The Imperative for Darkness in “Dark Times”

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Despite Post-modernism’s conspicuous voices about fracture and the multiplicity of “realities” and possible futures, unencumbered by any form of limiting essentialism, there still remains an enveloping Enlightenment – a quasi-religious conviction, that visibility is politically more efficacious than invisibility. Rendering situations visible exposes exercises of power and protects one from evil. Light redeems one from subjugation and exploitation.

This paper questions the proposition that light must always cast out darkness. Constructing “realities” has always involved a manipulation of what is seen and not seen - what is actual and what is illusionary. This paper questions whether our “Dark Times” Jacobs (2004) demand relentless transparency and argues that “shadows” Tanizaki (2001) and “disorder” (Sennett, 1996;2006) are important in understanding how visibility and invisibility are both parts of the pervasive apparatus of political, economic and communal hegemony. Extending Selznick’s (1957) arguments about “hidden” and autonomous elites, this paper argues that such elites flux both visibility and invisibility to serve oligarchic interests. Furthermore, Corporate Capitalism, especially in its current technocratic, Neo-liberal form, revolves around such fluxes of invisibility and visibility.

This paper concludes that, as exemplified by Sidney Lumet’s (1981) Prince of the City, a Public Policy and Public Administration solely focused on transparency not only mis-directs attention and political resources, but is, actually, self-defeating, leaving citizens less informed and more subjugated than before the drive for illumination. What is required is a Public Policy and Public Administration less besotted, ideologically and practically, with a fragmenting anti-essentialism - narcissistically obsessed with the power of deconstructive transparency, but a Public Policy and Public Administration able to calibrate whether the enveloping flux of visibility and invisibility is destructive to social capital and public domains.

Introduction

Despite the conviction within post-modern, intellectual circles that the grand narratives of Western thought have fractured into a multiplicity of positions and possible futures, unencumbered by any form of limiting essentialism, there, still, remains an enveloping Enlightenment – a strangely quasi-religious conviction that “visibility” is politically more efficacious, and “democratic,” than “invisibility”. Rendering situations visible exposes exercises of power and protects one from evil – light redeems one from criminals and other exploiters.

This paper questions whether contemporary “Dark Times” Jacobs (2004) demand relentless transparency. This paper proposes that constant illumination and constant darkness are forms of control intended to hold citizens in a perennial state of subservience and hegemony. This paper extols the acuity and wisdom of Tanizaki’s (2001) cross-cultural meditation on the
importance of “shadows”. Revolving around an examination of Sennett’s (1996) seminal investigation into the positive uses of disorder, and his (Sennett, 2006) analysis of the seemingly anarchic culture of the “new” economy, this paper explores, and challenges, the proposition that “light” must always cast out “darkness”. As conveyed in Thorne and Kouzmin (2006), the issue of visibility and invisibility is not new. Constructing “realities” has always involved a manipulation of what is seen and not seen - what is “actual” and what is “illusionary.” It is important to be aware of the “invisible hand” and “visible management” (Thorne and Kouzmin, 2006) behind what is permitted to be visible and to be able to deal with the invisible before reacting to the visible. The visible and the invisible are inter-related “realities” of the human condition.

Following Thorne and Kouzmin (2004; 2006) and Thorne (2005), this paper proposes that “visibility” and “invisibility” are both parts of the pervasive apparatus of political, economic and communal hegemony. Extending Selznick (1957), this paper argues that elites flux both visibility and invisibility to serve oligarchic interests. Furthermore, Capitalism, especially in its current technocratic, Neo-liberal, form revolves around such fluxes of invisibility and visibility. The interest of capital accumulation and profit generation benefit from fluxing visible manifestations of individual triumph as well as invisible ministrations of “free markets” and “visible management” (Thorne and Kouzmin, 2006). To survive, citizens must be able to move between “light” and “darkness” and the flux of “visibility” and “invisibility”.

This paper concludes, as exemplified by Lumet’s (1981) *Prince of the City*, that a Public Policy and Public Administration solely focused on transparency - light over darkness - not only mis-directs attention and political resources, but is actually self-defeating, leaving citizens less informed and more subjugated than before the drive for illumination. This paper argues that what is required is a Public Policy and Public Administration not so besotted, ideologically and practically, with a fragmenting anti-essentialism - narcissistically obsessed with the power of deconstructive transparency, but a Public Policy and Public Administration able to calibrate whether the enveloping flux of visibility and invisibility is enveloping and destructive to social capital and the public domain (Kouzmin and Dixon, 2006).

Despite post-modern protestations to the contrary, what Skinner (1985) terms Grand Theory in the Human Sciences must persist when some social constructions of “reality” are more powerful manipulators of what is visible and invisible and more ideologically and physically threatening than other constructions of “reality”.

Is One in “Dark Times”?

Until quite recently, it seemed disingenuous to even consider that the world may be in “Dark Times” or that a Dark Age/Epoch is dawning. Far more prevalent is the conviction that the unifying, post-modern, cyberspace “light” is driving out the divided, modern, industrial “darkness”. Since the post-Cold-War presumed defeat of “Communism” and many forms of “Socialism” (Kouzmin and Korac-Kakabadse, 1997), the US and Western, free-market, Corporate Capitalism had triumphed after a series of “hot” and “cold” wars throughout the Twentieth Century.

The “End of History” (Fukuyama, 1992) discourse is still upon one and the Kantian (1784) Epoch of “Reason” and “Freedom,” with its reliance on purposeful “Unsocial Sociability” (Bronk, 1998), arrives in a Neo-liberal guise. Intertwined notions of globalization, democracy and technology, especially information and communications technology (ICT), have driven, and been influenced, by worldwide transformation. This “End of History” sermon is presented as ideological hegemony - as the inevitable result of a globalized, Liberal-democratic world with virtual, flexible organizations based on information and other advanced technology and sovereign individuals responsible for their own destiny.

This discourse has supplanted the essential features of the supposedly outmoded Industrial Epoch, including the sovereignty of nation states; the reliance on hierarchical, bureaucratic organizations and the removal of “safety nets” provided by the “welfare state”. The new, enveloping Cyberspace Epoch of stateless, anarchic, constantly-changing, globalized, disembodied and virtual cyberspace (Ohmae, 1991; 2005: Freidman, 1999; 2005) brought the end to physical constraint and the transformation of human life.
As Thorne and Kouzmin (2004; 2006) indicate, the Neo-liberal faith in rampant ICT, unbridled consumer demands and un-encumbered, global, free markets, resonate with Post-modern fascinations with fragmentation; flexibility; multiplicity; surface; media images; hybridity; consumption; technological augmentation and, with ever, changing, free/perfect markets. As Fox (2003) outlines, the Post-modern is for a fragmented; multiple; socially and linguistically decentred subject - favouring relativism; indeterminacy and de-totalization over coherence; linearity; and causality - and preferring political strategies which involve identity; culture; and the realm of everyday life over political strategies involving the state and political economy.

This evidences a fundamental mutuality of interest between the Neo-liberal and the Post-modern approaches to economic globalization, virtuality and an un-restrained individualism - a mutuality that distrusts communal, political action, luxuriates in the liberating possibilities of technology and celebrates hybridity and self-absorption. It is disappointing (Thorne and Kouzmin, 2007) that one continues to witness an on-going age of post-modernist “denial” – denial with colluding consequences (Thorne and Kouzmin, 2004).

De-centred denial of the existence of ‘threatening and non-threatening “grand” narratives, scepticism about subjugating totalities and, especially, disillusionment with classic epistemologies, among many of the “signs” of the putative, post-modernist age’ (Kouzmin and Leivesley, 1997:92), might be construed as ‘a convenient way of rationalizing one’s own lack of power; of furnishing [oneself] with some much-needed consolation’ (Eagleton, 1996:2). When so-called micro-politics seem the order of the day, it is relieving to convert this necessity into a virtue - to persuade oneself that one’s limits have, as it were, a solid ontological grounding’ (Eagleton, 1996:9). Such rationalization gives way to simplistic “identity” politics, a vehicle for anarchistic, privatized epistemologies at best, nihilist at worst (Lazere, 1995:353). The situation is rendered even worse with the prevalence of a “reverse diglossia” (Candler, 2006:540-543) – a mono-lingualism and cultural incompetence prevalent among Anglo-American Public Administration scholars who, ‘rather than being privileged by knowledge of the dominant global language… are stuck in an academic provincialism brought on by their inability to engage other cultures’ (Candler, 2006:540).

The Post-modern approaches to conceptions of the decentred subject (in common with Sartrean formulations) do not give sufficient recognition to the importance of social contexts and ‘provide only a “thin” and rather monadic conception of individuality’ (Fox, 2003:7) The consequence of this is ‘a colluding silence about, and around, the grand narrative of Neo-liberalism’ (Thorne and Kouzmin, 2004:413).

However, this shared Neo-liberal and Post-modern “totalizing” discourse is not unusual. The primary function of the narratives of “light” and “dark”, the seen and the unseen, the visible and the invisible is to validate the supremacy of one economic/ideological position over another. Thorne and Kouzmin (2006) indicate that the most extreme efforts to impact the flux of visibility and invisibility involve Epochal shifts - from one Epoch to another, supposed, Epoch. Visibility and invisibility are extensively fluxed in attempts to validate dominant worldviews, putative modes of organizing and an economic-sovereign way of life over any possible other.

In this emergent discourse, what happened in the past does not matter. Time and space have new characteristics and possibilities. A new, circumscribed, future is made imminent in the present, exhorting that one must not squander the opportunity to partake in hegemony. One must now surrender to this enveloping light or be lost in the darkness forever. The ultimate gambit revolves around extensive (in)visibility. (In)visibility is most evident when the invisible/visible manipulation of what is most visible, accepted or acted upon, is discernable, even oppressive, but nonetheless ignored - as if such manipulation is not, in fact, occurring. Things untenable, and the interest behind them, are accepted almost without question as the new orthodoxy.

Thorne and Kouzmin (2006) propose that it is possible, post 9/11, that the epochal (in)visibility, associated with the most extreme forms of global, virtual and individual-sovereign consciousness is unstable, if not waning. As Thorne and Kouzmin (2004) and Thorne (2005) distinguish, there is no non-hierarchical, flexible and empowered “new world order.” Furthermore, many of the institutional and other structural aspects of modernity and Corporate Capitalism remain relatively undiminished within the Neo-liberal/Post-modern haze.
There is no evidence that the recent freeing of markets and the unleashing of individual empowerment has ushered in a new age of unrivalled productivity. Instead, traditional aspects of modernity are more prevalent than ever - few markets are free; the sovereignty of nation states has not disappeared; global markets in new and old industries are about the concentration of supply and the manipulation of demand; individual sovereignty is no assurity of economic or social success; and most workers, even those working in cyberspace, remain unempowered and are working longer hours than ever before. Supposedly liberating cyberspace is increasingly exposed as the control space par excellence.

The exploitation of 9/11 by oligarchic interests, especially the attempt by US Neo-conservatives to grasp the historical opportunity to remake the world, is more and more perceived as counter-productive forays into old and new forms of unilateral imperialism (Johnson, 2000; Harvey, 2003). The seemingly new, visible resurgence of Islamic and other religious fundamentalisms re-enervates seemingly invisible, divisive and outmoded notions of “Millennialism,” the “Apocalypse,” the “End of Time” (Kirsch, 2006); “Holy War,” “Crusade” or “Jihad” (Armstrong, 1991; Lewis, 2004); the “Clash of Civilizations” (Huntington, 1997); and the confrontation between now “visible,” extremist, Islamic theocracy with another, supposedly “invisible,” Judeo-Christian theocracy.

It is increasingly evident that prevailing elites are, themselves, resiling from globalization, virtuality and individual sovereignty. The Twenty-First Century now appears more medieval than global with constant warfare, economic and social upheavals, genocide, environmental and biodiversity disasters, global warming and AIDS already having killed more people than those who died during the Black Death.

Yet these manipulations of the flux of visibility and invisibility by elites have just moved on to incorporate the more open reliance on religious, nationalistic and other oppositional justifications to the use of naked force and military power to eliminate opposition and to drive out putative darkness. Despite Weber’s conviction to the contrary, ‘Capitalism’s “mechanical foundations” of rampant materialism have not left behind the “ghosts of dead, religious beliefs” – and have become a spiritually meaningless form of the “mundane passions” associated with sport’ (Weber, 1992: 124).

It is possible that the Neo-liberal world may be entering a “New Dark Age” where ignorance is driving out reason in a way analogous to what supposedly happened in Europe and the Middle–East after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. For example, Berman (2006) considers that the American empire has entered an inescapable final phase. In Berman’s (2006) view, the post 9/11 endless “War on Terror” and the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have left the American economy burdened by an insurmountable debt which threatens an imminent economic and social collapse. This is apart from the crisis proportions of the collapse of any global, “moral” authority, oligarchs and many public administration academics attach to American “exceptionalism”.

While the endless flow of propaganda destroys hard-won civil ideals and democratic freedoms, there are dangerous signs of hubris and the intrusion of threatening lost and discounted multiple histories; clear difficulties in overcoming time and space; the intrusion of a more unwieldy physicality in current events; and visible and invisible portents of a future other than the triumphialism of Western, especially “exceptionalist” American, interests.

This does not mean, however, that the self-interest of elites which benefit from a globalization-virtuality-individual-sovereignty discourse is in any meaningful sense in retreat or hibernation. The struggle overvisibility and invisibility, the ability to project (in)visibility and to challenge others to defy is still, more than ever, asymmetrical. What is more likely is that one has entered a time where open (visible) and covert (invisible) elites impose themselves even more forcibly via new fluxes of visibility and invisibility.

The gravest concern should be directed to all forms of military violence being further unleashed in domestic and international spheres, with elite, economic, self-interest being even more dependent upon market concentration and physical and non-physical exploitation - with a contest over differing fundamentalisms replacing the overt, seemingly restraining, emphasis on market and individual freedoms. The greatest fear is that the embracing cyberspace fable does not easily co-exist with newly, visible depictions of age-old antagonisms and that the conflicting formulations of light and darkness become destructive rather than symbiotic.
As Jacobs (2004) realises, Epochal/Age transformations and their accompanying extreme flux, in visibility and invisibility, all too easily become “either/or” confrontations - ones in which any continuation of the old ways is not possible - and language, sexuality, religious belief and everything, including virtue, coarsens while the economic, social and ideological basis of every day life is totally transformed.

Jacobs (2004:3) conveys that inherent within these confrontations is the possibility of a new “Dark Age”. This “Dark Age” involves a “cultural dead end” and the loss of the people who contributed to that culture. This ending is so abrupt that even the ‘memory of what was lost was also lost’ (Jacobs, 2004:3). According to Jacobs (2004:3), the collapse following the fall of the Western Roman Empire was just the most recent European example of how various “Dark Ages” had ‘scrawled finis to successions of cultures receding far into the past’.

Jacobs (2004:176) considers that a ‘meagre present and an alien future’ is inevitable for “empires” ‘that do not retain sufficient cultural self-awareness to prevent them from over reaching and over grasping’. Jacobs (2004:24) is convinced that a ‘culture is unsalvageable if potentially “stabilising forces,” themselves, become ruined and irrelevant.’ Jacobs (2004) laments that this is happening to contemporary culture. She is most concerned by the immanent loss of five, closely-inter-connected, “pillars” of culture: community and family; higher education; the effective practice of science and science-based technology; taxes and governmental powers directly in touch with needs and possibilities; and self-policing by the learned professions, requiring fundamental reformation of Public Policy and Public Administration.

Jacobs (2004:4) is intrigued and perplexed by what she considers to be the “salient mystery” of the “Dark Age” - why can a people so totally discard a formerly vital culture that it becomes literally lost? Jacobs (2004) connects the survival of a culture to the type of post-agrarian “ingenuity” which generates new wealth and ensures cultural dominance. Yet Jacobs’ (2004) emphasis on the self-defeating nature of hubris suggests that she is not unaware that any innovations which are merely technological and devoid of any complex connectivity with other cultures, or those who become convinced of their own superiority, all too easily become obsessed with control - with the preservation of fundamentally unsustainable states of (in)visibility and sending “light” into the “darkness” to drive out all deviance or opposition.

Jacobs (2004:21) identifies the corroding, hegemonic interests of elites and oligarchs: ‘powerful persons and groups that find it in their interest to prevent adaptive corrections, have ways of thwarting self-organizing stabilizers.’ Constant illumination and constant darkness are forms of control intended to hold citizens in a constantly tense state of hegemony. Extending Jacobs (2004:171), light Epochs/Ages and dark Epoch/Ages ‘are, at best, grim re-shapers of human life’. Living in a constantly tense state of (in)visibility involves an unrelenting, continual and demoralising struggle.

In Praise of Shadows

Tanizaki (2001) differentiates between Western (American) and Eastern (Japanese) cultures which differ, fundamentally, about approaches to “light” and “darkness.” Tanizaki’s (2001) deceptively episodic essay on comparative aesthetics extols the singular virtues of Japanese architecture over Western architecture. Tanizaki (2001) favours a poetic existence, one of elegant simplicity - close to nature and aware of physical/bodily nature. He sees perfection in the Japanese toilet which is elegantly frigid, yet functional, and ‘replete with fond associations with the beauties of nature’ (Tanizaki, 2001:10). To Tanizaki (2001:10), this is much more preferable to the unpleasant ‘steamy heat of a Western-style toilet in a hotel’. These “modern” toilets are much more hygienic and efficient to construct. Yet, the blinding whiteness and cleanliness serves to ‘remind us so forcefully of the issue of our own bodies’ (Tanizaki, 2001:11). Tanizaki (2001) considers that it is both crude and tasteless to expose the toilet to such excessive illumination.

‘The cleanliness of what can be seen only calls up more clearly thoughts of what cannot be seen’. In such places, ‘the distinction between the clean and the unclean is best left obscure, shrouded in a dusky haze’ (Tanizaki, 2001:11). Wherever possible, tiles and other white surfaces should be replaced with wood, unfinished and finished in black lacquer, which will
darken and grow more subtle with the passing years and acquire ‘an inexplicable power to
calm and smooth’ (Tanizaki, 2001:12).

Tanizaki (2001) questions the use of technology to illuminate every aspect of Japanese
music. This essentially reticent, atmospheric music, which echoes the soft, Japanese
speaking voice, loses most of its charm when recorded or amplified. Most distressing, is how
this technology renders pauses and other precious moments of silence “utterly lifeless”
away” with Chinese and Japanese paper which provide a ‘certain feeling of warmth and
repose’ and which “take in light.”

Tanizaki (2001) favours a “filthy elegance” which he finds within the sheen produced by grime
on objects, even buildings such as hospitals - a sheen of “antiquity”. This sheen may be
unclean and unsanitary but recalls the past which made it and provides peace and rest.
Tanizaki (2001) resists the use of the electric light and other forms of extreme illumination.
Much more preferable are the shadows cast by a flickering candle which enhance the beauty
of lacquer and other dark objects and surfaces.

Tanizaki (2001) presents darkness as the indispensable component of lacquer and maintains
that white lacquer is redundant. Lacquer flourishes in dark and candle-lit rooms which reward
the careful discovery of the soft, ever faint, luminosity within countless layers of darkness
which are ‘the inevitable product of the darkness in which life [is] lived’ (Tanizaki, 2001:23).
He luxuriates in feeble light.

Tanizaki (2001) shows that clarity, or transparency, is not the only way to establish what is
being presented in life. He elaborates a Japanese cuisine that ‘depends upon shadows and is
inseparable from darkness’ (Tanizaki, 2001:25). He contrasts the offering of soup in a
ceramic or lacquered bowl with the same soup offered in a clear glass bowl. With the soup
presented in a ceramic or lacquered bowl, the moment of recognition is delayed and
savouried and this simple experience is enriching on every level.

Tanizaki (2001) indicates that the Japanese are not at ease with anything that shines or
glitters. Accordingly, the Japanese prefer murky, deep jade, with a shadowy surface which
contains the shadow of the long past; abhor clear glass; and patiently wait for a dark, smoky
patina to appear on buildings, wood, tin and pottery. Even Japanese ghosts are opaque.
Tanizaki (2001) suggests that the thrusting, highly visible roofs of Gothic cathedrals are
emblematic of Western ambition to pierce heaven. In contrast, Japanese buildings, including
temples and those of the nobility, spread out under spacious eaves which encourage
shadows and darkness, have entrances that are almost invisible and have rooms which
benefit from the gradients of natural and artificial light. These buildings are notable for the
sensitive use of shadow and light and the ‘comprehension of the secrets of shadows’
(Tanizaki, 2001:32).

Tanizaki (2001) conveys that the supposedly mysterious Orient involves little more than ‘the
uncanny silence of these dark places’ (Tanizaki, 2001:33) and the invisible, yet sensed,
placement of elements and/or objects where light has been removed or constrained. Tanizaki
(2001) recounts the dramatic eroticism of the interplay between visible flesh and invisible
flesh concealed within the almost enveloping costume of a performer on a darkly-lit theatre
stage. He regrets that theatre represents ‘a distinct world of shadows which, today, can be
seen only on the stage; but, in the past, could not have been far removed from daily life’
(Tanizaki, 2001:41).

Furthermore, he laments that the excessive use of floodlights has ruined the contrasts and
contours of Kabuki and Bunraku-puppet theatre. He extends this purposeful use of the
wondrous interplay between light and darkness into an elaboration of how Japanese woman
use darkening, and other concealments, to draw attention to patterns of shadows and to draw
attention away from what might, when revealed, be considered ugly or offensive. For even the
whitest white or the strongest light is no guarantee in eradicating the inter-related darkness
that is out-of-sight or resides beneath the skin.
The Uses of Disorder

Sennett’s (1996) pioneering study of the positive uses of disorder also explores the proposition that light must always cast out darkness and recovers the Public Policy and Public Administration imperatives for retaining light and darkness, the seen and the unseen, and the visible and invisible. Like Tanizaki (2001), Sennett (1996) is not afraid of the dark. The dark is a place to hide; to rest; to contemplate; to plot; to experiment; to socialize; to express physical nature and to grow up. Sennett (1996) welcomes Tanizaki’s (2001) challenge for the West to delight in shadows. Sennett (1996) wants to ensure that any quest for a brighter light is muted and that the West ceases from sparing ‘no plans to eradicate even the minutest shadows’ (Tanizaki, 2001:48). Sennett’s (1996) approach posits a direct inter-connection between one’s psychological make-up and organizational/societal configurations. He identifies the unrelenting stress on enveloping light and control as being part of an essentially infantile culture which imposes rigid individual and group self-images. Sennet (1996) rejects any drive for a “purified identity” and for sanitized, overly pre-planned cities. Sennett (1996) favours the city as a vast and unpredictable jungle.

Even more than Jacobs (2004), Sennet (1996) is enchanted by the possibilities involved in diversity and exchange. Sennett (1996) is concerned by “Millennium,” “End of History” or “End of Time” thinking,” all of which invoke a fear of the sources of human diversity which create history in its true sense. In this way of thinking, the future’s only possibly is to exhibit the same form as the present – ‘as a state of life for an individual or group whose features are rigidly determined and contain no hidden surprises’ (Sennett, 1996: 8). Most instructively, Sennett (1996) cites Cohn’s (1970) study of the nature and implications of a purified religious existence. Cohn (1970) does not simply limit his conclusions to some few obsessed individuals and sects entranced by Millennialism but, as Sennett (1996:8-9) stresses, boldly, ‘links to contemporary “rational” experts, doctors and engineers and, even, anarchist, anti-religious leaders.’ Sennett (1996) went even further and indicated that this process is an endemic pattern of human fear and is a general human phenomenon despite its religious basis:

[T]he model for what this pattern of fear and self-conception means does come most easily from religion. The process …can be called a search for purity. The effect of this defensive pattern is to create in people a desire for a purification of the terms in which they see themselves in relation to others. The enterprise involved is an attempt to build an image or identity that coheres, is unified and filters out threats in social experience (Sennett, 1996:9).

Sennet (1996) locates not simply a fear of the unknown but a fear of losing one’s identity though outside threats. Sennett (1996:9) finds within Walzer’s (1966) study of early Puritans the ‘desire to find an absolute identity, to be fully and finally known to each other as true believers.’ He sees this craving for extreme certainty in revolutionaries of all persuasions. Experience is purified to remove dissonance and creates incontestable psychologies.

When the purification desires of a large number of people succeed and become dominant in their lives, it would be only natural for these men to try to mould society in their own image, so that the structure of society would be organized to encourage, and codify, this peculiar escape from painful disorder (Sennett, 1996:25).

Sennett (1996) considers that Weber’s (1992) great insight was seeing in this religious situation [the desire to see in their daily lives some proof of their own virtue] the expression of a kind of anxiety which would lead men to self-denial and self-repression out of fear of transgressing some sacred code whose rules could not be understood. Weber perceived that later in history ‘the kinds of men who became capitalists evinced the same kind of anxiety’ (Sennett, 1996:28). Sennett (1996) regards Weber’s “Puritan Ethic,” and worldly asceticism, more than a specific Eighteenth-Century phenomenon. The ingredients which created this ethic - a ‘fear, a contradictory system of values, a self-repression designed to be a sign of some personal response to a situation innately out of control - these problems are too deep seated in men’s natures simply to have died out’ (Sennett, 1996:29). In a related manner to Riesman, Glazer and Denney (1961), Sennett (1996:32) formulates a "new" Puritan Ethic
where ‘feeling[s] of common identity in community life occurs in advance of any communal experience between the people involved’. Sennett (1996) identifies situations where class, ethnicity, age and other differences play a decisive role in cutting off contacts between individuals, yet every person exhibits the belief that he/she is part of a unified group with warm and sustained contacts between members.

In contrast with the “old” Puritan Ethic, which inevitability brought people together in very intense experiences, the “new” Puritan Ethic involves ‘images of communal solidarity forged in order that men can avoid dealing with each other’ (Sennett, 1996:34). ‘Where the first puritans engaged in this self-repression for the greater glory of God, the puritans of today repress themselves out of fear - a fear of the unknown, the uncontrolled’ (Sennett, 1996:83). What happens is that there is a collapsing of the experiential frame, a condensing of all the messy experiences in social life, in order to create a vision of unified community identity. As distinguished by Goodman (1960), this process reveals the marks of adolescence in the community process. As Sennett (1996) observes, communally-painful experiences and unknown social situations, full of possible surprise and challenge, can be avoided by the common consent of the community which already “knows” the result of experiences and has already drawn the “lessons” from these experiences together.

This solidarity without bonds, without actual experience, results from a fear of participation. This is intensified when individuals (especially men) withdraw into family arrangements where the family circle become the sole focus of intimate connections and interacting with the rest of the world involves only impersonal, functional tasks. Sennett (1996:69) is most concerned by how the intense family circle, especially in already dis-connected suburbs, has become the agent for the ‘infusion of adolescent fear into the social life of modern cities’. This retreat into safe suburbia is symptomatic of an underlying fear of the inability to exist in complex, challengingly diverse environments.

This involves an evident fear of other(s) and one’s own otherness and also the fear of becoming too visible and/or being associated with what should be invisible. This is an all too easy acceptance of what Truss (2004) terms “polite invisibility” or what Sennett (1996:83) considers our ability to conspire with each other ‘to establish a comfortable slavery to the known and the routine’. To Goodman (1960:14), this is simply the product of an ‘economic “system” which does not want mature, spirited individuals as such individuals “do not suit” and the evident “sameness” is a cynical “waste of humanity”’ (1960:14). Both Sennett (1996) and Goodman (1960) reject an economic “system” which requires “culture” to tame and control a “featureless animal” and not a “culture” that enables ‘the invention and discovery of human powers’ (Goodman, 1960: 226).

Echoing Weber (1992), both Puritans and Capitalists are involved in the same contradictory activity - ‘engaged in a meaningless world whose pursuits – making money - has no value of their own and, yet, these pursuits had a great value in that they were a demonstration of the virtue of those who engaged in them’ (Sennett, 1996: 28). According to Vidich and Bensman (1958), in an analysis that exhibits acute insight into the purposeful use of visible and invisible power, “these “mechanisms of repression” require coherence myths which keep men from having to interact and understand each other as they really are” (Sennett, 1996:35).

Sennett (1996) conveys the idea that having little or no experience of disorder may mean that any eruption of social tension involves ultimate sanctions of supposedly justified aggression. He remarks, with profound sadness and insight into the contemporary dilemma, that it is a terrible paradox that the escalation of discord into violence comes to be, in these communities, the means by which “law and order” should be maintained. Sennett (1996) also notes that the cries for law and order are the most intense and extreme from those communities which are the most isolated from other communities and are mostly directed towards shadowy deviance not preventing crime, especially organized crime.

Sennett (1996) is essentially an anarchist with a “plan” not a “bomb”. He strives to save everyone from an innate acceptance of rigid order, fear of change and subservience to sameness and routine. Sennett (1996) rejects Jacobs’s (1961) revivalist view that anarchy in human environments is valuable as it leads, inevitability, to common association, stability and to re-establishing earlier patterns of close connections between neighbours.

Rather, Sennett (1996) is an adherent of Coser’s (1969) belief in the efficacy of the binding power of forward-looking, continually evolving, face-to-face tension and conflict (Sennett,
Sennet (1996:155) extols the hidden threads of social structure which exist within poor areas. These are the threads of social structure which Sennet wants to increase in times of affluence as well as poverty. In Sennett’s (1996) view, the overthrow of injustice involves purposely dense, decentralized, disordered, anarchic cities, and permeable neighbourhoods, where diverse communities and individuals must co-exist and share formal and informal decision-making in a direct physical manner which requires constant checking and other interactions and mitigates any lingering effects of outsiders and enemies: ‘because every day one sees so many people who are alien but who are not all alien in the same way’ (Sennett, 1996:153).

In the tradition of Communitas (Goodman and Goodman, 1947), Sennett (1996:192) wants an urban/city environment which reduces the separation of women and men so evident in suburbia and where ‘men and women are forced into all sorts of contact for accommodation and mutual survival’. He also favours disorderly environments with multiple, shifting contact points which would remove the ability of family groups to act as ‘intensive shelters, as shields from diversity’ (Sennett, 1996:169). This requires re-constituting public power to create decentralized, often painful, yet adult, survival encounters between individuals and groups which are not based on a pre-planned order and clarity in city and urban planning but for a jumble of diverse and changeable uses which encourage exploration and where the inherent tension and unease question solidarity myths and test any drive towards purified identity among inhabitants.

Sennet (1996:159) wants the ‘socio-economic integration of living, working and recreational spaces’. He proposes that this inter-penetration of boundary-less urban/city spaces should allow the community problems to spill over into work environments and for workers to find solutions to work-related issues such as status insecurity and other related frustrations reflecting the psychological maturity involved in direct confrontation.

Sennett (1996: xiv) is certain that any revolutionary transition must involve educating everyone ‘to accept a certain amount of anarchy and disorder in their lives’. Disorder is fundamental to any change. This education should sensitize all to understand and confront “normalizing” manifestations of visible and invisible power, such as impersonal bureaucracy and the faceless power which elites use against individuals and groups in work and non-work settings. Experts must demonstrate the utility of their knowledge to specific problems in specific locales and individuals and communities must resist the interventions of politicians, interested only in their own visibility, which cannot deliver results to diverse communities. Schools should be localized in diverse communities and students should be continually reminded that ‘tensions and friendships in the school and community do not create chaos and that, instead, there is a “kind of equilibrium of disorder”, a less than harmonious interdependence in every one’s life: where ‘people are not sheltered from each other, but their contacts are more explorations of a constantly shifting environment than an acting out of unchanging routines.’ (Sennett, 1996:191).

Like Tanizaki (2001), Sennet (1996:191) wants everyone to develop the “adult” capacity to ‘care and wonder about the unknown’ by allowing invisible, supposedly primitive, approaches to survival to interact within visible, supposedly more mature, approaches to civilized life. As Marion (2004:2) conveys, this will require recognizing what should not enter into the visible ‘fire in water, divinity in humanity’ and one refusing to be dazzled by excessive visibility or even excessive invisibility - developing a perspective on the visible and invisible which allows one to see the invisible within the visible and the visible within the invisible, - accepting the profound understanding that the visible must always be accompanied by the invisible and the invisible by the visible.

**Disorder and the “New” Capitalism**

To some extent, the Neo-liberal fantasy of a constantly changing, inclusive and infinitely flexible post-industrial, post-modern and post-bureaucratic world seems to gel with Sennett’s (1996) utopian aspirations. It is not surprising, then, that Sennett (2006), with his preference for anarchistic disorder, is somewhat beguiled by the apparent anarchy and restless energy within the seemingly decentered, “new” economy, especially within constantly-mutable-cyberspace Capitalism. Sennett (2006) is struck by the possibility of giving the political imagination free-play, just like the ‘experimental spirit of the media Lab’ (Sennett, 2006:158).
He notes that ‘there have been moments in the past decade [where]...I’ve been almost convinced that new economic conditions might produce a progressive politics’ (Sennett, 2006:160). However, he distinguishes that few humans are able to prosper in these unstable, fragmentary conditions. Rather, the contemporary economy is distinctive not for its generation of wealth but for the generation of inequality.

In Weberian (1992) terms, the social capital of immediate gratification is a poor substitute for the social capital involved in delayed gratification. Sennett (2006) observes that ideological and practical proposals on how individuals may flourish in this “new” economy are frustrated by the inherent fluidity which superficially rewards freedom but, more accurately, covers for existing and new forms of control and exploitation (see Bogard, 1996) and mitigates local or small scale, disorderly, yet mediating, social and political actions. Sennett (2006) is most concerned that the Schumpeterian (1975) “creative destruction” unleashed in this “new” economy by impatient global capital does not create the positive type of disorder which enables increasing numbers of social contacts and interactions enriching communities and allowing individuals to mature.

“New” economy organizations may have been Business-Process-Re-engineered, Downsized and subjected to the other managerial fads ensuring success in the “new” economy. But in Sennett’s (2006) view, flexibility and decentralizing merely involve delaying and removing the vital social conduits, flooding the organization with unprocessed information, increasing centralization and effectively stripping away from the organization social capital; including loyalty, informal trust and tacit knowledge. Nor does this constantly changing “new” economy provide the psychological “home” and “life narrative” offered by institutionalized bureaucracy.

For even within the most repressive of the old-style organizations, ‘if a person, even if generally unhappy, is given room to make sense of things on his /her own path, becomes bonded to the organization’ (Sennett, 2006:35). Sense-making in these “new” economy organizations, where anti-social disorder reigns, is arduous. These exploitive, intrusive organizations spill over into social and civic spaces and create a general sense of anxiety, overt fear and, even, institutionalized paranoia. In her comprehensive study of fear, Bourke (2006:386) concludes that such fear is manipulated by individual groups and organizations which have ‘a stake in creating fear while promising to eradicate it’.

‘Fear circulates within a wealthy economy of powerful interest groups dependent upon ensuring that we remain scared’ (Bourke, 2006:386). It is not surprising that Sennett (2006) expects that the most immediate challenge may be to ensure that any “resentment” that develops among individuals over not gaining any of the “new” economy “prizes,” does not sway, as it has so often in the past, into ‘religion and patriotism [becoming] weapons of revenge’ (Sennett, 2006:132).

It seems that the “new” economy, especially its global, virtual, sovereign-individual incarnation, is more distinctive for what Weber (1992) envisioned may be part of the last stage of the “cage” of worldly asceticism - a nullity involving ‘mechanized petrifaction, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance’ (Weber, 1992: 124). The “new” economy does not actually encourage anyone to strike out from the path of least resistance in dealing with each other and to purposefully interact with machinations of visible and invisible power. The new way of doing things does not actually encourage anyone to form relationships which have a ‘different pattern and direction from those that have existed before’ (Sennett, 2006:95).

Far from an utopia where none of the old rules applies, our world remains entranced by a false, anarchic fantasy involving a post-military, post - “Iron Cage” existence at the very time when America deploys the world’s most powerful military force and when hierarchical, bureaucratic organizations are more numerous and more powerful than ever before. If the “Iron Cage” is to be taken apart, whatever replaces the “Iron Cage” must ‘not just re-instate its distinctive social and emotional trauma in a new institutional form’ (Sennett, 2006:47).
Combating Visible and Invisible Power

This paper questions whether the current “Dark Age” (Jacobs, 2004) demands a relentless transparency. Absolutism, in the sense of rendering everything transparent, is a dangerous game. As Sennett (1996) distinguishes, individuals, cities and other social configurations benefit from dark spaces. Following the Enron and WorldCom debacles, are investors better placed if they act on a “buyer beware” basis rather than acting on a re-jigged, “regulated,” transparency basis? What should one expect to happen when one tells the Emperor that she is wearing no clothes? To be politically successful, one must be able to play visibility and invisibly and to ideologically and practically move the political discourse to arenas favouring one’s interests.

The most important power struggles and gambits are over the ability to control (in)visibility. The prevalent manifestations of (in)visibility do suggest where attention needs to be directed, even what must be attached to such attention and how to most usefully play with the flux of visibility and invisibility. Yet, the flux of visibility and invisibility continues relatively undebated. Are things better at the end or before the relentless drive for visibility and transparency? Remembering that, ‘[i]n a world of secrets, nothing is what it seems’ (Lumet, 1996:54) and the resolution is not to make everything exactly what it is or should be in a perfectly transparent world.

Does transparency require passive individuals interacting as part of some pre-planned process as passive instruments of justice or law and order, somewhat after the fact of the supposed transgression? What is actually required is the immediacy of individuals forced to deal directly with each other in order to resolve problematic situations - to resist losing social capital and political competence when purposeful drives for transparency seek to remove, or impersonalise, one’s ability to maintain diverse, and inherently conflict–ridden, personal relationships and affiliations fundamental to one’s ability to recognize that power is the issue.

Farmer (2005:193) observes, when commenting on Putnam (2000), ‘American civil society has declined over the past thirty years’ but the re-emergence of religious and other fundamentalisms suggests that not everyone is “bowling alone” and, as Eagleton (2003:297) warns, many resurgent “ugly” fundamentalisms have ‘less of a problem with foundational or metaphysical claims’ and exhibit little political pragmatism or “ethical hesitancy”. Kirsch (2006) is especially clear about the catastrophic revenge fantasy envisioned by fundamental religious forces and individual zealots favourably disposed to “end of the world” paranoia.

Fox (2003) suggests that apart from Baudrillard (1984; 1988), ‘whose later works stress discontinuity and generally take a belligerent attitude towards Marxism,’ other, supposedly key, Post-modern theorists have a less combative approach to essentialist aspects of the Grand Narrative tradition (Fox, 2003:172). Fox (2003: 172) acknowledges that there is a commonality between Lyotard (1984) and Baudrillard (1975) in relation to their mutual identification of ‘postmodern society as one based on computers, scientific knowledge, media information and advanced technology’ (Fox, 2003:172).

However, according to Fox (20003:172), Lyotard (1984) does not “sever” the link with political economy completely, recognizing that the flow and development of technology and knowledge essentially follow ‘the flow of money in contemporary society’. Fox (2003:172) also acknowledges ‘that Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari’s work do focus on the importance of micro-contexts of power.’ Yet, Fox (2003:172) discerns that these theorists not only do not deny the significance of political economy but ‘generally lean towards a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity between the (modern) past and the postmodern (present)’ This abandonment of “decisive ruptures” poses a striking counterpoint to Jacobs’ (2004) fear of the complete loss of a culture, even any memory of that culture, as the result of the “end of an Epoch” and the onset of a “Dark Age”. But, perhaps, more critically, Fox (2003) presents the possibility that “ruptures”, decisive or otherwise, do reflect continuing and emergent, micro and macro struggles involving hegemonic interests fluxing visible and invisible power. Fox’s extract from Derrida is illuminating:
My own conviction is that we must maintain two contrary affirmations at the same time. On the one hand, we affirm the existence of ruptures in history and, on the other, we affirm that these ruptures produce gaps or faults in which the most hidden and forgotten archives can emerge, and constantly recur, and work through history (Derrida, in Bernstein, 1993:215, cited in Fox, 2003:172).

This does not mean that the general, post-modern tendency towards anti-essentialism is completely absent. Derrida (in Bernstein, 1993) does not countenance a history that is a “pure break” with the past nor could he accept a history that is a “pure unfolding” of the past. Rather, this balancing of totalizing and de-totalizing positions presents the possibility to take up Derrida’s (1993) challenge to surmount the categorical oppositions of philosophical logic in a dialectical manner which confluates knowledge and power and which recognises that totalizing (essentialist) and de-totalizing (anti-essentialist) discourses are potentially totalitarian.

It is possible that Foucault’s ‘unmasking of the Western mind’ (Hassan, 1987:37, cited in Fox, 2003:6), even in his most Post-modern guise(s), recognizes the institutionalization of visible power within the Panopticon (Foucault, 1977) and, as Gordon (2000: xv) identifies in his introduction to Foucault’s unpublished works on power, it is one of Foucault’s essential messages ‘that the apparent neutrality and political invisibility of techniques of power is what makes them so dangerous’. Yet, the historically-derived search for ‘new and more effective political ways of seeing’ that Gordon (2000: xv) ascribes to Foucault requires an even more inclusive openness to the purposeful manipulation and interplay of visible and invisible power - beyond the subject’s complicity with the inscription of power. As Geczi and Ventris (2006: 572) remind one, ‘in subscribing to Nietzsche’s approach, Foucault (1980) declares that his own aim is not to recover the eternal origins of things, but to render visible the “discontinuities” that cross them.’

It must be always remembered that not all subjects are the ‘principle of [their] own subjection’ (Foucault, 1977:202, cited in Fox, 2003:28). As Virilio (2003:84) candidly admits, ‘your sight does not master the pictures [the visible/invisible], it’s the pictures [the visible/invisible], that master your sight.’

Thorne and Kouzmin (2006) propose a manifesto legitimising a reflexive consciousness in Public Policy and Public Administration, attuned to the play of visibility and invisibility underpinning political, economic and social hegemony. Currently, political, economic, social “realities” and discourses are dominated by false, seemingly anarchic and transcendent, Neo-liberal notions of the efficacy and the desirability of unfettered free markets, oligarchic democracy and technological innovation. A reflexive consciousness must address the inter-woven discourse of globalization, virtual organizations and the paradoxes of individual sovereignty which support hegemonic interests.

As Thorne and Kouzmin (2006) indicate, such a reflexive consciousness must be most adroit in relation to retarding the use of visibility and/or invisibility to protect and advance the interests of oligarchies and corporate capital. This consciousness must also address the complicity of the Post-modern in the Neo-liberal project and its uncontested acceptance of ongoing Epochal change. The Post-modern fails because it does not accept that some “realities” are perceptively more real, more privileging and more threatening than others (Thorne, 2005). This involves an anti-essentialism that acknowledges the possibility of constructions of reality that are more threatening than others. This means watching out for exclusionary narratives of light that cross over and dominate narratives of progress and technological determinism to present humanity with only one possible future. One must be equipped with the ability to act visibly and invisibly and to use multiplicity, hybridity, image and non-image to maintain narratives within multiple shades and graduations of light and darkness, even within the most oppressive uses of transparent light.

**Conclusion**

It is possible to learn from the “Dark Ages” discourse to avoid one’s culture, or what passes for it, ‘slipping into a dead end’ (Jacobs, 2004:4) and to establish what is required to retain
and further develop a living culture. It is important that one does not fall for the emulation of conquerors, surrender for trinkets, or settle for disuse and forgetfulness. Following Sennett (1996), such cultural/societal enervation requires a Public Policy and Public Administration based on the constructive decentralization of power which refuses to regulate conflict and which maintains bureaucratic routines open to social conflict - a Public Policy and Public Administration that has no guilt over conflict but reacts comprehensively when subject to the visible and invisible manipulations of oligarchs and elites. As Sennett (1996) suggests, this transformation will be enhanced when abundance is transferred from the Military Industrial Complex to human ends.

One must require of elites, and the economically-dominant who proclaim the end of the “Iron Cage” of bureaucracy, that they actually dismantle all aspects of an enveloping, supposedly outmoded, apparatus of control in physical space and cyber-space. One must resist technology for its own sake and insist on technology ‘that makes practical the system of social dis-organization of [individual’s] needs in order [for one] to become adult’ (Sennett, 1996:177). This requires that the global, virtual organizations, composed of sovereign individuals, must actually be highly flexible, conflict ridden and unstable, constantly changing and requiring, and rewarding the creative, and the psychological maturity, which prevents disagreements over particular issues escalating to the level of unilateral or mutual destruction.

In all, it is vital that one is not even partly seduced, as is Sennett (1996;2006), by the purposefully - false anarchism evident in the Neo-liberal-global-virtual-sovereign-individual fantasy. One must continually strive to see the purposeful illusions and mystifications within the flux of visible and invisible power. This requires developing individual and group ability to sense and engage with the purposeful manipulations of the visible and invisible without succumbing to massive external repression – to hegemony.

As Thorne and Kouzmin (2006) indicate, escaping from this discourse is not easy. Exposing the machinations behind visibility and invisibility is important. One must understand how prevailing hidden, and autonomous, elites (Selznick, 1957) operate, via smoke and mirrors, to render self-interest as, somehow, obviously self evident - as a fundamental organizing principle of not just economic activity but all contemporary social and, especially, organizational, compacts. This may allow one to ameliorate, even remove, some of the worst abuses. This means that one must support visible and invisible resistance to the underlying actuality of economic, social and political exploitation within global, virtual and sovereign-individual consciousnesses.

One must continue to expose this consciousness and its mutations as empty, with limited communal or physical nourishment. However, such exposure is not necessarily decisive and may be dangerous and self-defeating. Nothing is resolved harmoniously when the visible is always the initial target. The discursive game continues – propaganda prevails. Exposure is only a temporary satisfaction. New stratagems emerge, new elites ferment and contend for primacy and new visible and invisible arenas are brought into play.

Fortunately, the promise of disorder, the recognition of the place of darkness in all contexts and all times is paradoxical but compelling: ‘that by extricating the city [or the locale or nation or society] from pre-planned control, men will become more in control of themselves and aware of each other’ (Sennett, 1996:198). However, it is very difficult to abandon an enveloping faith in “light” over “dark” - lightness over darkness, visible over the invisible.

Even the poet laureate of the destitute, Bukowski (1996), yearns for light as a way of resisting “death in life” and illuminating our so often hidden “marvellous” individuality. Bukowski (1996:400) sought any light - ‘it may not be much light but it beats the darkness’. For it is in the light where God offered “chances” - especially the possibility of redemption. Yet, Bukowski (1996) should beware. The gods may wait to “delight in us” but may also inflict their own forms of submission – dank and otherwise. As Shakespeare (1974), another poet from the impolite, disorderly, “invisible” side of the Thames river, notable for bear baiters, prostitutes and ale-houses, observes about these very same Gods: ‘As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods; They kill us for their sport’ (King Lear, Act iv, Scene 1 in Shakespeare, 1974:131).

It seems that one has become ‘utterly insensitive to the evils of excessive illumination’ (Tanizaki, 2001:55). Perhaps, with Tanizaki (2001), one should envision a full and rounded
individual and communal existence that grows from “the realities of life”, including the “visible darkness” experienced by ancestors who, when forced ‘to live in dark rooms, presently came to discover beauty in shadows, ultimately to guide shadows towards beauty’s ends’ (Tanizaki, 2001:29) - to comprehend, and retain, the inter-related mystery of light, shadows and darkness and to extinguish and/or push back into the shadows those visible and invisible things that diminish human existence.

This may lead one to the promise of a permanent disorder since ‘survival depends on social acts and experiences rather than the brute possession of material goods’ (Sennett, 1996:178). Otherwise, one remains transfixed in the spotlight. Beware the brutal, yet cowardly, secular Puritans afraid of one’s powers; increasingly vulnerable to religious and other certainties; unwilling to explore what it is not possible to control in advance; and surrounded by institutions which encourage citizens to make this new Puritanism a permanent manner of existence.

Is it possible to now heed Bourke’s (2006: x) clarion call to escape from a time where ‘public policy and private lives have become fear-bound’ and the fear generated by the fluxing of visible and invisible power has become ‘the emotion through which public life is administered’. For, it is time that Public Policy and Public Administration turn to a visible and invisible politics that ‘fear[s] for the lives of others, near and far’ (Bourke, 2006: x). The inseparable ‘now “hidden”, now “open” fight’ (Marx and Engels, 1967:79) must continue.

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