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Title	Academic freedom and the eye of power: the politics and poetics of open enclosures
Author(s)	Ryan, Kevin
Publication Date	2016-06-13
Publication Information	Ryan, K. (2016). Academic freedom and the eye of power: the politics and poetics of open enclosures. <i>Journal of Political Power</i> , 48 (2), 1-20.
Publisher	Taylor & Francis
Link to publisher's version	http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2016.1191162
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/5888
DOI	http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2016.1191162

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The version of record of this article is published in the *Journal of Political Power*
Published online ahead of print June 2016

(A limited number of copies of the published article are available on an open-access basis here:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/z8KdazFzQ4Fet6REqVSc/full>)

Academic freedom and the eye of power: the politics and poetics of open enclosures

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Abstract

Transparency is both a powerful idea and a technology of power associated with accountability, justice and democracy, which opposes the secretive and shadowy power of surveillance wielded by states and corporations. This article examines surveillance and transparency not as a dichotomy but as a constitutive relation in the field of academia, focusing specifically on ranking and rivalry in the context of competitive performance. Transparency-as-openness (open access platforms) is enmeshed in enclosures assembled from (self-) surveillance, personal data, public institutions, and private enterprise. The analysis pays particular attention to how altmetrics and credibility metrics – used to enhance personal prestige and professional standing – reinforce the neo-liberalisation of higher education. The article concludes by engaging critically with the politics and poetics of open enclosures with a view to re-imagining the practice of academic freedom.

Key words: Academic freedom, altmetrics, credibility metrics, panopticism, transparency

Introduction

During the summer of 2012, filmmaker and digital rights activist Caroline Campbell and visual artist Nina McGowan used drones fitted with cameras to make a film offering new visual perspectives on Dublin city in the Republic of Ireland. Titled *Loitering theatre*, the film was created as part of the Science Gallery Dublin's *Hack the city* exhibition¹. The basic idea behind this project was in part to provide novel perspectives on the city, but the drones also symbolised the agency of citizens, or more specifically the ways in which technology can be used to subvert the power of states and corporations. The drones were used to 'see' the city in the way that a private security guard monitoring CCTV cameras might see it, or as the pilot of a police helicopter might see it. Campbell and McGowan also used the drones to snoop on meetings taking place in the Dublin offices of two major corporations: Facebook and Google². When interviewed for the magazine *Wired*, Campbell explained that the motive

behind the project was to ‘democratise surveillance...our argument is that Facebook has no expectation of privacy as their founder Mark Zuckerberg at one stage said privacy was no longer a social norm...We feel that [our actions are] no more intrusive than something like Google Street View’ (quoted in Solon 2012).

A second and very different scenario: in 2013 the athlete Christopher Froome won the most prestigious event in the world of professional cycling – the Tour de France. Such was his dominance in the high mountains that rumours quickly spread alleging that Froome was using prohibited performance-enhancing drugs³. Judged guilty in the mass-mediated court of public opinion, Froome’s response was to stage a counter-attack by making a slice of his physiological data available for independent analysis (Farrand 2013). More recently, having won the Tour de France for a second time (2015) and again facing allegations of ‘doping’, Froome announced his intention to undertake a series of independent physiological tests at key points in the coming season so that his data can be mapped longitudinally, with the results made publically available (Cycling News 2015; Moore 2015). Froome’s response to accusations of cheating has thus been to demand more intrusive surveillance on top of what is already considered by many to be an invasive anti-doping testing regime.

Two very different examples from two distinct fields of practice – and I will return to each in due course – yet they converge in the idea that visibility can be used as an instrument of justice. Both also dovetail with the core objectives of organisations such as Transparency International and Wikileaks, whereby (counter-) surveillance is transformed into something that has come to represent truth, virtue, and the good: transparency⁴. Yet when transparency *is* a form of surveillance and when surveillance articulates the virtues of transparency, then it is by no means clear how interventions such as *Loitering theatre* or Froome’s attempts to defend his professional integrity achieve anything other than reproducing and intensifying the very problems they seek to address.

I want to begin this paper by suggesting that both examples can help to cast trends in the field of academia into relief, and in what follows I examine the relationship between transparency and surveillance as a tactical game of visibilities in the context of ‘academic capitalism’ (Slaughter and Leslie 1997). One manifestation of this is the adoption of managerialism as a mode of government in higher education institutions, the aim of which is to measure, monitor and rank employees and their outputs on the basis of performance. But to focus solely on this trend would be to overlook forms of *self*-monitoring and *self*-surveillance which are refracted through the open access movement. Here the ideal of openness envisions an egalitarian approach to knowledge-production and distribution whereby ‘everybody has

equal opportunity to seek, share and generate knowledge' (Frontiers). To understand the linkages at work here I will be focusing on the power relations generated by ranking and rivalry, and to this end I examine how the game of visibilities is staged as a credibility contest within arenas of competitive performance which are shaped by practices and technologies that graft transparency to surveillance. The argument is that the game of visibilities is a process of foreclosing that generates 'enclosures of the imagination' (De Lissovoy 2013) whereby academic freedom – which is necessarily a matter of degree – draws inwards around the freedom to compete in a zero-sum game among winners and losers. The first part of the paper draws on Foucault and Arendt to examine power, freedom and visibility as a fractious or 'agonistic' arena of practice which can be harnessed through onto-political struggle. Part two maps the relationship between power, freedom and visibility in the field of academia, while the final section engages with the politics and poetics of open enclosures with a view to re-imagining the practice of academic freedom.

On power, freedom, and visibility: preliminary remarks

The purpose of this section is to draw from the work of Foucault and Arendt in setting out the parameters of the analysis and argument to follow. There are of course many ways of distinguishing these thinkers, but common to both is the study of power and freedom, and in terms of how this has a bearing on surveillance and transparency, both relate power/freedom to visibility. Foucault's theory of panopticism and the 'eye of power' (1977, 1980a) was anchored in his genealogy of the modern penal system, but it extends also to other fields of knowledge – medicine, psychiatry and pedagogy among them. Knowledge is made practical through technologies that 'see', so that power/knowledge is both produced and refracted through a relation of seeing and being seen. An example is how cartography and statistics were combined during the nineteenth century and used to map crime and vice in the towns and cities of Britain. Framed as 'public hygiene', the problem of the 'slums' was a fusion of medical and moral discourse, and it cleaved the slum-dwelling population into specific categories of problem targeted for normalising interventions (see Joyce 2003: 51-6). Observation, examination and judgement combine as a *gaze* (Foucault 1977: 171-4, 184) which is how power/knowledge shapes the practice of freedom.

In the case of Arendt, visibility is central to her theory of political action within the public 'space of appearances'. To act politically is to appear before others, but without ever really knowing how one actually appears *to* others (Arendt 1958: 199-206). The space of

appearances is also the realm of world-creation, which relates to Arendt's concept of 'natality' – the human capacity to begin something new – but this is a contingent and unpredictable process. Though each of us is a story that arises out of biological life, we are not the authors of our own stories – we cannot predict how others will interpret and respond to our words and deeds (1958: 184; see Haugaard 1992). Power, freedom and visibility thus combine as a dialogical, contingent, and constitutive process.

Without going further, it could be argued that these very different approaches to power, freedom and visibility are incommensurable. In contrast to Arendt's 'phenomenological-existential sensibility' (Hayden 2014: 7), Foucault's analyses historicize concrete apparatuses and regimes (from the French *dispositif*, see Foucault 1980c: 194-8). To come back to the examples used earlier, *Loitering theatre* might be examined through the lens of Foucault's theory of panopticism, while it could be argued that Christopher Froome's actions are staged within the Arendtian space of appearances. Common to both of these examples however is the way they each submit to the dominant regime of power/knowledge and play the game of visibility on its terms. The question then is how to avoid this trap. I think Foucault and Arendt *together* can answer that question, and here I follow Villa's (1992) argument that they meet on the terrain of an 'agonistic theory of political subjectivity'.

Foucault once invoked this concept of agonism – from the ancient Greek *agon*, denoting public contests whereby rivals compete for pre-eminence (Kalyvas 2009) – to present 'power and freedom's refusal to submit' as a 'relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle [and] permanent provocation' (1983: 222). Arendt writes of power and freedom as acting in concert, which might be interpreted as consensual collaboration, but Arendt's concert is a 'web of human relationships' born from plurality, and it encompasses not merely collaboration but also 'innumerable conflicting wills and intentions' (1958: 184). Perhaps nowhere in her writings is this combative rendering of concerted action more in evidence than when she uses the ancient Greek *polis* to illuminate present concerns. Here Arendt also invokes the concept of agonism to elucidate an expressive form of political action whereby individuals strive to rise above each other through exemplary public performances (2005: 130, 1958: 41, 194, 199-206). Importantly, Arendt also relates power/freedom to a very specific way of thinking about equality, which might serve as a corrective to neoliberalism's emphasis on competitive individualism. Judith Butler (2015: 52) makes the point succinctly when she writes that:

The 'I' is...at once a 'we', without being fused into an impossible unity. To be a political actor is a function, a feature of acting on terms of equality with other

humans – this important Arendtian formulation remains relevant to contemporary democratic struggles...The exercise of freedom is something that does not come from you or from me, but from what is between us, from the bond we make at the moment when we exercise freedom together, a bond without which there is no freedom at all.

There are three things I want to draw down from these initial reflections. One is the agonistic imbrication of rivalry, struggle and cooperation – freedom as a practice spans all of these relations. The second – as noted by Butler – is that whether we meet as allies or rivals, in a democracy we engage with each other on the terrain of equality. Finally is the issue of visibility: Foucault's analyses of the gaze and Arendt's space of appearances combine as a lens – a means of practising immanent critique and a way of seeing beyond the 'is' to the realm of imaginable possibilities. Otherwise put, the agonistic tensioning of power/freedom is not a puzzle to be resolved but is instead a generative feature of human existence, and might thus be characterised as a condition of possibility for staging onto-political struggle (Connolly 1995: 12)⁵. By this I mean struggles to imagine ways of being-in-the-world that can be actualised through disruptive and counter-normative practices (see Kester 2015; Khoo and Taylor 2016). To frame power/freedom as a way of engaging in onto-political struggle is to draw Foucault and Arendt together within the space of a generative process of world-creation.

Freedom is inevitably a matter of degree to the extent that the scope of possible action is conditioned and constrained by context-specific enclosures of power/knowledge, which in turn foreclose on other ways of practising freedom. These enclosures are not fixed and immutable however; they can be breached, or to speak with Zerilli (2011: 23) – this is a mode of action powered by 'imaginative acts of thinking and judging' that fold into the *agon* as a contest among equals. This is what is presently at stake in academia, because it is fast becoming a routine feature of academic life that anything short of optimal performance carries negative consequences for those who fall behind in the race to excel. Moreover, 'optimal' means exceeding the performance of peers and rivals in a competitive situation where performance can be, and is – as will be seen through comparison between sport and academia – augmented through pharmacological and technological enhancement.

In the next section I use the transparency/surveillance relation to examine power/freedom/visibility in the field of academia, moving from there in the subsequent section to the task of normative critique. What I am *not* going to do however is attempt to legislate on what should follow from this critique. My objective is simply to take up a critical

vantage point on where we are headed, what the consequences might be, and – with the help of Arendt and Foucault – how we might go about straining freedom as we currently experience and practice it. This is a first step towards opening out the possibility of thinking ourselves and the world anew.

Competitive performance: transparency and surveillance as a credibility contest

To begin at the most general level, academia is currently being reconfigured through programmes of reform variously referred to as the new public management, new managerialism and performance management, all of which are anchored in the neo-liberalisation of higher education (Giroux and Dawes 2014; Giroux and Giroux 2006). In practice this entails the use of instruments and technologies that seek to make actions and outputs visible and verifiable by measuring and incentivising performance through various types of audit (Power 1997) as well as flexible or ‘atypical’ labour contracts (O’Hara 2015). The idea of accountability (configured as transparency) is one of the drivers of this process, and is harnessed to objectives such as delivering value for money by rewarding effort and weeding out waste. Another driver is the technique of quality assurance. In Europe, quality assurance is built into the Bologna Process for cooperation in higher education, the aim of which is to establish a European Higher Education Area⁶. The European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) is the umbrella organisation for Bologna signatory countries, and in its mission statement the ENQA states that it is committed to ‘the enhancement of quality and the development of a quality culture in higher education’⁷. To cut through the rhetoric, Bologna is a coordinated strategy to place higher education in the service of economic growth and global competitiveness (see ENQA 2015). Though the strategy is framed as one of cooperation, quality is one of the ways that higher education institutions compete for market share by developing distinct brands and unique products.

What this boils down to, as argued by Slaughter and Leslie (1997), is ‘academic capitalism’. To borrow from Trottier’s work on surveillance and social media (2015, pp. 535-6), academic capitalism generates ‘curious partnerships’ that traverse the personal, the private, and the public. This is curious not simply in the way it connects public entities (universities) to personal data and commercial enterprises (discussed below), but also because there is a type of symmetry between those who manage and monitor others and those who self-manage. On one side is a drive to govern through quality review and evaluative monitoring on the part of policy-makers and university management teams, which has the effect – whether intended or not – of routinizing distrust and surveillance (Dardot and Laval

2013, pp. 215-54; Lipman 2006; MacLaren 2012; Shore and Wright 2000; Strathern 2000; Webb 2005). Here I am more interested in the other side of this relation: how surveillance is mirrored by researchers who strive to enhance impact and reputation by making effort and achievement as visible as possible. I also want to examine how rivalry between institutions and among individuals is leveraged by for-profit actors that exploit the open access movement.

Meritocracy unbound

Dardot and Laval (2013, p. 250) make the point that ‘measuring performance has become the elementary technology of power relations in public services’. What I am going to suggest is that this elementary technology is also a credibility contest staged at the threshold of external control and self-management. Before saying more about the field of academia, I want to elaborate on one of the examples used in the introduction above – professional cycling. This is partly by way of explaining what I mean by credibility contest, but the example is also apposite because elite-level sport and academia are analogous in certain important respects, specifically in terms of how competitive performance relates to surveillance, transparency, and performance enhancement.

In 2010, on the eve of the Tour de France (a three-week stage race held during the month of July), the International Cycling Union (UCI), which is the world governing body for sports cycling, created an ‘index of suspicion’. All 198 riders taking part in the race were assigned a number between one and ten, with a score of six or higher indicating an ‘overwhelming’ possibility of doping (Farrand 2011). The issue of doping concerns the illicit use of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs), and anti-doping agencies are looking increasingly to information technology as a means of developing tools for detection and deterrence. This is also what enabled the UCI to construct its index of suspicion. Each rider’s score was based on their biological passport, which is an electronic document that generates a haematological and steroid profile of the individual based on test results (blood and urine). Testing is conducted both during competition and out of competition, and the latest World Anti-Doping Authority Code (WADA 2015) makes it clear that athletes can be tested anywhere, at any time (day or night), by any anti-doping agency with authority over the athlete. To ensure that this policy can be implemented, athletes in the testing pool are required to continuously update anti-doping agencies on their ‘whereabouts’, which in practice means texting or emailing whereabouts information to a doping control platform called ADAMS (Anti-Doping Administration and Management System).

One important feature of this apparatus is that it renders suspicion actionable. An athlete can be sanctioned on the basis of anti-doping rule violations such as inaccurate whereabouts information, as well as ‘adverse analytical findings’ and ‘atypical passport findings’ (WADA 2015). In other words, athletes can be punished without ever testing positive for a banned substance. Another significant feature is that this violates rights to privacy by instituting intrusive forms of surveillance that would not normally be tolerated outside of prisons and the military. What is thus surprising – as argued by Sluggett (2011, p. 398) – is the behaviour of athletes in response to these controls. In the name of transparency, many are trying to outdo each other in demonstrating commitment to ‘clean’ sport.

In the introduction I mentioned the British/Kenyan cyclist Christopher Froome as someone who exemplifies this trend. By continually raising the stakes through his very public demands for a more rigorous and intrusive testing regime, Froome is helping to institute a practice whereby his peers must follow his lead, which gives rise to what Møller and Dimeo (2014) refer to as a credibility contest. Innocence (the absence of a positive test for banned substances) is no longer enough. Instead, credibility is an ongoing accomplishment that necessitates public performances that go above and beyond the threshold of suspicion. Yet that threshold keeps moving in tandem with athletes’ efforts to be fully transparent. This is not simply about fending off sanctions however, because credibility is a form of capital that converts suspicion into personal prestige.

Academia is also becoming a credibility contest, and in terms of how this articulates the relation between distrust and surveillance, it is analogous the arena of professional sport, but inversely. In the case of the athlete suspicion is aroused when an extraordinary performance exceeds what is deemed humanly possible. In academia by way of contrast, performance must exceed the norm and to be ranked as average is to be failing. It is in this sense that ‘excellence’ should be understood, because to excel is to exceed the achievements of others, whether at the level of individuals or rival universities. The experience of this persistent pressure to excel is conveyed extremely well by Ball (2003, p. 220) when he writes of the ‘mechanics of performativity’ and accountability in higher education – the ways in which academic labour is subject to a panoply of judgements, measurements, targets and comparisons, which combine to generate a situation characterised by uncertainty and instability:

...A sense of being constantly judged in different ways, by different means, according to different criteria, through different agents and agencies. There is a flow of changing demands, expectations and indicators that makes one

continually accountable and constantly recorded. We become... unsure whether we are doing enough, doing the right thing, doing as much as others, or as well as others, constantly looking to improve, to be better, to be excellent.

It is perhaps worth pausing here to reflect on the pros as well as the cons of competitive performance as a way of rewarding effort. With respect to the public sector, it has been argued that this is a desirable alternative to past practices when it comes to ranking candidates for promotion, and that as a way of implementing the ideal of meritocracy, performance management is an improvement on practices that reward seniority (see Osborne and Gaebler 1992). However this defence of meritocracy operates on the basis of naïve naturalism, and here the sport/academia analogy is particularly striking. In the sporting arena anti-doping agencies condemn the use of PEDs because this violates the ideal of playing 'clean' and 'true'. It is as though hard work and genetic inheritance set some sort of natural limits to competition, but there are many ways to enhance performance⁸. The sport of cycling for example has spawned an industry in research and development, and enormous sums of money are spent on clothing and equipment with the aim of saving a few watts of power through reduced wind-drag. In elite-level sport the difference between the best and the rest is measured in terms of marginal gains. A handful of watts can make the difference between winning and coming second, and when it comes to negotiating lucrative salaries and sponsorship deals, second place counts for very little. Factor in other legal methods of human enhancement such as nutritional supplements and new training techniques derived from innovations in the field of sports science, then in what sense we can speak meaningfully of the un-enhanced athlete is by no means clear.

As this culture of augmentation expands in scope it also escapes the grip of regulation. In sport it is regulated by anti-doping agencies, but as noted by Hoberman (2005: 17) 'modern societies that run on the principles of productivity and efficiency cannot credibly oppose techniques that boost the human organism in order to enhance its mental, physical and sexual performances'. One such cognitive enhancer is Modafinil (Provogil), a wakefulness drug designed to treat narcolepsy and easily available to buy online. Used to boost productivity and performance, Modafinil is reported to be 'gaining currency in the global academic community' (Tysome 2007). If one person equates this with cheating another might see it as a way of gaining the competitive edge, and the use of these 'smart drugs' in academia have been defended on the grounds that they offer the means of 'levelling up'⁹ (Shabbir 2014). Whether in sport or academia, natural ability can be enhanced, while success-

oriented commitment – will-power, focus and dedication – can also be augmented. In short, the meritocratic ideal of a level playing field belongs to a bygone era. The important difference between sport and academia of course is that academics do not need to fear the equivalent of anti-doping agencies. However the culture of augmentation is happening in other more mundane ways too, enabled by technologies to boost research ‘footprint’ and impact.

Visibility and the personal panopticon

Social networking sites for researchers such as Academia.edu and Research Gate are on an upward trajectory in terms of users, and this is also one way of becoming more ‘Googleable’. Both of these platforms are funded by venture capital, both have emerged in tandem with the open access movement, and both exhibit more than a passing similarity to Facebook. The number of ‘views’ or ‘reads’ on these platforms resembles the number of ‘likes’ on a Facebook page, while ‘followers’ mirror Facebook ‘friends’. In so far as this type of visibility helps to boost professional standing, it looks a little like a popularity contest. Research Gate’s RG Score – which is presented as ‘a new way to measure scientific reputation’ – captures all interactions on the platform, including the reputation of those who download and follow one’s work. A big RG Score is thus an indication that one’s research is attracting the attention of followers who are the academic equivalent of celebrity ‘friends’ on Facebook. This is one of the ways that Research Gate markets its product; users are informed that the RG Score can be used strategically to ‘leverage standing within the scientific community’¹⁰.

It might be argued that the RG Score is not a serious measure of impact and is not taken seriously by researchers or research institutions. The short answer to that would be ‘not yet’. Conventional bibliometrics are already being supplemented by altmetrics, which capture impact in the form of mentions in newspapers, on blogs and social networking platforms such as CiteULike, Mendeley and Twitter (‘Twitter demographics’ log tweeters who ‘share an article’)¹¹. Websites for academic journals are already beginning to resemble Academia.edu and Research Gate. The Taylor and Francis Group for example has added number of ‘views’ and ‘altmetric score’ to articles published in its journals, while Sage Publications has adopted a ‘What’s Trending’ approach to marketing its wares and uses email to disseminate the ‘Top Ten Tweets’. Professional standing is becoming a matter of who is following who and how big the numbers are (citations, views, downloads, reads, followers, tweets), and if this game of numbers helps to enhance one’s visibility and reputation, then that too can be leveraged by plugging into Google Scholar Metrics (citations and h-index).

This strategic visibility is another manifestation of what I have referred to above as a credibility contest. In fact this is more or less what Richard Price, founder and CEO of Academia.edu, means by ‘credibility metrics’. In an interview with Price published in *Scientific American*, Hadas Shema notes that publishing in a top-ranked journal is considered a ‘stamp of approval’. Price responds by noting that the ‘historical’ peer review process uses the opinions of reviewers as ‘a proxy for the opinion of the scientific community’. The future, he says, is ‘a family of credibility metrics’ that ‘reflect the sentiment of the scientific community’ (quoted in Shema 2015, p. 3). This evaluative shift – from ‘opinion’ to ‘sentiment’ – might warrant discussion in its own right, but here I want to focus on the notion of credibility metrics in the round, because it names what I have described above as a game of numbers. The individual researcher is becoming a self-administered micro-enterprise, or as Price puts it, ‘we are moving towards a world where the personal brands of scientists are starting to eclipse those of journals...The individual is increasingly going to be the person who drives the distribution of their own work and also the work of other people they admire’ (quoted in Shema 2015, p. 5). It hardly matters whether Price is stating a fact or embracing a normative vision when he says that ‘what will drive the adoption of credibility metrics is the competitive spirit in the scientific community’. In a situation where tenure-track jobs are scarce and where academic labour is becoming more precarious, then in the words of Price ‘you are incentivised’ to find a way to stand out, even if this means strategically ‘gaming the system’ by artificially boosting one’s credibility.

I noted earlier that academics do not have to fear the equivalent of anti-doping agencies in the sporting arena, and thus the use of smart drugs in academia is regulated by personal choice, peer pressure, and existing norms. Performance is nevertheless still wedded to credibility, particularly given the ease with which Google Scholar metrics, altmetrics and platforms such as Academia.edu can be gamed. In an experiment aimed specifically at demonstrating how Google Scholar metrics can be manipulated, three researchers from the University of Granada and the University of Navarra created six false documents, each citing 129 papers from their own research team (Delgado López-Cózar, Robinson-García, and Torres-Salinas 2012). Links to full-text versions of the fabricated documents were uploaded to a webpage under the University of Granada domain. Google Scholar subsequently indexed the documents, and to give an indication of the difference this can make to an individual researcher’s profile, Torres-Salinas presents two screenshots of his public profile – ‘before’ and ‘after the experiment’. His total citations rose from 226 to 415, while his i10-index more than doubled – from 7 to 17¹².

Altmetrics are even easier to game, and here I will write from experience. Last year I created accounts with Academia.edu and Research Gate because I was interested in understanding how these networking sites function and also what the potential benefits might be to the researcher. I was subsequently astounded by the number of hits (views and downloads) recorded on my Academia.edu account within the first few weeks. When I unpacked the analytics, I saw that a large number of hits originated in the same place and realised it was the uninvited antics of a friend. When I asked this friend to stop he explained that he was merely trying to ‘boost my impact’. The point is that I could quite easily have orchestrated this myself, and the same applies to Twitter demographics – credibility metrics may not always be entirely credible.

This strategic feature of credibility metrics mirrors Academia.edu’s business model, which exploits the credibility of the open access movement by building its platform as an open enclosure that can be mined for data. As of October 18th 2015, more than 26 million academics had signed up to Academia.edu and posted 7 million papers which are available for download (Hall 2015). The platform also enables users to send messages to each other, to comment on draft research papers, and to view their personal analytics on a dashboard that logs profile views and document views. This flow of data *is* the business model, and Academia.edu is arguably way ahead of competitors such as Sage when it comes to leveraging trends in research. As Price explains:

The goal is to provide trending research data to R&D [research and development] institutions that can improve the quality of their decisions by 10-20 percent. The kind of algorithm that R&D companies are looking for is a ‘trending papers’ algorithm, analogous to Twitter’s trending topics algorithm. A trending papers algorithm would tell an R&D company which are the most impactful papers in a given research area in the last 24 hours, 7 days, 30 days, or any time period. Historically it’s been very difficult to get this kind of data...As scientific activity is moving online, it’s becoming easier to track which papers are getting more attention from the top scientists (Price, quoted in Shema 2015, p. 2).

Academia.edu taps into the reputation of the open access movement, thereby aligning its business model with the positive meanings associated with transparency. Yet what Price is describing shades into open source intelligence (OSIN). OSIN is a form of surveillance that harvests, analyses and repurposes information which is in ‘plain sight’ (Trottier 2015) – basically the same method used to generate altmetrics. The growing popularity of social media has augmented the possibilities of OSIN and algorithmic data-surveillance because,

unlike phone calls and email, information posted on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Academia.edu is publically accessible.

Hall (2105, pp. 3-4) makes two important points in response to this trend. One concerns the source of revenue. In contrast to for-profit academic publishers that charge individuals and institutions to make content publically available, Academia.edu leverages data that is freely available on its platform. The second point brings me back to Trotter's idea of curious partnerships. Although academic research is increasingly reliant on private funding, the majority of academics are employed in publically funded higher education institutions, and Hall is surely correct when he makes the point that Academia.edu has a 'parasitical relationship to the public education system... academics are labouring for it for free to help build its privately-owned for-profit platform by providing the aggregated input, data and attention value'.

Whether one games the system or plays true, this way of boosting standing is staged within Arendt's space of appearances, yet this is very different to the world that she describes. We appear before others not just in the flesh, but also through our online presence – the 'personal panopticons' we construct and self-administer (Bauman and Lyon, 2013, p. 59). Our personal panopticons blur the distinction between transparency and surveillance, and this way of representing and communicating outputs and achievements reinforces the logic of academic capitalism in at least two ways: we ensnare ourselves in a business model fuelled by algorithmic surveillance, and we generate numbers that allow our digital-doubles to be compared and ranked, which in turn feeds back into the ranking of academic labour within the institutional setting. To come back to my earlier examples from the fields of art and sport, the personal panopticon is more or less continuous with *Loitering theatre* – democratising surveillance, and also with Christopher Froome's efforts to use data – numbers primarily – to offset scepticism and win public acclaim: the game of numbers is a credibility contest that democratises surveillance within the space of appearances. But this is also a case of Arendt's 'fiercely agonal spirit' whereby we freely participate in a contest driven by the logic of ranking and rivalry – a contest that distinguishes the best from the rest.

The personal panopticon accelerates the transformation of academia into a competitive arena which is configured as a race. This is not simply a race among winners and losers, it is also a race to remain in the race, to not fall too far behind, which is to be judged deficient and thus a liability rather than an asset to the organisation – only those who expect to fail or with something to hide would wish to remain in the shadows, and thus the generative relation between rivalry and suspicion continues to intensify. This is a field of

power relations that extends from the macro-political level of state-policy and international trends in higher education, through the institutional level of managed and measured performance, to the micro-politics of personal panopticons. In short this is much more than a mode of control whereby power is exercised by managers over line-workers (or anti-doping agencies over athletes). Instead it is a highly decentred network of power relations which is governed through a regulated autonomy constructed and conditioned not just by technologies of control, but also by personal panopticons and peer relations.

The politics and poetics of open enclosures: re-imagining power and freedom

...suspicion always attaches to mystery...for why should we hide ourselves, if we do not dread being seen? – Jeremy Bentham 1791

Everything that is, must appear, and nothing can appear without a shape of its own; hence there is in fact no thing that does not in some way transcend its functional use, and its transcendence...is identical with appearing publically and being seen – Hannah Arendt 1958

It is testimony to the influence of Foucault's theory of panopticism (1977) that Bentham has become a cardinal point of reference in the field of surveillance studies (Lyon 1994, pp. 67-79; Mathiesen 1997; Bauman 1998, pp. 51-4) as well as debates on transparency (Gaonkar and McCarthy 1994; Hood 2006). In his essays on the poor laws, written during 1797/98, Bentham presents his thoughts on visibility in the form of a succinct statement: 'the more strictly we are watched, the better we behave' (2001, p. 277). This applies not only to the inmates of his imagined panopticon prisons and poor-houses, but also to public officials and members of parliament (see Bentham 1791/1843, p. 314). According to Bentham, visibility is a 'tactic' that must apply to each and all. Foucault's rendering of this – his theory of panopticism – boils down to this: 'He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power...he becomes the principle of his own subjection' (1977, pp. 202-3). Foucault could hardly have foreseen the extent to which we have indeed become the managers of our own subjection, and Bentham's axiom might be reformulated as 'the more strictly we are watched, the more intensely we compete to enhance our own visibility'.

Foucault once described panopticism as 'diabolical' because it is a web 'in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is

exercised' (1980a, p. 156). Today's panoptic field of visibilities retains this diabolical quality in that it institutes what Foucault referred to as 'an apparatus of total and circulating mistrust' whereby – as with the example of the drones in the introduction – resistance takes the form of counter-surveillance. Transparency and surveillance are locked together as a ratchet-like process, and depending on how one perceives this, or more importantly perhaps, depending on one's subject positioning, it may well be experienced as tyrannical as well as being diabolical. For Bentham the panopticon was as a safeguard against tyranny. It was a way of imagining a thoroughly decentralised and democratised machinery of power that would be 'supervised by society as a whole' (Foucault 1977, p. 207). Yet if there is no apparent means of escaping the eye of power other than to move into the shadows and thereby render oneself void or suspect, then perhaps we have succeeded in democratising tyranny. The question that follows is how to act in the face of this predicament?

Reprise: power and academic freedom

As noted from Foucault in section one above, power is inadequately understood if equated solely with coercion, repression, and prohibition. Power also produces in that power is constitutive of freedom as an agonistic arena of practice, and this in turn forecloses on other ways of making the imaginable 'appear' (to borrow from Arendt). It is in this sense that depoliticised technologies of power – such as metrics used to evaluate and rank research and researchers – can be said to produce regimes of truth whilst remaining deeply political (Foucault 1980b). Otherwise put: to foreclose is also to enclose, but such enclosures are contestable. This gestures towards onto-political struggle which, as noted above, is a generative process of world-creation. Engaging in this type of struggle necessitates counter-normative interventions that cut across the grain of the instituted regime of truth, thereby transfiguring socially-scripted enclosures of thought and imagination (Khoo and Taylor 2016). I will attempt to make this argument tangible by engaging with three key concepts threaded through the curious partnerships that connect the personal (panopticon) to the public (corporatized university) to the private (algorithmic enterprise): excellence, quality, and innovation.

Excellence: I have suggested that the dominant conception of excellence in academia is about exceeding the outputs, impacts and performances of rivals. There are echoes of the distant past in this feature of the present, and though written long before the enterprise society had come of age, Arendt's account of the 'fiercely agonal spirit' that pervaded the city states of

ancient Greece can be used to recast the meaning of excellence today (1958, p. 41; 2005, p. 165). Arendt is here referring to political life in the *polis*, whereby excellence was a public performance of words and deeds in pursuit of distinction. In other words, to *be* excellent was to rise above one's peers, 'to show through unique deeds or achievements' that one 'was the best of all', or the best among equals (1958, p. 41). However, and this is the point I wish to stress, this is an individuality that requires the presence of others and exists only in the context of that relational plurality. What is foreclosed upon and remaindered by the 'value-neutral' framing of value – metrics, rankings, impacts, and so forth – is the inexhaustible plurality of perspectives that harbours the capacity to generate an endless flow of new beginnings. To institute a 'singular experience' (Arendt 1958, p. 58) that disciplines plurality transforms difference into managed predictability, so that excellence comes to mean more of the same in larger quantities at reduced costs. An alternative way of thinking about excellence, as argued by Fendler (2012, p. 322), is to exceed by 'pushing beyond current limitations, beyond what is known or imaginable, and toward the realm of the "not yet"'.

Quality: Earlier I mentioned the Bologna Process as a driver of Quality Assurance in Europe, noting that though this is a coordinated strategy framed by the idea of collaboration, in practice it generates competition among higher education institutions competing for market share. With respect to research, quality is captured and communicated in the form of data generated by the algorithmic monitoring of research trends (discussed above), as well as evaluation protocols and procedures that rate and rank research 'outputs'. Outputs are selected as trending and/or excelling relative to others deemed to be of lesser quality, and as with elite sport, the search for marginal gains encourages a situation where gaming the system of evaluation can become the optimal strategy¹³. Solving that particular problem however would do little in terms of altering the power relations generated by incessant ranking and intense rivalry. Rancière's idea of 'the sensible' – the thinkable, sayable, doable – and the way this partitions those who count from those who have 'the part of no part' is apposite here (2004)¹⁴. In the research assessment exercise for example it is 'things' which are counted and discounted, valued and devalued, but these things are born from human endeavour. The process of objectification transforms the ethico-political substance of these practices into a technical task governed by rules and procedures concerning the measurement, evaluation and ranking of comparable entities. When things are counted and discounted in this way, then lives are also valued and devalued.

To take a qualitative method such as the British Research Excellence Framework (REF) as an example, the logic of the exercise operates by ranking individual pieces of research which are distinguished on a hierarchical scale from four-star to one-star. This replicates one of the most deeply embedded myths in the field of art, or what McGonagle refers to as ‘signature practice’ (2007, p. 2). Signature practice is grounded in the myth of the individual artist as a ‘genius-producer’, so that signature culture

...pedals the idea that value lies in the uniqueness rather than the commonality of the artist’s experience; that art has its own separate grammar and syntax – its own language – and somehow speaks for itself. But art always has an ‘accompanying text’ – an armature of support mechanisms, socio-economic, political as well as cultural which condition/create its meaning.

The myth of individual genius has material effects in bestowing standing and market value on the work of an elite cohort of producers. What is lost in this way of valuing/evaluating both art and academic research is the collaborative nature of cultural and social production, or what McGonagle calls ‘participatory practice’. In the field of academic labour this does not have to take the form of a research team parcelling out a research project and collaborating on the same outputs. Participatory practice/culture is a diffuse and decentred process (see Moss and Kubacki 2007; Sawyer 2004). To use the language of the REF, it takes multiple one-star and two-star publications – not to mention the many conversations and conference presentations that do not translate into measurable outputs – and also the ongoing exchange of insight among teachers and students to lay the groundwork for a four-star publication, just as it can take a whole series of experimental works in the realm of cultural production to pave the way for an Antonin Artaud or a Joseph Beuys to emerge (and Beuys would likely be among the first to acknowledge this were he alive today). Bibliometrics and citation indices are an established way of acknowledging this debt to others, but these have come to function in much the same way as credibility metrics – a measure of individual prestige. What is eclipsed by the individualised game of numbers is the collaborative nature of inquiry, from collecting data through tried and tested methods, to reading the work of other theorists and analysts, learning through teaching, and borrowing insights and techniques from unrelated fields of endeavour. The idea of the single-authored four-star publication replicates the myth of the artist-genius, and this is reinforced by the personal panopticons that compete for individual prestige in the world of credibility metrics.

Innovation: This might be called the lesson from Mary Shelley – in the name of advancing science we create a monster that kills creativity, and we sustain the monster by giving it a name that serves as a surrogate for what has been lost. The name of the monster, and it is fast becoming a logic which is stretched across the social, is a mantra that swings like a pendulum between ‘enterprise’ and ‘innovation’. For ease of presentation I will stick with innovation, and I will contrast this with creativity with the help of an example: the difference between a house painter and an artist who paints¹⁵. The house painter works to a script which is the equivalent of an architect’s drawing¹⁶. The script might be produced by an interior designer or the owner of the house to be decorated, but either way the desired end product determines what will be done and how it will be done. Though this is skilled and knowledgeable work, the tradesperson is basically a tool in a managed process. In the case of an artist who paints – and though this is by no means a rule without exception – the artist who knows exactly what she will produce before the process even commences is likely to make the artistic-equivalent of a decoration. Creativity is more usually an open-ended undertaking guided by ideas, experience, technique, skill and also individual talent, but to peel away the layers of the finished work would likely reveal a process which is very different from the scripted labour of the house painter.

A striking example is Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica*, a painting that depicts the horrors of war in a highly visceral way and on a monumental scale (the piece is 3.5 meters high and 7.7 metres long). Without losing sight of McGonagle’s critique of signature practice or his argument concerning the relation between artistic text and social context (*Guernica* was created for the Spanish Pavilion at the International Exposition in Paris in 1937, against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil war and the rise of fascism), what I wish to draw attention to here is creativity as collaborative process. The room that houses *Guernica* in the Museum Sofia in Madrid also exhibits a series of photographs documenting how Picasso reworked his original vision. His initial sketches offer glimpses of what the finished piece would eventually look like, but there is no way of seeing the end in the beginning (indeed this might be a way of picturing Arendt’s way of thinking about action within the space of appearances). Crucially important here is that Picasso was not alone with his work. It was his lover Dora Maar who used her camera to record the painting’s evolution, and her presence must be seen as contributing to the process of production, just as the viewer’s presence produces the meaning of the finished painting. To abstract slightly, whether the production process is anchored in the field of art or academia, unscripted labour is a dialogical process of ‘collaborative emergence’ (Sawyer 2004, p. 13).

This is the difference between creativity and innovation as a process that fuels the logic of enterprise, and here it might be worth recalling Foucault's words by way of shifting the focus from artistic production to academic freedom. In an interview conducted in 1982 Foucault was asked whether he was as a philosopher, historian, or structuralist. His answer exemplifies the difference between innovation and creativity, and is also striking when compared to current trends whereby academics are increasingly required to specify impacts and outputs before the research has even commenced:

The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you were going to say at the end, do you think you would have the courage to write it? What is true for writing and for love relationships, is also true for life. The game is worthwhile insofar as we do not know what will be the end (1988: 9).

This might well be a succinct way of characterising not just academic freedom, but freedom itself as a practice worthy of the name. In contrast to Foucault's creative ethos of open inquiry, innovation is a machine powered by human effort, talent, initiative, skill and imagination, but it disciplines these distinctly human 'inputs' through the accountancy practices noted above – dividing 'outputs' that count from others that count for very little¹⁷. When peoples' jobs, security, futures are on the line, and when research outputs must have 'impact' in order to count, then it is inevitable that the monster will begin to condition what is done and how it is done. In short, innovation eviscerates the freedom to engage in creative endeavour.

Conclusion

To conclude I want to return briefly to Hall's (2015) analysis of Academia.edu, specifically his argument that the open access movement is in danger of being 'outflanked' by data-driven commercial enterprises. His choice of word is apposite, because this is indeed a strategic game of power, though it is not simply the open access movement that is being outflanked. A plurality of possible worlds (in the Arendtian sense) are also being outflanked. Yet to be outflanked is not equivalent to powerlessness (Haugaard 1997, pp. 205-18).

Whether examined at the level of individuals or institutions, academic excellence is becoming a zero-sum game of distinction and rivalry, but this might be reconstituted as a positive-sum collaborative undertaking – and *without* subscribing to some type of anti-meritocratic collectivism. This is one of the really important insights to be derived from Arendt's way of theorising the *agon* – the instruments that hammer academic labour into a

game of numbers which is somehow supposed to reflect quality might be countered by an alternative constellation of values, whereby quality stems from equality rather than a vertical logic of ranking and rivalry. To emphasise the main point: this does not foreclose on contests that allow individuals to excel, but it does diminish the value of winning-at-all-costs. In turn the hegemony of innovation and enterprise might be destabilised by enacting an ethos of openness – a commitment to experimentation and an open process of creative inquiry.

As an approach to life and inquiry – as a way of practising freedom – the ethos of openness attributed to Foucault above compliments Arendt's concept of natality. We are conditioned by the world that we are born into, and the world in this Arendtian sense is a human artifice. Through our deeds and words we create a world that will outlast us and which will in turn condition those who are born after we are gone. But no one is conditioned absolutely; each person is a new beginning and all have the capacity to imagine and create the world anew – this is what powers onto-political struggle.

Ultimately this is a contest staged on the terrain of some of the oldest debates in social thought – structure and agency, theory and practice – but perhaps there is also a need to work across the disciplinary enclosures separating the (social) sciences from the arts. To some extent this is already happening through the collaborative projects of socially-engaged artists (see Thompson 2012; Kester 2011), many of whom work across the boundaries of art, (social) science, technology, and activism. Politics and poetics meet as praxis that generates imaginable futures (Fendler's 'not yet'), yet these imaginary projections need not be framed as final destinations. As provisional horizons they remain open to chance encounters, unforeseen antagonisms, and unplanned deviations, thereby generating new directions and new horizons. But perhaps the most urgent feature of imaginary projections is that they provide critical vantage points on the here and now.

Endnotes

1 'Loitering theatre' is available on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZK4LtWyqFS4>. Accessed 25th August 2015. The Science Gallery was established in 2008 as a 'living experiment' where 'science and art collide' and is affiliated to Trinity College Dublin: <https://dublin.sciencegallery.com/about>. Accessed 25 August 2015.

2 At the time of writing Facebook and Google are both represented on the Board of the Science Gallery.

3 The issue of ‘doping’ erodes the credibility not just of individual athletes, but sport itself, including organisations such as sports governing bodies and anti-doping agencies.

4 Transparency International’s Mission Statement for example equates transparency with accountability, integrity, solidarity, courage, justice and democracy (TI 2011).

5 I am here extending Connolly’s argument that ‘every interpretation of political events...contains an ontopolitical dimension...its fundamental presumptions fix possibilities, distribute explanatory elements, generate parameters within which an ethic is elaborated, and centre (or decentre) assessments of identity, legitimacy, and responsibility’ (1995: 2).

6 Presently there are 47 countries participating in the Bologna Process, which commenced with the Sorbonne Joint Declaration in 1998 followed by the Bologna Declaration 1999. See: <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=3>. Accessed 2 November 2015.

7 ENQA: <http://www.enqa.eu/>. Accessed 2 November 2015.

8 Doping in the sport of cycling is currently shifting from chemistry to electricity, or ‘mechanical doping’ as it is called – miniature battery-powered motors concealed within the frame of the bicycle (Cycling News 2016).

9 In fact one commentator goes even further by advocating cognitive enhancement as a ‘moral duty’ in light of the university’s mission to strive for excellence (Quigley 2008).

10 ‘RG Score: A new way to measure scientific reputation’, available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publicprofile.RGScoreFAQ.html>. Accessed 12 September 2015.

11 Altmetric.com for example markets its product to publishers, institutions, and researchers. See: <http://www.altmetric.com/>. Accessed 16 September 2015.

12 Google Scholar’s i10-index captures publications with 10+ citations.

13 By way of example, consider the recent ‘guest-post’ by Cat Chimes, Head of Marketing at Altmetrics.com (see note 11 above), on the Taylor & Francis Group’s *Editor Resources* webpage. The piece offers advice to journal editors on ‘putting altmetric data to use’, and reads very much like a life coaching session: ‘Do you have content you’d like to make more visible? Take a look at the altmetrics for competitor titles and see what’s working for them – a great starting point for building your own outreach strategy!’ The post also offers guidance on how to boost impact: ‘You might find that Tweeting at a particular time of day produces more retweets, or that being featured by a particular blogger draws a lot of attention that an

article wouldn't otherwise get. Figure out what success looks like, and focus your activities on building relationships with those channels'.

14 As the imbrication of politics and aesthetics, Rancière's rendering of 'the sensible' can be understood as a process of inclusion and exclusion, division and partitioning between who/what counts and who/what is discounted.

15 I am writing from experience having spent a combined total of sixteen years working in both fields.

16 On 'scripted instruction' and 'teaching as improvisational performance' in the classroom setting, see Sawyer 2004.

17 It could be argued that Clayton Christensen's theory of 'disruptive innovation' complicates my portrayal. In the field of higher education for example, innovations in online technology could reverse the trend in escalating tuition fees (see Ondi Timoner interviewing Andrew Rossi about his documentary 'Ivory Tower' – available on TheLip.TV: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofuhIR4LAgQ>. Accessed 23rd November 2015). This posits innovative disruption as a revolutionary process in the normative sense of change for the better. It does not however alter the fact that disruptive innovation remains a zero-sum game among competitors. Christensen's website describes disruptive innovation as 'a process by which a product or service takes root... at the bottom of the market and then relentlessly moves up market, eventually displacing established competitors' (<http://www.claytonchristensen.com/key-concepts/>. Accessed 23rd November 2015).

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Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this paper was presented at IPSA Research Committee 36 (Political Power) Interim Meeting held at the University of Helsinki during October 2015. I wish to thank participants, and in particular Nanna Mik-Meyer, Phil Cerny, Mark Haugaard, and Louwrens Pretorius for their comments and suggestions, and also the reviewers for the *Journal of Political Power* for providing insightful and constructive criticism. In writing this article, my thinking has undergone continual revision through ongoing conversations with Liam Farrell, a doctoral researcher in my home university, and collaborative artist Fiona Whelan, who lives and works in Dublin. All of this interaction is an invaluable part of the research process and an intrinsic feature of what is framed in this article (from Sawyer 2004) as ‘collaborative emergence’.