

The marketisation of universities and some cultural contradictions of academic capitalism

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To all the decent, upright academics I have known

The current commitment of the Blair Labour Cabinet to a substantial increase in university tuition fees in the UK does not spring solely from the need to address the financial crisis in higher education. It is driven also by the sense that British universities or at least some of them must move towards a US model/myth/utopia of the “world-class research university”, or some version of it, though no clear specification or even a spectrum of scenarios, appears to have been published as yet. I am not sure whether many or indeed any of the distinguished academic backers and co-instigators of this drive share the brutal judgment expressed recently by a former Labour Minister of Education, resident in recent years in Cambridge Mass., that Britain does not currently possess a single “world-class” university or multiversity, Britain having presumably slipped down into this outer darkness at some oddly undisclosed point in the recent or perhaps not-so-recent past. In fact, the recently published ranking of 500 world universities and 100 European universities, prepared by a team at the Shiao Jong University of Shanghai, shows that Britain, as of 2003, was doing very well indeed in the number of universities in fairly high places in the list, in having two universities in the top ten (so part of the la crème de la crème), and four in the top twenty. No matter the merits or demerits of the Higher Education Bill, no matter what happens to it, now or in the next Parliament¹, the questions I am addressing will remain, possibly in an even more acute form. My concern here is not with the question of the comprehensiveness and equity of access to universities supposedly ensured by the new financial arrangements, important as it is, or with the “output” so unengagingly described by The Financial Times in

¹ The Bill was carried, though only by five votes, an astonishingly small margin, given the substantial majority enjoyed by the Government party (to be sure, many MPs voted as much against the Prime Minister’s leadership style and concentration of power, as against the proposed legislation but then again a number of MPs were persuaded to vote for the Bill against their avowed beliefs and convictions in exchange for constituency favours). It is not clear whether substantial amendments will eventually be carried at later stages of the passage of the Bill through Parliament

commending editorially these proposals, as noting more than improved “intellectual skills of the workforce”. For which purpose, surely, you don't really need universities at all, let alone “elite universities”, as it calls them, and it is worth noting that this “mouthpiece of capitalism” avoids any additional reference to such qualities of a democracy as a well-educated citizenry, and fails to invoke the word “education” at all (or cognate terms such as “culture”, “cultivation”, “civilization”, or “breadth of understanding”, for the last two centuries an integral part of the discourse of the university). My focus is rather on the character of the institutions students are going to have access to, what kind of form of academic life they will be participating in.

Now the academic advocates of the course referred to are undoubtedly extraordinarily busy people at any time, and the exertion of political pressure, not least on our rulers, is, I am sure, particularly draining (though 10 Downing Street is surely both more accessible and more amenable than the Bush White House). So it is not clear whether they have had the opportunity to read, or re-read, anything of an analytical rather than merely encomiastic kind on American universities. I have in mind a couple of works in particular. In the first instance, a classic analysis of the American research university in the 1960s, set forth in the book by the sociologists Talcott Parsons and Gerald Platt *THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY* (the theoretical apparatus being due to Parsons), in part indeed something of a celebration, in many ways a perfectly justified celebration, of the American university at its best, at a time when it already had a major world impact (it was the prime stimulus to the constitution of an academic world, or at least a transatlantic, or North Atlantic, market in the postwar era, not just in terms of students for such may be said to exist since the late 19th c. in EuroAmerica, but in terms also of researchers of all kinds and faculty members, at any rate in vastly greater numbers than earlier transatlantic or transpacific flows), but which did not fail to portray a good deal of the reality which more recent advocates of the “research university” in Britain sweep under the rug, or at least don't care to dwell upon. Whatever the misgivings about the theoretical framework, today regarded as outmoded, the general thrust of the argument was by no means controversial at the time, and it has been influential. More influential, though not embedded in a systematic analysis of the American university, and with a more skeletal theoretical apparatus, was the promotion by another sociologist, Daniel Bell, of the concept of the post-industrial knowledge-economy, in which the university, understood as a site of production of basic *theoretical* knowledge vital to

the progress of high-technology, as well as of more directly relevant or applied knowledge and technologies, comes to occupy an unprecedentedly central place as a key institution of economy, culture and society². This vision was supported by the independent contemporary development of the concepts, and statistical documentation thereof, of the “knowledge industry” and the “information economy”, addressing the rise and acceleration of the new technologies of information and communication, with the spread of ever more numerous, versatile, powerful and interconnected “intelligent” machines and systems permeating knowledge work itself as well as knowledge-dependent material economic advance in every field, feedback loops unlimited.

Such approaches should be complemented by a work first published in 1918, Thorstein Veblen’s *THE HIGHER LEARNING IN AMERICA: A MEMORANDUM ON THE CONDUCT OF UNIVERSITIES BY BUSINESSMEN* (Veblen is of course far better known for his other works), which might well have been regarded until recently as a dated, eminently forgettable tract for the times, or rather, against the times (President Coolidge’s notorious utterance, “America’s business is business”, came a few years later), much as the novel by the muckraking writer and America’s first Nobel prize winner in literature, Sinclair Lewis, *THE GOOSESTEP*, which in a way fictionalized Veblen’s vision (perhaps the least remembered of the novelist’s books too). It was all before the great surge of American universities after WWII to unprecedented heights of opulence, prestige and worldwide influence, and merely of historic interest, but the work has regained a surprising lease of life, of relevance, of topicality, in the world of the 1980s and subsequently, the world in which “business canons”, the “pecuniary ethos”, and business interests have impinged more and more on university life and even its self-image and public discourse. Veblen’s numerous examples of business involvement, influence, and attempted control in practically every sphere of academic affairs in the US of his time, though American science, by some measures, had already matched if not surpassed both England and France by 1910, in this largely forgotten work (perhaps the least referred to of his entire corpus in the last few decades) may be dated. Yet many can now be matched by very recent examples, even in Britain, some rather distasteful, to say the least, such as the Murdoch Chair of Communications at Oxford (to name a Chair of Communications after a media magnate! And Murdoch!), others more sinister, as in the role of tobacco firms in all too interested sponsorship of research and publications (with

² Daniel Bell *The coming of the post-industrial society-a venture in social forecasting* NY 1973

the tacit possibilities of censorship or self-censorship), contribute to a diffuse but far from admirable moral climate, even if direct business control of curricula and appointments, many examples of which Veblen cited, does not appear to be such a prominent feature of the academic landscape as yet: government promotion of certain kinds of research and development has now gone far beyond defence concerns, in particular, especially in the UK, to foster and protect biotechnology (including the more scientifically and environmentally controversial phases, controversial within the US as well as in the UK) as one of the core concerns of what used to be called the “scientific state” (the science-promoting state, for reasons of power, prestige and international competitiveness), but should now be glossed as the “scientific-merchant state” (promoting science-technology or “intellectual capital” as big business), now increasingly what might be called the “biotech-merchant-state”, if not the “Frankenfood State” (the UK may even surpass the US in this respect), steadfastly pursuing a course against public opinion (so much for the alleged guidance of “focus groups”), and indeed at least a section of world scientific opinion, whereas it disgracefully yielded to the truckers, for example.

In any case, if one conjoins the approaches of the two works, for Veblen’s text acquired an unforeseen topicality, especially from the 1980s onwards, one might begin to work out an analysis of what one might call “the research-business university”, a locution which I suggest should replace the jarring, all too coy euphemism or synecdoche of the “research university”, which should no longer be used to mislead anyone: if “market-research university” might be confusing, at least for the time being, to designate the emerging form of life in the epochal and too-long delayed transition to full-fledged academic capitalism (or academic “turbo-capitalism”³) against the remnants of academic feudalism and statism (ecclesiasticism being long gone in the UK, except in quaint vestiges), “research marketing university”, if not “market-driven research university”, might well do. The research university, without the manna of defence contracts (the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the US Department of Defense) or business contracts or the expectations of granting agencies, and ever closer interpenetration of science, technology and market economy, with the “new mode [or Mode II] of scientific knowledge production”, simply does not exist, if indeed it ever did, except for some universities for some of the time, and not

³ The concept of “turbo-capitalism” was advanced by the Washington-based scholar-consultant Edward Luttwak in *Turbo-capitalism-winners and losers in the global economy* (NY 1996). A similar concept of “fast capitalism” was advanced independently by Ben Agger.

since WWII. The Department of Defense itself sponsored the notorious Camelot Project on the sources of insurgency in the Third world, eventually cancelled by President Johnson, which had been envisaged by its academic leader as “the Manhattan Project of the social/behavioural sciences”, just as three decades later the US nonmilitary-financed Human Genome Project was envisaged equally grandly by its champions “the Manhattan Project of the life-sciences”, and completed, if not entirely gloriously. One may recall President Eisenhower’s Farewell Address (1961), a text full of enduring wisdom, a historic, if neglected, document in the sociology of science, with its surprisingly cogent and still all too pertinent comments on the dangers of “the military-industrial complex” and the potentially harmful tie up between science and business, academia and industry, the higher learning and commerce⁴. It was from this speech that the expression military-industrial complex entered general currency, though “military-industrial-academic” (coined later by Senator Fulbright) or “military-industrial-scientific”, or more inclusively the so-called triple helix industry-universities-state better represented the realities then and now. Though Daniel Bell wrote extensively on the cultural contradictions of capitalism he did not address, I believe, the cultural contradictions of the capitalist knowledge economy in which the production of knowledge as a public good, indeed the public cultural good par excellence, as gifts to the global knowledge commons⁵, is uneasily associated with the competitive national state and corporation pressures on the business university to reshape itself as an organization dealing above all in intellectual property and intellectual capital as the price of survival (though, surviving thus, it will die as a university)⁶.

It would be wrong to fail to note that the academic advocates referred to are well aware of at least two kinds of major consequences of the course of action they are fighting for, and, in the main, they embrace them. Both sorts of consequences are in the same direction, towards greater inequality, with a bias towards bimodality, a bias towards a *bimodal distribution of resources and rewards for universities* and a drive for a more unequal, eventually *bimodal distribution of resources and rewards for academics*.

(I)

⁴ President Eisenhower’s Farewell Address (1961) is available on the Internet.

⁵ Partha Dasgupta, Karl-Göran Mäler and A. Vercelli (eds.) *The economics of transnational commons* Oxford 1996.

⁶ Top university administrators constantly call for more “commercialization of research output.”

One is greater and more glaring, more brutal inequality in a variety of ways between universities: the cream, and the rest (if the former Labour Minister whom I cited earlier is to be believed, one might say, drawing out some implications of her claim, that there is in the whole wide world of universities, the “American cream” and the rest). Now the Parsons and Platts classic study of the American university had illuminated the prestige/resource stratification of universities, from the top ones, whether Ivy League or the great State universities, to the intermediate and bottom layers (and the bottom could be far down indeed). Some might regard such a development as retrograde, and certainly running counter to the tradition of British universities since WWII at least, symbolized by the nation-wide system of external examiners drawn from any other university in the country for both first degrees and research degrees (which practice never took root in the US), a tradition which many foreign scholars, with direct experience of the system, have long regarded as one of the most attractive features of the British academic scene, and one deserving emulation. But presumably they regard this dissolution of tradition, this break with such admirable practices and conventions, as a price well worth paying for the greater good, or at any rate to drive up market values of a few universities in world “quotations” (literally or not), though one may still ask whether, in the terms in which these matters are couched, Britain, on its own, will ever have in the future the capacity to match the first four “world-class universities” (just as it cannot afford a single Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, even though militarily it notoriously punches above its weight), no matter what “top-up” fees are charged, barring most unlikely eventualities, such as a sudden surge of super-patriotism among the cleverest (and even if it did, such a place would still not be in America, which is a necessary part of the package as far as much of the rest of the world is concerned, though it is also true to say that many people will go on being attracted by British universities for a great variety of reasons, sometimes indeed because it is *not* America). In fact, in the light of the recent ranking of world universities Britain has been doing exceedingly well.

The drive to secure or increase the places in the ranking via full-scale marketisation, in part neglects the fact that whatever the rankings, Britain can lay claim to scores and scores of “centres of excellence”, in most branches of what used to be called the higher learning, not least in the humanities, acknowledged as such throughout the world, more perhaps than most countries, which there is every reason to believe that it could maintain or foster anew – and wouldn’t such a

constellation be more than enough?⁷ Is the damage inflicted on the British university system and its former virtues (perhaps not wholly extinct here and there), likely to be irreversible, brought about by the drive to secure world-class universities, as distinct from a plethora of world-class research centers and excellent individual scholars- worth the human, social and cultural costs?. Though, I must add, it is not clear to me that they have thought through the psychological, social and cultural implications of the new academic stratification (on which they could draw on American experience), or indeed whether, in their frantic zeal to press their case, and have their recommended policies enacted, they would even care to stop and ponder such implications, and the bearing they may have on any kind of academic equality (isn't this a case of "reinforced dogmatism" in the Popperian sense: not only do they reject categorically opposing views, but they can also explain perfectly well why such wrong views are held). But appeals to equality per se, in any sphere of thought and practice, have ceased to carry much weight, except in very specific areas with particularly vocal lobbies, and the Tawney tradition of egalitarianism, once important in Christian social thought and the Labour movement in Britain, pretty well forgotten. If the most apparent class divide in Britain was linked to access to, or exclusion from, university education, the class divide in future could be between those who have gone to so-called "elite universities" and the rest ("mass universities"?), to "selective" or to "recruiting" universities, or perhaps one should simply say, to "upmarket" or "downmarket" establishments. Which two sorts of caste-making universities could become mostly self-perpetuating...⁸ There is an English

⁷ The proposed top-up fees would yield the equivalent of *one half of one percent of public expenditure*. The political costs incurred by the Government in the parliamentary battle would hardly be justified unless issues of far greater importance than this very modest amount of public expenditure, at a time of healthy public finances, were at stake. What drives the battle, one may hazard, is not the saving of public money and taxes, but the project of further drastic marketisation of the universities, the final submission of the universities to the canons of business enterprise.

⁸ Last year 50 per cent of all research funds went to five universities in England: Cambridge, Oxford, Imperial College, University College London, and King's College London. As it happens, the first four were the top British universities in the recent ranking of world universities by the Shiao Jong University of Shanghai (Institute of Higher Education), and indeed *all four were amongst the top twenty universities in the world*, respectively no. 5, no. 9., no 17, no. 20. All other universities among the top twenty were American (Harvard at the top), with the single exception of Tokyo University. Kings College London was no. 75 in the ranking. It may not matter at all to the powers that be, but these four universities are *the top four universities in Europe*, according to the same ranking, and Kings Coll London take a respectable no. 22 out of 100 universities listed. Twenty-two British universities appear in the list of 100 European universities, the largest national contingent. Cambridge is the second university in the world on the Nobel score, second only to Harvard, and far superior to all the others.

genius for caste-like stratification that may reincarnate itself in this marketized-technocratized fashion...

(II)

The other sort of inequalization, rather overlooked by some commentators who acknowledge the increased formalization of an “elite group” of universities as an inevitable outcome of the proposals, is perhaps even closer to the bone. It is inequality within universities, among academics, not just between ranks, but within them also. The advocates of reform in university finance seem to have in mind *inter alia* the system of professorial super-stars in the US (with paler reflections in the UK, perhaps only due to lack of money), in the humanities and the social sciences at least, as something absolutely required for “excellence” -which in these cases is perhaps a surrogate for fame, citations and the like- in these domains (and even to compete with the US, at least in the sense of preventing the outflow of high-reputation academics, at least in these areas to the US, by bribing them with ever-higher salaries and perhaps other forms of remuneration, to stay in the UK, as public honours, and other forms of “psychic income”, once perhaps highly valued in a less monetized market-grant economy, are clearly not enough by a long way: we already knew about “academic rents” (though curiously this concept is not invoked when wide academic wage discrepancies are promoted), but the “academic bribe”⁹ has not been the focus of much study except, sporadically, and not quite under that rubric, in relation to concerns over the brain drain from Britain to the US and even in some branches of the natural sciences, some years ago, to Germany). Again, they don’t disclose the plight of the academic underclass which seems a natural correlate of these arrangements (from graduate assistants and teaching assistants to their successors today in the US, the “adjuncts”), although these are known even to those with only a superficial acquaintance with the American academic world. Note that part-time (in pay if not in work) adjuncts make up *nearly half if not more, of the total higher education faculty in the US*, and this proportion may steadily rise.

“Excellence”, unfortunately, is already a tarnished word, as some American academic commentators have noted, for its overuse by universities (not least allegedly “third-rate” ones) in their glossy brochures has already made plain its resemblance to the kind of puffs new car commercials indulge in (the term “excellence”, unfortunately, was incorporated into

⁹ I gather the term “bribe” is used by economists in a wider, value-neutral sense.

managerialese some time ago). The “University of Excellence”, as the Canadian academic Bill Readings called it a few years ago in his *THE UNIVERSITY IN RUINS*, which has replaced the Humboldtian University of Culture, has become, in effect, the business-like (in every sense) university, the university as business and for business, the university saturated with market-speak in its privileged (if not the exclusive) mode of self-description and self-presentation. Some advocates of the proposed arrangements in university finance have been perfectly candid about the underlying drive: the universities, they say, are the last great “nationalised industry” (everything is an “industry”) in Britain to be “tackled”, by which I suppose is meant privatised or something like it (steered into state-defined marketisation), even if it is not perhaps implied that universities should be put up for auction like the railways, presumably in glorious fulfilment of some magnificent, unassailable, world-conquering historical project set in motion over two decades ago: such are the ways of “mythhistory” to use W. McNeil’s expression (odd to think that one cannot recall when they were ever nationalised, although one can date precisely when the railways, the coal mines, the steel industry were nationalised...could it have been a lapsus calami, confusing “national” with “nationalised”? What about the Armed Forces, the Monarchy, the swans in the rivers, the Established Church (this one definitely the result of a state take-over), the Civil Service, the National Trust, the Inland Revenue, the National Anthem, even, in a way, the English weather?). Though it is arguable that it was precisely the pre-eminently denationalising, privatising Thatcher government that did the most to bring the universities into government control until now.¹⁰

The trends in the business styles, the entertainment and media industries in America and Western societies at large, particularly accentuated in the last fifteen years or so, towards winner-takes-all

¹⁰ It is arguable that a kind of nationalisation took place, or a big step was taken toward towards such a condition, under the Thatcher government via the 1988 Education Reform Act, and further moves are taking place with state-determined, state-controlled marketisation. The conservative journalist [Sir] Simon Jenkins, who subscribes to this view, describes most British universities today as looking and feeling “like down-at-heel nationalised industries, working part time and facing obsolescence” (*The Times* 28 Jan 2004). Prof. A. J. Grayling laments in similar terms the sorry state of British universities as “the crowded, peeling, tottering institutions called universities in today’s Britain” (in his column “The reason of things” *The Times* January 31 2004).

The Government’s very one-sided attitude to the BBC in connexion with the “Kelly affair” may indicate its general outlook on public, independent institutions (independent from the State, independent from corporate interests, endowed with a Royal Charter). Perhaps we are moving a little closer to Orwell’s Ministry of Truth. At any rate to a situation where communications, news, reporting will be exclusively a function either of government-controlled organizations (official news management), on the one hand, or of business media corporations on the other (corporate news management).

arrangements, where quite small, even vanishingly small, or indeed non-existent differences in talent or performance, between contestants for “excellence” (top prizes), or even thanks to sheer flukes, secure wholly or at any rate hugely disproportionate, and indeed possibly quite fabulous in absolute terms - “rewards” in fame, or at least media exposure, reputation, money and perks, have already been the subject of substantial studies, even books such as the recent, well-documented and referenced one by the economists Robert H. Frank and Philip J. Cook *THE WINNER-TAKES-ALL SOCIETY: WHY THE FEW AT THE TOP GET SO MUCH MORE THAN THE REST OF US*¹¹ (which does not primarily focus on academia), which again one fears the advocates of similar trends in academia ignore (or perhaps knowingly applaud, and perhaps expect to benefit, and may even feel entitled to sole benefit from such cornucopias, and can barely wait for such a state of affairs to come about). If they succeed, the academic world, at least in the humanities and the social sciences, always the “softest” region of the academic world as far as external pressures on the one hand, and internal bids for power of doctrinal or methodological (or “paradigm”) zealots and academic mafiosi, on the other, are concerned, is going to become another domain of the “winner-takes-all society” (in some areas it perhaps already is), already in being in the world entertainment industry (including under this rubric a number of sports), exemplifying a kind of *super-Matthew effect*, (not just what one might call the simple Matthew effect, i.e., “to him [or her] that hath, more shall be given”, known to Merton, on either of his accounts, though one should never forget that the NT also reads “to those that have not even, that which he has shall be taken away”) a more up to date, post-Mertonian, turbo version “to him [or her] that hath, much, much more shall be given”) as indeed to some extent was already occurring in certain phases of academic life, where in any case careerist ferocity has never been absent, to be sure. Though perhaps we should also bear in mind the reference to Genghis Khan that Bill Gates/Microsoft’s greatest rival (and actually somewhat richer than Gates) likes to make: “the point is not only to succeed, but to make sure that the others fail”. Now the “*Genghis Khan effect*”, if you like, not yet properly recognized in sociology, unlike the simple Matthew effect: still, it was formulated by a leading businessman, one of the wealthiest in the world today, and given the prevalence of the business model for universities, it must have

¹¹ The work of Frank and Cook on the winner-takes-all economy draws on the “superstar hypothesis” advanced by a mainstream Chicago economist, the late Sherwin Rosen, in his classic paper “The economics of super-stars”, *American Economic Review*, 71: 5 (1981)

some bearing on the business university (not just the business or management school within the university), the university as business, the university for business.¹²

A perfectly legitimate question to ask in this context is surely this: What is all this going to do to the university as an institution? It is astonishing to find that some of the most vociferous advocates of these changes are heads of ancient Oxbridge colleges, institutions if anything can be called such, institutions nonpareil in the world. It is as if their anti-egalitarianism and radical academic individualism (even by theoretical epistemic holists and keen partisans of the social construction of reality) made them forget, or renounce, or at least discount, the institutional(ist) tradition they have been entrusted with. Under such circumstances the institution will not count at all, so why bother with the preservation of such colleges? Indeed why not go all the way into the already much advertised scenario of the virtual university, and all-inclusive if not yet exclusive “e-learning”? Already universities, at least as far as the humanities and the social sciences are concerned, tend to embody a kind of hybrid of the knowledge-as-commodity/knowledge-as-capital industry and the celebrity industry: at the limit they will become mere collocations of a few academic superstars shining ever-so-brightly in the world-firmament, and their legions of teaching or research minions, part-timers or “adjuncts” (as they are called in the US), who may eventually be relegated to something approaching zero-contracts, or what one might call academic Mcjobs, bringing the academic labour market into line with other service markets, entitled at most to (short) lives of (hopefully) blameless obscurity. Such places serve as collocations undergoing constant reshuffling, assembling and dis-assembling, according to the latest poll of rankings, patent indices, grants, publications lists in “peer-reviewed” journals (measured by number and physical weight, the weight example not being facetious or utterly hypothetical, but drawn from real cases referred to in T. Caplow’s *THE ACADEMIC MARKETPLACE*, if not wordage directly), all presumably in Anglophonia, for nothing anywhere else will count of course. Indeed, the ratings and scales may perhaps issued every week if not every day (Edinburgh University already claims ten peer-reviewed research papers produced by its staff every day, and other universities in the UK would claim even more¹³), if not

¹² The principle of performance-related pay (it used to be called in the economics of wages “payment by results”) in effect goes together with other market criteria, and may be overridden by them: a full Professor of English may be paid only as much as a new Assistant Prof. of Accounting in an American university, independently of publications or other performance criteria.

¹³ Edinburgh University was ranked 53 in the list of world universities previously referred to.

every hour (Edinburgh's rating would then be less than 0.5 papers per hour), like shares in Stock Exchanges, and indeed one may well expect universities to be literally "floated" (someone like Swift could have pursued this imagery beautifully) as Inc., PLCs or corporations, or even as assemblies of such firms, perhaps even down to one-person firms, a "university of me" (and every academic person a firm, a PLC, or whatever), quoted eventually in such places or their equivalent, if indeed this has not already occurred, at least in some fashion, and certainly needing no physical abode locatable by GPS (except perhaps with a logo "somewhere in or over America", for the sake of prestige) or any kind of collective sentiment, collective affection or collective memory?.

Yet science faculties in the U.K. are already contemplating low or nil fees for new science entrants, given the persistent decline in applications for science places (especially in physics and chemistry) and for mathematics at universities, a trend common, with variations, to most of the Western world (gender skewed inasmuch as few women go into physics, but match or surpass men in the intake into the biological sciences)... Yet the thrust of university expansion and revamped finance is supposedly designed to enhance the technoscientific capabilities of the nation...At this point one can see very clearly the emergence of the contradictions of academic capitalism, for the "effective demand" from students is not necessarily for the skills and competences that are vital for the preservation of the wider turbo capitalism, which on the other hand is the *raison d'être* of the marketized university (the effective demand of the supposedly market-wise consumers does not match the functionally required demand of the system...). Even in the case of economics, this seems less favoured in the US at undergraduate level than years ago, and some American universities have stopped teaching graduate economics (the ever growing mathematicization of the discipline, especially in the case of the most prestigious schools, is undoubtedly a factor). In the UK, presumably, modern language faculties would not be permitted to do imitate the science faculties, even though they are also suffering from an adverse trend in applications (as in other EU countries, even between neighbours like France and Germany) and foreign language skills could also be rated as important for business...So what is doing well at undergraduate level? In the US, at least, business courses, enrolments in which as of 2000 already made up almost *one-third* of the total undergraduate population. In the UK, a top-rated university department according to the state-imposed Research Assessment Exercise,

and therefore a jewel in the University of Excellence, may be closed down if numbers of applications from prospective students are deemed insufficient by the academic managers, having no place in the University of Excellence-as-business. There seems to be a cultural contradiction in academic capitalism when the requirements of excellence and the requirements of solvency clash, and the only managerial solution is to sacrifice research excellence, and cut costs by firing quality staff and closing top-notch departments or centers. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has been reported as aiming at a “nation of entrepreneurs”¹⁴ (perhaps coextensive with the total “workforce”), the new version of the “nation of shopkeepers”, but surely today mathematical, scientific and technological knowledge and understanding are required as well, not to mention the ability to speak and even read modern languages, amongst other things. Perhaps foreign students taking such courses are expected to keep teachers of those subjects in employment, though the teachers themselves may have to be imported as well...nevertheless there may still be money to be made (“value added”) from the entrepreneurship... Though even cleverer entrepreneurs may in due course simply outsource more and more and at the limit everything abroad and finally “delocalise” the whole business from the UK to China (offshore academic capitalism)...This is an example of the cultural contradictions of national academic capitalism, of the marketisation of the university in the world knowledge/education economy, though doubtless some would not see anything wrong at all with such a trend.

The call for higher, even discretionary, university tuition fees, is being accompanied in a number of countries (for it is a worldwide trend), as a kind of quid pro quo, by demands that the residual Civil Service-type protections of university teachers be scrapped completely (perhaps as part of a drastic denigration and drive towards the liquidation of Weberian-style rational-legal bureaucracies everywhere), just as general labour codes have been and continue to be under attack in European welfare states, and one-year or otherwise time- and security-limited contracts substituted for the classical ones, if not worse: as nonacademic labour has been encompassed more and more by contingent forms of employment, why should academic labour, however intellectual, professional, high-grade, or what have you, not follow suit?. This might well mean,

¹⁴ Prof. B. Charlton in his essay on the condition of British universities has argued that in effect the universities have been redesigned to supply *middle managers* to the nation, which of course sounds much less attractive than the Chancellor's vision, but is surely closer to the truth (I am grateful to prof. Grahame Lock for drawing my attention to this essay).

at the limit, that absolutely everyone in a university except super-stars) would have something like one-year, or, at any rate, short-term contracts, everyone, whether academic or other staff, students, etc. would be at short notice, everyone in such a place de facto and de jure a transient, expecting to stay for only a short while (as has been the case in some ebullient university departments for quite some time, even in England), like football teams recruited from all over the world, whatever the country they supposedly represent, with the players always on the move through push and pull effects. The upshot would be something like a post-modernist market University of Transiency, precariousness, indeterminacy (bluntly, with everyone in contingent forms of employment as has been increasingly the condition of most forms of non-university labour, as well as concepts, as it were, as the deconstructionists have taught us), if indeed universities as corporate entities do not disappear through merger and bankruptcy, partaking to some degree of the transiency of all their components. The University of Excellence approaches ever more closely to the norms of the *University of Transiency* or, in the economorphic language more suited to the times, the *University of Maximum Throughput*, in “personnel” as well in other ways, such as ever longer publications, grants and patents lists, in ever higher per capita rates. The transiency attaches to the publications output too, as something like eighty per cent of natural-scientific publications are never or rarely cited, and also to the graduand output, as engineers, doctors and others will have their specific knowledge base out of date within a decade or so, at current rates of “knowledge increase”, for there is no way to preclude the “trained incapacities” of the “workforce” (mixing Veblen’s with the FT idiom) in an epoch of informational-technological acceleration to exponential and indeed super-exponential (“hyperbolic”) heights. The ongoing “knowledge explosion” is of course accompanied by an “ignorance explosion”, the obsolescence of university-educated professionals in fields of rapid technological or technoscience-generated advance (and more and more fields, professional, as well as semi- or para-professional, are or will be affected by such changes and rates of change), as documented by J. Lukasiewicz, not to mention the uncertainties provoked by the unprecedented scale and cumulative, even accelerating anthropogenic impacts on the biosphere and the atmosphere¹⁵, the human and ecological implications of which are never addressed by the university reformers. I have not yet seen - though it would surely be in perfect harmony with the whole spirit of competition sweeping the academic world- demands for variable rates of pay over

¹⁵ I have written on these matters elsewhere.

time, so that the professorial super-stars of one year could (like everyone else) have their salaries significantly cut the next year, and perhaps, in year 3, be reduced to the rank and pay of research assistants, or deemed surplus to requirements and downsized (something like this was envisaged in Michael Young's meritocratic dystopia, though chiefly as a function of age and concomitantly declining IQ): I believe this upwardly and downwardly variable payment-by-results, year by year, if not more frequently, to be proper academic-capitalist or academic knowledge-industrialist "fairness", which may emerge any day.

The "socially unattached, free-floating intelligentsia" of Alfred Weber and Karl Mannheim today floats, or will float, in the market, and indeed in a variety of markets, not in class society at large, in the Stock Exchange, not in civil society. Basically the thrust of this kind of "research university" (in effect, this organizational type would be more accurately characterized as "research-business university", the "research marketplace academe", or "knowledge industry firms") propaganda is that we don't need institutions, or at any rate any institutions other than those concerning property including, of course, "intellectual property", without which, more than ever, technoscience cannot proceed, markets, business organisations and, residually, the state, in a self-proclaimed world of "Sovereign Individuals" or "Sovereign Knowers" or "Imperial Autonomous Selves" (as usual, "we" means of course the right people, the strong and confident of "election", in every sense of the term, not those doomed to inhabit the *academic Mcjobland* in Anglophonia). Who needs social and cultural institutions when we have got markets, or universities as social and cultural institutions, with a sense of civilization, when we have got academic labour markets, the university-as-firm, as a hectic market-place buzzing, indeed hopefully awash, with grants, research contracts, patents, copyrights, consultancies, and self-conscious as a quasi-market through and through? In this new world, the people once known as "students", "undergraduates" or "pupils" are redefined increasingly, in keeping with the times and the prevalent role-models, as "passengers", "clients", "theatre-goers", "music lovers", etc. etc. are all uniformly labelled "customers" or "consumers", in this case of academic "products" ("my "students"? you mean, my customers!"), academics themselves as "(knowledge) entrepreneurs" ("I am no "don", I am an "entrepreneur"!)" or, in answer to the question "what do you do? I am in the knowledge business [or the "knowledge industry"]", as others might say "I am in insurance"), producers, distributors, sellers of "knowledge products", addicted to "Total

Quality Management” (TQM), which of course entails measuring everything (except, of course the opportunity cost of the time spent by academics in filling or collecting the innumerable forms required by TQM and the like, work-satisfaction, pleasantness of the work milieu, the opportunities for fruitful intellectual interactions, a climate of trust, and other things not deemed proper *mensuranda* according to managerial or business canons) and other such business school, or business guru, fads and devastating practices (such as CI and Reengineering), heads of colleges and other such bodies increasingly known or referred to *intra muros*, quite unsmilingly, as a matter of course, as Chief Executive Officers, who just like the paradigmatic CEOs of the primal corporate world, feel bound to issue portentous “mission statements”, in an idiom just like that of any kind of business corporation anywhere (and soon they will demand, as they appear already to feel entitled to, similar rates of pay to those of their “counterparts” in other branches of the “real” or the financial economy, and, by the same token, “golden hellos” and “golden handshakes”: a CEO is a CEO whether dealing in soap, derivatives, plastic arts, Nietzschean studies, etc....perhaps soon they will be officially named CEOs.. welcome to the society-wide stratum of CEOs!). The very language in which universities are unceasingly talked about (by government and civil servants, amongst others), or talk about themselves, and not only in public, is one thoroughly saturated with business idioms, business/management guru locutions, managerialese or industrialese, with perhaps occasional embarrassed lapses into the idioms of historic piety. Can anyone involved in university policy today ever talk, ever think, or even dream, in any but the terms of mangerialese? Though business talk now embraces without demur or shame such startling locutions as “the soul of the corporation”, at a time when no academic would dare to utter some such phrase about the “soul” of the university, in public, at any rate, save in the Latin disguise of the locution *alma mater* (perhaps itself archaic), at least until such a time as the idioms of the corporation may be safely imported, and thus the university re-ensouled at second-hand, so to speak, no “mystical body”, no “clerisy”, no “spiritual power”, but the contemporary business corporation being now the only “soul model” for all except residual areas of society (at least the only avowable and avowed one) as well as a practical exemplar, for the university (as for everything else, hospitals, schools, prisons, soon the police and the armed forces, and so on, the programmes and briefings for such privatizations, or at least marketizations and managerialist reconstructions, already available from able and enthusiastic exponents of neo-liberal, libertarian if not anarcho-libertarian capitalism, in and out of universities, their civil

service sympathizers, sundry consultants to governments and international agencies, advisers to rising politicians, etc., just as able, just as fanatical, just as frantic as those disastrous “terrible simplifiers” so feared by Burckhardt, or the “pedantocrats” denounced by Mill and Comte). If and when the university becomes just another sort of business corporation (or close enough to it), just another variety of market entity -and it is certainly drifting, if not indeed speeding, that way- who will now speak the truth to power? Who will speak the truth to, instead of for, and with, Mammon? Indeed, to ask a logically prior question: in the end, who will even conceive of the very idea, the very presumption of any such things?

This is of course a general trend in Western societies affecting all the professions (professions libérales), which were once believed to be a social form distinct from both (free) markets and (rational-legal) bureaucracies, and perhaps we were deluded in supposing that the sui generis “moral economy” of the universities (unlike other instances of pre-capitalist or even pre-turbo-capitalist “moral economy” so far, so we had been warned) would somehow survive the spread of marketization, proceeding sometimes in a creeping fashion, sometimes tsunami-like, or indeed the bid from within to integrate the university ever more closely into the market economy and more specifically into its latest form, the winner-takes-all economy, in turbo-capitalism for all. One might say that every epoch brings forth its own variant of the *trahison des clercs* (famously attacked by the philosopher and cultural critic Julien Benda in his classic work of 1927), though it is not at all clear, under the storm, to what university, intellectual or transcendent ideals the bulk of incumbents of academe today, or their spokespersons in the demand for discretionary fees, profess, in public or in private, and therefore one could ask what exactly they are betraying: but are they still, in any of the received senses, clerics (they would not practice *sacerdoce littéraire*, more likely to wear the grey suits of middle management, or the paraphernalia of aging hippies)? True, the key difference is that whilst Benda’s main target was the corruption of intellectuals by “political passions”, not least nationalist ones, or “political religions”, the divinisation of the political, the subservience of truth to utility, of knowledge, inquiry, intellectual pursuits to practical relevance (cash or capital), which, as another form of the attack on disinterestedness of free inquiry (the “idle curiosity” commended by Veblen, as essential to the higher learning) he did not overlook, or market fever, now plays the role of the political passions of his time. Three decades ago some French cultural critics poured scorn on Socrate

fonctionnaire, the philosopher as civil servant, now we have the no less oxymoronic Socrate entrepreneur or the philosopher as professorial super-star (though perhaps in a while to be subject to the full rigours of the market, from stardom to low-rank, low-pay as well as the other way, some more like George Best than David Beckham, and even he is doomed to fall). But really, though Socrates was an assiduous visitor to the agora, he never bought and sold his knowledge or wisdom, never sought fame, and never left Athens: the Sophists of his time sold their knowledge, as individuals, in a highly competitive Hellas-wide skills market. Our sophists today crave transatlantic jobs, and in any case suffer from being nominally attached to institutions (still quaintly called “universities”, though increasingly and, most satisfactorily from their point of view, what I have called “universities of transiency”), pending a proper atomistic market (one imagines they would identify only with the top layer of classical sophists, for most sophists were not at all well-off, and their livelihood was quite insecure). Though our sophists hardly match a Gorgias or a Protagoras, for they are more like the sophisters Edmund Burke (no enemy of the market economy) referred to in his amazingly apposite phrase: “the age of sophisters, economists and calculators”, which age is certainly upon us (in this age of hybridization, not surprisingly, they need not be three different sorts of people, for every conceivable mix is on offer).

How odd that such arguments should be labelled “conservative”, or indeed “liberal” for they would not have found favour with staunch defenders of the market economy, such as the physician-physical chemist-philosopher Michael Polanyi or even the far more famous Friedrich Hayek (certainly, for Michael Polanyi, the university should never be subsumed under the market economy, nor could the relationship between the university and students glossed as one of service-suppliers and customers, the nexus between university and the wider culture as one of suppliers and consumers). The least one can say is that the advocates referred to don’t appear to think of universities as having, or needing, an institutional life beyond cash values and cash flows and indeed requiring protection from them, other than that of business-like entities selling an ever better “product” (in its sense in market-speak). What kind of universities-as-institutions as distinct from universities-as-market-places of intellectual property values (what happened to the universities-as-market-places-of-ideas?: gone with the wind...), knowledge-as-capital, reputations, celebrities and the like, do we want? Do they even want to consider seriously the exigencies of the flourishing of universities-as-institutions? Yet some of them have been

educated, taught, or currently teach, in places with some resemblance to them, as traditionally conceived in the UK, and there is no reason to suppose that they don't cherish them. But what "price" institutions? What kind of hollowed-out universities, mere purveyors of "knowledge-services" to "customers" of various sorts (some previously known as "undergraduates", "students", or even "pupils"), and "conspicuous display" thereof in the shape of super-star profs will emerge in the end? The English genius for institutions, much admired by refugees from the former lands of the Dual Monarchy and elsewhere, as witness their comments from the 1930s to the 1950s at least, is perhaps suspect now amongst the natives, at least those concerned with academic policy-making. One wonders if it might not be the case that, to paraphrase the poet, "what do they know of England who only England and America know [academically speaking]?" But really, can one imagine John Stuart Mill, or Bertrand Russell, or even John Dewey, supreme exponents of liberal civilization, embracing enthusiastically the market-immersed, market-shaped, market-speak multiversity, the winner-takes-all academia-as-fast-knowledge-capitalism, or indeed eulogizing anything like the winner-takes-all macro/global economy, which they might well have seen as the haven of a market-oriented "pedantocracy"? In any case, one need not indulge in an elegy for the virtues of academic England, such as it was (far, far from perfect, to be sure), not to feel entitled to at least a degree of disquiet, and indeed quite a bit more. At least market-speak, or industry-speak, or managerialese, was not the monopoly language, the public face, the near-hegemonic vocabulary of self-description, and self-presentation, of academia! As Hayek stressed, nothing is easier to destroy than institutions, not least from within, by the incumbents who cannot comprehend the wisdom of what they have inherited. Alas, to this insight, too little associated with his name, we should add that the undermining of public institutions in England has been carried out in no small part by those who claiming to be his followers, and in general by those who have taken to market-speak with a vengeance, "cynics" in Oscar Wilde's sense, if not in the classical one, knowing the price of everything (to which should be added, the price of everyone) and the value of nothing (and we might now add, too, the value of no-one, though they believe that everyone has got a price).

The monopoly language of markets and management canons, concepts and criteria embraced by universities is both self-fulfilling and suicidal: self-fulfilling in as much as construing everything in market terms everything does tend to so become, according to the performative use of

language¹⁶, undergoing consequently constant pressure to become effectively evermore like other businesses (in cost-cutting, for example, the drive to reduce labour costs particularly), self-destroying in as much as if they are just like any other business they will lose whatever aura they may still have and will be unable in the end to compete for big names, who see themselves as merely acting within businesses and markets, especially if they have opportunities elsewhere as has been happening, in the case of medicine, with the serious crisis of academic medicine. This is an example of the cultural contradictions of academic capitalism, in the era of cyber-acceleration and the market-boundedness of professions and services of all kinds. Despite the overwhelming importance ostensibly accorded to science and technology, at least for the sake of international competitiveness, it is not the Science Faculty or the Engineering Faculty that lies at the center of the University, where all must converge: it is, in a way, the Business School, or rather the canons, the language, the styles and techniques of business organizations as formulated by management gurus and management academics, from Harvard Business School downwards, for science's business is business, directly or indirectly, not least the life-sciences, and medicine too has been incorporated in the research-business mode (in fact the Business School does not need to be physically present for the effects of business orientation to pervade the university). It is arguable that the counterpart of the Faculty of Theology of the medieval university as the peak and overarching branch of the university is today the Business School, if not de facto or formally, but at least de jure, in its spirit and orientation.

The emerging winner-takes-all academia through the transition to full-fledged academic turbo-capitalism from the palaeo-capitalist forms, is somewhat reminiscent of the beehives that have figured so much in social thought even in the nineteenth century ("The beehive" was a frequent title of radical magazines, as Hayek pointed out), although this metaphor is somewhat simplistic to be sure, in detail, but not substantially alien in the spirit that informs it. The queen-bees, and they alone, have the great rewards and are able to reign, rule and reproduce (the academic counterparts to these abilities are quite easy to figure out). The bulk of the hive are plain worker-bees, who must slave away unceasingly, assiduously gathering all the morsels everyone, and most of all of course, the queen-bee, need, doomed to barrenness for the sake of the community, which in neo-Darwinian terms is, I suppose, engaged in some kind of unrelenting market

¹⁶ John Austin *How to do things with words*.

competition or zero-sum games of strategy with other hives, and indeed the rest of the biological world (and “Darwinian fitness” need not coincide with merit!), as scientific popularization and textbooks teach us, ignoring the serious scientific dissent from such oversimplified, endlessly propagated views (“and all the world is America”, to paraphrase John Locke’s dictum, changing the tense).

Some are destined, or already feel destined, like the Calvinist “elect” (perhaps even without any occasional tinges, let alone agonies, of self-doubt, unlike many if not most of the historic Calvinists) for they all, curiously enough, seem to remember Max Weber in this context, even if they have curiously forgotten, or eschewed, Rawls (well, he is dead and buried!) and indeed the egalitarian tradition en bloc, which some of them were defending not so long ago, which obviously has become a massive hindrance to the further expansion of the “knowledge-commodity industry” as a whole and locally (a tradition to which, like academic fair play in the reviewing of scholarly works, not even faint lip-service needs to be paid any longer, it seems), to become something like queen-bees, or perhaps better “Sovereign Individuals” in some academic bee-hive or other (you can name your candidates: some are, or could be, sitting next door, perhaps, male or female academic queen-bees in petto already), or super-stars in the winner-takes-all academia, and to get the super-rewards of ever more low-taxed income, rank, perquisites, fat grants, low to near-zero teaching loads, “genius Fellowships”, awards, and academic or non-academic fame, and what not, due to them (they are so much better than the rest!). The rest of us may still have their place, of sorts (at the limit, zero-contracts, or little better, in “bog colleges” as they are sometimes called in the UK, or “cow colleges”, as they are called in the US, or a tiny step or two above this level). Clearly, concern for the collective goods of academia and the overall quality of academic life, the public culture of trust and respect, of willing cooperation, of participation in the civilities of academic conversation (in a broad sense, as part of the conversation of humankind), the ambience of academic *philia*, is no longer uppermost in their minds, displaced by the appetite for differential individual rewards (over and above the rank category) in an institutional milieu they care less and less about, doomed to a vestigial status (though they still take for granted facilities, respect, safeguards). The bee-hive university or corporation, the barely distinct academic subdomain of the inclusive winner-takes-all society, any rate on the planetary scale, has not arrived yet, not in full, but anyway

soon...Some may still expect to become suitably recompensed queen-bees in a small academic hive, but before too long it may all be just One Huge (Knowledge Industry) Hive world-wide, or perhaps a Great Hive of Hives (in succession to things like the Great Society of Graham Wallas), and their chances of emerging as professorial super-stars even for a few minutes, or indeed for a few nano-seconds, of world-time, considerably diminished... “To hive” (for the word may also be used as a verb) is our destiny...¹⁷

Academic queen-bees in potentia, craving super-rewards as their due, and openly and strenuously calling for as wide a gap as possible in remuneration and other goodies between them and their supposedly less, much less, worthy colleagues, if such a term can still be used, for it is losing any point (such people already feel aggrieved at being “surrounded” –and this feels like the right verb- by what they perceive as, and undisguisedly call, a sea of “mediocrity”, and just don’t see themselves as perchance part of it, under some description or another: “la médiocrité, c’est [toujours] les autres”!, to paraphrase Sartre). You have nothing to lose but the unwelcome, stifling restraints of collegiality, traditions of academic equality, convivium, the cultivation of academic philia, the concern with disinterested public service, and the like the better to reap the rewards of the winner-takes-all society (euphemistically called a condition of “meritocracy” by many), the culmination perhaps of Western civilisation, as you may see it. They confidently expect to climb up the greasy pole inside what will remain of academia, transmogrified perhaps into an array, or, shall we say, a “network” of local “knowledge industry / celebrity industry corporations” or, more simply “knowledge corporations” (a.k.a., once upon a time, as “universities”), themselves collocations of one-person knowledge/would-be celebrity firms, to which ever-shifting aggregations they may be transiently, nominally and impatiently attached, whilst seeking an even better offer, and so on (*ubi bene ibi patria*), before virtual academic corporations (one-person or multi-person sized), in which the over-all cyber-economy incorporates the knowledge-commodity, knowledge-as-capital/academic-as-celebrity industry as a whole, finally take over, and the very denomination of “university” appears archaic, if not faintly comic, if it still has a “brand” or “image” appeal for physical or cyber-tourists (like the

¹⁷ Intense collaborative work via electronic systems, as in composition of texts, has been characterized as “hiving”, and some advanced modes as the “hive mind” (Don Byrd and Deek Owens “Writing in the hive mind” in Todd Taylor and Irene Ward (eds.) *Literacy theory in the age of the internet* NY 1998). If this were to spread even further, how can we go on having and rewarding Big Name and Superstars at universities? The hive itself, not the queen bees, should take the credit. But it seems not: we have here another cultural contradiction of academic capitalism, between the increasing, e-technologically stimulated and enabled collectivization of intellectual work and the winner-takes-all effect in rewards.

Beefeaters, or the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace, or the Queen's picture on postage stamps). They confidently assume that, even without tenure, they will enjoy some kind of immunity from the ravages of market fluctuations, their salaries always going up and up, or at worst staying put, and never down and down, or wavering erratically (in real terms, of course), as is the wont of the free market ! Loathing the civil service or *fonctionnaire* occupational framework (this seems a world-wide phenomenon), embracing the widening and deepening of the academic market, the full marketization of the universities, they somehow take for granted a lot of security for themselves, as their due (but what about others?). Where is the interpersonal consistency? And are they not mixing "rent-seeking" (protection, security, tenure), a Very Bad Thing, as economists have agreed since Anne Krueger coined the expression, with "profit-seeking" (top prizes and rising), a Very Good Thing? One is supposed to exclude the other!

The Age of Universities (late 11th c.- early 21st c.) in the West may be drawing to a close anyway: it had its great peaks in the 12th and the 19th-20th centuries, as well as its stagnant centuries, but finally the market and *technai* may take over completely, and not solely owing to brute, overwhelming outside political pressures, or "market forces", or "globalisation"¹⁸. Eventually, there may still be "academics" of sorts (or "knowledge entrepreneurs", or high-grade purveyors of "knowledge services", some of whom still claiming, perhaps, one wonders if without a tinge of embarrassment, lineal descent from the academics of yesteryear), but no longer academics-in-universities, no longer universities at all. Except hollowed-out ones, or, if you like, demystified universities, stripped of their mystical-cultural shell, the rational-market or business kernel finally plain to see, as some will say, both on the right and on the left, and sufficient unto itself. Eventually, there may be no-one able (even if they were so inclined) to write an elegy for academic England, for no-one will have any memories of how things were, no-one will know any better, or any different, or, in the Heideggerian terminology of Readings, no-one will knowingly remain "to dwell in the ruins" of the University.



Notes

¹⁸ Despite the considerable body of work on "long cycles" in politics and economics, ranging over millennia, published in the last two decades, including, but not confined to, "world-system" approaches, nothing seems to have been done on the universities from this secular patterns of change standpoint.

The former Labour Minister of Education referred to in the first paragraph is Mrs. Shirley Williams.

The Financial Times: leading article 15 January 2004. The Department of Education and Science has been renamed the Department for Education and Skills, but if the FT is right, and higher education is just about skills, it seems redundant to keep the word “education” in the title of the Ministry. For the last hundred years there have always been vocal businessmen who have advocated apprenticeship schemes instead of university expansion, in order to secure the “practical skills” needed for the workforce (for a very recent example of this so-often reiterated claim see the letter by a successful, knighted businessman/entrepreneur, Sir Terence Conran, in The Times 28 Jan 2004). “Skill” is obviously a term whose time and high-potency value has arrived..

One of the Prime Minister’s “hurrah words” (cf. T. D. Weldon THE VOCABULARY OF POLITICS) has long been “meritocracy”. It seems to be forgotten, by the PM and others, that the inventor of the word, and first analyst of the scenario, an independent intellectual (not a career academic), a nonpareil “social entrepreneur”, who originally conceived the idea of the Open University (amongst other valuable projects, some of which have lasted to the present day), Michael Young, in THE RISE OF THE MERITOCRACY, 1870-2030 - AN ESSAY ON EDUCATION AND EQUITY (London, 1958), envisaged this scenario as a dystopia, as an awful state of affairs which could arise if then-current trends towards evaluation by merit or psychometrically measured intelligence-plus-performance, justified as ensuring equality of opportunity and impartial, class-free, gender-neutral, etc. recognition of talent+performance were to swamp other criteria of social evaluation, as a true egalitarian such as he was, in the Tawney tradition (how obsolescent, if not how remote it appears now!), would have to. It is not clear to me whether one of the PM’s other major “hurrah words”, to wit, “fairness”, simply coincides, or at least overlaps substantially, with “meritocracy”. In any case, the pressure to enforce measured intelligence (IQs) as a criterion of selection, of admission to elite schools, or a major instrument of evaluation in education, a particular concern of that work, continues, psychometricians feeling doubtless rehabilitated even on the left, like the exponents of the “new eugenics” (hyperactive engineers and reengineers of the human), and the “new geopolitics”, who have shaken off their unpleasant historic even fascist associations. There are influential voices in Britain promoting a greater role for psychometrics in higher education and calling for the introduction of the SATs

(Scholastic Aptitude Tests), de rigueur in the US, as a criterion for university admission, presumably regarding the serious criticisms that have been advanced of the system in the US, which by itself has failed to improve the race profile of the composition of the studentry, especially at “elite universities”. It will be noted that 2030, the terminal date in Michael Young’s title, is not that far away. No rebellion of the low IQs such as that envisaged in the book, which overthrows the meritocratic society, is in sight, which is not to say that the structural tension between meritocracy and equality, psychometrics and humane concerns, will go away. Though something has been done to address ageism in the ageing societies of the West (on which topic Michael Young was especially interested), there is a very great deal more to be done.

The ranking of world universities, or at least of 500 of them, as well as 100 European, and 100 Asian, universities, in terms chiefly of science-productivity (science Nobels, publications in Science and Nature, lists in science and social science citation indexes), published recently by the Shiao Jong University of Shanghai (Institute of Higher Education), has provoked strong reactions in Germany and France. Neither country did very well in world terms, or even in European terms (amongst the fifty best European universities by those criteria, the top-ranked German university is number 10 on the list, in the case of France number 16). The German Chancellor has spoken of the need to have at least one German university on a par with Oxford or Cambridge (the second and first-ranked European universities respectively). In the case of France whose top-ranked university on a world scale is only 65th, the current financial plight of universities, and the sharp budgetary cuts of 2003/4, in addition to chronic underfunding, have triggered an even wider range of protests than usual (the French configuration is somewhat anomalous, as research is less university-focussed than elsewhere, given the CNRS and the chercheur status), and as in Germany, though to a lesser extent, the need to upgrade current university models emphasised to keep up with world technoscientific competition. Obviously the ranking is biased towards the hard sciences, with only some account taken of the social sciences and less of the humanities, and towards publications in English.

The UK scooped the first four places in the European list (Cambridge, Oxford, Imperial College London, University College London). On the world list, the placings of all four, but especially Cambridge and Oxford are very honourable, respectively 5 and 9. No country outside the US can

of course afford not to be very concerned about the future ranking of the very few of their universities that make it to top 100 or perhaps even the top 50 of the world list (the “Red Queen effect” of evolutionary theory). Perhaps the drop in student applications to US universities from the Middle East, China and Russia, and the difficulties of science researchers from those areas in even coming for conferences in the US, under the new passport procedures in the US, in the wake of 9/11, may turn the tide...

The notable work by the sociologist Paul Hollander *POLITICAL PILGRIMS- WESTERN INTELLECTUALS IN SEARCH OF THE GOOD SOCIETY* (NY 1981), published when the Cold War was still going strong, reviewed in a comprehensive fashion the vast corpus of ecstatic declarations of visitors, mostly intellectuals of one sort or another, Europeans and Americans, including some social and natural scientists, to the USSR and other Soviet-type countries (though similarly befuddled reports also were made by visitors to fascist and right-authoritarian regimes), reporting paradise on earth or utopia in the making, whom he compared to the pilgrims of old. A lesser work, as yet apparently unwritten, might address (toutes proportions gardées) the concept and survey the exemplary tales of the academic pilgrims, in an analogous sense to the “political pilgrims”, an eminently prolific species in the twentieth century, with their ecstatic reports on academia elsewhere, since WWII mostly regarding the American case (as European conceits of grotesquely unwarranted condescension were thoroughly shaken), though not only, political pilgrims, at any rate on travels to most places, having become quite unfashionable. Such one-sided -if not downright hyperbolic- reports fail to portray the full reality, the dark sides, the problematical features which necessarily attend even the best of the best in actual states of affairs. In any case materials for such a corpus would not be hard to find in any European country. (At times these gushing informal accounts are simply bathetic: one visitor to a top-notch social-scientific -or perhaps one should say behavioural-scientific- power-house, albeit one with a reputedly panoptic directorate, in the West Coast enthused also about the ocean, the beaches, the mountains ... My goodness!. I would like to say that we have all these in Lisbon, the westernmost port in the Eurasian landmass... True, the libraries are not nearly as good, to put it mildly, in the social sciences, for example...

One important feature of the American university system, for example, that the pilgrims never refer to (as far as I know), and they never emphasise diversity and how to achieve or sustain it, is the presence of Catholic, Calvinist, Baptist, Jewish (religious and non-religious) universities of some distinction, yet the diversity –in this case the religious diversity, which also enhances the variety of ideals universities are informed by- is an impressive feature not replicated in the UK. If diversity is a good thing (not just religious diversity of course), and generally it is supposed to be, surely it ought to be taken into account as well as inclusiveness, equity, “excellence” and so on, in appraising the university system of a particular country: why is it never considered? Perhaps a ranking of national university systems should take diversity into account, through doubtless the indicators may be less easily metricized than those say for publications in a few top journals, the number of science Nobels, patents, etc.

Veblen’s book, *THE HIGHER LEARNING IN AMERICA*, though published in 1918 (and much of it written by 1916), was already of and about the Gilded Age. But, as the mainstream American economist Paul Krugman pointed out recently, America is undergoing a second Gilded Age, with the levels of income inequality matching those of the earlier one, and indeed exceeding them (the *bons mots* about historical repetition don’t seem appropriate), the absolute levels of private wealth being much higher than at any time in history (with limitations arising from “positional goods” of various sorts) and with more billionaires than ever before. This development has surprised those economists and sociologists who had theorized that personal income inequality would decline, and even undergo steady if slow decline, in industrial capitalist economies through structural reasons as absolute wealth per capita increased (as in the famous long-term curvilinear “Kuznets Hypothesis”, backed by a most copious range of cross-national historical-statistical data), something which appeared to be increasingly confirmed in Western societies from 1945 until the 1980s. It seems that the Second Gilded Age follows the “Golden Age” of the capitalist welfare state from the 1940s to the 1970s (so termed by Eric Hobsbawm), or what the French called the *trente glorieuses* (Veblen’s book, incidentally, is available in its entirety on the Internet). Is the turn to increasing income and wealth inequality in advanced capitalist countries, the striking now two decades-long reversal of the Kuznets hypothesis, here to stay? In academia it is gathering momentum, seems irresistible and still proceeding to greater and greater income differentials.

If universities are just businesses, with their top people in general less well paid than in other businesses, it is not surprising that, for example, there is an acute shortage of top physicians and biomedics willing to teach in universities, thereby creating anxieties about the future of medical education and the National Health Service in the UK. If there is nothing distinctive about universities any more, being businesses like any others, in terms of their organization, operation and aims, self-image and public image, only paying less well than others in most cases, if the cultural prestige of the academy no longer beckons as a compensation, why indeed should top-earners in the non-university market teach at universities? The marketisation of the NHS has not made the lot of nurses more satisfactory, for the emigration of qualified nurses reaches worrying proportions, compensated only by the entry of foreign nurses.

A recent account of American biomedicine, by a medical practitioner and bioethicist, points to a similar disinclination to teach academic medicine, given the greater rewards of researchers. It also notes the disintegration of multispecialty group practices where salary equality was the norm owing to the differentials expected by specialists, with the result that “[d]octors were no longer all colleagues, all in it together,(...) no longer had a sense of shared goals or ideals or of professional solidarity” and “productivity figures became the name of the game” (John D. Lantos *Do we still need doctors? A physician’s personal account of practising medicine today* NY 1997, p. 25). He goes on to say that the prevailing American health care “nonsystem” “encourages physicians to look after their own interests. Self-interest is fashionable. Greed is good. We are all supposed to trust the invisible hand of the market to organize these competing selfishnesses into lower prices, higher quality, and responsiveness to the preferences of consumers...(..)[f]aith in the market allows us to avoid asking questions about what a health care system should look like or the role that doctors ought to play in it “ (do., p.26). One could also say that faith in the market, or the pressures towards sweeping marketisation, stop anyone asking more probing questions about the aims and values of the universities.

The case of citations, especially in books, reveals, at least in British sociology, a condition of astonishing drab conformity, where a maximum of five or six names –well, not more than ten or so- scoop a very substantial, hugely disproportionate oceans of references, across the entire spectrum of publications, about every subject on earth, yielding an overall impression of a vastly

repetitive, monotonous intellectual or sub-intellectual panorama or a kind of huge interminable echolalia, as if self-doomed to inhabit a never-ending aural Platonic cave, as if only comfortable in a monoglottic monoculture of the mind. Of course, it is part of a general cultural trend, nicely diagnosed as long ago as 1959 by the American historian of ideas Jacques Barzun, in a still very relevant work of cultural criticism and exposure of the sorry condition of intellectual life in our time, as seen in the American universities and high culture circles of the time (deservedly reprinted in 2002), as the “Paragon Complex” (*The House of Intellect*), the disposition to believe that there must be a single, uniquely determined best thinker in every field and subfield, without fail, and once discovered (or once one is told by one’s teacher, or faction capo), that’s that. This was once very marked in Soviet countries, but it has spread most successfully to capitalist countries, where it has been flourishing unabated for some time.

The ravages of the “paragon complex” can be seen also in various branches of the humanities, not least philosophy (though this has scientific pretensions from time to time), except that in these areas there are perhaps more such obsessional cultic references to recent DWAMs or Dead White American males (Rawls, Nozick, Quine, Davidson: how small the canon is!) than to DWEMs, Dead White European Males, though also live ones such as Derrida. On the strategies that helped secure extraterritorial rights as it were for “French theory” in the US the lengthy paper by Michèle Lamont is instructive (“How to become a dominant French philosopher: the case of Jacques Derrida” *American Journal of Sociology* 93 1997, no. 3 (Nov.): 584-622).

It seems all too likely that all the negative features I pointed to will be intensified as marketization of the universities, of their structure and their spirit (not that they would necessarily claim to have one), proceeds.

Regarding primary schools, the scenario has already been advanced in the UK of schools whose teaching staff would consist solely of (very well-paid) headmasters and low-qualified, low-paid classroom assistants (a move towards a kind of Benthamite panopticon?), pending robotization, for these tasks would not require a particularly high-grade version of robo sapiens, but of the sort that may be flooding the market within a decade or two, since there will be robots available for every management requirement. One can well imagine this scenario being extrapolated, mutatis

mutandis, to secondary schools (next in line, surely) and even to “higher education” (to use the old terminology), indeed to all “educational businesses”, or perhaps, the word “education” being on the way out, “learning businesses”, or “(intellectual) skill-enhancing facilities”, private or public.

Since the first version of this text (including the foregoing paragraph) was written and conveyed to a few persons at the end of 2003, things robotic have moved on even faster than I had anticipated. The “world-class” science periodical Nature (15 January 2004) has published a paper on the “robot scientist”, or what others have called ther SciBot (short for “Scientist Robot”), the issue of a combination of work on Artificial Intelligence in discovery software, or “machine learning” and on robotics, which can perform genetic analyses, more specifically, the function of specific yeast genes, as accurately and effectively as a human, and indeed more cost-effectively than human scientists. The automated system, once fed data (as a human reading articles on a given topic), originates hypotheses, devises experiments to test the hypotheses, runs the experiments on its associated lab robot, interprets the results as rebutting or corroborating the hypotheses, and restarts the cycle in the former case (Ross D. King and seven other authors, all at the University of Wales “Functional genomic hypothesis generation and experimentation by a robot scientist” in the cited number of Nature, pp. 247-252). This may be a significant step towards the automation of some phases of scientific labour, perhaps enabling at least many tasks of research assistants and varied sorts of time-consuming, mind-numbing, academic Mcwork to be foregone, in the never ending pursuit of downsizing by market-driven academic/university “corporations”. The Times Higher Education Supplement 16 January 2004 reports this development, as described in the just-mentioned article in Nature, under the auspicious heading “robo-don’s debut”. Will there be a conference soon, perhaps financed by the likes of Disney, Coca Cola, McDonald’s or Microsoft, on the automation (robotization) of scientific labour, of research labour, above all perhaps of laboratory work and life (of the “production-line” lab, the lab-factory), and eventually the automation (robotization) of a substantial chunk of the research university (affording yet another gloss to the expressions “degree factories” or “knowledge factories”)? The “robot scientist” has already been baptized though the current model, capable as it already is, is only a start in the new mode of production of science uncontaminated by the human intellect as well as by human hands.

An editorial in Nature, in the same issue, commenting on the article in question (p. 181) draws an analogy with the history of clerical labour in the service sector, with the mechanization of routine lab tasks, freeing graduate students, apprentice scientists or young scientists generally for more creative tasks, allowing more time to make the “high-level creative leaps at which they excel”: a not terribly inspiring analogy, for the historical record on the trials of clerical labour is very mixed indeed, though they may be right that postgrads and postdocs may be freed from the more mind-numbing tasks, since they have certainly been used at times as a cheap source of menial labour. Clearly a new subfield of Labour Process Theory –what one might call Scientific Labour Process theory- awaits development: the “technological unemployment” of scientific-technological labour, as robot-deploying scientific intelligence programs reach higher and wider in terms of cognitive capacities and greater than human cost-effectiveness, may recapitulate a familiar story... Where will the process of mechanization of the scientific labour process, the freeing of brainpower, end? Cost-effectiveness might provide sufficient impetus for it to be pursued for a very long time. After all, the SciBot “can work all day and all night without labour costs”. Besides, SciBot could also save time and money in drug development. We await the development of SocSciBots or Social Science Robots (doing a lot of the boring work in econometrics and modelling perhaps), and perhaps also HumBots, or Human Sciences Robots (with further progress in machine translation?). “To free your brainpower for more creative work”...

The robotic or cyborg research university (not the research into robots or cyborgs as such, but the carrying out of research by intelligent and ever more intelligent computerized robots and other sophisticated AI and cyborgic machines), the Robo-University, or the Cyborg University, might well solve some problems of public or private finance, though in a cyborg world perhaps all bets are off. Especially if professorial superstars could be “downloaded” or eventually “uploaded” onto intelligent-spiritual machines (recently theorized in such apocalyptic terms by Ray Kurzweil and the Transhumanist movement), once they have reached their peak (pending further advances in regenerative medicine, or high-quality life extension, which on their salaries they might well be able to afford), or got too greedy (all universities, after all, work under a budget constraint, and not only just for those with academic Mcjobs!)...[I have written on some of these matters

concerning intelligent-spiritual machines elsewhere, e.g. in “Aceleração, tecnogénese e experimentum humanum” in Hermínio Martins and José Luís Garcia (orgs.) *Dilemas da civilização tecnológica*, Lisboa, Imprensa das Ciências Sociais, 2003, pp. 19-77].

The distinction between private and public universities is becoming so blurred, that Britain, for example, with only one self-proclaimed small private university, may come to have nothing but universities that aim to be as “private” as possible with Government goading and sanctions, universities private in the substance, if not the form, all encompassed by pervasive market-speak and managerialese, putative CEOs and “mission statements”. In Japan, as from April 2004, the national universities will become “corporations” in fact and in law, able to charge what they will for their services: the UK is going down this path, even if in the absence of further legislation, some universities may have to declare “independence”. In the US, of course, the distinction has been partly eroded by the increasing proportion of total research funds accruing to private universities from Federal sources, which makes them live off the Federal Government as well as from endowments and donations whilst state universities lack endowments and State governments can often be ungenerous or unable to provide sufficient funds to obviate the deterioration of real salaries and facilities. Pay freezes and redundancies have made a greater impact on state than on private universities.

A case of professorial super-star elevation that made it to the New York Times (October 27, 2003, op-ed piece by an academic, David L. Kirp, entitled “How much for that professor?”) was the hiring of an Oxford Fellow, the historian Niall Ferguson, by New York University, with a very good salary and facilities (plus a lighter teaching load, etc.), who then accepted another appointment within six months, to Harvard, for an even better salary and facilities (where he may still be as I write, having peaked in the academic world market, or there being no further academic-financial heights to aspire to). Something of a latter-day Polybius (perhaps self-consciously so), he is the author of a long, enthusiastic study of the British Empire (savaging along the way a number of its classic critics), which also enjoins America to fulfil its own, even more arduous, more far-reaching, imperial vocation, but then Harvard University Press also brought out the no less notorious work co-authored by the philosopher-activist of the “ultra-left”, Antonio Negri (charged, rightly or wrongly, with complicity in political terrorism in Italy,

imprisoned for a number of years, and still under house arrest: cf. Negri on Negri, N.Y., 2003) and an American scholar of comparative literature at Duke University, Michael Hardt, with the same title, but with a quite different outlook on matters imperial, to put it mildly, now available in paperback from the same Press (obviously selling very well, which is what matters in the world of “one market under God”, or shall we say the One Big Hive of world-academia and world-knowledge, the latter-day avatar of Wells’s World Brain).

Whether “postmodernists of the Chair” (postmodernism, at least in some versions, is perhaps the most professorialized of all the intellectual modes of recent decades), “Marxists of the Chair”, “Empire Vindicators of the Chair” (to paraphrase the famous case of the late nineteenth century Kathedersozialisten), it is not really ideology or “loyalty” in the “clash of civilizations”, or “Americanism” which is at issue (at least within pretty broad limits). Be that as it may, it is surprising that, in the light of recent events alone, and the doctrinal florescence of neo-conservatism (though it must not be forgotten that a number of neoconservative thinkers with military experience and of military rank, have taken a principled stand against the recent military incursions of empire), that the academic field of Imperial Studies, or American Imperial Studies, has not been opened up, with a proliferation of Masters programmes and Chairs, eventually full-fledged departments, newsletters, journals, yearbooks, websites, awards, nominations, prizes, conferences, societies, discussion groups, etc., to join the programmes (or “programs”) of Post-colonial Studies, Subaltern Studies, Dependency Theory, and what not...perhaps only a question of time. One can just picture the immediate contributions of rhetoricians, tropologists, semioticians, postmodernists, geopolitics experts, deconstructionists, social constructivists of many hues, Derrideans, Heideggerians, Deleuzeans, Bruno Latour, etc., as well as of course neo-liberal economists of many, many sub-schools, psychometricians, straight historians, science apostles, neo-conservatives, or post-neo-conservatives, politicologues, Stanley Hoffman, possibly new eugenicists, etc., to such an eventually booming field... After all, they would be addressing a military empire, an “empire of ideals” (President Reagan), an “empire of capital”, an empire of the media, an empire of dreams (cultural commentators have long written of the “Californization of the dreams of the world”), an empire of science, an empire of the mind and the imagination, an empire of “no-place” (Negri & Hardt), etc. etc. It is just as easy to imagine the tables of contents of the first issues of the future Quarterly Journal of Imperial Studies (with supplements), with

such a cast, in English, of course, ... to be published by Routledge, Blackwells or Sage...available on-line also for subscribers... Now which multibillionaire or great corporation will endow the first Chair in such a manifestly deserving field, likely to enjoy a bright future, surely, and which university will first seek or receive such a benefaction? It is sheer, incomprehensible, cultural inertia in an age of speed-ups, acceleration, and acceleration of acceleration, that no such things appear to have come to pass as yet. Though if you really want to think big (Soros, I fear, might not be willing or able to give nearly enough for a project of this scale), why not launch a “Project Empire”, as the Manhattan Project of the social or behavioural sciences of the 21st century? Doesn't the Reality Principle count any more in the social sciences?

Of course, none of this is completely new. I remember meeting a distinguished academic many years ago who, without prompting from me, or anyone else, described himself to me as the best-paid professor of political science in the US at the time (alas, I never meet such people any more, nor would I know who the current counterpart is). Though the game “I-am-better-paid-than-you-lot” may become the academic game par excellence, together with ever-bigger-grantsmanship and “my-publications-weigh-x grams or x kilos more-than-yours”, and my “transfer fee” therefore will be bigger than yours...(and in the case of professorial stars, as against football stars, paid to the recruit in full: one economist was paid 300000 dollars “upfront” to move from Harvard to Columbia plus carte blanche in his new department). Perhaps the “truce” in the “star wars” of academia –the competitive bidding for academic celebrities, in the manner of top football players (a paradigm-case in economic analysis of “winner-takes-all” effects)- called for by some American academic commentators, like Prof. David Kirp, together with a renewed emphasis on the importance of teaching, might bring about a better atmosphere, especially if the truce were to hold not only within the US but in transatlantic connexions, but, however desirable, it seems unlikely to come about in the foreseeable future (an economist of distinction has written of the importance of the “economics of atmosphere” in organizations, but, alas, he didn't expand on the topic). Calls for “loyalty” to institutions are equally implausible and likely to go unheard (unless one means by “loyalty” just “brand loyalty”), if the institutions themselves have become thoroughly marketized anyway, or are unwilling (or too fearful, or too lacking in conviction) to assert the critical importance of nonmarket values and ideals for their very being, both in practice and in discourse, by explicitly and emphatically rejecting marketspeak as the monopoly language

of the times. Otherwise, the University of Transiency, as I have called it (or the University of Maximum Throughput, with the emphasis on the speedy productivity and fast turnover which is the hallmark of the cyber-science world [on which I have written elsewhere, e.g. “Tecnociência e arte” in Carlos Leone (org.) *Rumo ao cibermundo?* Oeiras, 2000]), with everyone here today, gone tomorrow, the faster the better, will become increasingly the “normal” mode of university life.

There appears to be (in English at any rate) an astonishing dearth if not a total absence of works on the philosophy and theology of the contemporary university, despite a distinguished tradition of such writing at least until the 1950s (such philosophers as write on university questions, oddly enough, appear to write solely on university finance, admissions, etc., and not at all in a distinctly philosophical vein). Yet the rise of professional academic philosophy was accompanied by a galaxy of writings on the philosophy, metaphysics, theology of the university by a number of the greatest philosophers of the time in the German lands of the early nineteenth-century (many of these texts, by Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher and others, were brought together in the very useful French collection *Philosophies de l'université*) in the epoch of the neo-Humanist model of the Humboldtian University, or what Bill Readings called “Humboldt’s University of Culture”, which was perhaps the single most influential model of the university in the last two centuries in Europe and the Americas, until the American university model supplanted it. Note, however, that some features of German universities, such as the *Lehrfreiheit/Lernfreiheit* principles, the “freedom to learn” coupled with the “freedom to teach”, enabling students to move from university to university with considerable ease, thus enabling many students, such as the young Leo Strauss, to desert their teachers, having heard rumours of the genius of Heidegger, have only been replicated sporadically and partially, even in America.

From that time till the 1940s, such writings by academic philosophers on the character, ethos, ideals, mission (before this ancient word, as used in Ortega’s classic *THE MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY*, was stolen by managerialese) of the University appeared from time to time in Germany, not least in the Weimar period of “mandarin” exaltation, reported at length by Fritz Ringer, and earlier summarized by Frederic Lilje. Max Weber’s famous lecture to university students on “Science as a vocation” elicited a number of replies and critiques by eminent

philosophers and cultural critics which provide a sense how the ideals of the university were viewed in the 1920s in Weimar Germany (the major texts of this controversy were collected for the first time in any language and translated into English for the first time in Irving Velody, Peter Lassman, Herminio Martins (eds.) *Max Weber's "science as a vocation"* London 1996). After contributions from the likes of Scheler and Spranger, the nadir was reached with the notorious Rectoral Address by Heidegger, which was concerned solely with the "tasks" of the German university of the time, though the main thrust since the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in the contributions of very many of the leading philosophers of the time, had been to defend the Humboldtian University against multiple threats, scientific and demotic, as they saw them.

In the last few decades I cannot recall any such work in Anglophonia by "professional" academic philosophers (if they do write about academic questions it is not as philosophers). Still, some works of a distinctly philosophical cast and with titles like The university in ruins (no less!), this one a notable work by a postmodernist scholar in the humanities, to my mind the most outstanding of the literature, a posthumous work by the Canadian academic Bill Readings (who died in 1994), published by Harvard University Press in 1996, which most certainly deserves to be read, and whose memory should remain in our minds: the message that we have "to dwell in the ruins of the university" or at least the Humboldtian University of Culture, may not answer all our questions, and the echoes of the late Heidegger not to everyone's taste, but it certainly an improvement on the enthusiastic immersion in the current business tide. The university appears to have virtually faded out as a topic for philosophical inquiry or even exhortation, at least as professional philosophers are concerned, if not philosophy as a wider pursuit. Whether this reveals the futility, or perhaps the timorousness, the awful careerism, the polytheism of values, or indeed the atheism of ideals, of academic philosophy in Anglophonia, or, conversely, the seeming irrelevance of the university to philosophical inquiry any more, now that market-speak rules, a question for another day (the philosopher Russell Keat's carefully argued book on the question of market and non-market provision of cultural goods is very relevant, however: *Cultural goods and the limits of the market* NY 2000). Since the demise of Universities Quarterly two decades ago, there has been no serious reflective scholarly medium for the consideration of the non-financial, non-business issues pertaining to the contemporary University in the UK (and this

may be true in all of Anglophonia). Perhaps any day there will appear its residuary legatee, the Review of the Knowledge Industry - Academic Division, elite universities, UK ... to be published by Blackwells, Routledge or Sage, available also on-line for subscribers... though perhaps only on-line, for daily if not hourly updating, given the ever-rising tide of “knowledge”, to which I cannot put a precise scientometric or bibliometric figure, but worldwide it may run into tens of thousands of peer-reviewed papers per day ...

Curiously, though there has been a great boom in business ethics, and the university is business, nothing much of recent provenance seems available on the ethics of academia, or the ethics of scholarship, let alone the ethics of academic reviewing (now there’s a virgin field, at any rate with a lot of scope for reflection, not to mention intervention in the interests of virtually moribund fair play, in this area!). Even if the field were to blossom, one cannot equate philosophy with ethics, let alone with the applied or practical, casuistized version of ethics which is the typical version in business schools and the like. It is true that (academic) philosophy has recently been rebaptized as a mode of “engineering” (*sophia* as *techne* ?), yes, literally so, and maybe something will be published soon by one of the practitioners of philosophy-as-engineering on something like (re)engineering the “soul” of the corporate university, though with downsizing, as few faculty bodies as possible (except the mechanical bodies of “robo-dons”, of which kind there could be plenty).

Anyday now (if it has not already occurred, which is not unlikely) God will be referred to as the Supreme Entrepreneur, or as the Sovereign CEO of CEOs: there are of course precedents for this sort of discourse, not least in the US, dating back to the nineteenth century.

An engineer who became a sociologist of science in the constructivist interest, came to write a little book disputing the existence of “society” (after all if “nature” goes... and “Man” is dead, preceded in death by God), and finally became a Professor of Marketing at Oxford University’s Business School. There is then no “society”, but most certainly there are markets, markets to be conquered and to be taught about, and to have remunerated Chairs on (from the social construction of reality to the deconstruction of society to the vindication of the market). One recalls that Peter Berger who famously co-authored The social construction of reality (which

some philosophers viewed as “The social destruction of reality”) subsequently became an indefatigable advocate of the “capitalist revolution” everywhere, a staunch enemy of enemies of the market. The turn to market zealotry in sociology is definitely a topic for investigation, though the conceptual dissolution of “society” runs beyond this stream to include ex-Marxists and sundry others.

A recent opinion survey in France published in Le Figaro Magazine, shows that while receptivity to market forms in the public domain has increased, there is still a substantial majority in favour of security of tenure for civil servants, and therefore for academics insofar as they still enjoy a civil service status (the over-all majority on this particular issue was not particularly left-biassed).

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