



Title: Lost Souls? The De-Moralization of Academic Labour in the Measured University
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Author(s): Paul Sutton

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Paul Sutton
Faculty of Education and Social Sciences
University of St. Mark & St John
Plymouth
UK*

Abstract

In this conceptual paper I contend that the soul of academic labour is becoming lost in performativity. Performativity, I explain, is a form of regulation and control that deploys technical rationality and judgements to incentivise and punish academics. Indeed, performativity is central to the culture of measurement within contemporary universities. This I contend is demoralizing academic labour as performativity only measures and values those dimensions of academic labour that can be captured by quantitative performance indicators.

To critique this process I firstly locate performativity within a moral economy perspective. I argue that the university economy is no longer structured by the moral norm of education as a public good. It has been restructured, commodified and marketized by neo-liberal capitalism. Secondly, I explore how the reorganization of institutional practices and academic identity within the university by performativity wreaks terror in the academic's soul. Thirdly, I critique the unsatisfying post-structural reduction of the soul to a synonym for subjectivity and offer a sociological conception of the soul as the spiritual dimension of academic labour emerging from deep, rich social relations of production. My conjecture is that the soul is the moral energy and purpose central to species-being: the peculiarly human ability to transform the socio-human world for the good of all. Finally, I suggest that within the soulless technical measure of academic labour that now dominates the university lies the possibility for developing a more soulful normative measure. My aim then is to articulate a dialectical humanist conception of the soul of academic labour in order to critique the reductive positivism of the measured university.

Keywords

Academic labour; dialectical humanism; performativity; soul; species-being,

* Contact Paul Sutton: psutton@marjon.ac.uk

Lost Souls? The De-moralization of Academic Labour in the Measured University

Introduction: The de-moralized economy of the measured university

Moral economy studies the moral norms and sentiments that structure and influence economic practices, both formal and informal, and the way in which these are reinforced, shaped, compromised or overridden by economic pressures. (Sayer 2007 p. 262)

In their discussion piece *Against academic identity*, Neary & Winn (2016) argue that interest in academic identity is a reflection of a wider concern with the nature of academic labour. They declare that the concept “fails to deal with real nature of work in capitalist society” (Neary & Winn, 2016, p. 409). In addition they argue that dominance of post-structural conceptions of identity that celebrate difference – gender, ethnic, sexual etc. – has led to an accommodation with, rather than the overthrow of capitalism, the real cause of the subordination of labour. Hence the concept of academic identity should be “abolished. I share Neary & Winn’s position on the subordination of academic labour by capitalism and the deleterious effects of post-structuralist conceptions of identity. However, rather than seeking to abolish the concept of identity I want to work “in-against and beyond” it (Holloway 2012).

To achieve this end I conceptualise academic labour as an expression of what Marx (1997) called “species-being”: the peculiarly human ability to transform both the socio-human world and ourselves for the good of all. Furthermore, I speculate that species-being has a moral dimension: it is an expression of the human soul. In addition I conceptualise the soul as the “moral energy” that gives purpose and value to social labour (Marx, 1997, p. 81). Thus, unlike Neary and Winn’s political economy, I seek to explore an aspect of the moral economy of academic labour and identity.

Twenty five years ago, whilst researching a labour history, I came upon the Marxist-humanist historian E.P. Thompson’s classic essay, *The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century*. In this work, Thompson analysed the effects of the reorganisation of the economy by the new ideology of laissez-faire capitalism; a form of capitalism that was “disinfested of moral imperative” (Thompson, 1971, p. 90). Thompson was particularly interested in the way that the market for bread that had previously been structured by popular cultural notions of fairness and reciprocity, became demoralized through the institution of the free market principle of supply and demand. As I was researching this paper, it struck me that there are strong resonances between Thompson’s analysis and the marketization of Higher Education in late twentieth and early twenty-first century. In England, the Higher Education economy is no longer structured by the norms and values of academic culture committed to education as a public good. It has been reorganized by the ideology of neo-liberal capitalism. The university economy is now structured by the principle of supply and demand and the cost-benefit calculus. Academic labour is now performed in a culture of measurement (Biesta 2010).

In the measurement culture of education questions concerning the nature and purpose of a good education have been displaced by technical and managerial questions concerning efficiency and effectiveness. The university economy is dominated by the measurement of process rather than moral purpose. The normative has been displaced by the performative:

The rise of a culture of performativity in education – a culture in which means become ends in themselves so that targets and indicators of quality become

mistaken for quality itself – has been one of the main drivers of an approach to measurement in which normative validity is being replaced by technical validity (Biesta, 2010, p. 13).

Using Biesta's work I argue that performativity measures only that which can be easily measured quantitatively. This has resulted in universities valuing only quantitative indicators of economic effectiveness and efficiency. For example, performativity neither measures nor values what is central to academic labour: love (Sutton 2016a). Love defined as a "syndrome of attitudes; that of care, responsibility, respect and knowledge" (Fromm, 1962, p. 33); as a feeling of connectedness with others; is a vital dimension of the deep, rich social relations that are necessary for the emergence of soul in academic labour. Furthermore, love is also a vital dimension of a humane moral economy. This paper then is an endeavour to reclaim the soul of academic labour that is becoming lost in performativity.

I now explore Ball's conception of performativity. Thereafter, I explore the contention that the soul is an emergent property of both human cognition and deep and rich social relations. Building upon this the soul is conjectured to be part of human species-being. Finally, I suggest that the possibility exists for a soulful normative measure of academic labour to be developed from within the soulless technical qualitative measure of performativity.

Performativity

My interest lies in how the technology of performativity, within an increasingly marketized Higher Education system (Brown & Carasso 2013), has overridden the moral purpose I believe to be central to academic labour: education as a public rather than a private good. Performativity is a quintessential dimension of the measured university. In order to critique performativity I will use the work of the educational sociologist Stephen J. Ball. The rationale for using Ball's (2003, 2012a & 2012b) work is that his work clearly and comprehensively addresses the perils of measurement culture in education. In addition Ball introduces the notion of the teacher's soul into the performativity debate. However, Ball (2003) only appears to explore the "terror" wreaked upon the "teacher's soul" by performativity. He never defines what soul is but simply uses the work of Foucault, in which the soul is a synonym for the psyche, subjectivity, personality, or consciousness. In Ball's post-structuralist account, the soul is engendered by "methods of punishment, supervision and constraint" (Foucault, 1979, p. 29); it is the medium and effect of power-knowledge relations. Thus the soul is a product of disciplinary power. Ball's account, like many Foucauldian accounts of power, is too negative. I will negate this negation by offering a more positive account of the soul as engendered by deep and rich human social relations (see below). But before addressing the emergence of the soul from the social relations of production, it is necessary to define performativity and explore how performativity demoralises both the institutional practices of universities and academic labour.

Performativity is a form of rationality and regulation that deploys technical judgements and comparisons to measure, incentivise and punish academics. In performativity academic productivity is measured by largely quantitative performance indicators. For Ball, performativity, in tandem with the market and managerialism, is an educational policy technology that is neo-liberalising Higher Education. This triad is changing both the nature of academic labour and identity. Ball (2012a p.31) offers a Foucauldian definition of performativity as "the quintessential form of neo-liberal governmentality, which encompasses subjectivity, institutional practices, economy and government." In this paper I am mainly concerned with the manifestation of neo-liberal governmentality in institutional practices of higher education and academic subjectivity.

The re-ordering of institutional practices

Performativity is a “framework of judgement” through which the efficiency and productivity of academic labour is measured (Ball, 2012a, p.31). Pivotal to the operation of performativity is “the translation of complex social processes and events into simple figures or categories of judgement.” (Ball, 2003, p. 217). What is lost in this translation, I argue, is the quality of the complex and dynamic relationships that constitute the moral economy of academic labour. Social relationships with colleagues and students, the fulcrum of academic productivity, are reduced to de-humanised performance indicators. Performative categories of judgement are characterised by a binary opposition of quantity and quality with quality being the subordinate term. Hence, performative judgements are largely made on the basis of simplistic quantitative measures of productivity reducing the complex human processes of academic labour to simplified targets and outcome measures. For example, institutional quality assurance measures consisting of standardised bureaucratic institutional reviews and key performance Indicators. Thus, the techniques of Personal Development Review, Academic Development Planning etc., operate to individualize and demoralize social labour by privileging quantitative measures of academic labour over the quality of that labour.

The neo-liberalising university positions academics as ‘active agents seeking to maximise their own advantage’; as individuals who are responsible for “calculating actions and outcomes” (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 198). Success at work requires each individual academic labourer to perpetually calculate and choose: for choice is a central tenet of neo-liberalism. Each individual is thereby “governed through their freedom to choose” (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 201). Choice is part of the regulatory technology of governmentality. The Foucauldian concept of governmentality can be defined as the “internal control systems” that attempt to “re-order the collective and individual selves that make up organizational life” (Power, 1999, p. 42). I will pursue the re-ordering of the self in more detail below.

The internal control systems of universities are structured by the principles of cost effectiveness, economic efficiency and quality assurance. Performativity then is a way of making institutional and individual performance auditable through the collection of mainly quantitative forms of information. Universities have been “*colonized* by an audit process which disseminates and implants the values that underlie and support its information demands” (Power, 1999, p. 95). The effect of these informational demands is twofold. First, it re-channels academic labour “towards those activities that can be easily measured, especially as performance outcomes” (Ball, 2012a, p. 32). In this way the more complex and difficult to measure “social, emotional and moral” dimensions that are central to the soul of academic labour, but have no immediate measurable “performative value”, tend to be effaced (Ball, 2012a, p. 32). Concrete labour is thereby displaced by abstract labour, use value by exchange value.¹ Thus, the experience of academic labour becomes “inauthentic and alienating”, a commodified relationship characterised by “active docility and depthless productivity”, in which “commitment is sacrificed for impression.” (Ball, 2012a, p. 31, 32). Second, performativity changes the way in which academics “experience their work and the satisfactions they get from it” (Ball, 2012a, p. 32). For example, the complex social relationship between teacher and student is transmogrified into a simple service relationship in which the customer is always right. Furthermore, and what is highly significant for this discussion, academics “sense of moral purpose” is also devalued by a “new episteme of public service” in which academic labour is restructured as form of self-interested entrepreneurialism (Ball, 2012b, p. 20). Academics are increasingly being urged to become highly visible entrepreneurs competing to sell their goods and services in the higher education quasi-market place.

The re-ordering of self-identity

Performativity not only re-orders institutional practices it also re-orders self-identity. One of the ways in which this is accomplished is through the institutionalization of the logic of standardization: regulations and systems replace academic judgement and discretion. As stated above, this changes the experience of being an academic and tends to produce “new mentalities, new incentives and perceptions of significance ... a new organizational actor” (Power, 1999, p. 97). The creation of this new organizational actor takes place when the technology of performativity becomes internalised: when academics come to want what is wanted from them. Thus, performativity works to align academics “moral sense” and desires with institutional demands (Ball, 2012a, p. 31).

Increasingly, universities demand that academics are in constant state of becoming (perpetual professional development review), continually working upon themselves to improve their economic effectiveness and efficiency. Performativity also induces guilt and inadequacy if academics do not (Beg & Seeber 2013). The collegial academic subject is being displaced by the individual neo-liberal subject acting to maximise their economic value within the academic quasi-market (Canaan 2010, Billot 2010). The ensemble of the social relations of production from which academic identity emerges is increasingly de-moralized through the institution of individualised market based contractual relations.

Thus, academic values and commitments are replaced by contractual duties. Performativity creates neo-liberal subjects that are “malleable rather than committed, flexible rather than principled – essentially depthless.” (Ball, 2012a, p. 31). The technology of performativity, in conjunction with marketization and managerialism, leaves little or no space for a “shared moral language” or “an autonomous or collective ethical self” (Ball 2003 p. 226) necessary, I argue, for the emergence of soul.

Performativity leads to a form of demoralisation through the “commodification of the public professional” (Ball, 2012a, p. 32). This process of commodification has changed the system of rewards and sanctions in higher education and the form and content of teaching and research. The success of academic performance is no longer measured by academic but commercial values. For example, numbers of students recruited, engagement with employers and other stakeholders, and income generation (Naidoo 2005). The power effect of being constantly measured by quantitative managerial criteria, that tend to be in a constant state of flux due to ever changing market demands, leads to “ontological insecurity” (Ball, 2003, p. 220). Academics become increasingly unsure as to whether they are “doing enough, doing the right thing, doing as much as others, or as well as others, constantly looking to improve” (Ball, 2003, p. 220). This creates high levels of stress around resource allocation, communication, and control of the labour process (Tytherleigh et al 2005). At best this has produced “uneasy academic subjectivities” (Acker & Weber 2016), and at worst this has wreaked terror upon the academic’s soul. However, as I observed above, Ball (2003) never adequately defines what soul is. I will address this lacuna by offering a sociological conception of the soul as the moral purpose and energy emerging from deep and rich social relatedness.

The nature and emergence of the soul

The Greek term soul is commonly translated as *psyche* a noun derived from the verb *psychein* which means to breathe or “that which generates and constitutes the essential life of a being” (Goetz & Taliaferro, 2011, p. 7). My interest in the ontological dimension of academic labour and how performativity is asphyxiating academic being has prompted this paper. I want to think about academic being by conceptualizing the soul as the generative energy and

constitutive power of authentic academic labour. Furthermore, I want to think about the generative energy of the human soul by using a Marxist Humanist theoretical framework. For at the heart of Marxism lies an especial emphasis on human creativity and self-creation (Williams 1977).ⁱⁱ Indeed, when reading the early Marx one is struck by the pivotal role ascribed to creativity in social life. Creativity is what makes us human: creativity is at the centre of our species-being. It is the peculiar human ability to transform both the socio-human world and ourselves. I develop this ontological dimension of Humanist Marxism by exploring the possibility that the soul is an integral dimension of species-being that emerges from within the “ensemble of social relations” (Marx, 1997, p. 402). To explain this contention, I draw on an essay by Brown (1998) which provides a very useful way to begin theorising the conditions of possibility for the emergence of soul.

Brown (1998, p. 100) argues that the soul signifies a “unique human capacity and experience”, associated with the exercise of agency, self-consciousness, love and transcendence. Soulfulness is a moral relatedness to self, others and God. In my social ontology of the soul, God is displaced by society, or more properly sociality (society as dialectical process). It is sociality, and specifically the social relations of production, that reaches deeply into the essence of our human being. Brown (1998) continues by arguing that the soul is an emergent property of “deep, rich experiences of personal relatedness”, which in turn are “an *emergent property* of certain critical cognitive abilities” (Brown, 1998, p. 102).

I understand deep rich personal relatedness as relationships that are founded upon love (care, responsibility, respect and knowledge), in which social interdependence is both acknowledged and valued. Deep rich personal relatedness then involves taking responsibility for both ourselves and others and positioning others as an end in themselves, rather than a means to an end. Such relationships generate a sense of identity and belonging (Whyte 2001), a sense of ontological security. Such relationships are rooted in community or collegiality rather than contract. The depthless nature of academic labour engendered by performativity is obviously anathema to the depth required for the emergence of soul.

Brown argues that an emergent property is made possible by an increase in the capacity of lower level abilities and their interactions. The soul’s “emergence” depends upon, but is not reducible to those properties. In sum, “human experiences of soul are conditioned by but cannot be reduced to the underlying mental processes from which they emerge.” (Brown, 1998, p. 103) Soul therefore, is something different from mind or consciousness.

Next Brown (1998) identifies six interdependent critical cognitive capacities that enable the emergence of soul: language, memory, and future orientation, a theory of mind, emotional modulation, and agency. Language is the uniquely human capacity to communicate and understand complex abstract ideas and emotional states. This “makes possible important dimensions of personal relatedness that could not exist independent of language” (Brown, 1998, p. 107). Social communication through language is a necessary condition for deep personal relatedness.

In Marxist Humanism, language is conceptualized as “practical consciousness” which arises from the need to produce “material life itself” – food, clothing, and shelter etc. (Marx, 1979, p. 421, 419). Language emerges from the human need to communicate with others in social labour and this requires cooperative social relationships with other people. However, I further extend Marx’s conceptualization to argue that language is not only practical but spiritual, and that the spiritual and the practical are both necessary dimensions of the production of the conditions necessary for life to flourish. Therefore, a shared moral language is a necessary dimension of the social relations of production from which the soul emerges. Furthermore, language is an essential dimension of the process of human self-creation (Williams 1977) is one of the conditions of possibility of the emergence of soul.

Language in turn is necessary for another critical cognitive capacity: episodic or autobiographical memory. Autobiographical memory creates a historical and continuous store of memories of events, places and people (Brown 1998). It connects the past with the present and is crucial for the development of both a stable identity and personal relatedness. Language combined with memory enables the construction of stocks of collectively accessible knowledge and understanding needed to direct future thinking, being and doing (Harvey 2000). Brown (1998) calls this the ability to imagine possible futures. I call it the utopian imaginary and, drawing on Freire and Bloch I argue that this is central not only to my own academic identity but also to the emancipatory purpose of Higher Education (Sutton 2015).

Language and memory also enable the development of another crucial cognitive ability: a theory of mind. This is the capacity to recognise the thoughts and feelings of self and other. I would add that such recognition facilitates compassion which for me is the essence of any moral economy. A theory of mind makes possible “emotional modulation”: the “complex social and contextual cognition” that enables people to make appropriate emotional responses and decisions (Brown, 1998, 103). This ability is vital for the creation and maintenance of personal relatedness. The final critical cognitive ability essential for the emergence of the soul is “conscious top-down agency” (Brown, 1998, p. 117). Humans do not simply react to stimuli, our behaviour is not simply the product of conditioning, but rather is the product of agency. Therefore, the emergence of soul requires a significant degree of freedom to exercise, what Marx (1997, p. 294) terms “will and consciousness”.

In sum, the complex interaction of these six critical cognitive powers and capacities create the conditions necessary for the deep and rich social relatedness from which the soul emerges. However, what is not fully acknowledged in Brown’s emergence theory are the material conditions and social relations of production necessary for the evolution of critical cognitive powers. As Marx (1997) argues, human as a species needed to organize labour collectively in order to survive. This defines their ‘species-being’. I now explore the concept of species-being and argue that the soul is an integral dimension thereof.

Species-being and the spiritual dimension of social labour

Species-being is a value-laden concept used by Marx to understand the peculiarities of the human condition. It is a “normative” rather than a simply descriptive concept of social being (Markovic, 1974, p. 53). Species-being signifies the human ability to “transform the world through labour and thereby transform ourselves” (Harvey, 2000, p. 206). What is often not made explicit in accounts of species-being is that it is the ability to transform self and society for the good of all. But what is species-being? Species-being is constituted through a “combination of self-consciousness, material capacity, and collective organisation” (Dyer-Witherford, 2004, p. 5). It therefore signifies that there are mental, material and mutual dimensions to the human condition. However I would go further and add there is an essential metaphysical dimension to the human condition: the soul.

Marx developed the concept of species-being as a critique of alienation: what he saw as capitalism’s appropriation of the human ability to transform self and other through social labour. In the 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* the concept of species-being emerges from Marx’s discussion of alienated labour. After discussing the alienation of the worker from the product of labour, and from the production process, Marx then discusses the emergence of self-alienation. The discussion begins with the introduction of the concept of species-being. Species-being is the power to “practically and theoretically” make “life activity itself into an object of will and consciousness.” (Marx, 1997, p. 293, 294). Note the emphasis on will here. The collective creation of the socio-human world through labour

requires both “moral energy” (Marx, 1997, p.381) and moral purpose: it requires soul. Building on this idea, Kosik (1975) refers to human survival as the ‘spiritual-practical’ production and reproduction of the reality through social labour.ⁱⁱⁱ It is my contention that the spiritual dimension of labour is often overlooked in Marxist theory. Furthermore, I speculate that the term spiritual can be fruitfully interpreted as connoting the soul, and that the soul is an essential dimension of the collective creation of the socio-human world.

Marx did not use the term soul but he did use the term spiritual.^{iv} He wrote of “the physical and the spiritual life” of human beings and of the “physical” and “spiritual energy” used by workers in the labour process (Marx, 1997, p. 293). Marx’s (1997, p. 295) discussion of alienation continues stating that under capitalism, the labourer’s loss of control over the process of production and the product of their labour engenders a self-alienation in which human ‘spiritual nature’ is lost. Capitalist relations of production abstract the individual from their collective species-being and in that abstraction the connection that the labourer experiences to work is lost. Thereby the spiritual dimension of labour disappears. Labour is reduced to the means to satisfy the needs of individual physical existence. It ceases to be creative, ceases to be “free conscious activity ...life begetting life”, and becomes “alienated externalized labour” (Marx, 1997, p. 294, 296). In the measured university the demoralization of academic labour under performativity creates a similar spiritual alienation in which the soul is lost.

The capitalist social relations of production that create alienation from the product and process, from self and spirit also creates alienation from other humans (Marx 1997). This results in the commodification of species-being. So too in contemporary neo-liberalizing universities species-being is commodified. Performativity, managerialism and the market result in the loss of the deep rich social relations which create and sustain the soul. For me, performativity is not only a reductive epistemology or mode of knowing and measuring academic labour, it is also a reductive ontology in which academics are alienated from the spiritual dimension of their species-being. Performativity is a form of positivism in which the unity of the practical and the spiritual in human labour is ruptured.

The antithesis to this reductive positivism can be found in a dialectical humanist approach that restores the complexity and interrelatedness of the spiritual and the practical.^v The soul emerges from their dynamic interplay in academic labour. Dialectics is a way of understanding and explaining academic labour as part of the “dialectical whole”. It is a theoretical method that proceeds “from the whole to its parts and from the parts to the whole, from phenomena to essence and from essence to phenomena” (Kosik, 1976, p. 18, 23). This dialectical conception captures the complexity of the social relations of academic labour that is lost in the positivism of performativity.

In sum, the soul is part of the human essence, part of species-being that emerges from deep, rich human relationships. Soul emerges from human consciousness and will, and provides both the moral energy and purpose central to soulful academic labour. Soulful academic labour is premised upon “a moral obligation to students and colleagues, regardless of the direct or indirect career benefits” (Macfarlane, 2005, p. 172). But how might the soulfulness of academic labour be measured?

Towards a dialectical measure of academic labour

... alienation could not even be seen, and condemned of robbing people of their freedom and depriving the world of its soul, if there did not exist some measure of its opposite, of that possible coming-to-oneself ... (Bloch, 1964, cited in Holloway, 2010, p.170-171).

It is my view that the measurement of academic labour is a given, it has become embedded in the institutional practices of universities. The measured university is here to stay. Nevertheless, I think it is possible for the dominance of technical performative measures to be challenged by normative measures concerned with moral purpose. The alienation caused by severing the relationship between the practical and the spiritual dimensions of academic labour can be overcome. For in the “paradoxical logic” of dialectical humanism opposites are interrelated (Fromm, 1962, p.120). What does this mean? This means that within the performative quantitative measure of academic labour resides its normative qualitative opposite. What Biesta (2010, p. 13) refers to as “quality itself”, rather than the targets and indicators of quality. Thus, although the meaning of quality is denoted and measured quantitatively, an opposite qualitative connotative meaning of quality is contained within performativity, albeit in a subordinated form. This opposite meaning provides an opening within the language of measurement for the transformation of quantity into quality. This dialectical process is called development through contradiction or negation. Furthermore, a dialectical measurement of academic labour would consist of both quantitative and qualitative measurements, and possess both technical and the normative validity.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a fully developed normative model for the measurement of soul in academic labour. However, a possible starting point for such a model is to be found in The New Economics Foundation (2014) Dynamic Model of Well-Being at Work. The New Economics Foundation uses an array of qualitative indicators to measure the *hedonic, eudaimonic and evaluative* dimensions of labour. The hedonic dimension measures academics’ level of engagement with their work, how worthwhile it is considered to be and how happy or anxious they feel. The eudaimonic dimension measures academics’ sense of meaning and moral purpose in their work, opportunities for creativity, a sense of achievement, and autonomy. The autonomy so central to soulful academic labour signifies “the ability to select tasks and research projects; time and space for thinking and research; the opportunity to engage in socially useful critique; and self- management within disciplinary departments” (Robinson, 2016, p. 27). The evaluative indicator measures overall job satisfaction. Thus the hedonic, eudaimonic and evaluative measures are a fruitful place to begin the quest to measure soul. Adapting the well-being at work model to this end could act as the antithesis of performativity: a dialectical negation of the negation that re-valorises the moral dimensions of academic labour.

Conclusion

... even the driest of his [Marx’s] descriptions contain an implicit moral connotation. (Markovic, 1974, p. 59)

Like Neary & Winn (2016), my aim has been to understand alienated academic labour and identity in order that they may be transformed. However, I offer a different kind of Marxist analysis, one that foregrounds the need for a moral as well as a political economy of academic labour. In my analysis I have worked in-against-and-beyond academic labour and identity through an exploration of the moral connotations of the concept of species-being. I argued that academic labour is an expression of human species-being. That the soulful dimension of species-being emerges from deep, rich social relations of production that are an essential dimension of the creative spiritual-practical reproduction of social life. I also speculated that the soul, conceptualised as moral energy and purpose, is an essential dimension of that species-being

However, the regime of performativity that dominates the measured university I argued is a limiting form of positivism. Performativity deploys narrow technical measures that fail to

capture the soul of academic labour. This results in demoralization. The soulfulness central to the social relations of academic production and the moral economy of the university as a public good are not measured and thereby are not valued in performativity. A re-valorisation of the moral purpose at the heart of higher education is therefore necessary.

This re-valorisation may be achieved through a dialectical humanist analysis. By positing a dynamic interrelationship between the technical and the normative, the quantitative and the qualitative the limitations of performative measurement may be transcended. A qualitative normative measure of academic labour based upon the NEF dynamic model of well-being at work, I suggest, provides a starting point for the development of new moral economy of academic labour. For it is only by re-uniting the spiritual and the practical measurements of academic labour that the soul of the labourer, and indeed the university itself, can be reclaimed.

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Endnotes

ⁱ For a detailed discussion of the Marxian concepts of abstract and concrete labour and the associated concepts of use and exchange value see Sutton (2016b)

ⁱⁱ See also Markovic (1974 p. 73-74) who states that:

‘One of the most distinctive characteristics of man (sic) is his creativity. In contrast to all other living beings man constantly evolves his tools, his methods of work, his needs, his objectives, his criteria of evaluation.’ Part of the purpose of this paper is to begin to explore the possibilities of alternatives to performative criteria of the evaluation of academic labour.

ⁱⁱⁱ On the dialectical nature of cognition in Marxist Humanism see Kosik (1976) Chapter 1.

^{iv} In Bottomore’s popular translation of the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (Fromm 2011), the term ‘spiritual’ is translated as ‘mental’. Yet in Kosik (1976) and Marx (1997) translated by Easton & Guddat the term spiritual is used. This does raise interesting questions concerning the politics of interpretation. In my endeavor to put the metaphysical back into Marxism I find the latter translation more sympathetic.

^v Kosik (1976) defines dialectics as a form of critical thinking that attempts to understand and explain the human being’s place in the universe by penetrating beneath surface appearances to the essence of phenomena. Dialectical thinking understands socio-human reality as a structured but evolving whole.

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