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## **Quality assessment and connoisseurship. A response to Bridges's 'Research quality assessment in education: Impossible science, possible art'**

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**Abstract:** In his paper Bridges argues for a reappraisal of the notion of connoisseurship as a valid means to judge the quality of educational research. This response starts from acknowledging the benefits of viewing connoisseurship as a point of resistance to the discourse of modernisation in which quality indicators such as citations, downloads, places of publication and machine readable software are located. The paper analyses the future quality indicators and their possible consequences on the professional identity and integrity of academia. It goes further to argue that while connoisseurship can be a valid alternative means of quality assessment, there is the need to avoid its more elitist features. Rather, it is suggested, connoisseurship offers the opportunity to regain control over the means and the ends of academic knowledge production in a more democratic manner.

### **Introduction**

As research quality goes, David Bridges's article is good quality, and a good and informative read of past and future ways in which the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) has and will shape the future of educational research. Not only did I *relish* and *savour*, to use Bridges's own words, the way in which the data was put forward and the argument developed; not only did I appreciate the crescendo of tone and rhythm

with which he brought the reader to the grand finale, but, most of all, the article was good quality because it made me think, argue, comment, engage, smile, nod with assent and shake my head with dissent or wonder. I doubt, however, than any of these very personal emotions would ever get included in the indicators of quality. Yet, the assessment of any product of the human intellect is not only the result of objective criteria. In assessing quality in educational research we are compelled to take under examination the feasibility, practicality, usefulness, appropriateness and propriety of the study, but also its intrinsic beauty, including the beauty of the exposition. Assessing quality, therefore, is not just an act of detached judgement, but also an aesthetic judgement for which objective criteria fail to help.

Such is the challenge of assessing quality and quality in educational research that Bridges frames it as a question about the supposed merits of science and the possible benefits of thinking about assessment as an art. The dilemma is the more poignant in the field of education where the question of the nature of teaching, and of the means to judge its effectiveness have been fought along such dichotomy for a long time. Bridges's paper is simultaneously a detailed, critical and scientific analysis of the means of future 'objective' assessment, and a call for the acknowledgement and reappraisal of the worth of personal judgment, and connoisseurship. As Bridges shows, in the first instance assessing quality is bound to become a feeling-free, judgment-free, value-free, cold, impersonal, and formulaic process. In the name of some objective science of assessment, the use of citations, downloads, places of publication, or the use of text-reading machines create a 'waste land' where the quality of human thinking, its research and endeavor to learn and improve is laid barren like an anaesthetized patient robbed of his feelings, emotions, and humanity.

Bridges's account of this state of affairs is compelling reading. His minute, critical and humorous analysis of the various innovative ways in which bureaucracy intends to rule and govern academic free-thinking shows the true, stark and soulless nature of the instrumental approach and its instrumentalising consequences. And yet Bridges does not go far enough to lie bare the consequences of 'scientific' quality indicators on the professional identity and intellectual integrity of academia. The disciplinary gaze of past and future quality assessment will in the long run, far from improve quality, reduce it to its minimum common denominators as academic institutions fighting for their survival are compelled to abide by the rules of the objectifying discourse of quality. By establishing the rule of standardization, objective quality indicators would not only define quality by what is acceptable by a system outside academia, but also determine who, within academia, is allowed to produce quality educational research, and who should better do something else, such as teach. It is in this context that Bridges's appeal to the notion of connoisseurship offers a starting point for thinking about not only indicators of quality, but also indicators of professional identity. Connoisseurship is thus an alternative discourse, which, as Foucault claims (1976: 95) offers 'points of resistance' from which a different notion of quality can be developed and applied.

In this response I would like to argue the following points. First, in agreeing with Bridges that the suggested new ways of assessing quality are not only insufficient, but also pernicious and unnecessary, I support his call for applying connoisseurship. However, to make connoisseurship a valid alternative we need to explore the nature of the knowledge needed to be and become a connoisseur, and, most importantly, how

academia can self-regulate itself in such a way that connoisseurship does not replicate hierarchical and elitist structures, but it can foster a new, democratic and empowering way of defining academic and intellectual identity and integrity. My understanding of the battle for quality is located in the broader debate of modernization, remodeling and efficiency as cost-effectiveness and instrumentalisation. The application of connoisseurship, therefore, while having the potential to set new opportunities for academia to regain its status and influence, in reality it can also set reactionary movements which will isolate research further from its moral and social responsibilities.

### **Research Assessment Exercise as modernisation and remodeling by the backdoor**

In his portrayal of how the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) shapes research, Bridges argues poignantly that ‘it is research quality assessment which, in the higher education context at least, makes the money go round’. Although factually right, focusing on the financial aspect detracts from the RAE ‘invisible’ aims and consequences. While the RAE is purported as a way to ensure that the best research universities can continue to do ‘quality’ research, in reality the assessment creates hierarchies of academic worth and consequently locates its research workforce on a scale of professional worth and value. Not unlike what is happening in schools, the RAE, like the school league tables, draws on the map of educational research two lands: the barren desert land of those who lack research capacity and aspirations to improve; and the luscious oases of those who have the means to turn the desert into fertile ground. As Bridges points out quoting ‘Goodhart’s Law’, the RAE outcomes

shape academic behaviour in such a way that those at the top of the league tables validate the system by keeping the goods they produce and the means of production for themselves.

We might like to believe that quality assessment is indeed just about quality. Cast in the hypothesis that if we only were to get the method just right and perfect, we can avoid the imperfections and downfalls of human judgment, the search for quality indicators such as citations, downloads, places of publication, and machine-readable software solutions mask a neo-liberal economic imperative. So, while assessing quality is predicated on the principle that such an exercise will form the golden rule for the efficient, objective and meritocratically based distribution of scarce financial resources, in reality the system builds hegemonic structures of control, and reifies and further confirms the status quo. In so doing it draws a line between the deserving and the undeserving, leaving the undeserving to starve of funds, unable to develop the means by which they could become part of the deserving elite.

The RAE is, thus, part of a much larger managerial strategy of modernization and re-modelling of the workforce that has redefined professional autonomy in many sectors from the social services, to health and education. Such a process, according to Gunter (2007), de-humanises and de-professionalises the lives of those it touches. Predicated on a meritocratic principle, in reality the drive towards modernization is deeply imbedded in a managerial culture which positions the need to assess quality as integral to accountability objectives and essential to raise the efficiency of the system. This is not to argue that accountability, transparency and efficiency have no place in academia, or, as we have witnessed recently, in political life. It is to say, though, that,

as Bridges argues, academia already has an indigenous system in place. What present policies do is to over-impose a new set of criteria, a new mode of thinking that remove professional authority and autonomy from the control of academics.

The ‘objective’ new rules of citation, download, and place of publication do just that. This is to say that while the public persuasive discourse of research quality is embellished by empowering language such as that of professional development, personal wellbeing, career progression and so on, in reality and in between the lines far harsher objectives are embedded in the language of ‘restructuring’, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency. When it comes to publication, academics not only provide the product, but they also provide the labour free of charge. While the issue of quality is used as both a carrot and a stick to turn the academic and education workforce into a self-regulated and self-regulating system, academics have embraced the task set upon them with the zeal of those children who always sit at the front of the class. Cast in a complex hypocrisy, quality assessment requires for its functioning docile intellectual bodies who, by their own self-will, not only abide but also create the very chains that shackle them. This is a far cry from Bridges’s suggestion that the way we should evaluate quality has to do with a ‘sense of life’, as Nussbaum (1990, p. 36) claims, with a sense of, Bridges continues, ‘what constitutes human beings and human experience and the values that lie at the heart of it and how, as a consequence, things are to be understood and evaluated’ (p. ...).

The quality assessment exercise is predicated essentially as a form of managerial mistrust, as Onora O’Neill (2002) claims in her analysis of the role of trust, transparency and freedom of speech in our society; and, if the RAE and the new

quality indicators, whichever they might turned out to be, are therefore means through which management forces can surveille and at the same time impose self-surveillance, how academia defines and redefines the process of self-regulation can be the way in which we can reassert academic autonomy, identity and integrity, but also how we can pursue research that is not only original, rigorous and significant (HEFCE, 2006, p. in Bridges, p. 4), but which is also politically, morally, and socially responsible.

By this I mean, that quality assessment exercises should need to focus not only on the quality of the product, but also, and probably most importantly, on the quality of the process of production of research. By quality of process of production, I do not refer here solely to the technical aspects of methodology, or what Bridges refers to as ‘characteristics which are intrinsic to the quality of the work ‘ (p. 14), but rather on the ethical aspects of broadening the basis of who is allowed and enabled to be productive. Such a focus would shift our attention from the objective of assessing quality of the finished work to how we can assess the quality of the support necessary to capitalize on the human and intellectual resources to produce quality. In so doing, we would reassert the importance of human beings as ends, rather than the means to ensure the achievement of measures of quality that become intrinsically void targets.

It is at this point, that Bridges’s suggestion to adopt connoisseurship as a criterion for quality assessment comes as original and significant. It is also here, however, that we need to be mindful of how connoisseurship can also be a means to replicate and reproduce inequalities that are detrimental to the lives of people, but also to the quality of research itself. In the final part of this response, therefore, I will look at the how the notion of connoisseurship can be made more rigorous. This will require us to examine

the epistemological claims Bridges brings to his notion of connoisseurship so as to start a debate on the knowledge that is required to be and become a connoisseurship.

### **Connoisseurship: practical wisdom and the value of human experience**

The notion of connoisseurship is at the heart of Bridges's solution to the problem of research quality assessment. Actually, we should say quality judgment, or quality appreciation for connoisseurship is more than assessment, or evaluation. Bridges's definition of connoisseurship is not unlike Henry James's portrayal of the woman which lacks the explicit classification of indicators of beauty, and quality, while still conveying to the connoisseur those very qualities that she seem she lack. Thus, Bridges introduces the idea of connoisseurship by replacing the cold and objective gaze of scientific rigour, with a language that appeals strongly to our senses. So assessing the quality of something is about 'appreciating', 'savouring', and 'relishing' the object under examination as if we could taste it, see it, and touch it. Assessing quality becomes an exercise in aesthetics as something that appeals to both our sense of beauty and the pleasure that beauty brings. Described as almost an erotic and passionate encounter, the appreciation of research quality invokes the idea of something that results in heightening of the senses, storming of the dozing feelings and developing the thinking by passionately shaking previous ways of seeing things. Assessing quality becomes a process of discernment, assimilation and appropriation of the object that by being beautiful and perfect we want to own, relish, and savour. So in describing how the assessor might go about using connoisseurship, Bridges states:

‘The connoisseur after all has to be equipped with wide knowledge of and experience in the field in which she is making her assessment. She needs to be able to know what sort of thing it is she is looking at and to judge whether this is indeed the sort of thing, which she can appraise, or whether she needs to pass it on to someone with a different kind of expertise. She then needs to judge it in terms appropriate to what it is (is it good *of its kind*?) not against inappropriate standards or criteria. She needs to be responsive to novel features of the particular case – perhaps something she has not come across before. She will see things that the lay person will probably have missed – and she will understand the significance of things which again will have passed over the untutored eye. Then, though she may comment on specific features of the object, she needs to have a sense of how they all combine to give an overall effect. And if the work is indeed of quality she will respond to it with appreciation, with delight even’ (p. ...).

In trying to persuade us that connoisseurship is more than the arousal of passion or the result of subjective and opinionated judgment, and more than objective measurement, connoisseurship becomes a third way between two distant opposites. Drawing from Eisner’s essay on ‘The forms and functions of educational connoisseurship and educational criticism’ (1979), Bridges is keen to point out the critical and public features of the connoisseurship required to judge educational research. If for Eisner ‘The major distinction between connoisseurship and criticism is that connoisseurship is the art of appreciation, criticism is the art of disclosure’ (p. ....), for Bridges appreciation and disclosure are not antithetic. So he suggests that:

‘The connoisseur/critic of educational research requires, then, the qualities of discernment and appreciation that I have been trying to convey, but these need also to be linked to a capacity to express, explain and defend the grounds for any appreciation, assessment or evaluation in a public forum – to reveal to others what the connoisseur has appreciated for himself or herself, to point to what is good, bad or indifferent and to explain convincingly the grounds for such assessment’ (p. ...).

This balancing act is well reflected in Bridges’s choice of using the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, since for Aristotle the way to find virtue and act virtuously lies in finding a balance between extremes. As such, the process of assessing quality is more than the sum of its quantitative parts, whichever we might decide they would be, but a virtue in itself. Consequently, the connoisseur should have not only ‘knowledge of and experience in the field in which she is making an assessment’, as Bridges argues in his definition, but she should also have virtues that are accepted as essential to the task of judging the worth and value of the object and its quality. The connoisseur, thus, is not only the one who knows, but, more to the point, the one that within a group has been acknowledged to be able to make virtuous judgments on issues that matter for that group. Citations, bibliometrics, downloads and machine-readable software lack not only the wide and informed knowledge, but they also lack the ability to make virtuous judgments.

But if quality assessment is the result of the virtuous application of knowledge, and if connoisseurship is the solution to the problem, what knowledge is the virtuous one? And who has the right and authority to claim to have such virtuous knowledge? How can we, as members of the academic community, agree on a set of values that define

the virtues of our practice? And how, are we to teach, disseminate and apply such virtuous knowledge?

Some answers to these questions can be found in the last section of Bridges's paper, titled "Love's knowledge' and practical wisdom". In this section Bridges draws from Nussbaum's analysis of the relationship between ancient Greek philosophy and literature. The objective of the book is to explore, as Bridges rightly suggests, human nature and the qualities of human perception and judgment, or, as Bridges summarizes, 'the values that lie at the heart of it and how, as a consequence, things are to be understood and evaluated' (p. ...). The book is a complex and erudite analysis of the ancient Greek philosophers' debate about the nature of knowledge and how this debate was translated in literary form. In brief Nussbaum's argument supports the Aristotelian view that knowledge has to be found within the realm of human expression and not, as Plato and the Sophists contended, in a world of ideas and pure rational thinking. To be more precise, in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle claims that 'practical wisdom is of the ultimate and particular, of which there is no scientific understanding, but a kind of perception' (1142a23).

It is easy, at this point, to suggest that Aristotle's view of practical wisdom is a clear endorsement of connoisseurship. Indeed, to be a connoisseur lies in the ability to appreciate the ultimate, or the general and universal rules, and the particular, or the messiness of the historical, social and cultural contexts in which an object of quality is produced. With regard to research in general and educational research in particular, the task is to define in what ways the knowledge used to produce, disclose and assess or judge the quality of the object of our assessment is within appropriately accepted

parameters of quality. By accepting the notion of connoisseurship the gaze shifts from the quality of the object to the qualities of the assessment and of the assessor. Because objective and scientific methods discard and belittle the value of human perception, we should not conclude that because practical wisdom relies on perception, it is less than rigorous and scientific. There is no space here for a lengthy analysis of the meaning of perception in Greek philosophy, nor for a detailed examination of the relationship amongst practical wisdom, *phronesis*, and the other two forms of knowledge Aristotle brings to the debate, that is *sophia* and *techne*, and quality in educational research and educational practice. Suffice to say here that the search for quality indicators and for the quality of the process of assessment is epistemologically speaking a matter of finding the truth, or some kind of true statement about the quality of the object under assessment.

If for Plato, perceptions disguise the truth because they are not ‘real’, they are appearances and, as such, the beliefs and interpretations of human beings about such perceptions are limited by their own limited and finite being, Aristotle declares that his aim is that of saving perceptions and their truth. In laying out his philosophical method, Aristotle says (in Nussbaum, 1986, p. 240, originally in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII):

Here, as in all cases, we must set down the appearances (*phainomena*) and, first working through the puzzles (*diaporentas*), in this way go on to show, if possible, the truth of all the beliefs we hold (*ta endoxa*) about these experiences; and, if this is not possible, the truth of the greatest number and the most authoritative. For if the difficulties are resolved and the beliefs are left in

place, we will have done enough showing’.

I believe that the quote above says much about the process of being and becoming a connoisseur and of the qualities required to make judgments on the quality of the *phainomena*, in our case the quality of educational research. For Aristotle there is no the need to contemplate only the knowledge that lies beyond human experience. Rather, for Aristotle it is that very human experience of the appearances, beliefs and language that constitute not only the accumulated and authoritative knowledge, but also the way to pursue the truth. Truth does not lie beyond the reach of human endeavor, but it is to be found within its own dilemma and puzzles. So, assessing the quality of educational research is not better pursued by finding objective ways of detaching and detracting from the human experience, but rather to acknowledge that experience and valuing it.

So far my argument has been partly an acceptance of Bridges’s critique of present and future methods of quality assessment, and partly an endorsement of his proposition to apply connoisseurship to the act of assessment. My contribution to the debate has been that of locating quality assessment scientific indicators in the wider context of modernization reforms. These reforms, I argued, while seemingly claiming to empower individuals, in reality subject them to forms of disciplinary techniques in which power, in the form of quality indicators, ‘becomes more anonymous and more functional’ (Foucault, 1977: 193). The result is a complex, unstable and problematic relationship between the power academics might have and the one that is removed from them. Assessing the quality of research, thus, is not just a practical task that can be done by a machine, but it exemplifies the very soul of academic power. Viewed in

this context the use of connoisseurship is the attempt to restore academic power through the control of the means and outcomes of production of academic work. Most importantly, connoisseurship is a call for reasserting the power to judge the value of knowledge and the knowledge of values.

As good and as potentially fruitful as this might be, there is the danger that in taking the connoisseur route, we might do nothing more than validating a different form of disciplinary technique. The disciplinary gaze with which outsiders advocate their rights to examine the worth of academic work, can easily turn into a self-destructive inward gaze. There is in the very notion of connoisseurship the potential of producing a discourse of elitism that will create boundaries between those who know, and those who don't. In so doing connoisseurship can reproduce those very ideas of meritocracy, surveillance and discipline that we find so alien and counter-productive.

The question now is how to promote connoisseurship as a method of quality assessment without falling prey to the charge of creating areas of elitism. If being a connoisseur is in effect about 'being in the knowledge' and 'have expert knowledge', who is to say who should be the expert? How can we draw lines of expertise and connoisseurship that mark the ones who can judge quality, from those who cannot? And if we insist that only some have acquired such knowledge, how could the others who are in the position to be judged ever achieve the practical wisdom they need to judge whether their own work and research is of quality? The final part of this response will focus on these questions. In trying to put forward an answer, it will sustain my central argument about the loss of academic identity by warning about the elitist consequences of the notion of connoisseurship.

## **Democratic and deliberative connoisseurship in educational research assessment**

I want to conclude this response by going back to my initial argument that the process of quality assessment is not just about judging the quality of research, but more perniciously about judging the quality of academic knowledge, power and authority. In my response to Bridges I have raised the issue that, while connoisseurship can be a potential fruitful third way, it has some inherent problems. The most serious is the potential of creating a class of 'Platonic philosophers' who have the knowledge needed to pursue the truth because they can see beyond the misleading appearances of life. This approach will do nothing to build a cohesive and strong academic community of practice. Rather, it will further increase the gap between those who produce quality and those who don't. In such a picture, some universities can aspire to *sophia*, while others will for ever be preoccupied with *techne* alone.

While systems of quality assessment and accountability have implications for all disciplines, I agree with Bridges that education is a particular case. Not only, as he points out, educational research is eclectic and diversified both in its epistemological and ontological bases, but it is, to a great extent still not recognized as a discipline in its own right. The lack of a consensual agreement within education on what is the essence of quality in educational research does nothing to elevate the subject to the status of discipline or to articulate the knowledge that a connoisseur should have. I contend, though, that this very fluidity and openness could set the basis for an extension and development of the criteria we use to judge quality. This assertion takes

me to review the three quality criteria employed by the RAE, and show that far from being cast in stone, they are open to further critical scrutiny.

I do not intend to rehearse here Bridges's appropriate and thoughtful analysis of three golden rules of quality research, that is, originality, rigour and significance. Yet, it is worth pointing out that none of the above three rules are clear enough guidelines to determine whether research is of quality. All three criteria are objective only on the surface. In reality, even a superficial analysis of their meaning would shed shadows of doubt on what they really mean in practice. For example, what should 'originality' refer to? Does it refer to the topic? The methodology? The theoretical approach? Or, maybe the content of the research? And how would be ascertain the originality of a piece of research before the research has taken place? Wouldn't it be the case that sometimes the originality of a work is to be found after the research has taken place? But even more puzzling, if the work is truly original, it means that such a work stands out as unique, different, and unlike any others. Yet, this also implies that such a work of originality might be ahead of its time and thus appear not significant, and yet original.

When it comes to rigour, it is clear that the 'paradigm war' had not ended in a peace treaty, but in a livable truce. So, the system is such for which quantitative based research is still perceived as the golden rule of rigour and significance. Qualitative research is still seen as woolly, fluffy, unscientific, and at best cast in a supportive role. And finally, how are we to understand the meaning of the word significant? Should a research project be significant for the development of the discipline as such? Or maybe, should it be significant for policy? Or maybe practice? And, what practice?

And who should within the practice determine whether the research was significant?  
And should we not take into account that significance might be something that we can judge better *a posteriori* for surely the impact of the research is what determines the extent of the significance.

This is to say that in the absence of answers to the above questions, we are far from having achieved an understanding of the complexity of the subject, its utility, its goal and therefore which research tools are best to build knowledge and understanding. Without a body of knowledge on what knowledge is constitutive of the discipline, it is difficult to ascertain the quality of research, let alone to agree on who has the knowledge to be accepted within the community as a connoisseur.

Yet, we should not cast the idea of connoisseurship aside as useless, impractical, or idealistic. Rather, as Bridges rightly claims, connoisseurship can be a valid alternative to the problem of assessing research quality. This is because embracing such a notion obliges us to reflect and question the very criteria onto which our assessment and judgment are based. The consequence of this act of self-critique might well be that of disciplining educational research and the subject of education, that is, of establishing commonly accepted rules of practice. This in turn, will also make explicit the rules by which the community defines who can be considered a connoisseur.

In the absence of this consensual agreement Bridges's list of connoisseur's features is a valid starting point for a more in depth analysis. According to Bridges to be a connoisseur requires the following:

- an understanding of the wider historical and contemporary context of the production of such a work and its place within it;
- an appreciation of the qualities which are being sought for in the object of assessment based on prior encounters with them in other works;
- an appreciation of what which of these qualities it might be appropriate to look for in the sort of work under scrutiny and what form these might take;
- an alertness to the possibility of the work exhibiting unlooked for qualities;
- perceptiveness and discernment in observing such qualities or their absence in the work
- and, *pace* Eisner's notion of the need to ally criticism to connoisseurship, an ability to point to, articulate, explain and defend these perceptions in the public sphere' (p. ...).

Bridges's connoisseur has to be erudite, educated, well read, perceptive, critical, alert, and equipped with the understanding of the whole and its parts so as to appreciate the beauty of quality. There remains a problem, though. It is unclear in Bridges's elaboration of connoisseurship the extent to which the features listed above are or can be the remit of a whole community, or the personal features of chosen ones. In brief, The notion of connoisseurship can be blamed for being elitist, individualistic, patronizing, and the remit of the few chosen ones, rather than a distributed and democratic form of academic self-accountability. Related to this, it is also not clear how connoisseurship can be taught and consequently distributed evenly and justly across all those who belong to the academic community.

So while we should embrace the Aristotelian empirical model of practical wisdom, we should take care in doing so in such a way that the model is inclusive and democratic.

Establishing such a model would involve a two-pronged concerted effort. On the one hand we should define the nature of the knowledge and expertise required of the connoisseur, while, on the other, establish and nurture the opportunities for all those who belong to the academic community, whatever their authoritative experience might be, to take part in the debate and in the judgment of quality. This exercise would also oblige us to determine who is a member of the educational academic community. Would graduate students be members? Would teachers and practitioners be accepted as members? Would they, on the basis of such a broadened membership be allowed to have a say in what quality of educational research is? Would such an extended community improve or damage the assessment of quality? Would it be a positive step in redefining the notion of connoisseurship, or would it make it an impossible art?

The future challenge is not how to define the criteria to be used in quality assessment, but how we ensure that future generations of academics can become connoisseurs whose voice and beliefs are heard. How we nurture connoisseurship, how we make it more inclusive, how we defend our intellectual right to it, will define things to come. For in the end assessing the quality of research is but only one way of assessing the quality and worth of the academic community that produces that research. Finding a solution to this puzzle, to quote Aristotle again, is timely and pressing. In the absence of commonly held criteria and beliefs, the voice of academia is silenced and powerless. Connoisseurship allows for a renewed relationship with the messy world of human affairs. As such I agree that assessing quality is above all an ethical judgment on the value and propriety of human efforts. However, to be truly innovative it needs to be democratic and inclusive; and to be truly rigorous it requires

that democratic and public debate to take place. Bridges's article is a brave attempt to start that debate, and as such a foundation stone with which it might be possible to build a different and better academic community.

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