

# VENTER, J J. 2006. A CREATIVE HUMANE UNIVERSITY – COPING WITH THE BUSINESS MODEL

Originally in: *Koers* 71(2, 3, 4). 357-395

## Contents

1. <b><i>A narrative introduction to the issue</i></b>	358
<i>Proposition 1: Scholarly creativity and quality are endangered by ‘economy of scale’ type managerialism</i>	358
2. <b><i>Science and culture – innovationism</i></b>	364
<i>Proposition 2: Good scholarship transcends technical training and innovation by taking account of the cultural foundations in which it is rooted</i>	364
3. <b><i>Limits and limiting of techno-scientism</i></b>	367
<i>Proposition 3: Views of contemporary technicism, economism, and scientism are expressed at university level in the forms of formalistic, bureaucratic technical management, and the training of students in recipes for research and professional work</i>	367
3.1 <b><i>Techno-managerial faddism versus authority</i></b>	367
<i>Proposition 4: Neo-pragmatist capitalism is one of the most authoritarian forms of managerocracy</i>	368
3.2 <b><i>The limits of technical training</i></b>	370
3.3 <b><i>Worthwhile knowing</i></b>	371
<i>Proposition 5: The ‘market readers’ indications of what is worthwhile to know, does not necessarily lead to ‘quality’ or responsible scholarship</i>	371
3.4 <b><i>Scholarship, scientific control and human subjectivity</i></b>	374
<i>Proposition 6: Modernity’s tension between the ‘absoluteness’ of the human being and its ‘naturalistic’ origins, is collapsing in favour of naturalism, combined with a desire for scientific control of all human life, and thus of dehumanising the human being in scholarship</i>	374
4. <b><i>Human sciences and scholarly creativity</i></b>	377
<i>The client type of student is a risk-avoiding consumer, and economy of scale changes scholars into risk-avoiding producers. Good training would support students in taking responsible risks with regard to challenging problems</i>	378
4.1 <b><i>Creative problems statements</i></b>	379
4.2 <b><i>Breaking the rules</i></b>	383
<i>Proposition 8: For the sake of responsible, but creative graduates, the playful, methodological weirdo who does not necessarily generate money, must be welcomed at universities, and students, including undergraduates, have to be exposed to this kind of scholar</i>	383
<i>Proposition 9: Scholarly creativity is born from a disciplined imagination wor-</i>	386

<i>king within the rules of good abstraction</i>	
<b>4.3 Abstraction</b>	387
<i>Symbolic abstraction</i>	387
<i>Representative abstraction</i>	388
<i>Focused abstraction</i>	388
<i>Simplifying abstraction</i>	388
<i>Generalising abstraction</i>	389
<b>4.4 Abstraction and responsibility</b>	389
<i>Proposition 10. The manipulation of 'factuality' allowed for by abstraction does not absolve scholars from respecting the deeper layer or normativity, such as human dignity, stewardship towards the environment, mutual care, justice, etcetera.</i>	389
<b>5. In retrospect</b>	392
<b>References:</b>	392

## **Abstract**

### **A creative humane university – coping with the business model**

In this article it is attempted to indicate that the economic application of economy of scale in the context of a university pushes a university, even in its reigning epistemology, ideologically in the direction of technicism, scientism, and economism (imposed by neo-pragmatist managerialism – again imposed by ideological politicians). Economic application of economy of scale includes minimising academic staff and their support systems, yet combined with maximum intake of student numbers. This managerial system introduces stereotypical forms of innovation, and inhibits risk-taking, although disciplined playfulness is indeed needed for creative scholarship. It is also attempted to analyse creative possibilities in terms of the spectrum of possible scholarly problem statements with their proportionate risks. The basic forms of abstraction are also outlined in order to give some indication of how scholars are to support the development of a responsible spirit of renewal of knowledge in their students.

## **Opsomming**

**'n Kreatiewe, mensgevoelige universiteit – die hantering van die besigheids-model**

In hierdie artikel word gepoog om aan te toon dat die ekonomistiese toepassing van ekonomiese skaalvoordele binne die konteks van 'n universiteit, ook ten opsigte van sy dominerende epistemologie, ideologies voortgedryf word in die rigting van tegnisme, sciëntisme en ekonomisme (opgedring deur 'n neo-pragmatistiese bestuurskorporasie – opgedring deur ideologiese politici). Hierdie ekonomistiese toepassing sluit die minimalisering van akademiese personeel en hulle ondersteuningstelsels in, maar gaan ook gepaard met die maksimering van studentetalle. Dié bestuurswyse stel egter stereotipe vorme van innovering aan die orde, en inhibeer die neem van risiko's, alhoewel 'n gedissiplineerde speelsheid tog nodig is vir kreatiewe vakmanskap. 'n Analise word ook gebied van die kreatiewe moontlikhede wat die spektrum van moontlike kreatiewe probleem-stellings bied. Ook die basiese vorme van abstraksie word omlin om sodoende 'n aanduiding te gee van hoe wetenskaplikes die ontwikkeling van 'n verantwoordelike houding van kennisvernuwing in hulle studente kan ondersteun.