

Economism and managerialism

Hidden ideologies behind the secularisation of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education

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Opsomming

Ekonomisme en 'managerialisme': verskuilde ideologieë by die sekularisering van die Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys

Hierdie is die derde artikel in 'n serie van vier. Die vorige (tweede) bydrae het hoofsaaklik gehandel oor hoe die Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys (PU vir CHO), gestig in 1869, binne die bestek van die laaste dertig jaar geleidelik gesekulariseerd geraak het. Volgens die analise van die skrywer het dit onder andere gebeur as gevolg van 'n hele konkoksie van ideologieë wat die proses van sekularisering gedryf het.

In hierdie derde artikel word die tragiese verhaal voortgesit met dié verskil dat twee van die mees prominente hedendaagse ideologieë, met voorbeelde van hulle ongesonde invloed op die PU vir CHO, afsonderlik en in besonderhede bekyk word. Agtereenvolgens kom die volgende aan die orde: (1) Ekonomisme – met die gevolg dat alles – ook die universiteit verkommersialiseer word. (2) Bestuursoutokrasie ("managerialism") – wat 'n universiteit soos 'n sakeonderneming dirigeer.

In 'n volgende slotartikel sal daar nog die volgende ses tendense bespreek word: (3) Sosiaal-Darwinistiese mededingendheid – as uitnemendheid beskou. (4) Verwetenskapliking (scientisme) en vertegniserings volgens die natuur-wetenskaplike model – in die geloof dat dit ook elke menslike probleem sal kan oplos. (5) Neo-pragmatistiese relativisme, wat alles in terme van die nut daarvan wil meet – maar geen werklike normatiewe koers vir die lewe kan aandui nie. (6) 'n Verabsolutering van waardes as 'n soort panasee – maar dikwels net dit wat verkeerd is verdoesel. (7) Die onverdraagsaamheid van die sogenaamde verdraagsaamheid van alle oortuigings – omdat dit 'n soort toleransie is wat maklik Christelike oortuigings kan uitsluit. (8) Kerkgesentreerdheid – wat tot die verlies van 'n breëre koninkryksvisie lei.

0. Preamble

0.1 Integral philosophy

The reader should at the start be reminded again that in these articles I am trying to propagate an *integral* Christian philosophy. To me the relationship between philosophy and Christian faith is not paradoxical, complementary of antithetical, but inseparable. This starting point removes at least four meanings in which the expression "Christian philosophy" is understood wrongly: (1) a theological system of Calvinistic/Reformational beliefs; (2) a biblicistic extraction of a philosophical system from the Scriptures; (3) a pietistic interest merely in the personal faith of a philosopher; (4) a specific philosophy officially sanctioned by an ecclesiastical body (e.g. the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas prescribed by Roman Catholic popes).

My approach in the case of this article is oriented by the biblical concept of idolatry and the philosophical analysis of ideologies.

0.2 A complicated concoction of ideologies

However difficult it may be to distinguish and separate the concoction of international ideologies from each other, I will now try to do so, indicating their individual effects on the university life of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PU). In each case I add an "-ism" (e.g. economism) to indicate the overemphasis or absolutisation of a specific facet of human life, reducing the rest to be of minor importance.

0.3 Old ideas in a new form

When I speak in this and the following article about *neo*-capitalism, *neo*-pragmatism, *Neo*-Darwinism, etcetera, I want to indicate the difference between these contemporary ideologies and their predecessors. Today most of them reveal strong irrationalist-relativist tendencies. Older capitalism, for instance, still respected some values like freedom and human dignity. These are left behind in neo-capitalism (or neo-liberalism), replaced by own personal or institutional financial gain or advantage as the primary norm. Earlier pragmatism already rejected principles or norms – only the means and ends were important. Today pragmatism is worse: means and ends are more or less identified, any means have become acceptable. (As Christians we should distinguish between God as Origin, the means directed by His norms, and the correct ends we are striving for.) While the older types of evolutionism (Darwinism) concerned itself primarily with the *biological* origin of life (survival of the fittest), in social Darwinism (from Herbert Spencer onwards) competition for survival is regarded as a norm also for *economic, political and social* life.

0.4 Ideologies and human responsibility

In the two previous articles I have already mentioned by the way that an ideological approach does not imply a kind of deterministic view, exempting leaders and managers from their personal responsibilities. Let me therefore quote right at the beginning what Van Dyke (1989:244) has to say in this connection:

At the same time this corporate thinking [according to an ideology] affords the individual no alibi. The path of [an ideology] is inevitable, but every step of the way involves human decisions: first, and most momentarily when the choice is made for the ideology; but no less as the ideology is being implemented and choices have to be made about objectives, about the means to achieve them, and so on, right to the last unspeakable consequences. Along the way the participants remain personally accountable for every step taken, because every step presupposes a human choice ... Surrounded by overwhelming pressures and overpowering facts, men are called to transcend the flux of history and seek to determine it rather than be determined by it.

0.5 The set-up of the following

This third article will focus on only two contemporary ideologies which are closely related, viz. economism and managerialism. The next contribution will add another six tendencies, co-influencing the process of secularisation.

1. Economism and commercialization

Western ideas about capitalism, going hand in hand with the older idea of progress, are not new in Western culture. (Still worthwhile reading is the critical study by Goudzwaard, 1979 as well as his critique of the ideology of material prosperity in 1984:49-60.)

1.1 Development of neo-capitalism into an ideology

Heslam (2003) distinguishes between the following characteristics of the older and more recent forms of capitalism. Earlier capitalism emphasized: (1) individual, private ownership, (2) autonomous markets, and (3) maximum profit. In neo-capitalism four more characteristics were added: (4) the involvement of huge multi-national concerns, (5) the severing of the ties between the financial sector and the real economy, (6) relentless competition, unlimited growth and abundant consumption, (7) the freedom of the market to organize or commercialize society as a whole in a totalitarian way – there seems to be no alternative.

1.1.1 Society viewed as a market

Heslam says the following about the last characteristic:

... the market principle is applied to areas of society previously considered to be free of the market's constraints. The kind of society that emerges today is not only one that has markets, but in a real sense constitutes a market. So the term 'the market' becomes, in the language of new capitalism, a metaphor of the whole of life – an all-embracing worldview (Heslam, 2002:12).

Our world society has become first and foremost a market. This holds for capitalist, socialist and communist societies alike. Managers and workers have become market slaves.

1.1.2 Mammon and his high priests

Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, parodied of the Gospel in Matthew 6 verse 33 ("Seek ye first the kingdom of God ...") was "Seek first the *political* kingdom ..." is today changed into: "Seek first of all the *economic* kingdom and all other things will be given to you as well".

With the arrival of economic internationalization (or globalization) also many poor countries worldwide are lured to bow before Western material gods (cf. Shorter & Onyancha, 1997:23). One of the highest

divinities is money (Mammon) and its precepts. His priests are the managers, the highest in rank, the best paid and with the greatest authority (see below).

1.2 What economism entails

As mentioned earlier, neo-capitalist economism boils down to a one-dimensional view; it implies overemphasizing only one fact of our lives as human beings. However, God ordained many different offices and tasks. Apart from the responsible production, distribution and consumption of goods, there are other equally important callings in life. (For instance, being a medical doctor, is not supposed to be for making money, but his task can be handled and destroyed in that way.)

The result of economism is that everything is reduced to monetary terms. (Cf. Strasser, 2003; Simons, 2010; Van der Walt, 1999; 2003:458-481; 2006:97-112 and Venter, 2002.) Every God-given good thing is reduced to money. You know the expression "time is money". Welfare is not intended *inter alia* to also build good human relations, real wellbeing, etc..

In neo-capitalism the so-called *free* market is in control, with the result that everything is viewed through the tinted lenses of production and consumption and human beings are seen as producers and consumers (cf. Graves, 2013; Lyon, 2000:73-96; Shorter & Onyancha, 1997:22-25; Conradie, 2010). We see a shift even in the world of religion from obligation to consumption.

1.3 The satisfied self

It is important to keep in mind that today's economism is strongly shaped by another Western ideology of ancient origin, viz. individualism. From about the middle of the previous century it has been intensified: Mankind in love with itself and serving no master but itself. This is the wet dream of self-gratification – with no one there to love but yourself. Many of our students no longer search for the meaning of life, but tend to turn to immediate and ephemeral satisfactions.

1.3.1 Narcissistic individualism

Lasch (1979) already warned about the dangers of what he called narcissism, referring to an ancient Greek mythological figure, Narcissus, who fell in love with himself. In this kind of egocentricity people are only concerned and busy with themselves. "Goodbye!" (an abbreviation of "God be with you!") is replaced by "Have a nice day!"

Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler and Tripton (1996) again describe and warn against this dominant tendency in Western culture – which now, because of globalization, has become a worldwide phenomenon. More recently Van der Stoep, Kuyper and Ramaker (2007) wrote a Dutch book with the title (translated into English): “Everything that your heart desires?” describing the latest characteristics of the individual's hedonistic experience of feeling good about himself/herself. Bell (2012) correctly calls capitalism the economy of desire.

Today the hope of many – the rich elite in Africa included – is no longer centered on God or on their own nation and neighbour, but on the satisfied self or individual. Africans, also in the past much more community-centred, are becoming more and more ego-centred. Already two decades ago Bennaars (1993:23) wrote:

Individualism in various forms is increasingly evident in daily life. Education, religion, culture imposed from outside have all contributed, not to speak of economics and politics. Today, African individualism has largely replaced communalism ...

Numerous books and articles remind us that we are presently confronted with a new “Me-Generation” (cf. Anonymous, 2013; Twenge, 2006 and Van Galen, s.a.)

1.3.2 *Experiencing self-satisfaction*

The sources of individualistic satisfaction may vary: money, power, sex, food, drugs, the honour of being an internationally famous film star, artist, sportsperson or an acclaimed scholar. Anyone of these should be pursued with passion. What really matters is not the *source* but the *experience* of *my* own satisfaction – the norm for life. To experience pleasure has become a new science (cf. Bloom, 2010)! Important are not real human *needs* but *desires* (cf. again Bell, 2012).

Such an attitude can only lead to deep disappointment since we are meant to live for something larger, more important than our satisfied selves. Volf (2011:145) writes: “Human beings will only flourish when the love of pleasure, a dominant driving force in our culture, gives way to the pleasure of love.” The whole idea of a divine calling from God to serve Him and other people is disappearing today.

1.3.3 *Clear influence on higher education*

As human beings create social institutions to reflect their own economic self-image, also universities/colleges today speak about their “core *business*” – no longer about their specific *task* or *calling*. Lecturers are regarded as consultants, producers (of technical knowledge), while students are called “clients” or “customers” (the consumers). In a recent newsletter to alumni of the NWU a new promotional strategy was announced: how better to satisfy the desires of our clientele – the main aim being to develop a skilled work force for the economy!

1.4 *The economic university*

When reading journals (like *Higher Education* and *Teaching Higher Education*) focussing on higher education today, it seems as if the marketisation of the university is viewed as a necessary, unavoidable fact. It looks as if prominent universities, like Stanford, are in favour of commercialisation, while others, like Oxford and Harvard, are more cautious.

1.4.1 *Critical voices*

This dominant trend in world culture has become more and more under critical fire. See, for instance, Chang (2010), Mulgan (2013), Saddeck (2012), Sandel (2012). Every nation in relentless competition, has to fight for its own gains (cf. Bremmer, 2012). The gap between the superrich and the dirt poor is becoming wider by the day (cf. Friedland, 2012 and Stiglitz, 2012) and justice is trampled under the feet (cf. Hoksbergen, 2011).

One of the critical voices against the commercialisation of academic education is Collini (2012). From the same anti-marketisation viewpoint, Furedi (2006), for instance, provides answers to his pro-commercialisation critics.

From the perspective of a pluralist view of society Strauss has the following comment: “... the ‘entrepreneurial’ activities of universities ... are geared towards the ideal of making the university financially independent – such that the typical academic task of an academic institution may flourish”. But then he continues: “If this a-typical side of modern universities is mistakenly understood to be a typifying characteristic, it would be impossible to identify the difference between the university and a firm” (Strauss, 2009:595).

Also Heyns (2012) discusses this new kind of university in South Africa, but does so in a critical way. He recognises a clear paradigm shift occurring in the academy.

1.4.2 *External and internal transformation*

On the one hand Heyns sees a transformation of universities toward the outside world: they should be connected to industry and business. On the other hand simultaneously an internal transformation is taking place: a new kind of student and lecturer is emerging.

Students become "clients", changing the original educational intention of the university. Lecturers and researchers are turned into "entrepreneurs". They have to make advances in knowledge and inventions that can be patented and marketed. They are deliberately involved half the time in academia and half the time in business. Heyns regards this "revolution" as a move towards an instrumentalist view of the university.

According to him the obsession with "making profit", imitating a business corporation, is on the march in the functioning of universities. They are enlisted in an almost religious belief in the necessity of unending economic growth. This economic goal should outrank all academic goals, because it seems to embody a blissful state of salvation. In actual fact, however, it despoils universities of the ability to raise their usual free, critical, imaginative and moral voice; it constitutes the deformation of the established view of being a university.

The literature consulted by Heyns also indicates that a successful synthesis between the teaching/research and economic agenda is not yet taking place – it rather introduces old as well as new unpredictable problems.

1.4.3 *Not merely economic reasons*

Heyns (2012:3) is also of the opinion that the change to a reductionist, economised tertiary education is not merely the result of a reaction to recent economic crises – a necessary evil – but also the product of more foundational motives driving our civilisation.

According to Jansen (2008:13) the "products" of this economic university in South Africa is young men and women who are motivated to a large extent by the "get rich instantly" attitude, characterised by

consumerist and hedonistic values. This new generation of people are mainly concerned about themselves and accumulate wealth at the cost of being passionate to serve.

Such neo-capitalism is not confined to education. It knows no boundaries. Literally everything on earth can be sold with a profit. The whole of societal life is commercialised and thus dehumanised. We have become used to expressions like "human *capital*", "social *capital*", "cultural *capital*" and (at the academic level) "intellectual *capital*".

1.5 *Material greed as driving force*

Material greed (instead of the love of God and all his creatures) may summarise the present attitude (cf. Schuurman, 2011:2) – Africa is no exception. This love of money is the source of many other evils (1 Tim. 6:9-11). It is insatiable – the deep thirst for more and more can never be satisfied by the things obtained. Therefore it is in itself a vanity and futility – the end result is always disappointment (cf. Mat. 4:4 and 16:26 and Mark 8:36).

To have a large bank account, an attractive corporate image and the best facilities is considered as of the utmost importance also to universities. This kind of money-materialism was propagated in the West by writers like Griffiths (1984) and recently by Mills (2010), as a solution also to Africa's many problems.

1.6 *Meaningless education*

The following development can be detected in the shifting ideas about the purpose of acquiring knowledge. In the Bible (and other ancient civilisations) knowledge implied real *wisdom* or how to lead a meaningful life. Later on in Western thinking it was still supposed to lead to some *virtues*. However, at the beginning of the 20th century it became knowledge for the sake of (especially economic) *power*. And today it is equated with *money*. The result is a poverty of ideas (cf. Dikeni, 2009)

In the past at institutions for higher learning in the West human flourishing was a central idea, exploring what it means to live well, to lead a meaningful life, how to be successful *at being human* (cf. Volf, 2011:65). But as even the self-confessed secularist Kronman (2007) indicates, universities and colleges today have given up on exploring the meaning of life, of real wisdom.

Lecturers are reduced to sellers of (technical) knowledge and are tempted to seduce their "buyers" (students) by tailoring the "merchandise" (syllabus)

to fit the desires of the buyer. The "clients" (students) pick and choose and purchase as much – or as little – as fits their own desires.

Volf (2011:107) however writes: "Wisdom is betrayed when it is sold or bought ... because it is fundamentally a gift ... Treated as a commodity, wisdom deteriorates into a technique for helping people to live the way they please, even when the way they please to live may be thoroughly unwise" (Cf. also De Beer, 2010.).

1.7 Alternatives

At this stage you may want to know whether there is any way out; can one do otherwise – for the sake of one's own and of the rest of creation's survival – than to accept the powerful economic forces of today? To answer your questions will require another article. But let me at least say the following. In the first place it has become abundantly clear (especially since 2008) that unlimited economic growth (identified with "progress") is not sustainable. Secondly, alternatives from a hopeful, real Biblical-reformational perspective are available. (I can refer you to Goudzwaard & De Lange, 1995; Goudzwaard, Vander Vennen and Heemst, 2008; Goudzwaard, 2013; Jongeneel, 2012, and on the protection of our natural environment to Wilkinson, 1991.)

1.8 Two examples from the PU

The following incidents illustrate how the PU on the one hand promoted economism and on the other hand – as result – denigrated academic endeavours.

1.8.1 In the trap of economism

In the last decade and more, on the one hand, the PU was involved (with or without the assistance of business) in erecting a shopping centre, establishing a high performance sports institute, a rugby and hockey *academy* (sic!), a soccer city and is at the moment planning to build a multi-million indoor wooden track velodrome according to international standards. A previous multi-million building project included luxurious accommodation for the Spanish team during the 2010 World Cup Soccer event in South Africa.

During the cold winters in the north sportsmen and women (mainly athletes and their instructors) – nota bene: not students – flock to the NWU to train under sunny conditions, using all the above-mentioned sport facilities. Has this anything to do with the real task and nature of a university? Some people are jokingly saying that the PU for CHE

has been replaced by the NWU for CHRS (Cycling, Hockey, Rugby and Soccer) or simply NWU for SPORTS.

1.8.2 The academy paying the price

On the other hand, the following occurred during the third regime. We as staff were shocked when overnight (during the overseas absence of its director) the important Institute for African and Political Studies was closed and all its staff members were informed to look for employment elsewhere. Probably the motivation for such a drastic step was that to be up to date on what is happening elsewhere in Africa was considered irrelevant.

When it was again decided by senior management to terminate also the Departments of Fine Arts as well as Drama, a few staff members were up in arms and protested – to no avail. The reformational anti-apartheid voice of the IRS (cf. Anon. 1995) was also ignored but the Institute itself allowed to suffer a slow death (cf. Van der Walt, 2008a:278-303 and 2008b). Its fate had already been decided in 1990, when it lost its own independent board of control and executive committee, but it was only closed with my retirement at the end of 1999. During the intervening years its budget and staff was cut. In similar ways also the reformationally-oriented Department of Philosophy nearly collapsed.

On the one hand profit-producing shopping and sporting facilities, on the other hand termination or near termination of vital academic sections, especially the humanities. One can only explain such things in the light of wrong (economistic) priorities – as a result of not realising what the main task of an academic institution should be. (In a recent article we are told that even at Harvard University humanities are tough to sell to students, cf. Levitz & Belkin, 2013.)

1.9 A third example

Since my nickname is "Bennie Boekwurm" (bookworm) I have to mention also the following example. Earlier the PU was well equipped with its own Central Publications Department, other departmental publications as well as the different IRS series of books. This was appropriate according to the core task of a real university: to disseminate important information. (Every major university in the Western world and even small colleges like Dordt has its own publishing house.)

1.9.1 *A university without publications*

However, during the third regime under discussion they were terminated. And during the present fourth regime three scholarly journals of the NWU (previously efficiently handled by its own bureau for academic journals) were regarded as merely "in house" publications (not "international" enough) and at a huge cost outsourced to a firm with a more international image. The decline of an intellectual institution (cf. Lategan, 2011)?

In this regard someone made the sarcastic but perhaps appropriate remark that the NWU does not publish its own publications any more since, as a secularized institution, it has no longer a distinctive, unique (Christian) message to proclaim. It has become similar to all the other universities in South Africa and the rest of the world.

1.9.2 *Internationalisation as final norm*

What is more: internationalisation not necessarily guarantees quality but can also support mediocrity and superficiality. *Welfare* does not necessarily imply the full *well-being* of human beings, their institutions and all God's other creatures.

A most recent development is that the South African Department of Higher Education has notified all accredited scholarly journals published in our country that they will only be subsidised (through the universities) if, within the next five years, they appear on the list of international accredited journals. Not quality but "internationalisation" again is the norm. And behind this façade again lies economic gain: The survival of an academic journal (e.g. like *Koers* with a general Reformational worldview approach) will depend on how many *paying* subscribers it has.

1.10 *A fourth example*

One of the results of economism is the restless tempo of our culture – time is money! "Output" is therefore regarded as of the utmost importance. Not only staff but also students suffer today. They have to finish their studies in the shortest possible time – almost like in a factory? How can this be combined with the slogan of excellence (see below)?

I have not even mentioned that, by commercialising universities into semi-businesses, they may easily reflect the image of an elitist institution only intended for and affordable by the wealthy on a poor continent like Africa. (All the universities in South Africa at the moment can accommodate only

750,000 students from a total population of more than forty million.) Or, if you are poor, it is believed that university study will automatically turn you into one of the respectable elite enjoying social and material success. The interests of the university may also become synonymous with powerful (economic) vested interests. Economism may furthermore compromise public trust in the scholarly integrity of university research and teaching. It may also lead to the trivialisation of subjects (like the humanities) that have no market value, etc.

1.11 *Wise advice*

Looking back on this whole section on modern-day economism one is reminded about the following warning of Paul about the character of the last days: "People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money ... without love ... without self-control ... conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them" (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

The utter emptiness of this way of life was recently described in the following way in a secular newspaper:

Money will buy a bed but not sleep, books but not brains, food but not appetite, finery but not beauty, a house but not a home, medicine but not health, luxuries but not culture, amusement but not happiness, religion but not salvation ...

We may add: a business but not a real university.

1.12 *Light from the Bible*

It seems that many people and universities do not know the meaning of the word "enough" any more. Also we as Christians should perhaps learn to pray to our Lord again: "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown You and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:8, 9).

God's final revelation in Christ confronts every believer with a radical choice: "The man who loves his life will lose it ... Whoever serves me must follow me. My Father will honor the one who serves me" (John 12:25, 26).

Without being an alarmist one may even ask whether the contemporary commercialisation of our world culture is not a sign of the end-times. Beale (1999:715-718) gives the following explanation of Revelation 13:16-17 where it is stated that Christians without the mark of the beast will not be permitted to buy or sell. The "mark" was originally the branding of a slave, soldier or

religious devotee, later on used for the Roman emperor's seal on economic transactions. Christians (with the name of Christ on their foreheads, 14:1) are excluded since they should refuse to be implied in idolatrous economic activities.

We now turn to the second major ideology:

2. Managerialism's total control of an organisation through quantification

Since capitalism knows no other norms than its own overriding one (money/profit), it also does not recognise a distinction between different kinds of office, authority, power and responsibility in various spheres of social life (cf. Van der Walt, 1995). The results are the totalitarianism (interfering in other domains as already indicated) of an institution as well as the authoritarianism of its managers.

2.1 Managers of an organisation – not leaders of a community

The ideology of neo-capitalism is implemented – forced upon? – by the “high priests” of this new religion, the top managers. They employ the market principle of an “entrepreneurial model”, hoping that a more “efficiently organised” university will be the result. Resistance to this model is not welcomed. Anybody not agreeing with management is marginalised. But if critique as such is discarded as only being negative, real reformation of an institution is excluded.

2.1.1 Managers not necessarily leaders

I have indicated (cf. Van der Walt, 2006:126-129) how, as a result of commercialisation, leadership today is transformed into management in most spheres of life. However, the books I consulted also emphasised the vital difference between leaders and managers. The first is a much broader concept than the second. Therefore, usually a good leader can also be a capable manager, but a manager is not necessarily a good leader. It is therefore regrettable that all over the world people are today “over-managed” but “under-led”. (For the totally different ways Africans used to view leadership, see Van der Walt, 2006:125-126.)

2.1.2 An organisation is not a community

Changed into a business enterprise the PU could no longer be a *community* of senior members (the lecturers) and juniors (the students) either. Management and professionalisation (cf. Dorsman & Knegtmans, 2010) becomes very important in a goal-oriented *organisation* (cf. Manning, 2012). Because managers need to organise and control people – not primarily serve and inspire them – they can become authoritarian, even treating people in humiliating ways (cf. Levinson & Sanford, 1950). However, the Bible knows of no rightful power that is not exercised through service, and advocates serving leadership according to God's central commandment of love.

2.2 Growing administration, supervision, planning, budgeting, auditing

The fact that managers are often not inspiring servant leaders, but domineering autocrats contributed to the fact that the managing or administrative staff members at the PU was steadily increased while the academic staff was decreased or kept at a minimum. Furthermore a rift developed between the two categories. The administrative section had to prove its own worth by devising more and more paperwork and meetings to be completed or attended by an already overworked academic body.

2.2.1 Strategic planning

Strategic planning is important in the business world. Turned into a business enterprise, it became typical of the PU. We had to write vision and mission statements, taking up days of wasted time because they were simply filed – management had already decided what the best was for every department!

Together with this one should mention the fact that the university budget (including its priorities) was regarded a big secret. How can one then design a mission statement for one's institute/department?

2.2.2 Auditing

Another example of how the managers transplanted the world of economics was continuous measurement, assessment, evaluation and auditing (cf. Secolsky & Denison, 2012 and Venter, 2006). Academics who have proven themselves through the years were continuously bothered with student- and self-evaluations, assessing themselves (the producers) and their results (their products in the

form of, for example, the number of their students, publications, overseas conferences attended etc.). Were they not denigrated to be salesmen/women?

2.3 Publish or perish

Let us focus for a moment on the one issue in auditing, viz. scholarly publications, to publish or perish. Since my viewpoint may be viewed as one-sided, let us listen to the queries of an outsider.

The Dutch (retired) academic, K b ben (2008:118 ff, cf. also K b ben & Tromp, 2003) writes that the present trend of "publish or perish" is driven by the fact that a university should primarily be an institution for research and moneymaking and not for teaching students. According to him in the Netherlands it is therefore required of an academic to publish at least 3.5 research articles per annum. (Books and book reviews are excluded, since they are considered unimportant.)

K b ben illustrates this new fad with the example of a valuable book written by an eminent scholar who left the academia exactly because of its absurd bureaucratic managerialism. The otherwise well-received book by the general public was, however, considered to be academically insignificant for the following reasons: (1) It was written in Dutch and not in prescribed English. (2) It was published as a book and not in a required article or articles; (3) not in an accredited international scholarly journal with (4) at least 300 subscribers. (5) It was written in a way accessible to the general public – a sure indication that it was unscientific!

K b ben's first reaction is that only a few people read scholarly journals, while the actual reason why anybody starts writing is to be read!

2.4 Serious reservations

But this academic has the following more serious questions to be considered.

Firstly, university managers ask for more refereed articles. But how can they determine which of the stream of articles were really worthwhile publishing? They simply apply what K b ben calls a bibliometric norm, they are fixated on quantity (counting) instead of quality (assessing).

Secondly, K b ben (p. 124) queries the fact that the articles have to be published in English. He rightly asks why a study in Dutch about a Dutch issue, relevant for the situation in the Netherlands should be regarded as inferior to the same study when published in the *lingua franca* of today.

Thirdly, he notes (p. 123) that usually the articles of researchers associated with top research institutions are more readily accepted for publication than those of unconnected individuals, making excellent contributions. In this way many low standard articles – that should never have been published – are also accepted.

Fourthly, K b ben (p. 126) also identifies some serious misuses of the system. One is that in some cases the leader of a research team is mentioned as the only author of an article (in some cases also his/her co-researchers), while he/she was not really involved in the actual hard work of the research done. He even mentions cases where four to five (or in medical journals up to ten) authors are mentioned. In some cases of teamwork this may be an honest acknowledgement compared to the example mentioned above. But is it true in all cases?

Fifthly, K b ben indicates that so-called "small fraud" is not always excluded. Sometimes an academic may – to blow up his/her *curriculum vitae* – publish articles with basically the same contents only under different titles in different journals. Or a long article on the same issue is divided in three separate articles. Or a dissertation, based on three/four articles is mentioned on a c.v. separate from the three articles of which it consists.

One could easily add some more problems connected with the system. Especially in the humanities the editorial board and the referees they choose to evaluate articles may, for instance, be biased towards a postmodern approach. Only with great exceptions will they allow an anti-postmodern contribution to be published in their journal.

Another common problem is that authors soon discover the likes and dislikes of a journal's editor(s). For instance, that an article (even a historical one) has to refer to the most recent sources, adhere to their latest idiosyncratic bibliographical style, should be written in what they regard to be standard English – sometimes without any knowledge of the kind of terminology and contents of a specific discipline. In many cases articles may be in agreement with all these formal requirements (for instance, the quotation of many sources), but leaving the reader in the dark about any normative direction. A well-known joke goes as follows: An author who uses only one book can easily be blamed of plagiarism. A scholar who can quote from ten different sources in his/her article is viewed as acceptable. But a writer whose bibliography includes more than a dozen or more other recent publications is regarded as excellent.

Köbben (p. 128) concludes that all these problems cannot only be ascribed to academic vanity or monetary gain (in cases where authors receive some remuneration), but also to the system itself which asks for it but can assess the results only in a quantitative way.

2.5 Effectiveness/efficiency

These types of assessments are not confined to publications only. Shortly before my retirement (1999) management hired a consultant (of course at a huge cost and on top of it an atheist) to do an "effectiveness evaluation" of the PU for CHE. The results about the IRS were kept secret in spite of the fact that I repeatedly requested them to be made public to the IRS and all other sections of the university who spent days on this kind of exercise. Firstly I wanted to know what the applied norms were. Secondly, how non-comparable facets of the University (e.g. the cafeteria and IRS) were compared by way of the quantification of their "outputs". It seemed as if an academic institute could only be labelled efficient if it is profitable.

2.6 Quantification as only norm

As I had suspected quantifying the unquantifiable was the only "criterion" that could have been used. But did not an atheist (Einstein) already remind Christians – who should know better God's various ordinations – that everything countable does not necessarily count in life, and that everything that really counts (is of vital importance) cannot be counted (simply be expressed numerically)?

To use a simple example: I may count a bag of potatoes at the market without buying it. Why? Simply because I also need other norms to decide. I may have discovered that of the 50 potatoes only those on the top are good – the rest of them are either green (poisonous) or rotten (worthless). Am I hypercritical when I state that an economised and managerialised university is more or less forced to count the non-essential, while ignoring what is really essential to be a true university?

3. Conclusion

My conclusion intends to guard against a too harsh a condemnation of the people leading the secularisation of the PU. The first reason for doing so is because it is today not easy at all to *direct* an organisation or institution. The second is that the managers of the PU may not have been motivated by clear-cut ideologies of which they were fully aware, but rather by embedded ones. Let me explain.

3.1 Steering or being steered?

In our times human responsibility becomes more and more restricted. We are surrounded by systems and networks in which we can only survive with smartness or luck. Professionalism and specialisation dominates. Broader society and the state as well as other institutions – large universities included – seem less malleable than was earlier assumed. Only the personal sphere seems to be a domain where responsibility still makes sense. Therefore managers – especially those who also want to be leaders, providing the correct direction – have huge obstacles to face.

3.2 Open or hidden ideologies?

One should distinguish between more open worldviews and ideologies and more embedded ones. One characteristic of the first kind is that it entails a heart commitment which provides the direction of a course to be followed in life one accepts responsibility for. However, in the case of the second type the assent remains tacit at best and absent at worst. No one is standing up to claim a specific path to be travelled. The heartfelt conviction remains concealed behind a façade. Of course this does not imply neutrality, like in so-called neutral economy and management theories, promoting their strongly bureaucratic and instrumentalist approaches.

Apart from such negative, pernicious influences, hidden ideologies and worldviews may, however, still contain some positive elements. Even in our secular world we can discern aspects of a Christian legacy. For example, present-day democratic societies parasitically still depend on this Christian heritage.

It is important to keep these two remarks also in mind in the following, concluding article that will investigate six other tendencies in the conglomerate of secular ideologies influencing Christian higher education.

Bibliography

Note: Due to the fact that not much has been published elsewhere on the history told in this article, this bibliography is, firstly, though not exclusively, mainly confined to the publications of local (Potchefstroom) authors. Secondly, without excluding secular works on higher education and ideologies, I have deliberately tried to draw the attention of the reader also to sound biblically oriented sources. Thirdly, I have milked many cows, but the cheese I have made remains my own responsibility.

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