

In order to understand the de-centred structure of the system of cultural value it becomes crucial, then, to analyse the specificity of the class of intellectuals: that is, of the category of cultural capital and its place in the system of production. This is the task of my next chapter.

## *Class and Cultural Capital*

Capitalism is one of the names modernity goes by. It consisted in the retraction of the infinite into an instance that had already been designated by Descartes (and perhaps by Augustine, the first modern): the will. . . . Capitalism posits the infinite as that which is not yet determined, as that which the will must indefinitely master and appropriate. The infinite bears the names of cosmos, energy, and research and development. . . . The decisive factor in what is called the postindustrial (Touraine, Bell) is that the infinity of the will invests language itself. The major development of the last twenty years, expressed in the most vapid terms of political economy and historical periodization, has been the transformation of language into a productive commodity: phrases considered as messages to encode, decode, transmit, and order (by the bundle), to reproduce, conserve, and keep available (memories), to combine and conclude (calculations), and to oppose (games, conflicts, cybernetics); and the establishment of a unit of measure that is also a price unit, in other words, information. The effects of the penetration of capitalism into language are just beginning to be felt. Beneath the surface of market expansion and a new industrial strategy, the coming century will be characterized by the investment of the desire for the infinite in language transactions, following the criterion of maximum performativity.<sup>1</sup>

The work of intellectuals is the implementation of modernity.

<sup>1</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, 'Rules and Paradoxes and Svelte Appendix', trans. Brian Massumi, *Cultural Critique*, 5 (Winter 1986-7), 215, 217.

By 'intellectuals' I do not mean the 'traditional' or 'high' intelligentsia: the small élite of men and women of letters who act as public spokespersons for the 'noble' disciplines of knowledge (philosophy, the arts, the social sciences, the higher natural sciences). Rather, following Gramsci,<sup>2</sup> I mean all of those whose work is socially defined as being based upon the possession and exercise of knowledge, whether that knowledge be prestigious or routine, technical or speculative. (This definition will be made more precise in the course of this chapter.) Unless this broader and socially relational categorization is adopted, it seems to me that any account of the stratum or class of intellectuals can only be a moralizing exercise in self-hatred and self-idealization.<sup>3</sup>

The work of intellectuals comprises a set of historically defined tasks, which I summarize, in Foucault's terms, as a mode of 'governmental' regulation that makes all domains of life, including both the 'public' domain of work and the realm of the 'private' whose borders it defines and patrols, visible to the scrutiny and the calculations of power. ('Power' here includes but is not restricted to the State.) Its instrument and medium is a culture of enlightened discourse which mobilizes a historically specific apparatus of power and knowledge around the claim to truth. And it is grounded in a set of economic conditions which make possible the constitution of

<sup>2</sup> Gramsci's understanding of intellectuals is built around the interplay between the universality of intellectual activity and the historical specialization of intellectual functions, which are bound up, either directly or indirectly, with the establishment of class hegemony. Intellectual work is thus not defined by its intrinsic characteristics but by its place within a complex ensemble of social relations. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), esp. 5-13.

<sup>3</sup> Subtle and cogent as much of it is, Zygmunt Bauman's argument in *Legislators and Interpreters* and elsewhere is ultimately flawed by its attribution to intellectuals (meaning 'traditional' intellectuals) of the autonomy and effective social power that they have claimed for themselves. Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-modernity and Intellectuals* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987). In this respect it repeats the various right-wing versions of the critique, which dissociate the 'New Class' from the real embeddedness of knowledge in capitalist production. Cf. the essays by Daniel Bell, Jean Kirkpatrick, Norman Podhoretz, and others in B. Bruce-Briggs (ed.), *The New Class* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1979).

the intelligentsia as a class, or a class fraction (I leave this alternative open for the time being). These conditions are, in brief, the structural possibility of converting knowledge into cultural capital.

To speak of cultural capital is to invoke the history of the integration of knowledge into commodity production—the establishment of knowledge as a central productive force. Lyotard speaks of the 'banality' of the thesis that commodified knowledge 'has become the principal force of production over the last few decades';<sup>4</sup> but it is perhaps only when we understand the dimensions of this development that we can understand, on the one hand, the internal contradictions of enlightened rationality, and on the other the social interests that are invested in the sphere of disinterested reason, and thus the particular range of class interests that define the intelligentsia.

Let me briefly outline some of the available information about the capitalist transformation of knowledge into a productive resource, relying in particular on Fritz Machlup's *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States*<sup>5</sup> and on the nine-volume report, *The Information Economy*, compiled by Marc Uri Porat.<sup>6</sup> Machlup's is the broader definition of knowledge; his use of the category has provoked considerable criticism,<sup>7</sup> but the value of his analysis

<sup>4</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, *Theory and History of Literature*, Vol. 10 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Fritz Machlup, *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962); this volume is expanded and supplemented by the three published volumes of *Knowledge: Its Creation, Distribution and Economic Significance*: Fritz Machlup, *Knowledge and Knowledge Production* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); Fritz Machlup, *The Branches of Learning* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982); Fritz Machlup, *The Economics of Information and Human Capital* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). The series is completed by Michael Rogers Rubin and Mary Taylor Huber, *The Knowledge Industry in the United States, 1960-1980* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> Marc Uri Porat, *The Information Economy*, Special Publication 77-12, 9 vols. (Washington, DC: Office of Telecommunications, 1977).

<sup>7</sup> Porat uses a more orthodox form of accounting (the National Income Account system devised by the US Department of Commerce) and works with 'value added' rather than 'final demand' figures; this means that items which don't

is precisely that by refusing to restrict the concept of knowledge to its traditional qualitative definition (referring, in Daniel Bell's words, only to 'research . . . higher education, and the production of knowledge . . . as an intellectual property, which involves valid new knowledge and its dissemination'),<sup>8</sup> he is able to get at the full extent of what might be counted and costed as knowledge in a modern economy—and can thereby get at real qualitative shifts in the structure of capital and the structure of social class.

Machlup's major categories are education, research and development, media of communication, information machines, and information services. I summarize his categories and his findings as follows:

The category of education includes education in the home, in the Church, and in the armed services, on-the-job training, and elementary, secondary, and tertiary education. The tables referring to this category show a rise in enrolments in elementary and secondary schools in the years 1890–1960 from 78.1% to 95.6% of the school-age group (all figures refer to the United States), and of per capita expenditure (in constant dollars) from \$2.54 to \$103.38. Enrolments in higher education (1870–1960) rose from 1.7% to 33.5% of the 18–21 age group, and per capita expenditure from \$0.60 to \$34.59.<sup>9</sup>

Research and development expenditure is roughly estimated at \$80 million in 1920, \$130 million in 1930, \$377 million in 1940, \$2,870 million in 1950, and \$14,000 million in 1960. This represents a growth in the 20 years to 1960 of 3,714%. Expenditure relative to GNP is 0.09% in 1920, 0.14% in 1930, 0.37% in 1940, 1.01% in 1950, and 2.78% in 1960. Government has played a central role in this growth. (pp. 155–6)

show up in the national accounts (such as the 'earnings forgone' by mothers educating their pre-school children, or by students) cannot be entered into the calculation of the economic costs of knowledge.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Postindustrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 213.

<sup>9</sup> Machlup, *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the US*, 71–9; further references to this volume will be incorporated in the text.

The category of media of communication includes printed matter, photography and phonography, stage and cinema, broadcasting, advertising and public relations, telephone, telegraph, and postal services, and conventions (pp. 207–94). These media show complex variations in growth according to their closeness to financial and industrial functions.

The category of information machines includes instruments, office information machines, and computers, with the beginnings of a massive growth in computer sales in the late 1950s just registering in Machlup's tables. (pp. 295–322)

The final category, information services, includes professional knowledge services (legal, engineering, architectural, accounting, medical); information and financial services (cheque-deposit banking, security and commodity brokers, insurance, and real estate); the intelligence service of wholesale traders; miscellaneous industries (business consultancies, etc.); knowledge transmission services (mailing, duplicating, etc.) and two-way transmission (credit bureaux, employment exchanges, auctioneers); and government as a knowledge industry (the state bureaucracy). (pp. 323–53)

The value of output for different knowledge industries in 1958 was:

education:	\$60,194 million
research and development	\$10,990 million
media of communication	\$38,369 million
information machines	\$ 8,922 million
information services	\$17,961 million

The total value of output was \$136,436 million, paid for 27.8% by government, 30.9% by business, and 41.3% by consumers. Total knowledge production in 1958 was almost 29% of adjusted GNP (pp. 354–62), rising to 31.0% in 1963, 33.3% in 1967, 33.9% in 1972, 34.7% in 1977, and 36.5% in 1980.<sup>10</sup> (Porat's figures are even higher—he classifies 46.2% of GNP as information activity, and 53% of all income as earned by information workers.)<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Rubin and Huber, *The Knowledge Industry in the US*.

<sup>11</sup> Marc Uri Porat, *The Information Economy*, Vol. 1: *Definition and Measurement*, p. 7, Table 1.1, 'The Structure of the Information Economy (1967)'.

Of particular significance are the shifts in the workforce measured in Machlup's Table X-2, 'Labour Force: Percentage Distribution over Broad Occupation Categories, 1900-1959' (p. 382):

Category	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1959
White Collar	17.6	21.3	24.9	29.4	31.1	36.6	42.1
Manual/Service	44.9	47.7	48.1	49.4	51.5	51.6	48.0
Farm	37.5	30.9	27.0	21.2	17.4	11.8	9.9

The table is continued by Rubin and Huber as follows:

Category	1958	1963	1967	1972	1977	1980
White Collar	43.0	45.6	46.0	47.8	49.9	52.2
Manual/Service	48.2	47.9	49.2	48.4	47.1	45.0
Farm	8.8	6.5	4.8	3.8	3.0	2.8 <sup>12</sup>

After a more detailed analysis of these figures into occupations producing or not producing knowledge, Machlup summarizes the trends read from the statistical series as follows: '(1) The knowledge-producing occupations have grown over the last sixty years much faster than occupations requiring manual labour. (2) The share of knowledge-producing occupations in the total labour force tripled between 1900 and 1959. (3) The share of these occupations in total employment has increased even more. (4) While in the first part of this century growth was fastest in clerical occupations, the lead was then taken by managerial and executive occupations, and more recently by professional and technical personnel. (5) The share of knowledge-producing occupations in total income has increased during the last decade. (6) The share of professional and technical personnel in total income has increased during the last two decades.' In general: 'The changing employment pattern

<sup>12</sup> Rubin and Huber, *The Knowledge Industry in the US*, 195.

indicates a continuing movement from manual to mental, and from less to more highly trained labour.' (pp. 396-7)

These conclusions are very general and do little more than provide a statistical basis for a widely accepted understanding of changes in the workforce of the advanced capitalist economies.<sup>13</sup> What they don't conceptualize is the reasons for the increased productivity of the 'knowledge-producing occupations': that is, they offer no theory of the historical change in the composition of capital, and indeed of how it might be possible to understand knowledge as a *form* of capital. The starting point for such a theory might be an understanding that knowledge is a moment of both capital and labour, and can be translated into each of these categories (as indeed they are constantly translated into each other); the productivity of knowledge could thus be thought on the one hand as an increase in the proportion of constant to variable capital, on the other as a 'rising proportion of embodied to direct labour'.<sup>14</sup> Such a theorization would require a disruption of the Marxist opposition, fundamental to the labour theory of value and founded in an anthropology that privileges the immediacy of human work over its mediate

<sup>13</sup> Fukio Kodama, for example, has spoken of a 'paradigm change' in the corporation, from being 'a place for production' to being 'a place for thinking', and compiles figures to show that in the sixty-eight major Japanese manufacturing companies, 'R & D investment surpassed traditional capital investment, on average, from 1987'. Fukio Kodama, 'How Investment Decisions Are Made in Japanese Industry', in D. Evered and S. Harnett (eds.), *The Evaluation of Scientific Research* (London: J. Wiley, 1987), 201.

<sup>14</sup> Adam Westoby, 'Mental Work, Education, and the Division of Labour', in Ron Eyerman, Lennart G. Svensson, and Thomas Söderqvist (eds.), *Intellectuals, Universities, and the State in Western Modern Societies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 130; Westoby adds that there are 'two general trends that increase the ratio of educated labour: first, its increasing share as an input, both as research and development and through the increasing relative weight of the control functions of organization and administration; and second, preceding these, the increasing proportion of labour which is employed (largely by the state) in maintaining and reproducing the labourers, the population, and the social organism (e.g., health and social services, education, and civil and social administration). Together, these trends mean that the production of both labour and other goods is becoming more and more intensive of educated labour. If, then, we speak of the rise of a knowledge class, it must be understood that its origins lie as much in production as in distribution or in control over it' (p. 131).

\* transformations, between 'living' and 'dead', direct and indirect, immediate and stored labour: knowledge is stored labour which is productive. And it would have to move beyond the *sociological* level of an analysis of patterns of change in occupational proportions, since 'the underlying transformation consists not simply of a shift in the proportion of people who have specialized knowledge but also of the new centrality of the structures of socially objectified knowledge'.<sup>15</sup>

Machlup's conclusions, and even more the methodological framework from which they are derived, do, however, seem to me to prepare the way for a class-based account of the work of intellectuals which would be broadly Gramscian in its refusal to separate valued from disvalued knowledges.<sup>16</sup> In so doing they make it possible to broach the following questions:

- How is the vocational complicity of intellectuals with modernity established?
- How, if at all, does knowledge constitute the basis for a class formation?<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Adam Westoby, 'Mental Work, Education, and the Division of Labour', 147.

<sup>16</sup> I differ from Gramsci, however, in that I attempt to relate the possession of specialized knowledges to membership of a distinct class formation rather than to already existing, economically defined classes. On this point cf. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labour, and the Origins of Personal Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 130. Armstrong and Tennenhouse propose breaking the opposition between intellectual and 'productive' labour, not by defining intellectuals as a 'new' social class but by seeing the bourgeoisie itself (at least in England) as a class whose power was primarily based in the control of information.

<sup>17</sup> Note that this is not an attempt to ground a social class in a fundamental economic category. As I indicated above, the Marxist understanding of knowledge either as constant capital or—its dialectical equivalent—as stored or 'dead' labour (neither of which can create new value, and neither of which can therefore function as a productive force) is quite useless. Several interesting passages in the *Grundrisse* on machinery (the section on the concept of fixed capital at the end of Notebook VI and the beginning of Notebook VII, written in February and March of 1858) do, however, suggest the possibility that indirect labour might be capable of producing value, and that the labour theory of value, and hence the domination of capital over production, might be dissolved under technologically advanced conditions of production. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 691–700.

- What role do cultural practices play in forming the common interests of this class, and how can we define the intelligentsia's class interests and institutional investments in the domain of culture?

These questions then in turn open out in two directions: in the one, on to the central questions of this book concerning the organization of cultural value, and particularly the relations between the categories of high and low culture; and in the other on to the *political* question of the claim of intellectuals to the right to speak on behalf of others, or on behalf of a universal reason: which is, at the last but also always from the beginning, the question of the position of interest from which I formulate these questions.

Yet there is reason to doubt whether the analysis of social class is any longer a feasible or even an interesting project (and indeed, it has been precisely a preoccupation with the knowledge classes, with the 'embarrassment' of the new middle class,<sup>18</sup> that has helped to undermine much of the simple explanatory power of class theory).<sup>19</sup> The theoretical analysis of social class has become deeply unfashionable, and for good and persuasive reasons. Briefly, they are these: that class analysis reduces political and cultural struggles and determinations, and the specific institutions through which they work, to the singular underlying logic of the economy and of places generated in economic production; that it describes social groups as essences, unified subjects with a pre-given structure of interests to which real behaviour and awareness may or may not correspond; that even when it recognizes the social effectivity of gender, race, ethnicity,

<sup>18</sup> Erik Olin Wright speaks of recent class analysis's 'pre-eminent preoccupation' with the "embarrassment of the middle classes" in *Classes* (London: Verso, 1985), 13.

<sup>19</sup> The problems in the conceptualization of class structure arise principally, although not exclusively, from the appearance of people variously termed salaried employees, white-collar workers, nonmanual workers, *ouvriers intellectuels*, service workers, technicians, "the new middle classes": Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 62.

regionality, age, and religion, it is constitutionally incapable of treating them as other than supplementary determinations which are to be integrated into the master code of class; and that even at its most sophisticated, it tends to be a taxonomy rather than an account of processes and interrelations.

In nevertheless pursuing here a class-based analysis of the vocation and the social capacities of intellectuals, and in exploring some of the theoretical preconditions of such an analysis, I am driven by the strong sense that in throwing out reductionist conceptions of class—and they have virtually all been reductionist—we have lost an indispensable analytic tool. We can understand neither the most delicate and subtle nor the most crude and basic movements of social power; and not only can we no longer explain crucial aspects of the role of cultural capital in production and in the exercise of political and ideological power, but we open up areas of necessary blindness towards the interests that limit, but also constitute, the power of theoretical work. Class theory is an instrument for pulling together the strands of social being, thinking it in terms of relationality (which is not the same as totality) rather than the pure dispersal of social action over a multiplicity of disconnected sites. It is never a singular instrument, since social position is always a complex knot of determinations: the choice of focus on class rather than gender or race or ethnicity will be one determined by narrative usefulness rather than by a hierarchy of theoretical models; but without it social and cultural theory is trivialized.

My expectation is that a more adequate theory of class might be able to situate the group of 'cultural' intellectuals<sup>20</sup> within a broader social formation made up of all those who work in the knowledge industries (all those whose income depends on possession of cultural capital); and might make it possible to identify a range of *interests* that would in some sense constrain and direct the actions and the social relations of this class or class fraction.

<sup>20</sup> By 'cultural intellectuals' I mean most of those in Machlup's categories one and three, education and media of communication, and who count as performing 'mental labour'.

Let me begin, then, by arguing that the various post-Marxist critiques of the category of class have been flawed by equating the concept of class with precisely the economic and reductionist model they reject. They have been trapped in a specular relationship to Marxist orthodoxy, repeating the structure of its category of class and simply reversing the value and the explanatory force attributed to it.

The authors of a recent survey have this to say about movements in the post-Marxist theorization of class:

A curious but largely unnoticed feature of recent class analysis has been a convergence in viewpoint between mainstream empirical sociological researchers and the 'post-Marxist' discourse approaches concerning the rejection of orthodox structural Marxist accounts of the relation between class position and consciousness. Central to this convergence are a series of arguments concerning the importance of 'non-class' identities or subject-positions in theorizing contemporary political behaviour.<sup>21</sup>

This is to say that a series of determinations of social agency are conceived as external to the category of class in so far as they cannot be explained as the effects of a necessity given in the logic of economic production; but this in turn means that the category of class is being *reserved* for the realm of that necessity.

Thus—in a passage that I quoted in the previous chapter—Chantal Mouffe sets up as follows the reasons for the virtual irrelevance of the concept of class within the move that she and Ernesto Laclau make to disarticulate discursive domains from each other: use of the concept, she says, opens up one of two options:

We can use the concept of class to designate positions at the level of the relations of production, but in that case we cannot deduce from it anything necessary concerning politics or ideology. Or, we can reserve the term to designate collectivities in struggle at the political level and whose objectives include the transformation of the relations of production. But in this case we cannot know anything

<sup>21</sup> Janeen Baxter, Michael Emmison, John Western, *Class Analysis and Contemporary Australia* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1991), 11.

necessary concerning the position of those agents in the process of production.<sup>22</sup>

As a consequence, she concludes, 'the concept of hegemony is more fundamental than class, since the role that the class positionality plays in the constitution of political subjects depends on the type of hegemony existing in society at a given moment'.<sup>23</sup>

This is a hegemony defined neither in terms of a hegemonic class nor of the interests yielded by such a class's relation to the relations of production; and the aporia to which this thesis inevitably leads is that, if there are no necessary effects of an agent's place in production, or if there are no determinate connections between the distinct domains of discursive positioning, including the economic, then it becomes impossible to construct a coherently relational account of social interests. As Tony Bennett argues, if we except Laclau and Mouffe's appeal to 'left-' and 'right-wing' positionalities, since these are purely contextual terms and have no self-evidence, then there is 'no logical reason why, from Laclau and Mouffe's perspective, the struggle of workers versus capitalists should be politically privileged above, or regarded as more left-wing than, the anti-statist arguments of small businessmen—arguments which often claim precisely the radical democratic political lineage upon which Laclau and Mouffe seek to found a new political imaginary'.<sup>24</sup>

The move made by Laclau and Mouffe to disarticulate the domains of the social, and indeed to refuse any totalized notion of the social system, is similar to that made within a more generalized post-Marxist discourse. Paul Hirst's significantly entitled essay 'Economic Classes and Politics', for example, sets up a conceptual opposition between 'classes of economic agents' and 'political institutions, practices and ideologies', in order then to refuse any causal linkage between them in so far as classes 'are not directly present' and are not

<sup>22</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, 'Recasting Marxism', 107–8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 108.

<sup>24</sup> Tony Bennett, *Outside Literature* (London: Routledge, 1990), 266.

visible as social actors in day-to-day political struggles.<sup>25</sup> Political interests are formed specifically by and within the political apparatus, rather than being transposed to it from some other domain. Thus not only is there no necessary correspondence between political institutions and 'economic classes', there is a *necessary non-correspondence* between them.<sup>26</sup>

The central argument here, as also in Barry Hindess's *Politics and Class Analysis*,<sup>27</sup> is that, given the specificity of political forces (political parties, trade unions, pressure groups, and so on) and the impossibility of deriving them directly from or reducing them logically to social classes, which in any case are complex in themselves and complicated by their relation to other structures such as gender and race, there is therefore *no* connection to be found between 'economic class' and the forces operating in the political arena, and certainly classes themselves are not such forces. All this depends, however, on understanding classes as 'economic', and on a refusal to conceive social forces in terms of a multiple and dispersed causality (since either there is a fully determinant 'last instance' or, apparently, there is pure indeterminacy). Cutting the tie between class and politics, both Hirst and Hindess continue to assume a motivation for political action—but it is unclear how motives or interests are generated if they are purely internal to the political domain. At the same time, the complex dynamic of social relations of production is relegated to a self-contained sphere of 'the economic' where these relations contaminate nothing else, have effects on no other spheres of life.

But the basic premiss is as false here as it was in Second International Marxism: as Connell bluntly says, there are no such things as 'economic classes'.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Paul Hirst, 'Economic Classes and Politics', in Alan Hunt (ed.), *Class and Class Structure* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977), 125.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 130.

<sup>27</sup> Barry Hindess, *Politics and Class Analysis* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> R. W. Connell, *Which Way is Up? Essays on Class, Sex and Culture* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 229.

The consequence of throwing out the category of class together with the logic of economism has not been to institute a new and more adequate model of analysis, but to abandon the field to the wilderness of stratification theory, for which, in Don Aitkin's terms, class 'is a concept of merely nominal value: it is simply the term used to subsume the manifold differences in occupation, income, prestige, residence, life-style and education that characterize a complex urban industrial society'.<sup>29</sup> The implication of such a model is that these dimensions are quite disconnected from each other: that they are aggregated rather than structured, or that they form a continuous, indeterminate, and potentially infinite scale without structural polarizations, and therefore without any way of explaining consolidations of discrepant interests.<sup>30</sup> The very act of *listing* the 'factors' that make up social positionalities (age + gender + race + sexual orientation + . . . ) assumes, as Judith Butler puts it, 'their discrete, sequential coexistence along a horizontal axis that does not describe their convergences within a social field'.<sup>31</sup>

I am not of course advocating a return to more traditional Marxist models, or to some combination of Marxist and Weberian schemata which would allow the integration of economic with non-economic determinations. All such approaches continue to be organized around the opposition of two logical planes: a deep structure carrying the necessary logic of the economic, and a surface structure where contingent variations on this necessity are played out. As I have suggested, even a move to abandon the level of deep structure continues to depend upon this binary logic as long

<sup>29</sup> Don Aitkin, *Stability and Change in Australian Politics*, 2nd edn. (Canberra: ANU Press, 1982), 130; cited in Baxter *et al.*, *Class Analysis and Contemporary Australia*, 307.

<sup>30</sup> For a fuller account of the inadequacies of stratificationist theory, cf. Karel Kosik, *Die Dialektik des Konkreten: Eine Studie zur Problematik des Menschen und der Welt*, trans. Marianne Hoffmann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), 111-13; Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 72-80; Connell, *Which Way is Up?*, 85-97; Wright, *Classes*, 34-7.

<sup>31</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 13.

as the category of class is understood to be the province of strictly economic determinations.

In building an alternative account I shall draw, with some diffidence, on a central concept in the work of Nicos Poulantzas; and with somewhat more confidence on the work of Adam Przeworski. Let me concede immediately that Poulantzas's work on class is severely flawed by his retention of the category of 'determination in the last instance by the economic', which in practice invalidates the formative roles he assigns to political and cultural struggle; what I draw from his theoretical model, however, is the argument that class is defined not on the terrain of the economic but on each of the levels of economic, political, and ideological structure. Class is the complex effect of these three structural levels, which are the loci at once of determination and of struggle.

The following passage gives one of the central formulations of the argument:

It must be emphasized that ideological and political relations . . . are themselves part of the structural determination of class: there is no question of objective place being the result only of economic place within the relations of production, while political and ideological elements belong simply to class positions. We are not faced, as an old error would have it, on the one hand with an economic 'structure' that alone defines class places, and on the other hand with a class struggle extending to the political and ideological domain. This error today often takes the form of a distinction between '(economic) class situation' on the one hand, and politico-ideological class position on the other. From the start structural class determination involves economic, political and ideological class struggle, and these struggles are all expressed in the form of class positions in the conjuncture.<sup>32</sup>

In order to develop what I take to be potentially fruitful in Poulantzas's work, let me supplement it with a further argument of Adam Przeworski's. Rather than seeing economic relations as having the status of objective conditions and all other relations as 'subjective' or contingent,

<sup>32</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 1975), 16.

Przeworski elaborates a model of class 'in which economic, political, and ideological conditions jointly structure the realm of struggles that have as their effect the organization, disorganization, or reorganization of classes. Classes must thus be viewed as effects of struggles structured by objective conditions that are simultaneously economic, political, and ideological'—and that have indeterminate outcomes.<sup>33</sup> Classes are thus not the direct effects of structure but the outcome, never given in advance, of struggles which take place at all three structural levels.

This seems to me to introduce the measure of indeterminacy that post-Marxist theorists like Laclau seek, without surrendering the structuring moment of objective conditions. Thus, as Przeworski argues, whereas the traditional formulation of class struggles 'either reduces them to an epiphenomenon or enjoins them with freedom from objective determination', this model posits that 'classes are not given uniquely by any objective positions because they constitute effects of struggles, and these struggles are not determined uniquely by the relations of production'.<sup>34</sup> They 'are not a datum prior to the history of concrete struggles';<sup>35</sup> and ideological and political struggles constitute a process, not of class-representation (that is, representation of pre-given interests) but of class-formation (including the formation of class interests).

This takes me to the core of my argument. Let me articulate it in terms of a number of theses:

1. Class is not an economic structure with effects on other dimensions; class structure is defined in each of the economic, the political, and the ideological spheres.

2. There is no necessary congruence or homology between these spheres: it is precisely *because* of this that we can take

<sup>33</sup> Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, 47 (this passage was initially published in 'Proletariat into a Class: The Process of Class Formation from Karl Kautsky's *The Class Struggle to Recent Controversies*', *Politics and Society*, 7: 4 (1977), 343).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 66–7.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 69.

political action or rational arguments (and indeed irrational arguments) seriously, as not being reducible to economic position and to an 'interest' defined elsewhere.

3. Class position is thus not necessarily unified or non-contradictory.

4. Each of the three structural spheres is an arena of struggle and of class-formation—not of fixed class positions. Class interests exist not as 'underlying' or objective relations or outcomes but as hypotheses, more or less rationally calculated (or miscalculated). There is no objective criterion of interest given by history or by a non-class or supra-class knowledge: every assessment of interest is itself interested.

5. Since each sphere is a domain of struggle, each is therefore organized as a bundle of economic, political, and ideological relations which constitute its material conditions of existence.

In what follows I try to spell out some of the implications of this final thesis, which produces a considerably more complex map of the structural conditions of class formation.

In diagrammatic form, the more complex map of the conditions of class formation that I propose would look something like this:

	sphere of production	political sphere	ideological sphere
economic class relations	ownership of the means of production (economic capital); the technical division of labour	distribution of political capital within government, political institutions, and the family	possession of symbolic capital (formal or informal qualifications, recognition of social legitimacy)
political class relations	relations of struggle and control in and over the work process ('organization assets') on the basis of legal relations securing property rights	relations of fealty and/or solidarity within kinship and affinity groups, and capacities for struggle with other groups	antagonistically structured status relations ('distinction') and symbolizations of group adherence
ideological class relations	distinction between manual and mental labour ('skill assets'); relations of gender, race, ethnicity	political belief systems, codes of obligation and loyalty, shared narratives of struggle	semiotic constructions of the subject form; the sense of self-identity and identifications of the social Other

Several explanatory codas need to be added to clarify this diagram:

a. This map does not describe or predict what classes there are. It specifies the range of areas in which class struggle, and therefore the experience of belonging to a class, take place. It does not specify the weight to be given to these areas, since this weighting is always a matter of particular historical circumstance.

b. Actual experiences and assignments of class would be the result of a more complex version of the map in which each area would be subject to historically and geographically specific binarizations (of the form +/- possession of economic capital, for example, or +/- membership of a dominant religious group). Any operationalization of the schema would similarly have to convert it into a complex and locally sensitive scoring system with a binary structure—with the degree of complexity or delicacy determined by the requirements of the analysis.

c. Rather than positing a relation between economic *production* and political and ideological *reproduction*, the model suggests that processes of reproduction of social relations, as well as failures and contestations of reproduction, are aspects of each sphere. Similarly, despite the heuristic distinction, all social relations are made up of elements that are *simultaneously* economic, political, and ideological.

d. Relations *between* the three spheres, and between sets of relations of struggle within each sphere, are relatively contingent; there is no necessary coherence or overlap between positionings in each sphere, and the *experience* of class may be discrepant in each.

e. The inclusion of gender, race, and ethnicity as an 'ideological' moment within the domain of production is not intended to indicate that these categories are somehow illusory, but on the contrary to indicate the way in which ideological values attributed to gender, race, and ethnicity work to structure relations of production.

f. Thus the category of gender, for example, must be taken as an overdetermining aspect of every area of class relations. Within the production process it operates to organize the division of labour by determining what counts and what doesn't count as a skill, and then to assign valued skills to men and devalued skills to women.<sup>36</sup> It organizes separate status hierarchies for men and women, it allocates gender-differential positions within kinship systems, and it supports the richly consequential distinction between the private and the public domains. In the same way, class is always, and to a greater or lesser extent, at once overdetermined by and overdeterminant of ethnicity. The particular articulation of class and ethnicity is always nationally and regionally specific, but seems in many cases to have greater force in relation to the working class than to the more nationally unified middle and upper classes. Ethnic rivalry is one of the most common forms taken by class struggle and class hatred (both between classes and within a class). In the United States, to be of Polish or Italian, Irish or Jewish, Puerto Rican or African-American descent is to have alternative modes of access to and integration in class, at the same time as ethnic identity is always rigorously positioned *within* a racially structured class hierarchy, the crucial fact about which is that it is the class of former slaves, not the (white) working class, which occupies the bottom rung.<sup>37</sup> In Australia, working-class identity is fatefully intertwined with Irishness and Roman Catholicism, even where these are purely virtual inheritances.

g. Like race and ethnicity under some historical circumstances, gender is in all societies so crucial a determinant of class relations that it must be asked whether it is theoretically adequate simply to integrate it as a sub-system of class. My

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle, *Gender at Work* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 19.

<sup>37</sup> On the interconnections of class, race, and ethnic identity in the United States, cf. Richard D'Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1990); David D. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991).

tentative preference is to use two different modes of description, according to the task at hand. The first speaks of a class-gender system as a way of talking about specific local relations where the two are methodologically inseparable. The second speaks of gender as a separate system that is inevitably enmeshed in the class system; the latter strategy will be used wherever class relations are not the primary focus of the analysis, or where it becomes important to decentre the concept of class in order to stress that it should not work as a totalizing category.<sup>38</sup> The centrality of class to various forms of social explanation is no more than an explanatory convenience; the category will in its turn show up as a *sub-system* in accounts that are concerned primarily with the system of gender or of race or of age. Social interpretation deals with multiple centres (or with no centre) and can only ever account for a heuristic confluence of factors for a particular explanatory purpose.

b. To take this a little further: what is it that makes this a *class* map rather than simply a map of general social determinations? Shouldn't the concept of class be tied above all to the social relations of production, and isn't this perhaps a reason for reintroducing a notion of the primacy of or the structural overdetermination of other spheres by the economic? My answer is that any such notion inevitably leads to the negation of the specificity of political and cultural processes. What makes this a class map is the decision to read it that way: that is, the decision to read it in terms of a possible or actual linkage, however indirect or discontinuous, between the three spheres, giving rise to historical consolidations of interests. Other social maps (those of gender or ethnicity, for example) will privilege other kinds of linkage, though they may contain many of the same features.

<sup>38</sup> One of the most lucid discussions of the distinction between the systems of class and gender remains Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex', in Rayner R. Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1975); cf. also Annette Kuhn and AnnMarie Wolpe, 'Introduction', *Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 8.

i. This is perhaps the point at which to indicate how I think it is possible to use the category of class in a non-systemic way. Clearly the full map of class determinants is both impossibly cumbersome and complex, and impossibly totalizing in its scope. It can however in practice always be replaced by a shorthand citation of the analytical features relevant to a particular situation or a particular argument, and these would be hybrid in form (class/gender, class/race, class/kinship). Rather than being a catalogue or a proliferating taxonomy, the use of the map would be pragmatic in its orientation and responsive both to the complex hybridity and fluidity of all actual social positions and to the *limits* of class explanation. There is no internal necessity for it to function as a totalizing concept.

j. The force of Poulantzas's characterization of the distinction between manual and mental labour as *ideological* is that it allows him to specify the domain of production as constituted by processes of political and cultural struggle. The distinction, he writes, is 'directly bound up with the monopolization of knowledge' and correspondingly with 'the permanent exclusion on the subordinated side of those who are deemed not to "know how"'.<sup>39</sup> The distinction works irrespective of whether the 'direct producers' possess a knowledge or a competence which they are not in a position to use, or do not possess it because it has been kept from them, or indeed of whether there is nothing that needs to be known. It is a relational—which is to say a politically constructed—distinction, since the fact is that 'every kind of work includes "mental activity", but . . . not every kind of work is located on the mental labour side in the politico-ideological division between mental and manual labour'.<sup>40</sup> And it is based in a schooling system the primary function of which 'is not to "qualify" manual and mental labour in different ways, but far more to disqualify manual labour', and which works through 'the inculcation of a series of rituals,

<sup>39</sup> Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, 237.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 254.

secrets and symbolisms which are to a considerable extent those of "general culture", and whose main purpose is to distinguish [mental labour] from manual labour'.<sup>41</sup> This dimension, then, will constitute a key criterion in the definition of the class of intellectuals.

k. Finally, the model makes it possible to dispense with the notion of objectively pre-given class interests, and to avoid the aporia of what happens when a class turns out not to be *interested* in its supposedly real interests: the classic dilemma of revolutionary Marxism. If class formation is based on struggle in three dimensions, then interests are constituted by and within (and—crucially—*between*) the economic, the political, and the symbolic institutions of this formation. It is a question of the discursive representation of interests, of calculation and hypothesis. There is no class essence and there are no unified class actors, founded in the objectivity of a social interest; there are, however, processes of class formation, without absolute origin or telos, with definite discursive conditions, and played out through particular institutional forms and balances of power, through calculations and miscalculations, through desires, and fears, and fantasies.

Most dispute in recent class theory has had to do with the relations *between* the areas mapped by this sketch of the conditions of class formation, and with the positional inconsistencies and discontinuities they produce. Theories of class structure have thus had to devise means either of resolving or of accepting the ambiguity of certain key class positions. Central amongst these has been that class (the stratum of 'intellectuals' in the broadest sense of the word) whose existence is grounded in the possession and exercise of knowledge. In returning to the question of the common interests of this group, let me briefly mention four influential and roughly coincidental accounts: that given by Gouldner

<sup>41</sup> Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, 268.

(amongst others)<sup>42</sup> of a so-called New Class of intellectuals and the technical intelligentsia; the Ehrenreichs' concept of a professional-managerial class; the account by Offe, Goldthorpe, Urry, and others of a service class; and Wright's various descriptions of the class of semi-autonomous employees, occupying a contradictory class location.

Methodologically, all four can be read as a response to the major dilemma of recent Marxist class theory: the question of how to take seriously the existence of substantial middle-class groupings in advanced capitalism without either reducing them to one of the 'fundamental' classes (as in the 'new working class' theory of Gorz and Mallet)<sup>43</sup> or characterizing them as a 'residual' class within a two-class framework (Poulantzas's account of the 'new petty-bourgeoisie').<sup>44</sup> There is disagreement, however, on the extent to which these groupings comprise a distinct and more or less homogeneous class.

Alvin Gouldner has the longest historical view of the emergence of such a class, locating its origins in the Enlightenment processes of secularization and modernization, in the culture of rationality and personal autonomy that emerges from the localized, ascriptive, interdependent culture of feudalism, and, above all, in the institution of public education (and, one might add, in the formation of markets in which educational qualifications are exchangeable values).<sup>45</sup> Its importance as a force in developed capitalism is due,

<sup>42</sup> Gouldner draws upon the work of Djilas and of Szelenyi and Konrad on the formation of a 'new class' of intellectuals and functionaries in the former communist bloc; Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Praeger, 1957); Gyorgy Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, trans. Andrew Arato and Richard C. Allen (Brighton: Harvester, 1978).

<sup>43</sup> André Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, trans. Michael Sonenscher (Boston: South End Press, 1982); Serge Mallet, *La Nouvelle classe ouvrière* (Paris: Seuil, 1963).

<sup>44</sup> Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*.

<sup>45</sup> Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class: A Frame of Reference, Theses, Conjectures, Arguments, and an Historical Perspective on the Role of Intellectuals and Intelligentsia in the International Class Contest of the Modern Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 1; further citations are given in the text.

however, to a number of structural changes. Wright identifies these as follows: 'the progressive loss of control over the labour process on the part of the direct producers; the elaboration of complex authority hierarchies within capitalist enterprises and bureaucracies; and the differentiation of various functions originally embodied in the entrepreneurial capitalist'.<sup>46</sup>

The developing autonomy of managerial functions is bound up with two great movements that stretch across most of the twentieth century: the increasingly specialized role of managers in the conception and design of labour processes, and the tendential separation of financial and legal *ownership* from the effective *possession* and control of large (public or private) corporations.<sup>47</sup> In its relation to the work process, then, this professional-managerial class has developed its powers by successfully laying claim to sole possession of expertise in crucial areas and at the expense of the skills and knowledges possessed both by workers and by the owners of enterprises.

But the claim to a monopoly of knowledges extends beyond the process of material production. In the terms used by the Ehrenreichs, the social function of this class is in the broadest sense the reproduction of the class structure of capitalism (and indeed, Gouldner would add, of state capitalism). The concept of reproduction, however, works in several rather different senses: minimally, it means both the ongoing reorganization of the productive process through scientific and managerial innovation, and the reproduction of social relations through the schooling system and the culture industries. In both cases it involves a use of knowledge, but of rather different kinds.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Erik Olin Wright, *Class, Crisis and the State* (London: Verso, 1979), 64.

<sup>47</sup> The thesis of an increasing separation of ownership and control was articulated as early as 1941 in James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution: What is Happening in the World?* (New York: John Day, 1941). For a critique of the argument, cf. Maurice Zeitlin, 'Corporate Ownership and Control: The Large Corporation and the Capitalist Class', in Anthony Giddens and David Held (eds.), *Classes, Power, and Conflict: Classical and Contemporary Debates* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 196-223.

<sup>48</sup> Barbara and John Ehrenreich, 'The Professional-Managerial Class', in Pat Walker (ed.), *Between Labor and Capital* (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 12.

It is this difference that provokes—quite fundamentally for all four groups of theorists—the question of the coherence of a class which is by definition larger than its managerial or technocratic wing. What might subtend its unity as a whole? Gouldner gives two complementary answers to this question. The first is situated at the infrastructural level: the unity of the New Class derives from its possession of cultural capital, a term that, far from being merely a metaphor, designates a real stock which, like a stock of money capital, generates privately appropriated income.<sup>49</sup> The second is cultural: the New Class is bonded as a class by its formation as a speech community characterized by ‘an orientation to a qualitatively special culture of speech: to the culture of careful and critical discourse’ (p. 27). By this Gouldner means something like a discursive ethos: such a culture relies on justification by argument rather than by an appeal to authority or precedent; like Bernstein’s elaborated code, it values explicitness and universality of reference; above all, it is inherently self-reflexive and self-problematizing (pp. 27–9). As enlightened reason it thus underlies both technical or instrumental reason and critical or symbolic reason—and is thus at some level common both to ‘intellectuals’ and to the ‘technical intelligentsia’.

<sup>49</sup> I have no strong position on the question of whether or not the term ‘cultural capital’—like the term ‘human capital’, with which it is historically connected—is a metaphor, since I am not convinced that the question is well posed. The Swedish sociologist Adam Westoby puts forward the following arguments that it should be treated as a metaphor: ‘Knowledge, as intangible and universal, can only give rise to stretched and imperfect property rights. It cannot assume a full commodity form, and its circulation and expansion cannot rest fundamentally on exchange. New theoretical knowledge, for example, supplants and modifies the existing stock directly, not through devaluing it. And as far as the structures of motivation facing the individual “capital” are concerned, any similarities are superficial: to the essentially quantitative, unbounded expansion of money capital corresponds the qualitative and finite life, education, and career of the individual.’ Westoby, ‘Mental Work, Education, and the Division of Labour’, 148–9. This presupposes, however, that there exists a literal or fundamental form of capital (money, for example); I disagree. Capital is a purely relational concept, the most abstract and disembodied of all economic concepts. It is a historically specific social *relation*, involving commodity production, private ownership of the means of production, and the objectification of labour power; and in all these respects it seems to me that it can take the form of socialized knowledge as well as it can that of, for example, money capital.

For reasons that I shall try to explain later, the key arguments for the unity of a knowledge class tend to be made in terms of its culture of work, rather than in terms of the similarity of the work performed. Let me isolate three dimensions of this ‘cultural’ explanation of class cohesion.

The first has to do with a set of common institutions and processes of socialization. As the Ehrenreichs argue, the professional-managerial class is knit together by a culture which includes distinctive patterns of family life, a shared ideology of social rationalization, and specific institutions of socialization (those of tertiary education). The university and the professional body, and the claim to specialized knowledge which they embody, are what enables the professional-managerial class to control its own reproduction. This is perhaps the most insightful aspect of their discussion: the recognition of the importance for this class of the reproduction of positions which, rather than being inherited, are acquired only within the class-*productive* apparatus of education. Hence the importance of control of this sphere.<sup>50</sup>

The second dimension concerns more specifically the culture and organization of work. In its relation to the ruling class the knowledge class is caught uneasily between its real subordination in the service of capital and its ethos of independence. This ethos has a grounding in the relatively high degree of autonomy characterizing its work practices, and in the organization of its mode of work by the structure of the profession. Professionalism is defined by three kinds of claim: to the possession of a specialized body of knowledge; to the upholding of ethical standards; and to the need for autonomy from outside scrutiny and control. These claims are

<sup>50</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein writes that the new middle class is differentiated from the working class by its possession of ‘human capital’, which is acquired ‘in the educational systems, whose primary and self-proclaimed function is to train people to become members of the new middle classes, that is, to be the professionals, the technicians, the administrators of the private and public enterprises which are the functional economic building-pieces of our system’; thus ‘a key locus of political struggle is the rules of the educational game’. ‘The Bourgeois(ie) as Concept and Reality’, *New Left Review*, 167 (1988), 105.

of course a matter of political struggle, but they also tacitly lay a further claim, to ethical and social enlightenment.

The third dimension of class cohesion is elaborated around the notion of a 'service' class and the particular form of rationality associated with service work. For Claus Offe, service activities are structured by the need to respect both the particularity of the needs of clients and the establishment of a *generalized* state of regularity; the need to achieve a balance between the 'specificity of the case' and the 'generality of the norm'.<sup>51</sup> Service labour is thus caught between the contractual and highly controlled rationality of 'industrial economy', and a more open-ended rationality of mediation and conciliation (p. 107). This emphasis on the structure of employment or the 'code of service' is extended by John Goldthorpe in terms of the ethical structure (the relationship of 'trust') which differentiates service work from the strictly controlled exchanges of the labour contract.<sup>52</sup>

It is around these three dimensions that the claim is made for a commonality of culture that would make it possible, and make it taxonomically illuminating, to group together such disparate occupational groupings as cultural workers, engineers, scientists, managers, and so on. In fact, no one of these four accounts is entirely successful in mapping contemporary class relations in such a way as to produce a coherent and integrated model of the knowledge class and its social interests. But two things need to be said about this. The first is that each of these accounts, though partial and limited, has generated strong insights into the conditions of possibility and the defining characteristics of such a class. The second is that the demand itself—for coherence and integration—may

<sup>51</sup> Claus Offe, *Disorganized Capitalism: Contemporary Transformations of Work and Politics*, ed. John Keane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 106.

<sup>52</sup> John Goldthorpe, 'On the Service Class, Its Formation and Future', in Anthony Giddens and Gavin Mackenzie (eds.), *Social Class and the Division of Labour: Essays in Honour of Ilya Neustadt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 162–85. Goldthorpe's essay draws extensively on Karl Renner's pioneering essay on the *Dienstklasse*, *Wandlungen der modernen Gesellschaft: Zwei Abhandlungen über die Probleme der Nachkriegszeit* (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1953).

be wrongly formulated in supposing the objective existence of class structures. Rather than asking 'what classes are there?', or 'who is in this class?', we should perhaps be concerned with class as a theoretical construct with discursive effects. Thus the value of positing the claim to possession of knowledge as a key criterion for defining the knowledge class may be a strategic rather than a descriptive value: it works to set up a relation between cultural intellectuals and a broader social grouping which has some shared social interests, (a fiction that may or may not prove fruitful.)

John Goldthorpe has challenged the usefulness of seeking to define the knowledge class, or service class, 'in terms of their distinctive possession of "cultural capital" or of their "command over theoretical knowledge"',<sup>53</sup> since data on credential levels indicate considerable cross-national variation. But the point here must be that what is at issue is the claim to knowledge rather than its actual possession, and that credentials are only one of the ways in which this claim can be pursued. This is the reason why I signalled the importance of Poulantzas's situation of the distinction between manual and mental labour as an *ideological* dimension of the production process. His argument makes it possible to take a good deal further an exploration of some of the crucial determinants of the organization of work and of the social relations bound up with it.

The historical conditions for the growth of a class based in the performance of knowledge functions are, very broadly, these:

First, the protracted development of a public sector in which a range of ethico-disciplinary functions—those of education, of public health, and a variety of welfare services—are removed from the family or the kinship network and assumed as State responsibilities.<sup>54</sup> The

<sup>53</sup> Goldthorpe, 'On the Service Class', 174.

<sup>54</sup> The distinction between the public and the private sectors is not in itself the crucial one, since the distribution of services between these sectors varies considerably from country to country, and many 'public' functions may be handled by 'private' agencies; the determinant factor is the autonomization of

constitution of 'the population' as an object of knowledge and of deliberate policy measures is the formative moment in the establishment of this sector.<sup>55</sup>

Second, the transformation and diversification of the managerial functions involved in controlling the work process: on the one hand the development of the techniques and ideologies of 'scientific management', which radically separate the functions of labour and of knowledge; on the other the increased importance to mass industrial production of the co-ordinating functions of contractual regulation, accountancy and financial services, computing, 'human resource' management, and so on.

Third, the growth in complexity of the planning function, including research and development, market research, and advertising. As Abercrombie and Urry point out, it is the reduction in contemporary capitalism of the turnover time of fixed capital that forces the expansion of technological innovation and of the controlled generation of desires, and thus makes these functions central to capitalist production.<sup>56</sup>

Each of these clusters of historical transformations is closely bound up with, and has powerful consequences upon, the tendential separation of 'manual' from 'mental' labour. Their effect, however, is not to produce a dichotomous class structure (workers and capitalists) but to generate new occupational groups with alternative grounds for formation as a class. These grounds include—to summarize briefly—the definition of members as 'mental' workers with specialist expertise; the possession of cultural capital in the form of

these functions: their socialization, and their ultimate regulation by the state. Cf. however the argument made by Harold Perkin in *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) that 'the struggle between the public and private sector professions is the master conflict of professional society' (p. 10)—by which he means contemporary advanced-capitalist societies, which are dominated in all aspects by the 'professional class'.

<sup>55</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality, with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

<sup>56</sup> Nicholas Abercrombie and John Urry, *Capital, Labour and the Middle Classes* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 97.

credentials; the claim to autonomous work conditions; and the enforcement of this claim, as well as the organization of a loose class cohesion, through professional associations or similar forms of peer recognition.

The development of new class relations, however, transforms the existing ones, and in this case transforms, above all, social understandings of what *counts* as knowledge. The ideology of rationalized, 'scientific' management was decisive in this respect in that it defined 'manual' workers as lacking in relevant knowledge. More precisely, by analysing production into its discrete stages and components, and then retraining workers in the mechanical performance of these disconnected and incoherent fragments of a total operation, it acted to strip them of their craft knowledge and to reinvest it in the 'specialist' manager.<sup>57</sup> (The process of appropriation of craft knowledges is taken to its extreme in robotization.) The result of this reorganization of work is not exactly a de-skilling, but rather, as Littek and Heisig argue, the establishment of a hierarchical division between knowledge and skill.<sup>58</sup> Crucially, both knowledge and skill are strongly gendered concepts: definitions of what counts as skilled work tend to exclude work performed by women (both paid and unpaid),<sup>59</sup> and within the domain of 'mental' labour there is a clear hierarchical distinction between routine and non-routine work, again to the disadvantage of women; lower-level clerical, teaching, and white-collar service work are now preponderantly female sectors.

The grounds on which the 'new middle class' of knowledge-workers is formed constitute at the same time the foundations for its social interests and for its 'causal

<sup>57</sup> The classic source is still Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

<sup>58</sup> Wolfgang Littek and Ulrich Heisig, 'Work Organization under Technological Change: Sources of Differentiation and the Reproduction of Social Inequality in Processes of Change', in Stewart R. Clegg (ed.), *Organization Theory and Class Analysis: New Approaches and New Issues* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 303.

<sup>59</sup> Game and Pringle, *Gender at Work*, 18.

powers'.<sup>60</sup> As these increase, so the powers of the working class, dispossessed of its traditional knowledges, decline. The relation is not, however, one of a simple inverse proportion: the working class is not reduced to being a passive instrument (nor should we idealize a mythical past in which it had full control over the production process); nor is knowledge 'owned' by the professional-managerial middle class. Certainly knowledge, especially economically productive knowledge, can be privately appropriated, and the whole apparatus of intellectual property law exists to sustain this possibility; but ownership is vested in that class which owns the rest of the means of production, not in knowledge workers. Alternatively, knowledge which is in the public domain circulates within the *institutions* of science, the professions and education, rather than being the property of its individual users.<sup>61</sup> The power of the knowledge class is the power of legitimate access to and use of this domain of knowledge, and the power to define what this domain is; but it should not be forgotten that there are other and more decisive powers.<sup>62</sup>

The origins of the knowledge class lie in an expansion and a transformation of the roles of the traditional intelligentsia. One wing derives from the intelligentsia of letters: from the

<sup>60</sup> Scott Lash and John Urry define the latter as being: 'to restructure capitalist societies so as to maximize the divorce between conception and execution and to ensure the elaboration of highly differentiated and specific structures within which knowledge and science can be developed and sustained. These powers thus involve the deskilling of productive labourers; the maximizing of the educational requirements of places within the social division of labour and the minimizing of non-educational/non-achievement criteria for recruitment to such places; and the enhancement of the resources and income devoted to education and science (whether this is privately or publicly funded).' Lash and Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 177-8; this passage is a slight reworking of a passage in Abercrombie and Urry, *Capital, Labour and the Middle Classes*, 132.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Lash and Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism*, 194.

<sup>62</sup> 'The means of mental production—laboratories, universities, television stations—are rarely owned by their workers, and indeed in most of these sectors we have recently seen an increasing assertion of external control, by other capitals and powers than those of pure ideas.' Michael Rustin, 'The Politics of Post-Fordism: Or, the Trouble with "New Times"', *New Left Review*, 175 (May/June 1989), 66.

priest, the teacher, and the journalist, who share between them the tasks of the cure of souls, the propagation of enlightenment, and the inculcation of ruling-class ideology. The other wing derives from the technical intelligentsia, especially the 'old' professions and the somewhat younger profession of engineering, which have as their function the application of useful knowledge. But speaking of origins says nothing of present structures. What, finally, allows us to imagine that this class possesses some integrating principle of unity?

To pose the question in this way is to assume that intellectual workers are held together as a class by a common bond—whether it be that of a common social function, or of a shared experience of class socialization, of a common experience and expectation of work, or of the jointly undertaken risk of investment in cultural rather than monetary capital. The most likely hypothesis, however—since otherwise there would not be so serious a problem of definition—is that it does constitute a more or less coherent class in some respects but not in others; the new middle class (the knowledge class) is an entity that doesn't respond well (for good structural reasons, I think) to the question: is this a fully formed class?<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf gives a lucid orthodox definition of the distinction between class and stratum. Classes, he says, are "major interest groupings emerging from specific structural circumstances, which intervene as such in social conflicts and play a part in changes of social structure". Whereas a "stratum" is merely an analytical category, identifying persons of a similar situation in the social hierarchy, who share some situational identities such as "income, prestige, style of living, etc." Ralf Dahrendorf, *Soziale Klassen und Klassenkonflikt* (Stuttgart, 1957), pp. ix, 139; quoted in Alec Nove, 'Is There a Ruling Class in the USSR?', in Anthony Giddens and David Held (eds.), *Classes, Power and Conflict* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 602. Paradoxically, many Marxist theorists resort to stratification theory in order to solve the conceptual untidiness of the middle classes. Thus Alex Callinicos argues that the new middle class is not a 'proper' class with a 'distinct and coherent set of interests deriving [from] their position in the relations of production'; it is no more than 'a collection of heterogeneous social layers who have in common an ambiguous and intermediate position with respect to the fundamental contradiction between capital and wage-labour'. Alex Callinicos, 'The "New Middle Class" and Socialist Politics', *International Socialism*, 2: 20 (1983), 103-4. Since I have no commitment to the model of a fundamental and unmediated contradiction, however, the distinction between class and stratum loses much of its importance.

There is, nevertheless, a valid and difficult question to be asked about the composition of the knowledge class. This is not quite the question: 'Who is in this class?' (a question that corresponds to a naïvely realist epistemology), but is rather a question about the consequences of theoretical choices made in describing the make-up of the class, and of the logic according to which these choices should be made. For example: should upper-level managers be said to belong to the knowledge class? The answer will depend not just on how this class itself is conceived but on our conception of the interlocking structure of relations *between* classes, on the particular criteria of class membership that we apply, and on how individuals identify themselves.<sup>64</sup> Wright notes at one point that the consequence of Poulantzas's narrow definition of the working class in terms of productive material labour is that the working class of the United States would constitute less than 20% of the economically active population, and the petty bourgeoisie would constitute some 70%.<sup>65</sup> Burris's schematization (Figure 3) of the different maps of class relations produced by the models of Poulantzas, C. Wright Mills, the Ehrenreichs, Carchedi, and Wright illustrates even more graphically the consequences of theoretical choices (although Burris of course implicitly privileges his own mapping of the class structure in doing so).<sup>66</sup>

There are choices to be made, then, but no objective criteria given in the statistical data or in the self-consciousness of individuals against which to measure their correctness. The

<sup>64</sup> That is, on whether they perceive some sort of commonality of interests and culture with others whom we assign to the class; but note that this perception of salience need not take the form of an articulate sociological definition; and it may involve a *denial* of a particular or indeed of any class status.

<sup>65</sup> Wright, *Class, Crisis and the State*, 55. To say this is not necessarily to make a criticism, as Wright seems to believe.

<sup>66</sup> Note that Burris seems to me to be wrong in assuming that Guglielmo Carchedi assigns managers and supervisors to the new middle class, since Carchedi explicitly differentiates them. On p. 96 of *On the Economic Identification of Social Classes* (London: Routledge, 1977), for example, he writes that 'the top manager has real, economic ownership and thus has economic power. He must delegate a part of his work of control and surveillance to lower managerial strata and to the new middle class.'

Detailed Class Fractions	Poulantzas's Classes	Mills's Classes	Ehrenreichs' Classes	Carchedi's Classes	Wright's Classes
Managers and Supervisors	New Petty Bourgeoisie	New Middle Class	Professional-Managerial Class	New Middle Class	Managers and Supervisors
Professional and Technical Workers			Proletariat		Proletariat
Routine Mental Workers		Proletariat		Proletariat	
Unproductive Manual Workers	Proletariat	Proletariat	Proletariat	Proletariat	Proletariat
Productive Manual Workers					

FIG. 3. *Alternative models of class divisions among salaried workers*

Source: Val Burris, 'Class Structure and Political Ideology', *The Insurgent Sociologist*, 14: 2 (Summer 1987), p. 33, fig.1.

criteria, that is to say, can only be those of productiveness and of plausibility—not of descriptive accuracy.

The least problematic structural question concerns, I think, the distinction between the knowledge class and the traditional petty bourgeoisie. The latter own their means of livelihood, may be small employers, and historically have possessed a distinctively illiberal ideology,<sup>67</sup> the overlap with self-employed professionals is therefore not as significant as would be indicated by purely economic criteria.

The division between the knowledge class and the working class is less well-defined, in part because the working class itself is now not so coherent a formation as it was (or as it seems in retrospect to have been) in Fordist capitalism. There is agreement among most theorists that 'routine' white-collar workers—clerical workers, lower public servants, nurses, technicians—are closer to the working class (for example, to skilled tradespeople) than to the credentialled middle classes,

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Frank Bechhofer and Brian Elliott, 'Petty Property: The Survival of a Moral Economy', in Frank Bechhofer and Brian Elliott (eds.), *The Petite Bourgeoisie: Comparative Studies of the Uneasy Stratum* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1981), 182-3.

but the uncertainties of self-definition and particularly the force of class *aspiration* make this boundary ambivalent.<sup>68</sup>

The same is true at the top end of the knowledge class, where upper-level managers, often holding stock in the companies they control or, in the case of public-sector executives, sharing a common managerial culture, merge into the dominant class; similarly, upper-level professionals (for example in the medical and legal professions) pass more or less easily into the *haute bourgeoisie*. The class boundary is thus not an occupational boundary, since it is formed in part by differences that have to do with generation and with class *trajectory* (a notion which is central to understanding the class situation and the calculations of interest of the credentialled middle classes).<sup>69</sup>

The group that remains—professionals, lower- and middle-level managers and administrators, and salaried or self-employed intellectuals, including cultural intellectuals, scientists, and higher-level technicians—is structured ‘internally’ by multiple splits and antagonisms which I take to be definitive of the class, and which can be grouped in a number of different ways: as a tension between managers and profes-

<sup>68</sup> In *Capital, Labour and the Middle Classes*, for example, Nicholas Abercrombie and John Urry differentiate sharply between two groups within what is usually called the ‘middle class’: de-skilled white-collar workers (lower-grade office and sales employees), on the one hand, and on the other an ‘upper’ middle class of managers, administrators, and ‘established’ professionals. This differentiation has a historical dimension: ‘With the rationalization of the labour process, the fragmentation and standardization of tasks, and the increasing bureaucratization of administration, the mental labour content of white-collar jobs passes further up the hierarchy. The process of rationalization has undermined the traditional sociological distinction between manual and non-manual work; clerks are manual workers.’ Abercrombie and Urry, *Capital, Labour and the Middle Classes*, 118.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 110–12; Erik Olin Wright, ‘Rethinking, Once Again, the Concept of Class Structure’, in Erik Olin Wright *et al.*, *The Debate on Classes* (London: Verso, 1989), 324–34. Alex Callinicos points out that, in contrast to the expectation of sharply rising income for upper white-collar workers, the career trajectory of manual and routine clerical workers is much flatter, rising only in relation to overtime worked and normally declining in later years. Callinicos, ‘The “New Middle Class” and Socialist Politics’, 103.

sionals; between ‘cultural’ and ‘technical’ intellectuals; or between public- and private-sector employees. I call these tensions definitive because it seems to me that the crucial attribute of this class is that it is *weakly formed as a class*. This weakness has to do above all with the fact that the key mechanisms of its formation as a class are those that relate to its claim to knowledge, rather than those that relate to the ownership of the means of production and to direct exploitation.

The formation of the knowledge class characteristically takes place around the professional claim to, and the professional mystique of, autonomy of judgement; this forms the basis both for the struggle over the organization of work and for individual self-respect (that is, for a particular mode of subjectivity) grounded in this relation to work. It underlies the differentiation of middle-class from working-class forms of work: one based in ‘knowledge’ and structured around loyalty, ‘social exchange’, and responsibility, the other based in ‘skill’ and structured around ‘low trust, economic exchange and direct control’.<sup>70</sup> At the same time the claim to autonomy underlies the complementary strategies used in the struggle to achieve appropriate working conditions: a professional strategy of arguing that access to specialized mental labour can and should be achieved only by way of institutionally controlled credentials; and a strategy of protecting managerial prerogatives from direct interference by owners.<sup>71</sup> The historical shaping of the knowledge class accordingly took place around a process of legal and industrial struggle over the conditions for autonomy of work practices.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Littek and Heisig, ‘Work Organization Under Technological Change’, 300.

<sup>71</sup> Wright, ‘Rethinking, Once Again, the Concept of Class Structure’, 339, n. 91.

<sup>72</sup> A number of writers cite the engineering profession in the United States early in the twentieth century as exemplary in its pursuit of an integration of industrial careers with educational credentials—for example, D. Noble, *America by Design* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). Lash and Urry write of this process: ‘One occupation after another sought to strengthen its market-power by connecting together the production of knowledge with the production of the

The knowledge class acquires legitimacy through the acquisition of credentials, and at the same time achieves a measure of class closure by integrating the community of those with appropriate credentials and excluding those without; it structures its Other in terms of its own claim to knowledge.<sup>73</sup> This closure is then reinforced through the 'cultural' mechanisms of taste and 'lifestyle'.<sup>74</sup> One of the reasons for its relative lack of cohesion as a class, however, is precisely that, as the disciplines of knowledge become institutionalized, it is these particular territories of knowledge, and the disciplinary mysteries appropriate to each,<sup>75</sup> rather than knowledge in general, that come to be invested with value. The potential for fractional division that this particularization brings with it is exacerbated by other structural rifts, in particular that between the public sector and the service professions, on the one hand,

producers via the modern university. There was a structural linkage effected between two sets of elements, specific bodies of theoretical knowledge, on the one hand, and markets for skilled services, or labour, on the other. By contrast with, say, nineteenth-century Britain, higher education became the means for bringing about professionalization and for the substantial transformation of the restructuring of social inequality.' (*The End of Organized Capitalism*, 173).

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Randall Collins, *The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification* (New York: Academic Press, 1979).

<sup>74</sup> 'Lifestyle' is one of the most obvious defining characteristics of the new middle class; I have paid no attention to the category here because I think its very obviousness can be misleading. Many descriptions of the class—Featherstone's, or Urry's, or Harvey's, for example—use the visibility of lifestyle as the occasion for a moralizing account of the class. Folk-taxonomic terms like 'yuppy' and 'trendy', although they are of considerable interest as indications of popular perceptions of a self-contained class, tend to work the same way. Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991), 45–6; John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990), 92–3; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 347–8; Paul Lyons, 'Yuppie: A Contemporary American Keyword', *Socialist Review*, 19: 1 (1989), 111–22.

<sup>75</sup> H. Jamous and B. Peloille distinguish between technical competence over an explicit and testable body of knowledge ('technicality'), and a charismatic mode of ascribed knowledge which forms any profession's 'mystery' and which, since it is never codified, cannot be appropriated by outsiders ('indetermination'); the acquisition of credentials for a profession involves in part the acquisition of the 'margin of indetermination' proper to it, which is not transmitted by explicit procedures of training and evaluation. H. Jamous and B. Peloille, 'Changes in the French University-Hospital System', in J. A. Jackson (ed.), *Professions and Professionalization*, Sociological Studies, 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 112, 115.

whose relation to the exploitation of the working class is tangential, and on the other private-sector managers and administrators, who participate directly in exploitation, albeit from the ambivalent position of salaried supervisors.<sup>76</sup> (At the same time, the possibility of critical intellectual work—work that cuts against class attachments—is given, in the *first* instance, not as a matter of ethical decision but in the double fracture that separates the knowledge class from the dominant class and then divides it internally along a number of different fault lines.)

One of Erik Olin Wright's major self-criticisms, however, is that possession of skill assets (knowledge) does not *in itself* constitute an exploitative relation to those without them.<sup>77</sup> If we accept this argument, then it is clear that the knowledge class cannot be defined directly on the axis of exploitation. It is structured by the indirectness of its insertion in the relations of production; by the salience for the way it defines itself of an ideology of autonomous work practice; and by its weak classificatory structure—the fuzziness of its boundaries with other classes.<sup>78</sup> It is a class which is necessarily-not-for-itself, and a class which is coherent only in its lack of structural cohesion. Concomitantly, its interests in the political sphere, reflecting this internal dividedness, are structured by its ambivalently tutelary and antagonistic relation to the working class, its identification with both public and private sectors, and its ethos of professional autonomy and service. Above all, it is formed politically by its close relation to bureaucracy (in both sectors) and to 'flexible' forms of bureaucratic rationality—and thereby to the forms of governmentality most characteristic of advanced capitalism.

'Cultural' factors, including a distinctive culture of work and the career-building role of cultural capital, play a major part in forming the knowledge class as a more or less cohesive

<sup>76</sup> Burris, 'Class Structure and Political Ideology', 39.

<sup>77</sup> Wright, 'Rethinking, Once Again, the Concept of Class Structure', 308–9.

<sup>78</sup> Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 88.

group. To make this argument is not, however, to posit a necessary or an expressive relation between class and culture: it is not to assume that this class possesses its own distinctive culture which gives 'expressive form' to its 'social and material life-experience',<sup>79</sup> or endows it with the consciousness of its own historicity.<sup>80</sup> Such assumptions, as I have argued earlier, fail to come to terms with the complexity of 'mass' audience structures, and ignore the crucial mediating role of cultural institutions.

The work that can be done by the category of class, and by specific class analysis, is at once more modest and more negative than this. On the one hand, class analysis can give a sense of the structural limits set to action and desire; on the other, it can act as a check against claims made by members of one social group to an identity of interests with another. I take up this question in the final chapter through an examination of the right claimed by intellectuals to speak on behalf of others. Here let me mention more specifically a concept that has been of central importance to the development of cultural studies, that of the organic intellectual.

In a widely cited passage in the anthology *Cultural Studies* Stuart Hall wrote:

The problem about the concept of an organic intellectual is that it appears to align intellectuals with an emerging historic movement and we couldn't tell then, and can hardly tell now, where that emerging historical movement was to be found. We were organic

<sup>79</sup> Fred Pfeil, 'Makin' Flippy-Floppy: Postmodernism and the Baby-Boom PMC', *Another Tale to Tell: Politics and Narrative in Postmodern Culture* (London: Verso, 1990), 98.

<sup>80</sup> Christa Bürger, 'The Disappearance of Art: The Postmodernism Debate in the US', *Telos*, 68 (1986), 96. Both Pfeil and Bürger are referring to postmodernism as the culture 'of' the new middle class. Cf. Lash and Urry's similar but slightly more cautious claim that 'it is the developing service class which is the consumer *par excellence* of post-modern cultural products; that there is a certain "hegemonizing mission" of the post-modern tastes and lifestyle of significant sections of this new middle class; and that there are certain structural conditions of the service class that produce a decentred identity which fosters the reception of such post-modern cultural goods'. Lash and Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism*, 292; cf. also Scott Lash, *Sociology of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1990), 20.

intellectuals without any organic point of reference; organic intellectuals with a nostalgia or will or hope (to use Gramsci's phrase from another context) that at some point we would be prepared in intellectual work for that kind of relationship, if such a conjuncture ever appeared. More truthfully, we were prepared to imagine or model or simulate such a relationship in its absence: 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will'.<sup>81</sup>

The problem Hall maps out is that of an intelligentsia 'organically' linked to a class or a historic bloc which has yet to come into being. The sheer virtuality of that link—its existence as 'nostalgia or will or hope'—shoots through with irony the notion that attachment to another class or bloc is the right and proper way for intellectuals to work. Hall reads this failure of attachment in essentially negative terms (as loss or lack); but the metaphors of projection—'imagine or model or simulate'—perhaps suggest another and more positive function of this imaginary relationship. In this alternative reading we might propose that it is a question not of preparation or anticipation but of work conducted in its own time, work with its own impetus and its own historic goals; we might propose, that is to say, that work in cultural studies could be taken seriously in relation to the specific interests of the class of intellectuals rather than in relation to a non-existent historic bloc. But this is perhaps also to say that this work, with its entirely fruitful impetus to explore non-traditional and previously unvalued cultures, was predicated on a necessary blindness to its own class provenance.

Michael Rustin makes a parallel and, I think, persuasive argument about the class bases for the conceptualization of post-Fordism, as it was elaborated by, amongst others, Stuart Hall in a series of 'New Times' articles. The world of flexible specialization, Rustin writes, 'is the world as seen from the point of view of some of its beneficiaries—themselves "flexible specialists" such as researchers, communicators, information

<sup>81</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies', in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (eds.), *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 281.

professionals and designers, whose specific capabilities involve the handling and processing of information'.<sup>82</sup> The way in which a particular set of class interests is carried is most evident 'in the high programmatic priority given to education, training and research as functional for "progressive modernization", but also, of course, as central to the life-world of the man or woman for whom the capacity to acquire, apply and transmit knowledge is *the* market resource'.

Correspondingly, even the more 'progressive' aspects of the concept translate interests that are not universal:

arguments for the decentralization of decision-making, for the informal welfare sector, for neighbourhood control, parent power and cooperative housing, also reflect the central position that this new and enlarged intelligentsia is likely to occupy in more pluralized and devolved systems, as the strata who have the cultural capacities to make use of such spaces to find fulfilling and influential roles.<sup>83</sup>

In much the same way, work in cultural studies seems to me to carry both the one interest that can be attributed with some certainty to the knowledge class: a commitment to the institutions of cultural capital, and simultaneously a set of anxieties about its place within these institutions. Displaced from the position of cultural authority which it once believed itself to hold, controlling one rather small market within a pluralized market system, and properly uncertain of its right to speak in and for other cultural domains, the cultural intelligentsia (and most of the knowledge class has some claim to cultural expertise) has been able to construct its own historicity only in the endless deferral of its self-recognition.

<sup>82</sup> Rustin, 'The Politics of Post-Fordism', 63.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 64.

## *Economies of Value*

The privileging of the self through the pathologizing of the Other remains the key move and defining objective of axiology.<sup>1</sup>

From this point onwards I address you, my silent reader, explicitly as a cultural intellectual: an address which may go astray, but which enables me to abandon that pretence of universality—the pretence of the absence of position—which lends such a false glow of transparency to academic writing. I assume, for the sake of argument, that when I say 'we' from now on I am speaking to and partly for men and women belonging to a local fraction of the class that I have tried to describe in the previous chapter; I assume that 'we' have certain—but by no means all—class-specific interests in common; and that these have to do above all with the investments we have made in knowledge and its social relations. I assume you share my uncertainties about the value of our knowledge and about—the topic of this final chapter—the positions that we are able to occupy within the field of cultural value.

I argued earlier that it is no longer either possible or useful to understand cultural production in terms of a general economy of value, and thus that we can no longer imagine ourselves into a vantage point from which conflicting judgements of value could be reconciled. What may in some sense always have been the case has become self-evidently so now: that different social groups employ criteria of value which may well be incompatible and irreconcilable. Lotman's

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 38.