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Abstract

This essay concerns “McLearning,” a neologism referring to education delivered through procedures, processes, and values increasingly analogous to those governing the delivery of American fast food. As the most technologically advanced factories have become post-Fordist in the past few decades, tertiary education has, perversely, more and more recognizably become a mass production factory. This essay does not condemn McLearning and notes that the signifier “university” has always been multiple, contestable, and fluid through time and across cultures. It does argue for critical reflection regarding the context(s) in which McLearning is appropriate and the means by which it might be best delivered, lest the value of advanced learning tout court be cheapened and damaged. Interwoven with the phenomenon of McLearning are three related notions. The first is that of the so-called knowledge society, a concept which merits reflection since enough time has passed to show that the utopian vision with which this term was associated in the 1990s was far from the reality that is emerging. The

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second is the relatively apparent, but generally overlooked, fact that while discussing knowledge, the central terms “data,” “information,” “knowledge,” and “learning” are used promiscuously, interchangeably and without consistency, resulting in a discussion in which the central phenomena are undefined. Finally, a bitter irony is noted: while the professorate is being deskilled in a metaphorical Fordist instruction factory, the theorists of deskilling and proletarianization have been, inexplicably, relatively silent regarding the applicability of their expertise to their own work lives. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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