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Abstract

This article argues that development of the modern university in many ways mirrors that of the modern state. Over time it has become increasingly centralized and bureaucratic with power passing from its members to the central administration. This has led to a bureaucratization of the university mind. In turn this has increased the tendency of universities to more extreme forms of scholasticism. The consequence is the creation of knowledge which is removed from the wider world and which mirrors its bureaucratic nature. In such a world there can be no true creativity or beauty. The only way to reverse this trend is create smaller, flexible entities which seek to maximize their creative potential.

Keywords

end, scholasticism, beauty, bureaucracy, australian, universities

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AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES: BUREAUCRACY, SCHOLASTICISM AND THE END OF BEAUTY

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ABSTRACT. This article argues that development of the modern university in many ways mirrors that of the modern state. Over time it has become increasingly centralised and bureaucratic with power passing from its members to the central administration. This has led to a bureaucratisation of the university mind. In turn this has increased the tendency of universities to more extreme forms of scholasticism. The consequence is the creation of knowledge which is removed from the wider world and which mirrors its bureaucratic nature. In such a world there can be no true creativity or beauty. The only way to reverse this trend is create smaller, flexible entities which seek to maximise their creative potential.

Keywords: universities; bureaucracy; scholasticism; creativity

When one surveys the condition of Australian universities one is often gripped by a sense of despair and hopelessness about that condition and the possibility of changing it. For their first one hundred years Australian universities were relatively small. For example in 1940 the University of Sydney had a total enrolment of 4,079 students of whom 810 were Evening students, who were taught by 179 full time academic staff and 222 part-time lecturers (Turney, Bygott and Chippendale, 1981: 644, 646). Since that time they have become leviathans. By 2011 the University of Sydney had 49,020 students, some 2,000 full time academic staff and 3,000 administrative staff.¹ A large organisation is invariably driven by organisational imperatives which, in the modern world, mean the triumph of bureaucracy, conformity and a diminishing desire to allow intellectual activity which does not conform to the established way of doing things. In my experience academics, even those who profess to be radical in theory, are extraordinarily conservative in practice being as they are the products of a large bureaucratic

machine. It would be astonishing if anything much in the way of genuine creativity were to come out of such institutions. One consequence of the bureaucratic temper of the universities is that they tend to produce works which accord with that temper. This means that the proclivity for scholasticism, at once the strength and the great vice of universities, is accentuated. What falls by the wayside is any desire to create things of beauty.

One of the real problems facing the contemporary university is that these bureaucratic imperatives come both from within the ever expanding central administration of those universities and from their ultimate master, the Commonwealth government. One forgets that originally universities were associations of scholars, in their earliest days in the twelfth century hired and fired by the students who they taught (Berman, 1983: 120-131). Even if power eventually was vested in the hands of the scholars, all this meant was that universities were essentially guilds of scholars who ran their own affairs. The entry into such guilds was to be awarded a Master's degree, in the same way as there were Master builders; but there was also a sense of relative equality amongst those who had become guild members. It would be true to say that universities were rarely at the centre of creative intellectual developments and that their characteristic intellectual mode was scholasticism. After all, their main purpose was a mixture of professional training and the study and preservation of those classical texts which had been handed down in the West from Antiquity.

Even in the early twentieth century power within universities was still relatively diffused with a degree of autonomy allowed to its various elements. Universities still bore a resemblance to the medieval guilds which was the model on which they were formed; students still matriculated so that they could be enrolled in a bachelor's degree. The first major changes came in the nineteenth century, first in Germany, and then in America, as universities sought to professionalise themselves and become research institutions (Marsden, 1994). This was often accompanied by a belief that the knowledge produced by universities should be used to benefit the state, such that academics could reconstruct themselves as individuals contributing to the public good by providing knowledge which would allow the state to create a better world. The mere preservation of the knowledge and wisdom of humanity was given a much lower priority; universities were meant to create the knowledge which would create a better future, not look back to an idealised past. The partnership between university and state in Australia was symbolised by the fact that the new universities of the twentieth century were no longer named after the cities in which they were placed but the states which they were meant to serve, including Queensland and Western Australia.

It can be argued that from the early twentieth century the universities of Australia were in the process of indicating their willingness to become the tools of the Australian state.² Their role was to engage in nation building and the growth of Australian democracy. Philosopher John Anderson was the most scathing critic of this development, but his response of cultivating intellectual purity in the face of what he saw as the development of the 'servile state' strikes one today as being self-defeating (Anderson, 1980). The point is that in the small Australian world of the first half of the twentieth century none of the possibilities of this relationship between universities and the Australian state were realised. It sat in embryo for well over fifty years. The possibility that it would blossom was increased as the Commonwealth government assumed responsibility for funding the universities and hence the opportunity to use its financial power to control them.

When it did come it was seen as something new and different. It has only really been in the past twenty five years that the full implications of this partnership between university and state in Australia based on the financial control of the Commonwealth have been realised. The consequence has been a process of 'double centralisation'. Firstly there has been a centralisation of control in the hands of the Commonwealth government, much in line with many other aspects of public policy. What has been rather sudden, and perhaps unexpected, has been the centralisation of power within the modern university away from the people who teach and research, and hence possess first-hand knowledge of what is happening, both in their areas of study and in relation to students, and towards the university bureaucracy on top of which, like some Absolute Monarch, sits the Vice Chancellor, only now such people would often prefer to be called presidents.

These changes within universities mimic the growth of the modern state which was originally relatively decentralised and required the cooperation of local figures who spoke on behalf of their locality to function properly. Over time these figures were transformed from being the spokespeople of those around them to being the representatives of the central government (Braddick, 2000: 230-231). They became the servants of the state. One can see the same pattern in contemporary universities as deans and the like cease to be the defenders of their areas of study and become agents of the central administration. Their role is re-defined to mean the implementation of policy determined by the central administration.

In other words universities are becoming increasingly despotic organisations run by the equivalent of the Stuart Kings but with no equivalent of Parliament to challenge that rule. There are many reasons why this is the case. One is simply organisational growth. As has been argued universities are now huge organisations that are difficult to run using the

somewhat ramshackle measures inherited from the Middle Ages. They have been allowed to follow the path of bureaucracy and central control as if it were a natural process. For institutions composed of people who dedicate their lives to the life of the mind they have devoted surprisingly little intellectual energy to considering the issue of organisational growth and how it could occur while also maintaining the intellectual and organisational autonomy of its component parts.

The second reason is that universities, especially in Australia, have only limited institutional autonomy and must be prepared to do the bidding of the government of the day. The Commonwealth funds the universities; the Commonwealth can tell them what to do. They can be pushed and pulled and ultimately made to conform. The Absolute Monarch, despite being paid an enormous salary, turns out to be no more than a local prince, or satrap, who must, in turn, obey his or her masters.

The triumph of the state over the universities in Australia can be illustrated in a number of ways. One of the most insidious expressions of the desire to integrate the universities so that they become the tools of the government can be seen most clearly in the way the Australian Research Council (ARC) operates. The ARC is the central funding agency for research in Australian universities in non-medical areas. For many academics it is perhaps their sole source of external research funding. This gives the ARC enormous power of which it makes considerable use. The ARC defines what research means and what types of research are acceptable, including what sorts of publications count for the purposes of university funding. If one publishes in general magazines such as *Quadrant*, newspapers that people actually read, encyclopaedias and certain other types of publication, the work has no value as far as the ARC is concerned. Universities receive no money for these publications and consequently have no real interest in them. This is despite the reality that articles in general publications, including newspapers, are far more likely to be read by, and to be influential on, politicians, public servants and opinion makers.

Moreover the ARC has a fetish about research grants. They are far more highly regarded than publications. Getting the money to do research is far more important than actually doing it. Doing research in an economical fashion, and hence saving the taxpayer money, is less important than receiving a grant that has lots of money attached to it that enables one to do the work in as expensive a fashion as possible. Huge amounts of money are awarded for research projects in areas such as philosophy which do not require much in the way of field or archival work. One wonders on what, for example, a grant of \$300,000 or \$400,000 to study a particular philosopher would be spent. The point is that such grants are 'trophies' rather than money required to conduct research. The irony is that ARC grants in the

Humanities are increasing in size just at the time when digital resources have made a lot of such research much cheaper to do. One can now read in the comfort of one's office on a computer what once required visiting many libraries. To give an example, writing in 1948 in the Preface to his *Political Economy in Australia: Historical Studies*, J A La Nauze notes that "In Australia the physical obstacles to study which requires other merely local material are considerable" (La Nauze, 1949: 5). The digital age has largely conquered that effect of the tyranny of distance. Yet the size of Humanities grants continues to rise.

What this means is that the fruits of research may turn out to be hideously expensive for very little return. Mark Bauerlein (2011), referring to America, puts it as follows:

If a professor who makes \$75,000 a year spends five years on a book on Charles Dickens (which sold 43 copies to individuals and 250 copies to libraries, the library copies averaging only two checkouts in the six years after its publication), the university paid \$125,000 for its publication.

Now the point is that professors in Australia earn twice \$75,000 a year. If they also receive an ARC grant of say \$200,000 to write this book then it becomes a very expensive piece of work. Bauerlein (2011) concludes "Certainly that money could have gone toward a more effective appreciation of that professor's expertise and talent". It has been estimated that 98% of articles and books in the Humanities are never cited (Donoghue, 2012: 39). But the whole point of everything in Australia is winning research grants, especially ARC grants, thereby making the outcomes of research, especially in the humanities, as expensive as possible. The whole point of humanities' research in Australia appears to be to produce pieces of written work that are extremely expensive but which very few people will read. As a taxpayer in an age in which governments need to cut their expenses I wonder how long such a crazy system can be allowed to last.

I will put it another way. I have written books and articles that are by-products of my teaching. They were relatively cheap to produce for that very reason. According to the bureaucratic imperative this is a bad thing because publications that are the result of a grant are far more valuable because of the funds that the grant brings to the university. What other industry functions in this bizarre quasi-Soviet fashion? Surely the public should ask: why is their money being spent in this way? The imperative of any good government should be to ensure that its funds are expended in the most cost effective fashion.

So the ARC is in control of the research process. It sets up the guidelines which places a heavy emphasis on grants. In particular it places a lot of emphasis on the grants that it awards. At Australian universities ARC grants are the ones that academics are encouraged to try and win. The objective is to direct academics into researching those areas which the ARC wishes to be researched by competing for grants that the ARC awards and producing publications that the ARC recognises.

But it gets better. The ARC also conducts an exercise called Excellence in Research Australia (ERA).³ Having set up the parameters for research the ARC then proceeds to judge which of that research is of any value. It establishes panels to evaluate the so-called quality of the research done in Australia. Put ERA and the grant process together and you create an iron cage that makes it very difficult for academics to do anything than conform to the model that the ARC has established. They should apply for grants in approved areas, produce the sorts of outcomes of which the ARC approves and then be evaluated by the ARC as to the quality of those outcomes.

Wonderful, is it not? For young academics who wish to survive in this bureaucratic paradise the obvious course of action is to conform and follow the path set out for them. That is to say, they should avoid at all costs thinking differently from the established orthodoxy, being in any way genuinely innovative or doing anything non-conformist that might rock the boat.

Now outsiders might think that what I have described is absurd in a sort of Kafkaesque way. And of course it is. The whole point about large bureaucracies is that their internal logic may be flawless while what they are doing is highly irrational even to the point of madness. But once you are inside the madness there is very little that can be done except to follow that internal logic because one no longer has much control over what is happening. Let us spend millions encouraging people to write books and articles that no-one will read and winning grants with lots of money attached rather than completing projects with an eye to economy and to producing material that will be read and discussed. And then let us reward people who achieve those goals.

Of course, similar principles are coming to apply in teaching as well. There are already pressures that will seek to make what is taught conform to a bureaucratic model with more and more regulation being imposed. There is another aspect of this process. It would not work if there were not academics willing to be co-opted by it. One can find many such people in the academy whether out of ambition or because they possess deep seated desires to become petty public functionaries. Whatever the case may be, such activity brings out the hidden bureaucrat in them. The result is to make the university even more bureaucratic in its culture, to create a mindset that thinks not in

creative and intellectual terms but in administrative terms as if that were the height of human excellence. Unfortunately in Australia, the one-time penal colony, one fears that such is the case.

The reality is that if an organisation rewards certain types of activity then its members will begin to do that activity, particularly if they are ambitious and seek to climb the greasy pole. The other issue is that of competition. There are many more individuals seeking to become academics than there are positions available to employ them. The huge number of doctoral students worldwide led to the creation of a large number of postdoctoral positions. But the number of permanent academic positions has not increased. Instead there is a huge mass of casually employed academics struggling to support themselves through short term teaching. Under these circumstances competition becomes intense, and conformity to the 'ways of bureaucracy' becomes overwhelming. Unfortunately the temptation to cut corners also becomes a great temptation. What goes out of the window is risk taking; it is taking risks which lie at the root of innovation and creativity. In the contemporary university conformity becomes the key to survival.

One is entitled to ask: what are the aesthetic consequences of this bureaucratisation of the human mind? It can be argued that universities have never been renowned for producing works of great beauty. Going back to the age of scholasticism, universities were renowned for their barbarous Latin, something against which the humanists of the Renaissance rebelled. To be fair to universities, it should be conceded, following John O'Malley (2004), that their scholasticism, and its accompanying analytical rigour, constitutes one of the four major modes of culture in the West. A problem only arises when the deficiencies of scholasticism cannot be corrected by those modes of culture, involving humanism and the Arts, which focus much more on beauty. The reason for academic indifference to beauty would seem to lie in the fact that academics only write for each other, rather than for the world at large. Humanists, and their intellectual successors, wrote for the public, or at least the educated sections of it, and hence needed both to communicate their ideas and to present them in the most pleasing form possible. They took delight in exploring the possibilities of language; they understood that they were writers and that in using words they could create things of great beauty.

Scholasticism is the great vice of the academic. At one level this means the triumph of the left side of the brain and its tendency to reduce our understanding of the world to a static logical system.⁴ At another level it means the tendency to be obscure and attempting to conceal one's ideas so that only those who are members of the academic club can understand what is being said. There is more than a little of the gnostic in the academic temperament, a desire to be superior to the rest of the world which can be

justified in terms of the need for a special language to express the complexity of the world. This also means that academics tend to be addicted to abstract models which often are lacking in a reality principle.⁵

This is not to say that everyone associated with universities over the past few hundred years have engaged in such wilful obscurantism. English universities, which long remained somewhat amateur in their ethos have produced some great prose stylists. One thinks of the advocate of liberal education, John Henry Newman, who wrote in a very clear and crisp style. But then many English academics wrote for a wider public; they were not just writing for each other. English and Scottish universities combined the rigorous approach of scholasticism with the ethos of humanism. It may also have been the consequence of being educated on a diet of Ciceronian Latin.

The primary consequence of the ARC vision of research and how to do it is to remove the need for academics to have any concern with communicating their ideas to a wider audience. The ARC much prefers research to be published in academic journals which will only be read by other academics. It frowns on publishing essays in general magazines and newspapers, and is not even sure if book chapters are a good idea. This is an open invitation to scholasticism and all which that entails. If one does not have to write for a discriminating public then questions of the beauty of what one does become irrelevant. The consequence is stodgy and dreary prose with a growth in obscurity. But then if one is writing for a miniscule audience of like-minded people beauty is of no consequence. Universities become the source of a great ugliness.

Another consequence of the gnostic imperative contained within a growing scholasticism is to increase the gap between the universities and the wider public. Universities now exist in their own incestuous world which bears little resemblance to the world of, for example, the tradie or the trucker. Universities demand money from the government on the assumption that they deserve such money; they have an entitlement mentality not dissimilar to welfare recipients. The real problem is that academics too often also appear to live in an alternative reality where the rules of the real world do not apply.

As they see themselves as deserving of public money and are in no way obligated to communicate with the wider world, academics increasingly view themselves as outside of that world. This leads to strange behaviour, including ignoring financial imperatives, such as the need to tailor what they do to serve those who pay to use their services, namely students. In this way Australian universities resemble the protected industries of the 1950s and 1960s. When they have problems, the solution is not to examine what they do and adjust their behaviour so that it approaches reality, but to go cap in hand to the government and ask for the equivalent of a tariff increase.

The intellectual consequences of this situation are also dire. The intellectual universe of many academics, especially in, but not restricted to, the humanities, is almost parallel to the real world. Increasingly it takes on a rationalist temper which resists evidence and is woven out of their own intellects to create models which are often fanciful but to which they are attached and unwilling to change. After all, as gnostics, they have access to special and superior knowledge. The world must be made to bend to that superior knowledge; reality must be re-made to accord with their fantasies.

What is the source of this madness? As I have noted, it has logic to it once the primary imperative becomes control and conformity. The government seeks control and conformity and the vice chancellors want their measure of control as well. But surely, it might be objected, control and conformity for their own sake are not really goods worth pursuing. Perhaps the only response to that is to say that we seem to live in an age that, at the level of government and its agencies, is obsessed with power, winning power, holding power and then using that power to impose on other people and make them conform to the will of the person wielding it. We live in an age when to be independent and to hold views that are different is seen as a threat. How else are we to explain the contemporary attack on freedom of speech?

The great theorist of bureaucracy, Max Weber, recognised both the value of bureaucracy and the need for a countervailing force to counter its undesirable characteristics.⁶ There is no such force in the contemporary university. Such criticism as exists comes from retired academics, a few dissidents, usually in the latter part of their careers and media commentators. Criticism is often construed as disloyalty to the university. Universities are particularly sensitive about criticism of the ARC which they fear could lead to retaliation against the critic's university. I know, from experience, that the ARC is a very secretive institution which jealously guards its information and is very unwilling to disclose details regarding the real way in which it makes its decisions. A number of years ago when I made public criticisms of the ARC it responded by complaining about me to my Vice Chancellor. The ARC operates by creating an atmosphere of fear, hardly the sort of conditions under which creativity flourishes.

It is funny but in all the discussion about universities and what they are doing there is virtually no space accorded to the simple issue of what is the purpose of the university, considered as an institution devoted to the pursuit of a number of particular goods, and how a university should be organised to achieve those goods. Everything is swallowed up by the question of how universities should behave in order to meet the demands that government impose on them. And the answer is always that the appropriate measures

involve the imposition of a more and more authoritarian and despotic set of administrative arrangements.

To me this is crazy. If universities have a goal and a purpose it is linked to their two primary functions which are devotion to the preservation and increase of knowledge and the transmission of that knowledge to the students who come to learn at them. The other functions of a university are simply an extension of the two primary ones; the organisation must function effectively to perform those two tasks and there must be means to transmit the knowledge that is gained. The real issue should be: how should universities be organised and function so that they carry out their two primary functions in the most expedient, effective and fruitful fashion?

Many years ago I was provided with a coach as part of a leadership program. We had many fruitful hours discussing such matters as how university buildings could be designed so that academics could work in the most creative way. Needless to say I have never heard any university manager discuss this sort of issue even though consideration of such matters is not unknown in other forms of creative industry. Academic managers in my experience appear to be fixated on a linear, bureaucratic mode of thought. Without a doubt they are left brain people. They are not reflective or creative or innovatory, which is to say that they tend to lack those qualities which universities often claim that they encourage. They are more interested in meeting their KPIs even though this sort of bureaucratic/accounting approach has the ultimate effect of making people less, rather than more, creative.

The starting point should always be: what are we trying to do, and what is the best way of doing it? It must be said that such a starting point assumes a measure of autonomy and it will be difficult to go down this road if one's role is simply to follow the orders of one's bureaucratic master. But that said, one can look to the history of the development of the state for clues as to what forms of organisation are effective and which are not. Looking to the eighteenth century it becomes clear that Britain could defeat France when the two came into conflict because it had a powerful mix of a well ordered state and accountability to the people through its parliament. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 combined an emphasis on individual freedom with the bureaucratic reforms implemented by James II.⁷ Britain became powerful because it involved its people, or at least some of them, in the process of government. Individuals came to believe that they had a stake in the success of their country.

Considering why the Athenians were able not only to defy but also defeat the Persian Empire one need only look at the introduction of democracy in the years before the Persian wars. Democracy unleashed the power of the people by making them active citizens with a stake in their society. Hence

Herodotus (1998: 332) comments on the improvement in the Athenians capacity as soldiers: “This goes to show that while they were under an oppressive regime they fought below their best because they were working for a master, whereas as free men each individual wanted to achieve something for himself”. Ultimately democracy led to a dazzling cultural blossoming such as happens perhaps only once in human history. To be creative one must have the opportunity for one’s talents to be cultivated so that they might flourish. Athens did not possess a bureaucracy; the citizens did almost everything for themselves. They ran their government and managed to combine democratic politics with an aristocratic value system which encouraged them to compete and to achieve. And achieve they did.

The point is that if one wishes to encourage intellectual creativity and innovation, one thing to avoid is the imposition of a set of excessive bureaucratic rules and regulations. One should look at designing institutional arrangements that allow creative and intellectual activity to flourish. This can only be done if individuals are given the opportunity to be in control of what they do and if the environment in which they are placed actively encourages their creativity. Again, many years ago I was recruited into an elite training scheme for graduates for the Commonwealth public service. The only problem was that individuals were recruited on the basis of their creativity and intellectual capacity, and then they had to conform to the ways of the bureaucracy. Needless to say the retention rate for the scheme was not all that brilliant. One could only survive in such an environment by adopting bureaucratic ways. Or one could leave.

But then universities are not a giant public service, or at least, they were not meant to be. That they are becoming more and more bureaucratic is simply an indication that they have lost the plot. How can one possibly bring creativity into being through bureaucratic fiat? Yet such a belief lies at the core of what many people running universities, people who often do not have a creative bone in their bodies, believe.

Now it may be objected that as universities are teaching institutions they require a measure of regulation and control, and hence bureaucracy, if they are to carry out their teaching function in an efficient fashion. Given that universities are now massive institutions this may be true but one could also ask if such large institutions are the most effective means for the transmission of knowledge. One could ask why universities have been allowed to grow and become so gigantic, and if this is really in the best interests of universities. There does not appear to have been much in the way of intelligent design at work by those who have presided over the growth of the universities.

In other words, instead of just taking for granted the growth of universities into gigantic, bureaucratic institutions there is a need to reflect

on the issue of the optimal size for such institutions if they are to do what they are meant to do in the best possible fashion. However, such discussions rarely, if ever, occur because those in government and the universities are carried away by the way in which they have developed, thereby creating bureaucratic empires in which those leading them have a vested interest, without ever reflecting whether such development has been good or bad.

We now live at a time when universities simply continue to grow like topsy, with ever more bureaucratic control and with an ever increasing authoritarian culture. If we want them to become even more soulless and soviet-like then we can simply lie back and let them continue down this road. Slowly any remaining creativity and intellectual vitality will be squeezed out of them. There will come a time when the only similarity with traditional universities of former years will be the name.

If, however, we wish to have the substance, as opposed to the shadow, of a university the time has come to reflect on what a university is meant to be doing and then to act on what comes out of those reflections. I should like to suggest a few ideas that should shape future universities in Australia:

- If it is to fulfil its function as a place where creativity and innovation flourish then the bureaucratic mechanisms that have been imposed on universities over the last few decades need to be largely dismantled. Creativity and innovation only really flourish when individuals control what they do. One cannot regulate such qualities into being. They only happen when individuals are free to control what they do. The ARC should cease attempting to control research. Good research does happen, but for it to happen those who conduct it need to be allowed to set their own goals. The end of bureaucratic control will not be anarchy but the creation of an order that is determined by those who are part of it.
- Universities need to be decentralised so that control over what is taught and researched is devolved to those who have the knowledge and understanding which only comes through a 'hands on' appreciation of how things work.
- Academics need to reflect seriously on the best means for encouraging innovation and creativity. They need to think about quite simple things such as office design, and how they interact with each other. As mentioned, it is my experience that academics are too easily seduced by bureaucratic models and some of them come to believe that the height of excellence is being able to fill out an administrative form. As discussed earlier there will always be a need for bureaucratic structures in universities because there is a need to organise teaching but the goal should be to minimise bureaucracy to the minimum. In other words, academics need to stop thinking of themselves as pseudo-bureaucrats and re-imagine themselves as thinkers and teachers.
- There needs to a re-consideration of the optimal size for universities in Australia and also whether universities are the only way to conduct higher

education. It is clear that bureaucracy is a function of size; the bigger an organisation is the more it becomes a rigid bureaucratic machine. There should be a place for smaller colleges, particularly for undergraduate education. Large universities could be broken up into smaller units that allow for much greater flexibility. Even within large universities ways of breaking down centralisation should be explored and encouraged. The more an institution grows the more it comes to resemble a dinosaur; the more rigid and inflexible it becomes the more likely it is that it will lose the race against smaller more agile competitors. We should encourage as much as possible those smaller competitors.

- Universities and academics need to re-think their relationship with the wider world and how they communicate their ideas to that world. The academic world is becoming more and more incestuous as much of what it does is simply for members of the academic club. It is increasingly sinking into scholasticism. Why taxpayers should tolerate such a situation is something rarely pondered in the ivory towers of academia. We need to encourage a re-engagement with the wider world and a desire by academics to link up with that world. This means, among other things, writing for the wider public (and such activity being rewarded by universities) so that a genuine dialogue exists between the universities and the wider society. In such a way academics may once again recognise that what they do includes an element of the beautiful.

- At a very fundamental level there needs to be a consideration of how to counter the worst intellectual excesses of academia and to examine ways of re-establishing some sort of balance between the two sides of the brain. Academics thrive on abstract models and are addicted to scholasticism; what they do tends to be attuned to one side of the brain in its approach to the world. Such an approach is not very sensitive to beauty. It cannot be allowed to become the dominant mode of culture in our world. Balance must be restored.

It might be objected that I am being excessively idealistic in my proposals. Maybe, but one should always beware those world weary types who say that this is the way things are and nothing can be done. Universities are becoming lumbering bureaucratic dinosaurs. They are increasingly being regulated by government and working to fulfil the demands that are placed on them. They are mirroring the demands made on them by internally becoming less flexible and more rigid. As time goes by, this rigidity will have consequences. The quality of their teaching will suffer but the solution will be for government to impose ever more regulation on them. Their research will equally be increasingly frozen into what the government of the day desires. They will become places dedicated to producing works of

scholastic ugliness, works which are expensive to produce and ever fewer people will read.

Universities linger in the aura of their past reputation. They sell their special qualities to those who want to work in them and to those who want to study there. In the nineteenth century a ball gown once worn by a member of high society would eventually work its way down, torn and tattered, to the very lowest section of society. Universities like to think that they are still the brand new ball gown. Increasingly their tears and dirty patches will be seen clearly. Whatever beauty they might once have contained they are becoming one of the chief sources of ugliness in the world, even if they continue to gaze into the mirror, in Dorian Gray fashion, and see the beauty of an age long past. Quite simply, they cannot live on their past reputation forever.

If they do not engage in renewal, then over time other institutions that are more flexible, more in tune with the times, and more responsive to the needs of society will emerge. If universities fail to reform themselves and simply sink into being tools of the government then there is little hope for them in the future. However, it does take two to tango. Governments must also recognise that if universities are to play the very important role that they have played in the modern world then governments must cease attempting to micro-manage them. They must create an environment in which universities can again be autonomous institutions that are not enslaved to the demands of bureaucracy and which possess the freedom to be flexible institutions in which creativity and innovation flourish. Only in such a way can beauty be restored to the universities as academics understand the temptations of scholasticism and work hard to overcome its deficiencies.

NOTES

1. University of Sydney, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Sydney Accessed 4 November, 2013.
2. See Michael Roe, (1984), *Nine Australian progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought*, Queensland University Press, St Lucia; Gregory Melleuish, (1995), *Cultural Liberalism in Australia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chapter 3.
3. <http://www.arc.gov.au/era/>
4. See Iain McGilchrist, (2009), *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
5. See Greg Melleuish, (2013), *Australian Intellectuals: Their Strange History and Pathological Tendencies*. Ballan: Connor Court.
6. See David Beetham, *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics*, Polity, 1985, especially chapters 3 and 4.
7. See Steve Pinkus, (2009), *1688: The First Modern Revolution*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

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