Book Reviews and Studies


In a seminal essay on the function of the modern state in a globalized world, theorist Theda Skocpol states:

The state ... is fundamentally Janus-faced, with an intrinsically dual anchorage in class-divided socioeconomic structures and an international system of states. If our aim is to understand the breakdown and building up of state organizations in revolutions, we must not [only] look ... at the activities of social groups. We must also focus upon the points of intersection between international conditions and pressures, on the one hand, and class-structured economies and politically organized interests, on the other hand. State executives and their followers [or leaders] will be found maneuvering to extract resources and build administrative and coercive organizations precisely at this intersection. Here, consequently, is the place to look for the political contradictions that help launch social revolutions. Here, also, will be found the forces that shape the rebuilding of state organizations within social-revolutionary crises.

Welcome to the New Year of the jobless economic recovery, the illiterate information implosion of further, higher education, and the kinder, gentler coercive "revolutionary" visions of globalization, Mode II. As the currently very security-minded, thoroughly abstracted, power élite and their policy maven's hold their Davos meeting in a physically sparse, quiet ski resort, the nosier protestors have been voluntarily self-exiled in their "exotic" counter-forum to a physically crowded, but power-deprived Bombay. In this newer, braver world order, the élite strategies of absorption and agenda-setting have clearly won out-over the cruder powers of the street, in that the (cleaner-smelling, cleaner-cut) proponents for social change have now been granted the privilege to speak to the powers-that-be in muted tones inside the resort. An "access" revolution now trumps a "rights" revolution. After all, it is so much nicer for a truly civilized, international person to be "inside" rather than "outside" the power tent, is it not?

Turning to the sphere of institutions within states in this very Bismarckian world, a higher education, in the words of Henry Wasser, President of the City University of New York, USA, for "calculation" trumps previous higher education traditions of the Napoleonic and Humboldtian university, as well as the Newmanian and the American college, all leading to the corporate university as a site for (commercial) applied research.2 In this

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2 See his President's Lecture, "The University: Does it Have a Future?" (New York: CUNY Academy for the Humanities and Sciences, 6 May 1996).
connection, Wasser is, perhaps not noticing it, following the lead provided by psychologist Erich Fromm on the realm of how such institutions reflect and mold individual behaviour. In his classic work on humanist ethics, *Man for Himself*, Fromm had discussed various negative, "non-productive" character orientations: (i) the "receptive", in which the person takes his or her clues from identity and behaviour from outside him- or herself, as a passive child we might; (ii) the "exploitative", in which the person also assumes that anything good is to come from the outside; however, unlike the "receptive" personality, "the exploitative type does not expect to receive things from others as gifts, but to take them away from others by force or cunning". He adds that, "this orientation extends to all spheres of activity", and that often very intelligent, capable people are susceptible to this fault, in the view that "stolen goods are the sweetest" goods in their mind; (iii) the "hoarding" mentality, which is characterized by an overt fondness of retention, order, and control, with no faith in the power of creation. "There is nothing new under the sun" is their motto, and they will cast this worldview as "realism" and not pessimism; (iv) the "marketing" perspective, which is most germane to the "higher education for calculation" under discussion, and thus will get particular treatment.

To Fromm, this character orientation, a product of the modern market economy, is an orientation shaped and formed by the impersonal "exchange value" valorized by that system. He continues:

The market day [under this system] is the "day of judgment" as far the exchange value of commodities is concerned. ... [This] regulatory function of the market has been, and still is, predominant enough to have a profound influence on the character formation of the urban middle class and, through the latter's social and cultural influence, on the whole population. The market concept of value, the emphasis upon the exchange value rather than on use value, has led to a similar concept in regard to people and particularly to oneself. The character orientation which is rooted in the experience of oneself as a commodity and of one's value as exchange value I call the marketing orientation (p. 76).

Thus, we have a cult of personality as the key to success in the world market, with the balance between technical/professional skills and charming skills shifted from the former to the latter. In sum, the person seeking work in the new global economy must not only be able to know what to do in a position; he or she must also be able to do it "with a smile" in any situation or condition and do it for whatever low price the market "decides" to pay. "I am what I do"—a bad enough trait in any humbly "productive" environment focused on use value (e.g., the just society Fromm envisions)—degrades into "I am whatever you [the employer or market] desire me to be", driving human "individuality" to become literal "peculiarity", social "equality" in solidarity to become a sham synonym for market "interchangeability" (where political rights are left at the workplace gate, dispersing individual power and dignity to the winds of change in the name of "the right to hire and fire"), and holistic human reason, i.e., thinking, is degraded into mere mechanical calculating "intelligence", narrow enough to "get the job done" and quickly.\(^3\)

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\(^4\) In a chilling note, Fromm observes that:

The marketing orientation ... does not develop something which is potentially in the person ..., its very nature is that no specific and permanent kind of relatedness is developed, but that the very changeability of attitudes is the only permanent value of such orientation. In this orientation, those qualities are developed which can best be sold. Not one particular attitude is predominant, but the emptiness which
BOOK REVIEWS AND STUDIES 149

The writer spends some time on this discussion of “productive” value orientations versus varied forms of “nonproductive” value orientations, particularly the “marketing” value orientation, because the works under discussion, like so many other policy-making books in the higher education sector, are, by and large, mired in the lowly muck of market ideology. Some essays in the collected books heroically struggle nonetheless to obtain Fromm’s productive status for all, but many do not, either thinking that the struggle is either useless since the end of a realistic counter-utopia, however fallen in execution, in 1989, or, worse, thinking that the “realism” of the market society is to be embraced as the only “realized” global utopia there can (or should) be. Before diving into the dark, dank drowning pool of cant ideology, Fromm leaves us with one most telling observation on such false “realists” and their kind:

The “realist” sees only the surface features of things; he sees the manifest world, he can reproduce it photographically in his mind, and he acts by manipulating things and people as they appear in this picture. The insane person is incapable of seeing reality as it is; he perceives reality only as a symbol and a reflection of his inner world. Both are sick. The sickness of the psychotic who has lost contact with reality is such that he cannot function socially. The sickness of the “realist” impoverishes him as a human being. While he is not incapacitated in his social functioning, his view of reality is so distorted because of its lack of depth, and perspective, that he is apt to err when more than the manipulation of immediately given data and short-term aims are involved. “Realism” seems to be the very opposite of insanity and yet is only its complement (pp. 96–97, emphasis in the original).

According to Fromm, the true opposite of both insanity and realism is human “productiveness”, defined as the person “being capable of relating himself to the world simultaneously by perceiving it as it is and by conceiving it enlivened and enriched by his own powers”. The dynamic interaction of the two poles is what makes for true productiveness in a person, claims Fromm, and furthermore, “while it is true that man’s productiveness can create material things, works of art, and systems of thought, by far the most important object of productiveness is man himself” (emphasis in original). (This definition of “productiveness”, Fromm allows, is not the definition of a Pharaoh, who believes that the only “productivity” of slaves that matters occurs when they are doing his bidding, building temples of idolatry; when they are actually praying to God, they are slackin’ off.) Turning to the books and essays at hand, it will be interesting indeed to see what perspective on “productivity” they hold; which “idol” they worship.

Globalization and the Market in Higher Education: Quality, Accreditation, and Qualifications, a product of the September 2001 UNESCO Expert Meeting on the Impact of Globalization on Higher Education, is a book that is solidly transfixed between the two versions of productivity, the false idol and the true embodiment.

Opening with a balanced treatment of the role of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) by the editor, the role of UNESCO in balancing the needs of “realist” and “humanistic” productivity goals is highlighted. The

Footnote 4 continued

can be filled most quickly with the desired quality. This quality, however, ceases to be one in the proper sense of the word; it is only a role, the pretense of a quality, to be readily exchanged if another one is more desirable. ... Some roles would not fit with the peculiarities of the person; therefore, we must do away with them—not with the roles but with the peculiarities. The marketing personality must be free, free of all individuality. (The reviewer is thinking of those offshore tele-marketers, now often employed in India, going to language classes to sound mid-American, or some such persona, to earn a minimal wage.) (pp. 84–85).
essays are ranged in four sections of interest (global context, regional perspectives, national perspectives and concerns regarding transnational education quality issues, and, finally, issues and concerns regarding the effects of trade liberalization and trans-frontier higher education providers), both from the points of view of exporting nations (such as Australia) and importing nations (such as Malaysia). The book closes with what is called a “balanced” overview of the threats and opportunities GATS supposedly presents for higher education. Finally, a call is made for a 2005 Expert Meeting to focus on the central role of quality assurance in this changing higher education landscape.

The best chapters for “staking out” the issues against a “bomfog”\(^5\) of balance are those, respectively, by Dirk Van Damme on “Higher Education in an Age of Globalization”, by Robin Middlehurst on “Quality Assurance and Accreditation for Virtual Education: A Discussion of Models and Needs”, and by F. K. Seddo on “Educating Citizens in a Changing Global Society: A New Challenge for Higher Education”.

Andrés M. Márquez’s chapter on the impact of globalization on higher education in Latin America is well worth reading, especially since Latin America is a region that already makes much use of part-time academic labour in private universities. Marla Singh’s contribution is also worth a look, dealing as it does with the ethics of higher education markets in developing countries. Jane Knight’s closing chapter, while certainly helpful in detailing what GATS has in store for the reader, also blinds him or her as to avenues of action in its air of technocratic inevitability.

*Globalization, Universities, and Issues of Sustainable Development* is a great book to balance the professional technocratic air of the UNESCO contribution. Not being burdened with the responsibilities of speaking for who knows whom (UNESCO, the IAU, or “Economia” [who runs that?!]), the authors can speak personally as well as professionally, and do not have to “pull their punches” in so doing. With a wide variety of authors from diverse institutions in the United States (i.e., Lowell, Massachusetts, is a town that has seen many transformations in industry over the decades as a result of globalization), Jamaica, Slovenia, Ireland, the Philippines, Latin America, and India, and covering rare topics such as “sex, maids, and export processing”, refugees and immigrant communities, and the role of the university in actually going out into the community to do something concrete to aid sustainable development (rather than say that it hopes to do it). Most importantly, following the line of Fromm, the editors state that:

Important public policy implications of the university’s role in the globalizing economy have been raised. In particular, we are concerned with how universities in developing countries resolve the tensions caused by [the IMF’s] structural adjustment policies, difficult socioeconomic problems, depleted budgets, and the need to “rely upon so-called market mechanisms” for significant resources. At the same time we describe a disturbing trend that finds universities in industrialized countries shaping their research “to follow the money trail” and operate like for-profit businesses. The “marketization” of higher education poses weighty challenges to the university’s ability to provide broad education, conduct basic and applied research, and augment the quality of intellectual, economic, and social life for communities and nations where they are located. ... Sustainable development is

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\(^5\) The coined term comes from literary critic Kenneth Burke, who defines it as rhetoric employed to obscure and/or deflect reality (of the humane kind).

\(^6\) Again, the infamous en vogue practice of UNESCO co-branding “in-hospital-ness” at work? Is the organization too strapped for funds to host an Expert meeting and to publish the results all by itself, or does it think it needs the holy *imprimatur* of big capital to be seen as serious?
a process that links many more things than just economics and politics. Among other things, it includes strategies that promote a more equitable distribution of well-paying jobs, dramatically reduced social inequality, the political empowerment of the citizenry, improved health, and decreased toxics usage.

There is no room in neoclassical economics and input-output models for the vital, cumulative impact that complex human efforts can have in the establishment of a development model that promotes equity, environmental sustainability, and myriad opportunities for people to contemplate and then intelligently act upon their future, not just wish for it. As the 21st century opens, the global reality is not meeting even the basic needs of too many of the earth’s inhabitants. Universities need to step up to this challenge, build a big table, and invite people to sit together and reconfigure things (pp. 260–265).

In conclusion, all this reviewer can say to Pyle and Forrant (as well as to some of the authors of the UNESCO book and the participants at the Davos meeting) is let us pray that we are not the insane ones in calling for a true human concept of “productivity” free of the sinful whip of economic overlords, and that we can have a new revolution some day at the “intersection” of power before we are crushed, oh-so-quietly, by the gatekeepers of our souls and bodies.

ERIC GILDER


Any volume conceived within such broad parameters as this one is will probably not provide much depth or revelation on any of the themes in question, and this volume is, unfortunately, no exception. Published under the auspices of the Dia-Logos Studies in Philosophy and Social Studies, Kwick et al. paint yet another veneer of general gloom and despondency on the deteriorating picture of “the university as we know it.” From the beginning, Kwick sketches the scene by declaring the public sector and higher education “under siege” and dedicates his canvas of (mostly acclaimed) speeches, essays, and articles to the condition of and challenges facing the university (with some passing emphasis on Central Europe). The colourwash is clearly that the green-eyed globalization monster is to blame for the ills invading the higher education community of today and for forcing its institutions through untenable changes as a consequence. The concept of change, far from being lauded as a mechanism for progress and development, is by implication derided as a cancerous growth sucking the academic heart from the modern university—a disease which should be surgically removed before it becomes malignant and spreads. Change, it seems, should only be talked about in higher education circles as it relates to disciplines other than higher education itself.

Kwick’s collection swings between the pragmatic and the theoretical, and is indicative of the two positions running through modern higher education institutions today regarding the need (or ill-conceived need) for change. On the one hand, there are those who acknowledge that change in some format is essential and will occur, and, on the other, there are those who steadfastly refuse to budge from the 200-year-old status quo, convincing themselves,