

## Editorial Comment

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# Anti-Monopoly Law to Prevent Dominance by one Theory in Academic Departments

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In the future the concept of equal opportunity and fair employment should be extended, not only to ethnic and gender equality, but also to equal opportunity for those holding different theories, methods and epistemologies. The present tendency for conceptual inbreeding among academics is not only counterproductive and counterevolutionary, but also contrary to human rights.

### Academic Stagnation

There is a tendency to blame budget cuts for the decline of academic vitality. But that is a scapegoat. The fact that intellectual inbreeding is a more basic cause is not considered.

Of course each academic has a freedom of theoretical choice, but that should not infringe upon the right for employment of those who told other theories, methodologies and underlying epistemologies, or the right for their works to be published in mainstream journals.

### Past Academic Mobility and Gesellschaft Syndrome

In the 1950s the American academia were characterized by the mobility of academics. It was normal and even desirable for an academic to move from university to university once in every five years or so. This practice resulted in a gesellschaft syndrome (Maruyama 1973): each department tended to become theoretically homogeneous because those

who did not like the department moved elsewhere. The resulting overall pattern was heterogeneity by localization (Maruyama 1973): for the same subject matter, the differences in theoretical orientation increased between universities while each department tended to become homogeneous. During this period, equal opportunity for different theorists was available because one could easily choose a university of his/her liking. It was also a period of academic expansion. The number of vacancies exceeded the number of applicants. But in a stricter sense, equal opportunity for different theories, methodologies and epistemologies was absent when each department was considered separately, and when the mainstream journals were considered together. Therefore, the problem existed like an incipient undetected cancer. Actually the abundance of vacant positions helped the disease to develop faster.

### Misevolution

In the 1970s and 1980s, suppression of theoretical, methodological and epistemological heterogeneity continued in spite of the fact that the academic budget became tighter, resulting in a misevolution which was maladaptive to the changing situation. Under decreasing budget and declining enrollment, an adaptive strategy would have been interdisciplinaryization. This did not occur because the concept and practice of interdisciplinarity mis-evolved also.

In the 1950s we saw a surge of interdisciplinary studies which continued into the 1960s. Think-tanks, interdepartmental and extradepartmental institutes, joint appointments and degree programs became fashionable. At that time the prevailing

principles were: (1) to put specialists from several fields together to discuss a topic or a problem; (2) to encourage infusion of extradepartmental ideas by hiring persons of other departments part-time or full-time; (3) to offer interdepartmental degree programs by combining courses from many departments; (4) to set up institutes or departments to study generalized theories. Books were and still are written with the same principles.

These principles left intact the way of thinking of most of the participants of the activities. Each person brought his or her specialized pieces of information to the gathering, and took home what was useful to his or her specialization. It looked like a flea market. In the case of books and degree programs, the situation was worse. Each chapter or each course presented discipline-specific contents and views, and the task of interrelating various chapters and courses was left to the readers and students. It was a catalogue or a collage. And some of the general theorists lacked the mentality for specifics. They tended to look for universality, analogy and similarities with little or no knowledge of the specifics, ignoring the existence, necessity and desirability of heterogeneity, and being prone to standardization, extrapolation or abstraction without reality base. They claimed to counteract the reductionism of specialists, but fell into a reductionism of another sort – oversimplification, homogenization, fantasy or wishful normativism.

Interdisciplinarity is a contextual orientation of mind (Maruyama 1992). But it had hardly taken root in the 1950s and 1960s. The surface activities without roots collapsed in 1970s and 1980s like a flea market and a collage.

Genuine interdisciplinarity who survived the collapse of the surface manifestations as well as innovators and potential innovators within each discipline became unable to function because of the resistance inside their own departments and in the mainstream journals. In spite of all the budget cuts, there were specialists in each department as well as interdisciplinarity who could have been innovative, but they were under subsedure (Maruyama 1991), i.e. they are superseded by the dominant group.

Ecosystem and evolution depend on positive-sum interactions among heterogeneous elements. Dominance by one theory is counter-evolutionary.

### Equal Opportunity for Different Theories, Methodologies and Epistemologies

Actually, equal opportunity saves money. Therefore, budget cut is no excuse for postponing the establishment of equal opportunity practice procedures. Specifically, legal requirements should cover: (1) employment; (2) representation in committees; (3) acceptance of manuscripts in journals. The second and the third do not involve additional expenses and can be implemented even under budget cuts.

### To Avoid Circumvention of Requirements

In the USA, academic and professional appointments are notorious for ways to circumvent the fair employment requirements. Very often the person to fill the position is already chosen, and the advertisement is made simply to comply with the requirements. In such cases job description is written in such a way as to fit exactly the person, but exclude other possible applicants. A problem occurs when some applicants show up who meet the description. Therefore a job description often includes an escape statement such as 'and otherwise meet the specific needs of the department'. Such methods should be explicitly prohibited.

### Conclusion

The 21st century will be an age of *interwoven* and *interactive* heterogeneity (Maruyama 1973) in contrast to the past age of localized heterogeneity. We can accelerate the change by eliminating the dominance and inbreeding by one theory in academic departments and journals.

### References

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