- In the bygone world (a complex, messy, contradictory world), different kinds of institutions embodied various, incommensurable kinds of value. Academic value was not to be identified with artistic value, nor artistic value with monetary value, and so on. But in our brave new world, it seems that a single final criterion of value is recognized: a quantitative, economic criterion. All else is no more than a means. And there is a single method for ensuring that this criterion is satisfied: quantified control.

Alain Supiot writes: “What distinguishes capitalism is not [so much] the pursuit of material riches [as] the subordination of the diversity of people and things to the rule of quantity” (2007). So the aim, it seems, is to transform the whole of higher education—in fact, education as a whole, including the schools—into an instrument serving the quantifiable economy, in the banal, capitalist sense. This implies, in the policy language to which we have become accustomed, the “marketization” of teaching and of research; or perhaps better, the subjection of education to a religion of the market, with its own God, efficiency, and its high priests, the ever-expanding caste of New Public Managers. The task of these inquisitors of the market religion includes the imposition of “market speak” (the forcible replacement of one vocabulary by another is in itself a mighty instrument of power) as well as of the rituals of “rationalization,” “evaluation,” “accreditation,” “audit” and the like… and which are, in their hyper-bureaucratic institutional embodiment, the ineluctable pendant of the “turn to the market.”

All this would have happened without the Bologna Declaration, but the Declaration has accelerated and of course “harmonized” the process. We know of course that one of the keys to this process is the introduction on a massive scale of so-called “quality control” mechanisms (see above and below). Such mechanisms, far from being an efficient extension of a rational principle, are yet further expressions of an absurd fundamentalism.

What is the nub of this absurdity? At one level, it lies in the massive introduction of all the well-known systems of visitation, evaluation, accreditation, teaching qualification certificates, and innumerably more hyper-supervisory instruments of a similar kind, not to speak of the various “quality-based rankings” (of universities, faculties, degree courses, or whatever), in short, of audit systems, all coupled to “quality control” and “quality assurance” structures—the effect of such structures being (in direct contradiction to the associated hype) to undermine the functioning of the University in its very essence. These instruments are applied in multiple ways in order (see above) to prize control of the universities away from the teachers and researchers and transfer it into the hands of external powers—government and business—for which a new managerial class operates as immediate overseer. Behind these symptoms also lies a permanent cost-cutting mania. At the same time, students in most European lands are forced to pay ever-higher fees, as well

as being exposed to recurrent threats to their grants. The banal rhetoric used to "sell" these latter policies is that students are "commercial customers" who must "pay the cost of what they consume" yet have a right to "value for money."

In respect to such control mechanisms, Aidan Foster-Carter puts the matter bluntly: "Everyone who works in higher education knows," he argues, "that the onward march of surveillance by [the] self-styled 'quality police' has brought nothing but . . . bureaucracy and misery. . . . But academics are less confident than they should be in pointing out the nakedness of these would-be emperors, who purport to be bringing private-sector efficiency to universities" (1998). And indeed, here the author believes that he has put his finger on a key factor. For in the opinion of leading experts, the whole "quality assurance" industry is fake from beginning to end. This is the central feature of the above-mentioned absurdity. Richard Gombrich writes: "The substitution of something called 'quality control' for the true quality of professionalism is make-believe of Orwellian dimensions. Intellectual honesty is being systematically destroyed" (2000).

Theodor Adorno already predicted such a development a long time ago. In Adorno's view, simply put, the ultimate logic of capitalism is barbarism. Gillian Howie notes that, with respect to the universities, "if we take our cue from Adorno's distinction between art and mass culture, we could say that the problem is not that there is a social good available to an increasing number of recipients—as those supporting the widening participation agenda would have us believe—but that education has become an article of commerce; and 'commercialisation' requires standards of calculable uniformity" (2005). Paul Taylor writes: "The roots of academic barbarianism lie in our own actions" (2003).

The imposition of so-called business-type imperatives on the universities has led to the introduction of management structures, which, "it is believed, will allow planning, certainty and control" (Sievers, 2008). Burkard Sievers (of the University of Wuppertal) comments that

> underlying these efforts is the fantasy that [ever more such audit-type] control will result in better management . . . and thus reduce the uncertainties resulting from primitive anxieties. Though these anxieties cannot be eliminated, the attempt to bring them under control provides the illusion that they can be held in check. At the same time, the psychotic anxieties related to the survival of the institution and the future of academic and administrative positions result in the role of rescuer being projected into management, which it compliantly introjects. The more the pressure, the more likely the psychotic dynamic will increase and that managers—like other organizational role holders—will become caught in

> their own individual psychotic parts. To the extent that the thinking in and about the university takes on a psychotic quality, management is mobilized to take on a more authoritarian stance, where decisions cannot be questioned and doubts cannot be raised. This leads ultimately to a totalitarian state of mind.

Thus, if Sievers is right, we have or shall soon have psychotic institutions of higher education engaged in the mass production of, among other things, “psychotic citizens.”

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