

(un)Ordering Intellectual Freedom

Andrew Dickson and Ozan Alakavuklar

*What does my manager want?
If only he knew.
At least then, enslaved, I could exert control.
I could respond to my master.
Instead he is a pseudo, a semblance.
A doppelgänger, but what does he resemble?*

From our perspective, as scholars in one of the most contemporary divisions of university (the Business School), theorising intellectual freedom requires theorising managerialism and how the doctrine of the manager places a particular order on the processes and products of intellectual work. Following a range of scholars we would argue that intellectuals find themselves subject to the alienating forces of managerialism regardless of their institutional position, and are compelled to excrete intellectual products that serve primarily the interests of managers, rather than the interests of freedom.

With the introduction of neoliberal policies as a socio-economic project, managerialism emerged as a technical and ideological apparatus to order the university (Davies, Gottsche & Bansel, 2006; Lerner and Le Heron, 2005). In contrast to collegial models based ostensibly on merit and scholarship, managerialism came to fore to manage academics and academic work along with a business language interwoven around corporate culture, entrepreneurship, performance indicators and corporate citizenship (Deem, 1998; O'Byrne and Bond, 2014). With the discourse of accountability, managerialism continues to create its own legitimacy via ranking systems, performance plans, auditing regimes, quality measures and seemingly endless

reforms and change programs (Lynch, 2014).

Notwithstanding the various and multiple impacts of managerialism on the idea of university, one of the critical issues is the desire of managerial authority to 'order' our scholarship by possessing decision-making processes (Djelic, 2012). This is not new to 'management' considering its functional focus and its ethos around control, yet we question whether universities or 'knowledge production' can in fact be ordered, without critically wounding their foundational apparatus, namely intellectual freedom. Senior management teams (particularly their obsessional drive towards the mysterious efficiency and effectiveness) require academics to produce knowledge in specifically ordered way: Continuously publish in top ranked journals; otherwise you may be unworthy for us (Roberts, 2007). That is what in fact PBRF (in NZ) and similar ranking systems do to us – they impose order. Overall, the intellectual freedom that drives scholarship is being gradually drained as more and more academics come into line with 'the order', similarly the critic and conscience role of the university is being flattened instead to feed the publication machine. The managerial caste is attempting to order the desire of knowledge into a simple control measure.

What might be the saviour of intellectual freedom from the hands of the managerial order? For this we need a *disorder*, or perhaps more subversively written, an *unorder*. For us this is the promise and threat inherent in Lacan's discourse of the hsyteric (Lacan, 2007). This chimaeric enigma (Wajcman, 2003) is not absent from theorising in our field of organisation studies, with many previous studies pointing to the potentiality (see for instance Alakavuklar, Dickson & Stablein, 2016; Sköld, 2010 and Fotaki & Harding, 2013). In our final few sentences we want to extend this in the direction of 'what we might do' to unorder intellectual freedom from the ordering effects of managerialism. We'll start with what Joan Copjec has said in relation to the supposed gaze of the Other:

Lacan does not ask you to think of the gaze as belonging to an Other who cares about what or where you are, who pries, keeps tabs on your whereabouts, and takes note of all your steps and missteps, as the panoptic gaze is said to do. When you encounter the gaze of the Other, you meet not a seeing eye but a blind one. The gaze is not clear or penetrating, not filled with knowledge or recognition; it is clouded over and turned back on itself, absorbed in its own enjoyment (1994, p. 36).

The manager's gaze is thus exposed as a semblance, he resembles the phantasmatic master, his eye firmly upon our efforts, his gaze panoptical,

sweeping the field, always seeing. But this is all a phallusy – in fact his gaze is a fiction – instead he is entrenched, a false entry on his own imaginary balance sheet. Perhaps intellectual freedom then becomes the task of the hysteric, as always in hysteria, the agent that generates knowledge. There is some specificity to this hysterical task for us modern day ‘Business School’ academics; that is pointedly probing the wafer-thin veneer that shields the case for managerial authority over other systems of order, thus making space for the unordering trauma of the Real and its subsequent radical potential for intellectual freedom.

Alakavuklar, O., Dickson, A. and Stablein, R., 2016. The alienation of scholarship in modern business schools: from Marxist material relations to the Lacanian subject. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, pp.amle-2015.

Copjec, J., 1994. *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists*. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.

Davies, B., Gottsche, M., & Bansel, P. 2006. The rise and fall of the neo-liberal university. *European Journal of Education*, 41 (2): 305-319.

Deem, R. 1998. ‘New managerialism’ and higher education: The management of performances and cultures in universities in the United Kingdom. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 8, 47-70.

Djelic, M-L. 2012. Scholars in the audit society: Understanding our contemporary iron cage. In L. Engwall (Ed.), *Scholars in Action: Past-Present-Future*, 97-121. Edita Västra Aros: Uppsala.

Fotaki, M. and Harding, N., 2013. Lacan and sexual difference in organization and management theory: Towards a hysterical academy?. *Organization*, 20 (2): 153-172

Lacan, J. 2007. *The seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XVII: The other side of psychoanalysis* (R. Grigg, Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Larner, W., & Le Heron, R. 2005. Neo-liberalizing spaces and subjectivities: reinventing New Zealand universities. *Organization*, 12 (6): 843-862.

Lynch, K. 2014. Control by numbers: new managerialism and ranking in higher education. *Critical Studies in Education*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2014.949811>

O'Byrne, D. & Bond C. 2014. Back to the future: the idea of a university revisited, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 36:6, 571-584

Roberts, P. 2007. Neoliberalism, performativity and research. *Review of Education*, 53: 349-365.

Sköld, D.E., 2010. The other side of enjoyment: short-circuiting marketing and creativity in the experience economy. *Organization*, 17(3), pp.363-378.

Wajcman, G. (2003). The hysteric's discourse. *The Symptom: Online Journal for Lacan.com*, 4 (Spring). <http://www.lacan.com/hystericdisc.htm>