Loyola
Marymount
University

DAVID M. BOJE

Organizational Storytelling

The Struggles of Pre-modern, Modern and Postmodern Organizational Learning Discourses

Pre-text

My purpose is to look at what variety of capitalism organizations are learning. Lyons (1993: 7–8) concludes that organizational learning scholars focus on this list of practices:[1]

- Embrace diversity in race, gender, age, experience and global perspective
- Grant importance to continuous improvements; re-shaping products or services; re-focusing missions
- Leverage learning with the use of multifunctional and/or cross-functional teams
- Treat employees as assets or investments
- Encourage managers and employees to be self-controlled, self-disciplined, self-managed
- Share important information at all levels
- View change not as an event but a condition
- Encourage risk-taking by helping people be free from fear of failure
- Emphasize openness, shared values and information
- Play down command and control authority/hierarchy
- Carefully reinforce double-loop or generative learning while retaining single-loop or adaptive learning for routine functions

He concludes from this list: 'We are witnessing the evolution of the learning organization'

(p. 8). I disagree with his premise that this is a recent evolution or a basic paradigm shift in the kind of capitalism being practiced. I think that all organizations are learning organizations and their learning curriculum has been evolving for several centuries. Rather than a confluence or 'postmodern generative paradigm' shift to new learning competencies, and away from modernist practices, I see a struggle of old and new discourses of capitalism.

Among the many theories about organizational learning, there are two that focus upon dialogue. Both Argyris and Schon (1978) and Senge (1991) advocate conversational dialogue, a process of face-to-face, assumption-testing disclosure, and trust-building. 'This then is the basic meaning of a "learning organization"—an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future' (Senge, 1991). Consultants, such as Sandra Weston, at a 2-day Workshop on Dialogue at the Toronto Organizational Development Network Annual Conference, and Linda Teurfs, a management consultant in California, focus upon changing how people dialogue as a process for successful organizational transformation over a period of several years:

Learning to shift from competitive discussion to collaborative dialogue, surfacing assumptions including affect, is critical for allowing team building and high level team functioning to be institutionalized after the consultant departs. (Harder and Weston, 1993: 16)

Improving the dialogue process is appropriate, but rather than organizational learning transitioning from rational discussion to affective dialogue, I think the focus could be on capitalism as a learning organization curriculum. The heritage of exploitive capitalism has been the systematic dehumanization of workers, especially children, and the deterioration of natural environment resources. According to several authors, if organizational participants can learn new ways of dialoging their firms, then they will also learn to decipher and govern their organization and environment in different ways (Bartunek and Moch, 1987; Huff, 1990; Weick, 1990; Barr et al., 1992; Shrivastava, 1993; Tenkasi and Boland, 1993).

While there are many varieties of knowledge and discourse, my focus continues to be on storytelling (Boje, 1991a, 1991b, forthcoming). Storytelling is an in situ practice of power and discipline. People in organizations are 'natural, born storytellers' (Mitroff and Kilmann, 1976) and man himself is 'homo narrens' (Fisher, 1984). Storytelling is the preferred sense-making currency of internal and external stakeholders embedded in the dynamic process of incremental and collective refinement of their stories of new events as well as ongoing reinterpretations of culturally sacred story-lines (Boje, 1991a: 106). Storytellers are more than 'in place metering devices' (Pondy and Boje, 1980) put there by social scientists. Rather, it is the storytellers who

construct the categories-in-use, the frames-in-use, the histories-in-use, and the capitalism-in-use in their discipline and governance of organizational learning.

A discourse is an extended expression of thought or knowledge on a topic that happens in a disciplined way. In discourse, there is an infinite play of differences in meanings enacted through socially and politically constructed, hegemonic practices (Laclau, 1983, 1988; Clegg, 1989: 178). It is in the collective dynamics (Lang and Lang, 1961) of the storytelling that discursive practices construct our knowledge and power relationships. Storytelling is a collective dynamic that scripts, sways and disciplines organizational learning. Stories get disciplined in transmission, and very different sides of a story get told in various sites in the collective. People do not just freely and openly engage in storytelling; they temper their storytelling, to present only a few sides of a discussion or a few voices in the governance of the enterprise. The collective learning task is to work out the controversies between various sides of the story. Organizational learning is constituted by the storytelling. As people join in the telling, the various implications of the stories fracture and translate into numerous factions of the organization. The stories discipline as they enroll technical, capital and humans into the same plots. They spin histories that narrow choices. We assume that old stories are recounted to frame current decisions according to the unfolding story-lines and thus, as social memory, keep the organization from repeating historically bad choices (Boje, 1991a).

Tamara, a Discursive Metaphor for Collective Storytelling

In Hollywood, a play called *Tamara* puts the audience in a special relationship with an experimental fiction.[2] *Tamara* is a play and a language-based metaphor of the storytelling organization (Boje, 1991a, forthcoming; Boje and Dennehy, 1993). In *Tamara*, Los Angeles' longest-running play, a dozen characters unfold their stories before a walking, sometimes running, audience. Instead of a stationary audience looking at a single stage, the audience fragments into small groups that chase characters from one room to the next, from one floor to the next. They even go into bedrooms, kitchens and chambers to chase and co-create the stories that interest them the most.

Tamara enacts a true story taken from the diary of Aelis Mazoyer. It is set in Italy, on 10 January 1927, in the era of Mussolini. Gabriele d'Annunzio, an exotic poet and patriot, eccentric womanizer and revolutionary, who is exceedingly popular with the people, is under 'virtual' house arrest. Tamara, an expatriate Polish beauty, aristocrat and aspiring artist, is summoned from Paris to paint d'Annunzio's portrait. If we assume that there are a dozen stages and a dozen storytellers, then the number of story-lines an audience could trace in

its networking as the 'wandering audience', chasing the 'wandering discourses' of *Tamara*, is 12^{12}! (**479,001,600**).

For example: I follow the chauffeur from the kitchen to the maid's bedroom; there she meets the butler who has just entered from the drawing room. As they complete their scene, they each wander off into different rooms, leaving the audience, myself included, to choose whom to follow. As I enact my decision on which character to follow, I experience a very different set of stories than someone following another sequence of characters. As an audience member, one never gets to follow all the stories since the action is simultaneous, involving different characters in different rooms and on different floors. At the theater each audience member receives a passport so that he or she can return every so often to try to figure out more of the many intertwined networks of stories. *Tamara* cannot be understood in one visit, even if a group of friends from the audience split off into six different directions and share their story data. Should one be in the room with their best friend, having both come to this room by way of different rooms and character-sequences, each friend can walk away from the same conversation event with entirely different stories.

Finally, there is an indeterminacy about each character. One thinks one is following a chauffeur, who in one discourse changes the rules and becomes a spy disguised as a chauffeur, who then becomes an aristocrat pretending to be a spy, pretending to be a chauffeur. Now, in his love affair with the maid, is he indeed in love with the maid, is he using her to spy on the aristocracy, or is he toying with her as an exploitable subject?

The learning situation in *Tamara* is pluralistic, actions are individuated, and there is an awareness for processes that involve many voices and many sides to any story. The organizational learning task is to provide spaces and times for people to accomplish their wandering discourse. The story is constantly being changed as it is translated across different language sites or what Pondy (1978) referred to as 'jargon groups'. The stories diffuse unevenly throughout the learning organization. When people no longer tell the story of an experience in writing or speaking, the memory is lost. People in their discourse socially construct their organization, in a process of ongoing learning by narrating their experiences in ways that produce and reproduce dominance and submission (Poole et al., 1986: 249; Bruner, 1990: 56; Tenkasi and Boland, 1993: 21). The storytelling collective is a community of many different and often opposed interests. The story builds up a series of alliances and counter-alliances.

So what does *Tamara* have to do with theories of learning organization? Organization theorists have relied for too long on the machine metaphors, for example the computer (a more modern machine than the clockwork), and the organic metaphors for theorizing organiz-

ational learning. In a recent article, Killduff (1993) deconstructed the classic *Organizations* to reveal how March and Simon (1958) reframed the machine metaphor into their computer metaphor. Emulating our learning after computer systems, or even organic constructions, keeps us on Toulmin's (1990) Omega detour, away from solutions such as 'green business' that focus on non-machine-based models of organization, more friendly to Mother Earth.

The limiting aspects of the computer metaphor have been effectively summarized by Tenkasi and Boland (1993): (1) confusing 'information processing' with 'meaning making' activities to elevate a technicalized construction of human sense making and learning, (2) reifying the flexible, shifting and contradictory nature of human understanding into fixed and static programs and sub-routines, (3) dismissing inputs that do not fit pre-given formats of programming, (4) reifying organizational learning and change as an outcome of programs of the mind, (5) ignoring environmental features that do not fit the programmable problem representations (pp. 2–9). In applying Giddens's (1979) theory of structuration, Tenkasi and Boland (1993) critique the alliance of structural-functionalism with the computer metaphor of routines and sub-routines, an alliance that permeates the management and organization literature (Weiss and Ilgen, 1985; Gersick and Hackman, 1990; Cohen, 1991; Louis and Sutton, 1991). They advocate instead a 'narrative structure' metaphor for organizational learning and change. Here, we will look at how discursive tournaments are hegemonic games of dominance and resistance constituting organizational learning. To me, this is the same project that Louis Pondy engaged in 'bringing mind back' into our theories of organization, including organizational learning (Pondy and Boje, 1980), as well as his work to go beyond mechanistic, organic, and even open system models to language-level systems (Pondy and Mitroff, 1979; Fitzgibbons et al., forthcoming).

Latour versus Kuhn Theories of Learning and Organization

Some ideas by Bruno Latour (1987, 1988, 1993) will help extend this collective storytelling metaphor into the examples that follow. Bruno Latour's work on philosophy of science is quite different from that of Thomas Kuhn (1962). Rather than paradigm shifts, Latour's focus is on the historical and political aspects of scientific knowledge production. There are forms of story-delegation, story-dispatch and story-monitoring in his theories that are relevant to storytelling in learning organizations.

Actors delegate to a script the ability to attribute roles and to delegate actions to them, although they remain free to modify the script, constantly monitor the contradiction between the two opposite delegations and check the fulfilling of the script. (Latour, 1993)

The organizational learning situation is as follows: the story dis-patches the performance that the actors learn to unfold. Tellers and listeners learn to attribute their own roles to the reified story; the actors and listeners learn to monitor differences between the story script and the story performance; actors learn to modify the story to attend to changes in the performance of the discourse. In sum, I would like to extend Latour's work to a storytelling approach to organization learning.

● *Story-dispatch* The story dispatches the actions to be played out in the roles of the performers.
● *Story-delegation* Actors (human and non-human) delegate to the story plot their ability to attribute their own roles.
● *Story-monitoring* Actors, as they modify the story, self-monitor, and are monitored by others who are sensitized to the contradictions between story-line and subsequent performance.
● *Story-passage points* In hegemonic discourse, storytelling passage points involve powerful gate-keeping actions. There are review com-mittees, associations, and boards that decide storytelling hegemonic concerns.
● *Storytelling collectives* Storytelling collectives recruit followers to subscribe to their more valued stories and exclude those who do not. Interests are heterogeneous and various factions are often at logger-heads in more diverse collectives. Some people in the collective have more resources to shape their stories.

In the next section, I would like to build upon Latour's formulations and apply them to a theory of collective storytelling that contrasts pre-modern, modern and postmodern organizational learning discourses.

Three Discourses of Organizational Learning

Table 1 is a chart summarizing three historical discourses that have affected organizational learning. These discourses intermingle, inter-penetrate and fragment the collective dynamics of organizational learning.

As in *Tamara*, the organization learning is a struggle of multiple discourses. In the pre-modern discourse, stories dispatch, delegate and monitor the customs and traditions of sovereignty and eldership. In the modern organizational learning discourse, stories dispatch and monitor the cult of efficiency and legitimate functional interpretations. In postmodern organizational learning, stories dispatch, delegate and monitor a diversity of voices and viewpoints, including those of environmental sustainability and social participation. In sum, my theory is that all three learning discourses struggle within the storytell-ing organization.

Table 1 Three discourses of organizational learning

	Pre-modern discourse	Modern discourse	Postmodern discourse
Dispatch	Discussion dispatched in a framework of customs that defines and clarifies the learning process	Discussion dispatched in a framework of hierarchy that defines and clarifies the learning process	Discussion dispatched in a framework of differences that defines and clarifies the learning process
Delegation	Conformity delegated to the 'yoke of custom'	Conformity delegated to the 'cult of efficiency'	Conformity delegated to 'political correctness' is deconstructed
Habits	Habits of discussion that once included masters, craftsmen, crafts-women and apprentices	Habits of rational deliberation among internally differentiated members are established	Habits of discussion that include a great diversity of views and voices is established (including pockets of resistance)
Monitoring	Actors monitor stories that legitimate traditions important to group heritage and fraternal cohesion	Actors monitor stories that legitimate the manifest destiny of progress and efficiency	Actors monitor stories that regulate equality and environmental sustainability
Passage points	Passage points include age-stratification, and respect for elder-learning is stressed	Passage points include hierarchical stratification, and respect for expert-learning is stressed	Passage points include wide inquiry networks of inclusion, and respect for local learning is stressed
Reflection	Collectives promote unreflective imitation of sovereign authorities and habitual routines	Collectives promote unreflective discussion confined to functional knowledge and myth of progress	Collectives promote reflective discussion of the process of governance and learning

Pre-modern Organizational Learning Discourses

Pre-modern storytelling is a mythic and spiritual journey dispatching and delegating traditional archetypes, particularly those of elder, seniority and protocol. The collective learning habits and passage points are carefully scripted as a spectacle where the sovereign imparts moral lessons to the subjects (Foucault, 1975, 1977). Pre-modern, western discourse did not differentiate the person from his or her social or religious role—spouse, soldier, and so forth (Thachankary, 1992: 225). Pre-modern is a mythic and nomadic journey, defending pre-industrial artisan craftsmanship, spirituality, family and a strong sense of community over economic rationality. Rather than experiencing era-by-era

displacement, as capitalist, industrial and enlightenment discourses associated with modernism became articulated, the pre-modernists stand steadfast in their defense of traditional alternatives (Toulmin, 1990). Pope Pius XI, for example, continued to resist the discourse of commodified labor and 'laissez-faire' capitalism, and other economic activity 'directed by the arbitrary will of owners without regard for the training and dignity of the workers' (Clune, 1943: 254–5). In the Americas, the native-born continue to defend a more spiritual view of 'Mother Earth' against the advance of industrial progress that is no longer environmentally sustainable. In feudal Japan, western-style capitalism was initially considered too threatening to pre-modern ethical heritages: modern ideas could lure people away from old customs and make people egotistical (Hirschmeier and Yui, 1975: 201). Modernists attacked the evils of pre-modern practices such as slavery, religious repression, torture and democratic inequality.

Besides their debate with modernists, several postmodernists defend selected aspects of the pre-modern. Baudrillard (1987, 1988), Deleuze and Guattari (1972) and, to a lesser extent, Lyotard (1984) advocate a return to pre-modern commerce and society, in which tribal cultures lived in more harmony with their ecological environment and with each other. The pre-modern, communal order that preceded the urban, mechanistic, capitalistic society is becoming increasingly popular as an alternative model of living, as exemplified in the 'Greening the Corporation' movement (Shrivastava, 1993). Deleuze and Guattari see the pre-modern nomadic tribes, which roamed deterritorialized spaces, exalting desire and emancipation while resisting efforts of state and religious powers to subdue them, as a postmodern model. Jameson (1986) argues that we are imprisoned in modernism in ways that do now allow us to see the validity of pre-modern stories; these may be viewed in the form of political allegories that transcend western tastes and challenge dualities that prescribe a separation of political and private, especially private, libidinal dynamics. In other words, I, as a white, male westerner, listen without the same understanding as someone who has life experience in a pre-modern, tribal society. Finally, Clegg (1989) draws upon pre-modern discourse, such as Machiavelli's, to fashion postmodern theories of power. Toulmin's (1990) Omega Theory frames modernist philosophy as a multi-century detour that connects postmodern philosophies to a rediscovery of their affinities to pre-modern discourse. Nomadic life in a postmodern world is anti-conformist, anti-traditional and anti-normalizing.

In this section, while there are a variety of pre-modern discourses, I will focus on the collective storytelling practices of guilds to show the struggle between guild and modernist discourses. Before the modernist era of capitalism and before the industrial revolution, pre-modern guilds appeared with Apostolic Constitutions in the 3rd and 4th

centuries. 'God was no respector of persons.' Masters, slaves and servants were supposed to be treated equally. Even two popes were former slaves. By the end of the 10th century, slavery had almost disappeared in Europe, but serfdom took its place. During the crusades, kings needed money and sold to many towns the right to regulate their own trade and commerce. Purchasing the freedom to regulate trade freed the town from the exactions of the bailiff and the sheriff. Being self-governing in its organization development, price and wage fixing, communal purchases and punishment of its members were new-found freedoms. 'Into this world, which had passed from slavery to feudalism and from feudalism to freedom, was born the social and economic order called the Guild System' (Clune, 1943: xix). The study of religious, craft, merchant and trade guilds reveals a way of life, not of some forgotten age, but of a discourse of organization that has lineage to modern industrial life (Smith and Smith, 1870; Sommerville, 1938; MacKenney, 1987).

Relevant to organizational learning theory is the observation that guilds are a form of organizational learning through self-governance that persisted for six and a half centuries. Often, the conclave members locked themselves in the Guildhall to meet and decide work rules, discuss how trade would be done, how to enforce quality among their members, and how to deliver goods at fair prices. Besides conclave meetings, organizational learning occurred in years of apprenticeship to graduate craftsmen (and for some centuries, crafts*women*), under the watchful eye of the guild masters who derived their authority from the town's nobility and clergy. For a time, guilds united brothers and sisters, craftspeople and masters, as one big family for mutual aid and to provide group responsibility for welfare services such as lodging, loans and burials. The knowledge acquired in guild meetings, guild apprentice training and guild work was of a different sort from what people would tolerate or learn in modern times.

1. In the accumulation of wealth, the strong businesses were kept from destroying the livelihood of the weak businesses. Masters, craftsmen, apprentices, customers, and town officials had common social, economic, and industrial interests.
2. Craftsmen could not go in front of someone else's shop and offer a customer a bonus to come to their own shop.
3. Masters could not steal each other's craftsmen by offers of high wages.
4. Guilds settled disputes by arbitration and prohibited brothers and sisters to sue one another. This strengthened the authority and prestige of the Guild and kept them from coming under the authority of the courts.
5. Masters who increased their wealth at the expense of the town were labeled avaricious. There were many Guild regulations to enforce and control the maximization of wealth. Unscrupulous competitive practices were considered violations of the Ten Commandments.

6. Those doing poor quality work, giving false measures, selling unsound wine, could be fined, placed in the pillory, on the 'ducking stool', made to drink the unsound wine, or whipped and otherwise tortured by the powerful Guild officials.
(Clune, 1943: 61–79)

Guilds followed the progress of early industrial development from Italy and France to England, America and Australia. The first merchant guild in England was established not earlier than 1093. Early on, they achieved a number of what would now be considered very post-modern ideals: '(1) the protection of the members against non-members, (2) an insistence on fair wages and reasonable prices for the producer, (3) an equal insistence on sound materials, proper workmanship, and reasonable prices for the consumer, and (4) a wide distribution of private property, the only guarantee … of personal independence' (Clune, 1943: 47).

A universal contentment existed throughout the labor world. Industrial exploitation, or the self-aggrandizement of a few at the expense of the many, was rendered impossible by the strictest Guild statutes. To live and let live was the rule. No one could participate in labor's remuneration who did not fully participate also in the toil. This could be legitimately insisted upon because capital investments, in the modern sense, were at the period entirely unknown.
(Husslein, 1931: 32)

Why Did Guilds Decline?

After a few centuries, the masters conspired to keep the number of journeymen who could become masters to a minimum. A new form of organizational learning curriculum was beginning to struggle with the guild ways of learning. Masters began to organize to keep the wages of apprentices and journeymen to a minimum. As masters began to command more capital, invest in more expensive tools and larger enterprises, it became increasingly difficult for craftsmen to become master-entrepreneurs, who became owners, and could then teach their own apprentices. Guild membership also began to be passed by inheritance instead of apprenticeship. Over time, women became excluded and guilds degenerated into political associations, drinking clubs, and even admitted members who had nothing to do with the craft or trade. The guild system gradually lost its pattern of self-governance involving craftsmen and apprentices. The masters of this enterprise were linked into one fraternity.
  Guilds did not die, but subdivided into two rival classes: employers' associations and unions. Friendly societies for employers, chambers of commerce and trade associations for the rich, and unions for the working classes, were all offspring of the guild system. The guild family quarreled over the inequity in the divisions of their estates. Securing the economic sufficiency of all in the enterprise was no longer

a value. Self-governance was failing to control exploitive practices; the long apprenticeships no longer guaranteed fine quality workmanship; people became free to pursue their own economic and social interests, and the duty of superintending industry fell to the state by the early 1800s. Contemporary organizations are not nearly as attentive as were the ancient guilds, who took their town and national citizenship very seriously.

What if Population Ecology is Wrong?

A population ecology explanation of the decline is that guilds were a population once well-suited to their times, but as economic market conditions changed, the guilds were deselected. A number of factors support such an interpretation: (1) more capital was needed to harness water and steam power (and later electric power) and to compete in more global markets; (2) large-scale production required more organization than a master, one or two journey people, and a few apprentices could provide; (3) big factories were needed, with many managers and stock ownership, and each worker doing just a few low-skill tasks.

An alternative to the population ecology argument is that guilds survived six to seven centuries because people were not so eager to move from small-scale, skilled, craft production to large-scale, unskilled, mass production. 'The people of the Middle Ages did not share our modern eagerness for gigantic factories any more than we share the Soviet enthusiasm for collectives in place of the family farm' (which has also been deselected) (Sommerville, 1938: 10–11).

... this fatal policy of exclusiveness, the artificial closing of doors to journey-men, was not due to any material change in the conditions of production, such as the enlargement of the market; it was due simply to moral deterioration, to the growth of selfishness, to the weakening of the old sense of fellowship ... All the critics and reformers of the guilds in the sixteenth century sought the remedy for evils in the return of the guilds to the observance of their professed principles. Nobody believed that a change in economic conditions had made the guild system obsolete. (Sommerville, 1938: 24–5)

Apprentices, craftspeople and masters were part of the same brotherhood and shared common economic and social interests. Modernism is a form of organizational learning that popularized the machine metaphor for its governance model. As production became large scale, mechanical power was harnessed to business. The growth of capital explanation for the end of the guild system and the rise of the modern system of production does not square with historical accounts. Capital markets grew from the 15th century alongside the guild system. It is debatable whether modernist forms of organizational learning are any more conducive to human and even national welfare than the old ways.

Guilds are not extinct. There is a growing guild of artisans through-out northern Italy that has rekindled the old fraternalism, principles of self-governance, and self-control. The diamond guilds are well-to-do, but 'hardened in their selfishness', the craftspeople never become masters and the town welfare is of no great concern. There are other survivals to this day of the old guild system. For example, in the US Supreme Court there are guild-like ways of conducting judicial conversation (see the criteria listed in column 1 of Table 1). The actors delegate to the judicial script the definitions of their roles and sequence of actions. There is not much modification of the script. The judges enter the proceedings, three abreast, with the most senior judges walking first and the most recent appointments taking up the rear of the procession. In the Wednesday conference, only attended by the judges, the most junior judge takes the notes and answers the knocks on the door, while the other judges continue their dialogue. In giving opinions, the most senior judge speaks first, the next senior speaks second, and the last appointed speaks last. The dialogue follows a traditional scripting of roles and protocol that is pre-modern. The court has its discipline story to perform: the court serves as society's stern surrogate parent: the role of the court is to administer family discipline and control—by applying punishment and confinement measures instead of counseling and rehabilitation measures to wayward children. Other examples of pre-modern guild-like forms include fraternities, sororities, boards of directors, trustees, etc. (Boje and Dennehy, 1993). In sum, pre-modernism sustains its struggle with modernism as an alternative organizational learning discourse.

Modernist Organizational Learning Discourses

In modern storytelling, the storytellers dispatch and delegate a more bureaucratic and pragmatic 'cult of efficiency'. The habits of deliberation are more rational. Actors monitor stories to sustain the discourse of progress and hierarchical stratification. Actors must fit themselves to the technical logic of the story and play out very functional, unemotional relationships. In modern discourse, 'rational deliberation' and 'rational cooperation' ideals led to discussion processes that were more functional, less social, less egalitarian, less town-oriented and more machine-metaphor-inspired. Self-governance became governance from the top performance program to the bottom performance sub-routines, with little tolerance or space for bottom-up feedback loops.

Modernist discourse sought to tame pre-modern pagan and mythical passion, contain the feudal corruption of absolute monarchy, and counteract the autocracy of the clergy. 'Modernism is described as having elevated a faith in reason to a level at which it becomes equated with progress' (Parker, 1992: 3). Cooper and Burrell (1988) describe

two modernist projects: the 'critical' programs of the Italian Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and the 'systematic', instrumental rationality of Weber's iron cage of bureaucracy. The second program of modernism, 'systematic', fashioned the rhetoric of 'instrumental rationality', most obvious in Bell's (1973) postindustrial society models. In the postindustrial scenario, science and technology would control the pre-modern world with the disciplines of cybernetics, decision theory, game theory, utility theory, and most recently transaction costs (Cooper and Burrell, 1988: 93–6). The system, particularly a large-scale one, in the interests of technological progress would contain pre-modern man in the 'performativity' machine (Lyotard, 1984) and the 'panoptic' gaze (Foucault, 1977). Habermas defends selected aspects of modernism: 'I think that instead of giving up modernity and its project as a lost cause, we should learn from the mistakes of those extravagant programs which have tried to negate modernity' (1981: 11). He sees modernism as an unfinished project with unfulfilled emancipative potential. He seeks, for example, to refine Marxist forms of criticism by reconstructing the too-rational and exploitive aspects of modernism and developing rational strategies for consensus. Habermas and others associated with the Frankfurt School (Critical Theory) are critics of postmodern theorists such as Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard and Lyotard (Cooper and Burrell, 1988; Best and Kellner, 1991; Deetz, 1992). Some postmodernists see nothing salvageable in modernism and focus only on hierarchy, oppression, sustained racial domination, cultural marginalization, environmental deterioration and sexism. In sum, modernism is a variety of discourses struggling with pre-modern and postmodern formulations.

There is more mind discipline, less physical torture, less spontaneity in the modern enterprise than in the pre-modern guild system. Pre-modern learning about quality, craftsmanship, pride in workmanship, self-reliance and entrepreneurship was clobbered by the modernist fusion of Max Weber's functionalist bureaucracy with Taylor's time and motion controls and Henry Ford's assembly line. In this section, since I assume readers are familiar with the critique of modernism and capitalist hegemony, I shall only briefly outline the more critical points:

1. Modernist Organizational Learning is a Discourse of Western Capitalism

Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* appeared in 1776 with a discourse of 'laissez-faire' capitalism. The new discourse became a doctrine marketed by powerful industrial interests. Turgot, the French Prime Minister, used it to sanction the abolition of the guilds. Western capitalist discourse commodified labor, subjecting it to iron laws of supply and demand, regulating wages and prices of goods by the invisible hand of free competition. This discourse met resistance in Europe and later in Japan. Medieval and modernist teachings on capitalism are diametrically opposed. In Japan, western-style capi-

talism might also make people too egoistic, make them forget their ethical heritage, and lure them away from the old customs (Hirsch-meier and Yui, 1975: 201). While European clergy feared a decline in the influence of Christianity, the Japanese nobles feared western capitalism would, in fact, make people convert to Christianity. Japan's nobility also reasoned that its industrial revolution might result in a labor movement that would adopt Russian Marxism. By the mid-1880s, there was a revival of traditionalism in Japan.

2. Modernist Organizational Learning Deskills Workers

The guild trained members to high standards of craftsmanship, while more modern training conforms people to the machine discipline of the hierarchy. The charges of 'monopoly' and 'restraint of free trade' were raised against the craft guilds. Guild advocates, on the other hand, charged that forcing wages down to poverty levels was economic paganism such that property rights would become concentrated in the hands of a few, businesses would become more avaricious, and the town would be left to absorb the costs of the social welfare that was addressed by the guilds. The modern system of production has led to a degradation of the worker.

3. Modernist Organizational Learning Separates Workers from the Discourse of Quality

Knowledge became the commodity of experts rather than of elders. Organizational learning became hierarchical learning. Inspectors, not craftspeople, decided issues of quality. With modernism, the worker lost control of the discourse of quality. Experts taught lower-paid clerks and bullying supervisors to inspect quality within the production system. The people also lost their governance discourse, the system of discussing differences and interests that had flourished for so many centuries. Revitalizing the forgotten discourse of quality makes organizational learning a hot topic in contemporary organizations.

4. Modernist Organizational Learning is a Pedagogy Justifying a Reduced Quality of Working Life

In late modernism, the hours of work were trimmed to 40 or less, the machines became less dangerous, health plans became available, and the human-relations engineers have tamed the economic machine so that people are about half as satisfied as they were with their guilds. On the other hand, average incomes are continuing to decline, the middle class is shriveling, some first-world countries are becoming more illiterate, the environment is becoming more toxic, and the industrial machines are being fitted to third-world labor. Sweat shops, often using child labor, still accompany the search for ever cheaper pools of labor. The pursuit of health and safety violations by the state is underfunded. Learning to ignore voices of the exploited is a form of power/knowledge institutionalized in modernist organizational learning.

Management Learning

5. Modernist Organizational Learning Separates Workers from Customers

In the guild, the customers could bring their complaints to the attention of the craftspeople. Modernism widened the gulf between craftsperson and customer. Self-governance of higher quality goods, fairly measured and fairly available to customers in the Middle Ages, was less costly than it is in our Modern Ages. The Better Business Bureau simply does not have the same sanctions available to customers who brought their complaints to the medieval guilds. The individual lost control of his/her own tools, the rate charged for his/her labor and the price of goods sold. The gap between customers and enterprise continues to widen.

6. Modernist Organizational Learning Privileges Discipline within a 'Cult of Efficiency'

A metaphor developed to explain that the body of man is a machine and that his mind is also a machine. The modernist language dispatches efficiency and performativity (Lyotard, 1984; Latour, 1993). In the 'iron cage of bureaucratic' discourse, each actor is scaled, normed, digitized and enscripted into the dialogue of the 'cult of efficiency'. 'They are resistant to change', reply managers about the workers who are not learning the pedagogy of efficiency at a fast enough pace. The learning game in corporations is embedded in a Foucauldian discipline network of panoptic teaching machines, a seamless web of instructional apparatus across the spaces and times of corporate life. In Foucault's (1977) capillary network of disciplinary and punishment mechanisms, we are taught to be 'politically correct' bureaucrats. The learning occurs in the minute-by-minute interactions and the spaces along the hallways, lunchrooms and e-mail networks. The iron cage of the bureaucratic teaching machine is so ubiquitous and benign that the prisoners of modern learning no longer see the bars, the gears, or question the learning agenda.

7. Modernist Organizational Learning Makes People Docile for the Gaze

Control and discipline are the products of organizational learning. People are summarized as digits in a personnel record which is digitized into computer memory. People are gazed by all manner of technology and scientific gadgetry to test, inspect, monitor and gaze their performance to ensure it follows scripted norms. Industrialists and entrepreneurs learn just enough science to grab social control, to translate their interest into more efficient processes, and to retranslate human variation into system parameters. One learns how to subordinate one's body and soul to the master discourse of machine-discipline. There is a discursive division of labor, into horizontal and vertical cells of discourse. The learning is disciplined but not innovative, orderly not profound. It involves large numbers of people, but is not open to too many different points of view, especially views from people at the margins. We are becoming more docile, compliant 'office potatoes'.

8. Modernist Organizational Learning is a White Male-dominated Discourse

Learning in any organization is a struggle, to hear the voices that get muffled by other voices, to read texts that are masked and over-shadowed by other texts, to read between the lines of official corporate storytellers so that the little stories get told (Boje, forthcoming). Calás and Smircich (1993) do: put the excluded voice (e.g. a third-world girl caught in a sub-minimum wage, exploitive job) alongside the modernist account (e.g. a manager's account of efficiency). Modernism is a white male-controlled political, business and social movement that has been slow to change (Ferguson, 1984). Discipline suppresses conflicting and diverse, alternative voices. Few women (especially if they are minority) are in positions of sufficient power to change the discourse of 'cultural relativism', where global trade expansionists seek to enslave third-world minorities (especially women and children) while excluding them from first-world privileges. A rhetoric that focuses upon religious and cultural traditions that justify unequal treatment is professed. Cultural relativism is a political discourse of oppression and abuse.

9. Modernist Organizational Learning is a Pedagogy of Postindustrialism

The iron cage of modernist bureaucracy as a teaching machine elevates a discourse of efficiency, earth-rape and third-world exploitation. Instead of high-tech jobs, we have high-tech lay-offs on a massive scale. The postindustrial story theme is that prosperity will come from becoming an information-age service economy as we work in our 'electronic cottages' (Winsor, 1992). The service economy story, as told by Toffler (1970, 1980, 1990) and Bell (1973) is no longer believable. It would appear undeniable that we have been on the postindustrial path for some time now, making decisions at both government and industry levels that play to the postindustrial scenario (Winsor, 1992). The pedagogy of postindustrialism promises a golden age of high-tech employment, but this story-line by the postindustrial soothsayers is getting harder and harder to believe (Boje and Dennehy, 1993: 11).

10. Modernist Organizational Learning Teaches Empowerment that is Rhetoric Manipulation

Unlike in the guild system, the individual surrenders his or her right to vote or otherwise govern. The individual contracts to be other-directed. Worker 'empowerment' in the guild system meant that the worker could vote on work rules, wages, prices and other economic issues. Now empowerment means being able to decide when to go to the bathroom. O'Conner (1993) has studied other instances of this 'rhetoric manipulation': involvement means more of the same, team participation is reproduction of management control, and my favorite, continuous improvement is 'the threat of uncontinuous employment'. When workers resist change, the solution is learning a language that redefines reality, and puts the people further away from empowered participation.

In sum, modernist discursive practices elevate exploitive production

over more pluralistic and multi-voiced, multi-storied approaches to capitalism (see Table 1). People are resisting the teaching of the service story, when they see that burger-flipping, accounting and insurance jobs after four years of college are not bringing the livelihoods their grandparents enjoyed doing non-college, boring factory work. We have bought into a neoconservative story of destructive capitalism that scripts an exclusionary and toxic scenario. Managers and workers have learned a system of discipline, obedience, surveillance and prescriptions in story-scripts that keep people from transforming the iron teaching machine (Boje and Dennehy, 1993: xxi). It is time for new stories.

Postmodernist Organizational Learning Discourses

Postmodern learning, as summarized in Table 1, is reintroducing the stories and voices of those excluded, marginalized and exploited by the pre-modernist and the modernist learning curriculum. Specifically, it is learning to deconstruct racism, sexism, colonialism, anti-ecology and bureaucratic narratives. Postmodern learning constructs pluralistic participation through multi-voiced dialogue to question grand, totalizing and essentializing claims.

Rosenau (1992) observes that some postmodernists take 'affirmative', while others take 'skeptical' positions. 'Affirmatives' posit that it is possible to move beyond exploitation by transforming organizations rooted in Tayloristic, non-environmentally sustainable, paternalistic and hierarchical practices—into non-hierarchical and non-patriarchical forms, such as circles, webs and networks. Affirmatives elevate equality, democracy, ecology and multiplicity and have their roots in modern and even pre-modern models (Toulmin, 1990). Alternatively, there are postmodernists who are very skeptical of modernistic enlightenment as well as progress discourses. Postmodernism has been described as a politics of alliance in which fragmented movements of environmentalists, African Americans, Latinos, native-born Americans, rain forest tribes, gays, public housing communities and other oppressed groups seeking to align their 'views from below' (Jameson, 1986: 71). While the study of these movements reveals postmodern strategies of resistance and escape, a skeptical appraisal of these movements suggests they reproduce hierarchy, marginalization and exploitation (human and ecological). Skeptical postmodernists frequently adopt Nietzsche's concept of 'difference', the recognition of indeterminacy, what Lytotard (1984) calls the search for instabilities, and Derrida's deconstructive method (1976, 1981). Again in reaction, postmodern discourse decenters the human agent and defends living and social bodies against the grand narrative, mechanical harmony, functional order and ecological plunder. Affirmatives attack skepticals and proclaim that more 'radical' discourses and practices are one-

sided, resulting in 'fragmentation' (Lyotard) or 'implosion' (Baudrillard) while overlooking resistances to forms of capitalistic exploitation. Baudrillard (1987, 1988), perhaps the most radical and defeatist postmodernist, believes we have lost the race to the modernists, who continue to commodify a 'hyper-reality' and repackage postmodernism into oppressive practices. While it is becoming more obvious that projects such as total quality management, lean production and empowerment are neomodernist attempts to package modernism into postmodern language, while keeping the game the same (Boje, 1993; Boje and Winsor, 1993; Winsor, 1993; Winsor and Boje, forthcoming), there are other projects, such as the green movement, which advocate the adoption of the Valdez principles for environmental sustainability which are providing an alternative organizational learning context for business practices.

Besides skeptical and affirmative, postmodernists debate era and non-era theories. An era approach to postmodern organization was developed by Drucker (1957, 1992). He saw postmodern organization as realized in a Cartesian paradigm shift from industrial to post-industrial information networks (1992). A modified era approach is supported by Jameson (1983: 123):

Radical breaks between periods do not generally involve complete changes of content, but rather the restructuration of a certain number of elements already given: features that in an earlier period or system were subordinate now become dominant, and features that had been dominant again become secondary.

The postmodern rebel (Boje, 1993) deconstructs the modernist learning conversation to reveal the muck and mire being smeared across our minds, the regimentation of the commodification programming that we are passively absorbing, and the way in which our own values are neutered. We deconstruct the 'normal' to reveal a brave new world, a Charlie Chaplin 'modern times', and reveal that the pre-modern emperor is also without clothes. Postmodern theorists challenge modernist constructions that elevate the impersonal, functional and mechanical social orders over the personal, and in some instances even resurrect pre-modern spiritual discourses (see Best and Kellner, 1991). In postmodern organizational learning there is more assumption-surfacing and assumption-testing. There are forums to challenge one another's version of the stories. It is legitimate and expected that there will be devil's advocates, explorations of differences, and attention to process. Modern learning masquerades as 'normality' as the expert testimonials and slick presentations receive applause. Deconstructions of this learning are met with charges of 'reactionary', 'defeatist', 'relativist' and 'discontented Marxist'.

Postmodern critique reveals the story of the majority of world

humanity locked within gilded cages, perched upon velvet cushions above the minorities' children laboring on the cage floor, looking between the bars of commodification to the natural, unterritorialized spaces that are being chainsawed, strip-mined and toxified. The postmodernist is in rebellion against the industrial exploiter's life. With 'affirmative' postmodernism (Rosenau, 1992) come the ideals that the imperfections of modernism can be overcome, the spirit of pre-modernism can be rekindled, and people can be taught to live in harmony with people and ecology. Researchers estimate that more than 200 million children, 8 to 14 years old, work as virtual slaves, enduring 14-hour days, seven days a week, for a few dollars a month. Child slavery grows as countries such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and China play their role in the modernist scenario. World Bank consultant David Lindauer is a modernist apologist for this script:

If children were not in the factory, they might be begging or scavenging. We cannot solve the problem of child labor in a poor country by prohibiting contractors from hiring anyone under the age of 14. We know of no case where a nation developed a modern manufacturing sector without first going through a 'sweatshop' phase. How long ago was it that children worked in the textile factories of Lowell, Massachusetts?[3]

His analysis ignores the fact that there was a popular discourse of pre-modern critique of the modernist 'sweat shops'. After much protest, in 1917, in America, a law was passed that prohibited child factory labor—only to be invalidated by the Supreme Court. It was not until 1938 that President Roosevelt signed a law protecting children that the Supreme Court validated.

Dialoguing across Discourses

If we theorize organizations as polyphonic, then surely we can begin to dialogue across the discourses. Organizational learning is constrained by all three processes simultaneously: by customs and respect for elders, by efficiency and hierarchy, and by pursuing differences, but in non-exploitive ways. Organizational learning is a conversation among different perspectives that has heretofore attempted to displace other modes of learning (e.g. pre-modern or modern) with their own (i.e. postmodern). In this section, we look at the benefits of a more 'caring capitalism'. To establish this dialogue, it is necessary that we look more closely at forms of multi-discourse learning. Hazen (1993), for example, has developed discursive metaphor from Bakhtin's work on the 'polyphonic' understandings of Dostoyevsky's novels that lets us look at the interrelationship of multiple discourses. Putnam (1990), Thachankary (1992) and Hatch (1993) have also identified numerous discursive approaches to the field. Hatch (1993: 6) advocates the

discourse metaphor in our organization theorizing, so we can view the ongoing dialogue among a set of organizational discourses. The *Tamara* metaphor, introduced earlier, includes the voices of wandering storytellers and the interpretation attempts of fragmented and wandering audiences, who enact learning and change in and around this storytelling organization. The following is a list of some ways in which aspects of pre-modern, modern and postmodern learning competencies can be synergized.

1. Apprenticeship Learning

It would be more caring to balance our pursuit of efficiency and cost with more respect for elders. Elders involve youth in lessons of apprenticeship without chaining them for 20 hours a day to rug, tennis-shoe, doll-making and garment machines. Contemporary organization learning can restore the dignity of the craftperson by restoring the voice of the apprentice. Apprenticeship programs, such as those in Switzerland, can be role models in the face of escalating child servitude models.

2. User-friendly Organizational Systems Learning

Organizational systems can be designed that are user friendly, help people sustain their employment, communicate across the globe, and sustain spiritual ideals. Global information systems can monitor rates of demand and supply so that production can be controlled to sustain employment at livable wages and affordable costs of goods and services. A wage system in which the CEO makes over 120 times the lowest paid workers, who are usually denied the same welfare benefits as the CEO, is exploitive especially in this era of recession, merger and downsizing. Putting large segments of the adult population out of work in third-world nations in order to pay children fewer wage dollars is also exploitive. Unemployment, not wages, could be minimized. Wealth and equality can be less bi-modal. Capitalism does not have to pursue the cheapest labor available on the planet. Consumers can unite by computer networking so that people can share information about companies that have unfriendly human and earth practices. People would then be in a better position to 'teach' destructive corporations with their spending choices.

3. Environment Sustainability Learning

The resources of Mother Earth are being consumed by an organization learning curriculum teaching lessons of efficiency, but not those of ecology and human rights. This can be balanced by learning to learn about 'recycling, reuse, and reduce' to hopefully reverse the destruction of the planet. For example, in North America there are a number of movements that are attempting to educate businesses to native-born American wisdom about the relationship between Mother Earth and business. While we exhaust sustainable resources and various species,

humans may not survive, while this earth will live on. The earth can no longer support our mass consumption and mass waste of the rain forest as well as the ocean. Even outer space is littered with life-threatening debris. 'Managing is an undisguised code word for [keeping things under] control' (Hawes, 1992: 5). Management by objectives (MBO), management strategy, management information systems (MIS), and the excellence movement are all about control: all about methods of domination, not only of people, but of the earth. The learning organization could become associations of people (postmodern tribes) to organize and do something about life on this planet. Tempering profit with environmental and social audits can become a platform for organizational learning that combines the best of pre-modern, modern and postmodern practices.

4. Self-governance Learning

Worker empowerment is only a very limiting and shallow concept of self-governance. It has to be more than just being able to decide which side of the work station to hang the spouse's photograph. It must include the voices of all stakeholders. This is similar to the co-partnership and co-determination models of Europe. We need to go beyond the failed Scanlan Plan of the US by re-involving employers and workers in the joint governance of corporate stock. The impact of ownership upon the quality and dignity of workers' performance is already known to be dramatic. Giving people a voice in the management of the enterprise and making them part-owners are two important steps to reduce the gap between the haves and have-nots, expand the middle class, increase business environmental and social responsibility, raise the quality of performance, reduce the win–lose relationship between stakeholders, and rekindle pre-modern fraternal spirit.

5. Learning to Deconstruct Modernism

Pre-modernism once sustained a passionate, modernist critique. Postmodernism is just learning to deconstruct the subtle bureaucratic command and control, surveillance and discipline discourses. This language game keeps workplaces less democratic and more prone to commit acts of Mother Earth rape, while expressing science and engineering-sounding rhetoric about efficiency, cycle time and global competitiveness. Since postmodern stories are only recently beginning to take shape, postmodern practices swim in a 'sea of modernism' (Clegg and Rouleau, 1992). The slavery of children is rationalized by scenarios of national economic development. Modernist stories teach the formulas for command, control and exploitation. Deconstructing management stories reveal discursive dynamics so that political hegemony is no longer hidden and taken for granted in bureaucratic practices.

6. Getting Skeptical about Political Correctness

In pre-modernity, the crown and the clergy decided which point of view was politically correct and persecuted subgroups with incorrect points of view. Modernity tamed pre-modern repression with essentialisms, examinations, panoptic gaze and totalisms (Foucault, 1977; Lyotard, 1984). It also introduced its own PC. When an elite or dominant group felt threatened it fired its victims. People who advocated unions were fired. The right purged the left for its politically incorrect views. Protesters against the Vietnam War were targets. Gays and lesbians in the military are still purged. Women are still being dismissed for their feminist beliefs. These are all organizational examples of PC domination. The result is that people try to be politically correct to avoid sanctions.

Modernism is also flexible enough to co-opt its opposition by reinterpreting it in its own terms. 'Thus wearing old jeans as a gesture of resistance to consumerism is coopted [*sic*] when the market provides new ''old'' jeans at premium prices' (Fox and Miller, 1992: 4). Taylorism is repackaged as Total Quality Management (Boje and Winsor, 1993). One danger is that the TQM discourse is becoming more politically correct, but the principles, recipes and prescriptions keep the modernist game intact. Learning that is 'politically correct' only substitutes new fad-words like 'total quality management', 'empowerment', 're-engineering' and 'flexible manufacturing systems' for the old ones. Efficiency reports become value-added reports. Time and motion studies become cycle time studies with workers empowered to gaze and report and adjust their performativity. It is harder to absorb the counternarrative that excessive corporate CEO salaries and contracting with sweat shops employing child labor does not constitute greed and exploitive profiteering. As modernists and postmodernists dialogue, the neoconservatives claim to be the victims of PC.

> The tactic is to gather together under one rubric a great diversity of issues— harbingers of cultural change are particular targets—and delegitimizing support for any one contention in one sector by attachment to a countersign, a symbol perceived more negatively in another sector. (Fox and Miller, 1992: 5)

7. Getting Other Voices Heard in the Learning Process

Listening to many voices is fundamental to learning. This means learning how to learn to manage dialogue in plurality and listening to a multiplicity of assumptions. This is teaching the organization to adopt a new learning style. Can we deconstruct the iron teaching machine to dismantle, expose and reform the prescriptions, stories, constructions, rules and voices that are taught? It means putting time into the discussion to assess and transform prevailing norms for organizational performance. It means confronting basic values of capitalism.

8. Critique of the Story of Progress or Perish

The curriculum of modernism is a pedagogy of oppression and destruction justified by threats that too much concern for worker safety and dignity will make the first world less competitive with the newly industrialized countries. A companion story is that an increase in sweat shop and anti-environment practices must be tolerated or there will be more layoffs, more downsizing, and more exodus of first-world companies to the third world. Just because an organization downsizes and gets flatter, adopts shorter cycle times, networks globally and is more customer-sovereign, does not mean that workers, managers and customers will be unshackled from exploitation or drudgery, or move towards environmental sustainability. The cult of modernist efficiency continues to spin its story of eternal and God-given progress: implement this Total Quality Management at the utmost speed so that the nation can sanitize the workplace of non-value-added humans, and downsize while third-world pools of child labor generate higher rates of return. In this way, the corporation competes globally, and maybe one keeps one's job. This is the grand and totalizing story that needs deconstructing.

9. Learning Resistance

The learning organization can rebel by emancipating any oppressed group to be free agents: free from discursive coercion, knowledge coercion and normalization coercion using social science and engineering language and practice (Boje and Dennehy, 1993: 16). There are three paths of resistance we can discuss. First, management writers talk about overcoming the workers' 'resistance to change'. This is low-level resistance. The second is the reverse of the first: resistance by the dominator to the initiatives of the dominated. The third is horizontal resistance in which people of equal status and power resist each other's attempts at domination. We can extend this typology of resistance to discourse. If a discourse, such as Total Quality Management, dominates the firm, those voicing alternative discourses will resist, wherever feasible, the encroachments and translations of the dominant discourse. This is first-order resistance. Second-order resistance occurs when the dominant discourse resists the challenges and translations of the alternative discourse. Finally, third-order resistance occurs in a more pluralistic setting where multiple discourses compete for hegemonic dominance. Sustaining a governance structure tolerant of both TQM and anti-TQM discourses in the same enterprise is required.

Post-Text— Conclusions

In this essay I have argued that contemporary organizations intermingle at least three discourses of organizational learning: premodern, modern and postmodern. In addition, I have advocated that we move from mechanistic or organic metaphors of organization

theory to discursive metaphors so we can begin to understand and then teach alternative discourses. Changing the corporate dialogue means changing the balance of power among alternative discourses. The lesson of the postmodern world is that we are already members of a fractured, intertwined, interpenetrated array of discourses. I focused on one aspect of discourse: storytelling. Finally, I advocated that we take pre-modern discourse seriously. That means recognizing how pre-modern discursive practices are still part of modern organizations. It also means recognizing aspects of pre-modern philosophy that are being revitalized in the postmodern condition.

In organizational learning, there is a need to teach the polyvocal and polysemous histories of exploitive technical efficiency and global colonialism. People trained in postmodern discourse work transform themselves into the hierarchies prescribed by discourse. The corporate learning context conditions and rewards one to make one's rhetoric politically correct. We are taught to translate social concerns into economic concerns, environmental concerns into efficiency concerns, and social governance concerns into Victorian capitalist ends. We are conditioned to learn a very simple story: if we organize across our functions, do joint teams, reduce cycle times, tighten our belts, downsize, close our eyes to urban sweat shops, then we can win the global race, turn the declining national economy around, rebuild the failing public school system, and have enough trickle-down crumbs to feed and house the homeless. Our MBA programs teach Victorian Capitalism. MBA might as well stand for 'Masters in Bureaucratic Administration'. It is heresy to admit it, but most organizational learning is learning to be docile, bureaucratic, mindless robots, in the Mother Earth destruction enterprises that infest this planet. Modernist organizational learning looks hygienic on the surface, but carries an epidemic of wasteful anti-ecology, racist, sexist learning in its underbelly.

I have argued that by including pre-modern and postmodern discourses in the curriculum of organizational learning we can achieve an alternative to our current forms of capitalism. This new journal can implement a theory and research agenda which is decidedly different from what has been done in organizational learning. There is a need to study the storytelling process to reveal the subtle ways in which capitalist learning occurs. One exciting research topic is to look at the struggle of multiple, fragmented and competing discourses. We can start to identify the practices-in-use that constitute the learning field of discourse. Studying how people resist the various curricula is also important. This is an inquiry into the politics of social construction. I think we have to do more than interpret the stories of the storytellers embedded in the organizational learning. I think we have to do what Calás and Smircich (1993) are advocating, put the stories of management (and management theorists) on one side of the page and the

excluded stories of the workers, especially child slaves, on the other. There is a need to compare management texts with ecological texts. We can also do more of the kind of feminist deconstructions as exemplified in Martin's analysis of a school board's racist decision-making (1990a), and a speech by a CEO (1990b) of a multinational corporation who had performativity views of how his subordinate should balance pregnancy and job duties.

We need theories of change and consulting from a multiple narrative perspective. We need to study discourse interventions as people learn to dialogue their differences. Modernist bureaucracy will resist and defend against changes to its hegemonic rendition of organizational praxis. The official, corporate story of the firm is bureaucratically defended against alternative stories (Boje, forthcoming). Bringing non-official stories and storytellers to the round table of dialogue is a political and rebellious invasion, and will be viewed in some enterprises as an act of terrorism.

We live under the illusion of progress, while beyond, and even within, our iron cage there is toxic entropy and slavery. Mother Earth has been cloaked with highly commodified hyper-reality images sustained by conservative politics. Pre-moderns suggest that our modern, western bodies are already imprisoned by our commodities. We, in academic life, are unwitting participants in a masquerade, trying desperately to convince ourselves that we care about the third world, the environment and animal rights—as we buy Barbie dolls made by young girls in sweatshops south of the border. We pretend to be the passive victim, with no control over the industrial ideology of capitalism. In the western tradition, we isolate ourselves from poverty, distance ourselves in suburbia from the inner city, hire armed guards to keep the have-nots off our lawns and doorsteps. As postmodernists, we are learning to hear the screams of the 200 million children in servitude, as the bulldozer rapes Mother Earth.

Notes

1. Organization learning is being defined by several scholars (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Bahrami, 1992; Byrne, 1992; Handy, 1990; McGill et al., 1992; Quinn, 1992; Senge, 1991).
2. *Tamara* is a production of TAMARA INTERNATIONAL, 2035 N. Highland Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90068.
3. As quoted in Richard Rothstein (1993) 'The Children's Hour', *LA Weekly*, 14 November: 16. The original quote appeared in *Harvard Business Review*.

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Contact Address   David M. Boje is at the Department of Management, College of Business Administration, Loyola Marymount University, Loyola Boulevard at W. 80th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90045, USA.