

Dan Harvey & Imre Szeman

Management in the Educational Field, or The Entrepreneurial University

Abstract

Drawing on Michel Foucault's insight (in the 1978 lectures collected as *The Birth of Biopolitics*) that neoliberal society requires a new type of entrepreneurial subjectivity, this paper examines the ways in which a discourse of entrepreneurship has slipped from the realm of economics to become a hegemonic common sense within Western societies. Entrepreneurship is no longer a practice carried out only by businesspeople; rather, we live in a time when the ordo-liberal project of continually restructuring society along radically competitive lines, to promote a specific vision of economic freedom (see Röpke, 1948; Böhm, 1950; Eucken, 1952), has been realized through the saturation of society with the ethos and directives of the entrepreneur. Working with this thesis as our starting point, we examine the effects such an "entrepreneurial turn" has had on subjectivity, community, politics, and culture. Entrepreneurial modes of behavior are increasingly linked with correct behavior—with doing one's part in society by maintaining a proper self-management of both external fields of possibility (within the social, economic, aesthetic, political and so on) and the internal field of subjectivity.

In this paper, we take as our object the North American university system, focusing in particular on initiatives introduced in public Canadian universities over the last decade. The mission of such universities has increasingly become a corporate one, which prioritizes industry partnerships, research commercialization, business startup promotion, and economically-oriented educational areas. Where the Enlightenment University privileged the development of reason, and the German model developed by Humboldt aimed to foster national culture, the contemporary corporate university increasingly seeks to create entrepreneurial subjects who might operate optimally in a society that has itself undergone an entrepreneurial turn: individualized, self-motivated, continually on the lookout for opportunities, and organized around profit at every level of experience and cognition.