



WHAT WE SEE IN THE WORLD DEPENDS ON *HOW WE THINK*

The recent furore about Irish universities "plummeting" in some international rankings, e.g., <https://goo.gl/3uAgPr>, is a good example of the point that **WHAT we think is governed by HOW we think.**

In this case, the idea of a '*ranking*', although by an arbitrary aggregation of diverse elements into a single number, is the HOW of thinking by the people reacting as lobbyists to the report.

Such rankings, being simplistically numerical, miss the **crucial qualitative dimensions of university communities** such a well-conveyed in this *New York Times* article by @FrankBruni:

<https://goo.gl/wNVSa8n>

Perhaps, instead of the usual *lobbying* we might have *leadership*, but this would **require a different way of thinking** - a way that would lead to new insights, instead of recycling old patterns of thought.

Perhaps looking at how art was created by medieval artists working on commissions from patrons would help. These artists were greatly bound by the constraints of contracts which specified in detail **WHAT** the artists could use and had to deliver. Such aspects of the finished work as its layout (e.g., where the baby Jesus would be placed and how posed - even expression - in relation to Mary) and how much of various materials could be used (e.g., amount of gold-leaf or ultramarine blue - very expensive materials in those days, so their use was severely limited) were specified in the contracts.

But the artists were free in the **HOW** of their thinking - that was their art. **Despite (because?) of the limits placed on them, these artists produced what is acknowledged to be great art.**

http://www.academia.edu/6437579/The_Relationship_Between_Patrons_and_Artists_in_the_Renaissance_Italy

To those artists, constraints were *not* restrictive, they were stimuli to creativity - limitations inspired them, their genius delivered and HOW they thought produced the what they did.

Is there a President of an Irish university who could emulate that model of thinking rather than that of the political lobbyist model? An Education Minister? Civil Servants? A Government? Anyone?

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