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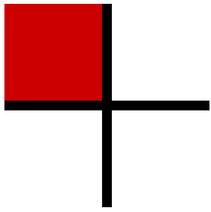
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## University, Failed

Armin Beverungen, Stephen Dunne and Bent M. Sørensen

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.  
Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho* (1983)

What is the modern university for? By what or whose standards is it to be judged? Is its existence justified by simple virtue of its being the case? Is it instead to be understood as a means towards the attainment of a particular end or set of ends? Or is it, just like the Socratic *Republic* (Plato, 1993: 358a), to be said to be amongst the very best of things: those which are simultaneously justified in themselves *and* by virtue of the various ends which they can be said to have achieved?

Such questions come with quite a degree of pedigree. They are questions which divide the university's inhabitants perhaps just as much as they divide those divided from it. They are certainly questions which lend themselves towards discussion and debate. They are, therefore, just the sorts of questions which our contributors have been invited to address and engage.

This special issue then, with its driving call for open discussion and debate, already has something very much of the university about it. For isn't 'open discussion and debate' precisely the sort of thing which many have come to characterise the modern university in terms of? To some extent it is. And yet, of course, the modern university cannot be simply defined as a vehicle for discussion and debate. For, on the one hand, the role of the modern university cannot be said to start and stop with discussion and debate. And on the other hand, the modern university can hardly be said to have any sort of monopoly upon discussion and debate.

The discussion staged within this special issue, therefore, is simultaneously of the modern university and not of the modern university. 'Of', to the extent that we have constructed the stage for it from within modern universities. 'Not of', to the extent that this stage is not solely determined by the source of the invitation to the performance. The role of the modern university, in other words, is not only a debate staged between and on behalf of its inhabitants. The discussion has a much wider remit, a much broader public.

Historically, the question of *legitimation* has frequently confronted arguments for the modern university with a pronounced degree of antagonism. Why has the modern university always been in need of legitimation, and why has this usually involved antagonism? For Jacques Derrida, this is because the modern university is “a stranger to power”, “heterogeneous to the principle of power” and consequently “without any power of its own” (2001: 236-7). The university thus puts itself in a position where it is

often destined to capitulate without condition, to surrender unconditionally. It gives itself up, it sometimes puts itself up for sale, it risks being simply something to occupy, take over, even buy; it risks becoming a branch office of conglomerates and corporations. (2001: 237)

This antagonistic history of the modern university and power starts even before the birth of the modern university. Immanuel Kant’s preface to *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798/1992) – one of the founding documents of the modern university – takes the form of a defence of the university against a recent attack made on it by the Prussian King. Kant’s argument for what the university should be, namely, an institution which holds reason as its foundational principle, can be seen to have been grappling with the question of legitimation at its very inscription. This struggle for self-legitimation also led to the university’s having to compromise the extent of its relationship with the broader social world (see Bridgman and Murdoch, this issue).

The work by Wilhelm von Humboldt and others in preparation for the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810 – the first modern university – is best read more as a policy document for the Prussian State and less as a *Streitschrift* (in the way of Kant’s *Conflict of the Faculties*) (Engel et al., 1990). Under Humboldt, then Minister for Education, the modern university simultaneously appeared as both a prop for the Prussian state apparatus and for its nationalist educational programmes. For Humboldt it was culture that was to serve as the foundational principle for the modern university. It wasn’t only good, reasonable and self-reflective critics that the University of Berlin (now Humboldt University) sought. This particular incarnation of the modern university, which was to become the model for the universities throughout Europe and the United States, simultaneously sought to mould equally good, *national citizens*: “each mind an analogously organized mini-State morally unified in the supermind of the State. Prussian mind-meld” (Massumi, 1992: 4-5).

In constructing the modern university by buttressing it upon the principles of reason and culture respectively, Kant and Humboldt sought to establish the modern university upon solid, irresistible foundations. These foundations were to be so strong as to withstand and overcome outside interference. They were supposed to specify and guarantee the internal organization and functioning of the university, to protect it from falling apart, to protect it from corruption (see Derrida, 2004). The earliest line of defence for the modern university was therefore a set of ideas: the idea of reason and the idea of culture.

This notion of a university with an idea, Jean-François Lyotard (1984) argues, is in turn bolstered by two ‘meta-narratives’: one of the speculative spirit, stemming from German Idealism, and the other of the emancipation of man, stemming from the French Revolution. And both of these meta-narratives were to be united in the idea of *Bildung*, the gradual ennoblement of character (Lyotard, 1984: 33). But Lyotard also argues that

today, these meta-narratives can no longer guarantee knowledge, that they have lost their social persuasiveness.

If this is correct, namely, that ‘reason’ and ‘culture’ have become objects for a generalised scepticism, a generalised cynicism even, then what comes of the modern university? Upon what is it to be buttressed if the foundations of ‘reason’ and ‘culture’ are no longer stable and assured? Where, in other words, does a general suspicion as to the guarantees of meta-narratives leave the modern university?

The answer of Bill Readings (1996) to this question is clear: in ruins. The abandonment of the foundational ideas of reason and culture has resulted in the turn towards the foundation of ‘excellence’. But for Readings, ‘excellence’ cannot serve as a foundational idea for the university in the way that ‘reason’ and ‘culture’ did. This is because ‘the university of excellence’ can mean more or less anything: ‘excellent’ league table positions; ‘excellent’ library; ‘excellent’ levels of grant funding secured; ‘excellent’ canteen facilities; ‘excellent’ parking; and so on. As Readings argues:

[T]he appeal to excellence marks the fact that there is no longer any idea of the University, or rather that the idea has now lost all content. As non-referential unit of value entirely internal to the system, excellence marks nothing more than the moment of technology’s self-reflection. All that the system requires is for activity to take place, and the empty notion of excellence refers to nothing other than the optimal input/output ration in matters of information. (Readings, 1996: 39)

This is a problem for Richard Rorty, amongst others, who laments the days when “university professors concerned themselves with issues in real politics (such as the availability of health care to the poor, or the need for strong labour unions) rather than with academic politics” (Rorty, 1997: 179-180). But might this abandonment of the university with an idea not rather give some cause for celebration?

It is fair to say that under the regime of the ‘University of Excellence’, the university can no longer be analysed in terms of what Louis Althusser (2001) called an ideological state apparatus. This is precisely because the ‘University of Excellence’ is ‘non-ideological’ to the extent that excellence, meaning so many different (often times contradictory) things, has no necessary political content. The ‘University of Excellence’ therefore offers the potential for many things to happen in the name of excellence: left-wing criticism might even become excellent along this logic (cf. Readings, 1996: 13, 38-9).

This opens the university up towards a certain institutional pragmatism. Stanley Fish (2005), for example, revels in the idea of “administering the university without an idea”, that is, “the university with as many ideas as you can get funding and space for” (2005: 80). In the face of a “theory or vision of education” Fish will “immediately run in the opposite direction”. He celebrates “the post-historical university” and gives it the following motto: “No theory, no urgent mission, no sociopolitical cause” (*ibid.*).

Yet such celebration of the ‘University Without Idea’ might be a little premature. Does the loss of a foundational idea for the university necessarily lead to the proliferation of ideas? Certainly not. Rather, what it does is open up the university towards a new organizing principle, one which Lyotard (1984) predicted and warned against:

performativity. Once performativity becomes the principle which governs university conduct, the university becomes a manipulable means towards any number of ends, this precisely because it has reneged upon its ability to define its own ends. Without defining its ends, its ends become defined for it.

The university therefore loses its integrity in that it becomes little other than a plaything for just so many interests, divorced, as it is, from any interests of its own. The general effect of the proliferation of the performativity principle

is to subordinate the institutions of higher learning to the existing powers. The moment knowledge ceases to be an end in itself – the realization of the Idea or the emancipation of men – its transmission is no longer the exclusive responsibility of scholars and students. (Lyotard, 1984: 50)

In this sense it is quite difficult to share Fish's optimism in the face of the university's apparent functional abyss. While we can certainly acknowledge that the modern university has increasingly moved away from being determined by nationalist agendas, we must also acknowledge that it has moved increasingly towards becoming determined by the circuits of capital. In this light, we can come to understand the university as a 'knowledge factory' (Aronowitz, 2000), as part of 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Leslie, 2001) or even as just another workplace that is as profit oriented as any other (Bousquet, 2008). So, not only is, as Lyotard analysed, the durability of 'knowledge' eroding, but academics must at the same time work hard to retain their share of a knowledge market where once they had a monopoly (see Basbøll's interview with Fuller, this issue).

We might also account for how alterations in the nature of the university reflect broader alterations in the nature of capitalism. In this sense the university gets ascribed a sort of 'productive centrality' (see Do, this issue; Dyer-Witheford, 2005; Federici and Caffentzis, 2007). And in considering the nature of the relationship between the modern university and the capitalist mode of production we are inevitably brought towards a consideration of the nature of the business school.

The work of Rakesh Khurana (2007) (see Butler, this issue) shows that the history of the business school has by no means been defined in terms of a comfortable relationship to the university. Whereas in its beginning the university-based business school sought respect within the wider university, "the thoroughly rationalized, bureaucratized, disenchanted (in the Weberian sense) university of today, as some have said, looks to management for guidance on how to be respected" (Khurana, 2007: 6). Tony Tinker goes so far as to describe the business school as "the Trojan Horse of modern capitalism" (this issue). Yet, as will be shown throughout this special issue, the business school is not simply the performative shell for modern capitalism (see also Jones and O'Doherty, 2005).

So if the modern university is no longer founded on reason, on culture, on *Bildung*, on excellence, on pragmatism, on performativity or on profit, then what are its foundations to be? Sievers (this issue) diagnoses the modern university as a psychotic institution. So should we divorce ourselves from such an institution and from the variety of ideas it once held dear? Or is there rather a sense, perhaps now more than ever, in which the

university has become an important site for discussion, for debate, for negotiation, for politics?

These politics might take place in the ‘university undercommons’ (Moten and Harney, 2004). They might involve a journey ‘from enthusiasm to exhaustion’ (Askins, this issue), based upon passion and invention (Dey and Steyaert, 2007). Or they might, indeed, lead to an exit from the university (Berglund, this issue). Might we strive to cling to the university and so to cling to the notion of critique and fearless speech (Bridgman and Stephens, this issue)? Might we, with Aronowitz (2008) declare ourselves ‘against schooling’ for the sake of a broader conception of what the university could be for (Land, this issue), and adopt the struggles that any such argument almost necessarily entails (Pason, this issue)?

This issue was a call to discussion, and what we have sought to achieve with it is to highlight the discussions already taking place within the university, and to spurn on some new ones. Yet, as the entrance to today’s Humboldt University tells us, such interpretation is not enough. What counts is change.

Such change cannot, we believe, be achieved solely by the university itself. As Derrida (2001) points out, the ‘university without condition’ may not reside within what we perceive as the university today (see Sievers, this issue; Do, this issue). Premising that ‘the university is the university’ may be the predictable failure of this special issue of *ephemera*, since the members of its editorial collective are all placed ‘inside’ its walls (although few on permanent contracts). This Derridean insight creates huge challenges for other issues and interventions regarding the university of tomorrow: to open the discussion to other shareholders and constituencies within the knowledge factory, to pave ground for other residuals, where a university may take place. Where are these places? And what do these people – the students, the politicians, the medias, the immigrants, the elderly, *the people* – want with the university? Underneath the seductive toasts and touching speeches that the university enjoys again and again, unmistakable signs of mistrust secrete. A dialogue about this mistrust (which dwells well, also, within the university itself) may be what lies ahead, meshed up with the ongoing grand failure of the university.

Because the university, we believe, did try. It will have to try again. It will, as observed, fail. Fail again. But perhaps this time it will, following Beckett, *fail better*.

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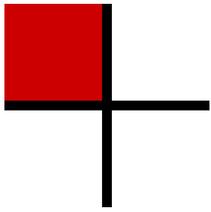
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## The Psychotic University\*

Burkard Sievers

### abstract

Building on my earlier reflections on the 'Psychotic Organization' (Sievers, 1999; 2006), I would like to focus here on the psychotic dynamics of the contemporary university – the German university in particular – which is, at present, undergoing major changes resulting from a fundamental reform of European higher education. This paper is guided by the working hypothesis that the present initiation and implementation of university reform is, to a large extent, inducing defences against psychotic anxieties on the side of university organizational role holders and thus favouring a psychotic organizational dynamic. To the extent that the psychotic parts dominate, the university itself becomes broadly or even predominantly psychotic. I will elucidate the psychotic university dynamic concomitant with the 'university reform' by elaborating the following four phenomena: (1) University reform fosters an organizational culture dominated by a totalitarian state of mind. (2) Economic values and practices have become the guiding paradigm of university reform; this praxis is reproduced in the theory and teaching of economics. (3) University reform is partly founded on magic thinking. (4) It is characterized by the view that knowledge, rather than thinking and understanding, is primary. An elucidation of the inevitable resulting traumas appears towards the end of the paper.

[The] weakness [of accepted scientific method] may be closer to the weakness of psychotic thinking than superficial scrutiny would admit. (Bion, 1962b: 14)

The capacity to think... appears to come from a relation to reality that is frustrating. (Long, 2008: 130)

We should not be surprised if we miss the mind in the atmosphere I describe here – it cannot be implanted into a dead condition. (Heinrich, 1987: 5)

### Foreword

During the last decade, the European landscape and organizational climate of higher education has significantly, if not dramatically, changed. Prahl (1978: 10f) correctly viewed the legitimacy of 1970s universities – despite their being institutions of society and thus affected by predominant societal developments – as not exclusively derived from the demands of society. This, however, is no longer the case with the present reform of higher education in most European countries.

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\* I am very grateful to Rose Redding Mersky for her enormous effort in editing this paper.

I all too well remember how discontented and deeply disappointed most of my British colleagues were in the early 1980s about the drastically changing state of their universities. These changes were due to Margaret Thatcher's *Kulturkampf* against higher education, which was guided by the neo-liberal aim of "a free market driven by student demand" (Kemp, 2004: 295). Compared with increased evaluation, accreditation and the concomitant control over research and curricula in the UK, the German university landscape seemed like a paradise. At the same time, however, I had the apprehension that what was taking place in British higher education might – in the not too-distant future – come to Germany.

Referring to Walter Benjamin's (2003: 392f) metaphor of the *Angelus Novus*, it appears to me that since 1999 a storm has been 'blowing from Paradise' that has driven the university 'irresistibly into the future'. While, for Benjamin, this storm is called progress, the storm hitting European higher education can be called, by analogy to the classification scheme used in meteorology, the 'Bologna storm'. As in Benjamin's storm, the latter is equally nurtured by the illusion of progress.

And as with real hurricanes, the origin of this storm dates back some time and lies in another area. The 'Bologna storm' had its origins in 1998 as a fresh wind blowing from Paris. On the occasion of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sorbonne, "the four ministers in charge of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom" met and signed the 'Sorbonne Declaration' (1998; cf. Kellermann, 2008: 2), postulating the creation of a 'European area of higher education' through "progressive harmonisation of the overall framework of our degrees and cycles... through strengthening of already existing experience, joint diplomas, pilot initiatives, and dialogues with all concerned" (Sorbonne Declaration; quoted in Kellermann, 2008: 13).

Kellermann (2008: 2) indicates that, while the Sorbonne Declaration, in "appreciation of traditional values of the university, is proclaimed to support the relative freedom and flexibility of students and citizens in accordance with humanistic aims, the Bologna Declaration [1999 – signed by the ministers of 25 EU-countries] subverts these values by promoting human capital, employability und mobility as ways of improving economic competition". At its Lisbon meeting in March 2000, the European Council further enforced the economic aim of the Bologna Declaration by asserting that, with this reform of higher education, Europe would "become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy of the world" (Lisbon Declaration; quoted in Kellermann, 2008: 2).

Based on the Bologna Declaration, the present reform is, as Kemp (2004: 294) states,

[a] process which will reshape higher education more radically than anything we have experienced since 1945, including 1968. What matters is the 'comprehensive implementation' of the 1999 Bologna resolutions, by which all courses of study in Europe and, therefore, in Germany, are trimmed down to the bachelor-master-format. What also matters is the combination of such a standardization process, typical for the EU, with the instruments of neo-liberalism.

The Bologna Declaration was not only propagated and broadly forced through as a 'revolution' in Europe's higher education system: it contributed "to eroding national control over education planning and policy" (Charlier and Croché, 2005: 7). As Krautz

(2007: 144) points out, the European Ministers who met in Bologna had no official mandate for the declaration and their meeting resembled a ‘private coffee circle’. It gives pause for thought that these ministers had no authorization from their respective states nor was the declaration ever discussed (much less ratified) in the German parliament (*ibid.*). As a matter of fact, the Bologna Declaration never became a treaty or a directive but remains ‘soft law’ (Charlier and Croché, 2005).

Seen from the perspective of systemic psychodynamics and socio-analysis, to be outlined further in this paper, the sudden change of wind into a storm – i.e. from the Sorbonne Declaration in 1998 to the Bologna one in 1999 – appears to be concomitant with a significant flight into psychotic thinking on the part of the respective European ministers. While the Sorbonne Declaration attempts to integrate the achievements of national universities from the past with the demands of the future, the Bologna Declaration seems to be driven by the megalomaniac and manic impetus of re-inventing European universities for the sake of global dominance. This is an excessive demand, which is vividly reminiscent of the rhetoric of business process reengineering in the early 1990s: “tradition counts for nothing. Reengineering is a new beginning” (Hammer and Champy, 1993: 49). While the latter movement has in the meantime widely failed and seems outdated, ironically, on the very day I was writing this introduction, the German press reported that the Hochschulverband (the German association of university professors and the new generation of academics) declares the Bologna process ‘failed’. The idea of the European area for higher education as the primary aim of the reform has been broadly missed, because the new design of study courses has not led to the expected mobility of students. “The Bologna process in Germany can only be saved if it is steered in a different direction” (FAZ, 2008).

In the following, I will first briefly outline my understanding of the ‘psychotic organization’ and subsequently elucidate what leads me to postulate that, as a result of the present reform of higher education, the (German) university system broadly has become psychotic.

## The Psychotic Organization

This paper is guided by the working hypothesis that the present initiation and implementation of the university reform is, to a large extent, inducing defences against psychotic anxieties on the side of university role holders and thus creating a psychotic organizational dynamic. To the extent that the psychotic parts dominate, the university itself becomes broadly or even predominantly psychotic.

Referring to an organization – and a university in particular – as ‘being’ psychotic may, at first, raise questions, if not concerns, on the side of most readers. Therefore I would like first to explain what I mean by psychotic organization.

The notion of psychotic organization emerged from my longstanding attempt to understand and explain from a socioanalytic perspective what in everyday language is referred to as ‘organizational madness’ or the ‘normal madness’ of organizations (Sievers, 1999; 2006). In contrast to the predominant view in psychiatry and

psychoanalysis that psychosis is a psychopathology of the individual, the psychotic organization refers to a social system (or sub-system) that induces psychotic thinking in its role holders – either temporarily or permanently. When organizational role holders are unconsciously ordered to mobilize their psychotic parts, they lose their capacity to think. As a result, they tend to reduce organizational reality to the obvious and concrete, i.e. to the data and figures which are in line with their predominant unconscious fantasies.

Working with the notion of psychotic organization I rely on two critical thinkers. Gordon Lawrence (2000: 4f) regards psychosis in general as

the process whereby humans defend themselves from understanding the meaning and significance of reality, because they regard such knowing as painful. To do this, they use aspects of their mental functioning to destroy, in various degrees, the very process of thinking that would put them in touch with reality.

In my thinking I also use the British psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion's (1957) differentiation of psychotic and non-psychotic parts of the *personality* in the context of *social* systems. I thus presume that the psychosocial dynamic of an organization can be of a psychotic as well as a non-psychotic kind. As with persons, the non-psychotic parts of an organization usually consist in tandem with its psychotic parts.

The perspective chosen here emphasizes the way the individual's and the organization's unconscious dynamics are interrelated, and thus offers a new approach to understanding organizational 'madness'. While psychotic organizational dynamics can be understood as socially induced – and thus as part of the 'normal organization' – the 'madness of normality' can be thought of as a social, instead of an objective, 'fact'. This 'social madness' finds its expression, for example, in the tendency of organizational role holders toward an unconscious hatred of thinking, by which organizational reality is reduced to what is or can be known on the conscious level. Though we tend to deny our psychotic anxieties, we contribute "unconsciously... to bring into being organisations which are designed to keep them at bay" (Lawrence, 1995: 17). "At the unconscious level we all know about the normality and ubiquity of psychotic anxieties, but it is quite another matter to be able to reflect upon some of the consequences of the omnipresence of these unconscious fantasies for life, culture, politics and the theory of knowledge" (Young, 1994: 50).

Considering the increasing tendency toward reification of organizations, the notion of the psychotic organization can perhaps offer useful insights into the unconscious construction and the one-sidedness of thinking on which organizations – and organization theories – are based. A deconstruction of this thinking, which brings insight into the social construction of the psychotic dynamic, may help to strengthen the non-psychotic parts and lead to genuinely new perceptions of 'organizational reality'.

## The Psychotic University

Using the previous roughly sketched theoretical perspective, I turn to its application to the contemporary German university, which from my point of view appears to exemplify the dynamics of the psychotic organization.

Psychotic thinking, experiences and (re-)actions on the part of the individual and organizations alike are not pathological exceptions but quite normal modalities of life and work itself. We mainly owe to Melanie Klein (1952; 1959) the insight that the experience of psychotic anxieties is a normal part of childhood and impacts that part of our adulthood based on early childhood experiences. Psychotic anxieties of retaliation and annihilation are concomitant with the experience of being persecuted. Though Klein suggests that these psychotic experiences and tendencies are integrated into the Ego in the course of normal development and will be balanced with less destructive libidinous elements, the adult is not immune to regression into these 'primitive' psychic states. In order to ward off unconscious anxieties and fantasies, we as adults deploy the defence mechanisms typical for the paranoid-schizoid position – denial, splitting, excessive forms of projection and introjection, identifications and idealizations as well as omnipotence, aggression and sadism.

In the context chosen here, I would like to elucidate the psychotic dynamic concomitant with the 'university reform' by describing the following four phenomena: (1) University reform fosters an organizational culture dominated by a totalitarian state of mind. (2) Economic values and practices have become the guiding paradigm of university reform; this praxis is reproduced in the theory and teaching of economics. (3) University reform is partly founded on magic thinking. (4) It is characterized by the view that knowledge, rather than thinking and understanding, is primary.

### *(1) Totalitarian State of Mind*

Both the politics of the German and European reform processes and their implementation in universities are concomitant with a high degree of totalitarian thinking (Lawrence, 1995; cf. Gabriel, 2008; Sievers, 1999; Stein, 2008). "The knowledge, which the totalitarian state-of-mind represents, symbolizes certainty and the hatred of the complexity of reality" (Lawrence, 2003: 353). This dynamic leads to a totalitarian consciousness in the organizational culture of universities, and is largely not acknowledged by organizational role holders, because it temporarily liberates them from their psychotic anxieties (Lawrence, 1998: 64).

There are only a few scholars who make no secret of the totalitarian state of mind on which the present reform is based. As Krautz (2006: 393) notes, for example,

not only is it anti-humanistic but hostile towards democracy if the law of the market is claimed to be a law of nature, the polity denationalized, and higher mental activities suppressed and permanent insecurity deliberately produced, since all these are, according to Hannah Arendt, characteristics of totalitarian power.

The promoters of the reform as well as those directly affected by it broadly claim that the market dictates what kind of knowledge is relevant (cf. Krautz, 2007: 8). This is

typical for psychotic dynamics, where individual and collective exculpation is obvious, as one cannot retaliate against the market (cf. Sievers and Mersky, 2006).

These recent radical changes have put the university under enormous political and economic pressure. People working in and for the university experience stress and anxieties to an extent previously unknown. Pressure has increased to either develop management structures and strategies or to apply them wholesale and directly from the business world. These structures, it is believed, will allow planning, certainty and control. External representatives from the business world are increasingly included on the boards of universities and, in some cases, serve as vice-chancellors or presidents. Instruments used by enterprises to increase profitability, such as cost reduction, grant funding and donations by outside institutions, are increasingly adopted, in order to optimize the production process of science. For example, student length of stay at the university is reduced and ‘outputs’ (e.g. special degree programs, seminars and events, consultancy and research services) are marketed to increase profits.

Underlying these efforts is the fantasy that more financial control will result in better management of boundaries and thus reduce the uncertainties resulting from primitive anxieties. Though these anxieties cannot be eliminated, the attempt to bring them under control provides the illusion that they can be held in check. At the same time, the psychotic anxieties related to the survival of the institution and the future of academic and administrative positions result in the role of rescuer being projected into management, which it compliantly introjects. The more the pressure, the more likely the psychotic dynamic will increase and that managers – like other organizational role holders – will become caught in their own individual psychotic parts. To the extent that the thinking in and about the university takes on a psychotic quality, management is mobilized to take on a more authoritarian stance, where decisions cannot be questioned and doubts cannot be raised. This leads ultimately to a totalitarian state of mind (cf. Gabriel, 2008).

Such an organizational culture diminishes the capacity for thinking and feeling and so role holders become less able to reflect on the nature, quality and methods used to execute the task of their institution, its place in its environment, and how the management structures may be distorting their professional values and beliefs about the work of the institution. (Lawrence, 1995: 11)

As part of the German reform process, universities were ‘granted’ autonomy from the federal states. This was based on the conviction that all problems can be solved if universities are regarded as enterprises competing in the economy of the markets. Thus the capitalist way of thinking is seen as a solution to a problem that was previously considered a societal or social one. Like hospitals, universities could be best managed if they operated “like biscuit factories, or a light engineering company or an *abattoir*” (Lawrence, 1995: 13). The reality and meaning of the university are thus reduced to financial and economic aspects (cf. Knights and Morgan, 1991: 260), and, according to a simple formula, “it will either stay on the market or vanish”. The resulting competition for excellence influences management to seek shelter in rigidity, reification and ultimately the terror of a totalitarian state of mind.

The present university reform in Germany as well as in other European universities is decreed from the top and implemented by those at the bottom. It is striking to note the

lack of resistance and the high degree of resignation on the part of most university role holders. It is almost uncanny that the political background and the specific details of university reform are broadly hidden from the public and out of the consciousness of many working in universities. It brings to mind Schelling's (1809) description of the uncanny as "that which is supposed to be hidden and kept secret but has nevertheless emerged" (Freud, 1919: 249). Other authors offer similar perspectives on the university, e.g. Bennhold (2002), Hörisch (2006), Krautz (2007), Lieb (2006), Liessmann (2006), Link-Heer (2006), and Schöller (2001).

## *(2) Economic Values and Practices Are Reproduced in the Theory and Teaching of Economics*

At present, we are experiencing the dominance of economic rationality in European educational systems in general and higher education in particular, in that they are being transformed into enterprises designed to compete on the market, in order to secure their own existence and to improve their quality (cf. Ronge, 2000). University reform is based on the goal of contributing to the health of the German economy and its competitive edge in world markets. This is reminiscent of the well-known American slogan that what is good for General Motors is also good for the US.

Economic values and practices have become the guiding paradigm of university reform; this praxis is reproduced in the theory and teaching of economics. As the management theory scholar Ghoshal (2005: 75; cf. Bowles, 1997; Burrell, 1989; Gabriel, 1998; Gemmill and Oakley, 1992; Hales, 1974) writes: "many of the worst excesses of recent management practices have their roots in a set of ideas that have emerged from business school academics over the last 30 years". Above all, Milton Friedman's (1970; 2002) formulation of (neo-)liberalism – and its inherent 'philosophy' of radical individualism – is the most prominent example. During the last decades, Friedman's position has not only infiltrated all disciplines related to management but has been accepted by a range of social science disciplines, e.g. economics, jurisprudence, sociology and social psychology (Ghoshal, 2005: 84). And the current university reform is only the most recent example of (neo-)liberalism influencing broad areas of politics.

It is actually not a new phenomenon for universities to be tied to the German Federal Republic's economic development. An extensive debate on educational reform during the 1960s was initiated by Georg Picht's book *Die Deutsche Bildungskatastrophe* ('The German Education Catastrophe', 1964). According to Picht, the state of emergency in education was directly linked to the perceived crisis in the future of the German economy. "The present economic upswing will soon come to an end when we will lack qualified junior employees, which are an essential precondition for the production systems of the technical age. If the education system fails, the existence of the whole society will be threatened" (Picht; quoted in Schulz, 2004: 2). Similar to Dahrendorf (1965a/b), Picht advocated an expansion of the general educational system (higher education in particular) by a funding increase and more social justice opportunities. He thus started a long-lasting debate that led to the foundation of the Deutsche Bildungsrat ('German Council for Education') by the Federal Republic and its Federal States in 1965. This council developed a broad variety of reform proposals for expansive new educational policies.

Contrary to the reform of higher education during the 1960s and early 1970s, which did not directly impact the conception of science in teaching and research, the present university reform is explicitly determined by the primacy of economics. All that seems to count is what is profitable from a short and medium-term economic perspective and what will return German universities to the international status they had at the beginning of the twentieth century. The primary aim of higher education is to provide a sufficient workforce for German enterprises in order to succeed in global competition. This has not been part of a broader societal debate, because the decisive reform guidelines were not developed from inside the scientific system, but from outside, i.e. by insufficiently legitimized EU meetings and massive lobbying by business interests. As Krautz (2007: 151) elucidates, the strategies – as well as their justifications – propagated by the Bologna arrangements were not an accident but were instead an opening salvo.

The basics of German higher education reform were actually previously worked out by the Zentrum für Hochschulentwicklung (CHE – ‘Centre for the Development of Higher Education’). CHE was founded by Reinhard Mohn (of the Bertelsmann corporation and foundation) and the then-president of the Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (‘Standing Conference of University Vice-Chancellors’). They were published by Müller-Böling (2000a; cf. Bennhold, 2002), the director of CHE under the title ‘Die entfesselte Hochschule’ (‘The University Unbound’) one year after the Bologna agreements. Müller-Böling (2000b) propagated what soon became the guiding slogans ‘for the upcoming millennium’ and the ‘reality’ of present German universities. He wrote that not only are “a holistic approach and a new model required... The university of the future will be distinguished by an international outlook and an orientation towards competition; and it will know what efficiency means”.

The very choice of the book’s title and its allusion to the unbound Prometheus suggests a program that – consciously or unconsciously – closely resonates with the optimistic interpretation of the role of technique in history as a means of progress offered by Landes (1969) in his *Unbound Prometheus*.

The extent to which the ‘unbound university’ is an expression of non-thinking and thus of a totalitarian state of mind is evident by the fact that its author does not offer a theoretical model for thinking. “The CHE describes itself as a ‘think tank’... Of course, it produces thoughts” (Bennhold, 2002: 9). The book advocates its own interests as the only truth and claims that there is an unavoidable necessity for the reforms to be undertaken. The demand is quite obvious: “it will be implemented come what may” (Krautz, 2007: 151).

I do not see it is a coincidence that all the key decision makers, i.e. Müller-Böling (the director of the CHE), the present Minister for Innovation, Science, Research and Technology (who is also Vice-President of the Federal State of Northrhine-Westfalia), and the Vice-Chancellor of ‘my’ university are all professors of Business Administration. You, the reader, may see this as an expression of my own paranoia or persecution mania, however, the choice of these role holders is, for me, quite some evidence that universities of the future must ‘trim their sails’ in order to relieve the federal states of their financial obligations.

To the extent that contemporary economic and management theories, with their causal and functional explanations, reduce reality and the world to what is economically thinkable, comprehensible and feasible, professors and students are reduced to mere *homunculi oeconomici*, i.e. what can be fit – either as human resources or consumers – into profit and loss accounting. To the extent that university reform substitutes the ‘good’ of education (*Bildung*) for knowledge as a commodity, education is ultimately turned into a commodity itself.

The dominance of economic priorities in universities (Ahlers-Niemann, 2007) and science strongly suggests that the present university reform is deceived by psychotic thinking that compensates uncertainty with alleged certainty, euphemistically substitutes freedom with autonomy and reduces knowledge to a mere commodity necessary for the so-called ‘knowledge society’. The psychotic thinking on which university reform is based, however, mirrors not least the psychotic thinking that broadly accompanies the global economy and the global financial markets in particular (Sievers, 2003).

### *(3) Magic as an expression of psychotic thinking*

University reform seems to reflect magic economic formulas – evaluation, quality assurance and aggravation, accreditation, efficiency, competition, balance of knowledge, financial support from foundations and companies, project management etc. (cf. Finetti, 2007: 8; Liessmann, 2006: 90; Müller-Böling, 2000a). I see all of these as expressions of magic thinking rather than of science.

According to Freud, magic is governed by the ‘omnipotence of thoughts’. And “it seems that we lend the character of the ‘uncanny’ to those impressions which confirm the omnipotence of thoughts and an animistic way of thinking, while in our judgment we have already abandoned them” (Freud, 1912-13: 374, note 2; 1919: 263, note 2). The description of magic that Freud takes from Sir James Frazer very much reminds one of the economic ‘spirit’ of the initiators and promoters of university reform:

Men mistook the order of their ideas for the order of nature, and hence imagined that the control which they have, or seem to have, over their thoughts, permitted them to exercise a corresponding control over things. (Frazer, 1911: 420; quoted in Freud, 1912-13: 371)

For the child, action that is guided by magic as a modality of thinking is oriented toward preventing catastrophe. Psychiatric patients tend to commit certain actions or think certain thoughts in order to prevent something terrible from happening. They thus give themselves unconsciously more power than they actually have.

Winnicott (1935/1975: 132; quoted in Kirsner, 1990: 42) states that the manic defence is embodying “omnipotent manipulation or control and contemptuous devaluation”. Among other things, the manic defence is characterized by “denial of inner reality, a flight to external reality from inner reality, holding the people of the inner reality in ‘suspended animation’, denial of the sensation of depression... by specifically opposite sensations”. Rycroft (1972: 86) adds the tendency toward “identification with objects from whom a sense of power can be borrowed”. This seems to be exemplified by the decision of ‘my’ department of business and economics to use the English term ‘school’ to describe itself and to name this school after a famous economist.

Gray (2003: 19) attributes to science a kind of magic character; he writes: “science is a refuge from uncertainty, promising... the miracle of freedom from thought”. Science as a social force or ideological phenomenon has, as Žižek (2008: 69) indicates, “the function to provide certainty, to be a point of reference on which one can rely, and to provide hope. New technical inventions will help us fight diseases, to prolong life and so on.”

The magic thinking underlying university reform, i.e. the omnipotence of thoughts as “the personalized and institutionalized *production* of knowledge” (Finetti, 2007: 7, italics added), is taking the place of science. To the extent that the illusion of omnipotent knowledge takes on a magic character and allows apparent certainty to dominate the world, the traditional notion of science becomes superfluous. The traditional view of science is that it is concerned with cognition, understanding, reflection, questioning, insecurity, (self-)doubts, not-knowing, searching and ultimately theory building, in the sense of a *scholarship of common sense as epistemology of disciplined imagination* (Ghoshal, 2005: 81; cf. Weick, 1989). This has formed the basis for the many scientific contributions, (hypo-)theses and insights of Freud, Marx, Darwin and countless other great thinkers. Without this perspective, their contributions would have been unimaginable. Instead of an epistemology of disciplined imagination,

the dominant cultural myth for scientific thought stresses precision, control, and accuracy. The fear of error and inexactitude are strong. Generalization with insufficient empirical evidence is taboo. Discipline and objectivity are very important; mistrust of intuition, introspection and subjectivity are ferocious... Scientific knowledge is part and parcel of a strategy of ‘guiltification’ – direct emotional involvement or hands-on associative thought are undependable. Rejection of the body invalidates direct perception and devalues experiential knowing. Without confidence in human will and reason, deep scepticism results about the ability to gain knowledge in the life-world. (Letiche, 2004: 157)

#### (4) *Primacy of knowledge instead of thinking and understanding*

Almost fifty years ago, Adorno (1959/2006) objected to the fact that education (*Bildung*) had become “a socialized *Halbbildung* (superficial education or half-cultivation), the omnipresence of the alienated mind” (*ibid.*: 8). “In the climate of *Halbbildung* the subjects of *Bildung*, reified as commodities, survive at a cost to their internal truths and their living relationship to living subjects” (*ibid.*: 25).

From a socioanalytic perspective, Adorno’s connection of *Halbbildung* to psychotic processes is most fascinating.

The conspicuous affinity of a state of mind, like the *Halbbildung*, to unconscious psychotic processes would, however, be an enigmatic, prestabilized harmony, if the systems of delusion, aside from their importance in the economy of the single individual, would not also have their objective societal function. They replace that essential insight, which is obstructed by the *Halbbildung*. Those who dispense with the continuity of judgement and experience are supplied by those systems with schemata that allow one to cope with reality, rather than reaching reality itself, and help one compensate for the anxiety of what is incomprehensible. The consumers of psychotic finished goods thus feel protected by all those who are equally isolated, those, who, in their isolation und radical societal alienation, are connected by their common delusion. (*ibid.*: 52)

In his philippic *Theorie der Unbildung* (‘Theory of Un-Education’ or ‘Non-Cultivation’), the Viennese philosopher Liessmann (2006) writes that Adorno’s

diagnosis of *Halbbildung* is ‘antiquated’ in so far as “it is not *Halbbildung*... which is the problem of our epoch but the absence of any normative idea of *Bildung*, in which something like *Halbbildung* could be seen” (*ibid.*: 9). To the extent that the generation and acquisition of knowledge in the ‘knowledge society’ is propagated as the unique aim of the university, it is – due to the particularity, fragmentation and simultaneous availability of this knowledge – “no longer possible to refer, even in a critical sense, to a binding ideal of *Bildung*” (*ibid.*). University reform like other areas of our lives is based on the dominant thinking “that reduces *Bildung* to training and degrades knowledge to a business ratio of human capital” (*ibid.*: 10). The main emphasis of university training is put on such knowledge, which should be up-to-date by the time the student enters his/her first job. Thus old ‘knowledge’ becomes lost, loses its relevance and – as Trotsky once said about anarchism – ends up on the dung-heap of history. Sadly, this appears also to be the fate of wisdom and history themselves, which – both as concepts and modalities of thinking – become ultimately outdated. “Modern science is oriented towards innovation. It is not supposed to guarantee origin, holy memory and legitimacy but has to anticipate that which does not yet exist” (Koschorke, 2004: 145).

Knowledge that has been lost in information, as T. S. Eliott puts it (in *Choruses from ‘The Rock’*) has become a substitute for *Bildung* in the knowledge society and has thus degenerated into a commodity, which no longer has anything in common with cognition, truth or insight, let alone with independent thinking. Knowledge can be bought and increases the value of the buyer, who, at the same time, can sell it to the market for as high a price as possible. Ownership of knowledge is supposed to be ordered and controlled individually and socially through ‘knowledge management’, and it is available to others only if they are prepared to pay the actual monetary price for it. The only societal function of knowledge (and science) is its economic value, whereas society as such is left to itself. Hopefully others will worry about it and take responsibility for it. “Unbildung today is... an abandonment of the attempt towards understanding. Wherever one is talking about knowledge today and whatever is meant by it, it certainly is not understanding” (Liessmann, 2006: 72). “What has become the reality in the knowledge of the knowledge society is the lack of *Bildung*, which has become self-assured” (*ibid.*: 73).

Insofar as knowledge – and not truth or meaning – is the key currency of science, it loses, like money, its symbolic function and becomes a commodity in and of itself (cf. Sievers, 2003; Wolfenstein, 1993). Even the relatedness amongst actors inside and outside the system of science is restricted to a relationship of commodities. Insofar as the concomitant reified and totalitarian thinking aims exclusively at increasing knowledge and ultimately money, other non-commodity dimension of reality are denigrated and excluded.

Höpfl (2005: 65) observes that the Business School is a factory geared towards Tayloristic basic assumptions of standardization, measurability and controlling, and Carter and Jackson (2005: 88) note that it is ‘the seminary of capitalism’. This suggests a tendency that will, in the foreseeable future, presumably become reality for the university in general. Knowledge in the university is no longer generated through search processes but is an object of production processes or stock keeping, in which the scientists/professors take the role of producers or traders and the students of consumers

(cf. Chattopadhyay, 2004; Lapassade, 1971/1976: 112ff; Long, 2004: 116f; 2008: 154ff). Thus, to put it metaphorically, the university is in danger of become a bottling plant for knowledge, in which old knowledge is recycled or disposed of to be replaced by fresh new information!

In the economic sciences – and increasingly other scientific disciplines – knowledge itself has become the functional equivalent of pretence of knowledge. As Ghoshal (2005: 77ff) indicates, in reference to Friedrich von Hayek’s Nobel Lecture in 1974 (Hayek, 1989), many of the axioms of economic science are not based on knowledge but on unchecked assumptions, which are passed off as unshakeable truth – and which underlie the present university reform.

While no social science discipline makes a stronger claim to objectivity than economics, no domain of the social sciences is more values-laden in both its assumptions and its language than economics and all its derivatives, including much of modern finance and management theories. (Ghoshal, 2005: 83)

This emphasis on knowledge as the decisive element of a knowledge society – and as a substitute for the traditionally broader notion of society – is concomitant with psychotic thinking. This becomes especially evident if one considers Wilfred Bion’s ideas on knowledge (Bion, 1962b) or thinking (Bion, 1962a). Though Bion, the British psychoanalyst, refers primarily to his own discipline, his ideas apply equally to the humanities – if not science in general.

Following Bion’s (1962b) distinction of knowledge in the sense of knowing (*K*) and not knowing (*minus K*) and his assumption that ‘thoughts’ arise “epistemologically prior to thinking and that thinking has to be developed as a method or apparatus for dealing with ‘thoughts’” (*ibid.*: 83), much of the knowledge propagated in the knowledge society – as well as in the current university reform – is not knowing or *minus K* (*-K*). While for Bion, “‘K’ is not a piece of knowledge but the process to get to know” (Thorner, 1983: 593; cf. Bion, 1962b: 65), *minus K* is, according to Sandler (2005: 384), “a knowledge linked to advocacy and law, to convince people, the realm of propaganda”. *K* requires “tolerance of doubt and tolerance of a sense of infinity” (Bion, 1962b: 94). “Knowing includes not knowing. Or, to experience truth includes to experience lying” (Sandler, 2005: 378). *Minus K* is an expression of a ‘disorder of thought’ (Bion, 1962b: 66). “The desire for knowledge demanding the possession of everything without concern for the object is greed and arrogance and its self-destructive results lays open the stupidity that is behind the desire for knowledge at all cost” (Thorner, 1983: 598).

This leads to the assumption that *K*, in Bion’s sense of wanting to know and the search for insight and truth, has broadly lost its function in the knowledge society and is substituted with *minus K* (cf. Erlich, 2006: 119). University reform propagates knowledge as a surrogate for the search and experience of truth and reality. As Bion indicates, knowledge as *minus K* is broadly concomitant with a hatred of thinking and an expression of the psychotic part of the personality. Such a hatred of thinking reduces one’s capacity to think and thus leads to an extreme loss of reality. A hatred of thinking not only reduces reality to what can be known consciously, but also further belittles and disparages those who regard thinking as part of their professional task. Ultimately, this leads to teaching that is reduced to the mere passing on of knowledge, which makes

thoughts and thinking superfluous. It is thus not too much of a surprise that students often develop a hatred of learning (Cummins, 2000).

Under the dictate of *minus K*, knowledge in the university tends to become psychotic itself and thus fosters and enacts the psychodynamics of the system. It appears as if “the conspicuous affinity of a state of mind, like the *Halbbildung*, to unconscious psychotic processes ... in the economy of the single individual” to which Adorno (1959/2006: 52) refers, has at present, in the age of *Unbildung* and university reform, found its objective, societal ‘system of delusion’ in the capitalist economy of science and the university itself. To the extent that the primary task of universities is to produce knowledge – and thus that which is comprehensible – (cf. Finetti, 2007: 7), “the anxiety of what is incomprehensible” (Adorno, 1959/2006: 52) becomes broadly obsolete. What was previously incomprehensible no longer exists, and the finite deduced through knowledge replaces its infinite character (cf. Lawrence, 1999). To the extent that knowledge becomes a substitute for consciousness, any concern for the unconscious – much less to acknowledge it as an object of research – becomes superfluous.

## Conclusion

The idea that university reform leads to the development of the psychotic university and thus is concomitant with traumatization seems to be an open secret. As Müller-Böling (2000a: 30; quoted in Krautz, 2007: 151) indicates, the implementation of the reform will not only be full of conflict, but ‘traumatic’ experiences in the universities will have to be accepted as collateral damage. Even though Müller-Böling does not have a socio-analytic perspective, his reference to traumatic experiences seems to hit the ‘nail’ on the head.

While the ‘vision’ of the ‘new’ university is aimed at the ‘profits’ that can be generated for science and the regained status and success of German universities in the world markets – higher efficiency, shorter length of stay of students, their success in finding employment, sufficient financing etc. – one has the impression that any exploration of the inherent losses is superfluous. Nevertheless, the potential ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ losses concomitant with university reform and its exclusive focus on knowledge and the knowledge society appear to be devastating. In addition to the objective losses of thinking, understanding, not-knowing, the meaning of experience etc. indicated above, it seems to me that there are decisive subjective losses for many university role holders – first and foremost the senior and junior academic staff members. Though many of these role holders may agree that much in the ‘old’ university – above all teaching – requires a major reform, it seems that many of them carry an ‘automatic anxiety’ in the sense that much of what has been good, important and valuable for them and which constituted a decisive part of their professional identity as scientists or scholars is now massively denigrated (cf. Heinrich, 2001: 138) and possibly doomed to end up on the dung-heap of history.

Automatic anxiety is, for Laplanche and Pontalis (1986: 64), in reference to Freud, “the reaction of a subject when it finds itself in a traumatic situation, i.e. exposed to an inundation of stimuli from inner or outer sources with which it cannot cope (...).

Automatic anxiety is a spontaneous response of the organism to this traumatic situation or its reproduction.” The traumatic situation thus is understood as “an inundation of a great many intensive stimuli” (*ibid.*). Even though such anxiety is a common experience concomitant with change in general – particularly organizational change – it appears to me that above all the psychotic and totalitarian thinking typical of university reform leads to an inundation of stimuli, with which many role holders in the ‘old’ university cannot cope and which leads to their traumatization.

It is an open question as to whether university role holders are able to acknowledge this traumatic experience – in order to learn from it – or whether they consciously or unconsciously adapt by activating their own psychotic parts. My hunch is that the uncanny of the university (and university reform) is not broadly concomitant with the experience of horror. Therefore, it is not possible for the uncanny to announce ‘the destruction of the Heimliche’ (‘Homely’) and thus ‘the dissolution of the familiar’ (Pfreundschuh, 2003). It appears that the uncanny broadly remains an ‘unthought known’ (Bollas, 1987: 1989; cf. Žižek, 2007: 67), i.e. knowledge in an organization that is shared by everyone but whose meaning and consequences cannot be thought and remain unspeakable and unthinkable.

For Bion, psychosis is an inner state in which verbal thinking is not possible, due to the predominance of destructiveness (Wiedemann, 2007: 81). In face of the conditions and coercions of university reform, many role holders thus may find themselves “under the spell of a horror that the individual cannot talk about” (Weinböck, 2004: 254). This appears to me as less a horror from a grey, traumatic past; “what is shocking and arouses fear in us” are rather the “unforeseen consequences of our own actions” (Žižek, 2007: 61). In this context, one must face the possibility that we willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, contribute to the degeneration of the university as the ‘universal’ and the ‘whole’ into a market oriented ‘partial’, a subtly veiled totalitarian culture reminiscent of the German university after 1933. Following Žižek (*ibid.*: 64) further, this horror results from “the fear of what is impossible”, the fear that “what we are afraid of”, i.e. that “what cannot happen [or is not allowed to happen] ... nevertheless will happen.”

That this is an impossibility, in a paradoxical sense, may be a source of hope for the university and its role holders, in the sense that only the impossible *may* happen (Derrida, 2001: 73). This is suggested by Derrida’s notion of the ‘university without conditions’. For Derrida, such a university is a thought, an ‘institution’ “free of any restricting preconditions” (*ibid.*: 9); “it declares *its faith in truth*, it *takes a vow of truth*” (*ibid.*: 10). The university without conditions has “the right to say anything, be it fictional or a test of knowledge, and the right to say anything and to publish it” (*ibid.*: 14). This is “a university that would be what it was always supposed to be or what it constantly was entitled to be, namely, from its founding, vested with a sovereign autonomy, with unconditional freedom as an institution, sovereign in its speech, its thinking and its script” (*ibid.*: 33) – and where the professors declare their commitment “to accept a responsibility which is not absorbed in the act of knowing or teaching” (*ibid.*: 40).

One should, however, realize that the university without condition has never existed and probably never will. And it also does not have “its place inevitably or exclusively inside the walls of what at present is called a university” (*ibid.*: 77).

Derrida’s university without condition is apparently a utopia – but also a ‘real’ one. Despite the fact that the university since its very beginning in the eleventh century has never been without conditions, this ideal may help us keep in mind what a university might possibly be. It seems that any attempt to approach this idea will – to a larger or smaller extent – result in a psychotic dynamic, either in a destructive or a constructive sense.

While it would go beyond the frame of this paper to further elaborate, there can be no doubt that universities, like organizations in general, have always had psychotic parts and will continue to have them, no matter what their configuration. German universities, as a reviewer of an earlier version of this paper rightly pointed out, have apparently “gone through countless, extremely painful and deeply decisive events and radical changes, which again and again have led to the decline or the dissolution of particular universities.” All this has generated unprocessed and broadly unconscious traumata. A historiography of these traumata, including a look at the psychotic dynamics and their defences, would place the contemporary university into a historical context. This exploration would also reveal the historical impact of money and profit on the university and its psychotic parts, in particular.

While this paper has emphasized the destructive side of psychotic dynamics in the present context of university reform, it should be said that the psychotic parts of the personality and the organization alike might also be sources of creativity. New thinking more often than not requires a capacity – or as Bion (1970: 125), in reference to the poet John Keats (1899: 277), put it, a ‘negative capability’ – on the side of the thinker to be available for ‘psychotic thoughts’, i.e. thoughts of the so-far unknown which at first sight appear bewildering, crazy, scary, unspeakable, devastating and delusional (cf. Pazzini, 2005). To endure such thoughts and ultimately reintegrate them, through thinking, into the non-psychotic parts both of the thinker and of the system in which s/he holds a role is a ‘capacity’ of the depressive position in the Kleinian sense. Such a capacity allows the role holder to experience, acknowledge and endure the pain and anxieties that are related to the experience of guilt, grief and the desire for reparation. While the anxiety of the paranoid-schizoid position is dominated by the fear of being destroyed, it shifts in the depressive position to a fear of destroying others. Thinking and working from the depressive position requires a capacity for sympathy, responsibility and concern for others, and an ability to identify with the subjective experience of people one cares about (Klein, 1964: 65f).

More than three decades ago, Eric Trist (1972: 181) stated that in order to foster positive societal growth, “a more thorough working through of the anxieties of the depressive position” must take place. This point also applies to the present context of university reform: “A society based on a denial of the deeper – and darker – aspects of the human psyche will be more one-dimensional than the present and there will be no joy in it” (Trist, 1976: 1019). To the extent that ‘the university’ would allow itself to develop into a place where the impossible could become possible, i.e. where everything

could be called into question (cf. Derrida, 2001: 14) – including these deeper and darker parts of the human psyche referred to by Trist – learning, teaching and research certainly would be less one-dimensional than the present science business that is in danger of destroying science itself for the sake of knowledge (Koschorke, 2004) – not to mention the loss of ‘joy’ and passion.

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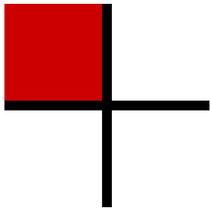
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# Institutionalizing Critique: A Problem of Critical Management Studies\*

Todd Bridgman and Murdoch Stephens

## abstract

This paper has as its starting point calls for critical management studies (CMS) to engage more actively with the public. CMS has been relatively successful in gaining an institutional foothold within university business schools, but is criticised from within for a lack of influence outside the institution. We argue that while closer relationships with the public is assumed to be the next phase in the institutional development of CMS, strengthening its position within university business schools is likely only to exacerbate the present lack of public engagement, since this becomes an end in itself. Bigger and better conferences and a proliferation of journals dedicated to the publishing of CMS research takes us further from the everyday world of workplace politics. As part of creating a space in which we can think differently about CMS and the university, we draw on Foucault's analysis of *parrhesia*, or fearless speech, which emphasises critique as a personal quality.

## Introduction

We approach this topic from two quite different places. We share a passion for the critique of management and organization but we pursue different strategies in practising this critique. One of us represents a CMS<sup>1</sup> 'insider', whose efforts have, in some small way, helped to strengthen the institutional foundations of CMS – by writing research articles, organising conferences activities and introducing critical management education in his classroom. The other is more an 'outsider' to CMS, who does not attend the conferences or write much for the journals, but instead works with activists and writes for a wider public. This paper represents something of a compromise – a paper in an academic journal on the subject of critique and CMS' political engagement with the public.

The university is in crises over its crises. The university is unsure of even its crises, like the skeptic who is unsure of their agnosticism. But the university runs on, powered by all those things that make the world go around. For Readings (1996), the university is in a state of destruction. If we are to sift through the ruins of the university what would we seek to salvage? For us, it would be 'critique'. Our starting point is Kant, in whom we

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1 We use this cautiously, in the knowledge that it is a contested term, both in terms of what it stands for and whom it includes.

see not so much the architect of the modern university as the one who helped lay its foundation.

We are sympathetic to Kant's articulation of the university as the site of the institutionalization of critique and of reason, given the extension of sovereign power and censorship which he faced at the time of his writing two centuries ago. We are also cognisant of the influence of his thinking on the development of the university since that time. Kant's impassioned plea for the protection of freedom of expression within the university has its legacy in conceptions of academic freedom and the university as a critic of society. Those who fight for the preservation of such privileges – and we have done this at various times ourselves – do so with the best of intentions. Unfortunately, a potential side-effect of institutionalizing critique within the university is that academics become removed from the very locations which their critique concerns – be it the workplace, the hospital, parliament or wherever. We see this as a problem, and we are not the only ones. Within CMS, it is the subject of countless conference streams, papers, committee meetings and conversations, typically expressed as 'how can CMS engage more actively with the public?'

To address this 'problem' we turn to Foucault. There is a growing interest in the deployment of Foucault's later works in organization studies (Chan and Garrick, 2002; Jack, 2004; Starkey and Hatchuel, 2002; Wray-Bliss, 2004). Here, Foucault's attention is directed towards the possibilities for transformation through the reinvigoration of critical thinking and the reinvention of the political, together with an analysis of its limitations and constraints. This later work can be seen as Foucault recanting on or mitigating the effects of his earlier work which was seen to delimit the space for individual action through a conception of power which challenged the notion of an autonomous, sovereign individual.

Our focus here is his analysis of parrhesia, which, although not written as a blueprint for intellectual practice, does provide us with alternative ways of thinking about the relationship between critical management scholars and the people. It calls upon us to recognize critique more as a personal quality than as an institutional right and urges us to engage with not just our students and academic colleagues, but with the targets of our critique.

## **A Problem for Critical Management Studies**

The success of CMS is well documented by Adler et al. (2008), including a thriving group of the Academy of Management which has now achieved division status, a large biannual conference in the UK and regional groupings of scholars around the world. Despite these successes, there is also a level of questioning and concern about its future direction, particularly with regard to the form, content and extent of communication with a wider public. Grey and Sinclair (2006: 445), for instance, criticise CMS for writing that it "is too often pretentious, obscurantist and dull". The effect of such writing is to render it meaningless to anyone outside CMS, thereby making it politically useless, in the sense of having any impact on the world of practice.

CMS might appear to provide an ideal home for academics keen to take on activist roles. The domain statement for the Academy of Management's CMS division lists the ambitious goal of "the creation of better organizations, more humane societies, and a viable world system" (CMS Division, 2008). However, critical management scholars are routinely and vigorously criticised for their efforts in the public arena, often by those sympathetic to the CMS agenda. Böhm and Spoelstra (2004: 98) ask: "has the CMS project even come close to starting to have a real impact in the academy and wider spheres of society?" Their answer: "a clear No".

These observations about a lack of external engagement will come as no surprise to those who have attended CMS conferences, where this is a recurring topic of discussion. Perhaps more surprising is that even in academic publications, critical management scholars are neglecting the issues that are supposedly of concern to them. Dunne et al.'s (2008) analysis of articles published in top business and management journals found that little attention is paid to political issues such as war, exploitation or international migration. While one might expect critically-oriented journals to buck the trend the results were underwhelming, leading the authors to conclude that "management academics want to claim power, but not responsibility" (*ibid.*: 276).

Do we expect too much from CMS? Is it reasonable to expect more from critical management studies than the critical study of management, disseminated amongst academic colleagues through seminars, conferences, books and journals? Certainly, central figures in CMS believe that is not too much to ask. In their overview of CMS for the *Academy of Management Annals*, Adler et al. (2008: 156-157) conclude that:

Those committed to advancing critical studies of management will doubtless continue to refine their theories and to debate the merits of their different approaches; the bigger challenge, however, and the one that provides the warrant for this internal debate, is to contribute more forcefully to shaping public agendas.

This, then, is a problem for CMS. The voice of CMS grows louder in its location of the university business school, but remains almost inaudible to those outside. In this paper we argue that while we too would wish to see critical management scholars engaging more vigorously with the politics of the workplace, we see CMS more as the reason for a lack of engagement than the vehicle for the realization of this goal. In making our case we turn to Kant's argument for the university as the site for the institutionalization of critique and consider what it means in the university we inhabit today.

## The Institutionalization of Critique and its Consequences

Kant (2007) answers the question of 'What is enlightenment?' using the motto '*Sapere Aude*' or 'Dare to know!' It is, he argues, a comfortable existence to take direction from others and there are always authority figures ready and willing to direct. In the age of enlightenment, however, people have the courage to free themselves from tutelage and "the freedom to make public one's use of reason at every point" (2007: 31). In *Conflict of the Faculties* (1992), Kant articulates a distinctive role for the university as the institutional location for the progressive use of reason. The 'lower' faculty of philosophy acts in the name of reason to oversee the more practical 'higher' faculties of

medicine, theology and law, which teach practitioners in line with government-approved doctrine. The lower faculty analyses these teachings and instigates conflicts aimed at keeping them aligned with reason and away from dogma. Upholding the freedom of expression of the lower faculty is in the interests not just of the government, but of the higher faculties themselves, since only then can their teaching be aligned with reason. Kant proposes, therefore, a strict division of labour within the university: the higher faculties, whose teachings interest the government and which they can sanction; and the lower faculty, which pursues the interests of science based on reason (Kant, 1992).

Kant's locating of critique in the institute of the university needs to be understood within the context of censorship in which he wrote *Conflict of the Faculties*. Frederick the Great ruled with the dictum 'argue all you will, but obey', which at least allowed for free discussion through which Kant believed reason would triumph. The limits of arguing were cut short under Frederick William II who imposed an edict which censored all writing that strayed too far from religious doctrine. Kant ran foul of the censorship commission with *Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason* and starts *Conflict of the Faculties* with the letter he received from Minister of Justice Woellner, which accuses him of using philosophy to denigrate the scriptures. Woellner urges Kant to discharge his duty to the State – "failing this, you must expect unpleasant measures for your continuing obstinacy" (*ibid.*: 11).

In this hostile environment, *Conflict of the Faculties* can be read simultaneously as an assertion of the rights of philosophers to speak out and a reassurance that such activity will not threaten the sovereign. To make the case, Kant invokes a distinction between the people and the learned community of scholars. Kant (1992: 15) denies that in *Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason* he has offended the State, since "the book in question is not suitable for the public: to them it is an unintelligible, closed book, only a debate among scholars of the faculty, of which the people take no notice."

While Kant talks often of the public and of the philosophy faculty as having the responsibility for publicly presenting truth, the definition of public is narrow. The higher faculties must answer to the government because their teachings "circulate among the people as a *civil* community" (*ibid.*: 57, emphasis in original), whereas the scholarly debates of the lower faculties "are directed to a different kind of public – a learned community" to which "the people are resigned to understanding nothing about" (*ibid.*).

The legacy of Kant continues in many universities of the present, where the freedom of expression is not just the preserve of the philosophy department, but is generalised across all faculties. In New Zealand, for instance, under the Education Act (1989), universities are required, amongst other things, to accept a role as critic and conscience of society. The critic and conscience role extends to state-funded polytechnics and colleges of education (which specialise in the training of teachers) but not to private educational providers. These critic and conscience responsibilities, in turn, rely on the protection of academic freedom, defined as "the freedom of academic staff and students to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and to state controversial or unpopular opinions" (Education Act, 1989).

The formal assignment of the role of critique to universities and the legal protection of this through academic freedom offers comfort for those who assert the university's role in a democratic society as an independent source of social criticism (Tasker and Packham, 1990). There are, however, reasons to be concerned about its manifestations in our commercialised, professionalised universities of the early twenty-first century. We will deal briefly with three: the 'misuse' of academic freedom; a narrowing of the definition of what constitutes critique; and a reluctance to view critique as a personal ethic. We then suggest that Foucault's analysis of parrhesia might offer us a way of addressing these consequences.

A perceived lack of engagement with the people is a critique that extends beyond CMS to business schools as a whole. There is no shortage of intellectuals conducting research in universities and no shortage of public commentators offering an opinion of the major issues of the day. However, there are very few public intellectuals – academics who write for a non-specialist audience on matters of public interest. Business and management is deeply implicated in major issues of public debate (e.g. climate change, globalisation and public ethics), yet business school academics are conspicuously absent from the public sphere. In the past, universities have been a central institution providing these public intellectuals. Yet increasingly think tanks, consultants, journalists and the proliferating 'blogosphere' have supplanted them, with academics blamed for retreating into a private and self-referential world of specialist publications and arcane debates. Jacoby (1987) is critical of academics for accepting the security offered by the profession and neglecting their role of addressing a wider public, arguing that academic freedom not only loses its relevance, but is partly to blame for making the intellectual's existence in the university a safe and comfortable one.

Along with the institutional protections of 'academic freedom' come constraints and responsibilities which reinforce a tendency towards the proliferation of 'safe specialists' in universities (Posner, 2001: 6). Academic freedom is personal in the sense of permitting freedom of speech within the law, yet it is a freedom only gained through membership of the institution, justified on the grounds that it is to be exercised by academics for the good of society. Typically, academic freedom only extends to some activities performed by academics, with a distinction made between speaking as a private individual and speaking as an academic or professional expert. Freedom becomes linked to the academic's area of expertise, so if they comment on areas outside their expertise they speak as private individuals, not as members of the institution, with the University not obliged to defend their right to speak. In theory, there is nothing to prevent academics from speaking out on matters of public concern which fall outside their expertise. In practice, however, self-censorship can become the norm, with academics reluctant to make political interventions in the public sphere because of a fear their careers will be inhibited (Bridgman, 2007).

A related concern is that we rest comfortably in the knowledge that universities will safeguard the role of critique because it is their legal obligation. In doing so, we abdicate our own sense of ethic or responsibility and leave the task of engaging with the public to an organization which faces pressures towards conservatism because of its range of competing stakeholder demands. At our university, the 'critic and conscience' role is one of the university's strategic goals, with administrators keen to gather data on

academics' interactions in the public sphere. A key issue is what constitutes 'critique' and given the definition of academic freedom described above, this tends to be interpreted narrowly as evidenced-based policy analysis, or similar. There are parallels here with Bauman's (1989: 163) argument that "the organization as a whole is an instrument to obliterate responsibility". The effect of organizations' attempts to control the behaviour of their employees is that individual ethical responsibility is suppressed. Applying Bauman's thinking to business ethics, Wray-Bliss (2007: 520) states that "by promoting the idea that management should take responsibility for deciding and enforcing 'ethics', business ethics can be argued to be further *removing* ethical responsibility from individual organizational members" (emphasis in original).

If we are dissatisfied with what passes as critique in contemporary universities, what then, do we want from critique and from the university? We are not advocating that we abandon the institution. By being in the university, whether as a student or member of the academic or general staff, we are all committed to the university to some degree. Unsurprisingly, we would like to see a university that is less obsessed by debates amongst the community of scholars. As Derrida notes, the idea of the Kantian university in which faculty speak publicly "but only *inside* the university" is now outdated (2002: 220, emphasis in original). While acknowledging that Kant's assertion of an essence in the form of an absolute free space deserves symbolic protection, Derrida believes this must be claimed "not only in a verbal and declarative fashion, but in work, in act, and in what we make happen with events" (*ibid.*).

Derrida's (2002) conception of a 'university without condition' is an appealing one, where there is the "right to say everything" and "the right to say it publicly, to publish it" (2002: 205). Derrida's unconditional university represents a utopia, but it can be approached through rigorous deconstruction in which nothing is immune from critique. We can think of this as a duty of the university and being part of it therefore requires working within the institution to explore its limits, as well as the possibilities of escaping them – 'to be in not of' the modern university (Moten and Harney, 2004: 102).

The merits of a deconstruction-based pedagogy for critical management education have been explored elsewhere (Dey and Steyaert, 2007). An alternative way forward is to turn to Foucault (2007a; 2007b), who, like Derrida (2004), sees a dual role for critique, both as an historical analysis of how we come to be constituted as subjects, as well as an exploration of the possibilities of moving beyond those limits. This approach is reflected in Foucault's own forays into political debate, where he used historical analysis as the foundation for specific interventions on issues such as gender relations, authority, and how we conceive of mental illness. While we acknowledge the merits of these contributions to a critical pedagogy, our interest here is on Foucault's analysis of parrhesia. Foucault does not connect this explicitly to the position of the intellectual and of the university, but it can provide a novel way of considering possibilities for countering the effects of institutionalized critique.

## Parrhesia and Its Relevance for CMS

Parrhesia has gained attention since the last of a series of lectures delivered on the topic at University of California, Berkeley and Collège de France by Foucault, in the two years prior to his death. Interest in the term gained momentum when Semiotext(e) released *Fearless Speech* (2001), an edited script of the six 1983 Berkeley lectures. In classical Greece, parrhesia was an attitude and practice that extended to all spheres of life. The parrhesiastic act was singular, and not a vocation, but its speaker was required to possess certain characteristics which allowed him to be considered to be speaking the truth.<sup>2</sup>

It is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognises truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). In parrhesia, the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy... (Foucault, 2001: 19-20)

The parrhesiastes says everything and hides nothing, using the most direct words possible. Parrhesia, as speaking the truth, and rhetoric, as speaking artfully, are held as strict opposites. A pre-condition for being able to speak with parrhesia is the coherence between ones' beliefs and actions. The parrhesiastes "says what he knows to be true" (*ibid.*: 14). To speak the truth requires courage but to be considered parrhesia, it is also necessary that there is a risk or danger involved. Parrhesia takes place "in a situation where the speaker or confessor is in a position of inferiority with respect to the interlocutor". (*ibid.*: 18). Finally, the parrhesiastes speaks because he feels it his moral duty to do so, rather than because someone forces him to speak. In describing the characteristics of the parrhesiastes, Foucault wants to make it clear that "parrhesia is usually spoken of as a personal quality, and not as an institutional right" (*ibid.*: 85).

The Kynic can be considered as the parrhesiastes *par excellence*, as the ideal emphasised in Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy* as both the happiest and freest man due to his 'self-sufficiency'. Boethius' emphasis on the importance of not only lacking a master to report to, but also to be without slaves to depend on, catches the Kynic attitude to freedom. The most infamous Kynic is Diogenes of Sinope,<sup>3</sup> who was not a 'born' truth teller, but emerged through a number of circumstances from his defacing of the currency, through to his surfacing in Athens as a 'dog philosopher'. The Kynic lived in public and engaged in an embodied critique – "the Kynic farts, shits, pisses, masturbates on the street, before the eyes of the Athenian market" (Sloterdijk, 1987: 103). Diogenes' home was a barrel in the street – he lived not only *for* the public, but *of* the public. His criticisms were never private challenges but were issued in the market, on the street, and in the assembly. Diogenes was able to speak truly in these locations as they were public; as a resident of the city they were every bit as much his as anyone else's.

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2 The parrhesiastes was always a 'he' since participation in Athenian democracy was not open to women.

3 See Diogenes as the focus in Sloterdijk (1988) and an analysis of the papers in Branham and Goulet-Cazé (1996).

What are the implications of parrhesia for our practice? Teaching would seem to be one aspect of our academic lives amenable to the practice of parrhesia. Jack (2004), for instance, deploys parrhesia to think about how we engage with students in the classroom, “to encourage them to reflect on their own moralities and their own lives” (2004: 133). If, however, we apply the criteria of parrhesia strictly, the criterion of criticism requires that the speaker be in a position of inferiority with respect to the interlocutor. Perhaps we might claim this to be the case where our students are managers, but otherwise, it would not seem that we are in a less powerful position than our students. While parrhesia could conceivably be part of a critical management education (Grey, 2004), approaches such as Derrida’s deconstruction (Dey and Steyaert, 2007), involving both a critical questioning and an invention of possibilities might have greater applicability in the classroom than fearless speech.

We also question the extent to which it is possible to practise parrhesia with our academic colleagues, at conferences for example. Whilst we are probably not alone in approaching conference presentations with some trepidation, it is not altogether clear who the interlocutor might be or if indeed there is a risk that we might lose our privilege to speak. Whilst we are of the opinion that many academic presentations would benefit from a dose of straight-talking, the abrasive nature of the parrhesiastes’ intervention is not altogether consistent with the image of a community of scholars, to which we remain attracted.

If there are limited opportunities to practice parrhesia through our teaching and research, what is left? We have in mind activity that engages directly with the ‘enemy’. That might be the senior management of the largest or most influential corporations in our localities. It might be civil servants with the responsibility for policy analysis in our areas of interest. It might be the politicians who drive such initiatives. It might be our own heads of faculties, or vice-chancellors. It might be our colleagues from the ‘mainstream’ of management within business schools.

In our experience of academic life, these opportunities present themselves even if we do not actively go in search of them. For example, when an invitation to address a breakfast meeting of managers arrives in our email inbox, it is tempting to delete it. Why would I want to spend my precious time talking to these people? They probably won’t understand what I have to say, and even if they do, what will they care? If I accept, that gives me less time for writing that academic paper, so what incentive is there for me to say yes? It is seemingly mundane engagements such as this that present opportunities for provocative dialogue. We should not delude ourselves that our interventions will convert these people to our ‘truth’, but it might be possible to “lead the interlocutor to internalize this parrhesiastic struggle – to fight within himself against his own faults” (Foucault, 2001: 133).

We are not the first to have turned to parrhesia to intervene in the debate about the practical politics of CMS (Barratt, 2003; Barratt, 2004). The most comprehensive treatment is provided by Jack (2004), who juxtaposes the ideas of free speech and fearless speech. Jack asks whether critical management scholars are prepared to engage in fearless speech and concludes they are probably not, because of the potential negative

material consequences. Whilst we might all stand for the principle of fearless speech, “its material enactment is something of a bigger challenge” (2004: 132).

A more conservative reading is offered by Barrett (2008), who believes that the familiar narrative of CMS’ unfulfilled potential of political activism or practical criticism, which we re-tell in this paper, is somewhat ignorant of the constraining effects of the power relations through which CMS is constituted. Barrett appears swayed by commentary on the positioning of CMS within business schools which sees CMS as marginal and always under threat. On this hostile landscape, the acts of naming CMS, organizing conferences and launching journals devoted to critical work are themselves political acts. Barrett (*ibid.*: 532) concludes that “tactical images of manoeuvres on inhospitable terrain” better describes the contemporary location of CMS than the straight-talking and risk-taking critic. Here, we have a reaffirmation of the boundary between the university and the people which Kant constructs, with critical scholars playing their part “by furnishing sympathetic political actors with instruments of analysis for a possible struggle” (*ibid.*: 533).

We are in agreement with Barrett that carving out a space for CMS within business schools where mainstream discourses of management and organization are hegemonic is not an easy task. We are fortunate to be located in a business school in which CMS represents more than a marginal endeavour, but accept that in many business schools, the bridgehead which critical management scholars have gained remains tenuous. However, as relative newcomers to CMS, we get the feeling that in some contexts at least, the life of the critical management scholar within the institution has become a relatively comfortable one.

Much critical management scholarship offers a penetrating critique of capitalism from within an institution, the business school, which, we are told, “extorts fees from the middle and upper classes so it can stamp their offspring with a passport into corporate sleaze” (O’Doherty and Jones, 2005: 1). For people unfamiliar with the world of business schools, this might seem an untenable position, yet to us it seems not only possible, but quite common. One explanation for this is that the critique offered by CMS is relatively tightly contained within the community of scholars. The exploiters and the exploited in our capitalist societies pay little or no attention to the writings of critical management scholars, either because they are not aware that they exist (being largely confined to academic journals which are difficult and costly to access) or do not understand them (being written in a language that they do not comprehend). As a result, the writings of critical management scholars are unlikely to give business school deans and university vice-chancellors sleepless nights because they can rest safe in the knowledge that such knowledge is highly unlikely to seep through the cracks of the ivory tower.<sup>4</sup> It is, of course, unfair to lay the blame for this state of affairs solely at the feet of critical management scholars. There are strong pressures from the state, which are fed through to university administrators, to communicate with other scholars rather than the people and as Parker (2002: 129) notes, “writing unread scholarship counts,

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4 In making this criticism, we do not pretend to be immune from it. In a very act of writing this paper, we are spending time to communicate with primarily an academic audience – time which could otherwise be spent with engaging with corporate elites, policymakers, activists etc.

organizing activism does not”.<sup>5</sup> As new outlets for CMS research emerge and as CMS research finds its way increasingly into ‘mainstream’ journals, critical scholars become greater assets to the schools which employ them. It is almost as if the content of their critique becomes irrelevant.

Those solely concerned with CMS achieving academic credibility within universities might not see the low level of public engagement as a problem. As we have shown earlier, influential figures within CMS do see it as a problem. The common response is that CMS, as a collective, must do more to reach out to the people.<sup>6</sup> We feel however, that these increasing calls for a politically-engaged CMS might be well-intentioned but misdirected. Rather than looking to the ‘community’ to co-ordinate the action, we have argued that it might be better if we look more at ourselves, considering our own sense of responsibility and duty and figuring out where and how we can intervene to make a difference.

The critical management scholar as parrhesiastes might be idealistic, but idealism is about ideas and about setting challenging goals, neither of which we consider to be negatives. We concur with Jack (2004) that there is still value in using parrhesia as a principle that might guide action, however pragmatic and limited it might be. Of course, there are many reasons for shying away from fearless speech. There would seem to be few institutional rewards on offer and sharing our critiques with those outside the university carries risks. When we attempt to communicate our ideas for consumption by the public, there is a risk that we appear simplistic or sensational, causing colleagues to accuse us of undermining our discipline. In a university environment where autocratic management styles are replacing more collegial approaches and where universities are becoming increasingly sensitive about how they are perceived by stakeholders, there is also the risk that we get offside with our employers.

## Conclusion: A Problem of Critical Management Studies

Kant answers the question of ‘What is enlightenment?’ using the motto ‘*Sapere Aude*’ or ‘Dare to know!’ In this paper we have dared to question Kant’s articulation of critique. We have interrogated Kant’s distinction between the public and the people in *Conflict of the Faculties*, being sympathetic to this isolationism given the threats of the censors and his desire to create a space for the expression of freedom yet raising concern at some of its consequences for the present. For an exemplar of fearless speech, we need look no further than Kant himself. There are similarities between Kant’s letter to his King and parrhesia as enacted in not only speaking the truth, but asking to be allowed to speak the truth.

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5 One of us must admit to feelings of disappointment that *ephemera* does not appear on the list of Australian Research Council rankings of journals, which has been adopted by our university as a mechanism for measuring research performance and which led to the realization that this publication would not ‘count’ as evidence that we are fulfilling our responsibilities for furthering knowledge.

6 This was an agenda item at the 2008 business meeting for the CMS Interest Group at the Academy of Management. Out of 900 members, only approximated 50 were at the meeting.

Trying to place the Kynics on Kant's schema of the university and the process of critique and progress is difficult. Diogenes seems to have forsaken all of the benefits of a private life, living as he did in a barrel, for a perpetual position in the public. But his method of discoursing with the public was not the learned books, but a biting rhetoric. For Kant there was the reading public who were interested in these esoteric arguments, and the people who would find these discussions boring or unsettling. The faculties and public forums were tools for ensuring that individuals lived in a system in which they would be happy to obey, or simply did not have to think about whether obedience was good. In Kant's schema it seems that the Kynics eschewed the private and the public in favour of direct dialogue with the people. To Kant the Kynics seem to be inviting anarchy and rebellion against the government.

In this paper, we have used Foucault's analysis of parrhesia and its expression by the Kynics as a mirror to cast a reflective light on CMS. Although Foucault does not advocate parrhesia as an intellectual practice, it might usefully contribute to rethinking the challenges facing CMS, by encouraging us to view critique more as a personal ethic than as something located within institutions such as CMS or the modern university. If we are to take the concerns about the future of CMS at face value, then there seems a genuine desire to invigorate critique. The development of CMS has been largely driven, until now, by a desire to be regarded as a legitimate perspective on organization studies, within business schools which have themselves been preoccupied with a quest for academic legitimacy within universities. With that institutional location now relatively strong, at least in the UK, Europe and Australasia, there is now a desire to connect better with those outside the university and this is assumed to be the next stage in CMS' development. This argument has intuitive appeal, but we are not convinced. We started out with the idea that CMS *has* a problem – its lack of engagement in the politics of the workplace. While we share that concern, our conclusion is that CMS, as an institution within the business school, *is* a problem. With every effort that goes into strengthening the position of CMS within university business schools, CMS becomes more professionalized and increasingly isolated from life outside the institution.

The juxtaposition of parrhesia with critical management scholars shows the limits of institutionalized critique. Freedom of speech, as represented by 'academic freedom' is granted by the institution of the university, subject to certain constraints. Fearless speech, on the other hand, encourages us to reflect on our engagement of critique at an intensely personal level. It is, we suggest, fundamentally about the personal rather than the institutional. It is analogous to walking the tightrope without the safety net below. Those in the modern university wanting to learn from the parrhesiastes need to consider the medium of transmission that the university provides, and, in line with Giroux (2003), find it necessary to defend these public spaces as one of the first acts that will allow free speaking to flourish. One requirement of securing public space may be to consider in more depth the particular relations to the public which may seem distasteful to some critical management scholars: perhaps public acceptance of the necessity for protection of public spaces in the university is of more importance than the strict styling of academic discourse. In short, some may need to pull their heads out of their arses, put aside their obsessions over language and start making sense as a political act. If we were more frank by writing with greater clarity, if we were more willing to speak directly to those in power and if we were willing to risk the privileges that come through our

membership of the university, we might come closer to fulfilling the emancipatory potential of CMS.

While we have been preoccupied with critique as practised within universities, we would like to finish by pointing to alternative forms of 'education' in our broader communities, and in particular to those in our home city of Wellington, that go under the name 'anarchists', but more specifically to those fighting for animal rights, environmental protection, an end to institutionalised racism, direct representation in politics and for/against an array of associated causes. We would like to point to loosely affiliated groups who are able to analyse the basis of their own common membership without blushing, who work as many hours as many employed people, but do so as unpaid volunteers, and those who aim to establish non-corporate media. Those with traction, without contracts.

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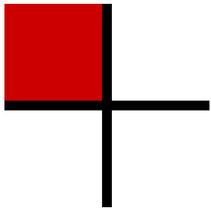
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## Discussing the Role of the Business School

Stephen Dunne, Stefano Harney, Martin Parker and Tony Tinker

### abstract

During the lead up to the publication of this Special Issue, we invited several figures to engage our original call for contributions in what ever way they saw fit. As these commentaries proliferated, it became increasingly apparent to us that it would be worth staging a virtual roundtable discussion – that being an online discussion co-ordinated and chaired by *ephemera* (in this case represented by Stephen Dunne) – devoted to the question of what today's Business School is for. With this end in mind, contributors to this feature were asked to debate the Role of the Business School, with particular emphasis being placed upon the opportunities and challenges that the very existence of something like a Business School presents to contemporary critical scholarship.

**Stephen Dunne (henceforth SD)** I'd like to begin with a question that will serve to put your contribution to this interview into some sort of context. That way it will be easier for your audience to explain your comments away with recourse to *your background!* Ok, the first thing that is apparent, on this question of *your background*, is that at the time of interviewing, you all work within Universities, indeed within Business Schools. For the benefit of the audience, then, can you please say a little bit about the history of your own relationship to the University in general and to the Business School in particular?

**Stefano Harney (henceforth SH)** I was born in Berkeley, California, while my father was finishing his PhD in History at the University of California. He held an appointment in history at the University of Toronto all his career. His brother studied for a PhD in English at Harvard University and became an English Professor on the North Shore of Boston. My brother holds an appointment in anthropology and history at the University of Western Australia, and my sister holds an appointment in art history at the University of Toronto. I hold an appointment at the University of London, and I hold a PhD from Cambridge. My brother and I, and both my sisters, attended Harvard College, as my father had before us. He was a working class scholarship kid, but you get the point. We are an academic family. I don't come to these conversations about the university from the outside. But I do come to these conversations about the business school from the outside. My first academic appointment was in anthropology, and my second in sociology. I was preparing my application for tenure at the City University of New York, in sociology, when I decided to apply for a position at the University of Leicester in the Management School in 2003.

I don't really know why. Part of the reason had been the political scene in New York, both Rudolph Giuliani at the city level, and George Bush at the national level. I was sick of it. Part of it was my growing interest in the connection between organising and organisation, politics and state. I sensed there was something going on in organisation studies in Britain that was not evident in organisational sociology, for instance, in the United States. So this is my pedigree. But there is also what the Italians would call the militant question, the question of how to be a movement intellectual. But maybe we should leave that for another answer.

**Martin Parker (henceforth MP)** My background, which feels like a foreground, is in English universities since 1988, but in the Business School since 1995. Previously, I worked in a Sociology Department. I didn't want to move into a Business School, because I felt that sociology was a discipline that promised radical social change, whilst management was a running dog of capital. But I did. Now, sometimes, I feel that my doubts reflected a misguided position that romanticized sociology and homogenized management. Sometimes. But when I am teaching a lecture theatre fecund with a million pounds worth of income, thanks to the sons and daughters of the Chinese bourgeoisie, it makes me feel nostalgic for sociology. Perhaps this is also nostalgia for sociology's supposed golden age, which happens also to be a recent golden age of dissent for the university. As for the university, it is an institution which has provided me with a living for twenty years, but I do not think it has a particularly glorious past or future. It has had periods of being a useful institution for certain radical purposes, but it has just as often been a place where power is reproduced, and the white sons of the imperial classes persuaded of their burden. But then I read something beautiful, or listen to a remarkable person saying something amazing, and it makes me pleased to be here. Indeed, I find it difficult to imagine being somewhere else.

**Tony Tinker (henceforth TT)** My relationship with Universities reaches over 30 years. Without an undergraduate degree, I obtained a professional accounting qualification which gained me admission to an MSc Program at Bradford. Having suffered several clerical jobs intermittently, I relished life in academia and proceeded to a doctorate at MBS. After a miserable few years as an Assistant Lecturer at the University of Sheffield (dominated by economists) I took up a visiting position at the University of Washington. In a good job market, I moved (up) to UCLA, then NYU, and ultimately CUNY (where I've worked for over 20 years). I am now Professor of Accountancy on several faculties at the City University of New York, including the Graduate Centre, Baruch College, and the School of Professional Studies. I've held distinguished Visiting Professorial Positions at St. Andrews University, Scotland, and have served as Visiting Professor at Leicester University, the University of South Australia, and as Research Fellow at Glasgow-Caledonian University, as a founder-member of Ralph Nader's Association for Integrity in Accounting Group, founder-member of the CUNY Faculty for the Development of On-Line Programs and Fellow of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants. I've been twice past-council member of the American Accounting Association and twice past-chair of the AAA Public Interest Section. I have authored and co-authored several books and published numerous academic articles and have served as co-editor of *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, *Accounting Forum* and Associate Editor of *Accounting in the Public Interest* and have been on the editorial board of several major accounting journals.

Working in a business school, I enjoy the largess of that institution, but also must play a savvy political game. Mainstream Business Schools in the U.S are politically and scholastically very right wing. Most of their research is a valorisation of the market (and thus the accumulation process) and an implicit denigration of all state and ‘social’ interests that may stand apposed to the accumulation process. My politics involves using institutional tools (such as journals and membership/offices of organizations like the American Accounting Association) to wage combat over specific crises of capitalism (e.g, the realization crisis of credit cards and sub prime).

**SD** Thank you all for that – now to the discussion! I suppose it is fair to say that with any discussion of the Role of the Business School, or, indeed of the University more generally, it probably makes sense for us to acknowledge that we are by no means treading upon previously uncharted terrains. Indeed in many ways, the attempt to assign a purpose or set of purposes to these institutions is a project that is at least as old as these very institutions. To be clear, the intention here is not to determine the role of these institutions. The intention here is rather to discuss the manner in which that role has and can be understood. So again, for the sake of contextualisation, I would like to ask you to outline what you believe to be the considerations that are indispensable to any such discussion.

**SH** Well, first, the innovation of the business school is to present itself as a self-service warehouse. We know in the past the way schools have been used to house labour that needs to be ready, to exhibit the potential to labour, as Paolo Virno would say, but for which there is no immediate need, other than to act obviously as a threat to those working. Now with the business school we find that people volunteer to be warehoused. And this is important at a time when politics is being privatized and individualized in ways that threaten the management of populations. So the business school is a triumph of what Foucault would call security: it takes the risk of letting people warehouse themselves and wins. This is especially true with graduate business programmes, but also given the expansion of the universities in the UK, it is also now true of the undergraduate programmes, with students who might have gone into the trades going into marketing. More and more of the population now knows when it is not needed, and this complements those parts of the population that do not need to be told to re-invest in themselves as ‘the new fixed capital’ as Christian Marazzi points out brilliantly. This is a victory for capital. That’s the first thing to say.

But the second thing that follows immediately from this observation is that the point of a warehouse is to do nothing (visit a comprehensive school or a high school to see this in action). Nevertheless, universities have a strange way of escaping the functions they are set up to perform, even if they never escape them entirely, and even if often we find long periods and wide swaths of academia where there is nothing visible but conformity. It’s different in this way, but it’s also a workplace, and when people are thrown together in a workplace they start to recognize each other in a certain condition, and I am tempted to say thrown-ness. And of course it is the original immaterial workplace, together with the state and the church. Let’s leave aside what we mean by immaterial, other than the fact that (cognitive and affective) communication and information are central to the work.

So students start communicating and staff, sometimes, start communicating, and before you know it, the university becomes a problem, no longer the warehouse solution it was intended to be. And this happens in the business school, especially in these large undergraduate programmes, as it does everywhere in the university.

**SD** You say this set of dynamics is characteristic of the Business School. What is it about the Business School which marks it out as special in this regard? What is it about the Business School which has you making this sort of distinction?

**SH** If the Business School is special it is not because it is closer to capital, but because it is closer to labour. If one looks at what the Business School says it is teaching one quickly discovers that it speaks in the voice not of capital but rather in the voice of labour. It speaks of difference, of culture, of language and discourse. It speaks of accountability and responsibility. It speaks of power and politics. It speaks in the language of critique. I am not talking about the way the Leicester School of Management speaks, nor am I speaking of any other school that designates itself as critical. I am talking about LBS and Harvard.

Now what is going on here? Well I think something is changing with how wealth is extracted socially. And I will go further. This new way of extracting wealth means we cannot dismiss the way the Business School talks, by saying for instance that it just *sounds* like the voice of labour but really it is just capital animating labour. No, because even that would be interesting. I think the reason to be interested in the Business School is to track this voice. No doubt the Business School is at the heart of the becoming-capital of society, of real subsumption, if you like. But we ought to be interested in the tendency of capital to pull away from labour by drawing nearer and nearer, by sounding more and more like it. At the same time, how to be interested in capital when capital sounds like critique is the really important question.

**SD** We'll be talking about that very shortly, I'm sure. Beforehand, Martin, can you give me your take on what we need to be talking about when we're talking about the Role of the University and the Business School today?

**MP** At the moment, I think the considerations are probably three.

One is rationalization, which is to point to the uses of social and material technologies which increase the 'efficiency' of the university.

This, I believe, is largely driven by the second consideration, academic capitalism. Whilst, in the past, universities were largely tied to the reproduction of state elites, now they seem increasingly to be lock-stepped with the reproduction of capital. In the UK, the state is gradually withdrawing its patronage, and teaching and research is justified for its usefulness and sold for increasing sums of money.

Finally, there is the working out of a longer term tendency, though accelerated by the other two, which is something like the professionalization of academic labour. This might be exemplified by the sort of person who knows the impact factors of the journals that they publish in, or who will write any old shit with anyone in order that they hear other people calling them professor. This is the one that disgusts me most, and makes

me want to spit in their white wine at the publishers' reception. Business Schools, of course, intensify these three considerations. Which intensifies my disgust, but also makes it more remarkable when the beautiful, remarkable and amazing miraculously manifest themselves.

**TT** The business school is best viewed as the Trojan Horse of modern capitalism, that is to say the vent for transforming the University Institution from within. This is not to idealize the University; it is a remnant of a pre-capitalist era (in the UK and France, for instance). Nevertheless, the commodification of university labour, and the product of that labour, has been established by business schools in many universities. At NYU, they were termed the cash cow: a dim recognition of this transformative force.

**SD** So what do you think about the contribution of Critical Management Studies (CMS) to the contestation of the Role of the Business School? Before you answer, please allow me to frame this question somewhat. On the one hand there is the notion that advocates of CMS, despite its very many diverse formulations, collectively pursue a "critical" approach towards the study of Business and Management. In this sense, CMS, whatever else it means, means being "critical" towards the study of business and management.

But on the other hand, if we commit to calling everything we agree with CMS, we run the risk of forgetting that calling something "critical" doesn't actually make it critical, and that not calling something "critical" doesn't mean that it is not actually critical. I think Stefano identified something of the difficulty of all of this when he spoke about capital coming to sound like critique. Otherwise, we might also think of Žižek's image of the yuppie reading Deleuze (*Organs without Bodies*) or of the position held by *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (Boltanski and Chiapello) which suggests that modern capitalism in fact thrives upon critique.

So what, if anything, do you see as the role of critique within the business school? And to what extent do you think this role is achieved in the name of Critical Management Studies?

**MP** As I mentioned earlier, I think the University has always had a problematic relation with power. This is simply because it must rely on the state, or on a particular social class or occupational group, for money and legitimacy. Throughout history, the relative economic importance of its various disciplines and faculties can hence be taken to be some sort of indication as to the distribution of interests within a given social context. It shouldn't surprise us that the business schools, and big science, are the key players within the contemporary university.

Being fairly realistic, the majority of employees within such a context will be primarily concerned with career considerations, in terms of job stability, income, status and so on. This means that teaching, publications, public comment and so on will be subordinated to making a living. Biting the hand that feeds is rarely a good strategy for advancement in any occupation. However, particular social networks, institutions, and funding regimes might be able to encourage critical writing, teaching and practice. Journals can be built, conferences organized, sympathetic persons find places in university and state bodies and so on. But this guarantees nothing. It merely means that some academics

might be encouraged to voice some sort of oppositional politics. It doesn't mean that anyone outside that small group will listen, or that certain 'effects' will take place. Those things become possible, but never guaranteed.

I think this is important because I don't believe that 'critique' makes much sense if it stays within the business school. If a small group of academics publish obscure but bad tempered articles about management fashions and textbook ideas they can certainly call themselves critical, but so what? It's a bit like someone moaning about the new world order from the safety of the bar at the Dog and Duck. Their immediate neighbours might be forced to listen, but no-one else is likely to care very much. So, I suppose my sense of the 'role of critique within the business school' is that it should always be trying to be heard outside the business school, however hard this might be. If it is only 'within', it is inadequate. As for CMS, I think it is a case study that echoes a lot of other critical movements within applied disciplines. In the UK context, legal studies, education, social work, architecture and so on all have had their critical moments.

Some of these have lasted longer than others. Some have been allied with developments in other disciplines, such as sociology or philosophy. Some have been overtaken by cliché and careerism. My sense is that CMS is close to the end of its useful life, though I don't wish it dead. For a while, it seemed that it was tactically useful for some academics to label themselves in this way. As an identity project, and as a totem for organizing around, it had some enjoyable and interesting effects. But now, with emerging gurus and all the apparatus of institutionalization, it runs the risk of a certain sclerosis. Not yet though. Not yet. It would be easy enough for an individualist academic, in love with the romance of the outside, to imagine that they could do without institutionalization. I don't think that they can, so I would caution against any easy disposals of CMS.

That being said, I would contest much of what passes for critical in the context of CMS. For me, critical necessarily means left wing. For me, that means being committed to the redistribution of wealth, to localization, and hence to forms of ideology critique that are helpful to these projects. In that sense, merely writing and talking about 'identity', 'discourse', 'theory' and so on are not in themselves critical. They might be turned to critical uses, but then so can forms of positivism, functionalism and science. The point, for me, is effects, and no particular epistemology guarantees certain political effects. It is easy enough to be a radical in the seminar room.

**SD** Tony, how would you respond?

**TT** Obviously we don't need to accept such a silly and commonsense /co-opted notion of critique. It is reductionism to assume that 'critique' can be assimilated 'without remainder'. Recall Gramsci's notion of an intervention at the right historical moment ('when the contradictions reach their most acute level') and to 'negate the negation' (in Adorno's terms). As for "achieved in the name of Critical Management Studies"? Not much I'm afraid! Early on, CMS was taken over and diluted by decedents of the *Nouvelle Philosophie* – pseudo French radicals who confused Stalin/the Soviet Bloc and the French Communist Party with Marxism, and rather than read the latter, embarked on

a revisionist binge of Neo-Foucaudian atomism. The result: a mish-mash of identity politics in its most atomistic form.

**MP** Tony, why are you so easily dismissive of CMS? Why dispose of possible allies and linkages in such a high handed way? Why not do the politics that would make these people useful for the projects you imagine? And if, as you said earlier, the business school is the Trojan horse of capitalism, how do we know when to sabotage the wheels and block up the eyes? How will we know ‘when the contradictions reach their most acute level’? Why all this waiting?

**TT** Like Hegel’s owl, I wouldn’t claim to be playing an especially ‘savvy game’. Indeed, compared with that of some hyper-omniscients, my position is a heavily defensive one of a ‘negation of negation’ form. CMS has been hijacked by a labour process creed that has little to do with labour or (historical) process. Accordingly, its time to ‘Move On’. As for knowing when “to sabotage the wheels and block up the eyes?” What do you want, Martin, a global forecast of the future?

Let’s get back to firm ground. We all have a back yard, and if we keep our eyes open, we will find our own petite historical moments. In my back yard, opportunities present themselves every day. As a journal editor for instance, I try to help progressive colleagues publish, get promoted, and get tenured. Now I grant you, this isn’t like bringing down the Berlin Wall, but in the words of George Orwell, ‘Every joke is a tiny revolution’. Once in a while, we may get a chance to land a sucker punch. When Enron broke, the Neo-Con Academics in North America were stunned into silence. Like Fisher in 1929, they had been trained only to say ‘The market is sound’. Given that these idiots hadn’t even read Schumpeter, no-one was willing to go on the national news to explain Enron. So the task fell to yours truly – twice.

**SD** Stefano: critique, business school, CMS...

**SH** Marx wrote not a critique of economics, but a critique of political economy. This is a very important distinction for me. When Marx was writing, what he termed the vulgar economists held sway. But he did not offer a critique of them, at least not directly. He instead took aim at what they vulgarised: political economy. In this sense he was writing a critique of critique. Smith and Ricardo wrote critiques of economy, but they used a politics that had essentially arisen with capitalism to do this. The most obvious place to see Marx enunciating this is of course in his critiques of Proudhon, where repeatedly he insists that you cannot start a critique from the grounds of a politics based on the commodity form (a form moreover that is then twisted by the way these commodities were produced). Here, and in his attention to primitive accumulation, we see him doing a critique of those who would try to bring a certain historically blind politics to economics.

When I hear today that we ought to politicise the creative industries, or corporate social responsibility, I hear Smith or Proudhon, not Marx. And this point seems especially important to me in light of what I have already said about the business school as a place where critique is produced for capital (this is only one dimension of the business school but an important one, even if we could also say that many other university departments

are guilty of this, and even if we need to specify this capitalist form of critique including rejecting the analysis of Boltanski and Chiapello whose naïve pragmatism derives from their over-estimation of the power of capital). Certainly there are vulgar scholars at work in the business school, but there are also many scholars who either with or without the label ‘critical’ work away in the tradition of Smith or Proudhon, or indeed in the best traditions of bourgeois sociology, because let’s not forget this is a tradition of critique too, and I need to come back to this academic discipline in the second part of this answer.

Bringing politics into business scholarship, or finding the politics of capitalism in business scholarship, does not take us far enough. This remains a common move, unfortunately. A financial crisis occurs so we ask about the politics of finance, or terror occurs and we promise to talk about the politics of terrorism. It is as if no one had ever read Foucault, who is the scholar of course who really extended Marx’s critique of critique so productively. But I hasten to add that this is no reason not to work with people who have this impulse or to see what we can make of such discontent and anger. Its just that it is not enough, in my view. Nor is it enough to dispense with business and management to find the real politics.

What I mean here is that some have said that business and management are just mediations and really any critique offered should be a critique of capitalism. I feel sympathetic to this impulse. And so did Marx, who often lashed out directly at the vulgar economists, at state officials, and capitalist deprivations like colonialism. In this regard, I admire the book that Campbell Jones and Damian O’ Doherty produced on *The Business School of Tomorrow*. At the same time I am interested in the mediation. And I feel this mediation cannot simply be swept aside. I think this is the lesson of post-structuralism. But I am also interested in mediation because I am interested in a part of Marx’s critique we have not mentioned. Marx conducted not just a critique of critique but he also conducted an immanent critique. He found another politics inside the politics of political economy, and this was the politics of associated labour, of the emerging society of producers. To do this he stayed close to his object. He did not sweep it aside in search of something underneath.

Now this for me raises the question of how one would do this, how one would stay close to these mediations. Well for me I find this possible through attention to students and to the workplace I know best, the university. I feel that if another politics is to be found inside business and management, one place to look for it is among the movements of associated labour brought together in the business school, and in the university more generally. Indeed I think there is self-organisation going on all the time in the undercommons of the university, and with the help of traditions in self-organisation, like the Black Radical Tradition, I think we can come to identify the immanent politics of this self-organisation among students, and among the discounted and the dispossessed of the university workplace. I would even go so far as to say that under the conditions that my friends at the Edu-Factory Collective in Rome have been theorizing, that is to say under conditions of what I have called the Metroversity, staying close to this site is a way to stay close to a privileged tendency in the mediations of capital and labour. And this is also what I have tried to do in a series of articles, and

it is what I am trying to do in my work with new teaching and curriculum efforts at Queen Mary, University of London.

So for me, this is what critique would mean.

Now it should be clear that this is not what critique will mean for everyone who, as you have said, uses or does not use the term, and this brings us to the second part of your question, which I will rephrase as what can CMS do? Well the first thing to say is an obvious thing, but still important not to forget. To have a lot of people teaching and studying in the business school who think there is something wrong with the world is a good start, and it is a chance to talk to others and to write to others, to imagine the formation of movements, and to make something of our teaching. I do not come from this world of critical management studies, but I am happy to move through it on the chance that we can start something, that we can always start something. I value this space and I benefit from it. Having said that, we cannot make any history we choose from this formation of scholars and students. There is an institutional history to it which others will know better. But what seems clear from this history is that some institutional space was opened by sociology in the business school in Britain particularly.

So the first thing it seems to me that CMS can do is to say okay we had this space opened by sociology, by sociologists coming into the business school in Britain and defining a field in a way that included this tradition of bourgeois sociological critique, and bringing in with it even some Marxist labour process theory. Now that is over as a specific moment it seems, but it continues as space, uncertainly. What we need to do now is to say: how do we keep open this space? How do we now put corporate social responsibility, ethics, governance, accountability at the heart of the curriculum to keep open the space created through an older formation of organisational behaviour and workplace sociology? This is one thing CMS can do and it requires a concerted effort to work on curriculum and teaching across the formation of scholars and students, and to support each other across institutions in all the ways required, from being external examiners for each other to being references for promotion for each other, a lot of which goes on already, but perhaps not strategically enough, with not enough attention to the space we need to keep open across the business schools. Of course this is related for me to working with students and to paying attention to the university as a workplace and thus it is related to my idea of critique, but what else can CMS do beside keep open this space, especially for those who do not share my approach to critique?

Well, I think it is helpful to look at CMS comparatively to judge what else it might do. As I have said, I associate more with cultural studies, through my work on the collective of the journal *Social Text*, a journal of Left tendencies, as Andrew Ross once called it, and I associate more with post-workerist thought in Italy and recently with the newest generation of social centres. These spaces, rather than CMS, represent my politics, but as I have said I also use and benefit from the space of CMS, and as a result I often compare spaces. One space that is instructive to compare to CMS is this regard is critical legal studies, a mostly American movement of the 1980's and 1990's (despite the importance of Unger), in the law schools. Critical Legal Studies is useful because of the similarity of its object, of its mediations. Like business, law ought to be dispensed with from a militant perspective, as the codification of the violence of primitive

accumulation and the ongoing privatisation of social wealth, or perhaps as something produced by criminality. But I would say, like the object of business and management, it is instead also productive to work with these mediations in search of a new politics, and indeed especially those working at the intersection of critical legal studies and critical race theory did exactly this. What came out of this was a critique of democracy. There is an infamous paper by Lani Guanier, for instance, that prevented her from becoming attorney general under Bill Clinton, because it argued against representative democracy and for racial justice. Resistance is prior and this provocation eventually produced capital's state response, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, democracy and equality reunited.

Now this is something CMS could do. It could provoke a crisis in the discipline and try to interrupt the flows between the discipline and the state. It has not done this yet, evidently, but there is no reason it cannot. There is nothing about working in the business school that makes it more difficult than working in the law school. Now I think we should start by saying the name of labour in the business school, the desire that dare not speak its name in the business school. This is the name, by the way, that both the business schools, and those who dismiss CMS as hopelessly out-gunned by capitalism, prohibit us from uttering, a curious coming together of an authoritarian tendency on the Right and the Left.

What else can CMS do? Let us return again to the law school. Those who work defending death row prisoners in the US may not always be providing the kind of critique found in critical legal studies, although they may well be, but certainly they are doing something politically important. CMS could be doing something similar, providing cover for instance to NGOs that have to certify they are run in a certain way to get funding and work around the world. Now I have a problem with most NGOs but I still think this can be important for what I would call movement NGOs for whom we could be providing both cover and space. Those in accounting and finance and worthy examples are Christine Cooper in Glasgow, or, of course, Tony Tinker, can use their skills to expose corruption and policy-based theft. Those who are in marketing can do sub-vertising, and so on.

This is something CMS can do, and it would take us closer to the mediations, and closer to that critique of critique we need. And CMS should do all of the things it continues to do to keep open space, conferences, publishing, infiltrating professional bodies. CMS is a possibility. When it fails to do any of this, just as when the Left fails, then we do not go home and wait for a crisis in the system or some workers elsewhere to win. We instead find some friends, we drink for strength, and we get up and try again. That's why they call it struggle.

**MP** Stefano, do you think you are a movement intellectual? If so, which movement, and have you told them? I have always admired your attempts to be positive about business and management ideas, even when they appropriate languages of creativity and revolution. But it still seems to me that the majority of business and management writing, in the texts and the magazines, is mere hypocrisy, or lies that are repeated so often that they become common sense. In that sense, I don't want to understand, but simply condemn. Am I making an old left mistake here?

**SH** I will take the first question very seriously and the second perhaps not as seriously, maybe reversing the spirit in which each was asked!

Disavowal is a common trait among some of our colleagues today in the critical schools, and not just in CMS. I have never been one for that. I am formed by two serious movements and I don't disavow them. I've not out-grown them, and I am not embarrassed by them. I am more than anything else, not smarter than them. I think you get the idea of the kind of disavowal I am talking about but bear with me while I get to why I am talking about this (it's not to portray myself as loyal and others as careerist).

Throughout my formal education, I was deeply influenced by the black radical tradition in the United States, chiefly through its embodiment in Professor Martin Luther King, who was and is a mentor to me. My exposure through my father, to 'history from the bottom up' and his studies of the oral histories of immigrants, prepared me for this black radical tradition, at least in part. It is interesting to me that this happened to me in the university, and I will come back to that. On the other hand, I am deeply influenced by a tradition exiting the university, the Italian workerist and post-workerist movement, initially through reading Michael Hardt and Toni Negri's *Labour of Dionysus* and Michael's *Radical Thought in Italy* collection (a kind of thunderbolt at the time), and later through a host of friendships in Italy, through my visits to social centres there, and through invaluable collaboration with PhD students working in and on this movement.

But what would it mean to consider myself part of these movements rather than merely being influenced by them? This is where the question of the university seems important to me and ties to some of the other comments I have made here so far. I encountered the black radical tradition in the university because this was one of the terrains of its struggle, the creation of black studies departments, and what were called the culture wars and the canon wars across numerous fields in the university. Now there has never really been anything like either culture wars more broadly or canon wars specifically in the curriculum inside business and management studies. So there has been no struggle uniting (or causing divisions!) a movement inside and outside the university in the field of business and management. Of course it is important to stress the idea of struggle here, because it is the struggle and not any kind of swapping of one set of texts for another that is important. Actually replacing a canon is a retrograde move.

A few scholar-activists, some associated with this journal, have thought about this, but for the most part there has been no challenge to what texts should be taught or to whom a business school ought to be responsible. So in terms of the black radical tradition my claims to be part of it must be quite tenuous (assuming here you understand I am talking about a radical tradition of blackness centred on black people but not exclusive to them) because I cannot actualize any kind of struggle on my terrain, except in my scholarship and episodically beyond that. But the Italian movement suggests to me that I should find other ways to struggle on this terrain and as Fred Moten and I said 'steal from the university' as it would steal from us. I think my comrades in this movement would understand me as someone who does that with them and for them, stealing resource, space, time. So that perhaps is my overly serious answer to your first question.

My second answer perhaps connects to this question of why there has never been something we could call canon wars in business and management studies, nor is there any serious contemporary effort to set up in the business school the study of 'that which is left out but makes possible and always haunts' our business world. You say that I take management studies seriously to the point perhaps of ignoring its ideology. You are right to think that I do not take it seriously to show simply that it cannot stand up to such scrutiny. I do think there is something in the business school that is more than management, more than business. But this does not mean that I do not see business and management studies as ideology.

I would go further, and I have with Stephen Dunne recently in an article. I would say that business and management is technically, logically, specifically, about nothing. The formula we used is this: capitalism=struggle but business=capitalism-struggle therefore business=zero. When we say this what we mean is that business casts matters of struggle as externalities. As you know, the study you Stephen and I did together shows how rarely top scholarship in our field ever addresses these externalities. When business extracts struggle from the real business of business and considers it an externality (even one that must be accounted for or dealt with) it is essentially defining itself as nothing, or more exactly as the science of managing wealth-making without wealth-making, the science of nothing or worse still perhaps, the science of managing nothing! We might say that the reason we both feel so exasperated by business ideology, but also so enervated by it, is that it is precisely about nothing. It hides nothing, and marshals nothing in its interest, at least at one level, and it is therefore a very tricky ideology I must admit.

And now, Martin, I've two questions for you!

The first is about movements and sectarianism and is prompted by an earlier comment you made as to how most of CMS is not, if one is to judge by conference panels gathered under this label, in fact a 'left wing critique.' I agree with you, but I also think that you and I share an abhorrence of sectarianism that I think comes from our horror at watching the in-fighting of the generation before us. So often I find myself torn. I know the people on the panel are not putting forth a left wing critique, but I don't know how to deal with this. Do I tell them bluntly their work is just a shill for capitalism (as often it is)? Because at the same time I think a movement starts in difference as much as in what is already common. Is there a way to build a left movement of scholars in the Business School today despite all the conditions you cite in your contribution (since neither of us would hold to an idea of capitalism as powerful enough to prevent such movements)? And does it require finding a way to urge or encourage some CMS people towards a left wing critique? Is this possible or should we be looking elsewhere for left wing critique at this moment?

Secondly: what about teaching? What are the emancipatory possibilities here? What special conditions are held in the business school? Your institution, Leicester, has taught a lot of unfortunate MBA students in its distance learning programme, but at the same time, the School of Management at Leicester has produced 'a golden generation' of new, critically minded PhDs who now inhabit half a dozen business schools around Britain. Is this tension not suggestive of a certain set of potentials?

**MP** I think that the big tent, broad church, or fat arse of CMS is simply too expansive. I assume that CMS is not the same as ‘good social science’, which is a line that some people like to take. Though I enjoy positioning a lot of management research as bad social science, it effectively means that a methodological distinction has been substituted for a political one. So that doesn’t really work for me. Further, if CMS is defined by an interest in what language does, then anyone who writes about narrative, identity, discourse and so on is effectively CMS too. And that doesn’t work for me either. Showing that we are constructed by the social might be an opening for control, just as it might be an opening for liberation.

So, though your acknowledgement of the dangers of sectarianism is taken, I think I do want to be sectarian, though in rather a liberal way. It’s all very well talking about difference and so on, but my understanding of politics involves a commitment to pointing out the differences between my position and that of others. To subsume that difference beneath the multi-coloured flag of CMS seems a cop out, largely because it allows an increasing number of people to pretend that being ‘critical’ (as an academic position) is only contingently related to wider public senses of politics. I am not hostile to, for example, discursive understandings of organization and management, but I see no reason to assume that they are ‘critical’. Nonetheless, I don’t particularly want to shout or exclude. I’d rather just carry on doing what I’m doing, and engaging with people and institutions that interest me. They can carry on doing what they are doing too, but I’m not going to term that ‘critical’ work.

Now I’m interested in quite a few different things, but for the purposes of this conversation, one of them is institutional change towards forms of organization that are based on localized forms of exchange, collective decision making in all institutions, and cultural pluralism (I won’t bother listing the things that I’m ‘against’). If we broadly call this ‘the left’, and I’m including most forms of anarchism here, then yes, I expect people who call themselves critical to share these sorts of positions. Telling me that leadership is a narrative, or that identity is multiple, is hence interesting enough, but tells me nothing about how this knowledge might work towards social change. So, if I read or listen to ideas that don’t seem to share this ‘left’ position, then I don’t think it should be called critical. This means, by the way, that quite a few things that I write can’t really be called ‘critical’ either, but I’m fine with that because they aren’t really ‘management studies’ either.

Your question was how to build a ‘movement’. I don’t really have an answer to this, and in some ways I think that is because I am predictably worried that any movement will harden into another fashion, which in turn becomes another journal, book series, chair, department and so on. Academics gradually turn ideas into clichés, which in turn become careers, and eventually footnotes. But at the same time, the ‘left’ in a wider sense is a movement that (in my country) has achieved all sorts of gains over the past century. Having academics on your side doesn’t seem to have been a precondition of success in this wider arena however, so I don’t think we should assume that we are particularly needed or wanted. Nonetheless, if we could help, through our activities at home, work and in our public lives, we should do so. The more of us that help, the more likely some enduring changes might happen. But I’d say that to anyone, not just academics.

As for emancipation through teaching, well, it's too soon to say. Most of the time, I teach large groups in lecture theatres, and I think this means that my students are usually an audience. As a lecturer I am pessimistic, largely because I don't see much effect from my attempts to be critical on the podium. I do it, because I can't really do anything else and feel good about myself in the morning. And I think I do it well, in the sense of an old stager being fairly skilled at making an audience respond to them. I enjoy it, when I'm doing it. But I'm often rather depressed afterwards. I've heard all my tired old jokes, and I see nothing new in my ringing condemnations of this, that and the other.

Flaubert said that 'Language is a cracked kettle on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to, while all the time we long to move the stars to pity.' I want to see the change happen in front of my eyes, but instead I just get board marker on my hands and a nagging headache from twenty two years of standing up in front of classes. But, people do tell me that I made some sort of difference to them, but then I assume that they are just being nice. Still, it would be daft to assume that teaching doesn't make some sort of difference. If we include supervision of dissertations, smaller seminars and learning from colleagues, then there is (for me) a clear sense of learning becoming collective, and part of a relationship. The longer the relationship, the deeper the learning on both sides. But the political economy of contemporary universities doesn't really encourage me to spend my expensive time in front of small groups or individuals. In order to do more of it, we would need to do less 'research' (perhaps not a bad thing) or have less students, or more staff.

Universities could be about teaching in this sense, and be vibrant and interesting places to be, but only if the question of who pays the wages can be settled first. Universities which employ academics and cleaners need to get income from somewhere. The answers begins with where, but rapidly leads into assumptions about what they are paying for, and hence about how much it should cost. Hence distance learning does make sense for a lot of people, and you may think they are 'unfortunate', when many of them seem to feel that they are rather lucky. If you live outside the global north, and have some cash, our universities might look like rather good places to be, and might teach all sorts of interesting things. Which takes me back to the question of audience, but in a more general sense. In order to know what a teacher might do to encourage thought, and perhaps emancipation from previous ideas, they would need to understand their audience first. Most of the time, I don't have the time to find out, so my teaching becomes performance, and I learn nothing and they learn little.

**SD** Tony, would you like to come in here?

**TT** The City University of New York (CUNY my 'home', one that I once shared with Stefano) also houses the Baruch Business School – one of the most acute examples of ruthless business school ideology. But this ideology isn't empty – it is instead riddled with contradictions and fissures that are also part of the contested terrain.

For instance, Neo-Classical Economics has radiated from Chicago/Rochester/AAA to provide the legitimizing framework/ideology for research, MBA and undergraduate syllabi for schools throughout the U.S. and frankly, large swathes of the UK (where

business schools often emerged as the unwanted stepchildren of many third rate neoclassical economics departments). So Neo-Classical economic ideology isn't empty, nor are many of its 'practical' extensions in (say) MBA programs. It is an ideology whose flaws have – and continue to be – exposed by attacks by Classical / Keynesian (and very important, Cambridge Controversy) exchanges. Nor are these just 'intellectual' struggles, these contradictions rather manifest themselves within the 'real' crises of capitalism (take the realization/credit/subprime fiascos for instance). Attacking these weaknesses – recognized as such, at times of crises that are partially registered in public consciousness offers magnificent opportunities for progressives in business schools. If there is a sense in which business school ideology is 'empty', it is in its inability to speak to these urgent material breakdowns in terms of social reproduction.

Stefano provided a very valuable personal history that he carefully elaborated into historical and social contexts. I would like to offer a modest compliment to this analysis – using my Baruch, itself a bastion of arch-reaction, with faculty who wish they could get a job elsewhere, but whose lacklustre research record imprisons them in a 'teaching school'. Baruch's political Achilles Heel is its 90% state funding from a City with 70% minorities (for a school and faculty devoted to market capitalism). Baruch's Accountancy department has never hired, on tenure-track, or tenured, a black in its 70 year history. It hasn't been difficult to send torpedoes to Baruch on these matters: Congressperson Charles Barron (ex-Panther and someone who has brought some \$50 million to CUNY from Albany) helps with approaches to Matt Goldstein (CUNY Chancellor) about getting Baruch to clean up its act. Articles in the student newspaper *The Ticker* such as 'Its Official, we can Discriminate!' have also sent the Baruch/CUNY Administration running for cover. But, as Stefano correctly notes, 'it is never over' because we can't eradicate the basic contradictions, and – relatedly – the social intellect needs to mature. There is no closure here, only a series of (re)engagements and (re)transformations that must always be attuned to the present.

**SH** Tony is quite right that all of us feel the effects of business school ideology and in this sense it is certainly not empty. We feel this ideology enacting us. It does mobilize all kinds of efforts on behalf of further capitalist accumulation, and the further imposition of work as the necessary discipline for this accumulation. When I said business studies equals zero, somewhat histrionically I meant to point to the fact that inside the business curriculum, inside business scholarship, there is nothing we can actually use to understand these struggles around accumulation and work and therefore nothing we can use to understand capital. All we have are the questions business answers, to paraphrase Marx, as a way not to bring up other questions. Anything useful is ruthlessly excluded because whatever else divides business scholars, they are united around the principle that capitalist society is both possible and desirable.

At the risk of being obvious, I have never seen any evidence for these positions. Indeed all the evidence is that capitalist society is both doomed and compulsory, and since these are the very direct stakes of what it would mean to be critical in the business school, the critique really is all or nothing. As Gayatri Spivak said – without hesitation – when she spoke at the management school at Leicester – when asked what a good business school would be, she replied, the good business school would be socialism. One of the reasons that CMS can sometimes appear to verge on the frivolous is actually,

I think, because of this very serious problem of emptiness in business ideology. Whatever one would need to critique business, one cannot find it in business scholarship. This is the sense in which it seems empty to me, in a way that studying 19th century novels, or contemporary television, or public health would not be, whatever the actual limitations of scholarship in these fields. And this sense of something missing is at the source of why CMS appears so fashionable, picking up Bataille this year, and Deleuze next year, and see you in 2010 for management and the pre-Socratics.

There is a symptomatic search going on here. I think the reasons it often cannot simply tell itself that it requires a forthright critique of capital has everything to do with our very immediate conditions of work in the university. Critique in this particular discipline requires something that most disciplines do not. It requires one to be able to call for the abolition of the discipline. It asks of the workers to abolish themselves and we can see why this is not easy when down the hall literature has a socialist future! And yet, if we don't do it, we might as well just show up in 2010 for the management and the pre-Socratics conference.

Maybe I could just point to the most logical problem arising from the call for abolition. I could call for socialism in an English department, like Terry Eagleton for instance, without at the same time calling for the abolition of my subject area. Such a call for socialism, communism, or anarcho-syndicalism, might not make me popular, and the prosperity of a few figures like Eagleton should not deceive us of the difficulties, but it does not immediately put me at war with those around me. And as we know academic wars are surprisingly vicious. Nor does it give my enemies such a good weapon – why should we listen to his points on structural racism or patriarchy in business studies – he wants to abolish the field. Or why should we interview him on BBC – has he not disqualified himself as an analyst by announcing for socialism?

So this is one reason I have some sympathy for CMS, as much as I recognize in Martin's and Tony's comments the truth of its ineffectuality. But should we then sacrifice our critique for strategic reasons? I think this would be a false distinction.

I draw some inspiration here from the prison abolition movement – you can imagine in the era of knife crime and its accompanying negrophobia and in the era of terrorism and its accompanying islamophobia, and the ways both of these state generated phobias actually keep in place homophobia and patriarchy – you can imagine in this era calling for the abolition of the prison entirely as Angela Davis, Joy James, Ruth Gilmore and others have done. Perhaps this is not strategic. They will not be consulted by Obama and have the chance to make real change. It is certainly radical. Only the call for the abolition of the slave on a slave planet was a more radical call. But would we say about the original abolitionists that they lacked strategy? Would we say this of Frederick Douglas? Or about Lenin? And I would not say it about Angela Davis and I would not say it about anyone who stood up inside the business school and said the first step to socialism is the abolition of the business school, as Spivak did from outside the business school. It is a question of reminding ourselves that strategy and compromise are not the same thing. A difficult thing to say in this reasonable era, but not that difficult comparatively.

**TT** Forgive the selective response, as there is much that needs digesting (and much that is agreeable) in all of this. Perhaps I have suffered too much of a business curriculum – first hand – to feel that it is not empty in the way that Stefano describes.

When economics, accounting, and other business students/faculty draw a three dimensional graph of a production function, with land, labour and capital on the axis, they commit a fundamental logical flaw, that permits insiders the opportunity to critique. How does one draw, on the capital axis, a quantity measure of capital, without assuming a cost of capital? If the cost of capital is presumed, or set at the outset, it also fixes the distribution of income (between capital and labour). But this is what the graph is supposed to decide (the efficient frontier of income distribution between labour and capital). The end result is determined from the outset.

In short, neo-classicism isn't hermeneutically sealed or empty. There is a vent or fissure for criticism. Once it has been shown that the distribution of income must be determined exogenously (a la Ricardo) then we put Economic Sociology back on the map (Maurice Dobb) because we now need to investigate the sociological conditions of income determination. And you know what that means? Class conflict!

**SH** Yes Tony, I absolutely agree that criticism of the business curriculum is possible, and necessary, for the reasons you illustrate so well. Even to read the great economists immanently (never mind vulgar business school economists) Marx had to bring with him the workers struggle and Hegel. We will need Maurice Dobb at the least! And for me the main reason to resist the operation of business scholarship as it externalizes struggle and the main reason to read struggle back into it immanently, as you do, is because again 'the good business school would be socialism.' What I mean is that the business school is a gathering of resources as I have said, of labour, of material, even of knowledge, despite itself. The last thing I want to do is to destroy it or disavow it, as I have sometimes been accused. I want to embrace it and make it into socialism. I want to bring struggle to the heart of its scholarship and teaching until it actually teaches us something about organization, about accounting, about strategy, even about management.

And for me this starts with pedagogy. I don't agree with those who say we should teach 'business skills' and then offer the students some critical insight in the 9th and 10th week of lecture, as some kind of prophylactic afterthought. In fact some of my friends do this, but I think they shouldn't. Of course there are circumstances where one has to teach this curriculum to keep a job, and that's fine, and requires more subtle forms of resistance. But the business school curriculum is immoral. And teaching it under anything less than a threat to one's livelihood is immoral. There is no such thing as imparting a few neutral skills under capitalism, much less giving the students what they want (which is absurd unless you believe students want to kill other students). There is only one skill under the permanent emergency of capitalism, and that is the critical skill. Paulo Freire taught us this when he showed us that even at the very beginning of learning, at the first moments of literacy, pedagogy is political, the learning of words is about power.

From the very beginning skill is political, and teaching is critical or it is nothing. And it is not just literacy. From Einstein to Oppenheimer right up to Haraway we have been warned about the dangers of teaching numeracy uncritically, as if one can choose, in fine capitalist fashion, to consume neutrality or criticality.

‘I’ll take the neutral curriculum in financial management, and give me two critical marketing courses to take away!’

I am not saying anything new here but simply outlining how many critical management scholars ‘make a concession’ by teaching some straight business school curriculum, even if this is intended to be contrasted later, or tell themselves the students are not ready for the critical until the third year, or the second semester. But this is immoral. There are not two. There is one, the critical one (which itself may be divided of course, and indeed as Adorno taught us, this must be unhappy with itself).

Now I am not excluding the possibility that teaching the business school curriculum can be a set up for smashing it, but this is very different from giving equal time or weight to the business school curriculum and critical approaches, or from letting students make up their minds once they have heard the arguments. That is what I mean by immoral. But recognizing the one skill is not enough. Somehow we have to do this with students. We have to get to the point where students want to study because study, as Fred Moten and I have argued, is the one thing not permitted in the university, and therefore the necessary thing. And study is education considered from the perspective of the critical, a curriculum considered from the perspective of the political.

**TT** Your caution against the tactic of ‘wait until I get tenure’ before I do the right thing – is well-taken. This is a refrain offered across the board; it extends to those guilt-prone liberals whose bad conscience tells them that they should do better. One problem with their line is that they never acquire the skills or taste for critical politics in the academy. In my shop, these characters get tenure, and then sink into a morass of disenchantment eventually ending up as second class consultants.

**MP** Oh come on! This seems less like a debate and more like a back-slapping contest, a back-slapping contest combined with a few swipes at the bad people we don’t like...

**SH** Martin’s comments bring up for me an uncomfortable condition. When we make a critique of the business school it does often appear like we are criticizing colleagues ‘in the mainstream’ (or CMS colleagues who have moved to the mainstream) and that they are somehow easy targets, or that they are decent people who don’t deserve our ire, or that we do this to feel superior, or that we do this without examining our own compromises. But the fact is, long before I even thought to make a critique of the business school, the so-called mainstream was already destroying, discrediting, and ridiculing anything that did not ruthlessly exclude questions of class struggle, to say nothing of radical feminist, queer or anti-racist critiques, and that includes people not just writing. Through ruthless journal refereeing processes, through hiring and promotion, through monopolizing the curriculum, and through making alliances with the corporate publishers, press, and professional associations, the so-called mainstream has done nothing but seek to destroy critique.

This is to say nothing about what their curriculum does to the world or to the students (even if students must take some responsibility for this). It is not we who chose this battle in the business school, and it is not we who list people we dislike. Any history of anti-communism will tell you that. We did not declare this war with our critique.

This means, for me, that any critique of the business school is also war, as Negri says of communism. The Right who dominate the business school – let’s let them call themselves mainstream if they wish – know this. The surest way to be destroyed by their war is to pretend it is not there. But because they have persecuted this war since the inception of this subject, I do not make my critiques for them. I am more interested in my friends, in convincing them of some of these points about the business school, and in trying to develop some collective strategy too, trying, if you like to get them on to a war footing amid this epistemic violence. So my assertion that ‘the business school curriculum is empty’ is an assertion for my friends, not one for those on the Right who dominate business schools by what can seem like a huge margin, unless we count students. When I say it is empty I mean it is empty of anything we would need to analyze business and management as a practice today or to reflect on this curriculum.

Take as an almost random example Charles Handy’s classic *Understanding Organisation*. Now this is book often assigned at the beginning of a business education, and at the same time a book that is empty of what a student would need to understand organizations. Take just one chapter, but we could take any one, the chapter on ‘why people work’. This is a very intelligent chapter, very considered. It quotes Tolstoy and *A Winter’s Tale* and takes us through all kinds of ‘motivations’ for work. Not once does it talk about the freeing of wage labour that leads to the founding compulsion to work in our society (much less does it question whether everyone wants to work). How can a student be expected to understand anything about why people work without at least an acknowledgement, if not an explication, of how they would starve or be jailed if they did not work, indeed how they have been starved and jailed for such refusals? No. Students need to start with EP Thompson. This is not a matter of liberal pluralism for me. It is a matter of teaching a curriculum filled with the critical tools a student needs, or it is a matter of teaching an empty subject (and making one in the process).

And this is also a strategic point for me. I want to urge my friends to stop treating the business curriculum as an equal in their teaching. This is a difference of quality with literature or geography or history, not emphasis, despite all of the failures of these subject in bourgeois hands (although even the bourgeois critiques like for instance *Vanity Fair* are more than you will ever get from Charles Handy), and this is why saying it is empty is for me a first step towards its abolition.

**SD** Given the fact that we are discussing the business school, maybe it is indeed fitting to close upon a set of strategic considerations.

Martin, can you suggest how we might re-consider the role of the business school, and moreover of the role of critical scholarship within the business school, in a manner that does not result in the sort of self-congratulation which you believe this discussion has tended towards.

Stefano, can you please say something about how your proposed business curriculum, necessarily re-conceived from the perspective of the political in light of its inherent emptiness, might be fought for against a prevalent conservative tendency which holds this curriculum as pedagogically legitimate and morally defensible, morally commendable even.

Tony, can you elaborate upon some of the consequences of what seems to be your strategy of engaging the content of the business curriculum precisely in terms of its blind spots? In particular, I wonder if you think it might be possible to generate collectives around such a project?

**MP** I suspect that self-congratulation is a common disease for intellectuals. They know, these wise professors, and others don't. This sort of diagnosis has at least two features – that the professors think themselves to be special, and that their customers think the professors are special. So, in our tiny little worlds, we become superheroes, known across our local conference circuit and amongst the few people who read our comics and vanity publications. And then I am asked what my opinion is on various things, and I declaim loudly and confidently as if I know stuff that other people don't know.

Clever huh!?

But no-one listens. The cultural counterpoint to the wise tenured expert is the irrelevant boffin who uses ten words where one will do and leaves his umbrella on the train. This is the box that we are really in, one in which we can imagine ourselves to be important, whilst our squeaky mannered voices simply don't travel far enough for anyone to hear. And this diagnosis hurts the 'critical' people even more, because they so badly want to be heard. So they end up sounding like messianic mice, declaring that they can see through to the other side, and that others are blinded by selfishness or stupidity. And, when they talk together, their squeaky little voices share the outrage of 'no one listens', but ends up blaming those who don't listen.

Apologies to Tony and Stefano for dragging them into my mice metaphors, but I think that the only way that self-congratulation can be avoided is if the university stops being a box that produces such thinking. 'We' (whoever we imagine ourselves to be) must try our hardest to de-institutionalise what it means to claim to be an intellectual, and work to open the university to become an institution that is free to those who want it. This works both ways. Academics must do their best to write for the popular press, and write books that people read, and become involved in whatever forms of public life enthuse them, and teach in the inclusive ways that Stefano talks about. But it must also be the case that 'higher learning' is deinstitutionalised. At the moment, the business school is an extreme example of printing qualifications for money, but I wonder what would happen if universities did not issue qualifications at all, but were just there for people who wanted them. With more than an echo of Ivan Illich, I think that the answer to the problem of insularity is to stop living in the institutions that produce it.

And yes, I know I'm one of the mice.

**SH** I think there is a level at which education is impossible today. It's impossible inside the university, never mind the business school. The time of the university is not the time

of study, not the time of collectivity. And the space of the university is occupied. The university is occupied today not by the demands of militant students or faculty. Nor is it just occupied by military and drug research. This latter has always been the case. It's occupied by its own labour process, its own schedule of production, turning out articles, books, students, exams, papers, marks, minutes, buildings, brands, patents. Trying to hold a reading group in the university today is like trying to hold one on the floor of a car plant or a discount trader. And this brings us to education outside the university, the flight from the university (or the floor). This is also impossible today. Because life beyond the walls of the university is just as busy and just as regulated, and it is poor. The wealth of resources gathered in the university are denied to the outside except through extensions of the labour process, as with spin-offs. No one can walk into a university library, nor access journals, unless they are producing labour in the university as a student, academic, administrator or plant worker.

Of course the reason for all this regulation and all this productivity is precisely in reaction to the fact the people keep trying to educate each other. They must be stopped. But they are never completely stopped. I love the dizzying height of the contradiction here – the university dedicated to the prevention of study. But of course especially self-study, collective study! So that is the context for any question of real curriculum in the business school. All this talk of objective business skills is part of this busy productivity. It's meaningless but effective – Bill Readings was right on this, on this meaninglessness when he fastened on the term 'excellence,' but he could not see yet its connection to work as control, to work set against study.

Whatever we do, and your question already hints at this, we cannot do it alone. This is a mistake made by those colleagues who try to quarantine the space of their lecture from the rest of the curriculum, and try to make this lecture hall, or seminar table, a place apart, a place of criticality. This never works. The university is today designed to make such people into freaks, and it does. Any curricular project must be collective – this is the strength of the premise in the Manifestos book I already mentioned. But the collective will also have to include students from the very beginning. Then it is a question of starting from scratch. As you can tell I don't favour an immanent critique in teaching in the business school, although I have tried it, and tried it in my scholarship. I favour junking it, especially at the undergraduate level, and building something new.

Let's see how long it is before we run into anything recognizable in the business school curriculum and its skills, anything even resembling it. I bet it will be quite a while. But let's make a curriculum about what it is like to be prepared for work in this society, to have to work in this society, to have been financialized, and what it is like organize, to try to go undetected and undisturbed, and to try to disturb and detect capital's resistance to our efforts. Start from the student labour process and start from the teaching labour process. If the university is a corporation let us take seriously what we know about corporations, what students know about corporations. Freire is right on this – we will have to make the road as we travel – and that travel must take us inside and outside the university, back and forth, for an impossible education. We must haunt what I have called the metroversity as it haunts us today, through its streets and its corridors.

**SD** As if to imply the position which he was perhaps going to allude towards, Tony has told me that he is not in a position to respond to this question because his time has been so severely taxed by calls for him to comment upon the causes and consequences of the financial crisis...

**SH** In that case, perhaps we might close on the question that was not asked by you here. How should we understand the relationship between the business school and the present crisis in finance capital? Well one thing we know is that a lot of people are going to be warehousing their labour in the business school in the next couple of years, if previous crises are indicative. Remember, crisis is the normal condition, not the exception, in capitalism, especially for workers – this is the real ambient terror, the daily terror of being waged or unwaged, a terror which is itself, like Brian Massumi's, below the level of the body in many cases.

What are all those who warehouse themselves going to learn here, in the business school? Richard Dienst says that television is not about a message or a medium but is instead a machine for socializing time, and we could say the same thing of the business school, that it is still a machine for socializing labour time, including teaching it to wait. We know what this involves: submitting students to extreme boredom, to random authority, and to operations and analysis without larger meaning – and these continue to be the important traits of any worker.

But the UK context is interesting. Finance is so important here as an industry, and with it in turmoil, even with the so-called bailouts, national economic hopes turn increasingly to the creative industries (including heritage and tourism) and the sciences (especially drugs and weapons). I think we will see in the business school a trend toward inter-disciplinarity both inside and outside its traditional borders as these industries and their disciplines entwine further with the business school. I fear that Martin's de-schooling will amount to this inter-disciplinarity in practice. The university is already going out into these industries of the arts and sciences and they are already coming in. I've called this the metroversity.

One of its characteristics is a strange enchantment hovering over in the city. David Harvey calls this enchantment the art of rent. Suddenly those in these industries of the arts and sciences are to behave like we used to, and some still do, in the university – they are to behave as if the general equivalent does not apply, as if they are not already abstract labour. But rather they are to act like their creations, whether chemical compounds or modern dance, are not yet commodified.

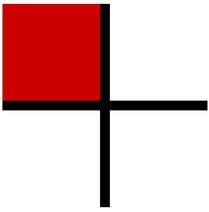
This is very much like the old history professor or literature lecturer who thinks his scholarship is his own, that he is in some kind of craft relationship to capital. Now this idea of craft is supposed to enchant the labour of the city as a whole, from tourism, to art zones, to the science parks on its edges. At the very moment the university is finally understood, thanks to Chris Newfield and others, as academic capitalism, the university spreads its most mystifying aspects into these industries, into the city, trying to convince people that they are starting with pure science and pure art, pure culture and pure subculture, and then entering into industry in these partnerships, in the

metroversity. This is simply a labour process technique, but it worked for years in the university, provoking all kinds of investment in an alienated labour of scholarship.

Thus the business school of tomorrow may look like the university of yesterday. This metroversity is not the place we would want to rest our analysis, or our militancy.

**MP** Which rather leaves open the question of how we, as critical Business School academics, respond to the financial crisis now. Because we are not yet at either Stefano's metroversity, or my de-schooled society. Tony, Stefano, Stephen and I have all recently been using our positions as 'Business School Experts' to make a variety of critical points about the present situation in a variety of media in the US and UK, and I do want us all to shout loudly if we are offered the microphone. As I've said, the sequestration of the university from wider forms of public discourse and debate is a really key issue in any evaluation of what 'critique' can achieve. But at the same time I am deeply suspicious of the idea that we become 'rent-a-quote' academics used to pad stories, and that our respective press offices count the number of times our universities are named. Professor Bighead isn't that much of a threat to the established order after all, and could even be a marketing opportunity for academic capitalism.

So, the paradox – which applies to CMS, to disciplines, to institutions – is that we can't do with them, can't do without them. The possibility of speaking truth to power is both constrained and enabled by where we stand right now. At the moment, disposing of the productive possibilities of that power would probably be a bad idea. We are in the middle of an extraordinary moment where Business Schools and a popular critique of capitalism can be conjoined in some very public ways, and all sorts of possibilities then begin to open up, both inside and outside our institutions. But we should never forget that power works on us, as well as for us, just in case we start to believe that we really are Professor Bighead. Because we really wouldn't be worth listening to then.



## Epistemic Convenience: An Interview with Steve Fuller<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Basbøll and Steve Fuller

**Thomas Basbøll (henceforth TB)** In your 1993 book, *Philosophy, Rhetoric and the End of Knowledge*, you say that your work is situated within “the profound ambivalence that Western philosophers have had toward the equation of knowledge and power” and you explain this ambivalence through the disciplinary specialization of philosophy into, on the one hand, epistemology, i.e., the study of knowledge, and, on the other, ethics, or what we might call the study of power.

We might also speak of the study of truth and the study of justice and then recall the words of John Rawls: “Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, just as truth is of systems of thought.” That is, justice is to ethics what truth is to epistemology.

In *The Knowledge Book*,<sup>2</sup> there is a chapter called ‘Epistemic Justice’, which cuts across the disciplinary distinction between ethics and epistemology, between social institutions and systems of thought, power and knowledge. The University is a fitting site to engage with this source the “profound ambivalence of Western philosophy”, as you describe it. After all, the university is both a producer and distributor of knowledge; it has both epistemological and ethical responsibilities, it manifests both systems of thought and social institutions. Indeed, it might be said to be both a system of thought and a social institution. Its first virtue is of course most often said to be “truth”; you seem to be suggesting that its first virtue might also be “justice”. Are truth and justice separable virtues? Can they be prioritized, i.e., is there a first and second virtue of the University?

**Steve Fuller (henceforth SF)** No, truth and justice are not separable virtues. Here I take my cue from the German idealist tradition’s dynamic sense of truth as something that comes to be gradually realized as more and more people are formally recognized as knowers. In other words, truth is simply knowledge universalised. As fewer people are

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1 These questions were submitted to Steve Fuller by email, who answered them in writing.

2 Steve Fuller, *The Knowledge Book: Key Concepts in Philosophy, Science, and Culture* (Acumen and McGill-Queens University Press, 2007). See the web-links below for more details: <http://www.acumenpublishing.co.uk/display.asp?isbn=9781844650989&TAG=andCID> and <http://mqup.mcgill.ca/book.php?bookid=2138>.

excluded from the pursuit of knowledge, the power that the ‘knows’ can exert over the ‘know-nots’ diminishes. I associate this conception with a largely theological way of looking at the problem of justice as a general version of the problem of dirty hands: In other words, the cost of doing anything in the world, even the most good, is that some harm will result. The question then is whether this harm can ever be adequately redressed without causing still more harm.

Put another way: Does the redistribution of advantage simply create new disadvantages? The idealist picture presupposes that our dirty hands can indeed become clean once knowledge can no longer be used as an instrument of power over others. I would have this function as a Kant-style regulative ideal of collective inquiry. In practical terms, this means that the sources of knowledge are transparent to all knowers. Knowledge-based injustices typically boil down to appeals to expertise to restrict access to knowledge by demanding that things be known in one or very few ways (e.g. by mastering jargon, acquiring degrees, etc.).

**TB** What, specifically, does a university produce and distribute?

**SF** I believe that the university is a social technology for manufacturing knowledge as a public good. This goal is most clearly realized the more that research – which is always in the first instance novel and hence esoteric – is translated into teaching, and hence made available to people who had nothing to do with its original production and are likely to take that knowledge in directions other than those intended, or even desired, by the original researchers. This feat of epistemic justice is most obviously performed in the construction of curricular materials like course outlines, textbooks and other pedagogical devices.

**TB** How is the production and distribution of these things related to their consumption and concentration?

**SF** A real problem with contemporary universities is that there is little incentive to complete the Humboldtian cycle of translating research into teaching, which means that research often remains concentrated in the researchers, their clients and perhaps graduate students specifically undergoing training to research in the same area. For knowledge to be produced as a public good, it needs to be regularly distributed at the undergraduate level, preferably to students for whom such knowledge would form part of their general education rather than a moment in the credentialing process.

**TB** Academic freedom has traditionally been practiced as an elevated form of irresponsibility, grounded in the idea that knowledge has no immediate effects on power. Recent university reforms and changes in academic culture, however, seem predicated on the idea that knowledge really is power. Academics are being held accountable, both by their own institutions and by society more generally, and both for how they spend their time and what they find themselves endorsing. Academics themselves also seem to feel increasingly responsible for the consequences of their work, even guilty about them. Do you think academic inquiry really has become more important for how power is exercised?

**SF** It's true that academic inquiry is increasingly insinuated in the various modes of legitimation in society, such that sometimes it seems that an expert or expertise needs to be mobilised to license any socially significant act. At the same time, there is of course also the opposing tendency forcing academics to be more publicly accountable. And this usually means that academics need to justify their existence in some traditionally non-academic terms. I believe these countervailing tendencies simply reflect the fact that academics no longer have guild possession over the production of knowledge in society.

The proliferation of terms like 'knowledge management', 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge economy' underscore the point: Knowledge seems to be everywhere nowadays, which means that academics must scramble to retain their share in a market over which they once had a monopoly. I should quickly add that Lyotard was right in *The Postmodern Condition* when he observed most innovations have always come from outside the academy. Nevertheless, the academy was needed to ensure that those innovations were converted into public goods rather than intellectual property. As universities themselves are now encouraged to become intellectual property holders, their distinctiveness as producers of knowledge as a public good is itself under threat.

**TB** Do you think academic freedom is threatened by this newfound sense of responsibility?

**SF** Yes, in two senses: one obvious, one not so obvious. The obvious one is tied to the decline in tenurable posts, which was traditionally the institutional safeguard for academic freedom: You may hate what I say, or find it irrelevant, but I still keep my job once I've passed a probationary period where I've demonstrated my competence in the tools of the academic trade – i.e. the marshalling of reason and evidence in argument. As universities become more 'adaptive' and 'flexible', the number of tenurable posts decline, and hence the glut of short-term contract teachers and researchers more directly sensitive to market pressures. Typically this does not produce outright censorship but rather subtler disincentives against pursuing certain lines of inquiry unlikely to be rewarded by large grants or student enrolments. This doesn't mean that people can't do interesting things. Indeed, in this time of rapidly shifting consumption patterns, adaptation requires a willingness to be open to new trends. But that sort of much-touted 'vibrancy' should not be confused with intellectual autonomy, which is directed by a self-legislated agenda that one believes has relevance beyond immediate market conditions.

The less obvious threat to academic freedom is related to my earlier point about the flattening of the conception of knowledge. It is now common to defend academic freedom as a species of freedom of speech, which I think is a big mistake because rarely can people exercise free speech unconditionally. One is always confronted with US Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes famous challenge of the prankster who cries 'Fire!' in a crowded theatre. In this and other problematic cases, 'free speech' is clearly treated as a form of action involving the use of the mouth, and not surprisingly there is a tendency towards some legal restriction.

However, it is worth recalling that the sorts of freedom that we normally associate with ‘free speech’ were originally protected on rather specific and separate grounds: I mean here freedom of press, freedom of worship and freedom of assembly – as well as academic freedom (i.e. the reciprocal freedoms to teach and to learn). All of these freedoms can be justified on their own without introducing a problematically inflated notion of free speech, which then provides an excuse for its restriction. People listening to this argument often think I am being elitist but I am simply saying that the sort of legal protection required of academic freedom pertains primarily to the modes of reasoning that we publicly use which marks us as academics – not to any old mode of reasoning or speech.<sup>3</sup>

**TB** Until now, social epistemology has served largely as a meta-theory for some members of the STS community. Such theorizing is of course important; indeed, you characterize theorizing as “a politically significant practice”. But there are also suggestions in your work that social epistemology might take a much more practical turn, serving as disciplinary background (training) of knowledge policy analysts and academic writing instructors, i.e., as social epistemologists enter professional life rather than traditional academic positions. The distinct sensibility that your brand of social epistemology fosters seems well-suited for the members of university administrations and the science policy apparatus. What do you think of the prospects for social epistemology as a vocation in this non-academic sense?

**SF** This question has increasingly interested me, as I have more fruitful exchanges with policymakers, lawyers, publishers, editors, journalists and other media types. Even my best students who have stayed in academia have generally gravitated away from the research mainstream to fields broadly concerned with ‘science communication’ and perhaps even ‘public relations of science’ (if that phrase doesn’t sound too loaded). These areas are likely to grow in the future as ‘science’ (i.e. organized knowledge, or *Wissenschaft*) is more explicitly entangled with the various modes of social legitimation. I tend to regard this as the sort of public enlightenment as, generally speaking, an *intended* consequence of Humboldt’s 19<sup>th</sup> century reinvention of the university. In other words, his idea was that academically trained cohorts would make their way into the larger society, leading to its gradual rationalisation, as academic modes of reasoning permeate public life. There are at least two differences from his original idea, though. One is that much of the migration out of the university has been – and increasingly is – forced – as people with hopes of pursuing an academic career are forced into, say, journalism or the mass media because of an oversubscribed labour market.

The second difference is that though Humboldt probably thought that an ‘academicised’ society would be a stable one, academicisation has arguably raised the incidence of – and tolerance for – social disruption. Here one need only think of the impact of those academic outcasts Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, the bane of Allan Bloom’s notorious 1987 best seller, *The Closing of the American Mind*. For Bloom, the Unholy Trinity’s

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3 The increasing importance of academic freedom in the UK has recently led to the formation of Academics for Academic Freedom, which Fuller, a prominent member, has defended in debate: <http://www.philosophersnet.com/magazine/article.php?id=1032>

influence demonstrated the failure of universities as vehicles for public enlightenment. Of course, he was wrong in his verdict but he was right to recognise the potentially explosive consequences once academics, by choice or by force, descend from the Ivory Tower.

**TB** What would be a fitting disciplinary background (degree) for such a practicing social epistemologist?

**SF** In principle, someone trained in any academic discipline could be a social epistemologist if they have a relatively good grasp of the history, philosophy and sociology of their discipline, and regard themselves as contributing to the discipline's future in some fashion. Ideally, such a person should have a sense of how their discipline compares with others along these dimensions – and it is here where dedicated courses would be needed. I also think that, on the practical side, to be a genuine social epistemologist, one must be committed to knowledge as a public good, which requires an ability to translate knowledge into more public media. So, in that respect, a fully rounded social epistemologist would have the skills of a public intellectual who can communicate ideas to a variety of audiences, in a variety of contexts, through a variety of media.

**TB** How would such a “professionalization” of social epistemology fit in with your recent experiences as a public intellectual? I'm thinking in particular of the intelligent design debates. Is that also a way of practicing social epistemology? Or is it as separate from your ‘discipline’ as such ‘political’ work is from the disciplinary backgrounds of biologists and mathematicians? That is, are you a public intellectual as a citizen or as a social epistemologist?

**SF** I am a public intellectual as an academic. Why don't I say ‘as a citizen’? Two reasons: 1) My status as a citizen (and I am still a citizen of the US not the UK) has *not* provided me the opportunities to intervene, for better or worse, in public affairs. It has been my status as an academic of a certain sort, which I have identified as ‘social epistemologist’; 2) Ordinary citizens cannot be regarded as proper public intellectuals unless they have ‘the right to be wrong’. This presupposes the luxury of making your mistakes in public, a feat that is difficult to manage for very long without something like the institutional protection offered by academic tenure. Cyberspace provides a good sense of the de facto limitations on the right to be wrong. Most internet debates occur via aliases. It would be nice to think that this is out of deference to a Habermasian ‘ideal speech situation’ (i.e. I don't want my identity to interfere with how my arguments are judged) but more likely it is out of fear of the consequences from the revelation of one's true identity.

As I get older, I learn more from Max Weber, someone whose career needs to be understood in the round. Here was someone who repeatedly spoke truth to power by appealing to truth as a source of power. Put another way: He saw clearly that the political strength of academia comes from academics speaking as academics, rather than as surrogates for various class, race, ethnic, gender, etc. groups. Thus, I decided to participate in the US intelligent design (ID) trial (*Kitzmiller vs. Dover Area School District*) after concluding that the plaintiffs' experts, whose written testimony I was

asked to rebut, had compromised their academic integrity by presenting a false picture of the history and philosophy of science in order to justify the exclusion of ID from high school science courses. In particular, the idea that science has been uniformly, or even primarily, informed by 'methodological naturalism' is a fit-for-purpose fiction. This concept, which has no clear philosophical meaning, basically conflates the idea of testability (which is fine as far as it goes) with a principled denial of the supernatural (which is based on a metaphysically prejudicial reading of the history of science).

In effect, the plaintiffs' experts would require science teachers to take a metaphysical loyalty oath. Unlike them, I do not believe that ID poses so great a threat to science that I feel I must shroud what I believe to be the truth in a 'double truth' doctrine like methodological naturalism. Science will continue perfectly fine, and probably improve, with ID in the classroom, given its historic contributions to science via the likes of Newton, Mendel, etc. I think more people don't see the situation this way because the plaintiffs' experts – an array of scientists, philosophers and theologians – managed to support the scientific establishment and receive the judge's blessing in the course of compromising their academic integrity.

This raises the more general issue, in these neo-liberal times, of academics running the risk of becoming captive to their 'clients', a term that should be understood in not only economic terms but also political ones. For example, a recent President of the American Sociological Association, Michael Burawoy, has been campaigning across the globe for 'public sociology', which in practice would reduce the discipline to a forum where every interest group can expect a fair hearing and perhaps even some advocacy but no clear voice of its own. (Where would such academic consciences of American society as C. Wright Mills or Alvin Gouldner figure in this conception of 'public sociology'?) I see Burawoy's vision as very much of a piece with the recent 'spatialisation' of social concepts, a euphemistic way of emptying institutions of their historical content, so as to make their infrastructure available to the highest bidder. Thus, when the Euro-gurus of science policy speak of universities in 'mode 2 knowledge production' in Greco-Latin terms as *agora* or *fora*, I reach for my wallet because these ancient terms originally referred to nothing more than multipurpose spaces in their respective societies, where, say, *both* politics and business could be conducted in equanimity. The first step 'back to the future' is to provide financial incentives for academics to share their offices and classrooms with conference-goers, with an option but not a requirement that the academics themselves attend the conference. More generally, the day when municipalities sell their civic buildings and start to rent time and space in generic conference centres, we will be back to the architectural consciousness of our ancient forebears.

**TB** Al Gore has recently given currency to the phrase 'an inconvenient truth' in his case for the proposition that ecological disaster awaits us if we don't do something about climate change. People like Bjørn Lomborg, of course, argue that the environment isn't doing as badly as we might think, or as badly as a particular constellation of scientists and politicians would have us think. They are often accused of serving as useful idiots to corporate interests and neo-liberal agendas, in short, of offering rather "convenient" interpretations of the climate data. Interestingly, Lomborg has himself argued that contemporary environmentalism, and especially the doomsday vision that motivates it,

is itself a convenient way to avoid much more important, and less convenient, 'leftist' causes such as the redistribution of wealth. Now, from the point of view of social epistemology, it almost ought to be possible to settle this question of whose truth is most convenient. More generally, we should be able to imagine an intellectual environment, constituted by the arrangement of political and scientific interests, in which the truth – i.e., the epistemic consensus on a given topic – is likely to be more or less convenient to the interests of what, perhaps imprecisely, is sometimes called power. More specifically, do you think that current trends in university administration are likely to make the truth more convenient?

**SF** Two sides to the binary of convenient/inconvenient truth come out from your question, which are really two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, when Gore speaks of 'inconvenient truth', he means a truth that he thinks is difficult for people to deny because its empirical basis is so strong. This sense comports very well with the idea that 'knowledge = power', indeed, in a way that Bruno Latour could appreciate, since it suggests an enormous effort (commissioning new research, new PR campaigns, etc.) would be needed to overturn it. On the other hand, when Lomborg speaks of Gore's super-environmentalism as itself a 'convenient truth', he means that it serves the interests of those (on the left) who found their original assignment too difficult – i.e. alleviating poverty and specifically human misery – and so have turned to something more tractable, or at least something where they feel they're more in control of the game. In effect, Gore and Lomborg are providing, respectively, a synchronic and a diachronic reading of the left's geopolitical strategy: Gore stresses immediate political advantage, Lomborg long-term accommodation to changing political fortunes. This is my rather Hegelian 'cunning of reason' take on the situation, which I have developed in *The New Sociological Imagination* (Sage, 2006: chapter 13).

To many this will seem like a perverse reading, since Gore is usually cast as the visionary and Lomborg the opportunist. However, we shouldn't forget that, notwithstanding Lomborg's influential friends in government and industry, Gore is the one about to pick up the Nobel Peace Prize. Gore is clearly the man of the moment – though quite possibly only of that moment. The trick for the social epistemologist is to do something creative with the hidden lesson in all this – namely, that in order to get to the point in history when we'll be able to say, "Lomborg was right after all, and Gore was over the top with his ecological alarmism," we may first have to go through a period in which we take Gore somewhat seriously. I don't mean we do everything he says, but we do enough of it that the alarmism dies down, and more traditionally left interests can find it convenient to migrate somewhere closer to Lomborg's position.

The problem with Lomborg's views as it stands is not that they're wrong (they're not) but that the wrong people – certainly an inadequate range of people – are positioned to benefit from them. Many scientific advances have this Lomborg-like quality when they first burst on the scene because of their elite character, which I already mentioned is likely to increase as intellectual property regimes are added to the cognitive difficulties already inherent in genuinely new knowledge. Here universities have a vital role to play in mainstreaming awkward voices like Lomborg by integrating them into a curricular narrative, so they are not seen as merely slaughtering the sacred cows but as replacing them with a more durable species. In this respect, academic administrators might think

of their task as one of *intergenerational epistemic management*, getting humanity across the timescale required for the cunning of reason to work its magic: So, yes, teach Gore's view as the dominant one but also teach Lomborg's as a critique that might itself attract developers in the long term that will overturn Gore. My attitude toward ID vis-à-vis Darwinism is very much along those lines: Academia as society's dialectical engine.

**TB** At the beginning of this interview you said that truth and justice are not separable virtues. But this seems to imply that truth will always be more or less convenient to the various, and often competing, visions of justice that are available. Is there absolutely no hope for a 'radically inconvenient' notion of truth? That is, can science ever put us into a position to know something that is of no ideological use to anyone? Can we only ever 'know' something that someone else, often more powerful than ourselves, has an interest in having us believe? Is there no conceivable organizational blueprint for a scientific institution that could achieve such knowledge?

**SF** I actually don't think the situation is as desperate as your question suggests. My idea of a 'radically inconvenient truth' is one that cannot be used to exert power over another. In other words, all parties have equal access to such a truth, and so they can judge it for themselves: It can't be rigged to benefit one party. All that I am saying here is just a politically sexed up way of talking about the project of classical epistemology, to which 'rationalism' and 'empiricism' were meant as alternative general solutions. On the one hand, I must be able to follow the steps in the reasoning; on the other, I must be able to see it with my own eyes. Both sides of this argument took refuge in the prospect of methodological transparency, a kind of procedural justice for inquiry. This is 'inconvenient' because all parties are supposed to be signed up to it before they know its outcomes in particular cases. The mistake made by those old epistemologists is to think that the solution lay in something pre-social about human nature, be it defined biologically or, more likely, theologically. The only one who got matters right was Hobbes, who insisted that the only way to ensure that people can't dominate each other, socially or epistemically, is by binding them all to the terms of the same contract.

From this perspective, the autonomy of philosophy came to be seriously compromised when it began to take seriously – and this has really happened only in my lifetime – the idea that our knowledge claims should always be in accordance with our best scientific theories. That is to render our social epistemology much too convenient to the status quo, ignoring the (meta)fact that all theories, *especially* scientific ones, are superseded in the long term. It is easy to see, under the circumstances, why Richard Rorty regarded philosophical assertions of 'truth' as 'honorifics'. Nowadays philosophers – and Daniel Dennett would be a paradigm case here – give added weight to knowledge claims that already carry quite a lot of weight because of the privileged status of science in society. Rorty thought the practice relatively harmless, showing if anything how parasitic philosophy was on science for any sort of credibility. I see the matter more sinisterly, namely, as a subversion of philosophy's critical spirit. In a recent article, I have written that science will not be democratized unless expertise is 'decommissioned'.<sup>4</sup> By that I mean that esoteric knowledge be rendered publicly available, enabling the broadest

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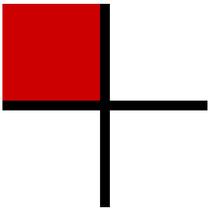
4 Steve Fuller, 'Science Democratized = Expertise Decommissioned', *Spontaneous Generations*, 1(1), <http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/SpontaneousGenerations/article/viewFile/2969/1087>.

range of people to do what they will with it. Again this returns us to the main mission of the university, where a properly Humboldtian sense of philosophy should be at its centre.

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## No Future

Paolo Do

### The Productive Centrality of the University in the Age of Cognitive Capitalism

Today we often use the concept of ‘Cognitive Capitalism’,<sup>1</sup> or, indeed, Post-Fordist production, to denote a profound breakdown that has occurred during the last few decades. And when we speak about a ‘society of knowledge’ we point out that today knowledge is the new tool of capitalist accumulation. Asserting this doesn’t mean hiding the fact that in the complexity of the contemporary world, we cannot observe completely different productive regimes co-existing, as we do within the metropolis. Indeed, the majority of work done in a metropolis certainly isn’t immaterial work: cleaners, janitors, salesclerks and storekeepers do not properly perform conceptual or symbolic manipulation.

The assertion of the ‘hegemony’ of cognitive labour and immaterial work therefore means something else, something very different from a quantitative measurement of this or that employment sector. The term, indeed, refers to *all the work that is done within the metropolis*. So even though the majority of work done in the metropolis is not strictly speaking cognitive, it is nonetheless *oriented* and *addressed* by the sector of cognitive labour. That is to say, the more prevalent forms of work are themselves organized as a function of cognitive labour. And it is in this sense that we can speak of the hegemony of cognitive labour. It is also in this very same sense that Marx wrote about hegemony within the *Grundrisse* (1993: 106-107).

This term: ‘hegemony of cognitive labour’, underlines the inherent arbitrariness of criticisms made concerning the supposedly questionable validity of the conceptual differentiations made between cognitive or immaterial labour and material or non-cognitive labour. These criticisms are to be understood as arbitrary precisely because cognitive and immaterial labour is *always* made up of a material and bodily component. And material labour, for its part, is also always made up of a cognitive and immaterial

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1 ‘Cognitive Capitalism’ is the literal translation into English of the term ‘capitalismo cognitivo’, a concept born out of European (and particularly Italian) ‘post-operaismo’ thought. See, for example, Vercellone (2003) and Negri (2008).

content. In this light it is the category of material labour, rather than the category of immaterial labour, that is problematic.

The concept of 'cognitive capitalism' therefore presents us with the inherent difficulty of proposing any sort of systematic dichotomy between intellectual labour and manual labour, the very dichotomy which nonetheless typifies Fordist factory work. It presents us with the great challenge of explaining the nature of the new productive contemporary metropolitan space.

To accept this concept of 'cognitive capitalism', I suggest, is to simultaneously accept the assertion that many traditional conceptual divisions are no longer adequate to the task of understanding the new division of labour within knowledge society. To accept the concept of 'cognitive capitalism' therefore means that we must find the role of capital's command in some other way. And with such a framework in mind, we can also see that the function, role and mechanism of many contemporary institutions have become completely different.

In this note I want to consider the case of the university. What is the university today? Well, if the productive tool is knowledge, if immaterial labour and cognitive labour define the hegemony of the productive world today, then the university is now the centre of the productive realm. Within such an era the university becomes the factory,<sup>2</sup> the realm within which economic wealth is produced, much in the same way that the manufacturing factory was just such a realm decades ago.

You have not misunderstood: the university today produces.

*At the spatial level*, we can say that the university is inside the productive process of modernity, with its circuits of teaching, learning, research (and its financialization), copyright management, and so on. Such centrality is accompanied by an increasing 'becoming corporate' of the university itself. More and more today we can speak of the corporate university, namely, the public institution that has to manage itself in accordance with the efficiency and productivity standards of the entrepreneurial world. The rhetoric of new public management, investment, accountability, stakeholders and so on, is more and more infiltrating the university mechanism. Despite widespread resistance to such evolutions, we are faced with a pervasive and relatively unchallenged adoption from inside the university of this managerial rhetoric.

The question is why? How is this possible? I suppose it is because in recent years, corporations are becoming more and more like universities, because the Post-Fordist factory has a similar refrain to the living substance of the university. The ability to learn and to adapt through learning is precisely what the contemporary labour market requires. To be able to learn today is to be able to be productive today.

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2 See the edu-factory Manifesto [[http://www.edu-factory.org/index.php?option=com\\_contentandtask=view&id=5&Itemid=6](http://www.edu-factory.org/index.php?option=com_contentandtask=view&id=5&Itemid=6)].

And *at the temporal level*, we can say that the contemporary university is oriented towards the present. Universities no longer look towards the future since the shaping and training of the workforce is not for the future, but for the here and now.

The present is the time of university and education. Here and now.<sup>3</sup> In this way, when one speaks about life-long learning it doesn't mean postponing the result, the 'final date' of the educational process until who knows when. The student is therefore no longer an unproductive figure that goes to school today and one day, in the future, will enter into the labour market. No. The student today is an immediately productive figure, and his or her productive time is within the here and the now.<sup>4</sup>

The central role of the university today insofar as the valorization of capital is concerned is a paradoxical one. For the goal of the university nowadays, is to earn well and hence to devalue knowledge. The contemporary university is therefore a space which devalues and discredits some forms of knowledge over others insofar as potential wage and remuneration is concerned. What does this apparent paradox of contemporary society mean? Speaking about wealth production, we refer to capitalist production. This is a production based on command. So we must ask: how is this command over cooperation, the productive capacity of the work force, exercised today?

This question is asked because the modern university is by no means a free zone, it is certainly not a place where the cooperation and productivity of the subject is free. It is also asked because, when the university becomes like the factory, we could say the 'edu-factory', it simultaneously adopts the goal of redefining the command of the workforce and of productive power itself. The factory is not only a space of production, therefore, it is also a mode of commanding production and the work-force. It is not a free space, but rather a space where one makes struggles. To say the university is a central space of the productive mechanism means, therefore, that it is a space where the command of productive power is articulated – the space where it is put to work. The modern university, therefore, is the point of application for the forms of command and control which characterizes cognitive capitalism. Such is the argument which I will try to make here.

## **Fordist Productive Power and the Distinction between Manual and Intellectual Labour**

Within this note what I am trying to do, insofar as I am writing about the role of the modern university, is to pinpoint the relationship between capitalistic command and productive forces. For what is capitalism if it is not a social relation? And within this

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3 The slogan of Italian university movement of 2005 was: 'our time is here and starts now' [<http://www.globalproject.info/art-6049.html>].

4 A document of the Paris VIII University meeting written during the students' struggle in France in November 2007 was suggestively entitled 'we don't want a future, we want a present!' It continues: "the project is to postpone existence in a future, in a post. We refuse this permanent updating. We want a present in which to extract something decent [...]" (Trans. by the author). [[http://www.globalproject.info/art-13859.html?var\\_recherche=cpe](http://www.globalproject.info/art-13859.html?var_recherche=cpe)].

section I want to consider the classical distinction between manual and intellectual labour characteristic of the Fordist period. By doing this, I want to pave the way towards a drafting of what might be called a *genealogy* of capitalism's commanding *dispositif*. By taking such a retrospective leap, therefore, I think that we can put ourselves in a position to better understand the nature of the space which the university occupies today insofar as what I will go on to call the 'political economy of knowledge' is concerned.

From the perspective of the Fordist firm and the Taylorist system of work geared towards the mass production of standard commodities, one can outline what might be called the real polarization of knowledge. Inside of this system of production we encounter a formal separation between manual labour, on the one hand, and intellectual labour, on the other. This separation, for its part, was accompanied by the incorporation of knowledge into machines: the standardization of manual labour led to the becoming machinic of labour. The system of machines came to take on an almost trans-individuality reality, a reality which was at the same time the triumph of fixed capital. This triumph is a response to the capitalist's need to assume greater control over the productive process, to become free from any sort of reliance upon the knowledge possessed by labourers. The gradual process of gaining such control was at the same time the process which saw the transformation of worker knowledge into a set of mechanic processes. Industrial capitalism was born *de facto* within this dual process of the disembodiment of knowledge and the becoming knowledgeable of machines.

The proliferation of machines as the simultaneous disembodiment of knowledge finds its utmost rationality in the Fordist model of production where the firm's organizational mechanisms are reflected two-fold. On the one hand we have the assembly line, itself composed of nothing but un-thinking, manually labouring bodies. And on the other hand, we have the planning stage, itself composed of nothing but absolutely thinking intellectual labour. This division between a purely intellectual component, on the one hand, and a purely bodily component is described by Carlo Vercellone as a "control of the intellectual power of production" (2006: 41, trans. by the author). And this very division between intellectual and manual labour is the Fordist ground upon which capitalism's command over the power of human production most firmly asserts itself.

Capital's command within the Fordist organization was carried out through the control of productive power within this formal division between manual and intellectual labour. But this distinction could not be maintained indefinitely – it was a form of control which was permanently exercised but also permanently limited. The separation between manual and intellectual labour was continually broken by labour itself in its very materiality. A separation of the nature of labour therefore existed, and was operationalised, but this separation was an entirely artificial one. And it was this inherent artificiality itself which emerged for all to see during the cases of strikes and whenever the assembly line itself was subjected to sabotage. These moments portray the separation between intellectual and manual labour in all of its artificiality. They show it to be nothing but an attempt to control, rather than express, the sheer vitality of human labour power.

The hegemony of intellectual labour therefore emerges and asserts itself at the very point where control attempted to eliminate it. In the strike, within sabotage, emerges the reality of the knowledge of the worker, the knowledge to stop the machine, the knowledge to control the production cycle, the knowledge to subvert the supposed hierarchy between manual and intellectual labour. The worker therefore asserts his knowledge of the production process through sabotage. And this knowledge is shown, thereby, to be inherently political rather than purely technical.

The very frequency of such confrontations and struggles made it impossible to completely separate the categories of manual and intellectual labour in a material sense. The frequency of such confrontations therefore served to expose such a separation as nothing other than a series of attempts to control the power over production. This particular control is a parcelled-out specialization and repetition of the worker's task itself. It is, to be precise, a 'political economy of knowledge' something capable of transforming knowledge itself.

The university, under Fordist conditions, is therefore an institution that produces and reproduces this separation between manual and intellectual labour. But under Fordist conditions it is not yet a socially pervasive institution since it presupposes a sharp division between inside and outside, a division that reproduces the unsustainable separation between manual and intellectual labour. The university, in this sense, was not immediately productive but rather functional to the productive system. It was a site that served to reproduce the hegemony of command of the Fordist factory by presupposing and therefore perpetuating the formal division between manual labour, on the one hand, and intellectual labour, on the other.

## **Post-Fordist Productive Power: Differential Inclusion and the Mass University**

Today we are faced with quite another matter. The classical division between intellectual and manual labour is now posed differently, and the use of this classical category is less and less useful in understanding the new code of capital's command over productive power.

As I have already remarked, the category of 'cognitive capitalism' presents itself as a useful means of understanding the new division of contemporary work beyond this classical distinction between intellectual and manual labour. It helps us to understand how the old scheme is no longer sufficient. Thereby, it helps us to speak about a new geography of capitalist command, about a new device of command that starts at the point where the workers' movement had overcome Fordist organization, a device which comes into play precisely at the point where manual and intellectual labour become indistinguishable from one another. We cannot understand the concept of cognitive capitalism unless we pass through this notion. Cognitive capitalism is not the hegemony of 'intellectual' over 'Fordist' labour. To repeat the point from which this note initially departed, the concept of 'cognitive capitalism' rather refers to the impossibility of separating and distinguishing between material and intellectual labour in the traditional, that is Fordist, way.

The workers' struggles of past decades have forced capital's command into a new space. From here, where it is more and more difficult to distinguish between what is manual and intellectual, one doesn't go backwards, that is, one doesn't attempt to nostalgically re-establish that which used to be. We rather progress on the basis of that which such resistances have produced. Resistance, after all, is that which produces such transformations. We might even say that resistance, understood in this way, is ontologically productive, that it is productive of the contemporary world of things. So today, if we are to understand capitalism's workings and its command after the victory of the workers' struggle against the factory organized upon the notion of the hegemony of intellectual labour, we have to see that the progressive intellectualization of work is no longer central. On the contrary, the downgrading and discrediting of the workforce itself inside of cognitive capitalism is what must command our attention.

So what, then, in light of the above, is the role of the university today? Moreover: at the time of the internet which spells the breakdown of the university's relative monopoly over knowledge, what is the university now for? We can confidently assert that the demise of the centrality of the Fordist factory and its division of labour is replaced today with the centrality of a university which becomes the place of pure command, a place for the prioritization of certain forms of knowledge possessed by the workforce. The apparent paradox outlined at the beginning of this article has now lost its 'paradoxical' distinctive character: downgraded knowledge here means that the university, as it is today, is more and more a part of a world where access to knowledge is free and, therefore, in spite of the university itself. Within such a reality of abundant knowledge, the university therefore plays the role of authority, the role of discrediting some knowledge in comparison with others. In short, the university is the contemporary space of command, a site where division and control become imposed onto the workforce. The goal of the university today is to produce a new differentiation of the workforce and this is done through a process of progressively prioritizing sectors of the workforce in terms of the knowledge it possesses.

The role of the university has therefore changed quite profoundly for the university has become nothing short of a mass university. All around us we see an increase in the number of graduates and, therefore, an increase in the level of enrolment within universities. The number of registered students has been constantly increasing ever since the Second World War: this gives us a measure and an idea of how much it has changed, of how central it has become.<sup>5</sup> During the first half of the twentieth century, the university was the place of reproduction based upon a sharp and strongly defined border between inside and outside which was reflected within the already described division of the workforce. The university was therefore a device capable of exclusion. Indeed, it was an institution largely reliant upon exclusion. The effect of exclusions through closed entry requirements, for example, was to create a high level of stratification between those who are able to afford the costs of studying, and a lower stratification for those who were outside (the majority). This double stratification and its deep logic of exclusion was at the base of the classical distinction between intellectual and manual labour, hegemonic in the Fordist era, where the university was the place of its production and reproduction.

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5 [http://www.edu-factory.org/index.php?option=com\_contentandtask=viewandid=86andItemid=41].

Today's university has, to a large extent, lost this particular border between its inside and its outside by directing its mechanisms towards inclusivity. Yet this process of inclusion doesn't outline a homogeneous inclusion, it rather operates on the basis of a *differential inclusion*. The segmentation of the workforce happens not on the threshold of the university's inside/outside but rather within the university's inclusion process itself. It is here that the tools for producing hierarchy become cognitive, it is on the basis of these tools that we can distinguish between skilled and unskilled labour. The likes of the Bologna process therefore reveal to us the nature and characteristics of these new filters and borders. We can see within such differential inclusion techniques the multiplication and production of new and fresh borders inside the workforce and the labour marketplace, a sort of generalization of the policies of management of migrant labour which becomes extended onto the whole population through the Higher Education sector itself.

Put otherwise: as production becomes diffused and the Fordist organization's factory loses its hegemony, the command of the workforce and of its hierarchy is produced by the university. If the distinction between manual and intellectual labour has broken down together with its device of exclusion, the modern university's inclusion process is not linear but one of differential inclusion. Here we find an overlap between techniques of labour hierarchization and the tools that become cognitive.<sup>6</sup> The mass university becomes inclusive by segmenting and differentiating with respect to some disciplines but not others. This sort of differentiation reflects the labour world where a segmentation of the workforce is effected between those who can recognize their competences and knowledges as opposed to those who cannot. This disciplinary segmentation refers to the recognition (or lack thereof) on the part of the competences of workers.

Secondly, the working of the mass university involves a management of knowledge the quality of which is immediately connected with the relation of the workforce to the marketplace through the collapse of temporality in forms of life, work and education. We can easily point to internships and other situations where the value of knowledge is made null: when one works for free. The internship, widespread across Europe, is a clear example of how the university system works towards a segmentation that devalues knowledge in terms of wage and remuneration. Moreover, the university works as a mode for governing and managing an increasing quota of the precarious workforce employed in sectors of low skills: the so-called shit jobs of students who simply cannot afford their study.<sup>7</sup> This is a real workers' reserve army, an army which the university itself organizes and builds up. Far from being a beautiful soul outside of the hidden dangers of the market, the student is exploited even when not working.

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6 [http://www.uniriot.org/index.php?option=com\_content&task=view&id=204&Itemid=104].

7 See in particular Bousquet, 2008, wherein the author describes the exploitation of undergraduate students as cheap labour and as a docile and disciplined workforce. Students, argues Bousquet, are already workers. The progressive 'intellectualization' of the workforce, in this light, doesn't mean an increase in wages but, on the contrary, the reduction of minimal guarantees. This is the scenario where the promise of a better future is in reality a present made of exploitation and debt.

Finally we have the construction of a hierarchy of the university itself at a national and international level. This hierarchy sets up filters to process a differentiation inside of the workforce where a degree from 'x university' or 'y country' is worth less or more than the same degree from another university or country. This hierarchy of degrees is applied onto the same international workforce, inside a new international division of labour.

## **Listen to the Sound of Struggle: Self-Education as Autonomous Institution**

To conclude, I'd like to mention some of the recent struggles around Europe within the university context. These struggles are not simply student struggles. Within the ephemeral borders of the university and its productive centrality, the struggles of the past years have taken shape differently from the classical university struggles. Indeed, these struggles, from the anti-CPE struggle in France in 2006 and those against the reform of Sarkozy's government in 2007, onto the occupation of Greek and Italian universities in 2005, may be understood as the new configuration of a new cycle of struggles, a new cycle marked by the complete overcoming of the classical figure of the student.

On the one hand the university context becomes central to capitalist production. And on the other hand we can find its immediately metropolitan dimension.

This is a new cycle of struggles where the main characteristics are the common processes of the precarization of life on the one hand, and the constant processes of educational policy harmonization (read: the attempt to construct a common market for the workforce at the European level) on the other. The metropolitan dimension of these university conflicts are elements that allow us to read properly what happened in our university, our metropolis, to understand that they are the same. These battles reconfigure how the struggles for access are struggles against filters and blocks of differential inclusion inside the workings of the modern university. These struggles displace the contemporary production of capitalist command onto productive power today and shape the hierarchical process conflicts around the students' mobility as a workforce.

To sum up what I've been trying to say here in a few points: I've tried to show how today the centrality of the university in the productive process entails that a new exploitation of the workforce passes through knowledge. That means that knowledge itself is a new strategic battlefield of the productive process, that knowledge is the battlefield against new sets of exploitation and blackmail. And if knowledge has a new centrality with regard to the capitalistic production of conflict, we need to consider two matters further.

*Firstly*, that the quality and production of this knowledge itself becomes a strategic field of struggle. In this way the experience of self-education in many universities at a global level represents a decisive field of conflict: workers' management of their own knowledge, of production and of its socialization. This is synonymous with worker autonomy and therefore with exodus from contemporary command. The construction of

autonomy and the planning of ways for existing networks to increase these practices is what, for example, the 'edu-factory' project is all about. The demand for the autonomy of content and the modality of the research of self-education itself is the field of difference capable of threatening the new set of command.

*Secondly*, to speak about the university and the contemporary institutions of capitalist command and of self-education, is to try to find an adequate organizational level for the contemporary *dispositif* of power. It is to attempt to elucidate how it articulates, to attempt to hone in on its modes of governance. It is to attempt to read these modes of governance as process of power and command management and to attempt to find ways to react to the creative power of conflicts: this is the answer and advanced point of new forms of command.

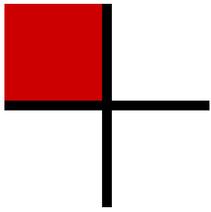
How are we to articulate the organizational practice of self-education when a physical outside does not exist? From where do we organize the threat? We need to find a new and public line of escape: a way to invent new weapons as Deleuze and Guattari (2004: 445) said, in a scenario that is no longer physical but becoming more and more time bound. We need to organize self-educational practices and workers self-management at a new level: at the level of the institution. And it is in this sense that we come to the idea of an autonomous institution. We must organize the university space, from inside, as an irreducible outside: a place where we find material resources, funds and organizational resources for labour's management of knowledge, autonomy and production of critical knowledge. By critical knowledge I mean a sort of knowledge that is able to organize, to open up and manage the crisis of the command of productive power as it goes through knowledge.

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## From Enthusiasm to Exhaustion: A Day in the Life of a Human Geography Lecturer\*

Kye Askins

### My Role in Discussing the Modern University

In this piece I want to offer a few reflections regarding my own place in the behemoth structure that is academia: I'm far from unique, and many things I have to say have been said before. Indeed, I deliberated over whether to write this contribution at all due to my concerns regarding the 'production' of academic knowledge (see Fuller and Askins, 2007), having spent some time (re)reading some of the relevant literature (that 'spare' time around teaching, meetings, marking and e-mail that I could find). Starting with the Antipode special edition of 2000 that examined "how the dynamics of contemporary capitalism are straining and splitting apart the university as a space of critical intellectual citizenship" (Castree and Sparke, 2000: 222), I followed links both pre and post that volume. And two things struck me: first, how much I agreed with all the critiquing of university corporatization, calls for critical engagements, and interrogation of what constitutes relevance in academic work, etc.; second, *how much we have written* critiquing university corporatization, calling for critical engagement and interrogating what constitutes relevance in academic work!

Obviously, I have decided to add to this body of writing, and I want to explain why. A key reason involves supporting what's already been said elsewhere to build consensus and *move towards change*. This is connected to issues that I consider central within my work – these issues form the substantive part of this paper and revolve around space, place, social justice, and education. And as part of these broader concerns, there is also a personal political project, which is to adopt a narrative strategy/style that endeavours to disrupt/challenge/question dominant structures of writing as part of my own commitment to critical engagement, following Cixous' (1991) conceptualisation of writing as 'a call to action, revolution and transgression' (see also Bingham, 2003; Crang, 2003; Hughes et al., 1999; McGregor et al., 2007). Partly recognising writing *as resistance*, but also because I'm tired of my undergraduate students quite legitimately struggling to connect with academic journal papers/texts (not all but many) because

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\* To Steve, Duncan, Graham, Mike and Rinke – better colleagues I couldn't wish to have! To all at FUN group in Byker, for their warmth and generosity. To Chillingham Road School pupils and staff, for their enthusiasm. And to my students, who always inspire me.

they are, and this is a common quote, ‘written in another language’. Why can’t work that is rigorous, relevant, empirical, theoretical, thought-provoking be in more accessible language, where possible? The point is, I believe that a key role of the modern university should be good (better) communication, within and without (see Hawkins et al., forthcoming).

## My Role/s on June 21<sup>st</sup> 2007

So, using one single day (notable for me as it is Midsummer’s Day here in England, and I have long used the summer and winter solstices to reflect on the passing of time and shifts in my life), I want to consider the ways in which I am positioned by corporatization within the academy and my resistance to it, the activities that I undertake in my own search for relevancy, and the roles I adopt due to my commitment to ‘learning’ beyond the academy. I guess my hope is to highlight where and how thinking, politics, activism and education are played out in University life (in and beyond its spaces) in complicated ways.

I should briefly explain that this particular day occurs after the end of the teaching year in my institution – after students’ exams, so formal teaching and marking is finished. There are, of course, different rhythms at different times of the academic calendar, so my ‘day in the life’ for June 21<sup>st</sup> will read quite differently than had I written about a date in semester/term time. However, I believe this is a valid date to explore especially because, while it is a time when I supposedly have less constraints around my working life, in my experience the corporatizing tendrils reach even into this space and time.

### 09.00 to 12.00

I spent the first part of the day with PGCE students from another university. PGCE is a Postgraduate Certificate in Education, and these were a group of students studying to become geography teachers. Northumbria University is in the city of Newcastle and we offer a PGCE in geography at *primary* school level (ages 5-11), while Newcastle University (referred to as ‘across the road’ by us at Northumbria) offers a PGCE in geography at *secondary* school level (ages 11-18). Around 24 Newcastle PGCE students were working on designing a ‘virtual fieldtrip’ to the Ouseburn Valley (an area in Newcastle), preparing case study material to go on-line for access by secondary school geography teachers across the UK (potentially across the world), as part of a larger project co-ordinated by the Geographical Association (GA).<sup>1</sup> I heard about the initiative through a colleague who knew that I’m interested in soundscapes and the aural environment within human geography<sup>2</sup> and asked me if I could get involved. That day,

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1 See [www.geography.org.uk](http://www.geography.org.uk) regarding the GA; and [www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk](http://www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk) regarding this specific project.

2 More broadly, my interests are ‘multiculturalism in the everyday’: the ways in which difference and similarity between/across people of diverse ethnic backgrounds play out in the banal spaces/places of daily life in exclusionary as well as transformative encounters. My research suggests that exploring ‘sense’ of place should include beyond the visual if we are to understand notions of belonging in and

I was working with six students who had opted to focus on ‘sounding’ the Valley, recording soundfiles to be attached to waymarkers on a map, photographing the places, and writing teaching plans to explore the diverse aural environments along the river valley.



*Figure 1: PGCE students designing a virtual fieldtrip*

I agreed to this work because *I found it interesting* – and in how many professions can we do something because it enthruses us? I want to emphasise that I consider my position relatively privileged, on the whole.<sup>3</sup> I also agreed because I believe that *bridging the gap across university and school education* is important. The UK saw a 29.4% decline in students opting to study geography to examination level at secondary school between 1996 and 2006 (Weedon, 2007), which impacts upon numbers applying to study the subject in higher education. University managers worry about this in terms of ‘customer downturn’: I was recently at a departmental ‘away day’ which started by considering ‘changes in the market’ and discussing the need to diversify the ‘product’ we deliver – see Tang-Martinez (2002) for a critique of corporate profit-making as negating diverse intellectual inquiry. My point here, though, centres on debate regarding the positive relevance of geography in contemporary society (eg. Castree et al., 2007;

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use of specific sites, and that sound in particular is important in thinking through how people inter/act in public spaces (see Adams et al., 2005).

3 Although I am deeply concerned by the increases in non-tenure/short term positions and erosion of these academic freedoms I’m talking about here – see Bryson (2004).

Lynch, 2007; The Guardian, 2008). Since I agree that (a critical approach to) studying geography is crucial to any transformative politics, linking the significance of geography into everyday spaces and across many places should not only occur in academia, but in education at all levels. Moreover, there are many excellent teachers in schools doing this, and we in academia have as much to learn as to offer, which is only possible through developing networks and bridging any 'divide' between universities and schools (and wider society more broadly, Bonnett, 2003). This issue is not only discipline-specific, and other subjects can/do mount similar arguments regarding relevance beyond the Ivory Tower.

The work with the Newcastle PGCE students raises another issue – while cross-institutional working, sharing expertise and experience may be beneficial to further 'learning' goals there is a sensitive political game played around which universities offer which courses, with management-speak couched along the lines of 'market competition' in terms of students. In the UK, an annual National Student Survey (2008) is conducted among final year undergraduates, who are asked to comment on the education and 'services' they have received, which is reported in a 'league table' format that puts us in *direct competition* with each other – as we are when it comes to bidding for research grants too, generally. This all works against inter-institutional cooperation.

## 12.00 to 13.30

I then went to an event in Byker (an inner city area of Newcastle, fortunately adjacent to the Ouseburn Valley) organised by the local government authority as part of 'Refugee Week'. Held in Byker Community Centre, the aim was to increase awareness of what being a refugee or asylum seeker involves among long term residents, while also raising awareness of local services among refugees. I went with a group of asylum-seeking and refugee families with whom I'm undertaking long term ethnographic research.

Rather than talk about the event or my research in detail here, I want to raise issues regarding *doing* this research. To date in my post (two and a half years) I haven't found time to apply for research grants because 1) this is my first lecturing job so everything has been prepared from scratch; 2) because I'm employed at a 'teaching-led' university with relatively high teaching loads; 3) because said 'teaching-led' focus offers less support to undertake research (though there is an expectation and contractual obligation to be 'research-active'); 3) because I have two children, an extended family and many other commitments outside of work. I don't intend this as a list of 'excuses' but as a reality.



Figure 2: Refugee Week in Byker, inner city Newcastle

Of course the ‘reality’ is that I choose to prioritise activities in a certain way due to my personal and professional values – I do find the time most weeks to actually engage in the research, so I could potentially spend two hours every week instead writing proposals, then do the research when I have some grant money. But my feet are firmly in the activist and public academic camps (Chatterton, 2006).<sup>4</sup> I believe it more valuable to be doing the research to inform teaching (see Jenkins et al., 2007) and have input to policy-making (see Ward, 2007) – and I understand these as not independent issues, since teaching our students has obvious relevance to the wider society in terms of their roles after they leave the University (Mitchell, 2004).

So when I do get around to apply for research money, it won’t be for a large grant where my time is ‘bought out’ – I enjoy teaching, I think I’m a pretty OK teacher, and I think teaching remains key within the modern university. I agree with Heyman (2000: 292) that the classroom is “a site of political praxis” and “a crucial place where... ‘corporatization’ can be challenged”, and that we need to think *across* pedagogy and knowledge production if we are to engage with social justice, critical citizenship and participatory democracy – conceptualising the classroom as a space of/for collective engagement (see Evans et al., 2007). Certainly, we should stay aware of Mitchell’s (1999: 387) warning regarding the threats to teaching and learning, and in particular to the development of critical thought, from “the commodification of education as ‘product’, combined with competition from the for-profit private sector”.

4 There is debate regarding what constitutes ‘the public academic’, here I’m referring to a more ‘doing’ outside the academy than a ‘writing in the public domain’ paradigm, though I recognise the latter is important (see Said, 2002).

### 13.30 to 14.00

I then rushed back to the office grabbing lunch on the way. There is a serious issue here. Since I became a lecturer I've had some digestive problems, which I believe are partly due to not taking lunch breaks. Typically, either I eat on-the-run between meetings, teaching, etc., or I eat at my desk while responding to e-mail. Rather than bad time management (I'm fairly organised and efficient), this behaviour can be linked to the corporate university's emphasis on increasing productivity of its workers – and my own complicity in such a process. Pierotti (2002) has written about decreasing faculty morale under such corporatizing pressures, which resonates with how I feel every time I promise myself that I *will* take a break tomorrow, and don't. Moreover, stress among academics has been linked to serious physical and mental ill health (Kinman, 1998).

### 14.00 to 16.00

I spent the early afternoon with three colleagues preparing for a fieldtrip the following week with primary school children (7-9 year olds) to Thornley Woods (half an hour from Newcastle). We drove out to the woods and walked around, planning fieldtrip activities and worksheets, and discussing the teaching we would do with the children in their school beforehand and at our university the day afterwards. Again, I undertook this work because it enthused me, because it was something new and exciting. In the event, working with the children was absolutely exhausting but a huge amount of fun and I learned a lot (for photos, see Askins, 2007b).

I won't repeat the earlier discussion about bridging across different learning environments, making the academy/geography relevant, etc. What I want to address here are related issues regarding equality of opportunity and 'widening participation'. Who accesses the modern university? Research shows that, while our student demographic has shifted over the past few decades, we still remain – in the UK at least – the preserve of the middle classes and above (see Higher Education Academy, 2008; Taylor, 2008). This is not only an economic issue:<sup>5</sup> there are social and cultural competencies involved in attending university and for many children/people, including most attending the school we were working with, academia is outside dominant life expectations (Dillon, 2007; Thomas, 2006). Introducing university *as a possibility* requires working across/in different places: widening participation requires labour, requires positive action. While there are some examples of good practice, these appear to be the exception rather than the rule, with universities keen on rhetoric but short on committing resources. What individual academics may achieve with small projects such as ours is not going to challenge the endemic inequalities around accessing university.

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5 Though neoliberalist principles threaten any endeavour to 'widen participation' with ever-increasing fees and other costs associated with studying for a degree.

### 16.00 to 16.30

Back in my office I hurriedly dealt with as many e-mails as I could. I experience technology as simultaneously transformative and entrapping, even as it opens up possibilities and improves equality of access in many ways, it structures us and creates exclusions – see *Workplace* (2002) for a critical discussion on the complexities of technology within academia.

### 16.30 to 17.30

Next, a meeting with an undergraduate student to discuss her plans for upcoming dissertation fieldwork over the summer months. I am also guidance tutor for this student, who had a baby at the end of first year, and we inevitably talk about a variety of issues whenever we meet. There is rich debate among feminist academics regarding the part that we, as individuals, play in all our academic endeavours and the need to excavate and hold central those individual, personal lived experiences and ‘situated knowledges’ (e.g. Bondi, 2002) – the need to reflexively examine the ways in which we *are positioned and position ourselves* in a variety of contexts, recognising the inseparability of consciousness and embodied experiences, and how these subjectivities are caught up with a ‘politics of position’. I could have written about ‘positionality’ with regard to any/every part of this ‘day in the life’ and I would argue it is implicitly there between the lines. I raise it here because, while attention is paid to positionality with regards to research and writing, these issues are less often translated within guidance and support roles. I have a duty of care and, moreover, should bring an ‘ethics of care’ (after Thrift, 2003) to all engagements with students (and colleagues too!).

I gave birth to my eldest son while an undergraduate student, a key reason that this student transferred from her original guidance tutor to me, and the reason for the time and energy I dedicate to supporting this student (and another young woman who had a baby in her second year). I’m not arguing that someone without the same experience of childbirth/childcare as a student cannot support anyone else in that situation, nor am I advancing any essentialised argument rooted in gender identity, but rather I want to highlight that within our working days there are emotional and emotive moments and geographies that ever-complicate what we do – and what universities are. The unknowability and surprise of emotional encounters within the academy have the potential to enthuse and exhaust (often at the same time), and for me it is this very *humanity* that underpins whatever the role/s of the modern university may be.

### 17.30 to 18.30

Finally (!?) I continued editing a paper that had been accepted for publication subject to minor revisions (Askins, 2007a). See how I referenced myself there? Important to get my citations up, given how we are generally ‘assessed’ on our ‘performance’ by structures of the academy. I’ve run out of word limit here (which raises issues regarding the ways in which our writing is almost always corralled by structures/traditions of journal design/length/format/etc.) and I haven’t even touched upon ‘accountability’ –

see Sparkes (2007) for a start, and presumably such issues are discussed elsewhere in this issue.

I'll just briefly say that demands for 'output' are difficult to deliver in a lectureship without research leave/sabbaticals and minimal 'research activity time' – I grab an hour or two here and there, sporadically, and I find it difficult to write-on-demand in such a way. Indeed, such demands threaten (rely on?) an 'extensification' and 'overflowing' of work into other spaces and times (Jarvis and Pratt, 2006). While flexible spatialities and temporalities of work are part of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century generally, and may be positive, there is an unspoken expectation that academics put in 'additional hours' above those contracted, which links to new structures of governance pervasive within neoliberal societies. And I'm privileged, I have a permanent contract: how much more difficult is research/writing for colleagues on pernicious short term/hourly contracts favoured within corporatized academia?

### 18.30

I went home to my family, tired but happy.

### So what does it all mean?

What I've tried to offer here is a snapshot of my personal situation, in order to examine just some of the issues I feel are important when debating 'the role of the modern university'. I hesitate to offer any definitive statement regarding academia's function, and there are many issues I haven't touched on. This narrative is intended to argue that, for me, it is less a question of whether the University has any *pre-determined* function, but rather that we need to pay attention to which functions/roles are played out *through our everyday enactments as academics* – embodied acts both in and beyond the University that are situated in complex political networks involving personal, institutional, economic and social power relations.

My personal concern surrounds the paradox regarding being a 'socially-driven' academic. I took on the roles outlined above because I *believed* in them, I believed that in some small way each of these tasks held the potential to work towards social justice and exploited my own labour in the process. If, as I believe it does, the contemporary University depends on our critical motivation – vocation? – to deliver 'social goods', then how can we get *beyond* corporatization within the academy? Perhaps heeding Moten and Harney's (2004: 103) call to 'steal' from the University, to fall 'out of love' with the University, to be part of an uncanny undercommons is the way forward. They argue that this requires:

a radical passion and passivity such that one becomes unfit for subjection, because one does not possess the kind of agency that can hold the regulatory forces of subjecthood.

I remain in turn demoralised and hopeful, fearful and fascinated to see what next Midsummer's Day – what every day – will entail.

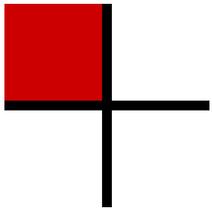
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#### the author

I would describe myself as an 'accidental geographer' who has come to academia through an interesting and meandering journey that includes several years in the 'not-for-profit' social work sector, an undergraduate degree in environmental management and starting a family. I guess I work (have always worked) from an over-arching 'social justice' perspective, with particular interests in issues regarding ethnicity, 'race', and social and spatial in/exclusion.  
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## **I Wanted to Be an Academic, Not ‘A Creative’: Notes on Universities and the New Capitalism**

Eeva Berglund

In 2002 I left the lectureship that I had thought would be my dream job. The university world was, I felt, changing into something I did not believe in and did not want to belong to. Since then I have discovered that two of my main complaints, audit and celebrity culture, are making work difficult far beyond academia. Yet there is an appetite – particularly among people with power and influence – for more of the same. One thing that makes the situation worse, but that is not much talked about, is the ongoing obsession with innovation and creativity.

Drawing eclectically from anthropology, urban studies and publicly available policy documents, and adding a liberal dose of subjective experience, this essay suggests that the debilitating aspects of audit and celebrity culture can only get worse if higher education lets itself be swallowed up by the twin-imperatives of the knowledge economy and creative cities.

### **‘Waffle Generation’ and Its Critics**

After two years as a post-doc in the USA I knew that a full-time lectureship would be tough as well as rewarding, but it took only another four years before I left. I had reached a point where the idea that academia was being run like a “well functioning waffle generator” (my translation from the Finnish *‘toimiva puppugeneraattori’*) (Tienari, 2006: 14) felt depressingly apt.

These days I am not just used to hearing academics grumble, my own experience on a one-year Masters course at University College London proved that the costs of difficult working conditions cascade down to students. Apart from there being, literally, not enough space to accommodate our year, the low morale and motivation among staff taxed our student experience.

Eloquent and sustained critique notwithstanding,<sup>1</sup> universities are under constant pressure to become more entrepreneurial and more focussed on employability. There is talk of professors and lecture theatres, not to mention contact time, soon giving way to corporate universities and virtual institutions that offer 'webinars' instead of seminars. What happens in and to universities, for instance through the Bologna process,<sup>2</sup> is routinely legitimated in terms of economic policy and frequently discussed in the language of business strategy. The work of universities becomes incorporated into a standard narrative that highlights, not always appropriately or accurately (Deem, 2007), intensifying global competition and accelerating business change.

One thing that has changed is the social role of academics as professionals. This shift, however, goes well beyond universities since the very idea of professionals as trusted and valued, competent and automatically accountable to society, has come to feel outmoded. Instead, we have practices that "favor individualistic efforts, mutual rivalry, instrumental use of 'human resources', and performativity" (Räsänen, 2008: 14). The tyrant most frequently blamed for this misery is audit.

## The Rhythm of Audit

"Auditors are, Euro-American scholars and academics would be the first to admit, ... ourselves" (Strathern, 2000a: 315). However, audit can combine with learned habits of self-discipline and self-scrutiny to crippling effect (Strathern, 1997). If the improvements it seeks and recognises are not what academics would consider progress, audit does make it possible to justify demands to accommodate more students, produce more papers, attract more accolades, year after year after year. I never quite learned to handle the way the processes of audit sliced off a part of my work and my being, and eroded my sense of purpose.

I was settling down in the department, collaborating across the college and the country, and sustaining and developing international links. For a while the everyday pleasures of academic work – wonderful students, interesting colleagues, promising research projects – did offset the chronic lack of time. But would my efforts turn out to be valuable and could I ensure that they would be counted as such? Older colleagues said they were concerned, even depressed about the direction of change, but claimed they were powerless to resist. And there was no respite. As soon as the Research Assessment Exercise<sup>3</sup> (RAE) of 2001 was over, talk turned to the next RAE in 2008. Audit was moving the goal-posts, feeding a fear that my efforts would never be good enough.

I encountered resentment throughout the institution, even shame that it was not more prestigious. I did not share this feeling, since I appreciated the college's quirkiness and

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1 The literature is now voluminous. I draw largely on Strathern (1997, 2000a, 2000b); Shore and Wright (1999); Mäntylä et al. (2006); Deem (2007) and others cited in this text.

2 The European Union's creation of a European Higher Education Area by 2010.

3 The Research Assessment Exercise translates research activity into measures by which funding councils can then allocate resources.

even its insalubrious surroundings.<sup>4</sup> But I was frustrated by the fact that our institution, remarkable in so many ways, was routinely compared, both officially and unofficially, to those in the 'Russell Group', a self-selected and informal lobbying network, made up of the UK's top research universities. This probably also corroded our sense of collegiality and our inclination to take risks. Academics have always, I'm sure, been competitive, but my point is that formal external evaluation combined with informal value judgements made us prone to look over our shoulders and made it harder to know how to value our achievements and ourselves.

The resentment was amplified because the information we were creating, and which enabled authoritative comparisons to be made in the first place, took up so much time and energy. Whatever we did, there was almost always a sense that someone somewhere wanted to know we were doing it properly. And so for a time I kept a record of how I managed my time, and complied with requests for measurable information, about student attendance and satisfaction, for instance, or on the research activities I could squeeze in. As difficult as this was at an individual level, departmental discussion about how best to respond to novel management demands was even more infuriating, a waste, I thought, of everybody's time, yet unavoidable. The monotony and exhaustion of producing all this administrative information did not help.

Finally, the spectre of constant examination made it extremely hard to maintain a work-life balance. (In a metropolis like London this is an ever worsening geographical challenge, given the affordability problems relating to homes, childcare and the education system.) The first priority was to feed the administrative machine as well as the publication market. By and by this meant losing the rhythm of one's own life. This became starkly apparent to me when I first mentioned that I was getting married. One colleague was particularly surprised that there was to be a wedding. Who, after all, had time for weddings these days. As anthropologists, it seems, we could write about other people's life cycle rituals, but our own were subordinate to other apparently higher goals.

Yet if something was distorting the proper aims of my practice as an anthropologist, I don't think it was my private life.

## **Profession Meets Business**

It is possible to argue that late twentieth century employment practices as a whole are unsustainable and unhealthy. Finnish historian Juha Siltala writes that we are witnessing "hyper-competition's experiment with the human body" (2004: 220). Others, notably feminists, have shown that capitalism's requirement for flexibility denies the limitations of the human body and of nature, and severely compromises the future (Soper, 2003; Brennan 2000). I have suggested before that academics could fight their corner better if they set their problems in this wider context (Berglund, 2005), and went beyond the

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4 Goldsmiths College is part of the University of London, but is located in South East London, on one of the main arterial roads into the capital.

experiences of academic life to consider the changing role of professional expertise in general.<sup>5</sup>

One profession that has reflected for some time on the changes in professional life is architecture (Saunders and Rowe, 1996; Foxell, 2003). Like academics, architects frequently lament their loss of authority, prestige, and, sometimes, financial reward. As in academia, periodic reports surface about the difficulty of recruiting and about the demoralising conditions of work. Like academics, architects are rarely happy about being asked to conduct themselves as entrepreneurs. Indeed, until only a few years ago, there was little expectation that they should.

When professionals – architects, medical doctors and doctors of philosophy – complain about their losses and about the need to sell themselves, one response is to wave them off as relics of the past, guarantors of a modernity that Foucauldian critique and geopolitics, not to mention technological change, has since relegated to history. A more sympathetic response is possible. Articulated in the literature I have referred to, it acknowledges the losses – of trust, judgement, self esteem and other benefits that are hard to measure. Usually it highlights the rise of managerialism, perhaps even the depredations of neoliberal capitalism, as the source of the problem.

All-purpose managerial expertise arose, broadly speaking, in the late twentieth century to serve the needs of firms operating globally. Although, as in universities, management has many of the functions of bureaucracy it now adopts the language and stance of business. One could say that management-speak provides the soundtrack for the culture of the new capitalism (the title of a book by Richard Sennett to which I return below). A provocative illustration from the corporate world is Corinne Maier's *Bonjour Paresse* (2004). Maier describes a world where there is much talk and much posturing, but little or no risk taking and precious little sense of responsibility. For her, and for the employees whose lives are hollowed out by the cynicism she describes, the language of business management is not so much a vehicle of communication as an endless source of humour. In fact, it is best enjoyed for its silliness, its up-beat but empty words: best value, win-win, fast-tracking, whatever is flavour of the month.

Yet the hold of business language and ideas is remarkable. The language of business can now be applied to all and any human endeavour, even though neither intellectual (Urwin, 2006) nor empirical grounds (Miller, 2003) for doing so appear to have been established.

## Performing for the Audience

Though it might provoke a sad or critical reaction, it no longer surprises when universities are talked about as if they were businesses that 'perform' either well or not so well. We are used to them responding to stakeholder demands, undertaking analyses of strengths and weaknesses or being concerned to "improve the strategic value and

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5 In addition to the references already mentioned, see Cohen (1993) on academia; on the broader field see O'Neill (2002) and Foxell (2003), and in a journalistic register see Ehrenreich (2005).

leverage of their learning and development (L and D) investments” (Todd, 2007: 2). There might be something faintly amusing about how business language can be contorted to fit educational rather than commercial ends were it not for the pressure that this puts on everyone involved. It seems particularly sad for academics, many of whom find themselves adopting habits that conflict with the fundamental drivers of good scholarship. The successful and talented find themselves doing management tasks and sitting in meetings instead of undertaking research. Political imperatives and policy agendas make it difficult to get funding for critical or radical investigation unless one knows how to ‘spin’ a topic or ‘play the system’. The business take-over means that academics are increasingly preoccupied by, and better at manipulating, appearance.

It is not just universities; in fact the UK’s public sector as a whole suffers from this preoccupation. Fortunately the problem has not gone unremarked or unanalysed. Danny Miller takes an anthropological perspective on the debilitating impacts of business-based practices in the UK’s local government. In an effort to salvage local democracy, central government has tried to enhance legitimacy and transparency by creating a constant inspection process, similar to that imposed on universities (Miller, 2003).

To improve performance, Britain’s local authorities have been directed, for example, to remove jargon from their documentation. Miller argues that this has actually emptied it of all *useful* expert-based insight so that municipalities are now producing monotonous documents that state the patently obvious to the point of being “entirely performative, a kind of incantation” (*ibid.*: 63). Distressingly, an enormous amount of work is being done to achieve this pointlessness. Worse still, it delegitimises local government even more. More effort goes into ensuring that a local authority’s services are represented correctly than goes into actually improving those services. The auditors’ concerns are privileged and the professional judgement of the functionaries is deemed practically irrelevant. Miller reminds us, however, that these attempts were all well-intentioned, aiming to improve services as well as accountability. Instead, a considerable burden has been imposed on local government resulting in confusion and demoralisation.

As in the RAE, the inspectorate is a tool for measuring and judging, but it is also an instrument of punishment and reward. Money is not necessarily at issue, but “the best councils (municipalities) are promised a light auditing touch in the future, while failing councils are promised even heavier audits to come” (Miller, 2003: 66). In other words, those who do well will be rewarded by getting back some of the time they need to produce substance as opposed to image. Clearly, the information that audit creates does have consequences even though it is so shorn of local detail, so abstract, as to be misleading or meaningless – except, that is, by the aesthetic criteria of audit itself. Put another way, the data it produces is meaningful and useful to the experts in audit. The experts in the fields that the process is meant to assess, say anthropology, chemistry or ancient languages, have quite different interests.

Still, context-free information has its uses, particularly in a global market environment.<sup>6</sup> Reducing a place or an organisation – a university, say – with qualities and locational attributes to a series of standard indicators means that it is possible, from anywhere, to

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6 My thinking on this owes a lot to how I interpreted a talk by Georgina Born (2006).

see it in a particular way. It can be ranked according to its performance, easily and quickly, as in league tables of the world's top research institutions – or in any of the corporate, regional or other beauty contests that regularly make headlines these days.

By drawing attention to appearances like this, audit supports shallowness and enhances the power of image, even if the way it does so is mundane and technocratic. A similar narcissistic impulse is embodied in a more flamboyant way in star performances. And this brings me to celebrity culture, an affliction suffered by many universities, perhaps top universities in particular. I experienced this most clearly at American conferences, where some star speaker or fashionable panel always seemed to induce excitement and overcrowding. However, star academics are now enticed by universities around the world, and they have certainly become a feature of the British academic landscape (*The Guardian*, 2007). It seems likely that it was the RAE that brought the trend to the UK (*THES*, 2005). Now university reformers everywhere have one eye on attracting the best in the world. Universities-UK, the representative body for the executive heads of universities, has even published on the topic of “Talent wars: the international market for academic staff”. Once again, academia is in good company. Stars have their place in all kinds of occupations today, not just the performing arts and sport. The 1990s produced ‘starchitecture’ and the 21<sup>st</sup> century has even inspired bars in the coolest US cities to ensure their attractiveness by employing ‘startenders’. Not everyone can be a star, but the star system touches everyone, particularly in more fast-paced and cutting-edge fields, and generally in what are known as the creative industries and the knowledge economy.

Audit and celebrity culture both have the currently valued capacity to organise our attention. Both are derided, but they are clung to, even in universities, because the attention they organise is believed to have tangible consequences. After all, from the point of view of an institution, it makes sense to draw in star academics who attract students and, maybe, research funding. Under pressure to perform in one area, however, star academics may not be so easily persuaded to perform in other, more mundane, areas. Knowing their value as elite workers, they tend to be treated with care lest they be tempted to move on again.

## Creative Cities

Having embraced business practices like audit, today's policy makers also appear to be in thrall to the idea that creativity and cognitive capital ‘create wealth’. The creative class are the new elite, a designation conferred both in admiration (Florida, 2002; Castells and Himanen, 2001) and as critique (Berglund, 2007; Peck, 2007). Either way, governments at all levels favour this new elite. They reputedly work so hard (and play so hard) that they require around-the-clock consumption as well as specific investments in infrastructure, from communications technologies to trendy street life. For well over a decade now, municipalities of all sizes and kinds have been preening themselves to look cool, cutting-edge and where it's at, and subsidising the kinds of cultural facilities, business premises and lifestyle options that the creatives are assumed to prefer. As Jamie Peck puts it, the creativity fix has spread like wildfire, with urban leaders from mega-cities like London to the unlikeliest provincial centres bending over backwards to

accommodate the “needs of a techno-bohemian slice of the middle-class” (Peck, 2007: no page numbers).

The preferences of the creative class are arguably shaping not just geography but our psyches. Urban sociologist Richard Sennett has a distinguished record of charting the shifts from an industrial society to what he calls the culture of the new capitalism, which he describes and finds wanting in his book of that title (2006). Its dominant institutions – cutting edge firms – have established new ideals and norms that, Sennett maintains, are damaging to most of us. They erode the ability to build self-esteem at work and they produce deficits of loyalty and trust.

Whether one calls it new capitalism or the creative economy, Sennett’s analysis captures something important beyond the exigencies of audit. He describes a world where frenetic technological change combines with short-termism giving rise to endemic time-anxiety and causing “people to skim rather than to dwell” (2006: 127). Shallowness is an apt adjective, ditto youthful and footloose. Ideal workers in the most highly valued sectors of the economy are young and willing to move, happy to live improvised lives as consumers and workers, even as political subjects. They are, above all, willing to flex. Such individuals are valued because employers no longer want skills learned over time or in-depth knowledge, what they are looking for is the ability to learn the new. Those most likely to succeed in the contemporary work place also, according to Sennett, have a very good ability to cope with failure. They just move on to the next thing and hope their work will bring rewards next time. Alas, I believe very few of us can, genuinely, achieve such nonchalance.

The critiques by Sennett, Peck and others resonated with my own experiences of academia. But what do they have to do with the future of universities? Very much, I would say. After all, most academic staff are typical – or at least potential – representatives of the creative class that sustains the new capitalism. More fundamentally, many universities and even departments have latched onto the rhetoric of the knowledge economy. Having made this choice, they participate in a hype that may be as debilitating as it is unjustified. There is a danger that their future will become hostage to an ultimately unrealistic as well as intellectually and culturally impoverished set of political strategies.

Higher education is being reshaped along the lines of business management because it is supposed that this way they can better contribute to the idealised new, creative capitalism. There are several problems. First, people are not, cannot be, ideal creatives in a permanent state of tense readiness, all the time. Second, universities do not on the whole behave like firms competing for business and nor, despite common rhetoric, do cities (Urwin, 2006). Compared with efforts to nurture their own assets, the strategies adopted by cities and towns to attract skilled labour or investment are insignificant (2006: 6). The same is surely true of universities. They do not rise or fall on the basis of how much money and talent they have managed to bring in, but on how they perform.

## Performing Well

I have described the huge pressures to behave, all the time, as if one were performing for an audience. It's a grim kind of performance, being judged by auditors and learning to negotiate a personal and professional relationship to global superstars. It generates an unhappy fatigue, a sense that energy has gone into creating image rather than substance, cool and cutting-edge shallowness labelled 'creativity' instead of fundamentally satisfying in-depth investigation with all the skill and inventiveness that academics know this requires.

But performance does have a more positive connotation also, and that is the sense of achievement, accomplishment, doing a task well to standards one sets oneself on the basis of experience and mutually shared understanding of excellence. These things still have a place in universities, although to experience a good performance in this second sense, increasingly it seems, the place to go is the theatre or a concert or some other performing arts venue.

The occasional prima-donna antics notwithstanding, academics are not and never should become performing artists. Many have, however, been taken in by a hyped up, business-based concept of creativity, and by a dubious economic argument that claims universities have no alternative but to become businesses. If academics want to recapture the universities for reasoned and imaginative deliberation and for inspiring education there must be more honesty about what such a business-oriented knowledge economy entails and more clarity about what a creative city creates.

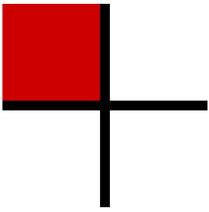
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## We Are All Workers: A Class Analysis of University Labour Strikes

Amy Pason

### abstract

The 2007 AFSCME workers' strike at the University of Minnesota exposed the extent that "we are all workers", showing that it is not strategic nor correct to operate under the assumption that the work of students and faculty is different from the wage labour of staffs that handle the daily operations of the university. This analysis suggests that using class as a framework to understand the operations of the university best builds solidarity across all worker classes, and that we must use our various class/worker positions in the university to change the nature of knowledge production and combat the corporate logics that turn knowledge and ideas into purchasable commodities. It is through realizing that *we all are workers* that we can work against the logics of capital to reclaim the university as a non-capitalist commons, or transform our workplace into a more democratically derived site of knowledge production. Previous critiques of the corporatization of the university have not gone so far to argue that we must all view ourselves as workers, but given the spread of corporatization in all areas of university work, we cannot afford not to recognize ourselves as workers.

Contrary to the numerous emails from university administration sent during the fall of 2007 that "business was continuing as usual," business was *not* continuing as usual as clerical, technical, and health care workers of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union went on strike for a living wage at the University of Minnesota (U of M). AFSCME workers at the U of M control the day-to-day operations of the university from classroom scheduling, library archiving, managing department budgets, laboratory maintenance, and "making sure they pull the right tooth" (AFSCME, 2007b). In the three years I have been at the U of M, business as usual has not meant seeing picketing workers in front of campus buildings, wearing buttons stating "We Support U of M Workers," and it certainly has not included emails from administration reminding me of my job obligations (to hold class on campus) including the limitations of the support I could legally give to the striking staff.

Business as usual has not meant that students, faculty, and staff felt tension and division between our labours. Business as usual has not included understanding that my position at the university was no different than the workers on the picket line – that as a graduate student, first and foremost, I was considered an *employee* in service to undergraduates. This last realization is perhaps the greatest lesson of the failed 2007 strike: we are all workers, and that our best strategy to work against the corporatization of our universities is to organize ourselves, across our various positions, *as workers*.

The corporatization of the university has been enabled by faculty and students who have laboured under the fantasy that knowledge production – specifically teaching and research – is somehow different than other forms of labour, and is unconnected from the wage labour of university staff. Understanding knowledge production not as *labour* is perpetuated further by a symbolic hierarchy in which faculty, students, and staff are located in different positions of privilege and status in the economic system of the university. The reality, however, is that the ‘product’ of college degrees and research is made possible only by the collaboration and cooperation among faculty, staff, and students (especially undergraduates), and that all our work is indeed labour. Closer to the truth is that all of us have our labour exploited, albeit in different forms, because Capital does not discriminate.

The persistent belief that these positions *are different* has prevented organizing on campuses across classes, which is the same as the mechanisms that nation-states employ to create divisions between the working, middle, and upper classes. Under the rule of university administration – that has the power to restructure, administer wage increases, and effectively control the university community’s relationship to the public – those of us who work in the university must recognize that we can have solidarity through understanding our interconnectedness through work. The AFSCME strike, and the attempts at strike support, exposed the extent that the administration understands us all as workers, and it is from this position that we must construct our analysis for future strategies. I offer here a class analysis as a lens to understand and mobilize support when strikes, of any kind, occur at our universities.

## **Strategic Positioning and the 2007 AFSCME Strike**

To understand what fully transpired in the 2007 AFSCME strike, it must be put into the context of the overt neoliberal programs that have defined the U of M climate. In order to make itself a “top three public research institution”, the university administration implemented Strategic Positioning. Begun in 2004, Strategic Positioning is an effort to deal with the “fierce competition” of US Higher Education and the “dwindling resources” that have characterized federal funding of public institutions (Bruininks, 2007). In practice, this has meant that university administration has enlisted the *volunteer* labour of faculty and staff to develop proposals for making the university competitive in the categories of students, faculty, innovation, and organization. Essentially, Strategic Positioning is a form of participatory management that articulates a collective university identity based on “global competitiveness” – undermining and marginalizing local struggles such as labour union strikes or educational access for the Minnesota community. Strategic Positioning has been successful in creating an illusion of a democratically governed university, but that works to re-stabilize “the divisions between the diverse struggles that emerge from non- and anti-capitalist commons in departmental and classroom communities” (Kamola and Meyerhoff, 2008: 27). The terms defined in the initiative to meet a top three goal created both internal and external competition at the university, thus foreclosing the possibility of creating a localized solidarity for a workers’ strike from the start.

In implementation, Strategic Positioning is similar to restructuring in any corporation – merging or eliminating redundant departments and cutting programs that did not contribute to quantifiable standards measuring progress and success of being ‘top three’. The priorities of Strategic Positioning, however defined, are for profit, and the cleverness of the initiative is that it enlisted the service of university members to create a system that pits departments and workers against one another. For example, some departments (such as Communication Studies) absorbed teaching loads from departments made redundant; based on the rubrics created, other departments became more marketable based on research produced and faculty awards. Although both teaching and marketable departments have perceived value in the institution, this, in practice, has not translated into more resources for those departments. Moreover, other departments not institutionally recognized in the various marketing campaigns have continued to compete with one another for attracting students to the courses that they offer. The system of *required* undergraduate courses promotes competition among departments as they jockey for a better position by creating courses that meet multiple requirements at once – certainly a draw for consumer students getting the most for their tuition dollar. In total, the assumption of Strategic Positioning is that if the university ‘wins’ in this higher education competition, all will profit as well, but the conditions of AFSCME workers that led up to the strike proved that this assumption is misguided – only some *individuals*, especially the Administration, profit.

Against the highly (internally) competitive climate of the U of M, AFSCME went on strike demanding a wage increase higher than what the Administration would allow. Whereas the university measures itself competitively against other institutions by the salaries of the President, faculty, and other administration, the wages of workers at the university seem to fall under a different competitive rubric – that of keeping operation costs low. As AFSCME flyers showed, President Bruininks received a 79% salary increase, and other administrators (about 1586 people making over \$100,000 each year) averaged between 12-59% increases since 2002 (AFSCME, 2007a). AFSCME wages actually *declined* by 5% (adjusted for inflation) since 2002, so their demands for a wage increase of 3.25% (3.5% for health care workers) seemed fair, especially when the Minnesota State Legislature gave this wage increase to all non-university AFSCME employees as well as recommended the same for university workers as part of the funding given to the University in 2007.

However, as proclaimed in a full-page ad by the administration in the U of M student newspaper, the “not only fair, but great!” contract that the administration maintained was only 2.25% (2.5% for health care workers). After 16 days, the one-third of eligible workers that went on strike (a majority of the AFSCME workers who voted to strike literally could not afford to go without wages) were forced to go back to work in order to not lose health insurance benefits, only receiving the 2.25% wage increase with consolation prize of a \$300 additional lump sum payment offered by the administration. The administration waited out the strike, and continued to assure the campus community through mass emailings that business would continue on with or without the AFSCME workers. In terms of negotiating a fair contract, the strike failed.

The strategic use of a strike is based on the premise that a union can force negotiations because *work has stopped*. To some extent, work did stop at the U of M, but the

publicly visible work of teaching and research continued on more or less uninterrupted. The 'product' of an education marketed to the public, is largely defined by the work conducted by *faculty* – regardless that research and teaching is facilitated by the work of all others in the university. Thus, it is easy for the university administration to convince the public that business is continuing as usual during a strike when classes are still being held and faculty continue in their various roles as department chairs, expert spokespersons, and even as public intellectuals writing letters of support for workers. It should be noted that labour strikes in the US are not common place as it is a struggle in many places to achieve the right to form a union at a particular work site in the first place. Especially in academia, attempts by faculty and students to organize have been prevented; moreover, public support for academic strikes is a challenge to build. At the same time, when *teaching* stops, it does gain attention as was the case for the New York University graduate student strike in 2005 (Krause et al., 2008), if not achieve the aims of the strike.

But when non-teaching workers strike, it tends to go unnoticed because work does continue albeit less efficiently. On campus, many felt that indeed it was business as usual as faculty and graduate students mostly towed the line, holding classes (mostly on campus) and creating a normal atmosphere for undergraduates as requested by the administration's emails. Moreover, undergraduate student workers (contrary to administrative emails) picked up the slack of AFSCME workers who were on the picket lines by taking on extra duties in their federal work-study positions. The flexible labour of students and faculty is transformed to absorb operations tasks, while the nature of other knowledge production is not easily quantified or stopped, thus many have questioned whether an effective strike is actually possible at a university. Clearly, it is hard for students and faculty to stop *work* when much of what we do is considered service or not labour at all, and when students and faculty have no real legal protection to strike in solidarity.

For many faculty and students, a work stoppage would both be illegal and illogical. Faculty and graduate students must continue to produce research not only for our local institutions, but also to remain competitive in the academic labour market. We are taught to think of ourselves as autonomous professionals with allegiances outside our home institutions. Undergraduates similarly face the necessity of timely graduation in preparation for their own job markets – all work cannot stop because of these external constraints. Moreover, for many, teaching is defined as a political practice instead of wage labour, so many found continuing this work during a strike as consistent with strike support. Strike support from faculty and students, then, came in the forms of a teach-in, faculty and student initiated demonstrations, and a student initiated hunger strike. Students and workers demonstrated and were arrested at a Board of Regents meeting (the governing board of the university elected by the State Legislature); faculty, labour unions, and community activist groups wrote numerous letters of support for the AFSCME workers (U of M Labour and Community Strike Support Committee, 2007).

Even with good intentions, these efforts were *ad hoc* and haphazard at best, and their ineffectiveness has been attributed to the fact that there was insufficient time to organize faculty and students during the first week of the semester. AFSCME leadership stated that they did not want students and faculty engaging in illegal activity

on their behalf, but at the same time, noted that even holding classes off campus was technically crossing the picket line – work was still continuing. Multiple levels of strike support were employed, with the battle defined as an unorganized collective of students, faculty, and workers against the Administration.

These different tactics of support were constructed based on the symbolic and material differences of each group's understood position in the university. Faculty assumed that the administration and Board of Regents would respect their opinions and analysis because of their expertise and prestige within the university, and might reconsider their offer to the union on that basis. However, the Regents, though some were in support of the workers, considered wage contracts an administrative matter that they had no jurisdiction over; perceived ownership of the university by the faculty was not realized in practice. Similarly, letter writing to supportive state legislators also was futile as the State can only make recommendations on funding allocation to the university. The U of M, founded before the State of Minnesota, has the power to allocate funds as it wishes. President Bruininks, who holds the most power over contract decisions, refused to be swayed by letters and continued sending emails reminding us all to continue working.

Moreover, student efforts faced similar challenges. The small collective of students who engaged in the hunger strike assumed that they could use their positions as students-in-the-care-of-the-university to shame the university (and Bruininks). University administration responded by sending a health care worker to check on the students, but publicly made statements that they disagreed with the students' tactic (Hunger Strike at the U of M, 2007). Other student supporters thought that they could use their position as student-as-consumer to demand better business practices of fair wages for workers. Bruininks blocked some students from emailing, and gave no public response to letters sent in support of the strike. Since the administration effectively used its power to communicate with the university to present their side of the story (whereas the union and supporters did not have access to mass emailings), other demonstrations attempted to shame an administration for being antidemocratic. Symbolic demonstrations of being 'struck silent' or putting one's body in peril through a hunger strike does not work when the administration has proven that it cannot be shamed and does not see itself as accountable to the students, faculty, and workers within the university as long as the university can be measured against others as being 'top three'. Clearly, democratic governance within the university is only illusionary, and is not part of the rubric that defines being a top research institution.

In the aftermath of the strike, failures of the above tactics were understood as our failure to organize across classes – as a unified student, faculty, and worker collective – against the administration. Because Strategic Positioning (neoliberalism in action) stabilized divisions between labour groups, prompting us to see ourselves as *individuals*, attempts to bring groups together in support largely fell on student organizers, and were too little too late. Capital, similarly, uses a 'divide and conquer' mentality to pit classes against other classes – undermining democratic potential possible through classes working collaboratively. The AFSCME strike showed that Capital was successful in allowing production to go on uninterrupted and largely unquestioned as campus workers were caught in a neoliberal web.

Defining this struggle as a contest between the administration and the rest of us in the university, then, is misguided. We are not citizens of a university community that can appeal to the benevolent ruler of the administration. We have to redefine ourselves as the administration did through its various email propaganda: we are all workers. And we are workers struggling against Capital. Capital is personified in the Office of the President and the Administration – it is Capital that underwrites decisions of what is valuable labour and how much that labour is allotted. Our struggle must shift, and for us to realize that our various positions in the university are not all that different as we are all against Capital. Capital is always threatened when cracks emerge, or when situations like the strike start to allow us to see ourselves and our work differently (Mandel, 1978). It is precisely by coming back to our role as workers that we might be able to find the leverage to take back our knowledge factory.

## **Working from Within the Cracks and Reclaiming the Common**

Many of us who labour in the university do so because we believe (or hope) that it is somehow different than working for exploitative corporations. In the US, the ideal that citizens should receive free education – further extended through land-grant initiatives of the late 1800s that granted states federally controlled land for the express purpose of building universities to give access to and teach all citizens practical arts and the classics – allows us to believe that public universities are indeed *for the public*, and based on the mission of providing knowledge and resources for the *public good*. However, even those of us organizing during the strike quickly realized that mantras of ‘Keep the U of M Public’ were misguided as the U of M and most public institutions have never *really* been public and have systematically excluded groups. A liberal arts education, even in the paradigm of land-grant institutions, has always been defined as the knowledge of elites, thus we cannot continue thinking about the university as an idealistic space, or that there is something that we nostalgically want to return to. We cannot continue to fetishize the roles of students and faculty as pursuers of knowledge when it is clear that knowledge has a price and is marketed as a product. Clearly, we must redefine the space of the university, our labour, and the relations between workers. These are the parameters to build solidarity: all as workers differently situated in the same economic/factory system.

The first step of redefining ourselves is to break away from the imaginaries that have allowed us to be complicit in the corporatizing of our workplace. We must recognize that the ‘university of the mind’ or immaterial knowledge production is not protected from corporatization, and cannot be understood separately from the operations of the ‘university of bricks’ or the management of the physical institution. Inequities that are normalized in the ‘university of bricks’ through our understanding of wage labour, is not so different from class systems that sustain administrative control in the ‘university of the mind’. The imaginary of the ‘university of the mind’ has allowed us to not see our labour as inextricably connected to the labour of staff, and has perpetuated a divide between faculty and students. We forget easily that (under)graduate students are not mere recipients or passive consumers of our teaching, but are indeed co-producers of knowledge. We must realize that we are all co-producers of the educational product, and we are all contributing to the same system – together.

Second, we must recognize that the university is not a training ground for a *democracy to come* that itself can be operated undemocratically. Democracy is an ideal based on promises that we endlessly work to achieve, improve, or perfect (Derrida, 1997), thus we should not labour under the assumption that a ‘democracy’ awaits for us outside the university walls. Democracy must be enacted in all spheres. To *make* a university into a public institution takes more than trying to work against neoliberalizing tendencies and corporate rhetoric. It takes the building of an anti- or non-capitalist commons to define our university community – the university as a space regulated by value systems not connected to Capital defined systems (de Angelis, 2007). It means that our educational product is a collective effort between all positions, especially undergraduate students, and we must fight against the competitive and quantitative rubrics that currently define our labour and divide cooperative potential that work against democracy at all.

Third, we must redefine our relationships between faculty, students, and workers to recognize the economic boundaries that prevent solidarity. Political theorists have debated which class is the truly democratic class, and who, in the bounds of a nation-state is responsible for achieving democratic governance. Ultimately, democracy is won through coordinated efforts between low, middle, and upper classes, but the challenge is in having classes give up their specific class interests for a greater good. Democracy has been lost when the State stifles cooperation between classes since that lessens State authority. The system of capitalism becomes a tool of the State to achieve these ends (Rueschemeyer et al., 1992). When we transpose this analysis to the space of the university, we can begin to see the ways in which the administration works to divide constituent factions, and how designators of faculty or student do not hold more symbolic capital than if we self-identify as co-producers or workers.

The analogy works when we place university administration in the role of the nation-state (organized by Capital) and faculty in the role of the bourgeoisie. The Bourgeoisie, with the most resources and potential persuasive power, are convinced to maintain the status quo through allowances and awards given by the State (such as serving on a Strategic Positioning advisory committee). Faculty must recognize that they have more to gain from working with others than the illusion of power yet to come; they must resist the inertia of producing research for the sake of producing or contributing to a discipline at large. They must resist committing themselves to advisory boards in the hopes of gaining privilege or assumed ownership. Wage workers (the literal working class) have the most to gain from more equity in operations in all aspects of the university, and other classes must recognize that the knowledge product of research and teaching benefits from the experience and fair wages given to all.

Lastly, students (both undergraduates and graduates) are positioned in the role of the middle class. As both consumers and producers, students perhaps have the most power within the system and ability to bridge classes. Graduate students must recognize themselves as part of the knowledge production system (and not merely preparing for a tenure-track job yet to come), and all must recognize undergraduates as workers as well – and not merely consumers that we are in opposition to yet working so hard to please for evaluation’s sake. We must all recognize that power and prestige will only be realized through the creation of a commons – where we all produce together as equals – not in the nostalgia of a university that never was. Although we all bring different

experience and expertise from our various class positions, ultimately, we are still contributing to the same educational public good and knowledge advancement.

What, then, would a struggle for the commons in a university look like? At the first level, we must seek social justice within the ‘university of bricks’ at the level of wages for all workers. At the next level, we must recognize the tension of faculty labour that navigates between localized service and tenure as well as external disciplinary publication. We must foster a tenure/publication system that values work contributing to the collective goal of education for the public good. The drive for producing knowledge should not be so great that we fail to see that the products of such a system are as corrupt as the system itself. We must recognize that students are consumers and producers, but also can occupy a space as critical agents – to be able to call to question when operations are not just. At the same time, students need help in understanding this role and being constituted into it. And when the lowest paid workers stop their production, faculty and students, too, must stop production and use their position as public intellectuals to produce analysis and work that brings equality back to the system.

Previous critiques (e.g. Gould, 2003) of the corporatized university have not gone so far to argue that we all must view ourselves as workers. It is assumed that if we change the rhetoric of what an education is for, that somehow, miraculously, it will be so and we will be freed from the neoliberal logics that undermine the liberal arts. When the current global economic crisis is affecting our universities, we cannot afford to rest on idyllic notions of what a university used to be or that is somehow doesn’t operate within the same system. Our strategy and logic must shift to understanding the system of production and our own roles – all of us – as workers in the system. We must work from within to make the factory itself a just place so that the educational products developed within also reflect that ethos. We should not wear buttons that proclaim we are in “Support of U of M workers”, because we *all* are workers.

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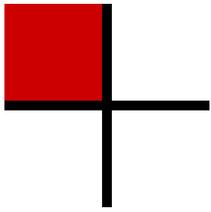
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## What's It All For? Against Schooling in the Modern University

Chris Land

**review of:**

Stanley Aronowitz (2008) *Against Schooling: For an Education That Matters*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers. (PB: pp. 216, \$24.95, ISBN: 9781594515033)

Published as part of Paradigm's 'Radical Imagination' series, this book brings together a series of essays written by Aronowitz during the 1990s and 2000s. The essays all deal in some way with the question of education and schooling, with a clear focus on Higher Education (HE) in the USA, although there does not seem to have been much effort to rework the papers into an integrated thesis. This leaves the book feeling a little disconnected and, in some cases, such as when describing political struggles, slightly out of date. For example, chapter 6, which explores the role of unions in resisting the corporatization of universities, includes some interesting empirical details of the struggles against managerialism at the City University of New York (CUNY) where Aronowitz works. Unfortunately the chapter is a reprint of a book chapter first published in 1997 and the results of the struggles outlined, how effective they were and how they evolved in the following decade, is not discussed, something of a missed opportunity to my mind. The following chapter, which also addresses the question of union activism in higher education, is from 2007, so the reader has to make a bit of a jump to follow the development of the struggles being discussed. Despite these complaints the book has much to recommend it and does have a degree of consistency running through the different chapters that comes together to form the overall argument emerging from the book: whilst 'schooling' is, or has become, problematic for a number of reasons, there remains the possibility of another form of education that will avoid the twin traps of the academic, elitist imposition of knowledge upon students (the traditional university model) and the capitalistic, corporate university model of markets, consumption and employability.

This 'other' education is not simply conceived in terms of pedagogic methods or alternative structures for the university, but recognises that 'education' is a widely distributed phenomenon that takes place outside of, and often against, or in spite of, formal schooling. For example, drawing on the work of Paul Willis (1977) Aronowitz points to the role of family, class, popular culture and peer-group socialisation in

'educating' students, often in practices of classroom resistance and anti-intellectualism. By recognising that 'education' takes place in this broader social sphere, Aronowitz's arguments concerning the university are always already inextricably linked to wider issues of social change. As he puts it in his chapter on Freire, the issue of 'education' is never just one of method or pedagogy:

[Freire] means to offer a system in which the locus of the learning process is shifted from the teacher to the student. And this shift overtly signifies an altered power relationship, not only in the classroom but in the broader social canvas as well. (Aronowitz, 2008: 162)

This is, perhaps, the main contribution of this book. Aronowitz, through his analysis of the current situation of HE in the USA, through his discussion of the role of Trades Unions in universities, and through his theoretical mobilization of Gramsci and Freire, consistently places education at the forefront of more general struggles for social change. As such he not only raises the stakes of struggles over university education and schooling, but also shows how much more radicalised resistance must become to achieve a really substantive change.

### **Study in the Corporate HEI: Learning as Preparation to Work**

So, why is change needed; what exactly is Aronowitz's problem with 'schooling'; and why does he, as a professor of sociology in a large North American university, feel the need to take a stance 'against' it? Aronowitz's main concern, outlined in the introduction, is the subordination of education to credentialism and employability. As in the UK and other countries, the USA has seen a thoroughgoing subsumption of 'education', through formal schooling, into the service of capital. In public policy discourses Higher Education has become at best a process of preparing students for work, at worst a cynical means of keeping down unemployment statistics (Aronowitz, 2008: 26; 109). Against employability, Aronowitz holds out an idea of education for citizenship. For a democratic state to function in any meaningful sense, the *demos* must be capable of understanding their world and participating in decision making at all levels, both in the public sphere and in their everyday life. Unfortunately, as Aronowitz notes, questions such as what a student needs to know to participate effectively as a citizen are neglected by an educational regime that "privileges job readiness above any other educational values" (2008: xii). Given that the workplace is, on the whole, one of the least democratic of our social institutions, this focus on preparation for work could even be seen as anti-democratic.

A secondary concern is that the contemporary focus on credentialism has led to an increased emphasis on testing at all levels of the educational system. As curricula are increasingly standardised and set by governmental authorities, teachers are subjected to the kind of rationalisation and deskilling process that Braverman (1974) observed in other professions years ago. Instead of a creative education, designed to enable students to realise their potential in diverse ways, perhaps even in ways determined at least partly by themselves, the rationalisation of education has subjected students and teachers alike to a pre-determined, standardised curriculum where employability and testing are the overarching principles. A general education that would facilitate a critical understanding of political process, social theory, rhetoric, composition and literary

criticism has been replaced by a more technical education, where the teacher has become an administrator, rather than a creative professional.

For Aronowitz it is not just the content of schooling, however, but also its form that stifles its educational potential. Indeed, he suggests that the technical 'content' of education is almost irrelevant. For a handful of elite universities and schools the main benefit to students is the social capital they gain with an education, the people they meet and networks they develop. For the vast majority of university students, however, the function of schooling is primarily disciplinary and "achieving a credential signifies mainly that the student is more or less reliably integrated into the work-world system... shows up on time, hands in assignments according to the instructions, and sits for exams" (2008: xiv; 12). In these sections of the book it is clear that Aronowitz sees higher education today in a similar light to Foucault's (1979) description of the school timetable at the start of *Discipline and Punish*, albeit with a more explicit critical-functionalist emphasis on the production of docile students to feed capitalist enterprises' hunger for manipulable labour-power. I will return to this point below as I feel that it signifies both the main critical vantage point of Aronowitz's analysis and one of its potential weaknesses.

Alongside this shifting social function of schooling, Aronowitz bemoans the organizational and structural fate of the North American university today, most of which, through an apparent process of mimetic isomorphism, are becoming increasingly like business corporations. Their structures of governance are divorced from academics, and administration has become a separate career path that, once embarked upon, is unlikely to see a return to the professoriate. With an increasing pay gap between administrators and academics, and little likelihood of senior managers going back into teaching and research posts, university administrators have become divorced from their fellow academics and will rarely face the prospect of having to labour under the regimes they instigated. This has, Aronowitz suggests, led to a bifurcation of interests between management and academics that undermines both the traditional functioning of the university and its autonomous self-governance by a community of scholars. This change in management, coupled with an increased use of 'adjunct' teaching staff on part-time or temporary contracts and with little or no paid research time or job security, means that the university is increasingly modelled on the capitalist business organization, a structure in which traditional academic values find little space. Indeed, Aronowitz is quite explicit in claiming that these structures undermine academic values of freedom and autonomy. Academic freedom is challenged by the increased pressure upon academics to account for their research through funding from external agencies, thereby subordinating disinterested research to the interests of corporations (especially in the sciences), the military or the economy. Administrative autonomy is eroded by the increasing layers of professional administrators employed by universities, at a time when faculty recruitment is often frozen (2008: 120).

Aronowitz is careful to avoid the trap of nostalgic reaction when responding to these changes and does not advocate a simple return to some traditional 'community of scholars'. He maintains an awareness of the inequities of the 'old' system of education, whereby the disciplinary authority of the academic was supposedly unchallengeable and students were relatively passive recipients of their 'education', rather than active

subjects of it. In this he separates his position from those “educational radicals [who] once condemned the disciplinary basis of school knowledge as an outmoded, repressive regime [but] now resist any hint of educational reform, since such proposals rarely signify the enlargement of resources but are used by administration to facilitate consolidation” (2008: 126). Rather, Aronowitz wants to embrace the necessity for reform and to push it much further than either the paradoxical reactionary radicals, or the neo-liberal reformers, would like.

## Widening Participation and Democratizing Access

One example of this is his response to the question of widening participation. Aronowitz is clear that broader access to a university education is a good thing, but questions what exactly it is that is being accessed. An example of this is found in one of Aronowitz's relatively rare mentions of the development of distance learning and the virtual classroom, widely discussed by the likes of David Noble (2001) and others (e.g. the collection edited by Robins and Webster, 2002). Here he notes that:

After more than a decade of fumbling, it appears that distance learning is regaining its legs. Given the systematic disinvestment currently globally rampant in higher education, one would expect new cost-cutting proposals to be put forward, often dressed in the garb of democratization. If this trend gains momentum, we may witness in our lifetimes an educational regime in which only a tiny minority of students and professors enjoy the luxury of classroom learning while the immense majority earn credentials without seeing a single live professor or conversing in person with fellow students. (Aronowitz, 2008: 80)

So long as the idea of ‘widening participation’ in HE leaves the rest of society untouched it is likely to pander to ‘the market’ and students’ expectations that a university degree will improve their prospects in the labour market. Inevitably this leads to a focus on the product of an education (access to the credential, whether BSc, BA, MSc, MA or PhD) rather than the process. In this, alas, he may not be wrong. My own place of work has recently signed a deal with Kaplan to offer a University of Essex validated and branded BSc in the area of business and management. The projected enrolments, if realised, will mean that in just a couple of years there will be more ‘Essex’ business graduates taking this route to their degree than study on campus. Needless to say, the content of the degrees are incomparable. Whilst all of the necessary QAA benchmark boxes are ticked, the new scheme is entirely of the technical type that Aronowitz is worried about. In contrast, the full-time BSc in Business and Management taught at the University of Essex has a more critically oriented curriculum where students are introduced not only to mainstream management theory but also to wider debates in social theory, ethics, philosophy and international political economy, and are expected to engage with popular cultural representations of work and management in film and in literature, as well as in management theory texts, so as to locate the production of ‘business’ and ‘management’ within a wider cultural, social, economic and political context. Not only is the content of the two degrees incomparable, but so is the form of delivery. Kaplan uses a relatively small number of course tutors coupled with a large number of casually employed assistants who administer the small groups into which students are placed during their studies. Few of these have PhDs and none, to my knowledge, are research active, so students are not getting any of the benefits of a

degree at a research institution other than the human capital conferred by the brand. Almost humorously, this form of intellectual asset stripping was dressed up in the garb of democratisation and broadening participation in HE to those in full-time employment who could not otherwise attend a full time course of study. Of course, as Aronowitz suggests, the course of study they gain access to is not at all the same thing, other than in terms of the impoverished credential they will receive at the end of their studies.

Such developments are not entirely the result of corporate profiteering, however. Aronowitz offers the interesting suggestion that the student protests of the 60s and 70s may have paradoxically driven the neo-liberalisation of HE. As the traditional liberal arts education was rejected, by students and radical faculty alike, as elitist it was replaced by a kind of populism that had little substance in terms of an alternative programme for education. Instead the concerns of working and middle class students, and their parents, over financial security and employability came, in part, to drive the growth of technical areas like business education. The problem here is that whilst more people are going to university, what they get there is not what it used to be, nor what it could be:

...if higher education is to become a public good in the double meaning of the term – as a decommodified resource for the people and an ethically legitimate institution that does not submit to the business imperative – then beyond access we would have to promote a national debate about what is to be taught and what is to be learned if citizenship and critical thought are to remain, even at the level of intention, the heart of higher learning. (Aronowitz, 2008: 76)

In the absence of a clear alternative, radical programme for education, neo-liberalism filled the vacuum and traditional academic values were driven out in favour of employability. As I have suggested, however, Aronowitz resists the temptation to retrench nostalgically around lost values and instead seeks to push through on the agenda of 'widening participation' to open up a debate over what social function schooling should perform and how that function is best realised.

## **Resistance First!**

Here there is an interesting twist, I think, to Aronowitz's argument. The idea that it was student protest that pushed change in the universities is reminiscent of autonomist Marxist arguments concerning the primacy of resistance in capitalist restructuring (Cleaver, 1992; Dyer-Witheford, 1999) as well as Boltanski and Chiapello's (2005) idea that the discursive reconstitution of a 'new spirit of capitalism' was driven by anti-capitalist sentiment and student revolt. Unfortunately I didn't feel that the full implications of this idea were worked through in this book. If we accept arguments, like Boltanski and Chiapello's, that capitalism has restructured significantly in recent years, at least in heartlands like Western Europe and North America, then the question of what kind of employment schooling is preparing us for should be addressed head on. As I have suggested above, the model of schooling that Aronowitz portrays, through his focus on standardisation and testing, is reminiscent of the disciplinary regimes of the factory and the prison, where docility and obedience are the ruling principles and foundations for productive organization. If Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), Hardt and Negri (2000) and others (e.g. Deleuze, 1992) are correct, however, and capitalism has

restructured around the model of the network, immaterial labour, communication and biopolitics, then perhaps there is a tension in the place of contemporary higher education in capitalist social reproduction that Aronowitz misses?

In his desire to construct a critical functionalist position where schooling has been subsumed into employability there is a danger that his analysis misses these kinds of changes and neglects the very real possibility that schooling, or specifically higher education, is itself out of step with developments in capitalism. Such an argument might consider the paradoxical situation that universities find themselves in today of simultaneously guaranteeing stable social reproduction, by preparing students for the world of work, and also being quasi capitalist organizations in themselves. It is entirely possible that this tension is itself creating some of the paradoxes of contemporary university education where, as standardisation and large class sizes, as well as a technical curriculum predominate, students are increasingly disengaged and uninspired, at least partly because of standardization, large class sizes and a predominantly technical curriculum. Under such conditions there can be little hope of them developing the critical and creative faculties that critical theorists and management pundits alike suggest are necessary for commercial success in today's global economy.

Of course, it is entirely possible that Aronowitz is correct and that the majority of graduates today will not end up in the creative sectors or working as 'symbolic analysts' and knowledge managers, but labouring in silicon sweatshops – call centres and routinised coding factories – or retail outlets, bars and restaurants (cf. Thompson, 2005; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). Under such circumstances perhaps the degraded idea of schooling that Aronowitz outlines in this book *is* functional and does fit the capitalist zeitgeist, but in this case extending his arguments out to examine the labour market that schooling supposedly serves would give his argument considerably greater critical leverage, particularly given his concerns with a whole-social critique, rather than pedagogic methodologies.

## **CMS in the Business School**

A final, but connected, comment relates to the question of 'resistance'. It is notable that Aronowitz bases many of his arguments on a fairly limited empirical base. His own experiences, predominantly at CUNY, and a handful of other prominent cases from North America are the only empirical material presented in the book. Very little serious analysis is given of areas of 'technical' education and the content of the curriculum pursued in those areas, despite the rise of such being a key concern for Aronowitz. A perfect example of this, of course, would be the business school, where, in the UK and Europe at least, the project of Critical Management Studies (CMS) has been increasingly prominent. Indeed, by some accounts the rise of CMS has been so extensive that the CMS conference is as large, if not larger, than the more mainstream British Academy of Management. This, coupled with the fact that two of the most prestigious departments of management and business in the UK, at least in terms of the RAE, have a significant presence of CMS affiliated scholars (Warwick and Lancaster) suggests that traditions of critique and a more liberal education are not quite dead even

in those places that prejudice would assume are most tightly coupled to an agenda of employability and corporate servitude.

Aronowitz does partly recognise this dynamic and I suspect that he might respond to this criticism by simply saying that such critical positions, at least in terms of teaching content, are reserved for a small handful of elite institutions (cf. Aronowitz, 2008: 30) but it does seem to me that this point needs addressing. If capitalism is dependent on the development of critique to provide content for its basic, but ultimately empty, drive toward accumulation for its own sake (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005), then the resources of critique and their role within higher education may be more complicated than Aronowitz suggests. This kind of internal tension in HE both complicates the critical functionalist analysis that Aronowitz pursues in this book and opens avenues through which such contradictions might usefully be developed as areas for further academic research and as productive sites for intervention, resistance and struggle.

This last point also raises important questions over the kind of alternative models of education that Aronowitz identifies, but does not analyse in detail, outside of formal schooling. Most significant, to my mind, in his account is the idea of an autonomous sphere of education in the social movements (Aronowitz, 2008: 50, 56-58). His comment that, “[i]n the last instance, the best chance for education resides in the communities, in social movements, and in the kids themselves” (p. 50) is (aside from the slightly patronizing and 1980s evocation of ‘the kids’) unfortunately left almost entirely undeveloped in this book. Indeed, although he implies that institutionalised schooling should play a decreasing role in a more human education, Aronowitz offers little interrogation of the various forms of alternative education that have developed within the new (and even newer) social movements. The strength of the Home Education movements in the UK and USA, whilst often quite conservative (Apple, 2000), offers some interesting examples of quite consciously autonomous models of ‘education otherwise’<sup>1</sup> that are neglected here by Aronowitz. Similarly he ignores developments like the Tent State University model in the USA<sup>2</sup>, popular education collectives like Trapese<sup>3</sup> or experiments around a ‘knowledge commons’, however precarious such initiatives are, such as Wikipedia and even journals like *ephemera*.

Given Aronowitz’s focus on social movement and community education, some kind of critical analysis of these forms of education, which are coterminous with other forms of social action rather than located in discrete ‘alternative’ educational institutions, is needed, as Paul Willis (1977) did in the 1970s, for example. Instead, Aronowitz’s substantive discussion of ‘alternatives’ is restricted to a fairly cursory examination of two theorists of education – Gramsci and Freire – who provide the substantive focus for the last two chapters of the book. Whilst these are interesting and valuable, particularly the chapter on Freire which touches upon the possibility of an emancipatory, humanist education after the post-modern turn in social theory, this lack of empirical examination, and a clear grounding in the political-economy of contemporary capitalism leaves the full potential of a book like this unrealised. Nevertheless, this is an

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1 <http://www.education-otherwise.org/>

2 <http://www.tentstate.com/>

3 <http://trapese.clearerchannel.org/>

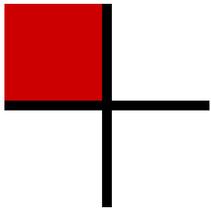
interesting and thought provoking read and, alongside the work of writers like Noble (2001), Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), Harvie (2006) and Martin (1998), contributes to the growing leftist critique of corporatized Higher Education in advanced capitalist countries.

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## The Invention of the Business School

Nick Butler

**review of:**

Rakesh Khurana (2007) *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands: The Social Transformation of American Business Schools and the Unfulfilled Promise of Management as a Profession*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press. (HB, pp.531, £19.95, ISBN 978 0 691 12020 1)

The story of business education in the United States is also a story about a new occupational group that emerged in the late nineteenth century and rose to prominence during the twentieth century: full-time salaried managers. This relation – between management as an academic discipline and management as a professional class – provides *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands* with its main focus. Although this is a work of mainstream business history, written as it is by an associate professor at Harvard Business School, the book marks an important contribution to the sociology of professions beyond the field of management studies (indeed, it won the 2008 American Sociological Association’s Max Weber Award for Best Book). Khurana, with an engaging scholarly style and a deft handling of historical sources, takes us from the faltering first steps of business education right up to its contemporary full spectrum dominance. While it would have been interesting to see how business education developed in countries outside the United States, the book sheds a great deal of light on the individuals, institutions, and wider social forces that have shaped the American business school over its 130-year history. To this extent, *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands* is essential reading for anyone who wishes to find out how something as functional and applied as ‘management’ came to be taught and researched at university-level in the first place.

Khurana argues that the emergence of the business school in the late nineteenth century was inextricable from management’s quest for social legitimacy. The power that management now commands over organizations is by no means a natural or inevitable outcome of its institutional origins, as some have suggested (the work of Alfred Chandler is one obvious point of reference in this regard). As the early chapters of the book make clear, it was necessary for managers to assert their right to control large-scale corporations against the claims of other competing groups, such as shareholders and shop-floor workers. In addition, ‘big business’ was facing widespread public mistrust at the time following a spate of high-profile corporate scandals. The solution, for the managerial elite, was clear: “If managers could successfully present themselves

as agents of the rationalizing process that was required for corporations to achieve societal legitimacy, managers would, in turn, greatly advance their own quest for legitimacy” (Khurana, 2007: 39). Towards this end, management sought to enlist the resources, both practical and ideological, offered by science, the professions, and the university – three elements that would soon come to coalesce in the form of the business school.

The strategy of the ‘institutional entrepreneurs’ who founded the early business schools was, on the surface, very simple. By presenting management as an academic discipline, it was envisioned that business schools would confer on managers a more professional status, on a par with that of lawyers, and guarantee their work the appearance of scientific objectivity. Moreover, business schools would serve as a laboratory for improving industrial efficiency as well as a training ground for future business leaders. This process began with the founding of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania in 1881, followed by the College of Commerce and Politics at the University of Chicago and the College of Commerce at the University of California at Berkley, both in 1898. Twenty-five more university-based business schools were established in the first thirteen years of the twentieth century, including Harvard Business School in 1908. Although private colleges for accountants and clerical workers had existed in the US for over half a century, the emerging business schools greatly differed in terms of their scope and ambition. The new institutions did not simply aim to equip their students with a set of technical skills but, in line with the quest for social legitimacy, also hoped to instil in them a sense of duty-bound professionalism – the ‘higher aims’ of the book’s title. As much as we are tempted to scoff at such lofty pretensions from our present perspective, Khurana reminds us that the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) was founded in 1916 precisely “to transform business schools into genuine professional schools, and management into a genuine profession” (Khurana, 2007: 145). This meant, in practice, that business schools were intended to help management establish its “[e]xpertise, autonomy, and an ethos of service to society” (*ibid.*: 101) on a firm institutional basis, in much the same way as medicine and law had previously gained full professional recognition.

Despite these ideals, the early business schools were beset by numerous operational problems due to their rapid expansion and haphazard development. Some of these problems are still familiar to many of us today who find ourselves working in business schools or management departments: overcrowded classrooms, muddled curricula, poor standards of research, and low-quality teaching from over-stretched and under-trained staff. On top of these systemic difficulties, there was also the question of reconciling the higher aims of the early business schools with the somewhat baser aspirations of their students, namely, to make lots of money by becoming an executive in a large organization. By the end of the twentieth century, the latter set of values would eventually come to displace the former, thus signalling the triumph of market logic at the expense of management’s professionalization project.

In the years immediately following the end of the Second World War, the business school entered a period of radical transformation that would serve to inaugurate a new era of technocratic managerialism. What was required, Khurana tells us, was no longer

an educational system for “instilling in future managers a strong sense of their responsibilities as businesspeople”, as had apparently been the case since the founding of the Wharton School; now, the business school needed “a more mechanized, capital-intensive process for training large numbers of managers” (*ibid.*: 233). The main catalyst for this change came from federal government, with increased state funding in higher education, as well as large philanthropic organizations like the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation. Such organizations made a deep and lasting impact on business education in the second half of the twentieth century by pumping millions of dollars of investment into business schools. The figures themselves are remarkable. Between 1953 and 1964, for example, the Ford Foundation gave a total of \$5.2 million in grants to Harvard Business School alone, which had been designated by the organization as one of several ‘centres of excellence’ for business education. Needless to say, such vast sums of money could not fail to influence business school policy in terms of research and faculty. While the traditional case study method continued to be used as a pedagogical tool, it was now supplemented by quantitative approaches drawn from a variety of fields, including economics, statistics, and mathematics. Federal government and philanthropic organizations thus contributed to the shift in emphasis in business schools away from narrow vocational training and towards a more standardized and analytical ‘management science’.

The most fascinating chapters in the book are saved for last. Having risen in mainstream respectability during much of the twentieth century, the managerial elite were now exerting considerable power and influence over the direction of university-based business schools as well as large-scale corporations. Management, as an occupational group and an aspiring profession in the 1950s and 1960s, was enjoying the fruits of its institutional success. Black clouds, however, were rapidly forming on the horizon: “no sooner had managerialism been enshrined as the justification for both managerial authority and the existence of university business education than it began to be swept away by new forces that would result in the abandonment of managerialism – along with any meaningful concept of professionalism – altogether” (*ibid.*: 291). This critique of managerialism, Khurana explains, had its origins in the economic crisis of the 1970s and was further exacerbated by the logic of investor capitalism in the 1980s. On a basic level, managers were charged with neglecting the interests of investors who owned company stock: instead of maximizing the value of assets for shareholders, managers were said to be more interested in increasing their own salaries and accruing large bonuses. In a curious twist, management was now seen – at least by those adhering to the ideology of shareholder primacy – as an agent of *mismanagement*. As a result, corporations rushed to ‘downsize’ and managerial positions in organizations were significantly reduced. Khurana goes so far as to call this shift a ‘Copernican revolution’ in the way corporations were run:

Private and public pension funds, mutual funds, and other investors and financial intermediaries...continued to chip away at corporate and managerial autonomy. These large shareholders began to actively press for more control over decisions about mergers and acquisitions, cost containment, executive compensation, and even who should occupy the CEO position. The twenty-year restructuring that was largely completed by the early 1990s marked the overthrow of managerialism as both the defining logic of American capitalism and the arbiter of its actual practices. (*ibid.*: 304)

The demise of managerialism was the first time in nearly a century that owners and shareholders had successfully asserted their right to control large-scale corporations. Ironically enough, the business school – the very institution that management had once hoped to provide the basis for its quest for social legitimacy – played a significant part in management’s declining fortunes. Having attracted trained economists, mathematicians, and statisticians to its ranks, the business school was now producing financial models and theories that served to undermine some of the basic arguments in support of managerial authority. Agency theory, for example, emphasized the need to align the interests of managers with those of shareholders. This was to be achieved in part by putting into place a set of internal financial controls that would monitor and regulate managerial performance, thus eroding some of the organizational autonomy to which managers had become accustomed.

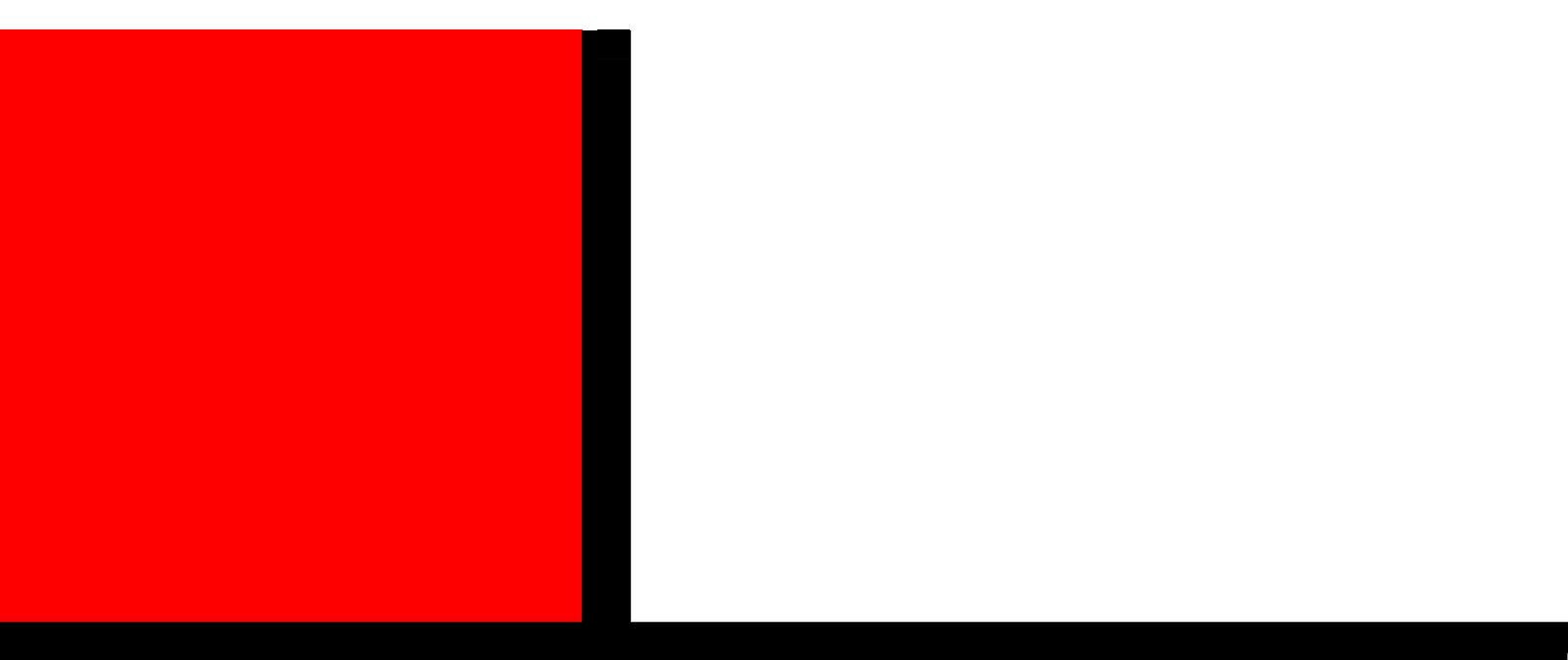
The development of anti-managerialist thought within the business school was soon reflected in the types of jobs sought by its graduates. Khurana tells us that “between 1965 and 1985, Harvard Business School – which had always defined its core mission as educating the nation’s general managers – saw the number of its students going into positions in fields such as financial services and consulting rather than pursuing careers as corporate managers rise from 23 percent to 52 percent” (Khurana, 2007: 328-9). These same graduates, Khurana adds, would in all likelihood go on to spearhead the campaign of corporate restructuring in the 1980s and 1990s, which saw the methodical decimation of middle management in large-scale corporations. The higher aims of business schools, it seemed, had finally come to an end; managers were no longer viewed as “fiduciaries or custodians of the corporation and its values”, but instead “hired hands...who, undertaking no permanent commitment to any collective interests or norms, represented the antithesis of the professional” (*ibid.*: 325).

The tone, throughout the final chapters of the book, is intriguingly plaintive: we are left with the distinct impression that Khurana mourns the passing of management’s professional aspirations. This suspicion is confirmed in the book’s epilogue. Khurana argues here that, “with the abandonment of the professionalization project and the idea that managers... should exercise ultimate control over the corporation, university business education lost the grand narrative that had sustained it from its beginnings” (*ibid.*: 368). This grand narrative, for Khurana, provided the business school with a wider social mission in addition to its instrumental objectives; the loss of this narrative, therefore, has resulted in an ethical vacuum at the heart of the business school. Khurana proposes to fill this vacuum by reinventing management as a ‘calling’ (in the Weberian sense of the word) in order to cultivate the values of custodianship, duty, and responsibility in business education. While this liberal-reformist agenda for business education may well strike some of us as bland and insipid, there is a case to be made that Khurana’s plea has already been overtaken by recent events: following the aftershocks of the sub-prime mortgage crisis, and the subsequent injection of over \$700 billion into the US banking system by federal government, it would certainly appear that the days of freewheeling investor capitalism are, in practice if not quite yet in theory, numbered. Perhaps, then, it is far more likely that the internal contradictions within the economic system itself, rather than the ethical imperatives imposed on MBA students by well-meaning academics, will come to play the principal role in shaping the business school of the future.

By describing the relation between business education and management's quest for social legitimacy, *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands* provides an invaluable resource for those of us attempting to understand how the university continues to be shaped and transformed by a confluence of economic forces and political interests. For this reason, Khurana's book deserves to be widely read within academia, in the business school and beyond.

**the author**

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