor, David Schwerin, who was heavily involved in the workplace spirituality movement at the time. In his book, *Conscious Capitalism: Principles for Prosperity* (1998), he argued that capitalism and business leaders could benefit from "ageless spiritual wisdom" and drawing on from many esoteric philosophies, he put together a self-development program for entrepreneurs and managers. Later, bestselling author and futures researcher, Patricia Aburdene picked up the idea of Conscious Capitalism and brought it to a broader audience in her popular book, *Megatrends 2010: The Dawn of Conscious Capitalism*. Aburdene declared that "spirituality in the workplace"

Although Conscious Capitalism clearly intersects with the "workplace spirituality" movement, its advocates do not explicitly describe it as "spiritual." Yet, much of its language and practices Conscious Capitalism involve the rhetoric of spirituality. Unlike the business scholars who study spirituality in the workplace, Conscious Capitalism is an organization comprised of business leaders and professional who are dedicated to more simply transforming the mindset of business. They are more overtly political in their orientation and advocate

vehemently for open markets, deregulation, and for empowering entrepreneurs. The chapter explores the movement's co-founder, John Mackey, shaped Conscious Capitalism through his personal spiritual beliefs and practices. Conscious Capitalism, while distinct from "workplace spirituality," nonetheless advocates for a brand of "spiritual libertarianism," in which the rhetoric of spirituality is used to provide an unconventional justification for laissez-faire capitalism.

A Texas-Sized Counterculture

In 2008, a group of progressively minded business thinkers, led by Whole Foods founder and CEO John Mackey, have established a well-organized and highly visible non-profit organization, "Conscious Capitalism," committed to the healing power of free markets. They propose to accomplish this "through transformative thinking, programs, events, and communities of inquiry designed to support the elevation of humanity."[239] Over the course of his career, Mackey has cultivated a particularly libertarian worldview and refined a set of spiritual disciplines that accommodate his politics. In other words, Mackey has erected a kind of *libertarian spirituality*, rooted in his rebellious youth as a participant in the counterculture.

John Mackey, like Steve Jobs, came of age during the early 1970s in the waning years of the counterculture. Born in Houston, TX to Bill and Margaret Mackey, he moved to Austin after high school in order to attend the University of Texas. Austin, at the time, represented the regional epicenter for youth rebellion; it

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[239] "About Us," accessed 15 April 2013, www.consciouscapitalism.org/aboutus.

was the Lone Star State's variant of San Francisco, replete with a burgeoning rock and alternative country music scene, hippie communes, and spiritual seekers.

Despite these similarities, San Francisco and Austin remained worlds apart. For one thing, each thrived on quite distinct forms of industry. If Northern California symbolized cutting edge technology and the sophistication of Napa Valley, Texas prospered from the land, quite literally. First, for the first half of the twentieth century, it provided the lion's share of the industrial world's most desired product, petroleum. Despite diminishing returns by the mid-twentieth century, it nonetheless continued to serve as the hub for the American oil industry.

Long before the internal combustion engine made oil the highest traded commodity around the globe, however, Texas was known for its other major export to the rest of the country: beef. Indeed, it is anchored to local identities as well a part of broader American popular culture. The "cowboy," rugged and armed with a six-shooter, yet virtuous and self-reliant, driving herds across the great empty spaces of western country, has become a prominent member of the America's mythological pantheon. Still, however *Giant* James Dean or Rock Hudson might appear to captivated audiences, cattle ranching, like oil, was big business and, thus, became an object of scorn and an embodiment of "the system" for the countercultural stirrings in Texas, and in particular Austin. When John Mackey came to the capital as a youth, therefore, he encountered a countercultural discourse with a distinct regional flavor, which emphasized a loose mode of living and spiritual seeking, but especially new methods of food production that could undermine the power of the cattle juggernaut.

Mackey never graduated college, but these initial years proved to be formative for his adult character. First, he embraced an intuitive, flexible approach to life, relying less on rationality and more on "feelings." "In my early twenties," he recalls, "I made what has proven to have been a wise decision: a lifelong commitment to follow my heart wherever it led me—which has been a wonderful journey of adventure, purpose, creativity, growth, and love."[240] This loose style permitted Mackey to pursue living as a kind of smorgasbord of potential experiences upon which he could draw, depending primarily on his mood or appetite.

His brief stint in college reflects this relaxed mode of living. Unconcerned with planning for the future, Mackey indulged in those courses that peaked his interests in the moment. He states "I only took classes I was interested in, and if a class bored me, I quickly dropped it."[241] While this approach might have hindered his progress towards a college degree, Mackey nonetheless sees this as an advantage. Never enrolling in a single business class, according to him, meant that he "had nothing to unlearn and new possibilities for innovation."[242]

Instead, he spent his early adulthood chasing broad philosophical concerns, as he says, "trying to discover the meaning and purpose of my life."[243] He digested a number of courses in religion, began experimenting with various forms of spiritual practice, such as yoga and meditation, and developed an interest in alternative diets. He became a vegetarian and, at one point, spent two years living in a cooperative

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[240] Mackey and Sisodia, *Conscious Capitalism* 7.
[241] Ibid, 1
[242] ibid.
[243] ibid.

community where, he writes, "I grew my hair and beard long."[244] For Mackey, the search for meaning manifested at a place where concerned for healthy food and seeker spirituality converged.

Like many of his peers at the time in the New Left, Mackey was critical of bureaucratic juggernaut of postwar American society with its seemingly blatant disregard for the ecological and socio-economic consequences of mass production. He agreed with the agendas of groups like Students for a Democratic Society, who were wary of expanded governmental powers as well as the exploitative practices of bloated corporations. By the late 1970s, he eagerly had joined a cooperative in order to help raise the awareness of alternative foods in Austin. However, the experience quickly became source of discontent. Mackey found the democratic principles of the co-op extremely cumbersome, stifling the innovation and organizational growth, which he believed necessary to influence the larger society.[245]

Armed with a modest amount of capital investment, therefore, Mackey and his wife finally left the cooperative to start a privately owned organic grocery, comically named SaferWay (a twist on the national grocery chain, SafeWay). Although the store would expand and evolve into Whole Foods Market, the first years of business proved challenging. In spite of their meager earnings, Mackey and his wife found themselves the targets of criticism from his anti-business voices who

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[244] ibid.
[245] Ibid, 3.

accused him of exploiting workers and customers. "Despite my good intentions, I had somehow become a selfish and greedy businessman."[246]

A Turn to the Political Right

His experience as a struggling entrepreneur contradicted Mackey's assumptions about the exploitative nature of capitalism. He found solace in an source quite unusual for a socially conscious youth at the time: the defenders of classical economic liberalism. Vociferously devouring the works of Ludwig von Mises, Ayn Rand, and Milton Friedman, Mackey experienced a revolution in his thinking. These thinkers offered Mackey a philosophy of human freedom that accounted for his experiences as a social reformer and an entrepreneur. In a free marketplace, Rand states that "all human relationships are *voluntary*. Men are free to cooperate or not, to deal with one another or not, as their own individual judgments, convictions, and interests dictate."[247] Capitalism, unlike any other social order, expressed individual freedom and could foster the kind of social change Mackey was seeking.

Through a renewed committed to the power of free markets, Mackey located common ground between the aspirations of the New Left and the assertions of neoclassical economic philosophers. Both ideologies maintained that centralized,

[246] Ibid, 4.
[247] Ayn Rand, "What is Capitalism?" in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York: Signet Publishing, 1967), 2.

bureaucratic power of any form diminished the freedom of individuals. Moreover, each shared the ultimate goal of liberating the individual from the constraints imposed upon her by the prevailing social order in postwar America. What Mackey found among the characters of *Atlas Shrugged* and the warnings of Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* were an unfamiliar and refreshing set of ideas with which he could retool his own experiment in countercultural entrepreneurialism.

Mackey jettisoned the anti-capitalist rhetoric of the New Left and constructed a new ethos that injected economic liberalism with a dose of the "consciousness transforming" sentiments of the counterculture.

> What I love most about the freedom movement, another name for the Libertarian platform, are the ideas of voluntary cooperation and spontaneous order that when channeled through free markets lead to the continuous evolution and progress of humanity. I believe that individual freedom in free markets when combined with property rights and the rule of law and ethical democratic government results in societies that maximize prosperity and establish conditions that promote human happiness and well being.[248]

Mackey reworks markets as utterly anti-institutional, based on "cooperation" and "spontaneous order," as the logical outgrowth of voluntary human action. Furthermore, free markets establish the necessary conditions for "continuous evolution," leading not merely to the pursuit of profit but to ultimate goals of "human happiness and well being."

Seeking Freedom through Spirituality

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[248] John Mackey and Michael Strong, *Be The Solution: How Entrepreneurs and Conscious Capitalists Can Solve All the World's Problems* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2009) xviii-xiv.

The transition that Mackey experienced as a young entrepreneur went beyond a change of political and ideological orientation. The shift was equally practical and moral, intimately associated with the various spiritual activities he cultivated. When Mackey claims, "business can be a wonderful vehicle for both personal and organizational growth," he casts the entrepreneur and the firm as vertically integrated spaces for moral activity, who, in dialogue with one another, facilitate a mode of spiritual seeking.[249] In fact, Mackey's political and professional identity as a libertarian entrepreneur is inseparable from his spiritual quest. Through these practices, Mackey engendered libertarian sensibilities and formed habits of perception that were radically subjective.

Mackey acquired a penchant for eclectic privatized spiritual seeking during college, exploring the contours of Eastern philosophy and religion. While he and his wife continue to perform a variety of activities, Mackey draws his primary spiritual regimen from *A Course in Miracles*. As a regular practitioner of *A Course in Miracles*, he cultivates a radically subjective worldview premised on the notion that correct perception shapes reality.

Mackey understands spiritual disciplines like *A Course in Miracles* in terms that conform to the libertarian principles of non-coercive voluntary exchange. He describes to one interviewer what he appreciates about *A Course*:

> My real spiritual path is *A Course in Miracles*, and I've been following that for 15 years, and that's a hard path of forgiveness and love, and mind training. How that plays out, I suppose, in my work life is I don't push that philosophy on anybody. Of course, one thing I love about it is it's this self-paced path, as opposed to a guru type of path. And in interacting with people, I try to see everyone that I encounter as a

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[249] Mackey and Sisodia, *Conscious Capitalism*,7.

spiritual being and my brother/sister and try to deal with them respectfully and with love.[250]

Spirituality, for him, remains a voluntary activity, not to "pushed" on anyone else. Other spiritual paths that assume a more formal organizational structure or require submission to an external authority violate this principle. Furthermore, he values *A Course* based on its practical usefulness rather than its universal Truth claims. What matters for Mackey is how *A Course* shifts his consciousness, and subsequently, his relationship with others.

The teachings found within *A Course in Miracles* complement Mackey's privatized spiritual style. First published in 1976, the book's author, or more precisely, its "transcriber," Helen Schucman, declared *A Course* to be her effort to capture the words of an "inner voice" that she identified as Jesus. While *A Course in Miracles* espouses a Christian foundation, Catherine Albanese designates the text as part of the New Age movement, a main trait of which is the subjective nature of reality. "New Agers," she notes, "evoke the energetic basis of their spirituality when they tell each other that they create their own reality, affirming the pliancy of matter and its plasticity before the moving of the spirit."[251]

A Course teaches generally that suffering, sin, and evil refer not to objective conditions in the world but instead result from the misperception of individual experience. Albanese states that "sickness, for *A Course in Miracles*, is a defense

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[250] ibid.
[251] Catherine L. Albanese, "The Subtle Energies of Spirit: Explorations in Metaphysical and New Age Spirituality," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 67 no. 2 (1999): 312.

against truth, in other words, a blockage and point of fixity."[252] The student who works through the exercises outlined in *A Course*, then, habituates a worldview where the individual is solely responsible for her reality, where the world persists just as it should, and where any unwanted experiences can be mitigated through adjusting her perceptive lens. As the text states, "Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the piece of God."[253]

A Course in Miracles reshapes the self through a series of self-guided, daily reflections, or "lessons," which over time can effectively radicalize the subjectivity of the practitioner. As the text explains, "the purpose of the workbook is to train your mind in a systematic way to a different perception of everyone and everything in the world."[254] In gradual succession, each lesson builds upon the preceding one to habituate within the practitioner a new, radically subjective worldview which by Lesson 32, becomes "**I have invented the world I see."[255]**

Through *A Course*, Mackey acquired a spiritual perspective that could agree with his libertarian sentiments. Statements like "**I am not the victim of the world I see**," teach the reader to assume total responsibility for her condition and, subsequently, to reject notions of systemic social injustice as illusory.[256] Indeed, these attitudes, instead, represent the source of the problem and, hence, only a change in perception rids her of this burden. Additionally, some lessons prove even

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[252] Ibid.
[253] Helen Schucman, *A Course in Miracles Combined Volume: Preface, Text Workbook for Students, Clarification of Terms, Supplements*, 3rd edition, (Mill Valley, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 2007), Introduction.
[254] Helen Schuman*A Course in Miracles*, *Workbook for Students*, 1.
[255] Ibid, 49.
[256] Ibid, 48.

more explicitly libertarian, such as "Lesson 76," which enjoins the practitioner to envisage that "**I am under no laws but God's**."[257] The lesson explains that man-made laws, because they deny the true relationship between the mind and the body, are inevitably futile attempt to achieve "salvation." "Think," it states, "of the freedom in the recognition that you are not bound by all the strange and twisted laws you have set up to save you."[258] Again, the text advises the reader to rely solely on himself (as a component of the divine) and to realize that involving the state can only hinder his progress.

Through *A Course in Miracles,* Mackey accepted reality as pliable, as a matter of deliberate choice, grounded in a looser, but empowered form of selfhood. "This particular reality that we're in is not the only reality that exists," he told the *New Yorker* in 2010. "In fact, there are an infinite number of realities."[259] The informed individual may freely choose the particular version of events most appropriate for attaining happiness. In the end, both *A Course in Miracles* confirms the libertarian maxim: in a liberal society, the free, autonomous individual holds sole responsibility for the outcome of her life.

The Genesis of Conscious Capitalism

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[257] Ibid, 134.
[258] Ibid.
[259] Nick Paumgarten, "Does Whole Foods' C.E.O. know what's best for you?," *New Yorker*, 4 January 2010, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/01/04/100104fa_fact_paumgarten.

Mackey shaped the formal organization and guided the informal culture of Whole Foods according to the principles of his private spiritual practices. Since the turn of the century, subsequently, these spiritual and political commitments have led him to a more vocal public posture. In late 2003, Mackey befriended Michael Strong, a libertarian-leaning headmaster of a New Mexico charter school, and began to discuss the possibility of started a movement based on their shared views. "After a great deal of brainstorming," Mackey recalls, "we decided to create an organization that would serve as a beacon of liberty, human potential, and making the world a better place."[260] They named their new organization FLOW, an acronym for "Freedom Lights Our World" that also acknowledges the influential work of psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.[261]

The concept of "flow" accords neatly with Mackey's radically subjective spirituality, libertarian politics, and respect for entrepreneurship. According to Csikszentmihalyi, "flow" delineates a "state in which people are so involved in an activity nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it."[262] Drawing on ideas from humanistic psychology, he argues that human flourishing most fully occurs through creative action, that man, as producer, experiences true happiness. The individual who cultivates the proper mindset of "flow" will inevitably realize her highest potential.

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[260] Mackey and Strong, *Be the Solution*, xv.
[261] See Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990).
[262] Mihayi Csikszentmihalyi, 4.

As FLOW took shape, Mackey and Strong articulated three initiatives that would encompass the organization: "Peace through Commerce," "Accelerating Women Entrepreneurs," and last but not least, "Conscious Capitalism." These programs would be explored through various local chapters around the United States known as "FLOW Activation Centers."[263] By 2006, activation centers existed in New York, Austin, and San Francisco Bay.

These groups began to forge a network of like-minded business leaders and thinkers whom Michael Strong eventually brought together as contributors for a collection of essays published in 2009 entitled *Be the Solution: How Entrepreneurs and Conscious Capitalists Can Solve All the World's Problems*.[264] Mackey, who composed the forward for the work, and the other authors each articulated how a new, more ethical, and spiritually grounded form of capitalism was emerging. True to Mackey's libertarianism, they argued that business represents the best hope for achieving a prosperous global future. The essays bear titles such as "The Entrepreneur as Hero," "Arete and the Entrepreneur," and "Liberating the Spirit for Entrepreneurial Good," in which the authors weave moral and spiritual language into a broad discussion of business strategy. Prominent business leaders and scholars praised the work. As one professor expressed on the book's jacket, "at last,

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[263] "Flow Activation Centers," *FLOW: liberating the entrepreneurial spirit for good*, archived website, accessed 15 June 2013, http://www.flowidealism.org/Community/FAC.html.

[264] Mackey and Strong, *Be the Solution*.

a book about the heart of capitalism as a force for creating good in the world for solving many of our tough social problems. I hope our political leaders read it."[265]

In the few years since the publication of *Be the Solution*, FLOW has ceased to exist while Conscious Capitalism as evolved into an independent organization. Leading executives and business thinkers from a number of industries have signed on to the movement. Its Board of Directors feature individuals such as Doug Rauch, former President of Trader Joe's and Kip Tindell, founder of The Container Store. The organization hosts an annual conference where, over two days, business owners, executives, and thinkers participate in workshops and panel sessions dedicated to free markets, spiritually driven business, and facilitating the spread of "consciousness" around the globe.

Mapping a Post-Industrial Habitus

Thus far, this chapter has traced how Conscious Capitalism how is historically tied to the libertarian spirituality of John Mackey. Emerging from the social strife of the 1960s and 70s with a penchant for highly individualized forms of spiritual practice which would become entangled with their professional lives. He helped define a new ethos for business, and a defense of capitalism anchored in seeker spirituality and suited for a post-industrial United States.

Mackey, as baby-boomer living in the countercultural epicenter of Austin, TX, was ideally situated to embark on the path he would choose. The cooperative

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[265] R. Edward Freeman, Olsson Professor of Business Administration, Academic Director, Business Roundtable Institute for Corporate Ethics, University of Virginia, in *Be the Solution*.

movement around the University of Texas was engendering new ideas about food that rejected corporate agriculture and livestock industries. They preferred a return to a purer, more democratically controlled form of food production, values which would eventually find their way into the culture of Whole Foods Market via John Mackey.

Mackey infuse his passion for food with his private spiritual beliefs and his libertarian politics, seeing them not as contradictory, but as complementary. He created for himself a spiritual libertarianism that saturates the movement he helped to build, Conscious Capitalism. John Mackey's most recently published treatise, *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business*, most explicitly reveals this libertarian platform. "Business does not exist," he writes, "to be a servant or tool of social activists or the government. Some people would like business to act like a dog on a leash and do whatever the government wants them to do. That's been tried; it's called corporatism or fascism. It is about dominating and controlling business to make it serve the goals of political rulers."[266] Here, Mackey asserts the superiority of the voluntary principle as the moral imperative. Coercive institutions, like the State, violate this maxim and therefore diminish human freedom. According to this logic, diminishing the power of the state presumably facilitates the greater good. For instance, Mackey argues that "if business taxes were lower, all other stakeholders would have more—lower prices for consumers, higher wages and benefits for team members, and higher profits for investors, and the amount of

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[266] Mackey and Sisodia, *Conscious Capitalism,* 125.

money we could give to support the nonprofit sector would also be proportionately greater."[267]

The voluntary principle applies equally to organizational structure of the Conscious business. "Increasingly in the world of business today, individual creativity and innovation must be combined in with a shared sense of harmony and purposeful creation. A decentralized and empowered organization does not perform a symphony; it engages in a kind of improvisational jazz."[268] Conscious Capitalism requires a new workplace structure, comprised of empowered, autonomous, self-regulating teams, which mirrors with remarkable accuracy much of the corporate downsizing and restructuring that has occurred in since the 1970s.

Mackey imagines business as "ultimate source of all taxes and donations," as the origin of all value.[269] He views organized labor as a coercive form of power that constrains progress. "Unions," Mackey asserts, "compete with the company for the hearts and minds of team members. Our belief is that if a company does an outstanding job caring for its team members, creating value for them, and respecting them as key stakeholders, it can successfully avoid unionization."[270] Unions, from this perspective, produce value of their own, and emerge only out of the moral failure of the company's leaders. The Conscious Capitalist is pro-worker and only indirectly anti-union.

Conscious Capitalism endorses the neoliberal project to foster privatization on a global scale. Admitting that "we want to make Conscious Capitalism the

[267] Ibid, 136.
[268] Ibid, 237.
[269] Ibid, 137.
[270] Ibid, 158.

dominant economic and business paradigm in the world to spread human flourishing," Mackey outlines how Whole Foods, through the Whole Planet Foundation, "works to "end poverty around the world by making microcredit working-capital loans to millions of impoverished people to help them create and improve their businesses."[271] Here again, Mackey implicitly attacks non-market forms of social welfare as inadequate. Conscious Capitalism supports a world where problems are confronted through market solutions and every individual is the CEO of her personal firm.

On one hand, Conscious Capitalism supports the typical a union-busting, anti-regulatory, privatized neoliberal worldview. Yet, it also provides Mackey with a moral vocabulary that allows him to move beyond the conventional neoliberal arguments. Quoting Marc Gafni, Director of the Center for World Spirituality, he writes:

> The world of business is becoming one of the great cathedrals of spirit. Businesses are becoming places in which meaning can be created, in which mutuality begins to happen. Business is the force in the world that is fulfilling every major value of the great spiritual traditions: intimacy, trust, a shared vision, cooperation, collaboration, friendship, and ultimately love.[272]

At the center of these twenty-first century cathedrals sit the enlightened corporate gurus. "Conscious Companies are led by emotionally and spiritually mature leaders… They embody Mahatma Gandhi's dictum 'We must be the change we wish to see in the world.'"[273] These post-industrial heroes must embody these spiritual

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[271] Ibid, 64.
[272] Ibid, 225.
[273] Ibid, 179.

principles and master the prescribed spiritual practices in order to bring this new order to fruition.

The spiritual practices and beliefs espoused by Mackey and Conscious Capitalism bind the individual practitioner to the larger post-industrial social structure. Mindfulness meditation assuages the uncertainty of laissez-faire, while corporate sponsored fire-walking enhances risk-taking amidst the cutthroat conditions of a globally competitive market. Moreover, a cultivated sense that perception determines reality allows one to readily shift perspective in the face of unpredictable events. In other words, the looser, radically empowered *sense* of self, instilled through these post-industrial spiritual practices, mimics and even reproduces the deregulated, privatized social order of post-industrial society. Bourdieu describes the social agent as "a collective individual or a collective individuated by the fact of embodying social structures… The habitus is socialized subjectivity, a historic transcendental, whose schemes or perception and appreciation are the product of collective and individual history."[274] Put succinctly, what I am beginning to describe here is how post-industrial spirituality reveals the underlying *habitus* operating in contemporary American society. The libertarian ethos, which guides the individual, arises alongside and in a necessary relationship with the spirit of global capital.

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[274] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Social Structures of the Economy*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 211.

Chapter 6—Not the Usual Suspects: Real Estate Rabbis, Monastic Managers, and Spiritual Salesmen in the Big Apple

Up to this point, I have focused on broad historical and institutional developments. The rhetoric of spirituality emerged as a form of criticism against the postwar welfare state. It transformed the language of management and the way entrepreneurs shaped their businesses. Academic societies, peer-reviewed journals, and research organizations, which concentrate on "spirituality in the workplace" or "Conscious Capitalism," had risen to prominence. Advocates of spirituality at work venerate scientists like Willis Harman, humanistic psychologists like Abraham Maslow, and businessmen like Robert Greenleaf as pioneers, each of whom stressed the importance of subjective experience, intuitive knowledge, and the "spiritual." They privilege notions of spirituality as utterly private and apolitical and yet as a vital part of the social fabric and the means to a prosperous future. These popular and intellectual movements matured during a period of intense socio-economic change in which the welfare state was in retreat and post-industrial forms of work began to dominate middle class careers. It was in and through these processes that spirituality entered the public discussion of work, and it is in light of these broad forces that it must be grasped as a distinct, coherent aspect of post-industrial American life.

Yet, to describe these developments as a discrete "religious" or social movement, as others have done, would prove myopic.[275] Rather, they are widely

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[275] Lake Lambert refers to "workplace spirituality" as a new religious movement in the business world, and David Miller traces the history of what he calls the "faith at

scattered groups that often lack an awareness of one another. Some, like the Management, Spirituality, and Religion interest group in the Academy of Management, apply a scholarly lens to workplace spirituality. Others, like Conscious Capitalism, appear more as political action organizations, seeking to not only upend the mindset of business leadership but also to promote a kind of spiritual libertarianism. These groups might be formally organized, featuring well-known spiritual or business leaders, or merely informal networks of individuals who share a desire to incorporate spirituality into their working lives, who use tools like social media to stay connected.

Rather than a movement, what I am describing is an extended family of formal and informal groups, bound together culturally, who engage in a shared discourse about work, business organizations, and capitalism anchored in "spirituality." While others, including myself, have written extensively on prominent examples like Whole Foods or Steve Jobs, little effort has been made to examine the less visible members of this family. The next two chapters will look at two local contexts where spirituality comes together with work. First, I explore a loosely structured network of informal groups, who meet regularly in Manhattan to discuss the intersection of spirituality and work. While this movement revolves around a common discourse, its constituents participate for a variety of reasons. The next chapter provides an ethnographic case study of Café Gratitude, a San Francisco-based coffee chain that describes its mission as explicitly spiritual.

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work movement" during the twentieth century. See Lambert, *Spirituality Inc.* (NYU Press, 2009), and Miller, *God At Work* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

In each of these cases, I move beyond the usual suspects of business leaders, popular authors, and scholars to look more closely at how working people negotiate the topic of spirituality at work. Like the more publically visible examples, these individuals participate in this movement because it provides tools for overcoming the anxieties wrought by globalization and post-industrial life. The rhetoric of spirituality enables them to make sense of a world governed by neoliberalism. In essence, these are localized moments in the reproduction of globalization.

The New York Groups

On a muggy June evening, I attended a lecture at *Intersections International* in midtown Manhattan entitled "The Spirit of Work," part of *Intersections* "Power and Values" seminar series. Associated with the Collegiate Church of New York, founded in 1628 and reportedly the oldest continuous congregation in North America, *Intersections International* is an ecumenical organization "dedicated to building respectful relationships among diverse individuals and communities to forge common ground and develop strategies that promote justice, reconciliation peace."[276]

Fred Johnson, Artistic Director for Intersections, convened the meeting at dusk with the sound of bongos, over which he improvised melodic lyrics welcoming those in attendance and introduced the speakers. People like Alan Lurie and Kenny Moore, two of the facilitators, brought a range of experiences and perspectives on

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[276] "Intersections," *Collegiate Churches of New York*, accessed 14 February 2014, http://www.collegiatechurch.org/?q=content/intersections.

the spiritual aspects of work. Prior to a successful career in human resources for a large energy company, Kenny "the Monk" Moore spent fifteen years in a monastic community and found through religious discipline life lessons remarkably applicable to corporate life. Alan Lurie is an ordained Rabbi and author of *Five Minutes on Mondays: Finding Unexpected Purpose, Peace, and Fulfillment at Work* (2009), who had developed a unique program in the New York real estate firm of which he was managing director. At the beginning of each workweek, Lurie gathers with his coworkers and shares a parable, often drawn from his extensive knowledge of Jewish and other religious teachings, as a way to attend the spiritual needs of his staff.

Intersections International is not alone in its commitment to exploring the relationship between spirituality and work. In fact, this meeting represents only one example of countless formal and informal organized groups that meet regularly in New York City to discuss the topic. Unsurprisingly, these events often draw a regular cast of upwardly mobile business professionals who, for a variety of reasons, wish to take part in this movement. Some working people, like Marc Miller for example, an executive in corporate real estate, use these groups as opportunities to bring their private religious commitments into their professional lives. Others, such as Peter Roche, see spirituality as the foundation upon which thriving, socially conscientious companies might be built. These groups come together not only in churches, but in corporate boardrooms, as well as exclusive societies such as the Princeton Club of New York, where I had seen many of these same faces a few weeks earlier to hear Alan Lurie speak about "Work as a Spiritual Gymnasium." These

usual suspects, through a shared interest in spirituality of work, have forged disparate voices into a loosely structured network of business leaders, religious thinkers, and spiritual seekers.

While the aims of its members differ, this community generally envisages spirituality as a means to cope with the stresses of the fast-paced, highly competitive business environment of New York City. Because the prevailing culture of business precludes transcendent principles, they maintain, it inadequately address the spiritual needs of individuals and society alike. In particular, they have turned to spiritual language to explain the economic crisis of 2007-08 that wrought havoc in many of the industries in which they operate and undermined many of their assumptions about the promise of hard work. While careers are less secure, and plans for the future uncertain, these communities orient participants towards an alternative narrative of global capitalism that celebrates uncertainty as opportunity and dangles the hope that through inner transformation comes global reform.

Competing Aims

Many of the participants in this loosely structured movement understand work, itself, as a kind of spiritual practice. Such views, of course, are not new, and reflect deeply entrenched Western, particularly Protestant, notions of work as a "religious" act. The modern conception of work remains tied historically to reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin, who broadened the traditional idea of

"calling," to include not only the work of the ordained or the cloistered, but also secular pursuits.[277] Despite such historical antecedents, the notion of work as "spiritual" as it is used in these groups represents something quite distinct from earlier ideas of work as a "calling." Whereas Luther sees one's "calling" as worldly activity conducted in service to God, these new groups prefer a more eclectic, less dogmatically confined idea of work as "spiritual." Authority rests not in God and his commandments, but in the choices of the individual to explore, refine, and express her "spirit" through work.

Real Estate executive, Alan Lurie, for example, appears regularly as a lecturer in settings throughout the New York area to talk about the spiritual aspects of work. He began his foray into this movement in a corporate real estate firm where he would bring employees together every Monday morning and deliver a brief inspirational message. In short order, Lurie became an important figure among local business circles in the city and was being invited to speak in a variety of professional contexts. In 2009, he emerged on the national stage as a prominent advocate for workplace spirituality when he authored *Five Minutes on Mondays: Finding Unexpected Purpose, Peace, and Fulfillment at Work,* a collection of the parables that he was sharing with his staff. He blogs regularly for the *Huffington Post* and in 2011, at the International Conference for Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace at the University of Arkansas, Lurie was awarded the *Willis Harman Spirit at Work Award*.

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[277] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Routledge, 2006), 40.

Known popularly as the "Real Estate Rabbi" (a term he personally resists) because of his formal rabbinic training, he claims that "work, in fact, presents the most powerful environment for spiritual development."[278] The workplace confronts individuals with "very real dilemmas and interactions," which, like weights in a gym, serve as tools, when used properly, and can build "spiritual" strength.[279] "Weight-lifting," he explains, "is about resistance. That's what work is, because I'm getting pulled down by the gravity of ego and I have to push against that."[280] Work, then, is not an obligation to God, but an activity through which one struggles deliberately to achieve a more spiritual (less ego-driven) disposition.

Lurie draws inspiration from his formal education as a Rabbi to describe this "spiritual gymnasium." The Hebrew term for work, *avodah*, also means "prayer", and thus, according to him, Jewish teachings have always perceived work and spiritual action as coterminous with one another. "When business is approached with the same spirit as prayer—with positive intention, honesty, and humility—a deeper and lasting success will naturally emerge."[281] Again, while this might closely resemble the Reformed notion of "calling" as an obligation to God, Lurie points out that the ultimate aim of any spiritual practice, including work, is primarily the connection it creates between individuals. "Within Judaism, the point of vertical connection (to God), which one gets through meditation and prayer, is like an

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[278] Alan Lurie, "Work as a Spiritual Gymnasium," *Huffington Post*, Religion Section, 4 January 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabbi-alan-lurie/work-as-a-spiritual-gymnasium_b_1173113.html.

[279] Alan Lurie, *Five Minutes on Mondays: Finding Unexpected Purpose, Peace, and Fulfillment at Work* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press, 2009), xxii.
[280] Alan Lurie in discussion with the author, 23 May 2012.
[281] Lurie, *Five Minutes on Mondays*, 7.

extension cord to draw energy into you to allow you to be effective horizontally (with other people). So in Judaism, the idea of spending your whole time doing vertical work, misses the whole point. We are embodied to be of service horizontally."[282]

Although committed to his faith, Alan, like many of his peers in the movement, draws on teachings outside of Jewish tradition. Religion, for him, represents merely a "repository of spiritual teachings from people who had spiritual insights." Spirituality, the true essence of what religion preserves, is something more ineffable and deeply private, "those things which help you identify your true nature, which is spirit. Something is spiritual," he claims, "when it is an experience of a transformative connection."[283] Lurie sees each religion as containing identical spiritual truths, interpreted differently by individuals in different places and times.[284]

Yet, Lurie locates spirituality not only in other religious traditions, but also in ideas normally identified as secular. Like so much of popular discourse on spirituality and work, humanistic psychology informs his ideas. Alan can move, in the course of a few seconds, from discussion about "ego," through Pastor Rick Warren's *Purpose-Driven Life*, to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Lurie's ideas blur the boundaries between the religious, the spiritual, and the secular. Indeed, because he defines spirituality as utterly transformational, authentic spiritual experiences demand change in all areas of life, not merely during well-defined religious

[282] Alan Lurie in discussion with the author 23 May 2012.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Alan Lurie, lecture on "The Spirit of Work" at The Princeton Club, May 2012.

practices. "If it only changes you when you're sitting on the meditation cushion, or at synagogue, and then you go back to the same way you were, that's an experience but it's not transformative; it wasn't the 'real deal.'"[285] All experiences and activities, including work, get redescribed as opportunities for spiritual expression.

While individuals like Alan Lurie view work as a form of spiritual self-development, others are interested in using their religious faith as a moral guide for their careers. Marc Miller, an executive in commercial office leasing, can be found regularly attending many of the various lectures and workshops in New York, which focus on this relationship between spirituality and work. Although an acquaintance of Lurie's, he participates in these groups not because he sees work as inherently spiritual, but rather because he is seeking to enhance the ethical foundation that his Jewish faith already brings to his professional life. Religion serves as the interpretive lens through which Miller makes daily decisions, and deals with tough situations in an industry that he describes as "very cutthroat" and particularly prone to unethical behavior.[286]

Miller, the youngest of three brothers, hails from a conservative Jewish family in the borough of Queens, which engaged in what he calls "stringent" religious practice in the home. Of his two siblings, Miller alone attended a Jewish Day School where he learned Hebrew and studied the texts and traditions of his religious community. Although he later drifted from his religious devotion during college, Miller continued to maintain a strong ethnic identity as a Jew, remaining

[285] Alan Lurie in discussion with the author, 23 May 2012.

[286] Marc Miller in discussion with the author, 25 May 2012.

staunchly pro-Israel and supporting a robust US-Isreali relationship. In his twenties and thirties, as a young professional living in the city, however, Marc began to reconnect with his religious upbringing. He started attending Bible classes, admittedly for social reasons, "to meet girls," but quickly become immersed in the material.[287]

Now fifty-two, working in commercial leasing, he works primarily on commission, and although competition can be overwhelming, the financial rewards are staggering. With such high stakes, the industry attracts many to whom Marc refers as "bad apples," individuals willing to cut corners and engage in dishonest behaviors to reap significant profits. His religious practice has proven vital in negotiating these turbulent conditions. "Spirituality," Miller contends, "has helped me to deal with that, because if I wasn't a religiously spiritual person, I could've been driven to violence."[288] Recalling an incident when a colleague took credit and commission for a deal that Miller had initiated, he admits to seriously considering physically harming the gentleman. "We invest our heart and soul, with our time and talents that God gave us. Thankfully, for my faith, I didn't kill him or hurt him."[289] Drawing on his faith, Marc left the firm soon thereafter and opened his own business. "In my tradition," he explains, "when you're around bad people, you have to move away from them. Believing in God gave me the faith to realize that this person who did this to me would get his comeuppance on God's time, when He wants it to happen."

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[287] Ibid.
[288] ibid.
[289] Ibid.

The decision to become an entrepreneur proved only to bolster the connection he was forging between work and his Jewish faith. Raising three children leaves Miller with little time for personal religious practice at home, and as a business owner, he now takes a few minutes each day during the workweek for prayer or Bible study. In addition, he regularly attends a Torah class, which meets every Tuesday at Google's New York office and participates in workshops devoted to workplace spirituality around the city. All of these activities illustrate how Marc's professional life serves as a central locale for his religious practice and identity.[290]

All in all, Miller regards conventional business ethics with skepticism and believes religion and spirituality can more effectively guide business behavior. "If a company just has a mission statement or five words that they call values, is that really going to effect their recruiting, their hiring, or how they're going to discipline? I don't think so."[291] People in the world of business, according to Miller, require something more robust, the kind of total worldview that only religious belief can provide. His previous employers espoused ethical values, but because they neither appealed to spiritual concepts nor grounded their principles in religious belief, they failed to effect the daily decisions of staff members. As an entrepreneur, Miller finds the "latitude to spend time during the day, here or there, studying, and just being freer to make ethical decisions."

Marc Miller regards religion and spirituality as distinct, yet relevant to work, unlike Lurie, who regards work, itself, as a spiritual activity. Yet others, like seventy-three year old Peter Roche have turned their interest in spirituality into a

[290] Ibid.
[291] Ibid.

business opportunity. Roche, through his firm known as the London Roche Perret Group (LRPG), helps other companies "reinvent" their organizational cultures by altering "the ways of working, the interactions, and what people bring to their enterprise, in particular commitment, passion, and engagement," according to their website.[292] While Peter steers away from any formal use of "spirituality" in his firm, he nonetheless characterizes his efforts to change the way people work as a spiritual undertaking.[293]

Peter founded LRPG in 1985 with his wife after moving to the United States from his native Britain, but his interest in religion, spirituality, and organizational change began many years earlier. As young man reared in a Catholic home, Roche entered the seminary, aspiring to serve as a missionary priest. Unfortunately, his superiors thought him a "prankster and practical joker" and encouraged Peter to consider another vocational path. Acquiescing to their request, he landed, by convenience rather than design, in the world of business as an employee in his father's advertising firm. Peter, however, did not remain there for long, and his ambition fueled him to change jobs often in order to take on increasingly prestigious positions. "I took on a lot of jobs I wasn't qualified for, learned how to do it from the inside. No sooner had I mastered one job when I was taking on another job that I wasn't qualified for," he remembers.[294] Eventually, Peter attained a managing director position of a British public company.

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[292] "What we do: Organizational Reinvention," *LPR Group Website*, accessed 12 March 2014, http://www.lprgroup.com/orgreinvention.php.
[293] Peter Roche in discussion with the author, 19 June 2012.

[294] Ibid.

Despite his success as a businessman, Roche never relinquished the enthusiasm from his days as a missionary seminarian. He wanted to help others in some way and began to consider how he might introduce these desires into his professional life. In the meantime, Roche had relocated to the United States to be with his wife, a professor of business at Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, where he became involved in number of what he calls "transformational" self-help programs. Soon thereafter, he started toying with the idea of applying this "transformational approach" to organizations, of rethinking the entire model of business. Within a few years, he and his wife opened a consulting firm dedicated to this premise. LRPG would challenge companies (for a modest fee) "to take on something bold and audacious that they couldn't take on without rethinking the way they manage, they way they be, work, and collaborate."[295]

This "reinvention" process that LRPG offers to its clients is based on the notion that certain fundamental, unconscious values shape the behavior of individuals as well as organizations. "I try to get people to bring these values to the surface," Roche explains, "and start noticing what I must have as a set of values that cause me to behave like this."[296] Exposing these values purportedly allows members of an organization to more clearly discern their individual and collective goals and intentions, rendering work more fulfilling, conflict less likely, and the business more successful.

LRPG avoids using terms like "spiritual" to describe their services, but Roche admits that this kind of work, for him, remains utterly tied to his beliefs about

[295] Ibid.
[296] Ibid.

spirituality. Instead, when faced with clients who might react negatively to such language, Roche employs an alternative rhetoric of "values." "My access to talking about things that are spiritual," he states, "without using the word, is to ask people what their fundamental values are, and I pick and choose my language depending on who I'm talking to."[297] For Peter, specific language is less important than the basic truths to which they point. Such language, he feels, are merely superficial labels, and that "what's behind the screen gets obscured by what's in front of the screen." Appealing to religious or spiritual concepts, then, might actually hinder the "reinvention" process for individuals who are resistant to such language.

Despite avoiding "spiritual" language, Roche nonetheless remains actively involved in local groups and international organizations that openly discuss spirituality and work. It was at one such group that gathered every Wednesday in Manhattan where he befriended Alan Lurie, and has since continued to regularly attend his lectures. In addition, Peter maintains ongoing professional relationships with some of the leading voices of the movement, like Judi Neal, whom he met through her organization, the *International Association for Spirit at Work*.

All in all, this deeper examination into some of the participants of these groups reveals a remarkable degree of heterogeneity in this movement. Individuals come to these meetings for many reasons. Some, like Marc Miller, find these groups as useful ways to embolden the connection between their privately held religious beliefs and professional life, while Alan Lurie and others perceive work as a spiritual activity. Finally, there are those like Peter Roche, who prefer altogether to avoid the

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[297] ibid.

rhetoric of "spirituality," but continue to place significance on the need to change the culture of business.

Class Power, The Great Recession, and Neoliberalism

Among members of these groups, concepts like "spirituality," "values," or "culture" elude stable meanings. Whereas Alan Lurie defines spirituality rather ambiguously as the "experience of a transformative connection," Peter Roche clearly implies something much more private when he equates spirituality with one's "fundamental organizing principles." Moreover, from our conversations, Marc Miller seems to suggest that spiritual and religious represent the same idea. It would be wrong, therefore, to characterize this movement as an ideological monolith by any means. Instead, it might best be considered as a loose formulation of localized groups, on the one hand comprised of a diverse spectrum of peoples, and larger formal organizations, such as the Conscious Capitalism or the interest groups in the Academy of Management one the other hand, all of which relying on various forms of media to continually reconstitute a collective identity. Concepts like "spirit at work" anchor the individuals to a wider social formation, but to what these terms actually refer remains of secondary importance. Rather, to this movement, these constituents bring their competing concepts, motivations, and aims, producing a common discourse and shared sense of identity.

In spite of such wide-ranging differences, however, when we acknowledge that this shared discourse occurs within a larger social and historical context, an

extraordinarily consistent set of assumptions becomes clear. Because my ethnographic research occurred between 2011 and 2012, in the wake of the Great Recession, the economic crisis inevitably constituted a considerable amount of discussion among those with whom I spoke. From these conversations, a consistent pattern emerges.

First, it is vital to note the class dimensions of this movement. While the professional backgrounds of these individuals vary, they clearly represent a relatively affluent stratum of American society. Participants in these groups, lectures, and presentations appear to be largely white-collar professionals and business owners. The Intersections International meeting, which I attended, on the "Spirit of Work" illustrates this point. First, each of the four guest speakers represented positions of privilege. As I have already noted, Alan Lurie works in corporate real estate, and he was accompanied that evening by Kenny Moore, a former monk turned business executive currently employed as the Director of Human Resources for Keyspan, a Fortune 500 energy company. Joining Moore and Lurie was Carol Folks Prescott, a self-employed performance coach whose clients, according to her website, include business leaders, clergy, doctors, and educators.[298] And Joshua Greene, the fourth guest speaker, spent thirteen years in an ashram before embarking on a thriving career in television.[299]

This gathering exhibited obvious class dimensions, as most of the attendees hailed from upwardly mobile circumstances. In addition to Marc Miller and Peter

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[298] "About Carol," *Carol Fox Prescott,* accessed 4 March 2014, http://carolfoxprescott.com/about/.

[299] *Joshua M. Greene Official Website*, accessed 7 March 2014, http://www.atma.org/biography/.

Roche, both of whom were in attendance that evening, investment bankers, HR managers, and business owners filled the room. The venue failed to attract an obvious working class contingent. There were no cab drivers or employees of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in attendance (MTA). Rather, this workshop clearly aimed at the affluent, the educated, and the entrepreneurial. In a manner of speaking, the group embodied Maslow's hierarchy of needs; these individuals had already achieved their basic survival needs and were looking for self-actualization. After all, it is these kinds of professions that afford a sufficient level of autonomy and financial security that enable these individuals to even ask the question: is it possible to find meaning and purpose on the job? The professional class, the privileged, is a driving force of this movement, at least among these groups in Manhattan.

Second, participants continually diagnose the collapse of the financial markets in 2007-08 in strictly private moral terms. During a presentation at the Princeton Club in New York, Alan Lurie remarked that "the collapse of the financial system was primarily due to individuals in the financial industry holding onto a 'bad faith statement.'" A faith statement, he explains, represents a basic principle through which a person interprets her experience. Using an advertisement from HSBC bank (fig. 1), Lurie demonstrates how different "faith statements" produce very different experiences of the same event.

fig.1[300]

Superimposed on three identical pictures of a wallet lying in the street are three different words: “misfortune,” “obligation,” and “temptation.” Each of these terms mediate between the audience and the image to produce competing interpretations. The viewer might see the “misfortune” of a lost wallet, the “obligation” to find its rightful owner, or even the “temptation” to take possession of its contents. Lurie proposes that human beings construct meaning in a similar manner. Individuals take in objective data and erect a story around this information using various ‘faith statements,’ which they hold about themselves and the world. This interpretation, subsequently, determines how one next behaves.

Superficially, his claims appear akin to Roland Barthes’ analysis of popular culture (1957).[301] Like Barthes, Lurie maintains that our interpretive frames

[300] Slide from Alan Lurie, “Work as a Spiritual Gymnasium,” presented at the Princeton Club of New York, 16 May 2012, provided via email to the author.

determine what we believe and how we act. Yet, for Barthes, the interaction of signifiers, out of which meaning arises gets imposed on the audience *from outside*, whereas Lurie situates the "faith statement," and therefore meaning, as *wholly interior* to the viewer. Lurie's *radical subjectivism*, then, inverts Barthes' strict structural analysis in that the social structure merely persists as is, and meaning (i.e. behavior in the world) arises exclusively from the individual's inner "faith statement". Equipped with this notion of the "faith statement," Lurie is able to effectively reduce the causes of the Great Recession to a collection of individual moral failures. Individual bankers held a bad faith statement, he claims, that declares, "I'm here to make money."[302]

Although we did not discuss the economic crisis specifically, my conversations with Marc Miller reveal similar views about the fundamental role of private morality in business. According to Miller, a morality grounded in religion or spirituality is the essential ingredient for a thriving capitalist society. Again, he understands this as a tempering factor, mitigating an unrestrained and self-indulgent pursuit of wealth. "America was built on the Protestant Ethic and historically, the Jewish people have always been very industrious, and when you look at worldwide competition, and you look at China for instance, their drive for money gives them the ability to do virtually anything to their own people."[303] In

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[301] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies,* trans. Annette Lavers, (New York: HarperCollins, 1957).
[302] Alan Lurie, "Work as a Spiritual Gymnasium," 16 May 2012.
[303] Marc Miller in discussion with the author, 25 May 2012.

other words, without religion and spirituality (e.g. Communist China), business descends into exploitation.

Exploitation and growing inequality are great concerns for Peter Roche as well, and he likewise sees these trends as evidence of a moral crisis. While Alan Lurie denotes this as a "bad faith statement," Roche instead appeals to his language about "values." Individuals "unconsciously acting inconsistently with their values" cause institutions and societies to falter. "The first thing I want people to recognize is that they have a choice, that they can look after their selfish interests and to hell with you, or they can find a way to satisfy what they want, not at your expense," Roche opines.[304]

If the current economic woes stem from a collective moral failure, then its solutions lies not in structural reform, but in the moral transformation of humanity, beginning at the individual level. By adopting a new faith statement, Lurie suggests that our behaviors, and then the world, will change. One should substitute "greed," which characterizes wealth as an end, with "abundance," a faith statement that "recognizes the richness and diversity of creation" and sees "wealth as a tool and a gift," he claims.[305] Peter Roche echoes these sentiments. He hopes that helping individuals to align their behaviors with their core values will ultimately "escalate all the way up through human society."[306] In sum, global reform begins with the interior change of each individual.

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[304] Peter Roche in discussion with the author, 19 June 2012.

[305] Alan Lurie, "Work as a Spiritual Gymnasium," 16 May 2012.

[306] Peter Roche in discussion with the author, 19 June 2012.

This assumption that in human consciousness lies the root of all human potential is one of the most common dimensions of this social movement going back to the early days of the 1970s, when Maslow and Willis Harman declared that perception shapes reality. Judi Neal's "edgewalkers" and the Conscious Capitalism Institute reiterate this fundamental principle. It constitutes one of the central tenets that bind this social formation together, and this tells a story about its underlying imaginaries. According to this view, conscious thought, be it under the guise of core values, faith statements, or peak experiences, wholly dictate behavior to the exclusion of all else. Individuals react not their external environment but rather to their *interpretation* of that environment, a reasonable claim in and of itself, yet this principle goes further and fails to acknowledge (1) that our behavior changes that environment and (2) that the environment, in return, frames the possibilities of perception, and therefore how one might behave. In short, this view posits the individual as essentially autonomous from all social constraints. In a state of nature, she possesses total liberty, and the "myth" of social constraints (institutions, power, etc.) diminishes this freedom.

Lasting structural reform, then, proceeds only from a transformation of consciousness, a point reaffirming the affinity this movement shares with neoliberal ideologies. Alan Lurie writes in the *Huffington Post*, "as much as we can attempt to legislate good behavior in business and enforce consequences, lasting and meaningful change can only come from within the individual. And we will see greed and corruption finally disappear only when those involved begin to see their work

in a radically different way."[307] State-imposed rules, according to this perspective, merely treat symptoms, whereas curing the disease, the root cause, requires a voluntary shift in perception. This shift, for Lurie, is a spiritual turn, wherein an individual takes responsibility for her faith statements, and therefore, her behavior. In valorizing personal responsibility, Lurie translates a key virtue of economic liberalism into the rhetoric of "spirituality."

To a large extent, Lurie is using the idea of work as a "spiritual gymnasium" here, and in his broader project, to explicitly make an argument against the state regulation of business and the economy. His book, *Five Minutes on Mondays*, can be read as a veritable primer on neoliberal economic ideology. In one chapter, he acknowledges "the devastating results of an unrestricted selfish focus on short-term monetary gain," but reduces this to "bad bankers doing bad things."[308] Lurie celebrates the ebbs and flows of the global market as "a river rapid whose twists, turns, and accelerations obscure our view," and challenges individuals to embrace uncertainty and to take risks.[309] He declares that business leadership in these turbulent conditions must become a "spiritual" practice, "an inward journey, with the conscious intent of personal growth."[310] Lurie's new individual essentially reemerges as the quintessential capitalistic agent. She cultivates a sense of self that can adapt and respond to the ever-changing circumstances of the marketplace, not merely to survive, but, in keeping with the logic of the free market, to *grow*.

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[307] Ibid.

[308] Alan Lurie, *Five Minutes on Mondays*, 243.
[309] Ibid, 88.
[310] Ibid, 28.

Spiritual practices, like meditation and prayer, serve dual purposes here. While they facilitate this transformation, regular contemplative practice, as he says, leads to "reduced levels of anxiety," guarding against some of most acute effects of life under this dynamic global marketplace.

Because what counts for Lurie is cultivating the inner change, enforced redistributive policies associated with the welfare state prove wholly dysfunctional; in other words, for him, these policies miss the real point here. Alan openly identifies as an "economic conservative," which in the American political context more accurately means he champions economic liberty with free markets, which he justifies through his spiritual rhetoric. "Religion," he says, "tells us that we chose our situation… Every soul has it's own journey, and we have to be responsible. On the other hand, we need to help. So I'm more a fan of private charity than of government mandated charity."[311] Private acts of charity are voluntary, not coerced, and therefore reflect something of the individual's inner character. State-sponsored welfare initiatives, even if they are beneficial, generate resentments because they undermine this principle of voluntarism.

Yet, his appeal to religion here justifies neoliberalism in a second way. If human beings choose their situation and choose their "journey," then each individual remains solely responsible for the conditions of their life. Essentially, suffering is redescribed as a self-imposed opportunity for personal growth. No one else can be responsible for alleviating one's suffering, because ultimately, the individual voluntarily selects the life to be lived prior to birth. This represents a

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[311] Alan Lurie in discussion with the author, 23 May 2012.

powerful endorsement of the liberal economic model: if you are poor, you have only yourself to blame.

While Alan Lure explicitly supports economic liberalism, others in the movement see things differently. Peter Roche, for instance, rejects describes the increasing concentration of wealth as "unconscionable" and rejects the idea that regulation is essentially harmful. When posed a question about his feelings towards John Mackey's Conscious Capitalism, he responded:

> I would subscribe to that view (libertarianism), if, in fact, human beings were transformed and they didn't have this alter ego of greed and selfishness. But that's not the case, we're going to have to be regulated. For instance, I love to drive fast, and were it not for a penalty of speeding, I would drive 123mph. Come on! There's a lot of things I would do, that are part of my self-expression, that I won't do because of regulation. If we don't deny that side of our humanity, we will want to regulate ourselves and be regulated by others to make sure that we don't do that.[312]

On one hand, Roche's response is surprising, because in the course of conducting this ethnography, he is the only business leader who expressed to me support for state regulation. On the other hand, this statement is not a wholesale rejection of economic liberty. First, using the example of penalties for speeding, he seems to equate "regulation" with "law" and libertarianism with a form of anarchy. However, even prominent economic liberals like Milton Friedman, a hero of Mackey, readily admit that the role of the government is "to provide a means whereby we can modify the rules, to mediate differences among us on the meaning of the rules, and to enforce compliance with the rules on the part of those few who would otherwise

[312] Peter Roche in discussion with the author, 19 June 2012.

not play the game."[313] Ironically, Roche's remarks about regulation accord quite closely to Friedman's characterization of appropriate limited government. Because some individuals are greedy or selfish and refuse to "play along," governments enforce compliance.

Second, Roche only rejects libertarianism not because it is wholly incorrect, but that it is unrealistic. In fact, he acknowledges that he would "subscribe to that view" were people no longer prone to greed or selfishness. And yet, ridding individuals of these vices, however, is precisely the aim of his business activities through LRPG. Roche remains devoted to the idea that individual transformations might "escalate all the way up through human society," at which point, he seems to suggest, rules and perhaps regulations would no longer be necessary. So, his views differ from Mackey's libertarianism according to means rather than ends. Mackey believes that in a free market, inherently good people rise to positions of power and that rules obstruct this natural process. Roche, conversely, maintains that societies require regulation until a time when sufficient numbers of people are transformed. Both seek a world without regulation and both see "values" as the tool for ultimate reform.

In light of this, both perspectives conform to Bourdieu's definition of globalization as a heterogeneous political project that employs neoliberal ideologies to constitute the economy beyond the confines of nation-states.[314] The various spiritual rhetorics described in this chapter and employed by individuals like Alan

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[313] Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom: Fortieth Anniversary Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 25.
[314] Bourdieu, *Social Structures of the Economy*, 224.

Lurie, Peter Roche, and Marc Miller, rely on assumptions about individuals and society that, implicitly or explicitly, advance the marginalization of the state and the imposition of "the absolute rule of free exchange."[315] They use spirituality to depict individuals as radically autonomous subjects, wholly capable and responsible for their circumstances, who must *voluntarily* cultivate the proper interiority to overcome suffering.

The Great Recession, then, becomes an opportunity, not for structural or legal reform, but further evidence of a moral crisis at the individual level. Greed and selfishness, rather than dysfunctional political economy, represent the culprits. What is needed is a spiritual resolution rather than a political one. As Alan Lurie suggests, the state, because it relies on coercion, only hinders this progress and should simply step aside.

This rhetoric renders the state as a relic, no longer sufficient for meeting the challenges of the inevitable march of global capitalism. Kenny "the Monk" Moore described this ideology most concisely when he spoke at Intersections International on the "spirit of work:"

> Traditionally, churches were always the largest buildings in a city. The skyscrapers of today, however, belong to private companies. In the past, if you wanted power, you had to join religion. Later, in the 1800s, you became a statesman, a politician. Today, power is located in business. This is how we make a difference today.[316]

Moore's simple historical narrative suggests that power, in all things temporal and spiritual, has moved from The Church (presumably the Catholic Church of the High

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[315] Ibid, 228.
[316] Kenny Moore, speaking at "The Spirit of Work," *Intersections International*, New York, NY, 13 June 2012.

Middle Ages) through the nation, and now resides in business. Similarly, democratic deliberation has been superseded by the logic of the global marketplace. Business represents the setting for meaningful action in the twenty-first century, and it is one's participation in these institutions (i.e. work) where one experiences spiritual fulfillment. However accurate or inaccurate, Moore presents this historical move of authority away from the church to business as inevitable, rendering it immune from criticism and leaving as the only option a passive acceptance of its reality. In this way, Moore mythifies globalization and its concomitant neoliberalism as fundamental truths about the world today.

All in all, these networks of small groups, workshops, and lectures that focus on the relationship between spirituality and work represent localized moments in the production of neoliberal globalization. On one level, the movement exhibits a great deal of heterogeneity. Individuals like Alan Lurie, Marc Miller, and Peter Roche participate for a number of reasons, and they often disagree on any precise definition for terms like "spirituality," "religion," or even "work." Nonetheless, these concepts provide cohesion for the movement, serving as the anchors for a shared discourse and a common sense of community.

At a more fundamental level, however, this shared discourse relies on certain unquestioned assumptions, or what Bourdieu refers to as *doxa*. Doxa, he argues, is the experience of the "natural and social world as self-evident;"[317] it is, for him, a misrecognition of politically and historically constructed assumptions as objective

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[317] Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 164.

reality. In this case, the shared discourse facilitates a misrecognition of libertarian sentiments and a narrative of globalization as established facts. It is libertarian in so far as individuals are assumed to be autonomous agents who act out of internally generated value systems, and it presents globalization as the natural progress of a sui generis marketplace. This misrecognition obscures the possibility that objective conditions might actually shape individual subjectivities, that they are, in fact, not entirely autonomous and self-sustaining.

In addition, presenting globalization as inevitable masks the political and social interests that the phenomenon benefits as well as harms. The rhetoric of spirituality and work, consequently, serves to merely reproduce these two dimensions as doxa in these moments. Simultaneously, it offers an individual the means (meditation, cultivating compassion, etc.) to overcome anxieties stemming from a social structure that it continuously reauthorizes. Through their participation in this movement, individuals acquire the skills to function in a post-industrial social order characterized by rising insecurity and uncertainty due to the liberalization of global capital.

Chapter 7—Sacred Commerce: Neoliberal Spiritualities in a West-Coast Coffee Chain

Walking along Mission Street in the heart of San Francisco, I absorbed the eclectic cultural milieu that lay before me. A group of young white men stood in the doorway of a residence, clandestinely (or rather no so subtly) sharing a joint, as a mixture of urban professionals, homeless, and local Latino residents walked the streets. The storefronts proved equally diverse, ranging from posh eateries and cramped bodegas, to seedy massage parlors and palm readers. I was looking for *Gracias Madre*, a restaurant featuring organic foods that serves as the flagship location for a West-Coast chain of coffee shops called *Café Gratitude*. Amidst the bustle of the street, I experienced some difficulty locating the address, and was worried that I would be late for my meeting with Eva Ackerman, the general manager of Gracias Madre.

Cafe Gratitude exhibits a distinct organizational culture, which owners Matthew and Terces Engelhart call "Sacred Commerce," a unique philosophy founded on the view that business can be a "path to spiritual awakening."[318] Whereas many management scholars and business gurus are merely talking about the spiritual dimensions of work, the Engelharts are putting this into practice, shaping the entirety of their business around their exclusive brand of spirituality. They understand Sacred Commerce as a way of life and encourage their employees to enact its principles both inside and outside the workplace. For some, the impact

[318] Matthew and Terces Engelhart, *Sacred Commerce: Business as a Path to Spiritual Awakening* (2007).

can be profound, as the rhetoric of spirituality becomes the basic fabric out which they make sense of their lives. Sacred Commerce teaches that suffering is a state of mind, and with practice, one can learn to choose to experience life as abundant and fulfilling, regardless of the objective conditions. The Engelharts' most earnest desire is that, in transforming individual conscience, their spiritual program will reform humanity.

I want to suggest, however, this spiritual rhetoric belies an underlying political dimension thoroughly grounded in neoliberal ideologies. Sacred Commerce imagines free markets, unencumbered by government regulations, as the optimal path to social progress. Moreover, it characterizes entrepreneurship as the highest form of freedom and subsequently privileges the authority of business owners over that of workers. Finally, Sacred Commerce shares with neoliberalism a devotion to individual responsibility. Practices couched in the rhetoric of spirituality teach employees at Café Gratitude to perceive human suffering as a symptom of conflict internal to the individual and not the consequence of external factors. Through daily practice, participants accomplish more than new ways of thinking, they cultivate distinct norms, habits, and dispositions that enable them to negotiate the contours of their daily lives. Specifically, they engender subjectivities capable of coping with the prevailing anxieties of life in a post-industrial society governed by the norms of global capitalism.

Café Gratitude and Sacred Commerce

Matthew and Terces Engelhart founded Café Gratitude in 2004, opening their first location in the heart of San Francisco's Mission District, the area of the city where the Spanish first settled the Mission San Francisco de Asis in 1776. Although it continues as an epicenter for the Latino community, the Mission has been in the midst of rapid gentrification as increasing numbers of young, affluent, White Americans call the neighborhood "home." In the years since its founding, the company quickly spread throughout the Bay Area, with new locations opening in Santa Cruz and Berkeley. According ot Matthew and Terces, the cafes offer more than healthy, vegan food options, Café Gratitude use a unique practical philosophy called "Sacred Commerce," a set of beliefs and practices that views the workplace as "a sacred container" that teaches employees and customers to experience "prosperity and abundance" in their daily lives.[319] The workspace is a training ground that promises a better way of life, on and off the job. Fighting against what they see as an old paradigm of industrial work, which leaves employees feeling alienated from their labors, the Engelharts claim that, because of their approach to business, their staffs are "actually happy, not pretending to be."[320]

The organizational culture at Café Gratitude reinforces this spiritual perspective for their workers and their customers. The all-organic and vegan menu options are presented in the form of "affirmations" rather than more conventional titles. For example, the Berkeley store offers a black bean burger called "I am magical" or, instead of a strawberry milkshake, customers will order an "I am eternally blessed." These affirmations are meant to disrupt the daily, presumably

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[319] Matthew and Terces Engelhart, *Sacred Commerce*, 7.
[320] Ibid., 18.

negative, internal dialogues, which normally shape experience, and redirect individuals to the "great qualities in themselves."[321] In addition to these uncanny menu items, customers can play a game called *The Abounding River,* while they relax with their refreshments. The game asks players to take turns drawing cards that contain introspective activities such as holding hands with another participant and staring into their eyes, or sharing with each other what they are grateful for. Intended to "introduce people to an unfamiliar view or BEING AUNDANCE," *Abounding River* "encompasses both training people in a day to day practices as well as discovering a Spiritual foundation that opens up a whole new way of looking at money and resources," according to the product description.[322]

Like the customers, employees too engage in specific practices aimed at reinforcing positive self-reflection. At the beginning or every day, workers perform a ritual called a "clearing" before starting work. In their book, *Sacred Commerce: Business as a Path to Spiritual Awakening* (2008), the Engelharts describe the clearing as "a basic technique for distinguishing how the past is impacting the present and then presenting an opportunity to create something new and shift one's attention to something more empowering."[323] The clearing process enables employees to express their private anxieties and to be redirected towards a more positive self-image. Described in detail later in this chapter, the clearing represents the central practice of Café Gratitude's unique workplace culture.

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[321] "About Our Practice," *Café Gratitude*, accessed 6 January 2014, http://cafegratitude.com/about-our-practice/.
[322] "The Abounding River Boardgame," accessed 9 January 2014, http://www.graphicgirlz.com/cafe/boardgame.html.
[323] Matthew and Terces Engelhart, *Sacred Commerce*, 25.

In addition to these daily practices, Matthew and Terces also offer an array of intense workshops, open to employees and the general public (for a fee), which outline in greater depth their ideas about money and spirituality. Their *Sacred Commerce Workshop*, for instance, invites business owners and managers "to embark on a path to creating a more productive, fulfilling, and profitable life for all."[324] Another course, in which I was able to take part, *The Abounding River Workshop*, give attendees a chance to reform their attitudes towards wealth, to "experience themselves as being the source of unlimited supply."[325] The company also strongly encourages its employees to take part in self-development programs outside the company. Employees, for instance, receive a subsidy if they enroll in seminars held by the Landmark Forum, a self-transformational program that is the successor to Werner Erhard's EST, which was popular during the mid-1970s.

Fundamental to Sacred Commerce is the idea of shifting awareness away from one's more primitive instincts and living a more intentional, socially conscious life. Matthew says, "it's really a shift in priorities from the individual, from survival, from getting ahead, to community and resources."[326] By "putting our attention" on the right perspective, the world can be transformed. Still, even with such lofty goals, Café Gratitude is a company, a workplace where actual people, replete with their own complex biographies, aspirations, and personal struggles, come each day to labor and interact.

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[324] "Sacred Commerce Workshop," accessed 9 January 2014, https://www.facebook.com/events/540540045992796/.
[325] "Abounding River Workshop," accessed 9 January 2014, http://gracias-madre.com/2013/03/03/207/.
[326] Matthew Engelhart, in discussion with the author, 14 April 2012.

Spiritual Rhetoric at Café Gratitude

Sacred Commerce provides employees with rhetorical equipment from they formulate personal narratives that align individual and organizational identities. Because Sacred Commerce avoids any references to specific religious traditions, employees from various backgrounds are easily able to incorporate its lexicon into their own private belief systems. Yet, this conceptual ambiguity also implies that even mundane aspects of life can come to be understood as "spiritual." Activities like cooking, listening to music, or exercising acquire "spiritual" significance. Employees are inclined to redescribe their entire sense of identity in terms of Sacred Commerce, and therefore work becomes a focal point around which other areas of life revolve.

When the manager Eva Ackerman first came to Café Gratitude nearly seven years ago, she was a year from finishing a dual degree in Spanish and Latin American studies, without any expectation of pursuing a career in restaurant management. Eva initially took a part-time job with the company primarily as a means of support while she completed her education. However, she quickly became enmeshed in the culture and was quickly offered a promotion. Still, she insisted on finishing college before assuming any larger responsibilities with Café Gratitude.

Although Eva only mentions her initial hesitation to become a manager in passing, it indicates that how her own narrative might have changed while working for the company. On one hand, she says of her first experience as a customer at Café

Gratitude, "the energy and consciousness that was around in Gratitude was so line with my own personal path, that I knew I was going to work there."[327] Yet, after starting her job, she chose to wait nearly a year before moving into a full-time position. Eva had worked in a number of restaurants prior to Café Gratitude, but primarily because those jobs afforded the flexibility and the income she required as a working student. Until her time at Gratitude, she had expected to work for the non-profit sector, doing work that was "socially conscious" that improved the lives of others. Indeed, the jobs that she had been most rewarding were occasional translation duties she would perform for various "outreach initiatives," whereas her ongoing work in restaurants was strictly for instrumental purposes. What Café Gratitude offered Eva was a particular spiritual rhetoric through which she could understand restaurant management as "socially conscious" work that contributes the wider world as much as any non-profit.

Eva describes herself as "a completely different person" after seven years at Café Gratitude. While her long-term career goals have certainly changed, such radical claims of total transformation obscure important continuities. She continues to identify religiously as Jewish; she continues to work in restaurants as she had before; and she has not lost her desire for a socially conscious career. Making the claim that she is "a completely different person" anchors Eva's personal narrative to the culture of Café Gratitude. Whether or not she has changed is irrelevant (even assuming such a claim could be accurately measured). Rather, it is a way for Eva to reiterate the connection her personal narrative and the organization. Her narrative

[327] Eva Ackerman (restaurant manager) in discussion with the author, April 2012.

has become organized around the spiritual rhetoric present in Café Gratitude's culture.

When she admits that she experienced a "spiritual awakening" at the age of twenty, for example, she does this because it is a way to include Café Gratitude as a part of this ongoing spiritual journey. Similarly, spiritual rhetoric imbues her job with such profound personal significance that it aligns with her desire for socially conscious work. The changes that Eva has experienced have been predominately affective. "I know myself to be a leader now; I trust myself and am just a lot happier and better adjusted; I know how to navigate my personal and emotional landscape with a lot more ease," she states.[328] These are qualities directly tied to her responsibilities as a manager, and the spiritual rhetoric enfolds these virtues into a comprehensive narrative about her life.

Personal narratives can become completely reorganized around this spiritual rhetoric. When Lindsay Kraten, another manager, recalls an incident that occurred while vacationing in Peru directly prior to seeking a job at Café Gratitude:

> As I sat on the beach, thinking about how I don't want a job just to make money, what's more important to me is finding a place where I feel good, and comfortable. I wanted a place where I can say what I feel, and feel support for managers. When I returned to San Francisco, this is really what I started to put my attention on. Lindsay describes this realization as my first spiritual manifestation of where I saw myself in the workplace.[329]

Here, the phrasing that she uses indicates that Lindsay is interpreting this incident only in light of later experiences. Not only does she refer to this epiphany as a

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[328] Ibid.
[329] Lindsay Kraten (restaurant manager) in discussion with the author, April 2012.

"spiritual manifestation" about work, but she deliberately chooses the phrase "to put my attention on," an idiom directly associated with Sacred Commerce. The company's website states, for example, that "we train our staff to practices *putting their attention on* the outcome they with to create for themselves."[330] This is one of the central practices of Sacred Commerce: to construct a positive vision, to put one's attention on the goal, in order to manifest it in the physical world. Lindsay has internalized this rhetoric to such a degree that she not only envisages the future in this way but also her past. It places her current expectations about work (as about more than money, a place to feel good, say what she wants, and feel supported) into past, as aspirations that ultimately have been fulfilled at Café Gratitude. The company gave Lindsay the workplace that she had always been desired, even if she never knew this until she found it.

Spiritual rhetoric also eases workplace conflict. Whenever disputes arise in the workplace, employees know that they are expected to take responsibility for "getting clear" or "being complete," as Lindsay states. Gossip and backtalk, she says, are merely outward symptoms of inner turmoil that "have no substance, but there's always something rooted behind that, which we want to get at."[331] And in the rare instance that employees are unable to "be complete," a manager will step in to arbitrate the process.

All in all, spirituality functions as a conceptual repository that maintains social relations and upholds existing power structures in the workplace. At times, it

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[330] "About Our Practice", *Café Gratitude*, http://cafegratitude.com/about-our-practice/.

[331] Lindsay Kraten (restaurant manager) in discussion with the author, April 2012.

upholds power by obscuring it. For example, Café Gratitude does not require employees to attend any of the extracurricular workshops such *Sacred Commerce* or *Abounding River*. Although Eva estimates that, on average, most staff members will complete one or more of these courses during their first months, occasionally an employee will opt out of this option altogether. She admits that "the people really go through the training process (meaning the extracurricular workshops) are the ones who really get involved with the culture. The others don't usually end up moving up in the company or even sticking around."[332] Of course, this would make sense to someone like Eva who is devoted to the entire spiritual program at Café Gratitude, but it also sheds light on how an individual's willingness to accept the spiritual components of the job is directly linked to one's future prospects in the company. Informally, the employee who opts out of the broader spiritual itinerary essentially segregates themselves from coworkers, who might be more engaged. Potentially, then, failure to "get involved with the culture" could serve as a justification for disciplinary action from management, from being passed over for a promotion to being terminated.

In other ways, too, spiritual rhetoric gets deployed to preserve the interests of the business owners and to undercut the authority of employees. When one manager at Café Gratitude purchased a vacation to Hawaii before asking for the time off from work, the Engelharts "supported her in seeing that she not only diminished her experience of being supported and celebrated by her management team, but she diminished their experience of being people who would of course want her life to be

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[332] Eva Ackerman (restaurant manager) in discussion with the author, April 2012.

great and would alter their schedules to make her trip happen."[333] They treated the manager's transgression as a spiritual ailment rather than a violation of company policy. This pushes responsibility onto the manager and conceals the control they are exerting over the lives of the staff.

Similarly, this same logic excuses lower pay for workers. It is not wages that are actually insufficient, but rather the employee who has failed to understand that she is "creating being so justified in [her] feeling underpaid and overworked right now."[334] Each person bares "responsibility for your own experience." Wages are only "low," working hour only "long, and workload only "demanding" if one chooses to see them as such. Compensation levels remain intrinsically neutral, according to what the market dictates for the business to succeed.

Matthew moreover uses his spirituality to oppose fringe benefits, as they create an unwarranted relationship of dependence between employer and employee. "When [Café Gratitude] San Francisco offered benefits," he states, "people stayed, but for the wrong reasons. That's where things went bad. The business wasn't created to make wage slaves. People were supposed to move up and out into the world."[335] Matthew understands Café Gratitude as a "revolving door, as a school," equipping individuals with the tools they need to succeed for themselves and to proliferate their spiritual views throughout society. Benefits that encourage long-term tenure merely hinder this mission.

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[333] Matthew and Terces Engelhart, *Sacred Commerce*, 71.
[334] Ibid, 96.
[335] Matthew Engelhart, *Abounding River Workshop*, 13 April 2013.

All in all, the practice of Sacred Commerce, on its surface, promises employees greater self-esteem, more rewarding work, and a strong sense of community. Yet, this rhetoric of empowerment equally renders employees complicit in the means of their own subordination to the interests of the employer. Acquiring the *sense* of authority or possessing the ability to *express* frustrations is something quite different from *exercising* authority or *addressing* grievances. The latter remain exclusively within the purview of Matthew and Terces Engelhart, and spiritual rhetoric conceals this fact.

Embodying Neoliberalism

While the rhetoric of spirituality impacts the individual identity of employees and upholds the formal power structures in the organization, Sacred Commerce remains deeply bound up with the Engelhart's political orientation. Although he describes himself as "not very political," Matthew Engelharts supports what he calls "compassionate deregulation," a two-fold process that seeks to remove government oversight of the economic activity while transforming the prevailing business norms and values. "We have become so litigious and distrustful," he remarks, "and this prevents the entrepreneur from starting a business."[336] Sacred Commerce envisages a society where business, liberated from state constraints, is free to pursue activities that contribute to human progress, and where the workplace serves as the locus of spiritual authority. Managers are the "stewards of

[336] Matthew Engelhart in discussion with the author, 14 April 2012.

consciousness" that "steer the community towards the sacred."[337] Engelhart sees businesses as a new kind of church, a training ground for the interconnected world of the twenty-first century.

Sacred Commerce, therefore, shares similar aims with neoliberal ideologies that seek to empower capital and free trade at the expense of organized labor and the State. The spiritual program engenders attitudes and dispositions amendable to neoliberalism. Sacred Commerce is not only "workplace spirituality," it is also a set of practices and beliefs that reproduce the conditions of global capitalism with its participants. Through daily practices like "the clearing" and in workshops like *Abounding River*, employees continuously reformulate themselves as neoliberal subjects.

The most visible aspect of Sacred Commerce can be found in the daily practice known as "clearing." Each day before beginning work, an employee will sit with a manager or coworker and take a few moments to "get clear. The Engelharts meticulously outline this process in their book, *Sacred Commerce* (2007). "It is a basic technique" they write, "for distinguishing how the past is impacting the present and then presenting an opportunity to create something new and shift one's attention to something more empowering."[338]

The process entails four steps: first, the employee is asked to discuss her current struggles, or "wounds." Depending on how the "spirit moves" the clearer, this question differs from day to day, ranging from "what's your biggest fear?" to

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[337] Matthew and Terces Engelhart, *Sacred Commerce*, 49.
[338] Ibid, 25.

"what failure has you stopped in your life?"[339] Next, the clearer listens and repeats the employee's words verbatim, an act called "recreation." A second question, intended as "an opportunity to shift one's attention to something new," follows, such as ""what are you grateful for?" or "what is blessed about your life?" Finally, the employee responds and the clearer acknowledges "the divine qualities" in her. The clearer, according to Engelharts, resembles a "shaman, a bridge between the visible and invisible worlds," and the clearing draws out this hidden spiritual realm.[340]

Manager Eva Ackerman describes the clearing as more than a conversation. "It is an alchemical experience" in which the participant initially "puts attention on" judgmental feelings, fears, and anxieties, and shifts the focus to a mover positive view of the self.[341] The individual cultivates a perspective that all suffering originates from within, not from the external conditions of one's life. She explains that "a lot of people are dominated by their circumstances, and there's no power in that. If you can understand that it's not the circumstances, but it's who I'm being or what I tell myself about that, then I have all the freedom."[342] Healing comes not from outward measures of success, but rather through the realization that an individual has chosen fear as a response to her circumstances.

Because outward conditions are fixed, the clearing process engenders a malleable, flexible self, which can cope in an unpredictable world. The self becomes an ongoing project, the kind of neoliberal subject that Nikolas Rose refers to as "the

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339 Ibid, 29.
340 Ibid, 31.
341 Eva Ackerman in discussion with the author, April 2012.

342 Ibid.

enterprising self." "The enterprising self," he argues, "will make a venture of its life, project a future and seek to shape itself in order to become that which it wishes to be."[343] The individual must become an entrepreneur in all things and accept personal responsibility for successes or failures, as well as joy or suffering. Furthermore, the enterprising self experiences "freedom" not as a consequence of a just social order but as an internal condition: "a freedom to realize our potential and our dreams through reshaping the style in which we conduct our secular existence."[344] At the center of the clearing is this same perception of life as an opportunity for self-actualization, and the "good life" is nothing more than series of subjective adjustments to overcome harmful interpretive habits.

The clearing represents an embodied act that presumably fosters "happier, healthier, more productive employees."[345] It commits the employee to a novel set of behavioral norms that mark off the workplace as exceptional. At Café Gratitude, intimate physical contact, emotional vulnerability and psychological healing are celebrated, and the clearing reasserts these expectations with each performance. Over time, this rhetoric of the wounded self, in need of an antidote, can profoundly alter the individual's sense of self. "When getting cleared daily," the Engelharts claim that "we begin to understand that one's consciousness is the source of experience, that we are making it all up." However, I suggest that these localized practices remain inextricably bound up with the conditions of global capitalism.

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[343] Nikolas Rose, "Governing the Enterprising Self," in *The Values of Enterprise Culture: The Moral Debate*, eds. Paul Heelas and Paul Morris, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 146.
[344] Ibid, 157
[345] Matthew and Terces Engelhart, *Sacred Commerce*, 26.

The clearing reconstitutes the participant as an "entrepreneur of the self", capable of adapting to the uncertainties of the marketplace. Practitioners cultivate a kind of *neoliberal habitus* in which the prevailing norms of global capitalism are reproduced within the individual's subjectivity.

Rose's depiction of the "entrepreneurial" self clarifies how the clearing engenders a neoliberal habitus. Bourdieu characterizes the habitus as "a collective individual or a collective individuated by the fact of embodying objective structures."[346] Individual subjectivity and social structure reproduce one another, and the clearing exposes this entanglement. Global capitalism posits the autonomous, rational individual as the fundamental social agent and the marketplace as the perfectly neutral arbiter of all social relations. The clearing, likewise, imprints this same schema within the practitioner. When global market forces render life uncertain and insecure, the individual remains free to "shift attention," perceiving suffering or injustice as opportunity. Practiced daily, the clearing simulates the disposition required to navigate the contours of this social structure.

Abounding River

While the daily clearing imprints the virtues of neoliberalism on employees at Café Gratitude, the *Abounding River Workshop* redescribes the logic of global capitalism through the spiritual rhetoric of Sacred Commerce. The two-day

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[346] Pierre Bourdieu, *Social Structures of the Economy*, 211.

workshop offered to employees as well as the general public extols money as a "sacrament" and recognizes "spending" as the supreme moral act. Participants receive the *Abounding River Logbook*, a thirty-day self-guided program that they can complete after completing the course. Moreover, like the clearing, the workshop and the logbook emphasize "shifting attention" to deal with suffering, but even more explicitly associates this practices with some of the most enduring consequences of economic liberalization: income inequality, economic uncertainty, and homelessness. Through a series of vignettes and carefully executed activities, I and the other participants confronted these harsh realities and learned to shift our attention in order to see them in a different, more positive light.

Abounding River characterizes "abundance" as a state of mind, "a quality of spirit, of the divine, a flavor" of the human experience.[347] Of paramount importance in our finance-driven world is not acquisition or the accumulation of wealth, but the act of exchange itself. The global free market represents the space where humans work enact "abundance" as sacred and work together for mutual benefit. The Engelharts point to the stock market as a "vivid demonstration of this principle" that abundance is essentially founded on investor and consumer confidence.[348] Just as the value of stocks increase alongside increasing confidence, a positive disposition presumably will facilitate an abundance life.

Over the two-day workshop, the Engelharts introduce participants to the six "Spirit Currents" that manifest abundance: Creation/Responsibility, Worth,

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[347] Matthew and Terces Engelhart, *The Abounding River: A Personal Logbook* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2007), 22.
[348] Ibid, 59.

Love/Acceptance, Gratitude, Generosity, and Abundance. These are inner attitudes, to be cultivated through the activities introduced during the course, when taken as a whole, they form a moral foundation that reproduces the virtues of economic liberalism. Because individuals create their own experience, they must take responsibility for their triumphs and failures. Furthermore, they must accept their circumstances and love themselves for who they already are, as aspects of the divine. Generosity triggers authentic giving that is voluntary, unlike government attempts to redistribute wealth through coercion.

The Engelharts use these Spirit Currents to excuse some of the most acute consequences of the neoliberal state. In the workshop, they recall an incident when they brought a homeless woman named Jason to their house so that she could eat, bath, etc. After speaking with the woman, Matthew and Terces realize the rich life full of activity that Jason leads daily. "She had lost weight at last, had more time to read, and had a great community of friends who share and look out for one another," they state.[349] Her optimism surprised the Engelharts, who had assumed that the life of a homeless woman like Jason would be encompassed by misery, hardship, and interminable struggle. While helping a seemingly helpless individual, they had learned an important lesson: "Homelessness is just another way of life," Terces declared to us as we sat in the workshop. "It's not worse. It just looks different from my perspective. This woman has healthier than she'd ever been in her entire life."[350]

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[349] Ibid, 60.
[350] Terces Engelhart in discussion with the author, April 2012.

From one perspective, the Engelharts certainly "discovered" the humanity in Jason, but this story also illustrates how their spiritual program conceals social inequities as lifestyle choices. As if one freely chooses to identify as homeless in the same way another might call himself a sports fan, a hipster, or a vegan. The viewpoint erases the possibility that Jason's weight loss could be due to malnourishment or that her greater free time to read stems from a lack of sustainable and secure employment. Homelessness, poverty, and any other forms of material deprivation get reduced to individual choice.

The activities in the *Abounding River Workshop* are designed to reinforce these principles. Participants embody neoliberal virtues by performing ritualized activities that simulate global capitalism. During one activity in which I participated, the Engelharts asked participants to stand in a circle, dig into our wallets, and take out any money with which we might feel comfortable parting. For one minute, we would attempt to give away this money to one another. If we found ourselves with empty hands, we were to hold out our hands to receive money from others. After the minute expired, the Engelharts stopped us and drew our attention to how "energy" in the room had become "flat" and how difficult it was for us to look at one another.

This activity imitated the flow of money in a free market, and our bodies served as the territory for this exercise. We could literally "feel" the vitality of exchange as well as the glum of hoarding. To save is to seek security, which is ultimately motivated by fear, and, according to the Engelharts, the state represents the ultimate social expression of fear. Without explicitly saying it, the exercise was

showing us through our bodies that society works best when it maximized free exchange and minimizes fear (i.e. the State).

Once we returned to our seats, hand still grasping the crumpled bills we had received, the Engelharts asked, "how many of you are givers and have a hard time receiving?" Terces beckoned us to open our hands to see what we had received. She then glanced at one of the participants, a homeless man named Kevin, and declared "we all want to take care of each other, but we're afraid to go first." Looking back at the rest of the class, Terces inquired if we would like to offer Kevin our money. Everyone in the class assented, as Kevin and several others began to weep.

A middle-class professional and father, Kevin had been the victim of the Great Recession. Downsized and unable to find another job, he had found himself without a home and picking up temporary work where available. By offering him our money, not only were we helping him, we enacted a fundamental principle of neoliberal ideologies that all legitimate social relations are voluntary. We all began with varying amounts of resources, but we only gave what we had freely chosen. Moreover, in the context of free market exchange, even the most needy, like Kevin, will receive the help they need through charitable donations.

The Engelharts interpretation of the activity, however, obscures some significant differences and similarities between itself and the marketplace it presumably represents. First, exchange in the marketplace is transactional, whereas "gifting" more appropriately characterizes our actions. Giving is imprecisely equated with spending, and this ignores the more subtle social relations operates through the exchange of gifts. The giving of gifts sets in motion a series of social relations

quite distinct from market exchange. Whereas market transactions occur immediately and imply no further obligations for either party, giving brings forth an asymmetrical relationship between giver and receiver. As we continuously handed over money, the cycle of reciprocity requires us to respond to one another with obligation, gratitude, and even deference. "Giving is also a way of possessing," as Bourdieu suggests, and in one sense, when we handed our money to Kevin, we were taking ownership of him.[351] Our gift to him was a strategic use of our social capital, and his response was gratitude, evident in the tears he shed. Thus, on one hand, the activity identifies spending as a form of giving, which inscribes the power relations of gift exchange onto the market. However, on the other hand, the power relations inherent in our generosity towards Kevin become obscured and characterized as a natural consequence of a neutral marketplace.

In following the precepts of Sacred Commerce, the Engelharts ask employees and workshop participants to embrace the logic of global capitalism. A world ordered according to these principles persists without class distinctions, and suffering, if it ever exists, results from our individual choices to interpret our experiences as beyond our control. Homelessness and deprivation indicate personal preferences rather than systemic conditions stemming from the weakening of public forms of social maintenance. Whatever our material status, we are, each of us, already wealthy. As they claim, "the fact that we don't experience the quality of being rich has no validity because we've allowed circumstance to

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[351] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 195.

determine our experience."[352] In the cosmos of a global capitalism, social conditions constitute the collective relations of individuals acting in the marketplace, and because an unfettered market operates perfectly, injustice is an abject impossibility.

The components of Sacred Commerce analyzed in this chapter demonstrate how practitioners embody the norms of neoliberalism. We practiced voluntarism and learned to look only within ourselves to discover the sources of suffering. We become consummate individuals, whose private confidence in ourselves and collective confidence in global markets facilitates the spiritual evolution of humanity.

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[352] Matthew and Terces Engelhart, *The Abouding River: A Personal Logbook*, 70.

Conclusion

In November of 2011, I was invited to Fayetteville, Arkansas to present a short paper at the *International Faith and Spirit at Work Conference* sponsored by the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas. I would be discussing some of my earlier ethnographic research on the corporate culture at Starbucks Coffee, which I had conducted in the process of completing a Master's Thesis. The contrast between my departure from LaGuardia International Airport in Queens and my arrival at Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport could not have been more striking. I left behind a cacophony of taxis, people rushing with baggage in all directions, and the notorious swirling winds on Flushing Bay for a modest, single-terminal building surrounded by wide-open cow pastures. I was excited about my first opportunity to discuss spirituality in the workplace with individuals from fields outside the academic study of religion. In fact, the program listed no other scholars of religion as speakers. So I was especially intrigued to acquire new insights from my colleagues from beyond my "siloed" existence in the humanities.

In many ways, the conference was microcosm of the broader movement. Some of the most outspoken proponents of workplace spirituality participated in some capacity, alongside numerous entrepreneurs, religious leaders, theologians, business scholars. Involvement was truly international. A number of individuals travelled from Europe to take part, and I heard research from two individuals based in Australia. Yet, the notable guests were all prominent public advocates of workplace spirituality, some of whom have an important place in the narrative of

the preceding chapters of this dissertation. For instance, the current Director of the Tyson Center and host of the conference was Judi Neal, founder of the Association for Spirit at Work, who has been a tireless outspoken proponent of workplace spirituality since its genesis in the early 1990s. Alan Lurie was there as well to receive the first International Faith and Spirit at Work Leadership Award.

This was an amalgam of voices, big and small, coming together, I realized, not to understand workplace spirituality but to celebrate it. The conference served as a designated space to formulate a sense of collective identity around a shared discourse and a chance for its leaders to construct an authorized narrative about the movement's origins, its present state, and the direction it might take in the future. The mythopoesis commenced immediately on the first evening of the conference. David Wetton, an interfaith minister and founder of an online consulting service called *Spirit in Work*, convened the conference with an "inspiration," reading several stanzas of a poem called "Blessing for a Leader."[353] Opening and closing the proceedings of each day with an "inspiration" from a religious leader was fixture of the conference. It brought participants over a threshold into a different, exceptional space and time, diminishing the importance of the world outside and elevating the awareness of community.

After this "inspiration," Judi Neal took the stage to present awards for the year's honoree, Alan Lurie. She began with a question for the audience. "Do any of you know," she inquired, "who Willis Harman is?" A scattered number of hands (including my own) went up across the room, but the majority failed to budge and

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[353] This poem can be found in John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings*, (New York: Random House, 2008).

waited for further explanation. A photograph of Harman projected onto the presentation screen and Neal continued, describing how Harman was her mentor and a legendary figure for the movement. He had, she said, "discovered human potential" as far back as the 1950s and was one of the earliest proponents of bringing faith and spirituality into the workplace. Neal claimed that Harman's pioneering efforts were the inspiration behind the *International Faith and Spirit at Work Leadership Award* that would be extended to Alan Lurie for his achievements as a leader in the movement. By introducing Willis Harman, Neal constructed for the audience a sense of history. She had named the movement's founder, who had since passed away but now could be, in a sense, deified as the great teacher. Moreover, when Lurie received the award, he was accepting the mantle of Harman's legacy, and emphasizing the continuity between himself and the founder. As witnesses to this event, the audience likewise became a part of this history.

After invoking a mythic past, Neal offered her aspirations for the future of spirituality at work. She declared that with all of the seemingly insurmountable challenges facing the world today, the consciousness of the planet much be transformed. "Business," Neal concluded, "is the way we can transform consciousness precisely because it so powerful today." Here, she reiterates two recurring themes central to this post-industrial spirituality. First, efforts at global reform must begin and end with the transformation of individual consciousness. Second, the world of business is best situated to serve as the context for this epic transition. In this statement, Neal implicitly recognizes the dominant position of

global capital, even surpassing the ability of nation-states to mitigate human suffering.

If Neal's remark only tacitly acknowledged the power of business, another, more opaque dimension of the conference clearly exposed this nexus of workplace spirituality, neoliberalism, and global capitalism. Travelling to the conference from New York, I found it odd that the airline even offered a non-stop flight between LaGuardia and Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport. In my experience of air travel, getting to a regional airport area typically required at least a single transfer to a short commuter flight from the nearest major city. The flight attendant informed me that the airline made three round-trips daily between the Big Apple and northwest Arkansas. However, because the airport sits roughly halfway between Fayetteville, where the University is located, and Bentonville, which boasts the international headquarters for Wal-Mart. Although Wal-Mart was not profiled as an official sponsor that year, its proximity sheds light on deeper connections between workplace spirituality and multinational businesses supportive of neoliberal policies.

As historian Bethany Moreton has stated, the businesses of the American Mid-South have played an influential role in bolstering business education in the region. An unprecedented gift of fifty-million dollars from the Walton family to the University of Arkansas in 1998, for example, established the Sam Walton College of Business.[354] Moreover, In *To Serve God and Wal-Mart* (2009), Moreton argues that companies brought a commitment to "Christian free enterprise," an unwieldy

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[354] "Walton History," *University of Arkansas*, website, accessed 10 April 2014, https://waltoncollege.uark.edu/history.asp.

devotion to entrepreneurship couched in a regional evangelical populism.[355] Perhaps it is no surprise, therefore, that a grant from another Arkansas-based corporation, Tyson Foods, installed the Tyson Center for Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace in 2009.[356] Significant endowments from large multinational corporations, it seems, was underwriting the *International Conference Faith and Spirit at Work*.

Three keynote addresses at the conference were reserved for representatives of multinational corporations headquartered in the region, a fact that clarifies not only the influence of global business but also the underlying connection between workplace spirituality and neoliberal ideologies. John Tyson of Tyson Foods, former Wal-Mart executive Don Soderquist, and Bill Pollard, former CEO of the Memphis-based conglomerate Servicemaster, each expressed their support of faith at work, but their addresses reveal a deep affinity for neoliberal ideological assumptions.

On the first morning of the conference, John Tyson, chairman of Tyson Foods, spoke about his company's efforts to create a "faith-friendly" workplace through an extensive program that provides chaplains from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam for factory workers. He told the story of how workplace chaplains helped settle a dispute between management and several Muslim employees over accommodations for prayer. In one sense, the incident demonstrated how chaplains in the workplace might resolve conflict. However, because these chaplains rely on Tyson for their

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[355] Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 5.
[356] "History," *Tyson Center for Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace*, website, accessed 13 April 2014, http://tfsw.uark.edu/history.asp.

income, deep ambiguities persist between, on one hand, the interests of the employer, and, on the other, the ability of chaplains to freely consider the interests of workers. John Tyson remarked in his presentation that the chaplaincy program offers employees "a sense that they are being listened to," but this obscures the fact that these chaplains must always listen through a filter constrained by the interests of the company. Such programs, in effect, reinforce the power of employers at the expense of workers, to help them deal with workplace conflict as personal and "spiritual," obscuring potential systemic factors.

The keynote addresses of Don Soderquist and Bill Pollard echoed Mr. Tyson's support of the "faith-friendly" workplace, but they more explicitly endorse a pro-business, neoliberalism. Soderquist attributes Wal-Mart's success to its "Judeo-Christian culture" and that "Wal-Mart believes it has a responsibility to God to take care of the planet." Pollard describes Servicemaster in similar terms, as kind of moral community that "honors god and respects the dignity of each human being." They understand faith and spirituality as the source of ethical business behavior and the Great Recession as evidence of a moral deficiency in the business world. "The cause of the financial crisis," Pollard remarks, "was an era of profound irresponsibility," calling for a moral transformation among business leadership "by bringing faith and spirituality into work."

Still, Soderquist and Pollard frame their commitments to workplace spirituality against the specter of government intervention. Pollard describes government as an "ineffective" tool for addressing economic woes. "Government can't develop character," and "ethical behavior cannot depend on a set of rules," he

states. Instead, "people make markets work or fail, evil or good" and although business has a social duty, it must stem from the voluntary actions of leaders in the business community, not from government from coercion.

Likewise, when one audience member asked if Wal-Mart has helped or hindered the plight of the poor with its commitment to low-cost goods and services, especially in light of the Occupy Wall St. protests that had recently taken place across the United States. Soderquist responded forcefully:

> I have an obligation to provide the same opportunity to others, but not an obligation to provide actual wealth… Poverty is a mentality, a cycle. People can break out of this cycle, because everyone has a chance to make it. I don't know about this inequality deal, it's not right to take away and give to people who don't want to work… There's too much welfare already.

Soderquist's remarks disarmed the audience, as they exchanged looks of disbelief and whispered words of dismay at his attitude towards the poor. He had exposed something about workplace spirituality that had remained hitherto concealed. Perhaps because of Judi Neal's role as host, the conference exhibited a decidedly liberal predilection. Her eclectic notions about spirituality seemed more akin to the "New Age" or religious liberalism, movements more often associated with left-leaning social and economic policies.

Yet Soderquist's address had unearthed a way to reconcile an acute neoliberal politics with workplace spirituality. He reduced poverty to mentality, a cycle from which one can always escape, and paints government regulation as a violation of individual property and liberty. From here, ironically, one need only take a minor step to embrace a belief in suffering as simply a "state of mind" that one can correct through spiritual practice, that global transformation must begin

with a change in consciousness, and that business is best positioned to serve as the conduit for this transformation.

In the end, the cognitive dissonance aside, Soderquist envisions a world not very different from his audience at the conference. Business, unleashed from the constraints of the welfare state and equipped the proper moral compass (i.e. faith or spirituality) can lead the way to new order, in which individuals are truly free to pursue the good, where human flourishing simply occurs through the mechanisms of a free global market. After all, as Judi Neal stated, "business is a way to transform consciousness because it is so powerful today."

What these three keynote addresses demonstrate is not some inherent contradiction in the logic of workplace spirituality. Rather they express a pervasive set of cultural assumptions inextricably bound to it, and this illuminates a great deal more than how the rhetoric of spirituality operates in the American workplace of the twenty-first century. This project has sought to explore what it means to "go to work" in the twenty-first century, about our shared expectations for that one social activity, perhaps more than any other, by which Western modernity evaluates the worth, status, and power of each individual.

It is also a story of how the rhetoric of "spirituality" has become entangled into the way Americans in the twenty-first century think about work. Researchers, business executives, and employees are increasingly turning to this kind of language to make sense of their working lives. Workplace spirituality should not be understood as a coherent religious movement with its own distinctive set of doctrines, explicit authority figures, and adherents. Additionally, it does not indicate

the extension of "religion" out of the church and into the business world, or a lay-driven movement who wish to express their "faith at work." Moreover, workplace spirituality cannot be reduced to some underlying transformation of "consciousness" occurring across humankind, as business scholars like Judi Neal have asserted. Rather, I have asserted that it is all and none of these things. My analysis reveals that something more basic has changed in the way Americans think and behave towards work.

This change, of which workplace spirituality is one piece, is part of the shift from a national economy centered on heavy industry to a truly globalized one where national borders have become increasingly insignificant. This "new economy," driven by high technology, finance, and mass consumption has required new forms of work, which depend greatly on interpersonal skills and affective labor. The *experience* of work, rather than its material rewards, has become paramount concerns for employers and employees alike. Amidst these changing expectations, some Americans have turned to a rhetoric of "spirituality" to understand the role of work in their lives, in their society, and in the world.

This rhetoric is most visibly evident in those industries that have helped to shape this new economic landscape. It appears in mindfulness meditation courses at high-tech firms like Google or Apple Computer, or among finance professionals and realtors in New York City who use spiritual practices to overcome the stress of highly competitive work. And, this rhetoric can be seen in the retail world, in coffee shops like Café Gratitude, when managers and staff talk about "Sacred Commerce" and share their personal stories of spiritual growth through work.

While the history of religion in the United States has been replete with discourse about work since the earliest days of European settlement, workplace spirituality represents something quite distinct from examples. It is particularly suited to the social conditions of post-industrial American life because it implicitly lends a kind of mythic legitimacy to the neoliberal ideologies that have informed politics in recent decades. Workplace spirituality positions entrepreneurs as modern day heroes, creating value for the rest of society. Movements like Conscious Capitalism, as discussed in Chapter Five, proclaim that business, even more than government, represents the one institution best equipped to address the social, political, and, indeed, spiritual problems facing the world today. Additionally, it instills within individuals a worldview that can account for some of the most acute consequences of neoliberal policies, redescribing social inequality, career instability, and financial insecurity not as systemic social ills, but as opportunities for personal spiritual growth.

In the end, workplace spirituality embraces the "spirit" of global capitalism; it celebrates the power of business, operating under the auspices of deregulated markets, to advance human and material progress. It inculcates within its advocates a libertarian ethos that celebrates individual authenticity, personal responsibility, and afford individuals with a sense of power and significance in a world shaped less by nation-states and increasingly by the dynamics of the global marketplace.

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