

Collegiality: can it survive the corporate university?¹

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This paper raises pressing issues regarding the present and future of the university. It is strongly critical of worldwide corporatisation and the response of academics to what the authors consider to be a crisis or impasse. As a mark of capitalist ascendancy, the university as corporate has, it would seem, lost its soul and its autonomy. The focus on collegiality invokes the communitarian and independent spirit which has for centuries been the foundation of university ideals, but which is presently undermined by managerialism and its profit-driven motives. A crass utilitarianism appropriates and 'brands' academic values to retain pseudo-prestige, while impoverishing the sense of vocation without which collegiality is rendered an anachronism. In their last section, the authors propose a way forward, indicating that a revival of collegial governance is both possible and imperative.

Keywords: Corporatisation; managerialism; collegiality; university; profession; Vocation

A fully corporatized university is only the shell of a university. (Steck 2003, p. 81)

This institution [the University of Virginia] will be based on the illimitable freedom of the human mind. For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it. (Thomas Jefferson to William Roscoe [1820], in Lipscomb and Bergh 1903_4, vol. 15, p. 303)

The idols of the market ... everything that drives one to the short and easy way. (Henry James, 'The Lesson of the Master', ch. 3 [1888], in Edel (1963, p. 239)

Corporatisation

There is strong evidence that, in the era of advanced capitalism, the university has lost its distinctiveness and become just another corporation. A vast literature has accumulated throughout the last century and into the twenty-first that openly decries the intrusion of a normative business model foreign to the deeply ingrained collegial interactions of university life and governance.² Ironically, though seemingly every aspect of the process of corporatisation has been exposed, the system has remained resistant to dissent. More recently, criticism is ever more strident as (post the collapse of the Berlin Wall) the corporate university increasingly entrenches itself, and is even taken for granted.³ Worse still, while a critical discourse is firmly established

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and may be a source of inspiration as well of consolation for those seeking to comprehend what has happened, academics themselves are generally passive and inactive in the face of a threat to the very nature of academic life, at least as it has been understood since the exposition of the university ideal in Germany (late eighteenth to early nineteenth century),⁴ with its clear antecedents in the early Middle Ages, and the founding of the universities of Bologna (1088), Paris (late twelfth century), Oxford (late twelfth century) and Cambridge (early thirteenth century).⁵ Cognisant of a malaise, at least from the point of view of the beleaguered academic who still cherishes what, over the centuries, the university has best embodied and stood for, this paper examines the fate of collegiality in our time and reviews, with undisguised concern, whether it has any chance of survival.

That the university should be one of the casualties of corporatisation is distressing, but in the broader scheme of things it might have been expected. This honoured institution could hardly be exempt from a process that has swept across not only the Western world, bound up with its own commitment to 'late capitalism',⁶ but also the East, with China and India now taking the lead in the market economy. The profit motive has been naturalised in the postmodern environment and appears to leave nothing untouched. As early as 1813, the intellectual poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, in his youthfully rebellious work, *Queen Mab*, declared that 'All things are sold', noting ironically that 'Even love is sold' (V, ll. 177, 189).⁷ He was responding with disdain to the intrusiveness of commerce following the publication of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1788) and in the wake of the Napoleonic wars. The visionary poet and painter, William Blake, echoes Shelley's concern in his image of the 'dark Satanic Mills' (from the well known 'Jerusalem', l. 8 (Preface to *Milton: A Poem*, 1804–8),⁸ suggesting mass production that, in the industrial revolution, transformed the English landscape into one of dismal brick factories, making the free earth the terrain of business and profit (comparable to the way advertising has invaded the privacy of every modern home). At another though not unrelated level, the image captures the heartless grinding down of creative energy (imagination) into factual and saleable quantities. Along similar lines, the philosopher and social critic, Theodor Adorno, has more recently argued that 'The entire practice of the culture industry transfers the profit motive naked onto cultural forms' (1991 [1938ff]), p. 99). In his view, the whole of culture has been the unrelenting target of commodification, and that must include the academy as well.⁹ The unashamed branding and advertising of universities proves this to be the case.

Given its antiquity – being one of the earliest foundations of modern Europe – and its reputation as an ivory tower, the university has probably held out longer than most other institutions, has more valiantly resisted outside interference.¹⁰ By its very nature as a sanctum of learning, it has been historically distanced from, and ostensibly opposed to, commercial enterprise. Pointedly, Frank Furedi (2004, p. 109) remarks that 'Commercial and business pressure has always been seen as a potential threat to the exercise of academic and artistic integrity. The market is indifferent to the intrinsic merit of a cultural product – it is interested only in its monetary worth'. Yet for several centuries, if not throughout its entire history, the university has had to balance its own mandate as the guardian of all 'knowledges' against the crude requirements of survival and demands on its functioning as 'a public good'. The equilibrium has not always been stable, and there is no doubt that vested interests associating status with wealth and power – interests reflecting the social control of a cultural elite – have influenced and undermined the academy

in the past.¹¹ This being the case, the ascendancy of capitalism in the present time has found a point of leverage in order to gain a foothold in the sanctuary. Thus gradually and insidiously the 'logic' of corporatisation has taken hold of the institution so that seemingly overnight the academic fraternity – at least those who are not propagating managerialism – has woken up to a reality it can barely recognise. The efficacy of this process has much to do with the erosion of the principle of communality in society, which allows the mechanisms of business to define the parameters of socialised interaction. Collegiality – the sustaining communal principle of the university – has been fatally imbricated in this altered institutional culture and thus, even while it continues to function as a shibboleth, has effectively been co-opted and neutralised by the new order, retaining only a spectral presence. There would seem to be no place for an ethic that gives precedence to disinterested common purpose – to what is not merely driven by mercenary motives but benefits the larger academic community interpersonally and intellectually. It has been supplanted by a systematised competitiveness that conscripts the individual academic within the university's profit-based rationale, calling upon him or her to enhance not the discipline but career paths and the university's own market share. Eve Bertelsen (1998, p. 135) notes this outcome in specific regard to South Africa and adds that the 'explicit use [of "cutting edge" competition] for higher education is to secure a competitive position for South African business in the new global economy'.

The advent of corporatisation in the modern era reflects the rise of 'big business', relying for its establishment on favourable ideological trends. Corporatisation capitalises on the 'free' market philosophy, producing conglomerates in the private sector (resulting in 'multinationals'), or semi-privatising state enterprises such that they become competitive or commercially state-owned.¹² Its purpose is to regulate and intensify production to satisfy growing consumer demand and to maximise large-scale profits. The postmodern state university fits into the semi-privatised formation, though it is partly subsidised and not state-owned. On either side of the economic spectrum, selling and buying, corporatisation is driven by acquisition, which holds out to all the opportunity to raise the standard of living, even though this has been accompanied by a corresponding philistinism, which disdains nonacquisitive values and the life of the mind, since in most cases they do not provide a 'living' and are not considered 'useful'. The phenomenon can be traced back to the utilitarianism current in the nineteenth century that made the greatest net benefit the informing principle of human action.¹³ In the populist and crudely simplified version of this doctrine which became accepted practice in the West, whatever one did had to be goal-directed and functional, since utility (maximal pleasure or happiness) could be measured by the end result or outcome. Consequently, the larger the clientele the better. While this form of utilitarianism was clearly spurred on by the Industrial Revolution which transformed the agrarian economy of Europe by mechanising labour and multiplying production, it had unforeseen consequences which cast a shadow over its viability: it exploited the natural environment, draining its resources, and alienated the worker, made to submit to harsh conditions and to tasks that by their very nature were severed from the person's self and from the purpose the task was designed to serve. Such forms of disassociation are being repeated in the present time, not least among academics whose working day may be filled with mindless tasks, and little taken up with genuine collegial matters relating to teaching and research. Responsive to expanding markets that offer panaceas of practical or material 'utility', corporatisation all the while disguises the

silent hardship or spoliation that 'pays' for its 'success'.¹⁴ This is not to say that collegiality has not itself been used as a mask in the repressive political state, as in the case of the apartheid university, serving in this case a minority and not a majority and thus turning the principle of utility on its head.

Utilitarianism itself drew strength from the growing ascendancy of the rational principle at the expense of the imaginative.¹⁵ Tied to its imaginative origins, reason questions and elucidates without becoming empty abstraction, and is guarded from its worst excesses. Separated as it has become, shown in the mania for statistics, in the measuring and calculating of outputs and performance criteria (to determine 'knowledge-production' as 'utility'), reason is a law unto itself and is imbued with a brutal instrumentalisation that serves only sectional interests and loses sight of the broader human context. Blake, who represented 'Reason' as the tyrant god, Urizen, prefigured this result in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1792) in two terse 'proverbs':

The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock; but of wisdom, no clock can measure.
Bring out number, weight & measure in a year of dearth. ('Proverbs of Hell', 12, 14)¹⁶

In the first of these prophetic sayings, the 'hours of folly' encapsulate the strict determination of value in terms of the clock, of time as measurement. Time is an assessor rather than a manifestation of intelligent work. Ironically, the more the clock is insisted upon, the more absurd – irrational – is the result. Wisdom, by which Blake means true insight, is never dependent on any timescale: it cannot be programmed, rationalised into being by institutional fiat, which assumes that knowledge can be manufactured to order, or engineered in segments of time.

In the second, Blake implies that the creative mind has become debilitated and invention been rendered inert ('year of dearth'). What takes its place are militarylike policies, strategies, designs, plans and rule-centred dicta which cannot come to life because they lack the active principle, one that resists quantitative schemes, formulae and assessments, and requires adaptability, exploration, experimentation, even risk. The standard of value in post-Enlightenment society – as now in the university – is calculation, means to ends, or simply 'profit' as material advantage rather than enrichment of being.¹⁷ Unfettered calculation always marks the presence of self-interest and oppression.

The rationalist enterprise that has so strongly marked the 'progress' of the west is destined to play itself out for good or ill. Faith in rationality has an almost religious hold over the American and European psyche. Its recorded emergence in antiquity – for example in ancient Athens, and in ancient Rome which emulated the Athenian example, especially in spheres of civic governance – gives rationality prestige and richness and aligns it with an integrated consciousness from which it derives, and from which it may draw strength where there is need. Yet rationality in modern times is desired for its own sake, as the 'miracles' of mechanisation and technology overwhelm intuition and insight, and work-to-order overwhelms creative impulse. That in the case of South Africa this enduring faith has been imported without qualification is ironic, given the fact that the hard-won liberation of the country from the predations of colonisation calls into question the assumed superiority of the Western mindset (which is obsessed with order and control). The constant invocation of an African Renaissance, bound up as it is with European terminology, and the insistence on Africanisation in the university are meaningless

if an alien model is adopted unconditionally and uncontextually, without any consideration of its appropriateness in a country which has a multiplicity of peoples, cultural allegiances, strong residues of communality and ancient tradition. Corporatisation is itself like colonialism or the military: everything and everybody must fit into the straitjacket.¹⁸ There is a definite sense of mimicry about a mode of organisation that so lacks an indigenous character, intimating that the university is a clone of commerce, which has simply infiltrated all levels of society. It would be fair to say, however, that the indigenous in South Africa has long been overlaid by the colonial gaze and so would have to be reclaimed, or reconstituted – freed, that is, from Eurocentricity. The corporate model is also at the mercy of government which engineers social and educational policy all the more easily via the dictates of management. The goal of transformation – of the redressing of past injustices – is anomalous when it is yoked into a system that has nothing of the genuine quality of transformation about it.¹⁹ Despite incentives, neophyte academics are disempowered by a regime that is stultified by a separation of powers: managers divided from the staff, in the way of business.

Evidence of an insidious corporatisation is to be seen in the surreptitious importation of rank from the world of commerce, a process that at one time (when trade was low in status) would have been considered offensive.²⁰ Ancient university positions, offices, bodies, though honoured by time, have been renamed to reflect their new alignment with the marketplace, politically overlaid in turn by way of state dictates. Thus, in many universities worldwide and noticeably in South Africa, we have ‘executive dean’, ‘senate executive committee’, ‘faculty executive’, ‘faculty or college board’; heads of schools and institutes who had previously retained their professorial designations (as befits the academy) are now ‘executive directors’,²¹ the inscripted stylisation marking a deliberate and unambiguous shift in allegiance from collegiate to administration (executors of educational policy). These fabricated designations, with their earnest signals of managerialism (as if the technocratic ‘executive’ or ‘director’ has more status and authority than the customary ‘professor’ or ‘lecturer’), have ample remuneration as their support. In this case, the nomenclature is itself synonymous with the monetary entitlement. This is a tacit acknowledgement of the tawdriness of the new ‘culture’. Senior university representatives have reclassified themselves as ‘executive’ or ‘top management’, and their authority scaled down into the system at every level, such that the chair of department functions as a line manager answerable to superiors, thus removed, technically speaking at least, from the department he or she serves. The first step in the overhaul of an unfashionable system is the renaming of the parts. Once the new ideas are verbally instituted, the rest follows suit and a form of closure ensues.

The dean, whose title was drawn from the church (*decanus*) in recognition of ties between academic and religious institution²² is tailored into a careerist, whose vestigial title and ceremonial regalia are quaintly obsolete. What is retained in this transformation is a university relic now, as ‘executive’, conscripted as a brand. A deceptive piggybacking takes place in which esteemed attributes of academic life are siphoned off to serve as corporate emblems and to preserve the trappings of a venerable tradition. The term ‘excellence’, deriving from the Greek Αρετή [aretê], lit. ‘the inward goodness or virtue of the thing’, and implying full realisation of potential – congruent with the idea of the university as ‘the arbiter of truth and truth seeking through diligent research’ (Webster 2010, p. 19)²³ – becomes a selling point. In this way, the term is denatured, commodified and so robbed of its

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original signification, appearing as a loaded advertising slogan that has only blurred meaning (you can put into it whatever you like) but which in truth denotes the product offered or taken. According to Bill Readings,

Its very lack of reference allows excellence to function as a principle of translatability between radically different idioms: parking services and research grants can each be excellent, and their excellence is not dependent on any specific qualities or effects that they share ... the only criterion of excellence is performativity in an expanded market. (Readings 1996, pp. 24, 38)²⁴

Following Readings's thinking, celebrated in an issue of *Diacritics*, Reingard Nethersole (2001, p. 43) several years ago drew attention to the anomalous situation in South Africa where 'the institutionalized space of thought has been all but erased in the face of current restructuring of the universities into institutions of "excellence" along "business lines" in order, as "a truly developmental state", to catch up and to compete with the industrialized world'. Clarifying the association of 'excellence' and 'business lines', and quoting from mission statements of South African universities which foreground "excellence" before anything else', Nethersole shows how these universities

are busy transforming themselves into 'businesses' for the purpose of capturing 'clients' in a 'shrinking industry sector' due to a drop in student numbers. Anxious to transform itself from an 'institution of learning' which is 'controlled and managed by academics,' the university enlists its 'Staff Training and Development Unit' to urge professors to accept a 'new paradigm' that posits the university as 'a place of business with its main business as education'. (Nethersole 2001, p. 43, n. 18)

In addition to the appropriation of terms that are redolent of humanist thinking, a soulless managerial-speak has infiltrated itself. 'Rationalisation', as the key to greater profitability, is a mantra as are its attendant, Americanate terms 'downsizing', 'restructuring', 'recurriculation' and the like. Assessment markers such as 'throughputs', 'strategic planning', 'performance appraisals', 'operational needs' and 'active citizenship' have become ubiquitous, betraying the technocratic mindset.

The process outlined here amounts to a hostile takeover of the university by a new elite, though branding rather cheaply pretends to disguise this fact. The attributes of the university remain visible as signs and tokens in logos, mission statements, degrees, graduation ceremonies, all inducements for enrolment and competitive edge, but in many cases with no guarantee of substance. Paradoxically, collegial values and attainments, authenticated over centuries of scholarly endeavour, are essential to the survival of the corporate model, which parasitically draws on their strength, but at the same time debilitates the host (the collegiate). Essentially, the terms of highest repute in the university are recycled as empty signifiers, their import residing in their saleability.²⁵

B. Collegiality

At least as a *virtual* public good, and not under any dictates of totalitarian rule, the university has provided a safe environment for rigorous critical thought, and the untrammelled pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. Unlike other institutions, it guarantees protection of research or expression which might seem dangerous or

offensive to society. Not surprisingly the historic university emblem is '*alma mater studiorum*' (nurturing mother of studies).²⁶ No culture, tradition, religion or philosophy is sacrosanct when free inquiry is vouchsafed. The goal is 'truth', in so far as 'truth' can be grasped or ascertained. Any constraint imposed upon this freedom that is not intrinsically academic must harm the integrity of the university. Justified by its proponents (who have a strong stake in its entrenchment), the corporate model simulates this ideal, but, by its very nature, nullifies it. It encourages scholarly endeavour, fosters it, even prescribes it, but at a price. It rewards production, or what is reduced to 'output', whether the research is unoriginal and hastily written or potentially ground-breaking, requiring meticulous examination of evidence, and infinite revision. Quantity of publications is the keynote, as this accrues wealth for the university and the researcher (this being the cornerstone of corporate thinking). Quality implied by 'peer-reviewing' is a nebulous criterion with its own price tag as it does not necessarily discriminate between top-quality and run-of-the-mill journals (often local with a minuscule readership) or publishers (which are all in the same basket of options). The idea seems to be 'if it is peer-reviewed it is safe'. The constraints go beyond the university, extending to the journals themselves that produce according to demand in a solipsistic circuit of exchange. It is the cash value of the product that counts, and because this same standard is carried over into the curriculum, where viability of courses is a matter of their 'cost-effectiveness', the pursuit of 'truth' is invariably compromised. Knowledge is circumscribed, homogenised and banalised, reducing risk and the need to offer it protection. The mania for quantified outputs (whether they be in the form of nondescript publications, standardised pass-rates or simplified and overregulated modules that must oblige bureaucratic and governmental stipulations) places a severe restriction on the gravitas of study or research – the recognition of the extent of the field of knowledge which surrounds a topic historically and contemporaneously, and which requires the fullest exploration. Not only is the integrity of the field undermined but also the integrity of academics who, unwilling and afraid to disappoint the authorities or seduced by the opportunity to profit financially (in cases such as supervision of theses where profit never before existed), yield to expedient pressures external to their discipline.

Together with the devaluation of scholarship that has now become endemic is the critical loss of agency experienced by the teachers and researchers themselves. Formerly self-empowered as a practitioner of knowledge and an authority in the discipline, and in the running of the university, the practising academic has been relegated to the role of mere functionary in a system whose core principles are essentially uncollegial. The driver of the institution of learning has become the least significant player. The key 'stakeholders' are the administrators (management), council, the unions, and the students: the lecturer, without whose work the university would cease to exist, ultimately carries out their decisions. Whereas before the administration served the academic staff, presently the roles are reversed. In fact, administration is now a product as significant as the teaching and research that were once thought to be the mainstay of the university.²⁷ There has been a fundamental crisis of identity in those whose dedication and accomplishments once gave body to the institution – an embodiment that in its present form has merely a posthumous existence, masked by the corporate, effectively the new, counterfeit 'body'.

What previously constituted the academic's identity and gave it 'authority' and a true 'foundation'²⁸ was a different form of organisation that was compatible with the culture of learning and that served above all to facilitate it. This was collegiality,

a phenomenon like fellowship that is difficult to define, even elusive and arcane.²⁹ The *OED* provides functional definitions only: '1. Colleagueship; the relation between colleagues. 2. The principle of having a *collegium*'. A *collegium* in turn is defined as 'colleagueship, partnership, hence a body of colleagues, a fraternity'. The absence of further definition implies that collegiality is characterised by an intuitive, institutional understanding transmitted over time. The definition appears to incorporate two key ideas: that in the first place collegiality is a relational phenomenon, and that secondly, it is a corporate concept, but fundamentally at odds with the business model that systematically applies its monolithic apparatus across the board and from above. In the sense of relation, collegiality is understood by definition to embrace the presence of the other, whether it be individual persons or the group. It has no meaning or significance for the individual alone. In the sense of the 'corporate', it affirms organised co-operation and mutuality of interest as ends in themselves.

Collegiality derives from the Latin *collegialis*, in turn from *collegium*, which in Roman times legally enshrined the principle of association and shared leadership in a bond of allegiance, the most famous example being the consulship (either consul being a *collega* = partner in office, lit. one chosen or joined with another). Roman *collegia* were diverse, widespread 'societies', advancing some shared interest or purpose, or occupation. In the Middle Ages the *collegium* survived as a 'guild', a corporation suited to a particular trade, craft, or school in the case of the emergent *studia generalia*³⁰ which attracted foreign students (the scholastic guild being *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* = community of teachers and students). The term *universitas* (lit. 'the whole', 'whole number of things', 'whole world' [Lewis and Short 1879]) had reference to various corporate bodies, and conveyed etymologically the sense of 'turning' a group of persons into 'one' [*uni+vertere*], pointing therefore to the solidarity of university fellowship.³¹ Separate *collegia* (colleges, self-contained scholarly communities in most cases not directly in the service of church or monastery, as at Oxford or Cambridge),³² sprung up, each marked by its own distinctive character, style, forms of association, specialist areas of study, and each functioning as an independent body within the federal framework of the university as a whole (re-articulated in the division of the modern university into colleges or faculties).³³ By its very nature idiosyncratic, collegiality – the quality that inheres in college formation – is bonded to the composite structure of a discrete institution: its every manifestation reflects the nexus of arrangements and conditions that have evolved over time. It registers the historical imagination that progressively binds past attainments to ongoing endeavours and prospects. It derives its strength from the seamless integration of *collegial* forms and their application in all the areas that advance its ideals.

Far from being an adjunct to the academic project – a chivalrous embellishment in the midst of work – collegiality is, primarily, a mode of governance. Underlining this view are the claims that 'Collegial governance is collective self-governance' (Dix 2003, p. 2)³⁴ and that 'the idea of a community of self-governing scholars has always been integral to the collegial tradition' (Tapper and Palfreyman 2000, p. 125). Whatever decisions are taken result from sustained conceptualisation (mapping out), reflection and dialogue, which ideally allow everyone to participate, such that the collective voice that prevails is his or hers as well. This does not mean that everyone agrees to everything. On the contrary, disagreement (*dissensus*) is an important aspect of dialogue. The process is inclusive and respectful of each

contribution, and therefore what is arrived at is communal, neither individualistic, nor factional, nor hegemonic. As with any association based on mutual agreement and trust, it is by no means foolproof, not without flaw, misuse or discord (sometimes exceedingly fractious). Privileges of one kind or another have undoubtedly interfered with its practice over the centuries. Collegial systems, including those of the church, have, at various times in history, been co-opted, neutralised and enervated by elites, or by authoritarian regimes (among them South Africa's notorious system of apartheid). Yet collegiality has lived on, an embedded and intrinsic feature of the university landscape, though now finally discovering its nemesis in the all-consuming market – confronting modernity in the form of the reign of late capitalism. In South Africa, the issue is further complicated by the obvious intrusion of the state in university policy and the hangover from the colonial past, which still influences collegial structures and paradigms.

Simply stated, collegiality is a sophisticated, time-honoured form of reciprocity that many may fail to live up to and is exploitable, but which, at least before the advent of the corporate model, was the assumed standard or norm. Allowed to function on its own terms, its practice reflects difference and diversity, and yet is consensual.

³⁵ It is essentially always in an imaginary, potential state, never practised to the letter, since there is no rule or regulation or even set code that prescribes its conduct (though statutes might embody or enjoin it). This is its special attraction. Like writing itself, it is reinvented every time it is 'performed', a praxis rather than an ideal. Being pliable, it can adapt itself to the eccentricities of the academic mind (always unpredictable), as well as to the inequities of the past. Governance of this order is nuanced, and is a tribute to the common-spiritedness that informs collegial procedures. While it takes time for voices to be aired and agreement reached, the system is synchronised, allowing every institutional level to make its appropriate input on academic principles.

Arising from governance are qualities that enhance aspects of academic community, strengthening the ties that foster creative cohesion among colleagues. Collective consciousness arouses an exceptional sensitivity to matters of mutual concern. It brings to the fore the importance of engaging not as individuals whose career path is the definitive feature of their 'corporate' existence, but rather as integral contributors to the discipline. In this context togetherness and interdependence have a specific currency, for they are conditions for the sustainability of scholarly endeavour: they inspire and drive forward in concerted effort what isolated individuals cannot by themselves achieve.³⁶ They offset the one-way traffic of the linear teleological design, so favoured in the present commerce-driven dispensation. Instead they embrace a confluence of activities that transcend the distinctions placing lecturers and students, professors and junior lecturers, mentors and mentored, in opposite camps or categories. Interaction takes the form of a sharing of interests and nurturing of potential that enrich both parties, making the transmission of knowledge a two-way exchange. In such a transaction, tutor and learner are interchangeable entities, the one taking on the function of the other reciprocally, even though their experience and acquaintance with the field of study will be unequal. Similarly, contributors to a publication, conference, or project will be guided by the editor or convener, irrespective of rank or reputation. This anomalous displacement of hierarchy characterises collegial relations, in the recognition that, in the republic of letters, knowledge strictly belongs to no one,³⁷ is freely accessible to all, and can be supervised by anyone who has the requisite academic apprentice-

ship, for whose cultivation the university provides a proper training, guiding the bachelor to the position of master 'craftsman' as was the case in the ancient guilds.³⁸ Given its foundation in self-governance and community, whence it derives its authority, it may be inferred that the collegial arrangement instinctively resists the imposition of an oligarchy which, in its incorporation of top-down structures 'for profit', is an affront to the principles of autonomy and reciprocity. Once autonomy is ceded, the battle is over and lost. As Bertelesen (1998, p. 142) remarks, 'When universities uncritically adopt the crude mechanisms of market supply-and-demand they yield their own right to define the nature and goals of higher education and surrender their institutions to the laws of the market economy'. Whereas collegiality and the university were once conjoined – though not always in a benign manner, as under the surveillance of dictatorship or minority governments – they are now severed by an extrinsic principle (corporatisation) that is foreign to them both.

The entire dispute regarding corporatisation of the university centres on the loss of identity and autonomy and on the erosion of a sense of vocation, without which collegiality is impotent to advance learning and the academic community, thus yielding to self-interest or the market. The corporate seeks, even by way of advertisement solicits, customers and competitive advantage and is indifferent to loyalty, seniority, long service (concerns of the past). It takes for granted that lecturers and students (as employees and clients) will shift allegiance to the option that sells best (has the most attractive brand label). Vocation by contrast is, in its original meaning, a 'calling',³⁹ an intimate responsiveness to the intrinsic value of an art, trade or profession (in the sense of 'occupation one professes to be skilled in'), and a commitment to its wellbeing. It expresses a belief in the institution and its distinctive nature. Integrity – the coherence of collegial relations – is at stake, calling for dedication to a discipline that, presently, is diverse and permeable, intersecting with others of its kind in new configurations; and to the free pursuit of knowledge, held 'sacred' within the protective ambit of the university. Waning concern for the institution of learning as sanctum indicates in itself that the discipline is no longer of central importance, that the ethos that defined it is wanting, erased by the segmentation of courses and proliferation of options, following the supermarket principle of a basket of eye-catching 'offerings', to cater for ever-increasing numbers of students. Evidently the university has lost its mission as the testing-ground of knowledge, historically pursued in specialised areas of study. Academics are opting out of their calling and, as if cynical of any restitution of the collegial impulse which once vitalised the work ethic, are content to abandon their creativity, to carry on regardless and without due recognition for their efforts, resigned to await the next salary payment (the slightly improved remuneration being effectively a corporate trade-off).

The situation in the humanities is probably more dire than it is in the sciences, since the former – once the bedrock of the university⁴⁰ – have less credibility than the latter in an age of hi-tech and 'knowledge production' and are therefore more easily undermined. However, the pure sciences (such as physics and mathematics), whose contribution to progress has been immense but whose immediate practical value is almost non-existent, will be increasingly under pressure to produce useful results. Science is more exposed to commodification by way of patents, prestigious grants, foundations, sponsorships and industrial projects, and is therefore more vulnerable to its abuse.⁴¹ Moreover, science speaks to the corporate, providing, in reduced form, the principles of accounting that derive from the laboratory:

efficiency, calculability, predictability and control.⁴² Reliant on theory, abstraction, logic, insight, intuition, in brief on the classical virtues of conceptual enquiry and imaginative (or aesthetic) representation, the humanities resist 'results' and 'solutions' that readily lend themselves to commodification. Furthermore they are currently denigrated as their persistent recurrence to culture independently of the marketplace is a direct rebuke of the corporate mentality, which measures knowledge in cost units (as, for example, reflected in enrolments and pass-rates which determine the viability of smaller, endangered disciplines). Increasingly the humanities are placed under severe pressure, bereft of vocation and a collective ethos which served in times past as an anchor, and of the common purpose uniting it with scientific advance. Their decline is that of collegiality itself, a community in which, *sui generis*, scholars are respected and affirmed, in recognition of the belief that the academic pursuit must primarily be valued for its own sake, whatever may be its 'usefulness' or its potential impact on society. This was the non-utilitarian, humanist, ethic that Cardinal Newman (1907 [1858], p. 103 [Part 1 Discourse 5]) endorsed despite his allegiance to the church: 'Knowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward' (1907 [1858], p. 103 [Part 1 Discourse 5]).

C. Where to from here?

Faced with the discord between two kinds of practice, the one managerial and the other collegial, some have argued that they can be reconciled. Given the role that administration must play at the university, it is proposed that a compromise may be reached, perhaps by levelling the influence of management, or scaling it down to accommodate ancient priorities, including those now rebranded technocratically as 'active citizenship' and 'community engagement'.⁴³ In any case, it is further argued that the corporate university, to survive at all, must preserve some remnant of academic value in order to retain credibility. This paper takes the contrary view that such reconciliation is impossible. It is inconceivable that a regimented structure, driven by an objective of standardisation, career-centredness and profit, as well as conformity to myopic state policy, is compatible with a communitarian formation whose *modus vivendi* is multifarious intellectual enrichment.

This fundamental incompatibility is amply demonstrated in historical shifts in the meaning of 'professional' and 'profession'. In the modern corporate dispensation, a 'professional' efficiently executes the explicit requirements of an occupation, is financially rewarded, sometimes handsomely (as in sport), and accepts that the job is worth doing. The standard, characteristically bourgeois, is that of all-round skill or 'expertise', and of steady competence and reliability. This rationale of 'professionalism' has become a norm for the academic as well, despite collegial requisites that through the centuries have been fine-tuned to meet the exigencies of rigorous scholarly work. It was once sufficient to be an academic (that is, one highly qualified to teach and research), to do the job expertly. Ironically most 'managers' in the corporate university are not strictly qualified to manage according to business principles. This makes their higher salaries as well as their integrity even more questionable. The current term 'professional' has migrated from its earlier sense that, ironically, was closely allied to the academy. The term derives from the idea of 'professing' [Latin *profiteor* pp. *professus* = to declare publicly, to acknowledge, confess openly, Lewis and Short 1879], of laying claim to one's expertise. It was first used in English

to indicate a vow on entrance into a religious order, and was especially attached in the course of time to prestigious 'learned professions', such as divinity, law and medicine (fed by the universities, and sanctioned by acknowledged humanitarian concerns). In the academic field, the term 'professor', which was actually introduced informally in England in the fifteenth century, denoted a scholar who was hired on account of a proficiency in a specialist academic domain (certainly not administrative or managerial), and, as lecturer, was in a position to 'profess' or publicly avow a commitment to that domain.⁴⁴ Thus a professor is, by definition, a person who has expert knowledge and lives by his or her calling. Jacques Derrida draws eloquently on this etymology:

The declaration of the one who professes is a performative declaration in some way. It pledges like an act of sworn faith, an oath, a testimony, a manifestation, an attestation, or a promise. It is indeed, in the strong sense of the word, an engagement, a commitment. To profess is to make a pledge [gage] while committing one's responsibility. 'To make profession of' is to declare out loud what one is, what one believes, what one wants to be, while asking another to take one's word and believe this declaration. (Derrida 2002, p. 214)

Derrida is highlighting the necessity of acting out one's conviction in order for the 'professor' to come into being, to exist. This necessity constitutes the professorial self and is not simply a function reflecting position or rank. This acting out of who one is is a public statement which is given authority by those to whom it is addressed – students or fellow colleagues, not bureaucrats and entrepreneurs. What we see in action is the intellectual taking a stand, being in the truest sense of the term 'accountable'. Furthermore, in a performative realm, the art of professing by its very nature would require constant reinvocation and reiteration, lest it lose its purpose, and become moribund.

In the course of time 'profession' has lost its confessional nature⁴⁵ (still epitomised by the Hippocratic oath taken by graduate medical students ready to enter the esteemed medical profession) and has been appropriated, via the prestigious professions, to designate any occupation by which one may respectably earn a living. The idea of public declaration or avowal is gone. The professor's 'profession' has lost its public voice and commitment as well as its distinctiveness. Together with the university, 'profession' has been corporatised, and in consequence vulgarised. The managers who ironically still call themselves professors (as if their true status depended on it) have emptied out by their very persistence the historic significance of the designation, implicitly inducting all professors into management. What are the grounds for naming oneself, or for addressing someone as, 'professor', who professes nothing? Certainly a technocratic, entrepreneurial 'professor' cannot be reconciled to his or her illustrious former self, and any attempt to do so will result in fragmentation. The postcolonial theorist and literary critic, Edward Said, in his Reith Lectures, indicates sardonically that the keynote of academic professionalism is conformity, compliance and amenability:

By professionalism I mean thinking of your work as an intellectual as something you do for a living, between the hours of nine and five with one eye on the clock, and another cocked at what is considered to be proper, professional behavior – not rocking the boat, not straying outside the accepted paradigms or limits, making yourself marketable and above all pre-sentable, hence uncontroversial and unpolitical and 'objective'. (Said 1994, p. 55)

Clearly the corporate would opt for a docile employee rather than have on its hands one who is at odds with the system.

In considering the situation as we have it now, collegiality in all its aspects is yielding to a social manifestation that is deeply embedded and seemingly unstoppable. The 'triumphal age of corporations' or 'corpocracy', as it has been called,⁴⁶ means the end of academic autonomy – of an encounter with knowledge that is independently motivated and consensually affirmed. Called to account on the grounds that 'academic' work is supposedly 'artificial or impractical, merely theoretical' (Garber 2001, p. 112), the lecturer is reduced to a white-collar employee functioning within a specialised service industry whose primary goal is to enhance economic growth – by providing qualified graduates for the workplace, or useful knowledge for commerce.⁴⁷ From the point of view of business and government, the university is a breeding ground for future trained employers or employees. Ultimately the 'knowledge practitioner' serves the anti-intellectual inclinations of the capitalist state.

What alternatives are there? Short of rebellion or striking, which are not easy options as they harm the residual idea of vocation, there is another path which has been followed, with this directive: oblige the system professionally in so far as its due requirements are concerned, and pursue your own interests in your own time. The disadvantage of this approach is that it leaves the opposition between management and collegiate unresolved. It fractures the academic's commitments, and does nothing to ameliorate the actual conditions of work, or the status of the university which itself is being downgraded to a business. This process reflects the institutionalisation of intellectual work and the degradation of its social conscience.⁴⁸ At best it is a half measure, a weak compromise, and a survival tactic. A more dramatic and more fruitful proposition might be offered, with the prospect of breaking the deadlock without returning nostalgically to a dispensation that has been vulnerable to inimical influences. This would be to argue that professors should, one and all, embrace the nobility of the 'profession', claim their academic being, affirm their academic duties, and provide strong academic leadership, which is presently wanting. Consciousness of this responsibility is surely repressed in the diehard line manager who every succeeding year does less and less academic work. By its very nature, the assumption of authentic identity would reinvigorate science and the humanities over which administrators preside only in name, unconscionably permitting the critical temper to dissipate in the current circumstances. This bold commitment on the part of the professoriate would have an inspirational effect on a presently fatigued, isolated and demoralised lecturing staff which, it must be emphasised, was never directly responsible for the capitulation to an alien dispensation induced by corporate stakeholders, policy-makers and their acolytes in administration. The idea is to sustain the academic profile throughout the university, and to recover the collegial unity that once made the whole of 'management' unnecessary. While a campus revolution is very unlikely, given the lethargy or indifference of many academics, hope remains in a sustained dissenting literature which is the articulate academic elucidation of the impasse, questioning the system as it is wont to do, and, as a profession of faith, reclaiming – in imagination at least – a threatened habitus.⁴⁹ Perhaps with bold interventions of this nature, the corporate model might begin to dissolve. One must not assume that this model is here to stay forever. Historically models come and go, and it would be no surprise if, in time to come, the present hierarchy – indeed corporatisation itself – would seem as

reprehensible to society as those hierarchies of the past, such as the feudal system or ancien regime, which, at the time of their ascendancy, might have seemed written in stone. It should be recalled that the university once freed itself from religious and political surveillance without too much fuss (though its relationship with the state has always been problematic). This could act as a precedent for reasserting its autonomy. Moreover, rationalisation taken to an extreme has the seeds of its own destruction. It is food for thought that the idea proposed by Derrida for the future 'sovereign' university is one that has never yet materialised: in brief he recommends 'a university that would be what it always should have been or always should have represented, that is, from its inception and in principle: autonomous, unconditionally free in its institution, in its speech, in its writing, in its thinking' (Derrida 2002, pp. 213_14). Derrida conceives a reclamation of the humanities at the core of the university. His is not a rehash of the older and now dubious position that a university education would inevitably improve one. Rather he identifies the domain of the 'as if', of the possible and of the full stretch of the imagination, giving to literary representation – the realm of figurative expression – a significance it has never yet assumed within the university. His is the visionary approach and leadership that at present the academy is crying out for.

Notes

1. This paper appeared in serialised and condensed form in 'Getting Ahead', *Mail & Guardian* (Johannesburg), 24–30 September, 5–11 November and 26 November–2 December 2010.
2. The 'corporatized university has provided a subject matter for several shelves full of books for over a century and has recently enjoyed an especially attentive press' (Cirillo 2005, p. 46). Notable earlier discussions are Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1994 [1899]); *The Higher Learning in America* (1993 [1918]), an account prophetic of modern-day tendencies; Upton Sinclair, *The Goose-Step* (1923); Hannah Arendt, 'The Crisis in Education' (2006 [1954]); Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (1963). Perhaps the most influential book of recent times is that of Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (1996). Following Hofstadter into British culture, and linking corporatisation to the 'social inclusion agenda', with far-ranging consequences, is Frank Furedi, *Where Have All the Intellectuals Gone?* (2004).
3. The titles alone of some contemporary publications point to a malaise: *Leasing the Ivory Tower* (Soley 1995); *The University in Ruins* (Readings 1996); *College for Sale* (Shumar 1997); 'The Market-Model University' (Engell and Dangerfield 1998); *The Knowledge Factory* (Aronowitz 2000); *Killing Thinking: The Death of the Universities* (Evans 2004); individual chapters are entitled 'The Heart of Darkness: Audit and Compliance'; 'Iron Cages', 'Survival Strategies'; *University, Inc* (Washburn 2005); *The Last Professors* (Donoghue 2008); Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University (Tuchman 2009); *The Lost Soul of Higher Education* (Schrecker 2010). Among essays, see 'Why I am Not a Professor OR The Decline and Fall of the British University' (Tarver 2007). The author, who has abandoned the academy, links 'Decline and Fall' to the 'corruption of the academic ideal' (1st para.). A brief, pertinent, up-to-date critical overview is 'Decline in Academe' (Sawyer et al. 2009). (Interestingly, two of the authors, Johnson and Holub, are Accounting and Finance lecturers.)
4. Although infrequently acknowledged in Anglo-Saxon writings, the university ideal was formulated by German intellectuals in the Enlightenment and Romantic periods. Key works include Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Some Lectures concerning the Vocation of the Scholar* (1794); *On the Nature of the Scholar, and Its Manifestations* (1806); Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798); Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Lectures on the Method of Academic Study* (1803); Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Occasional Thoughts on Universities in the German Sense* (includes a proposal for a new university

- in Berlin) (1808); Wilhelm von Humboldt (founder of the University of Berlin, 1810), 'On the Spirit and the Organisational Framework of Intellectual Institutions in Berlin' (1809–10).
5. Scholarly academies, some in North Africa and the Middle East, are ancient precursors of the European model. The great flowering of universities followed throughout Europe from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century.
6. The period that, for Frederick Jameson, has brought postmodernism into being. See Jameson (1991, pp. 1–54). 'Late capitalism' is said to date from the 1950s.
7. See Reiman and Fraistat (2002, p. 46). Notably Shelley includes 'the fellowship of man' (V, 183) among 'things sold'. For further discussion see Weinberg (2006, pp. 102–118).
8. See Bronowski (1965, p. 162).
9. See 'Culture Industry Reconsidered' (pp. 98–106) (ch. 3).
10. It has been described as 'the last enclave of stubborn holdouts against the new regime' (Cox 2003, p. 18).
11. See, for example, Veblen (1993 [1918]). Commercial interests have been prevalent in the United States, and are the driving force behind the modern corporate university. For an historical overview, see Washburn (2005).
12. These are the manifestations of large-scale corporatisation. Historically a chartered institution or company, not necessarily commercial, the corporation presently provides the standard business model deemed to be efficient and profit-worthy. The formal components of this model are management, creditors, shareholders, and labour. Redefined as 'labour', academics once considered 'elite' have been downgraded and marginalised.
13. The classical utilitarian position, deriving from Humean ethics and reformulated by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, advocates the greatest pleasure (happiness) for the greatest number.
14. A criticism of utilitarians is their apparent readiness to sacrifice the few for the many, and to quantify utility (pleasure).
15. For a classic discussion of the subordination of reason to the imagination, and the greater utility of the creative arts, see Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* (Reiman and Fraistat 2002, pp. 509–535).
16. Bronowski (1965, p. 96). In Blake's 'London', 'charter'd street' (l.1) and 'charter'd Thames' (l.2), point to the fusion of state interest (as in royal charter), corporate ownership and traffic, and regulatory municipal control (by mapping) (*Songs of Experience* [1794], Bronowski 1965, p. 52).
17. The word 'profit' was, in earlier times, commonly used to designate non-material benefits, as in Chaucer's ideal 'comune profyt' = for the good of all. Cf. Ecclesiastes 5.9; Matthew 16.26; Mark 8.36 (King James Version).
18. It is to be noted that corporations (chartered trading companies) promoted slavery and significantly extended colonisation in Africa and the rest of the world.
19. Transformation has been divested of its 'transformative educational agenda' and 'become aligned with the commercialisation of education', and other socio-political directives, including Africanisation (Sumeli Weinberg and Kistner 2007, p. 2). An 'agenda of inclusion' has found a strong ally in 'the ethos of consumerism' (Furedi 2004, p. 110). See also penetrating comments in Evans (2004, pp. 1–27).
20. Pierre Bourdieu (1998, pp. 105–106), implies that business has been so normalised that it belies its grubbiness: 'The emergence of the economic field marks the appearance of a universe ... in which [social agents] not only can do business, but can also admit to themselves that they are there to do business, that is, to conduct themselves in a selfinterested manner, to calculate, make a profit, accumulate, and exploit'.
21. 'Executive director' has been defined as 'a person responsible for the administration of a business' (The Free Dictionary [n.d.]).
22. The dean was head of a community of monks or of priests ('the chapter in a cathedral or collegiate church' (*OED*)). Universities at Oxford and Cambridge evolved out of monastery or cathedral schools. In the earliest stages university authorities were both elected by their peers and responsible to church authority. By the early fifteenth century (1433) they had won complete autonomy. See Cobban (1988, pp. 274–299).
23. 'The university is the place where truth is sought unconditionally in all its forms' (Jaspers 1965 [1923, rev. 1946], p. 75).

24. Summing up Readings's criticism, Webster (2010, p. 10) concludes: 'Thus universities today claim ... *excellence* in everything (and nothing).'
25. Cf. Bertelsen (1998, p. 137): 'The discourse of the market transforms social thinking, the neo-Gramscians suggest, through a process of parasitism, absorbing and incorporating other discourses to realign them with its imperatives'.
26. The present motto of the University of Bologna (Latin: *universitas bononiensis*), in honour of its antiquity as the 'mother' of European universities. The Humboldt University of Berlin is affectionately regarded as the 'mother of modern universities'.
27. In the modern university, administration has grown disproportionately in relation to the academic staff. This appears particularly to be the case in the humanities. 'Administration is the leading growth sector of higher education' (Engell and Dangerfield 1998, para. 27).
28. Hannah Arendt (2006 [1954], pp. 91–141) links 'authority' to the 'foundation' of a tradition, with especial reference to ancient Rome.
29. Although large-scale explorations of collegiality are in short supply, there have been essay collections devoted to the topic. See *symplokē* 13 (1–2), 2005 and *Profession (MLA)* 2006, pp. 48–118.
30. Those more eminent among the cathedral and monastic schools which were among the first European universities.
31. Universities might in origin be collectives of students (e.g. Bologna) or teachers (e.g. Paris).
32. The first colleges were, however, designed to serve the clergy by providing qualified churchmen.
33. For an account of the evolution of colleges, see Cobban (1988, pp. 111–145).
34. Akademos, the subject of Dix's discussion, is an Australian university that has abandoned managerialism and reaffirmed collegiality as its founding principle.
35. It is frequently asserted that 'the primary function of leadership within the collegial tradition is to preserve consensus' (Tapper and Palfreyman, 2000, p. 139). While the example of 'donnish dominion' (p. 135) at Oxbridge was certainly 'elitist' (p. 136), it was designed to allow 'all fellows ... an equal say in governance' (p. 137) and to protect the college from outside interference (pp. 135–140). An air of exclusivity has always been a feature of Oxbridge, and has historically tended to favour a privileged class.
36. Scientific experiments and papers are proof positive of the efficacy of scholarly collaboration.
37. Patents have undermined the communality of knowledge; copyright laws may have had a similar effect.
38. The earliest 'university' functioned on the model of the master craftsman and apprentice, the latter a term of French derivation signifying 'learner' or 'teacher'. At the time, there was no hard-and-fast distinction between scholar, craftsman and artist. All exercised a 'craft' or skill.
39. From Lat. *vocatio* = a calling; a citing, a summons, a bidding, invitation (Lewis and Short 1879). Currently there's a tendency to use 'vocation' as a synonym for 'job' or 'occupation' (cf. 'vocational guidance, counselling'). Another evocative specialist term has been impoverished.
40. The faculties of arts, theology, medicine and the laws were the foundation of the earliest universities, setting the pattern for Humboldt's University of Berlin (1810), which initially replaced arts with philosophy. Matters pertaining to commerce were, for centuries, outside the province of the advancement of learning. The first collegiate business school, the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania was founded in 1881.
41. See, for example, 'The Republic of Science in Turmoil', in Washburn (2005, pp. 73–102) (ch. 4).
42. Ritzer (2000, pp. 12–15) identifies these principles as the mainstay of McDonaldisation (the fast-food industry as paradigm for ultra-efficient, but ultimately irrational commerce).
43. Universities have always sought to advance the academic profile whether internally or in the community.
44. For an account of the first professorships at Cambridge, see Leader (1988, pp. 242–254).

45. A confession of faith is a credo or avowed system of belief. 'Profession' and 'confession' are, in origin, closely aligned. Effectively 'profession' is the public declaration of what one confesses.
46. 'Our end of century and the next century loom as the triumphal age of corporations' (Derber 1998, p. 3). For 'corpocracy', see pp. 145–154.
47. A goal complacently justified in the recently published Browne report (UK). See Collini 2010, para 18.
48. See Furedi (2004, pp. 38–43).
49. Growing resistance in the 'academic labour movement' might be a step in the right direction. See Johnson et al. (2003).

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