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SCHOLARS, PHILOSOPHERS OR PERFORMERS?

THE POLITICS OF RESEARCH IN CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITIES

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I have to set up the most difficult ideal of the philosopher. Learning is not enough! The scholar is the herd animal in the realm of knowledge – who inquires because he is ordered to and because others have done so before him. (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 226)

Among the many qualities for which John Codd will be remembered, one of particular note for me was his intellectual integrity. For John, there was no separation between the ideas he espoused and the way he lived his life. I knew John for almost two decades. As editor of the journal *Delta* in the late 1980s, he was responsible for the publication of one of my first academic articles and provided strong support and encouragement for my initial writing efforts. In my discussions with John at conferences and other events, he was always humble, attentive and generous with his time. In the work he published and presented John was lucid, rigorous and passionate in his pursuit of deeper truths. He knew his fields of study well and managed, as few

others can, to balance patience and thoughtfulness with uncompromising critique. In his service as the external examiner for an EdD cohort at the University of Auckland in the early 2000s, John was thorough, fair and helpful in his comments for students and staff. John was committed to democracy and social justice and exemplified those ideals in all areas of his academic life.

For these reasons and others, I regarded John as a model scholar. At first glance, then, the quotation from Friedrich Nietzsche at the head of this paper might seem somewhat out of place. Nietzsche's words were recorded in his unpublished notebooks in 1884 and speak to our current age in a manner that is at once offensive and insightful. For those committed to the ideal of the scholar as a creative, critical and not merely 'learned' being, Nietzsche's portrayal of scholarly life might be regarded as irritating at best and repugnant at worst. Yet there is a sense in which 'we scholars' (to use the phrase Nietzsche employs in the sixth part of *Beyond Good and Evil*: Nietzsche, 1990) are increasingly being encouraged – sometimes against our expressed wishes, and perhaps in ways we cannot fully understand as participants in the process – to become more 'herd like' in our activities as a condition of our continuing existence. The 'we' in this context refers to a particular form of scholarly community, namely, the group of workers employed as academics in the conglomerate of institutions and organisations known collectively as 'the university'. If by 'continuing existence' we mean ongoing paid employment in contemporary universities, a certain kind of herd-like behaviour has become almost a necessity.

This paper develops this idea in relation to research policy in particular, taking New Zealand's Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) as an example. In so doing, it builds on a tradition of critical scholarship to which John Codd made a very significant contribution. John was at home in several domains of educational inquiry

– including philosophy of education, sociology of education, and educational policy studies – and a key focus of his later policy work was tertiary education and the PBRF (see, for example, Codd, 2001, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2006b). Indeed, I feel very fortunate to have co-authored a piece on tertiary education with John shortly before his untimely death (Roberts and Codd, 2010). Our focus was the pervasive influence of neoliberalism in shaping tertiary education policy in New Zealand. The legacy of neoliberal thought is still clearly evident in the PBRF, as the present paper attempts to show.

Drawing on the work of Nietzsche, I argue that the PBRF, while fostering an individualistic and competitive ethos within and between institutions, is also deeply conservative in its effects. There are, it will be suggested, strong incentives in the PBRF scheme for scholars to become, in some respects, more ‘herd-like’ in their research activities. The PBRF, in short, promotes a form of scholarly individualism that is ultimately conformist in its character and consequences. The paper falls into three main parts. The first section outlines Nietzsche’s distinction between scholars and philosophers and comments briefly on his own philosophical life. The second part provides an account of the evolution and operation of performance-based research funding in New Zealand. The final section evaluates the PBRF in the light of Nietzsche’s ideas.

Nietzsche on scholars and philosophers

Nietzsche’s views on scholars and philosophers were given expression in a number of his publications, including his essay ‘Schopenhauer as Educator’ (Nietzsche, 1997) and his book *Beyond Good and Evil* (Nietzsche, 1990). Written as one in a series of

‘untimely meditations’, ‘Schopenhauer as Educator’ examines the relationship between the state, the university and philosophy, and describes – in typically Nietzschean witty detail – the defining features of the scholar. These can be summarised as follows: probity and a sense for simplicity; shrewdness for that which is close, and myopia for that which is distant and universal; sobriety and conventionality in likes and dislikes; poverty of feeling and aridity; low self-esteem, amounting to modesty; loyalty towards one’s teachers and leaders; a preference for habit and routine; a tendency to escape boredom with the aid of books; a motive of ‘breadwinning’; a desire for recognition by one’s fellow scholars; a propensity (rare among most) to vanity; amusement with scientific puzzles; and (occasionally) the impulse for justice (Nietzsche, 1997, pp. 161-177).

The genuine philosopher, on the other hand, lives ‘unphilosophically’, ‘unwisely’ and imprudently. The philosopher, Nietzsche says in *Beyond Good and Evil*, ‘risks *himself* constantly, he plays *the* dangerous game’ (Nietzsche, 1990, p. 132). Philosophers will confess to ‘taking *pleasure* in negating and dissecting and to a certain self-possessed cruelty which knows how to wield the knife with certainty and deftness even when the heart bleeds’ (p. 141). These ‘hard’ characters, as Nietzsche describes them, will feel disgust in the face of ‘fawning enthusiasm, idealism, feminism, hermaphroditism’, instead exemplifying ‘[c]ritical discipline and every habit conducive to cleanliness and severity in things of the spirit’ (p. 141).

Nietzsche laments the sickness – paralysis – of will in Europe in his time. The sceptics prominent in this period had, Nietzsche argues, lost any conception of independence of decision, of a sense of pleasure in willing (p. 137). Regaining this requires the development of new qualities. ‘It seems to me more and more’, he muses, ‘that the philosopher, being *necessarily* a man of tomorrow and the day after

tomorrow, has always found himself and *had* to find himself in contradiction to his today: his enemy has always been the ideal of today' (p. 143). This is a task for the very few – for those who have been *bred* for philosophy by virtue of their origin, their ancestors (p. 145). It is not something that can be taught, but rather must be known from experience.

The scholar, by contrast, is subservient, lacking in self-sufficiency and unauthoritative. Scholars, knowing their place among the rank and file, will be industrious but moderate in applying themselves. They seek a good name for themselves and require constant affirmation of their value. They have to overcome, again and again, a certain inner distrust which lies at the heart of all dependent beings and herd animals. The diseases and ill breeding of an ignoble species are evident. The scholar is 'full of petty envy and has very keen eyes for what is base in those natures to whose heights he is unable to rise' (p. 133). Inhibited in their own thoughts and actions, scholars become 'frosty and reserved' when in the presence of those who are able to 'flow out' more freely (p. 133). In the end,

... [w]hat ever still remains in him of his 'own person' seems to him accidental, often capricious, more often disturbing: so completely has he become a passage and a reflection of forms and events not his own. He finds it an effort to think about 'himself', and not infrequently he thinks about himself mistakenly; he can easily confuse himself with another, he fails to understand his own needs and is in this respect alone unsubtle and negligent. (p. 134)

Nietzsche's own life as a philosopher provides an interesting point of reference when considering his views. Few philosophers, or writers in any other field, have been able to convey their ideas with greater wit and concision than Nietzsche. Nietzsche's writings exhibit a sharpness in critique that has seldom been equalled.

They are a model of succinct, precise and penetrating prose. Yet creating such a distinctive writing style did not come easily for Nietzsche. In an especially memorable passage in one his letters from his university days, he observes:

It will amuse you if I confess what has given me most trouble and anxiety: my German style. The scales are falling from my eyes: I have lived too long in stylistic innocence. I have woken up to the categorical imperative: ‘Thou shalt and must write’. In fact I tried what I had never tried except in school: to write well. And suddenly the pen was paralysed in my hand. I could not do it, and I was angry. (cited in Hayman, 1980, p. 85)

Writing, for Nietzsche, provided a form of relief from other stresses (e.g. the death of his aunt Rosalie in 1867), and letters enabled him to meet the need to converse with friends while enjoying the pleasures of writing. The development of his aphoristic style had its roots in his early dissatisfaction with contemporary German scholarly prose. Always a hard worker, Nietzsche at times stretched the limits of human endurance. While writing *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche, 1967) he averaged only one night’s sleep every two nights. Many of his health difficulties, including inflammation of the stomach and intestines in February 1871, were attributed directly to overwork (Hayman, 1980, p. 138). In fact, his earlier encounter with Schopenhauer’s work had inspired him to deliberately test the power of the will by subjecting himself to arduous physical rituals – including one period of two weeks where he allowed himself no more than four hours of sleep each night (p. 73).

In a letter to his sister on 29 November 1881, Nietzsche spoke of the difficulties he was having in writing:

I do not trust the thoughts that occur when my soul is oppressed and my intestine afflicted, and even what might get written when I have a headache will certainly be torn up. On the other hand I am well aware of being tremendously indebted to this inconstancy in my health ... this magical feeling of getting better – a wonderful condition and the source of the most elevated and courageous perceptions ... As in the Engadin I go for walks in the hills, exultantly happy, and looking into the future as no one before me has dared to. (cited in Hayman, 1980, p. 236)

Nietzsche spoke many times about the importance of suffering in his life, and came to believe that it served a purpose in this philosophical development. He referred to his existence as a ‘fearful burden’, yet felt that the suffering and renunciation he experienced saved him. Despite ‘furious attacks’ and ‘semi-paralysis’, he could find consolation in his thoughts (p. 219). A committed teacher, Nietzsche wanted to integrate his pressing philosophical concerns and intense interest in the music of Wagner with classical philological learning. Appointed to a professorship in philology at the exceptionally young age of 24, he became increasingly distant – in both collegial and theoretical terms – from some of his contemporaries. The public lectures that formed the basis of his argument in *The Birth of Tragedy* were received with ‘fear and incomprehension’ (p. 120). He applied, unsuccessfully, for a position in philosophy at his university in Basel in the early 1870s. Eventually ill health hastened his resignation from his university post, and he sought a new kind of intellectual life.

At the time at which he was writing *Human, All Too Human* (Nietzsche, 1996), Nietzsche wished to live as a truly free spirit, driven by the quest for knowledge. Such a life, he noted, demands a total commitment, where even love of one’s fellow human beings will be ‘prudent and somewhat short-breathed’ (p. 134). Free spirits, he says, engage themselves with this world of ‘affection and blindness’ only as far as

necessary for the sake of knowledge (p. 134). Yet the rewards for the few who can follow this path are great: ‘no honey is sweeter than that of knowledge’ (p. 135). Having at an earlier stage in life entertained the notion of bringing together a group of like-minded people to live in a small philosophical community, Nietzsche ended up pursuing his ideals alone.

His university pension was sufficient to enable him to wander throughout Europe during the 1880s, spending time in Switzerland, Italy and France while writing, walking and thinking. Some of his best-known books – including *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche, 1976a), *Beyond Good and Evil* (Nietzsche, 1990) and *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Nietzsche, 1989) – were produced during this period. The final year before his collapse in January 1889 was one of frenetic writing activity, producing *The Case of Wagner* (Nietzsche, 1967), *Twilight of the Idols* (Nietzsche, 1976b), *The Antichrist* (Nietzsche, 1976c), and the autobiographical *Ecce Homo* (Nietzsche, 1989). The last decade of Nietzsche’s life was spent in the darkness of insanity, and he died in 1900.

Performance-based research funding in New Zealand

What relevance might Nietzsche’s portrait of scholars and philosophers have for contemporary academic life? In a tertiary education environment governed by the logic of performativity, Nietzsche’s account assumes new significance. As John Codd demonstrated, in universities and other educational institutions, knowledge has become commodified and harnessed as part of a wider struggle for international economic competitiveness. This process has been reflected in a number of policy

developments and is clearly evident in New Zealand's PBRF, a system designed to measure and reward research performance (see Codd, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006b).

The PBRF emerged from the work of the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (TEAC), a body formed shortly after the formation of a new Labour-Alliance government in New Zealand in 1999. The case for performance-based research funding was considered in the fourth of the TEAC reports, *Shaping the Funding Framework* (TEAC, 2001), following a review of schemes elsewhere in the world. The investigation undertaken by the TEAC commissioners was extended by a PBRF Working Group formed in July 2002. The Working Group's recommendations on the structure and implementation of performance-based research funding were published in a report, *Investing in Excellence* (PBRF Working Group, 2002). Together, the fourth TEAC report and the Working Group's report provided the theoretical foundation on which subsequent practical developments in the PBRF have been laid.

The first assessment exercise (quality evaluation) was completed in 2003. This was followed by a partial round in 2006. The next evaluation is due to occur in 2012. In both 2003 and 2006, individual academics in participating tertiary education institutions and organisations were assessed by expert panels in disciplinary clusters on the basis of submitted 'Evidence Portfolios' (EPs), with lists of research 'outputs' and sections devoted to peer esteem and contributions to a research environment. Individuals were required to nominate four outputs as their best. Up to thirty further outputs could be listed. The other two sections were also to be presented in the form of a list using pre-defined categories. There was minimal space for describing an individual research programme. Individuals were awarded a grade from 'R' (where there was little evidence of research activity) to 'A' (research at a world class

standard). Grades of ‘B’ and ‘C’ designated varying degrees of research achievement between these two extremes. ‘A’ ratings were highly prized, with, for example, fewer than 3% of Education academics receiving this grade in the 2003 quality evaluation. Results in the EP assessment process have been coupled with research degree completions (Masters and doctoral) and externally generated research income in determining the total amount of PBRF funding for each participating institution or organisation. The University of Auckland emerged as the clear overall ‘winner’ following the first assessment round (see Tertiary Education Commission, 2004), but the University of Otago claimed victory status after the partial round of 2006. There has been a great deal of debate between these two institutions over the interpretation of the results, giving clear evidence of how important the PBRF has now become in establishing an academic reputation in New Zealand. Universities and other institutions are now busy preparing and implementing strategies to maintain or improve their rankings in the next evaluation exercise.

Nietzsche and the PBRF

What would Nietzsche make of the PBRF? And what would the PBRF make of *him*? The second question is perhaps easier to answer than the first. Nietzsche, had he been assessed during the years of his university professorship, would probably have fared only moderately well, achieving perhaps, at best, a B rating. This seems almost inconceivable given Nietzsche’s extraordinary influence in the second half of the 20th century and first few years of the new millennium. He has become known, with Marx and Freud, as one of the great ‘Masters of suspicion’ and his work has provided the focus for hundreds of books, articles and conference papers. Yet, while he was

writing the books that would later make him famous, Nietzsche achieved comparatively little recognition from his peers. During his years of institutional employment, Nietzsche would have received only a modest score in the ‘peer esteem’ section of PBRF assessment exercise and his contribution to a research environment would have been regarded as virtually nil. His most productive period was to come after he was no longer constrained by his university commitments. Of course, much of this can be explained by changes in universities over the following century, and many other well known thinkers might also have been in danger of receiving low PBRF grades. But Nietzsche’s case is instructive, for it highlights the limits of a system driven so heavily by short-term judgements about research ‘quality’. The difference we make as researchers – our contributions to knowledge and to the lives of those we supervise and teach – will often not be evident for many years, and even then it may not be ‘measurable’ in the ways supporters of the PBRF would want it to be.

Nietzsche was one of the most profound individualists of his age. He defied easy philosophical categorisation and he felt himself to be very much out of step with his time. He wanted to provide a revaluation of all values; to disrupt the very foundations on which prevailing conceptions of morality had been based. His critique of scholars was based, in considerable part, on what he saw as their tendency toward conformity – their inability to make the kind of bold, genuinely creative, independent intellectual leaps characteristic of true philosophers. The PBRF was ostensibly designed to foster just these qualities, rewarding those who are creating cutting-edge knowledge, pushing the boundaries of understanding, challenging and testing ideas (Maharey, 2002, p. 2; PBRF Working Group, 2002, p. 4). Nietzsche’s philosophers should, on this basis, have been right at home in a PBRF environment. And indeed, philosophy as

a discipline has done very well in the PBRF quality evaluation process. (This does not mean philosophy as currently practised in university environments bears a strong resemblance to philosophy as Nietzsche conceived of it.)

Yet, there is also something deeply conservative, deeply conformist, in the PBRF. All that counts in the PBRF process is that which can be measured – and measured in the narrow terms dictated by the language of ‘outputs’ (Codd, 2006a, 2006b; Roberts, 2006). Nietzsche sought *knowledge* and strove to create conditions conducive to this quest (see Nietzsche, 1996). In the PBRF, it is *performance* that is being measured, or supposedly measured, not knowledge. To do well in the PBRF, our work must be constructed or reconfigured to comply with these expectations. It is true that the PBRF allows for ‘special circumstances’, but the exceptions granted in these cases simply confirm the rule – the general orientation of the PBRF process. These are, moreover, not exceptions of a kind that allow researchers to claim their work constitutes a ‘revaluation of all values’ or a ‘philosophy of the future’ and thus should be granted special status. The PBRF, in keeping with most nationwide evaluation systems (whether these are in tertiary education institutions, schools, or other working environments), is capable of dealing with difference in only a strictly limited way. Almost all full-time academics in New Zealand’s universities are subject to the PBRF. The PBRF is never far from institutional leaders’ minds when new research initiatives are developed. The PBRF also exerts an influence, even if often only indirectly, on promotions and appointments. Research committees and other administrative groupings with a research focus must take the PBRF into account in their deliberations, procedures and recommendations. Tertiary education institutions and organisations that choose not to participate in the PBRF process nonetheless become affected by it given the funding consequences of their decisions. The PBRF, in its

operation and influence, at both an individual level and institutional level, sends a clear message: *conform or else*. The ‘or else’ here means ‘or else there will be consequences’. These may not be as severe as dismissal (in the case of individuals) or closure (in the case of institutions), but they are significant nonetheless. The PBRF plays an increasingly important role in shaping patterns of thought and action in New Zealand’s tertiary education institutions, and the more entrenched such patterns become the more difficult it is to rub against them.

Those responsible for implementing the PBRF process in universities and other participating institutions know how much hinges on the exercise and have, accordingly, devoted considerable time and energy to it. Yet, in the rush to improve the system’s performance, other ways of viewing the research process – and the nature of academic work more generally – are in danger of being trampled or lost. In converting the complex, often lengthy process of research into a finite list of measurable outputs, a certain kind of homogeneity is assured. As thinkers such as Lyotard (1984) have recognised, information, if it is to be traded and exchanged, requires a certain standardisation. The PBRF Working Group (2002) claimed that what was needed in New Zealand was the development of lively, vital, active research cultures where research productivity and interaction between ‘clever, creative individuals’ could be enhanced (p. 8). The PBRF, it was argued, should be guided by principles of comprehensiveness, respect for academic traditions, consistency, continuity, differentiation, credibility, efficiency, transparency, complementarity, and cultural inclusiveness (pp. 8-9). Around the same time, the official introductory web page on the PBRF noted: ‘The fund should also allow more standardised and transparent information on research outputs to be collected and made available to users’ (Ministry of Education, 2002).

Such standardisation has its drawbacks and is in tension with the claims about creativity in the Working Group's report. The very features that make a particular form of creative or intellectual activity distinctive and meaningful can be lost in this process. For research is not simply about producing standardised outputs for 'users'. Some of the most important research that goes on in institutions like universities does not produce anything with an immediate and tangible use value. Researchers, in some fields at least, need time to reflect, to ponder, to search and explore, to read and reflect, to try out ideas, and to talk and interact with others (colleagues, students, practitioners) who share similar interests and seek to address similar questions. While Nietzsche was, for a good part of his life, a rather lonely figure, in many other senses he exhibited exactly the qualities just noted. He did much of his best work, his best thinking, while wandering in the hills of Europe. Sometimes this form of intellectual activity is called 'basic' research or, rather derisively, 'blue skies' research, but neither of these labels is particularly helpful. Work of this kind is 'basic' only in the sense that it constitutes the creative heart of the research process; it is *not* basic in the sense of being simple or rudimentary. Neither does this sort of work involve a vacant, sleepy gazing at blue skies. Nietzsche was, it might be said, *literally* a 'blue skies' researcher, but the form of intellectual work he undertook during his long walks was purposeful and active. What makes this dimension of research 'difficult', perhaps *irrelevant*, in PBRF terms is its immeasurability, its incompatibility with a system that seeks to produce output units for others to 'purchase', 'use' and exploit for economic gain (Codd, 2005a; Roberts, 2007).

In what general direction does the PBRF process move? Arguably it creates a research environment conducive to the development of many of the negative qualities Nietzsche saw in scholars. Our attention becomes focused more on what is near at

hand, on the details necessary for PBRF compliance, rather than on the ‘bigger picture’. We quibble over the forms or the institutional demands or the weightings of different PBRF components or the interpretation of the quality evaluation results, forgetting to consider what the system as a whole is doing to our understanding of research and of ourselves. The low self-esteem of which Nietzsche spoke has emerged as a key theme following the first two quality evaluation rounds (cf. Ashcroft, 2005; Clark, 2005; Smith & Jesson, 2006), with a decline in morale among many designated as ‘research inactive’ or worthy only of a ‘C’ when they considered themselves to be experienced and accomplished researchers. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that for some the results have provided a boost in confidence (see Middleton, 2005). A desire for recognition by others has certainly become a feature of the PBRF process, as individuals seek promotion and appointment partly on the basis of their rankings (where these are favourable) and institutions compete vigorously with each other to achieve results attractive to prospective research students, academic appointees and external funding bodies. Living ‘unwisely’, as Nietzsche believed philosophers should, and refusing to conform with PBRF demands, is seldom an option. Loyalty to institutional leaders in completing the PBRF requirements has become a necessity if academics wish to retain their positions and continue to earn a living from their intellectual labours.

Nietzsche’s work is helpful in providing a lens through which to consider recent developments in tertiary education and research policy in New Zealand. Yet, it is not without its weaknesses and it also raises further questions. The lines between ‘mere scholarship’ and genuine philosophical activity – as Nietzsche saw them – remain somewhat ambiguous. It is not clear where Nietzsche’s philosophers are, or have been. Who *are* the philosophers of the future? Should we see Nietzsche himself as

one? Certainly he must be seen as a strong candidate for this title. But who else might we place on the list? Should we look toward thinkers whose work has been influential in the twentieth century? (In addition to Nietzsche himself, we might name Marx, Freud, Weber, and Heidegger, among many others, as examples.) Or would we be closer to the mark in identifying political figures who have changed the course of history over the last 100 years or more (e.g., Lenin, Mao, Mandela) What of spiritual leaders and social activists such as Mahatma Gandhi, Simone Weil, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, and the current Dalai Lama, to name but a few? No one named here seems to quite match Nietzsche's characterisation of the new philosopher. In some cases, there is a lack of the 'hardness' of character Nietzsche appeared to regard as essential; in others, there is perhaps not the degree of boldness and creativity in thought Nietzsche envisaged as necessary. It is difficult, however, to know who else might be considered. And if the philosophers of the future are yet to emerge, how might we, as beings so deeply immersed in a performance-driven, conformist, consumerist, anti-philosophical age, know how to identify them? Nietzsche's philosophers will have to tell us, or show us – but will we hear?

For many thinkers past and present, the role of the philosopher has been defined by a commitment to a particular mode of life. Some see this as reflective, inquiring or questioning in orientation; others speak of rigour and scholarship as important; yet others stress the need for a dynamic integration of theory with practice via critical transformative activity. Lyotard (1984, p. xxv) maintains that philosophers, unlike 'experts', are never certain of what they know. Derrida (1994, p. 3) speaks of the philosopher as someone 'for whom philosophy is not given' – a person who questions the nature, purpose and direction of philosophy. These points are worth keeping in mind when reflecting on Nietzsche's account of scholars and philosophers and the

relevance of his ideas for an understanding of the PBRF. Nietzsche exhibited the critical, questioning attitude to which Derrida, Lyotard and many others have referred, but he too must be questioned. His disparaging remarks on women should not be ignored, nor should his more general tendency towards a certain kind of intellectual cruelty – a willingness to, as he puts it, ‘wield the knife’ while saying ‘Thus it shall be’ (see Nietzsche, 1990). Nietzsche’s work must also be contextualised. Nietzsche was writing at a different time, in a distant place, and under circumstances that appear to bear little relationship to our own in 21st century New Zealand.

That said, there is merit in allowing Nietzsche to serve as a prompt for attempting, as far as this is possible, to ‘stand back’ a little from the PBRF. It is hard to know what Nietzsche, were he to find himself in the present world, would have to say. It seems likely that he would find the systems, policies, practices, and language of universities in our current age bizarre, but whether his reaction would be one of horror or amusement (or both) is a matter for some speculation. Yet, while a great deal has changed, some of the traits – those human, all too human flaws – he identified in his own day are still with us today. They simply take a different form in response to new social conditions. What is clear, I think, is that leading the kind of philosophical existence Nietzsche carved out for himself following his resignation from his university post would be extraordinarily difficult (Roberts, 2001). Taking such a leap of faith while still in one’s thirties, as Nietzsche did, and expecting to live this way into old age is simply impossible or impractical for most academics today, whether they are ‘scholars’ or ‘philosophers’. From a financial point of view alone, being able to create a life of this kind seems highly unlikely. Most universities do not pay pensions to those who leave their posts at a young age. In New Zealand, some academics make superannuation contributions from their salaries but this money does

not become available in the form of a yearly retirement allowance until age 50. A young academic committed to a post-university life of wandering, thinking and writing would need an alternative source of regular income and/or support from family or friends willing to cover some of the other responsibilities that must be met in contemporary western societies.

Nietzsche did admit that he too had to serve as a scholar for a period (Nietzsche, 1989, p. 282) and this is revealing, for it says something about the kind of preparation that is often necessary before one can engage in sophisticated critique. Nietzsche's conservative scholarly background played a significant role in providing him with the intellectual tools he needed to later undermine German cultural institutions. Extending this line of thought, we might say that scholarly life can be viewed as a form of deliberate but potentially educative *suffering*, where lessons have to be learned the hard way, over and over again. Nietzsche, it will be recalled from earlier discussion, believed certain forms of suffering were important in his intellectual development. Writing, while not always easy for him, was ultimately a liberating process. Indeed, it is arguably the struggle itself that *makes* writing and other forms of purposeful intellectual work liberating. Research, at any level, is often an agonising process – one involving frequent inner turmoil and sometimes physical pain (as Nietzsche experienced) – but it would be worrying, perhaps, if it were to be otherwise. If research was too easy, too neat and tidy, it would lose something of the risk-taking spirit Nietzsche tried to capture in his portrait of the philosopher. Over time, then, a ‘scholarly apprenticeship’ can play a redemptive role, but not in the way we might expect. Experience in writing and research can pave the way not for an easier, safer, more secure, more enjoyable intellectual existence but a gradual

acceptance that tensions, uncertainty and struggle will always be present. The PBRF throws up many such tensions in the lives of New Zealand academics.

Conclusion

Nietzsche used the term ‘scholar’ in a quite specific and not altogether unproblematic manner. Wishing to advance his view of the philosophers of the future in bold, dramatic fashion, there remains more than a hint of caricature in his portrait of the scholars of his time. John Codd’s exemplary qualities as a scholar stood in marked contrast to many of the attributes identified by Nietzsche as typical of the ‘men of science’ he observed in the second half of the nineteenth century. To return to the quotation at the beginning of this paper, John was never one to inquire simply because others had ordered him to. John was careful and methodical, it is true, and in many senses Nietzsche was of the same inclination (despite appearing to rail against these qualities). Yet, in the model of scholarship exhibited by John Codd – and by Friedrich Nietzsche – there was always a quiet determination to rub against the grain where necessary: to question, to take up a position that may be unpopular, to problematise. John displayed many of the characteristics Nietzsche admired so much: independence in thought, courage in his convictions, and a genuine love of knowledge. John’s commitment to the ideals of the university was such that he could not sit back and let the neoliberal reforms of the late 20th and early 21st century pass without critical comment. The PBRF, as John saw it, was an extension of neoliberal trends already well established in the tertiary education sector. It was another step in the commodification of knowledge, it intensified competition within and between institutions, and it reinforced a destructive culture of performativity.

My concern in this paper has not been with the ‘technical’ aspects of the PBRF system but with some of the philosophical questions raised by it. There is, of course, no perfect approach to the funding of research. The reports of the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission and PBRF Working Group were helpful in highlighting problems with the previous system of research funding. The PBRF addresses some of those weaknesses, but also creates problems of its own. The PBRF was promoted as a means for enhancing creativity, increasing the quality of research, and advancing New Zealand as a knowledge society and economy. The PBRF fosters a certain kind of individualism: it pits one academic against another in the quest for higher ‘quality’ rankings. Yet, with its standardisation, its reductive use of the language of ‘outputs’, its elements of compulsion, its compliance demands, and its dominant influence on research discourse and practices in New Zealand, the PBRF also encourages conformity. The PBRF is, in many respects, completely at odds with Nietzsche’s intellectual ideal and his way of life. Nonetheless, there is potential within a PBRF environment for research to retain something of the spirit of Nietzsche’s legacy. By accepting that research in today’s world is a process of *struggle*, with attendant forms of suffering, the PBRF can be kept in proper perspective and, when it becomes the object of careful reflection and critique, even provide the basis for a form of intellectual growth.

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