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Emerging Neoliberal Academic Identities: Looking Beyond *Homo economicus*

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Abstract

In this article, I deal with the notion of 'academic identity' holistically, seeking to bring together the teacher and researcher roles of academics in the neoliberal university. The article begins from the perspective of early-career academics who occupy the majority of fixed-term, teaching-only contracts in Higher Education, arguing that such casualisation of academic labour entrenches the role of the academic as *Homo economicus*. Drawing on the work of Foucault, I demonstrate how a neoliberal governmentality is now not only exerted upon academics from without, but increasingly they are subjecting themselves to the logic of efficiency and effectiveness too. The neoliberal governmentality of the university thus influences and shapes academic subjectivities, such that what it means to *be* an academic is confined to this marketised logic. Despite the pressures placed on academics to 'produce' measurable outputs and demonstrate their impact, I argue that moving beyond *Homo economicus* is possible, arguing instead for a re-claiming of 'the academic' as *Homo academicus*. The idea of *Homo academicus* can only be supported when three conditions are present: collegiality is afforded greater importance than competition; the discourses of 'productivity' and performativity are balanced against simply 'doing good work well' (Pirrie in Virtue and the quiet art of scholarship, Routledge, London, 2019), and; academics are mindful to practice the 'quieter' intellectual virtues, including the virtue of 'unknowing' (Smith in J Philos Educ 50:272–284, 2016).

Keywords Academic identity · Early-career academics · Foucault · Homo economicus · Unknowing

Vignette

An early-career academic, one year post-PhD, is employed on a fixed-term teaching-only contract in a research-intensive university. She feels lucky simply to be in employment, and to be employed in academia, whatever the contractual terms and conditions are. This young academic also feels somewhat 'privileged' to be working full-time in just one institution,

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rather than having to earn her living through an amalgamation of separate fractional contracts. Being on a teaching-only contract, the academic must snatch precious hours for research and scholarship when she can, in between teaching and administrative duties. The academic also actively resists taking work home with her in terms of working on evenings and weekends, although this can be guilt-ridden if such over-working is seen as part of the institutional culture. After moving from another teaching position in an FE college, the early-career academic experiences a major identity shift as a teacher, finding that in her new position less 'nurturing' and pastoral care is required by students. As the academic enters the research-intensive university, she must also adjust to the sheer size and scale of the institution. While it seems almost inevitable that one's academic identity will be changed and/or re-negotiated as someone moves institution, the early-career academic here is also contending with a major identity shift from that of being a PhD student to an independent academic, and in turn she cannot avoid questioning what it means to be an academic on the teaching-only side of the teaching-research nexus.

The Position of Early-Career Academics in Higher Education

The intensification of academic labour is well-charted in the literature as 'new managerialism' and a neoliberal, marketised logic have become ingrained in the HE sectors of most OECD countries throughout the world (Wills 1996; Loftus 2006; Walker 2009; Fanghanel 2012; Ylijoki and Ursin 2013). The marketisation and commodification of universities, and thereby also academic labour, is particularly evident in the UK (Kreber 2010; Fanghanel 2012; Bullough 2014). Academics are now, perhaps more than ever before, being forced to account for their time in relation to teaching hours, administrative duties, and research outputs (Guzman-Valenzuela and Barnett 2013). With the recent rise of fixed-term, teaching-only contracts, and even 'zero-hours' contracts,[1] it seems that the balance between teaching and research in universities is leaning much more towards teaching. While academics at any stage of their career may be employed on fixed-term and/or teaching-only contracts, the majority of such roles are currently filled by early-career academics (Fazackerley 2013; Leathwood and Read 2015; Bosanquet 2017; McKenzie 2017; Anonymous Academic 2018).[2]

The vignette above highlights some of the tensions that early-career academics (ECAs) may experience, such as that between teaching and research, the pressure to 'publish or perish', and adapting to one's relatively new identity as an academic. Given that academia is an increasingly competitive, or even 'hyper-competitive' (Bothello and Roulet 2019, 854), profession in which to get a foothold, the academic in the vignette is surely not alone in feeling 'lucky simply to be in employment'. There is a certain level of guilt associated

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[1] It is increasingly common for PhD students and early-career academics to take on 'zero-hours' contracts in which they are only paid for a specified number of lectures, seminars, or workshops. Such contracts are given in terms of the number of teaching hours required by the university, and there is no guarantee of further employment beyond this. These 'zero-hours' contracts may also be referred to as 'guaranteed hours' or 'visiting lecturer' roles.

[2] Thwaites and Pressland have defined 'early-career academics' as 'those who are within five years of having been awarded their PhD', although they do highlight that this concept is still a contested one and is 'laden with politics' (2017, 8). As they explain, being '"early career" is often associated with a heavy teaching workload, no successful grant reputation, a myriad of obscure administrative roles, and a lack of job security' (p. 8).

with the academic's defiance of a culture of 'over-working', as it is not uncommon 'for professional academics [to consider] long hours, disrupted holidays and working at weekends [as] just part of the job' (Calvert et al. 2011, 33). The way in which conducting research is associated with 'snatching precious hours' also implies some form of guilt, particularly as the academic in the vignette is employed on a teaching-only contract.

The commodification of academic labour has perhaps been more acutely intense recently due to the 'unbundling' of the academic identity, resulting in a number of 'para-academics' who specialise in certain aspects of the role—such as teaching-only or research-only staff—rather than being 'all-round academics' (Macfarlane 2011a, 59–60). The language used to describe teaching-only roles often implies a limiting of career progression, with 'teaching-only' and 'teaching and research' contracts being seen as completely different tracks at some universities. Similarly, the term 'para-academic' itself has pejorative connotations of a 'half-formed' or 'incomplete' professional.

Herein lies the great paradox of academia that all academics must confront, but especially those early in their career: promotion and progression largely depends on one's research activity (Young 2006; Fitzmaurice 2013; Flecknoe et al. 2017; Bothello and Roulet 2019), but ECAs are less likely to be given time within their contracts to actually do their research. So whilst being over-loaded with teaching commitments, ECAs still need to find time to carry out their own research in order to move up the career ladder. While teaching quality has been the subject of extended discussion since the implementation of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in the UK, it is still difficult to make a case for promotion based on one's teaching abilities rather than research outputs. The introduction of the TEF[3] was intended to 'raise esteem for teaching' and 'recognise and reward better teaching' (Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2019, 21); this move can be seen as attempting to redress the balance between the typical overvaluing and prioritisation of research over teaching. While the diversity of HE provision has steadily increased across the UK since the 1990s, there remains a persistent dichotomy between 'research-intensive' and 'teaching-intensive' institutions, with the former often considered as the 'gold' standard (Ball et al. 2002; Ainley 2003; Archer 2007). Interestingly, since the TEF came into being, those institutions which would not usually have been at the top of university league tables have been better able to demonstrate their merit (Weale 2017). This policy change has arguably broadened the conception of 'high quality' provision in HE, however it could also be used as a justification for the recent increase in teaching-only academic positions, a shift which has further entrenched the deprofessionalisation of academic labour.

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[3] The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), first introduced in the UK in 2016, is a measure of the 'teaching quality' provided by universities. Universities may be awarded either 'gold', 'silver', or 'bronze' as a result of this assessment, with those obtaining 'gold' being allowed to charge the maximum tuition fees to students (in England, this is set at £9,250 per year). TEF ratings are based on six core metrics including three subscales of the National Student Survey (a prominent measure of student satisfaction), student continuation data, and data regarding student outcomes in relation to employment and further study. For further details on how 'teaching excellence' ratings are calculated, see: Department for Education (2017), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/658490/Teaching_Excellence_and_Student_Outcomes_Framework_Specification.pdf.

While it is still optional for universities to take part in the TEF or not, it seems almost unthinkable to opt out of the Research Excellence Framework (REF)[4] given the inextricable link to funding for research. REF evaluations happen roughly every six years and they involve judgments of research 'excellence' based on the criteria of: the *quality* of outputs, their *impact* beyond academia, and the *environment* that supports research (REF website). All staff who have a 'significant responsibility for research' are entered into the exercise as part of their university's submission, meaning that those who do not have research time in their contracts are simply side-lined and passed over. The emphasis placed on the REF entails years of planning and preparation by universities in between cycles, and it has also generated an unhelpful knock-on effect of 'game-playing' in order to be ranked the highest (Wilsdon 2017; Anonymous academic 2019). Chief among the game-playing strategies is the recruitment of more 'research-active' staff ahead of a REF exercise, while in 2014 universities were even able to decide which members of staff to enter in their submission and which to leave out; this clearly shows how one's type of contract, acknowledgement of research outputs, and career progression are intricately woven together. For those on teaching-only contracts, this creates an uncomfortable paradox, that is, of having no time for research but needing to do it regardless. Admittedly, this paradox persists at all levels, yet the make-up of academic labour seems to shift more towards administrative and management duties as one progresses—senior lecturers, for example, may similarly have no time for their research, but this may be for different reasons than those of ECAs.

In this paper, I will not be arguing for a return to some 'golden-age' vision of academia, but I will be exploring further what specific changes to practice—such as workload allocation models, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), the Research Excellence Framework (REF), and the impetus to bring in grant income—might mean for those new to the academic profession. Here, I will consider what it means to *be* an academic, discussing the different ways in which early-career academics may form and re-form their academic identities beyond the PhD.

Teacher, Researcher, Academic?

There is a limited number of articles and books which directly discuss academic identity in philosophy of education, although this discussion of what it means to *be* an academic under the constraints of marketisation has been ongoing since the 1990s in the sociological literature (Berube 1996; Readings 1996; Slaughter and Leslie 1999). The changing conditions of academic labour have received more widespread attention in the US context than they have in the UK to date, most notably from Michael Berube (1996; 2013), who has critiqued the exploitation of graduate students who are involved in teaching but not financially rewarded in a manner commensurate with their status. The shift towards a majority workforce of non-tenurable, part-time, and adjunct faculty across US

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[4] The Research Excellence Framework (REF), first conducted in the UK in 2014, is an assessment of the quality of research outputs produced by academics at different institutions. REF sub-panels are assigned to evaluate the quality of a research profile submitted by each university department, with individual outputs being assessed in terms of 'originality, significance, and rigour'. As well as evaluating the quality of 'outputs', the REF also takes into consideration the overall 'impact' of a department's research, and its research 'environment'. For further details on how REF ratings and rankings are calculated, see: https://www.ref.ac.uk/media/1084/ref-2019_02-panel-criteria-and-working-methods.pdf.

colleges (Bousquet 2008) exemplifies the means-ends rationality of university manage-ment which is corrosive to the notion of 'the academic' itself. Appeals to 'intellectual craftsmanship' now seem overly-idealistic (Ormsbee 2017, 303), while the concept of tenure could almost be regarded as having 'unicorn' status; wonderful in theory, but dif-ficult to pin down or materialise.

A common theme identified in the literature on academic identities and/or subjectivities is a clear separation between consideration of the academic as a teacher, and their role as a researcher. Haamer et al. (2012) even take this one step further by comparing 'university teachers' with school teachers, as if there is no clear distinction to be made between these professions. Others have even tried to separate out the 'doing' of academic work from 'being' an academic (Archer 2008a), which seems to imply that one could do the job with-out this influencing their personal and professional identities. There are different models available in the literature which seek to categorise and pin down one's 'teacher perspective' and/or researcher identity (Akerlind 2008, 2011), but such a categorical approach seems inadequate to capture all of the different motivations and values which may inform one's academic identity. A number of scholars have highlighted that an academic's professional and personal selves are inextricably linked (Archer 2008a)—described by Sheridan as a 'risky mingling' (2013, 569)—while one's academic identity is also bound up with more personal values and ideologies (Winter 2009; Kreber 2010; Fanghanel 2012; Fitzmaurice 2013). The forging of an academic identity is thus not simply an intellectual endeavour, but also a moral and emotional one (Fitzmaurice 2013).

The disciplinary community and social networks one is initiated into constitute the 'social context' of academia, while the 'occupational context' pertains to the balance between teaching and research in one's institution (Kreber 2010, 172). In the opening vignette, the early-career academic is placed within a new 'occupational context' and seems to be struggling to adjust to the balance between teaching and research across the institution more broadly, and then within her own job role. While it was not a shock to the ECA in the vignette to receive a high teaching load, what may have taken her by sur-prise is the extent to which academics must now seemingly justify their workload, such that their jobs (fixed-term, zero-hours, or otherwise) may be considered 'secure', at least for the next academic year. While some level of accountability and performativity meas-ures may be necessary, the ways in which ECAs must 'justify' their position now seems to have expanded to include (in)direct links to student numbers and admissions. This link between student numbers and academics' employment is especially evident in the case of 'zero-hours' or 'visiting lecturer' positions, whereby staff are brought in to teach a speci-fied number of classes and nothing more. We often see a seasonal pattern to this kind of precarious academic work, with many zero-hours staff being unpaid throughout the sum-mer. ECAs thus seem to be more affected by market fluctuations than their 'well-estab-lished' peers (although even for these academics, the idea of 'tenure' has dwindled away).

Although I am focusing on the experiences of ECAs in this paper, it is interesting to note that the values which academics associate with their professional identities—namely 'intellectual endeavour', 'criticality', and 'professionalism'—are the same for both 'younger' and 'older' academics (Archer 2008a, 270). That academic identity is linked to these specific values across age and career stage shows that there is some continuity per-haps in why academics choose to enter and remain in the profession. What is shared among academics at all career stages are the increasing pressures of performativity, accountability and surveillance, but my concern here is that ECAs being inducted into this system may have nothing to compare it to, that is, no other conception of academic life beyond what it is now.

A final point of difference I wish to make between early-career academics and those more well-established is that due to the increasing marketisation and corporatisation of Higher Education since the 1990′s, PhD students and early-career academics are subject to ever-shifting goal-posts through which to define their 'success'. While obtaining a Doctoral degree used to be enough to enter the academic profession, current PhD students are now also expected to have published their work before completion (Bothello and Roulet 2019), to obtain teaching experience, and to finish their Doctoral studies within a timely manner. As one of Archer's 'younger' academic participants explains: 'it feels like you can be an emerging academic but *you need to show that you are not just emerging but you've already blossomed*' (2008b, 391, my emphasis). This raises an important question: can early-career academics enter the profession as 'works-in-progress', or are they already expected to be finished (neoliberal) products? The original contribution of this article is not necessarily its explanation of how academic identity has been increasingly commodified, but rather it adds to this critique by offering some means of resistance against the processes of neoliberalisation which are encroaching on what it means to be an academic, focusing particularly on the experience of early-career academics.

The Academic as Neoliberal Subject

That neoliberalism and the principles of the market have now infiltrated almost all facets of the UK Higher Education sector will come as no surprise to most readers, so I will not reiterate how measures such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) have transformed the sector. Instead, I wish to highlight the ways in which competition and the drive for efficiency associated with such measures are increasingly reducing academics to mere 'neoliberal subjects' not too dissimilar to Foucault's *Homo economicus* (economic man). In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault explains how a more 'traditional' version of *Homo economicus* premised upon exchange and the calculation of utility has been transformed into a new, neoliberal ideal of *Homo economicus*. As he writes:

> In neo-liberalism…there is also a theory of *homo economicus*, but he is not at all a partner of exchange. *Homo economicus* is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself. This is true to the extent that, in practice, the stake in all neo-liberal analyses is the replacement every time of *homo economicus* as partner of exchange with *homo economicus* as entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings (Foucault 2008, 226).

Throughout this article, I will be referring to this neoliberal version of *Homo economicus* as a model for academic subjectivities in Higher Education.

First, the neoliberalisation and commodification of academic labour can be seen in the use of student satisfaction survey results to measure 'teaching excellence'—National Student Survey (NSS)[5] data constitutes three of the six metrics used in the TEF. While

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[5] The National Student Survey (NSS) is conducted with final-year undergraduate students across the UK. Consisting of 27 questions focusing on different aspects of university provision, the NSS is a measure of students' satisfaction with their experience. Since its inception in 2005, the NSS has gained prominence as a marker of 'quality' in HE, and this is inextricably tied to the shift away from public funding of the sector and the concomitant rise in student consumerism.

the TEF was introduced as a way to give credit to those universities which focus on delivering high-quality teaching, it can also be seen as yet another measure or 'indicator' of academic performance. The TEF impacts early-career academics in a slightly different way, as there is now an expectation that those applying for entry-level positions at universities—such as teaching fellow and lecturer jobs—will have already attained fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA, now re-branded as 'Advance HE') which is seen as a marker of good quality teaching.

While it is perfectly acceptable to expect that early-career academics will have some teaching experience, there is a risk that courses associated with gaining HEA fellowship (such as a postgraduate certificate in HE) could be seen purely as means to other ends. Such courses, described more broadly by Fanghanel as 'learning to teach' programmes, are likely to be reduced to a mere tick-box exercise if they are mandatory and/or 'linked to securing a permanent position' (2012, 32). 'Learning to teach' courses for early-career academics might be considered as a way to enhance one's CV and capitalise on one's resources; this epitomises the underpinning rationale of *Homo economicus*, namely that each person becomes the 'entrepreneur of himself' (Foucault 2008, 226).

Second, in a globalised knowledge economy, even academics' ideas are commodified and have an exchange value. While maintaining high-quality teaching is afforded greater importance now in universities, the balance of the teaching/research dichotomy is still overwhelmingly tipped towards valuing research activity and outputs, and this is most evident when universities are making appointment and promotion decisions (Fitzmaurice 2013; Grant and Elizabeth 2015; Ward 2018). Academics are held accountable for the number of peer-reviewed publications they have (or have not) produced within an academic year, and the focus of various 'research and knowledge exchange' offices in universities is to support staff in applying to large, prestigious research grants. 'Bringing in the money' in the form of substantial research grants is often equated to being a good academic (Harman 2006; Winter 2009; Grant and Elizabeth 2015), while grant income is also inextricably linked to REF evaluations (Chowdhury et al. 2016). Competing for large research grants as a gateway to promotion is one aspect of the commodification of academic research, but another off-shoot of this is the influence of the REF on the kinds of research activity that may be conducted. While it would be extremely difficult to investigate what factors are involved in academics' decision-making when it comes to their research profile, early-career academics are certainly made aware of the importance of being 'REF-able'. Rather than pursuing a research question/project for the sake of curiosity in itself, academics at all career stages are almost duty-bound to question 'can I get a REF-able publication out of this?' and/or 'how will this be judged in the next REF?' when approaching a new venture.

The third instance of the neoliberalisation of academic identities I will discuss here is one which draws together both teaching and research activities: the workload allocation model. 'Workload allocation models' (WAMs) are now used across a number of UK universities to control and allocate academics' time to different activities across an academic year, as if we could plan to spend just one hour preparing for a lecture, or spend just three months writing a journal article for peer-review. As certain activities may take up more time than is allocated, academics inevitably fall into patterns of working well beyond the hours they are salaried for, and taking work home into the evenings and weekends (Calvert et al. 2011). Discourses of being over-worked and on the brink of exhaustion are common, although strangely this may be seen as 'heroic' rather than detrimental (Wills 1996; Walker 2009). Resisting this culture of over-working necessitates that we challenge the

expectations which have become normalised, such as the view that 'if you are prepared to work an 80 h week, you can "get on"' (Thomas 1996, 153).[6]

As Fang et al. discuss, the effects of such WAMs go beyond the mere control of academics' time, moreover they are 'being subjected to external forces that imbue individual subjectivity with a persecutory consciousness of self-discipline and self-control' (2019, 12). As academics are increasingly governed and managed according to neoliberal principles, they begin to self-govern as neoliberal subjects also. As Lazzarato explains the influence of neoliberal forms of government on individuals, he writes that, 'subjection requires making the individual responsible and culpable or criminalisable' (2009, 127). This is inextricably tied to the economic individualism associated with the marketisation and privatisation of the UK HE sector, but it also aligns with the model of the academic as *Homo economicus*, as each person feels responsible for their own 'success' or 'failure' in a system which in fact relies on a state of 'equal inequality' (Lazzarato 2009, 119). WAMs highlight the fact that academics are increasingly encouraged to monitor and seek to capitalise on their time, or rather 'to live purposively amid fast time' (Guzman-Valenzuela and Barnett 2013, 1120). The impetus is to produce as much as you can, as quickly as you can, with the number of outputs being the focus of all-important REF submissions. This need to constantly produce seems to be exacerbated, rather than alleviated, by the fact that academia is generally considered to be more of a 'vocation' (from the Old French *vocacion*, meaning a 'spiritual calling', 'a calling, being called') than a 'profession' (from the Latin *professionem* meaning an 'occupation one professes to be skilled in') by those involved in it.

Reframing Academic Identity: *Homo academicus*?

The space to push back against academic identities constituted as *Homo economicus* seems narrow, however, those entering the sector are still likely to see the job as valuable in itself. It is university management teams and marketing departments that seek to instil 'market values' into the academic imaginary as a mechanism of control, with job security being tied to various university 'targets' (Kreber 2010). While some universities may seek to resist the application of free market principles to their key functions, the wider policy landscape includes several forms of surveillance tied to 'quality assurance', and there are economic implications if institutions do not 'play the game', so to speak, so the pressures of marketisation exist both within and outside of universities. As academics become neoliberal subjects, they are ultimately 'expected to internalise the importance of student numbers, grant income, prestige journal rankings and institutional league tables as market signals of the success and prestige of their institutions' (Winter 2009, 123), as if the success of the institution is inseparable from the academic's own.

What is most concerning about a neoliberal governmentality is that the mechanisms of performance management and accountability are gradually internalised by those subjected to it. In *The Subject and Power* (1982), Foucault outlines how governmentality acts on people's ability to act, influencing their actions before they have even chosen to act.

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[6] This has recently been challenged through a Twitter hashtag that is becoming increasingly popular: '#TakeBreaksMakeBreakthroughs', coined by Dr Kay Guccione (2016). As Guccione states, one of the purposes of using this hashtag when tweeting about one's work is to 'de-glamorise academic overwork' (online, no page number). For further details, see: https://wakelet.com/wake/mADpfF3OqBnGTlnj6w7Xt.

Governmentality, as a form of power, acts on our potential future actions, influencing what we conceive of as possible. As Foucault writes:

> In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, or existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future (1982, 789).

That an alternative to *Homo economicus* is not forthcoming or easy to fathom is itself suggestive of the power of neoliberal governmentality; it has rendered other possible actions unfeasible. Despite the pervasive influence of processes of neoliberalisation on academic identities—described by Joronen as 'a process of ontological violence' (2013, 357)—I am arguing here that *Homo academicus* (academic man) can be revived in the contemporary university. Reframing this idea of *Homo academicus*[7] in the current context depends on: a commitment to collegiality (over and above competitiveness); challenging the normative discourses of over-work and exhaustion in the quest for productivity, and; attending to the 'quieter' intellectual virtues of the profession.

Collegiality

Given the numerous policy changes and shifts in academic labour identified above, it is easy to see that competition and performativity are often afforded a kind of sovereign status in universities. As Warner clearly explains, 'the model for higher education mimics supermarkets' competition on the high street; the need for external funding pits one institution against another—and even one colleague against another' (2014, no page). Competition as a *modus operandi* filters down to individual academics from the institutional level, and if academics are reduced to competing against each other, then notions of collegiality and community may be seen as anathema to career progression. But recognising and reframing collegiality as a professional value is integral to pursuing the *Homo academicus*, rather than *Homo economicus*, model of academic identity.

Collegial relationships could provide fertile ground for the development and exchange of ideas, while also being sites of genuine dialogue and creativity, although the 'outputs' associated with being collegial are not explicitly 'measurable'. The etymology of 'collegial' directly points to ideas of society and community (from the Latin *collegium*), while a 'colleague' originally referred to a 'partner in office'. The idea of one's colleagues being 'partners' may seem odd in the current context, but perhaps this is not only due to the increased competition between colleagues, it could also be an effect of performance management too. As Pirrie aptly states, 'suffice it to say that living mutual relations wilt and wither under the relentless pressure of "performance management"' (2019, 71). Even where colleagues do work productively together, such as engaging in joint and/or interdisciplinary research projects, it can still be a case of 'every *Homo economicus* for himself' when it comes to REF submissions.

When outlining a number of processes which constitute the RAE-ification (the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) was a predecessor of the REF) of academic identities, Loftus

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7 While the term '*Homo academicus*' was originally coined by Pierre Bourdieu and used to describe agents who inquire and act in the scientific field, constituting a 'relational sociology of science' (Salö 2017, 29), here I will be using this term in a way which is not discipline-specific. For further details about Bourdieu's conception of *Homo academicus*, see: Bourdieu (1988).

states that among these is 'the dominance of things over people' and 'the fragmentation of the social whole' (2006, 110). It seems that these processes are now eroding the very collegiality that universities were built upon. Such processes are reflective of a broader shift away from communality towards a kind of economic individualism, exemplified of course by Foucault's *Homo economicus*. This account of the pervading lack of collegiality in contemporary universities is not meant to be totalising, but what I want to highlight are the ways in which certain practices may restrict the potential for meaningful dialogue and peer relations that go beyond a concern with 'outputs'. The issue here is not that academics do not believe in collegiality as an important ideal, but rather that there may be limitations to practising it. Indeed, as one lecturer put it, 'people are too busy to be collegial' (Macfarlane 2016, 44). Even where collegiality is asserted as a faculty or university value, there is still a concern that this is little more than a 'performative riff, a value which academics feel obliged to pay lip service to' (Macfarlane 2016, 47). The very idea of collegiality could perhaps be reduced to just another aspect of one's academic performance, subject to appraisal as teaching quality and research outputs are, but any metric for collegiality would only be able to capture and measure a 'hollow' collegiality. This kind of 'hollow' collegiality is one in which there is an appearance of consensual decision-making happening, including staff at all levels, yet discussions leading to real change are avoided (Macfarlane 2016). While it is feasible to devise a measurement tool for collegiality—with sub-scales such as 'mutual support/trust', 'equity/politics', and 'shirking behaviour' (Miles et al. 2015, 328)—there are still elements of collegiality which are resistant to such 'metricization' and instrumentalism (Andrew 2019, 63).

Collegiality is integral to academic identities, this should go without saying, but competition and performativity are diametrically opposed to it and we cannot ignore the influence of these forces on academic labour. It is also important to highlight here that the presence (or lack) of collegiality in any university is heavily dependent on the institutional context and culture; if we are to encourage richer, more dialogic relationships between colleagues, then it has to start at the level of individual departments and institutes. Commenting on recent policy changes in HE, Anne Pirrie poignantly notes that 'references to people are remarkably rare in the discourse of contemporary Higher Education…this is a managerial flatland from which people have largely been eliminated' (2019, 18). While people have been 'eliminated' from policy discourse, academics need to be wary that this does not lead to an elimination of people from their working relationships too; recognising the importance of collegiality is essential to this.

Challenging 'Productivity'

A second facet of the idea of *Homo academicus* is that the language and procedures associated with performativity cannot be allowed to dominate over what it means to be an academic. There is a worrying trend among academics that valorises working to the point of overload and exhaustion, as if this were a 'good thing' and is simply a demonstration of one's commitment to their vocation. Rather than being driven by external targets and deadlines, it seems as if we are now also setting our own, managing ourselves before the managers even need to intervene. As Hodgson et al. write, 'academia…actually depends on our having internalised the demand for visibility and productivity' (2020, no page). These trends are concerning in themselves, but I am also wary that the discourses associated with performativity, productivity, and 'outputs' could become the 'new normal' for early-career academics just entering the profession.

An example of when 'productivity' may be taken too far is evident in the proliferation of workload allocation models (WAM's). These models now dominate over academic life to such an extent that one may feel guilty for engaging in activities which cannot be directly catalogued as 'productive'. Fang et al. explain the implicit effects of WAM's on academic identity and labour as follows:

> The temporal logic of ensuring that all hours are effectively 'used' that governs her working life follows her even as she turns off the lights in her office. It accompanies her wherever she goes; it follows her to her coffee with Annie [one of the co-authors of the article]. So much so that she makes the following declaration to Annie: 'I cannot "WAM" the time I spend having a coffee with you, even though we talk good stuff' (2019, 15).

While the colleague referred to in this example does not directly say it, there seems to be an undeniable element of guilt involved—similar to that evident in the opening vignette—in simply meeting up with a colleague to have a conversation over coffee. Should we only converse with each other when there's an agenda involved, or a target to meet? Do we really need to account for ourselves as academics day-by-day and minute-by-minute? The power of a neoliberal governmentality in Higher Education rears its ugly head again here.

If academics are to put up some resistance against the *Homo economicus* identity they seem to have been given, then challenging this calculative ideal of 'productivity' is imperative. As one of my own colleagues has said to me a number of times, when faced with my own angst regarding the drive to 'publish or perish': 'you're not a battery hen'. Academics cannot be expected to simply produce research outputs, or eggs, on demand. The kinds of intellectual and moral efforts involved in academic work make it unsuitable for a production line. Ideas cannot be assembled in the same way as car parts.

Contra to the incessant drive of 'productivity', I argue here that we should heed Pirrie's call to return to 'doing good work well' (2019, x). While a shift away from 'traditional' ideas of 'academic freedom', characterised as 'the autonomous and independent guild of dons' in a system of 'unconditional funding, and minimal state intervention', (Thomas and Davies 2002, 374) is by no means a bad thing, the term will now strike many academics as vacuous and hollow. Pirrie astutely notes that the introduction of a business model into HE has made it 'considerably more difficult to get on with the *deceptively straightforward* business of doing good work well' (2019, x, my emphasis). That academic labour is increasingly monitored, measured, and monetised has a number of detrimental effects, but I contend that perhaps one of the greatest barriers to simply doing our work now is the influx and overflow of bureaucratic procedures. Subject to numerous mechanisms of control, it is easy to see how academics' curiosity and creativity could be vitiated. What it means to actually do 'good work well' will of course vary for each individual academic, but this alternative idea of what it means to be 'productive' seems more humane and intrinsically relational (in contrast to current iterations of 'productivity' which are simply economical).

In *Virtue and the Quiet Art of Scholarship*, Pirrie gives a number of indications of what it means to do 'good work well' (2019, 1), but perhaps what is most distinctive about this mode of working is that it cannot be reduced to a mere box-ticking exercise. Doing 'good work well' is about engaging in research and scholarship[8] as an end in itself, for its intrinsic

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[8] While 'doing good work well' will also involve teaching of course, Pirrie (2019) focuses mostly on research and scholarship in universities, and so my discussion is confined to these aspects of the academic role here. I will discuss what the idea of *Homo academicus* means for teaching in the following section: quieter intellectual virtues.

value alone. While the REF depends on a calculative, outputs-focused research agenda at universities (which is problematic on many levels), it would be perhaps utopian to suggest that we could simply do away with it or avoid engaging in the exercise altogether. Instead, we should attend to the ethical problem of 'self-aggrandisement' that the exercise encourages, particularly in relation to the assessment of our 'impact' (Conroy and Smith 2017, 704).

For Pirrie, doing 'good work well' also involves drawing on one's own lived experience in research, as this is more attuned to the contingent nature of scholarship. Attending to one's own lived experience in academic scholarship may be more easily imaginable for research in the humanities which is concerned 'with matters of perspective, tone, nuance, of apparent authority' (Collini 2012, 73). If academics in the humanities are concerned with perspective, broadly speaking, then it seems almost unthinkable that they should negate or ignore their own. Acknowledging one's own lived experience as an academic does not imply writing in a 'personal' manner in a confessional sense (Pirrie 2019, 1), but rather considering how particular ideas are actively embodied instead of being an inert 'collection of facts'.

Reconceiving 'productivity' in terms of 'doing good work well' could counteract a number of pressures that academics are currently facing (such as having to account for one's time in calculable terms). While it may still seem an impossible task to resist the processes of neoliberalisation which have re-shaped the nature of academic labour, Pirrie does give us a shining light of hope in the contemporary university, as she writes:

> we can find a way to get on with the deceptively simple task of doing good work well…in a sector increasingly dominated by the values of the market, there is no need to sell our souls to the highest bidder (2019, 126).

Quieter Intellectual Virtues

A third and final point I wish to make in arguing for a reframing of *Homo academicus* is that the 'academic man' should be one who embodies the 'quieter' intellectual virtues. The 'louder' or 'tougher' intellectual virtues, including self-aggrandizement, 'intellectual rigour', and 'intellectual courage' (Baehr 2013, 148; Smith 2016), are well-matched to the kinds of calculative 'productivity' and performativity that are currently heralded in Higher Education. But such intellectual virtues seem to place the 'good knower' at a distance from what is known, assuming that someone could have a 'love of truth', for example, in an abstract form (Smith 2016, 274), rather than being concerned with specific truths which are connected to one's own lived experience.

Smith's argument against these inert 'intellectual character virtues', with their associated language of 'grasping' and 'acquiring' knowledge, leads to a positive account of the idea of 'unknowing' (2016, 276). While becoming 'intellectually virtuous' in the 'tough' sense accords with the idea of 'eating one's epistemological greens' (Pirrie 2019, 37), Smith argues that this approach to scholarship falls prey to 'knowingness'—this can be considered more of an intellectual vice, than a virtue. Although Smith highlights that the 'quieter' intellectual virtues such as 'modesty and diffidence…often characterise people whom we are drawn to and respect' (2016, 275), such virtues may be easily side-lined in an academic culture which privileges visibility and measurable outputs. Contra to these 'quieter' epistemic virtues, Pirrie (2019) notes that academics are increasingly encouraged to report on and 'big up' their achievements. Making one's accomplishments publicly visible also coincides with the impetus for early-career academics to maintain an 'online

presence' on social media as part of their emerging 'knowledge ecosystem' (Miller et al. 2017, 700). There is a clear alignment between the 'louder' intellectual virtues, particularly self-aggrandizement, and the impetus of *Homo economicus* to be an 'entrepreneur of himself' (Foucault 2008, 226).

In contrast to the loud and over-bearing intellectual virtues presented by Baehr (2013), Smith urges us to re-appraise what he terms the 'virtues of unknowing'. Crucially, 'unknowing' is not to be equated with mere ignorance or self-deception, instead to be 'unknowing' means to be open to uncertainty. Being unknowing is tied to the possession of a 'well-stocked mind' (Smith 2016, 276), implying that while one does not know everything, one can still be aware of the boundaries of ignorance. Another key feature of 'unknowing' is that it involves learning how to 'live well with our knowledge' (Smith 2016, 278) such that it becomes part of our lived experience, rather than gathering a mere 'pile or hoard' of knowledge (Pirrie 2019, 50). I contend that *Homo academicus* should be actively open to 'unknowing', as this is cognisant of the 'embodied, situated, affective' nature of scholarship (Pirrie 2019, 70), and it implies a deeper engagement with one's knowledge. I am reminded here of Nan Shepherd's wish to know the Cairngorm Mountains[9] deeply rather than broadly, as she notes that 'the thing to be known grows with the knowing' (1977/2011, 108).

Pirrie provides an interesting example of being 'unknowing' when conducting research. She readily admits to being too 'knowing' when at first identifying the area of research inquiry for a particular project, as it was 'framed' by seeking to account for pupils' 'routes, destinations, and outcomes' after being permanently excluded from formal education (2019, 58). What Pirrie and her colleagues then struggled with was being able to authentically account for the experiences of such young people—their research participants— within these terms. While the researchers were initially focused on the trajectories of the young people, as if moving smoothly from point A to point B and so on, what they discovered during the course of the project was that 'the development of mutual trust and respect [was infinitely more important]…than "outcome delivery"' (Pirrie 2019, xvi). This openness to alternatives, to 'go[ing] doggedly along a path of inquiry' despite not knowing one's way (p. 94), epitomises the opportunities inherent in 'unknowing'.

Proceeding with an inquiry despite being 'unknowing' is more likely to inculcate in academics the 'quieter' intellectual virtues, such as intellectual modesty and self-deprecation, advocated for by both Smith and Pirrie. Admitting to being 'unknowing' when teaching in a university is also likely to open up space for genuine dialogue with one's students, encouraging them to persist with their intellectual endeavours despite the setbacks they will no doubt experience. Following this, I argue that *Homo academicus* must be the kind of academic who lives with what they know, who recognises that scholarship should not be purely 'objective' and removed from experience, and who acknowledges that 'unknowing' is an intellectual virtue rather than some confused state to be avoided at all costs.

As I have argued here, the neoliberalisation of academic labour, and thus academic identities, is increasingly evident under pressures of performance management and

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[9] *The Living Mountain* (1977/2011) charts Shepherd's exploration of the Cairngorms over the course of her lifetime. She expresses throughout the book her wish to 'know' and understand the mountain, and commits herself to this as an end in itself. Shepherd's work has been described in various ways as 'a celebratory prose-poem? A geo-poetic quest? A place-paean? A philosophical inquiry into the nature of knowledge' (Macfarlane 2011b, xiv). Pirrie discusses Shepherd's 'alternative epistemology' in greater detail than I have scope to do here, see: ch.6, pp. 82–99 *in* Pirrie, A. 2019. *Virtue and the Quiet Art of Scholarship*. London: Routledge.

accountability, set within the context of a marketised Higher Education system. For early-career academics who are disproportionately employed on fixed-term, teaching-only or research-only contracts, the pressure to be and become universities' version of *Homo economicus* may seem overwhelming. I argue that resisting the pressures of a neoliberal governmentality in Higher Education is not a utopian ideal, but it is practicable if we move our attention back to a conception of 'the academic' as *Homo academicus* instead. In order for *Homo academicus* to re-emerge as the guiding force of academic subjectivities, I contend that collegiality needs to be afforded greater importance, the discourses of 'productivity' need to be balanced out against simply 'doing good work well', and academics should attend to the 'quieter' intellectual virtues as emblematic of more authentic scholarship. Although the contemporary university context is one in which the measurement of 'outputs' and 'impact' can constrain academic identity, perhaps all academics need to be reminded of is that, in the end 'you're not a battery hen'.

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