

palgrave▶pivot

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL
INTELLECTUAL
IN THE CORPORATE
UNIVERSITY

Clyde W. Barrow



The Entrepreneurial Intellectual
in the Corporate University

Clyde W. Barrow

The Entrepreneurial
Intellectual
in the Corporate
University

palgrave
macmillan

Clyde W. Barrow
Department of Political Science
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Edinburg, TX, USA

ISBN 978-3-319-63051-9 ISBN 978-3-319-63052-6 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-63052-6

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017948273

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2018

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: © Andrew Taylor/Flickr

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

*Dedicated to my friends
and partners in crimes against the bureaucracy:
Nora G. Barnes, David R. Borges, and the late Philip H. Melanson*

PREFACE

This book is simultaneously a critique of the corporate university and the elaboration of its antithesis—the entrepreneurial intellectual. Much of the text consists of a personal narrative of my experiences directing an entrepreneurial research center at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth from 1993 to 2014. While some may see this personal narrative as a self-indulgent approach to the topic, I have employed the method of auto-ethnography for two reasons. First, my personal account of the entrepreneurial intellectual is a critical element of the theoretical argument developed in the manuscript insofar as it documents the conflict between the corporate university and the entrepreneurial intellectual phenomenologically—or as a lived experience from inside the university. In fact, other scholars have asked me for many years to put such an account into writing not only because many of us share similar experiences, but because they illustrate in a concrete form the lived contradictions of the corporate university. It is hoped that these examples, illustrations, and anecdotes will resonate with individual faculty who daily experience similar confrontations with their own university bureaucracies.

However, throughout the text, and within each chapter, my auto-ethnographic account of the entrepreneurial intellectual is situated within a theoretical literature that gives this account a deeper structural meaning for those of us working in universities. Thus, I begin with a discussion of “the problem of the intellectuals” as it has come to us in the sociological and historical literature, but redefine and update that

problem in contemporary terms as the problem of the corporate university. I then narrow this theoretical problem by contrasting the concepts of the entrepreneurial state and entrepreneurial governance to point out that despite deploying the rhetoric of entrepreneurialism, the corporate university is structurally antagonistic to entrepreneurialism. The bureaucratic structures of the corporate university actually reinforce and routinize institutional behaviors that thwart and suppress entrepreneurialism, particularly by faculty. What senior university administrators call entrepreneurialism amounts to nothing more than public subsidies to private business—corporate welfare—in the form of workforce development, technology transfer, and other subsidies that transfer value produced by faculty and students to private corporations. However, in contrast to similar critiques of the corporate university, I do not embrace the now-failed strategies of shared governance and faculty unionization, but turn instead to the theoretical works of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon for a model of decentralized networks of individual proprietorships and producer associations as the basis for a new social category of entrepreneurial intellectuals.

I turn to Proudhon, because after many years of reading Marx and Marxist critiques of the corporate university, I concluded that one only finds hat worn “solutions” to the problem of the intellectuals that have been tried and failed many times over the last 100 years. The first solution proposed in many critiques of the corporate university is a “return” to a mythical golden age of the university when faculty exercised shared governance through a deliberative senate and its plethora of university committees and task forces. As I argue in the following text, and as I have argued many times previously, this ideology of the intellectuals proposes returning to a golden age that never existed as anything but a normative myth in American higher education. I cannot see any solution to the problem of the intellectuals in returning to something that never really existed except as an academic mythology.¹

Thus, a key implication of my critical analysis is that American professors must relinquish the ideal of an ivory tower and accept the reality that they work in corporate and state-capitalist enterprises. By continuing to claim that the university is somehow special or unique—indeed, even sacred—rather than just another business, professors cut themselves off from the recognition that their demands as faculty are the same demands being made by other workers for workplace democracy, profit-sharing, and cooperative or worker ownership. The re-conquest of the university

must ultimately be part of a wider movement for economic democracy, but I contend that such a movement begins inside the university with the actions of individuals and small groups. Professors have little room left to maneuver, because corporatization and bureaucratization have already transformed higher education into a one-dimensional institution (Marcuse 1964).²

A second solution proposed in various critiques of the corporate university is that we accept our newly proletarianized condition and align ourselves more closely with the working-class or other social groups by organizing more militant faculty unions. I personally embraced this solution to the problem of the intellectuals for many years, but my own experience with faculty unions led me to the conclusion that they too are bureaucratic institutions and any innovative, creative, or entrepreneurial intellectual will not find a welcome home in these allegedly working-class organizations. As a result of this dual disenchantment and disillusionment, I found myself returning to two old books that I had not read for many decades.

The first book that recaptured my imagination was Henrik de Man's *The Psychology of Marxian Socialism* (1928), which was published by the Belgian socialist while serving as director of the Belgian Labor College. At the time of the book's publication, De Man was a widely heralded leader of the world workers' education movement that swept through working-class organizations in Great Britain, Continental Europe, the USA, and Australia during the 1920s (Barrow 1989). De Man's long forgotten, but insightful work includes several sections on the psychology and behavior of intellectuals in the labor movement, including their work in trade unions and left-wing political parties.

De Man recounts his experience as one in which *real* proletarians were put off by the false and transparent attempts by *real* intellectuals to act *like* proletarians, while simultaneously being far removed from them in daily life. De Man describes a cultural environment where intellectuals attempted to imitate workers in dress, manners, and vulgar speech until it finally dawned on him that *real* workers were actually insulted by these artificial, if well intentioned, efforts to *simulate* their lifestyle (Baudrillard 1983). He observes that he finally realized that workers did not seek him out for public lectures, or classes on socialist theory, because he was a simulated proletarian, but they instead came to him (or the Belgian Labor College) because he was an *intellectual* who possessed (owned) specialized skills and knowledge that could be useful to them individually

and collectively, but which they otherwise did not possess. Thus, De Man concludes that he became more effective as an organic intellectual when he made peace with his petit bourgeois social status, cultural orientations, and education.

As a result of re-reading Henrik de Man, the second book that pushed its way back into my consciousness was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's *What is Property?*, which I had not read since my days as an undergraduate student. Although I had long recognized that university intellectuals are engaged in a struggle with the capitalist class and its political servants for the ownership of our labor and its products, I increasingly realized that unlike "the proletariat," there is still much about our work that is not socialized or collectivized, but very private and individual, or that at best occurs in small groups. This realization led me to the conclusion that many university intellectuals have misled themselves in an act of existential bad faith with the professed belief that because our economic and class situation is *similar* to that of the industrial and service sector working classes, it is therefore identical to that of the proletariat. In fact, our economic and class situation is that of petit bourgeois proprietors, such as attorneys, doctors, accountants, and other small business people who work in professional corporations, limited liability companies, and partnerships. Consequently, I have come to see the "university" as simply a collection of office buildings, laboratories, and warehouses (i.e., a campus), where intellectuals assemble to practice their craft, much like these other petit bourgeois professions assemble in campus-like office complexes. As a result, I argue that the university is becoming, and should become, less and less of an organizing principle for our work and less and less a source of identity for intellectuals. The university is simply a *place* where we work, and not even the only place where we work, but it does not define our class, cultural orientations, or any other collective identity. In other words, our economic and class situation is indeterminate between that of the traditional and the new petit bourgeoisie, but it is definitely not the same class situation as that of the proletariat or an autonomous stratum (Poulantzas 1978, 191–331). Furthermore, I argue that an acceleration of this tendency is the best solution to the contemporary problem of the intellectuals. However, this solution will require university intellectuals to embrace risk, competitiveness, independence, and even the marketization of our skills and knowledge.

Proudhon's (1876, 280–288) description of a "third form of society" between capitalism and communism is based on "the principle

of workmen's associations," which entails the replacement of laws, rules, and regulations with "the concrete form of contract," "equality of exchange," "competition," and the "honorableness of work" (Proudhon 2007, 215–224, 243–247). Another fundamental principle of Proudhon's (2007, 244) third form of society is "the universality of comfort." Thus, a Proudhonian solution to the problem of the intellectuals will also require university intellectuals to aggressively disavow and abandon their archaic and obsolete monkish vows of poverty inherited from the university's medieval and clerical origins. We should never again be embarrassed to demand the full value of our labor and its products even as we perform tasks that benefit the wider society.³ We are not here to sacrifice for the greater good. I will leave that to the priests, ministers, and rabbis, although I note in this regard that many professors have evidently chosen the wrong profession.

The incorporation of an auto-ethnographic account is also based on my conclusion that it would not serve any purpose today to publish yet another turgid structural-institutional account of the corporate university as these now abound in great numbers, including one authored by me (Barrow 1990). None of these works seem to have had any significant impact in awakening the class consciousness of university intellectuals, because they evidently do not see themselves in these institutional descriptions of the contemporary university. Indeed, panels on the politics and policies of higher education at the American Political Science Association rarely generate an audience of more than 10 to 15 people out of 6000 to 7000 persons attending the annual conference. While my experience with these panels has been somewhat more encouraging at sociology, anthropology, and education conferences, there is nevertheless very little interest among university scholars in reflecting seriously on the conditions of their own labor or in understanding the ideological and political functions of the university in contemporary capitalism. Most contemporary intellectuals are bureaucratic intellectuals who somberly reproduce their quotidian roles as acquiescent agents of the corporate state.⁴

Yet, despite my occasional references to Proudhon, it is not my intention at this time to fully articulate an alternative organizational model of the entrepreneurial university as it is my contention that the concept of the entrepreneurial *university* is merely an ideological artifice deployed by corporate elites and state managers as a subterfuge for transferring the value produced by faculty and students to themselves and to private

business corporations. The entrepreneurial intellectual is *not* in the short term a broad strategy for subverting the bureaucratic corporatization of the university, but a limited micro-strategy operating at the margins of the bureaucratic corporate university, which will likely appeal to only a few intellectuals. Entrepreneurialism is an individual and small group tactic of micro-subversion and evasion, rather than a mass collective, institutional, or class-wide strategy of resisting the corporatization and bureaucratization of the university. One might foresee a situation in the indefinite future where networks of entrepreneurial organizations operating on the edges of the corporate university (boring from without), or operating quietly inside the corporate university (boring from within) could presage the emergence of a genuinely entrepreneurial university, but I suspect that possibility remains far in the future. As noted earlier, I offer glimpses of this possible future in my references to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, whose inspiration leads me to wonder if the university could be reconstructed as a network of decentralized and autonomous producer associations, but I offer nothing more than a flickering glimpse of this alternative, because I do not think that the ideological and organizational infrastructure is presently within reach to make this possibility a reality. Thus, my only goal on this front is to fire an opening volley into a complicated discussion with the hope that it will stimulate additional personal accounts of life inside the corporate university, as well as more theoretical discussion about alternatives to the failed strategies pursued by intellectuals up to this point.

Edinburg, USA

Clyde W. Barrow

NOTES

1. Kaufman-Osborn (2017, 12) provides a somber historical and theoretical epitaph for this professional ideal, but concludes that if this inherited “vision of professionalism...is a relic whose day has come and gone, there is indeed much we must surrender.” However, I am not convinced that intellectuals surrender much more than a false identity by abandoning the myth of the autonomous university, see, Barrow (2016).
2. I (2010, 344) have previously argued that a “progressive resolution of the crisis [in higher education] would be a new social compact between higher education, the state, and the public, which must

include a restoration of faculty and students to a central place in higher education decision-making processes. The progressive alternative will not be realized until faculty and students retake physical control of their campuses and join with other social movements to reconstruct power relations within those institutions and redefine their relationship to the state.” This essay is an attempt to build on that observation at the level of micro-politics, although realizing this micro-politics on a larger scale, that is, as the entrepreneurial university, would be a revolution in higher education.

3. It is no accident of history that the most commonly cited treatise on “the idea of the university” as an ivory tower in pursuit of knowledge for its own sake was authored by a Cardinal in the Catholic Church, see, Newman (1927).
4. The average university professor seeks nothing more than security, routine, and predictability—precisely the things that a bureaucracy provides to them. Thus, university intellectuals are bureaucratic intellectuals by natural inclination or at least by self-selection at this point in history. I propose this statement as a fundamental axiom that is true regardless of whether an individual intellectual holds a left- or right-wing ideological orientation. The concept of the bureaucratic intellectual is a trans-ideological concept and institutional practice.

REFERENCES

- Barrow, Clyde W. 1989. Pedagogy, Politics, and Social Reform: The Philosophy of the Workers’ Education Movement. *Strategies: A Journal of Theory, Culture and Politics*, 2 (Fall): 45–66.
- Barrow, Clyde W. 1990. *Universities and the Capitalist State: Corporate Liberalism and the Reconstruction of American Higher Education, 1894–1928*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Barrow, Clyde W. 2016. Realpolitik in the American University: Charles A. Beard and the Problem of Academic Repression. In *Neoliberalizing the University: Implications for American Democracy*, ed. Sanford F. Schram, 14–34. London: Routledge.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 1983. *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman. New York: Semiotext(e), Inc.
- De Man, Henrik. 1928. *The Psychology of Marxian Socialism*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul. London: George Allen & Unwin.