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## 8. MANAGERIALISM AS ANTI-SOCIAL

### *Some Implications of Ubuntu for Knowledge Production*

#### INTRODUCTION

Criticising managerialism (or equivalently performativity, audit culture, neo-liberalism, corporatisation) is a favourite pastime of contemporary academics, not only in the hallways of academe but also in the literature. Many of us have an intuitive sense of what is objectionable about managerialism, but is there a plausible theoretical account of it? According to what basic perspective would objections to the various managerialist practices make sense? Is there one thing that makes all the forms of managerialism problematic?

Of course, there might not be just one thing that makes the myriad instances of managerialism undesirable.<sup>1</sup> However, it would be fascinating, at least from a philosophical standpoint, if there were, and I conduct a search for what that might be in the discussion that follows.

In this chapter, which is a work of applied ethical philosophy, I present a unified account of what makes managerialism problematic, at least with respect to knowledge production in South African higher education institutions, and I suggest respects in which this account can plausibly be extended to managerialism more generally. In particular, I advance a novel, sub-Saharan theory of why managerialism is wrong, drawing on a certain ideal of relating communally that is commonly associated with *ubuntu*, the southern African Nguni word for human virtue. In a nutshell, I argue that what is fundamentally wrong with managerialism is that it flouts the value of communal relationship. I also provide concrete guidance for how university research ought to be conducted in South Africa and elsewhere so as to honour that relationship.<sup>2</sup>

Although communalism is particularly salient in sub-Saharan traditions of ethical thought, I do not mean to suggest that the critique of managerialism is only ‘for Africans’. People from a wide array of cultural and theoretical backgrounds could find something plausible in the suggestion that managerialism is objectionable, roughly speaking, in that it keeps people apart. Note that I do not intend to provide evidence that this is the *best* explanation of why managerialism is unwelcome. Instead, my goal is the more limited one of providing a new, powerful explanation that has an African pedigree and that could be weighed against theoretical competitors in the future, particularly those grounded on characteristically Western ideals.<sup>3</sup>

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I begin by spelling out what managerialism is, and provide several examples that relate specifically to research in the contemporary South African higher education arena. Note that I do not address the causes of managerialism, such as changes to government policy or what occasioned them—I leave that to my colleagues in the social sciences. Then, I provide a philosophical interpretation of *ubuntu*, that, instead of reproducing it in its entirety as a religious worldview or traditional way of life, sets out its morally attractive dimensions that can be understood and appreciated by people from a wide array of backgrounds.

According to my favoured reading of the concept, an *ubuntu* ethic prescribes becoming a ‘real’ person, which one can do insofar as one prizes communal relationships with others, i.e., by sharing a way of life with other persons and caring for their quality of life. After having clarified this principle and differentiated it from an ideal of collegiality, I apply it to managerialism. The basic problem with managerialism in light of this understanding of *ubuntu* is that it tends to impair the ability to relate communally. Undertaking research could be a way for academics to commune with other academics, managers, students and the broader society; however, managerialism makes such relationships much more difficult to achieve. Following that discussion, I suggest ways in which university procedures could be imbued with more *ubuntu* while retaining enough efficiency, accountability and the other values that tend to motivate administrators to adopt managerialism. I conclude the chapter by noting the need, which is unaddressed here, to weigh this *ubuntu*-based critique of managerialism against other, particularly Western, theoretical perspectives.

#### MANAGERIALISM, PARTICULARLY REGARDING KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

In this section I provide what is intended to be a comprehensive analysis of the nature of managerialism in higher education institutions, with key illustrations from a South African research context. I aim to go beyond merely providing apparent synonyms of the phenomenon such as ‘performativity’, noting one-sided aspects of it such as ‘commodification’ or ‘top-down’ approaches, or pointing out a variety of examples of managerialism. Instead, I proffer here an account of managerialism that is meant to capture its essence.

Follow the suggestions of Penny Enslin, Shirley Pendlebury and Mary Tjiattas (2003) as well as Felicity Coughlan and several others (2007), I submit that managerialism is well understood as a condition in which the central activities of an organisation are largely determined by rationalised, viz. quantified, standardised and hierarchical, procedures that are typical of modern economies and states. Higher education institutions become more managerialist the more that teaching, research and governance are steered by the instrumental logic typified by markets (money) and bureaucracies (power).

This proposed analysis borrows much from the sociological traditions of Max Weber (1904, 1922) and Georg Lukács (1923), particularly as they have been

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interpreted by Jürgen Habermas (1981a, 1981b). All three social theorists view modernity as being characterised, to a large extent, by the development of institutions focused on efficient goal attainment or means–ends rationality. In the private economy, maximising outputs and minimising inputs has often meant that a business owner or manager breaks down the labour process into discrete processes that can be easily measured and repeated. The assembly line is the quintessential example, but the above thinkers suggest that much of everyday life in contemporary capitalism, and not merely most of the work, has a similar structure. When it comes to modern public institutions, for example, a bureaucratic chain of command involves high-ranking officials issuing directives to subordinates to engage with clients on the basis of fairly inflexible form-filling and box-ticking.

There is real debate to be had about whether these rationalised processes are undesirable, all things considered, or even avoidable, in a mass society. Habermas's (1981b) view that the development of these systems is in fact a kind of social progress, but that they must be prevented from becoming too extensive, merits serious consideration. My point is that one compelling way to understand managerialism in higher education institutions is in terms of the extension of an instrumental logic, characteristic of modern economies and states, into a realm where it did not exist in the past.

Consider how this account of the nature of managerialism makes sense of a wide array of practices that are intuitively managerialist in twenty-first century South African higher education institutions. Think about the practice of monitoring and evaluating lecturers primarily with respect to their classes' pass rates, with any result under 82% being considered to be putting a course or lecturer 'at risk'. Consider judging a unit's equity or transformation profile merely by the percentage of black South African staff it has, with deans being tasked with reaching something on the order of 36% in a given year. Imagine a university whose senior management has mobilised substantial resources so that instead of remaining in the top 4% in global rankings, the university moves into the top 3%. Suppose that, in order to reduce the amount of fraud occurring, line managers had to examine all the receipts handed in, write the word 'cancelled' on them, sign them and date them, on pain of the academics in their departments not being reimbursed for their expenses. And then reflect on the practice whereby those largely affected by a financial decision are not allowed to have a meaningful say in it, for example, where there is no overview by, let alone consultation with, academics in regard to a university's budget.

Some of the above real-life examples are more bureaucratic, and others are more market-oriented, but all are plausibly called 'managerialist'. I suggest that the label is apt because they all, to a varying extent, involve steering subordinates in ways that call for the production of uniform outputs according to measurable criteria. There is no explicit connection to knowledge production in these cases, though one might pause to consider how it might be indirectly affected.

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Now, I indicate some forms of managerialism that have a more direct bearing on the way research is undertaken. Think about senior management designing a development programme for associate professors without first consulting them about what they might find useful for their research and for their careers more generally. Consider that when this programme is implemented, prospective participants are not able to engage directly with senior management about their concerns, but must rather channel them through a coordinator, who relays them to a director, who passes them on to a still more senior manager, who must then approve any changes.

Imagine that academic staff, in general, are incentivised with the prospect of a monetary bonus at the end of the year that is determined by a numerical rating of their performance, which, with regard to research, is based almost exclusively on quantified outputs such as the number of publications in forums that are expected to accrue government subsidy for the university. Suppose that when it comes to promotion, a staff member's research contribution is expected to meet a certain quantified threshold, where a journal article counts as one full unit and a chapter in an edited book counts as half a unit. Finally, reflect on the practice of awarding research-related funds to academics according to whether or not they publish in a journal on a particular list that helps the university climb the global rankings.

There are a number of reasons why academics might reasonably find the above practices unwelcome. In what follows, I seek a principle that makes sense of all of them as various manifestations of one basic problem: they inhibit academics from communing with each other, managers, their students, and the society in which they live.

#### UBUNTU AS A MORAL THEORY<sup>4</sup>

A well-known maxim that indigenous southern Africans often invoke to sum up salient ethical perspectives is 'a person is a person through other persons' (e.g. Khoza, 1994, p. 3; Dandala, 2009, p. 160; Mandela, 2013, p. 227).<sup>5</sup> Although those familiar with traditional African cultures tend to associate certain ideas with this phrase, as it stands, it is virtually meaningless to someone outside the fold (after all, who would ever think that a person is not a person?). Since this chapter is directed towards an English-speaking audience that includes those who are not familiar with African traditions, and since transparency and clarity are essential for the purposes of public morality, in this section I articulate an ethic based on this maxim that can be readily grasped, and even appreciated, by those from a variety of backgrounds. Note that I am not seeking to *reflect* accurately the way that particular indigenous sub-Saharan people understand morality or the above maxim about it. Instead, I draw on some of the ways that a variety of (southern) African societies and thinkers understand it, in order to *construct* a plausible moral theory, having an African pedigree, that can be

used to judge contemporary social controversies, including managerialism in higher education institutions.

What, then, does it mean when one says that a person is a person through other persons? Or, more specifically, which interpretation of this phrase is both continuous with sub-Saharan ethical traditions, particularly those in southern Africa, and *prima facie* attractive as a basic moral principle?

Take the first clause. When sub-Saharanans say that ‘a person is a person’ they are not expressing a tautology. Instead, what they mean usually includes the idea that someone who is a person, in the biological sense of a deliberative agent such as a human being, ought to strive to become a *real* or *genuine* person, that is, someone who exhibits moral virtue (Ramose, 1999, pp. 52–53). Someone who has such virtue has *ubuntu*, literally, humanness in the Nguni languages of southern Africa. A true or complete person is someone who lives a genuinely human way of life, who displays ethical traits that human beings are in a position to exhibit in a way nothing else in the animal, vegetable or mineral kingdoms is able to.

Just as one might say that a jalopy is not a “not a *real* car” (Gaie, 2007, p. 33), so (southern) Africans often say that someone who lacks *ubuntu* ‘is not a person’ (Gaie, 2007, p. 32; Dandala, 2009, pp. 260–261) or is even an ‘animal’ (Pearce, 1990, p. 147; Bhengu, 1996, p. 27; Letseka, 2000, p. 186). That does not mean that the wicked are literally not human beings, viz., no longer entitled to human rights, but instead connotes the metaphorical point that these individuals utterly fail to exhibit human excellence and have instead actualised their lower, base nature (Ramose, 1999, p. 53).<sup>6</sup>

The second part of the phrase tells people how to become a real person or to exhibit *ubuntu*, that is, ‘through other persons’. Typically this means by entering into a *communal relationship* with others, or seeking to live *harmoniously* with them. It is well known that indigenous African ethical views are characteristically communitarian, but this concept is often understood vaguely or is construed in a crude manner, as ‘the group’ taking precedence over ‘the individual’. As should become clear below, a sub-Saharan moral principle can really be put to work, and be attractive for giving due weight to individual interests, once one is clear about what it means to commune or to live harmoniously. To demonstrate what this plausibly involves, I present below representative comments from some southern African intellectuals.

Former South African Constitutional Court Justice Yvonne Mokgoro says of an *ubuntu* ethic that “[h]armony is achieved through close and sympathetic social relations within the group” (1998, p. 17). Gessler Muxe Nkondo, who has held positions of leadership on South Africa’s National Heritage Council, avers that “[i]f you asked *ubuntu* advocates and philosophers: What principles inform and organise your life? What do you live for? ... the answers would express commitment to the good of the community in which their identities were formed, and a need to experience

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their lives as bound up in that of their community” (2007, p. 91). Nhlanhla Mkhize, an academic psychologist at the University of KwaZulu-Natal who has applied *ubuntu* to conceptions of the self, remarks that “personhood is defined in relation to the community ... A sense of community exists if people are mutually responsive to one another’s needs ... [O]ne attains the complements associated with full or mature selfhood through participation in a community of similarly constituted selves ... To be is to belong and to participate” (2008, pp. 39, 40). In the final example, Mluleki Mnyaka and Mokgethi Motlhabi, two theologians based in South Africa, say this of *ubuntu*: “Individuals consider themselves integral parts of the whole community. A person is socialised to think of himself, or herself, as inextricably bound to others ... *Ubuntu* ethics can be termed anti-egoistic as [they discourage] people from seeking their own good without regard for, or to the detriment of, others and the community” (2009, pp. 69, 71, 72).

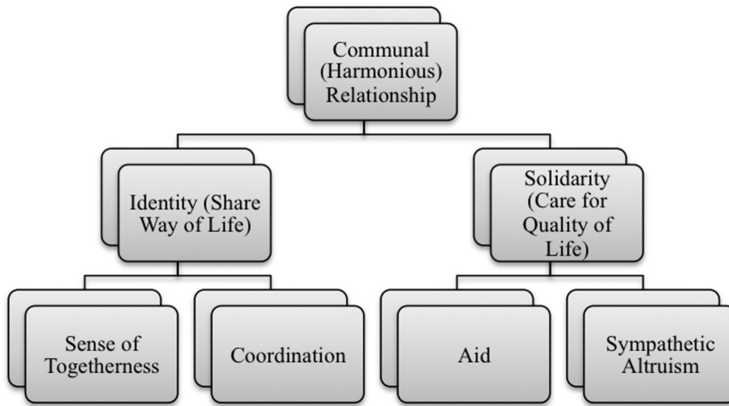
These and other construals from many different parts of Africa<sup>7</sup> about what it is to commune or to live harmoniously with others suggest two recurrent themes. On the one hand, there is what I call ‘identity’, a matter of being close, experiencing life as being bound up with others, belonging and participating, and considering oneself a part of the whole. On the other hand, one finds reference to being sympathetic, being committed to others, responding to the needs of others, and acting for the good of others, which I label ‘solidarity’.

It is revealing to understand identifying with others (or being close, belonging, etc.) as the combination of exhibiting certain psychological attitudes of ‘we-ness’ and cooperative behaviour. The psychological attitudes include a tendency to think of oneself as a member of a relationship or group, perhaps by referring to oneself as ‘we’ rather than ‘I’, to have a disposition to feel pride or shame in what others do, and at a higher level of intensity, to experience an emotional appreciation of the nature and value of others. The cooperative behaviours include being transparent about the terms of interaction, allowing others to make voluntary choices, acting on the basis of trust, adopting common goals, and, at the extreme end, making choices for the reason that ‘this is who we are’.

Exhibiting solidarity with other parties (or acting for the good of others, etc.) is similarly aptly construed as the combination of exhibiting certain psychological attitudes and engaging in helpful behaviour. Here, the attitudes adopted are positively oriented toward the good of others, and include an empathetic awareness of their condition and a sympathetic emotional reaction to this awareness. Further, the actions taken are not merely those likely to be beneficial, that is, to improve the state of others, but also those taken consequent to certain motives, say, for the sake of making the other better off, or even a better person.

The above specifications of what it is to commune or harmonise with others, which enable one to specify a fairly rich, attractive and useable ethic with an African pedigree, are displayed in Figure 1.

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*Figure 1. Schematic characterisation of communion*

Bringing the above definitions together, some concrete, principled interpretations of the maxim ‘a person is a person through other persons’ are:

- One should become a real person, which is a matter of prizing identity and solidarity with others.
- An agent ought to live a genuinely human way of life, which she can do if and only if she honours relationships of sharing a way of life with others and caring for their quality of life.
- Morally right practices and policies are those that treat people as special in virtue of their capacity to enjoy a sense of togetherness, to participate in cooperative projects, to engage in mutual aid, and to do so as a consequence of sympathy and for the sake of others.

One way to begin to appreciate the explanatory power of these principles is to consider their implications for the nature of wrongdoing. Since the relationship of identifying with other people, or sharing a way of life, in combination with that of exhibiting solidarity with others, or caring for them, is basically what English-speakers mean by ‘friendliness’ or a broad sense of ‘love’, this philosophical interpretation of typical sub-Saharan values implies that wrong actions are, roughly speaking, those that are not friendly (or, to be more specific, that fail to prize people by virtue of their capacity for friendliness). What makes acts such as killing, raping, deceiving, exploiting, breaking promises and the like typically impermissible is that they are (extremely) unfriendly. They are instances of division and ill-will, the discordant opposites of identity and solidarity.

Such analysis fleshes out the following comments by Desmond Tutu, renowned former chair of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, when he says of indigenous Africans:

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We say ‘a person is a person through other people’. It is not ‘I think therefore I am’. It says rather ‘I am human because I belong.’ I participate, I share ... Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the *summum bonum*—the greatest good. Anything that subverts or undermines this sought-after good is to be avoided like the plague. (1999, p. 35)

What is *prima facie* compelling about *ubuntu*, interpreted as an ethical–philosophical principle, is that it implies that immorality is behaviour that fails to prize friendliness (and is often itself unfriendly), which is different from the dominant philosophical views in the English-speaking world that immorality is what causes harm in the long run, degrades people’s autonomy, or violates rules that everyone would reasonably accept.

Before applying this ethic of communal relationship to managerialism, I pause to indicate how it differs from an ideal of collegiality, which has at times been invoked to criticise managerialism, and in a South African context specifically (e.g. Johnson, 2006; Stewart, 2007; Weinberg & Graham-Smith, 2012). Collegiality, once typified by the University of Oxford (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2000, 2010), is more or less a relationship among academic peers in which decisions about core university activities are largely determined by academic judgment made consequent to respectful deliberation.

There are of course communal elements in this relationship, and collegiality probably captures what the interpretation of *ubuntu* in this chapter prescribes when it comes to the ways academics ought to treat each other. However, collegiality is not a comprehensive ethic, and so cannot provide an explanation of those respects in which managerialism is problematic with regard to relationships between academics and non-academics, such as laypeople in the broader society. *Ubuntu* could be considered as the genus, and collegiality as a species, where the former has the power to explain philosophically what is so appealing about the latter.

#### MANAGERIALISM AS UNDERMINING OF COMMUNION

The basic problem with managerialism, from the perspective of *ubuntu* as a moral theory, is that it tends to *degrade communal relationships*. When a core university function such as knowledge production is, roughly speaking, steered by money and power, it fails to honour friendliness in that it makes it harder both to share a way of life and to care for one another’s quality of life. To make this case, I return to each of the examples of managerialism mentioned above to show that *ubuntu* captures theoretically what is intuitively objectionable about these practices.

Consider again the case of senior managers deciding to implement a programme, meant to improve the research of associate professors, without consulting them about their needs. Probably the most glaring problem with this approach is the flouting of identity, that is, the extent to which it impedes not only a sense of togetherness, but also cooperation, between managers and academics. Even if the academics were not



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required to participate in the programme, and so would not be subordinated outright, the lack of even-handed dialogue about how such a programme would be designed means that management is not prizing the communal value of sharing a way of life. When those with substantial education and experience, such as associate professors, are not allowed to participate publicly and collectively in decisions that will affect them in significant ways, then 'we-ness' is hardly forthcoming. Instead, feelings of disrespect and resultant demoralisation (or, to use the jargon, a lack of 'buy in') are to be expected.

In addition, with this non-consultative approach, management is undermining the value of caring for the quality of life of others. To exhibit solidarity with others, it is not enough merely to have good intentions. If one tries to save someone from drowning by waving what one thinks is a magic wand, one means well but is not acting rightly or virtuously. Genuinely helpful behaviour would be to dive in to rescue the person, to throw her a life preserver, or to call a lifeguard. Similarly, for managers to act in genuinely beneficent ways with regard to staff would mean asking them for their perceptions of their research-related needs, since quite often (perhaps not *always*) those perceptions would be revealing of what their needs are and of how to meet them.

Similar remarks with regard to identity and solidarity apply to implementing a programme in ways that fail to devolve responsibility. If alterations to the programme stemming from participant feedback have to gain approval from three managerial layers, all the way up to a deputy vice-chancellor, each layer lacking direct contact with participants, it is bureaucratic control, and not communal relationship, that is prioritised. Such practices determined by a chain of command, instead of by collegial dialogue, lack the nimbleness needed to implement a programme in a way that would most assist academics.<sup>8</sup>

Turn now to the example of the policy of rewarding staff with a year-end bonus according to the extent to which they have met numerical publication targets, particularly those expected to bring money into the university. If these targets are unilaterally formulated from above, there is a lack of sharing a way of life. Carrots are naturally more welcome than sticks, but, even so, this situation would not consist of interaction between management and staff that attempts to reach mutual understanding and agreement.

In addition, the focus on the number of outputs and the prospect of income threatens to reduce the influence of academic judgment on what and where to publish. Ideally, of course, an academic should try to publish material she thinks is of genuine importance in a forum that is suitable and influential *and* that would satisfy management's interests in terms of income, rankings, etc. However, in cases where the academic's choice of forum pulls in a direction away from satisfying management's interests, there is the risk that the purely academic interests will be undermined.

One might point out that, in these cases, academics would be assisting their universities by bringing in funds. However, chances are that they would be failing

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to do their utmost to assist their colleagues' search for knowledge, or their students and the broader society to the extent that they have an interest in what is published. Furthermore, since a university presumably ought to be using funds precisely for promoting the academic search for, and public appreciation of, knowledge, it is not clear that bringing in funds at the expense of academic interests even counts as a relevant form of 'help' to the university! Insofar as academics ought to exhibit solidarity by aiding one another, their students and the public through their research, and insofar as managers ought to exhibit solidarity with academics by aiding them to do precisely that, the kind of reward scheme under discussion is, on the face of it, counterproductive.

The same kind of comments apply to the other two forms of managerialism with respect to research as sketched above. Basing a researcher's promotion on the number of peer-reviewed units produced, with more weight given to journal articles than book chapters, substantially reduces the influence of academic judgment, not only on what research is produced and where it appears, but also on which researchers obtain resources in the academy and become more influential. The role of dialogue among experts about the merits of a researcher's contribution is reduced in favour of a counting exercise. And a researcher seeking promotion is then not encouraged to think about what would most benefit her field or her society, but rather what would satisfy a quantified benchmark. This point also applies to the practice of awarding funding to researchers according to whether they publish in a journal on a certain list that is expected to help the university climb the global rankings.

Recall that I initially listed additional forms of managerialism not directly bearing on research. I submit that similar kinds of objections apply to them—they, too, flout the communal values of sharing a way of life and caring for the quality of life of others. That is, they also create a sense of 'us versus them' (or at least a failure to foster 'we-ness'). They fail to base interaction on cooperative input (even tending towards outright subordination). They further prevent academics from doing the most to help one another, their students and the broader public. And they are not based on a motive of wanting to help others for their sake, but rather on more self-serving interests such as obtaining funding and acquiring prestige.

As an example of these additional forms of managerialism, judging a unit's transformation profile merely by the percentage of black staff it has neglects, and fails to encourage, focusing on additional respects in which public institutions that previously flouted communal values should be seeking reconciliation or otherwise aiding a disadvantaged society. Such could be done via engaging in community service, providing role models, increasing the number of black postgraduates, offering bursaries, funding students to attend international conferences, and teaching them how to publish and how to construct a CV, for example. And for teachers to be monitored and evaluated primarily with respect to the pass rates of their classes neglects, and discourages focusing on, other facets of lecturing that would be good for students and society, such as being an inspiration, fostering empathy, imparting

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cognitive skills that include critical thought and imagination, showing how to debate respectfully and constructively, broadening horizons, making students aware of excellence, conveying life lessons, and ensuring the curriculum is relevant and up to date.

These kinds of energy-intensive and commendable actions might indirectly lead to increased numbers of black staff or improved course pass rates, but they are likely to be insufficiently acknowledged, prized and rewarded in a numbers-based reporting system. The greater the reliance on quantified outcomes, the more other legitimate academic tasks, at least from the *ubuntu* perspective of genuinely aiding other people, are under-reported or not undertaken at all.

## NON-MANAGERIALIST APPROACHES TO KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

In the previous section, I argued that the salient respects in which managerialism in recent South African higher education institutions is objectionable, particularly with respect to knowledge production, are well captured by the idea that it impairs the ability to relate communally, an ideal in the southern African ethical tradition of *ubuntu*. The communal relationship, here, is a combination of identifying with others and exhibiting solidarity with them, and it is these values that managerialism arguably fails to honour appropriately. In this final section of the chapter, I turn from critique to construction, again drawing on the Afro-communitarian values of identity and solidarity but now to propose some different and presumably more attractive ways of proceeding with regard to research at a university.

Let us revisit a final time the idea of a development programme for associate professors, one that is meant to advance their research careers. In order for managers to identify with academics, they would ideally meet with the academics to discuss the proposals and solicit input. Of course not everything that academics want would necessarily be on offer—not everyone would be able to travel to Bellagio or to stop lecturing for long periods. However, management would inform staff about the kinds and extent of resources available, and discussion would take place within those (let us presume reasonable) constraints. If this could not be done in person, it could be done by email. Doing these things before the programme were adopted would cultivate a sense of togetherness between management and academics, and probably among academics themselves. It would promote cooperative participation by the parties most affected, be most likely to produce a programme that would truly benefit academics, and express to academics that management cares about them.

Ideally, the group of associate professors would be given forums at which they could speak directly to senior management about their perceptions of the programme, or would elect, or at least confirm, a coordinator who would liaise with senior management on their behalf. Senior management would give a coordinator leeway to make decisions within certain boundaries, while expecting routine reports on progress and notifications of any unexpectedly large changes. In this way, collegial dialogue between the coordinator and the academics would be the

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primary determinant of the programme's unfolding, realising a shared way of life and readily adjusting in response to new information that would invariably arise, thereby ensuring the academics' interests were cared for.

Considering, now, academic staff more generally, the communal values of sharing and caring would prescribe an evaluation of their performance that is focused on discussion, in the light of academic judgment. A line manager and an academic staff member would each make appraisals of the importance of the research produced by the academic in a given year and the impact (theoretical or practical) it had or is likely to have. Based on that evaluation, they would determine what went well, what could have gone better, and how things could be done better the following year. A more radical suggestion would be to abjure individual performance management altogether in favour of evaluating the way that a group has functioned. Such an approach would be particularly likely to encourage a sense of togetherness as well as to foster a cooperative division of labour that would be beneficial for all.<sup>9</sup>

Although these kinds of appraisals could still be awkward—a matter of a superior appraising subordinates—surely a communal relationship would be more likely to emanate from them than from a superior giving subordinates a numerical score for their performance tied to a certain monetary award based on the number of subsidy-accruing units of output.<sup>10</sup> And where some quantitative steering may be appropriate, say, with regard to the desirable number of research outputs, it would be better to enable those who are subject to the steering to have a substantial input on the nature of the targets.

When it comes to promotion and the allocation of research-related resources, a similar procedure would be apt. Ascertaining whether promotion is justified with regard to knowledge production should be undertaken holistically, in the light of the proper aims of research.<sup>11</sup> Some research should be undertaken for other researchers, such as scholars striving to discover what is true or at least epistemically justified, and some of it should be for students and the public, who may also have an interest<sup>12</sup> (but are often more urgently concerned with physical, social and economic well-being). Instead of primarily considering numbers of articles and chapters, with the former being weighted more heavily, for whatever reason, than the latter, academic research should be evaluated in terms of the sort of contribution it has made. What have we learned from this research? How have others benefited from its publication? From the perspective of *ubuntu*, knowledge production is aptly viewed as a kind of service, i.e., a way of exhibiting solidarity with others, sometimes practically, in terms of the society's flourishing, and other times theoretically, in terms of people gaining greater understanding of themselves and their place in the world. In addition to the consideration of promotion on the basis of an academic's research, grants and other financial support should be distributed based on the considerations discussed above, and not as much on publication in a journal on a certain list that is expected to help the university improve its global ranking.

I submit that these measures would be consistent with reasonable interests on the part of management in ensuring that academics are productive and that councils,

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government departments and other stakeholders are kept informed about how tax revenues are being spent. It is of course much easier to count the number of publications produced in a given year than to indicate, say, what kinds of discoveries researchers have made. The former task calls for a scorecard, the latter for a narrative, and a narrative takes time and creativity to construct.

Think about what it would mean for senior management to report properly on a university's activities. If a university ought to be identifying with and exhibiting solidarity towards the society in which it is located, then such narrative considerations are, in fact, the only relevant sort of information to provide. Solidarity with regard to research would mean indicating what has been discovered and how it is to the good, either practical or theoretical, of others. Knowing that greater numbers of publications have been produced compared to the previous year is simply not relevant, and a senior management team that focused on such measures when reporting externally would be failing to be accountable to stakeholders (cf. Metz, 2011b, esp. pp. 47–50).

## CONCLUSION

I close this chapter by reminding the reader of its intended scope and of what has yet to be done. I sought to develop an *ubuntu*-based critique of what is wrong with managerialism in general, and as it is applied to research in particular. More specifically, I pointed out that certain communal values are often associated with indigenous southern African worldviews and have advanced a principled way of understanding their moral import. According to this ethic, one ought to live a genuinely human way of life by prizing relationships of identifying and exhibiting solidarity with others. I argued that, by this principle, managerialism is inherently anti-social; it tends to inhibit people's ability to enjoy a sense of togetherness, to participate cooperatively, to do what is likely to aid one another, and to do so consequent to sympathy and for the sake of the other. I also suggested some non-managerialist ways of engaging in knowledge production that would not flout, but would rather accord with, these values.

I have not sought to argue that my *ubuntu*-inspired critique of managerialism is the only comprehensive one available, let alone the best one. There are, in particular, more Western approaches with which it should be compared. For example, some argue that the value of democracy is what managerialism fundamentally forsakes by virtue of its procedures (Enslin et al., 2003; Coughlan et al., 2007), or that these procedures directly impede a certain kind of individual autonomy or self-formation (Shore, 2008; Clarke & Knights, 2015). Others working more closely with Habermas's (1981b) overarching framework might maintain that, while there is nothing objectionable about managerialist procedures as such, they become problematic when they produce "pathologies" such as "legitimation crises", "anomie" and lack of "ego strength".

A rigorous comparison of my account, which has an African pedigree, with these others will have to be undertaken elsewhere in order to determine, say,

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whether only one of these accounts is sufficient or whether a combination of them is needed. However, I conclude by noting that one *prima facie* advantage of my explanation is that, whereas the claim of lack of democracy or autonomy focuses solely on managerialism as a process, and the claim of pathologies focuses solely on consequences thereof, an *ubuntu*-based approach includes both dimensions of criticism: managerialist procedures in themselves are incompatible with a shared way of life and they often undermine the ability to do what is likely to improve people's quality of life.<sup>13</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> There might be an irreducible plurality to the many different kinds of problems with managerialism, of the sort one finds in Lynch (2006). However, one can know that no unity amidst the diversity is forthcoming only if one seeks it out.
- <sup>2</sup> Other applications of *ubuntu* to an educational context have recently appeared, for example, *ubuntu* was the theme of the 2015 Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society and is the focus of a special issue of the *International Review of Education*.
- <sup>3</sup> See, for instance, appeals to the ethics of 'deliberative democracy' in the work of Jürgen Habermas (Enslin et al., 2003; Coughlan et al., 2007), of 'encounter' in Emmanuel Levinas (Standish, 2005) and of 'techniques of the self' in Michel Foucault (Shore, 2008; Clarke & Knights, 2015).
- <sup>4</sup> Much of this section borrows from Metz (2011a, 2014, 2015a, 2015b).
- <sup>5</sup> For a discussion of this in the context of several other sub-Saharan peoples, see Menkiti (2004) and Nkulu-N'Sengha (2009).
- <sup>6</sup> For discussion beyond southern Africa, see Gyekye (2010).
- <sup>7</sup> For example, the Ghanaian Kwame Gyekye notes, "[t]he fundamental meaning of community is the sharing of an overall way of life, inspired by the notion of the common good" (2004, p. 16), while the Nigerian Segun Gbadegesin says of a representative African moral perspective that "[e]very member is expected to consider him/herself an integral part of the whole and to play an appropriate role towards achieving the good of all" (1991, p. 65).
- <sup>8</sup> Also worth mentioning is the fact that the more burdened senior managers are with the nitty-gritty, the less occasion they have to reflect strategically on how to advance the interests of the institution.
- <sup>9</sup> This approach was used for a couple of years by one of my own departments, until disallowed by senior management.
- <sup>10</sup> One might suggest a combination of evaluation processes—the one I have suggested, focusing on the nature and influence of an academic's research, in addition to the managerial one, focusing on quantity and monetary incentives. Might that not be what would most encourage a typical academic to do the best possible work? The recent evidence, in fact, suggests not—'external' or 'instrumental' incentives tend to reduce creative work, even in the presence of more 'internal' or 'intrinsic' ones such as wanting to excel (see, for example, Wrzesniewski & Schwartz, 2014).
- <sup>11</sup> Another interesting suggestion that I do not explore here is that, within an *ubuntu* perspective, the means by which knowledge production is undertaken, and not merely its end, should also be informed by communal considerations. Perhaps research for a given project should be participatory, that is, should not be conducted by an individual, even where that is possible, but rather in collaboration with members of the public. For this sort of interpretation of *ubuntu* as it applies to journalists, see Blankenberg (1999).
- <sup>12</sup> It is not easy to find a place for knowledge for its own sake within a basically communitarian ethical framework (see Metz, 2009). I presume it can be done in terms of people having an objective interest in understanding themselves and how they relate to the world.
- <sup>13</sup> This chapter has benefited from written comments by Bernadette Johnson of the Vaal University of Technology and Peter Woelert of the University of Melbourne as well as from oral comments

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by participants at a Colloquium on Knowledge and Change in the African University held at the University of Johannesburg, 1–2 October 2015.

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