

Should We Defend the University? Between Market Constraints and Academic Utopia

Monday 26 November 2018, by [BENSAÏD Daniel](#) (Date first published: July 2009).

Although the university space has historically been a site of autonomy and resistance, the last few decades have seen market forces invade this sanctuary of critical thought. But is it enough to oppose the ideal of the autonomy of knowledge and science to the commercial imperatives and bureaucratic controls that govern many universities today? In this essay, first published on *Contretemps* in 2006, Daniel Bensaïd argues that critical forces in the university must move beyond a defence of the “sanctuary” status, towards the creation of a broader strategy of social transformation, that can only be achieved by collaborating with other centres of knowledge production.

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Translators' Introduction

The following essay was written nearly two years after the August 2007 passing of Nicolas Sarkozy's flagship Universities' Liberties and Responsibilities law (*loi relative aux libertés et responsabilités des universités; the LRU*). Though the LRU prompted nationwide protests from trade unions, university students, and the country's lycées (secondary schools), its pro-market drive has served as the basic vector of proceeding governments' policies towards higher education.

Whilst the essay's references are mainly French, a general value comes from, first, its argument that contemporary universities are at once “public” institutions, in which certain basic features of capitalist society are reproduced and also, more peculiarly, where not only technical but philosophical innovation is permitted, even encouraged. Second, it's recognition that the state is compelled to closely calibrate this disunity, as Sarkozy was himself reasonably lucid about: for him, the 2007 election would decide “*si l'héritage de mai 68 doit être perpétué ou s'il doit être liquidé une bonne fois pour toutes*” – whether or not the heritage of '68 would be perpetuated, or be liquidated. And third, for it's argument that the Marxist defence of education should not be based on either exulting or deriding the alleged distance of universities – and of students, teachers, and “theory” – from the wider world, but instead proceed from an appreciation of their full imbrication within a society not of uneasy cohesions, but rather of definitive contradiction.

In his 2010 obituary to Daniel Bensaïd, Tariq Ali suggested that Bensaïd's 'lyrical ring' meant his writings 'resist easy translation into English'. We have here attempted to conserve the complexity of the essay's rhythm, or rhythms, stepped out by the author less with words than punctuation, particularly commas, and the high frequency of quotation (rarely, noticeably, of co-thinkers). Written in the last year of his life, the impression left is of a superb lightfootedness, and an almost cruel, accurate jab.

This text was published first in *Contretemps* in July 2009 [1], and republished in September 2016. The original title was "Defend the University: Between market constraints and academic utopia"; *Contretemps'* introduction is as follows:

"Should we oppose an ideal of autonomy - of knowledge, of science, of scholas - to "a dual authoritarian heteronomy (...) of the university, of administrative supervision, and the requisites of the market?" Is it enough to call for the defence of the University considered a "sanctuary", whilst missing the conservative functions that it has always assumed, and without being able to formulate a strategy of social transformation, including of the University, and the education system more broadly?"

Should We Defend the University?

"It seems of great value to confront and to be able to win the youngest by means of living discourse; but the place where this happens and the reduced number of men it touches is not unimportant; and as certain as it may be that, apart from the universities, there is no other place to assure the fruitfulness of this deed, it is also certain to me that the university is itself more and more troubled by the limpidity of the sources of its teaching" (Walter Benjamin, Correspondence I).

After the adoption in the summer of 2007 of the LRU - the "autonomous universities" law - a number of academics, choosing to ignore the Orwellian character of the Sarkozyist rhetoric, have complacently confused the word for the thing itself. For Sarkozy, autonomy is heteronomy; and in the Pécresse law [1], autonomy is contrary to autonomy: less pedagogical power for teachers, more bureaucratic and administrative power, and more dependence on private funding and market dictates. More than ten years ago, Areser [2] denounced the confusion between competitive autonomy and academic freedom: "The invocation of university autonomy has now become an administrative weapon used to justify the total disengagement of the State, and to divide competing institutions from one another in terms of the distribution of financial means." [3]

Autonomy Bolognese

In the aftermath of May '68, the Faure and Guichard Ministries diverted the aspirations of the protest movement towards the adaptation of the university to the needs of the capitalist economy: the key words of this reconversion were "autonomy" and "self-management (*autogestion*)". This meant reducing the "body of the state", including the traditional university and their franchises to a series of units associated with regional economies, and reverting the student movement to a provincial corporatism. The autonomy proclaimed by the reformers was already a pretext to "put an end to the outdated autonomy of the liberal university and to open the university to employers' control." [4] This is what was meant by the enticing formula of "openness to the forces of the nation". From abortive reform to repealed reform, it would take forty years to achieve this - and with the help of liberal Europe and the Bologna Process, this is where we are today.

The Magna Charta [5] adopted in 1998 by the rectors of European universities, on the ninth centenary of the University of Bologna, referred to the founding principle of the University, to “critically produce and transmit culture through research and teaching”. Whether irony or cynicism, it was also in Bologna that a year later the process of reforms was initiated, inspired by this report [6], delivering universities up to market logic: Bologna against Bologna! The great ransacking of universities flows directly from this attempt at creating “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge economy in the world”, initiated ten years ago in accordance with the European Union’s “Lisbon Strategy”.

In the autumn of 2007, a huddle of reforming presidents exulted: “The implementation of the new provisions is generating a new momentum (élan) in our institutions, and the university community has quickly mobilised to transform them into an opportunity for our students and our research teams”. [7] Since then, the mobilisation has switched camps! [8] To think that these presidents were naive enough to believe that - thanks to their reinforced personal power - a balance had finally been struck between public service and market demands, and that reforms to the status of teacher-researchers, the doctoral contract, and the masters programmes, had cleared everything up for good.

The jurist Olivier Beaud summed up the meaning of the ministerial text well: it contributes “to the slow death of the French university, since it aspires to transform academics into employees of the university, and into the subjects of professional administrators”. [9] Thus, under the guise of autonomy, as with the hospital reforms, a dual authoritarian heteronomy establishes itself in the university, of administrative supervision, and the requisites of the market.

Of the new poverty of student life

The Situationist pamphlet *The Poverty of Student Life* (*De la misère en milieu étudiant*), expressive of a deep discontent among the student community, foreshadowed in 1966 the uprising of 1968. It illustrated the refusal, by part of the students - beneficiaries of the early stages of the massification of higher education - to become the new guard dogs of the bourgeoisie or the ideologues of a West, bogged down in its colonial wars. Guy Debord was categorical: “We agree: there is no interesting student for us as a student; their present and their planned future are equally despicable.” [10]

Things have changed a great deal. Most students are no longer living today as “intellectuals in the making”, accumulating symbolic capital at the university. This may be one of the reasons why the student mobilization was much more impressive against the First Employment Contract (CPE) in 2005 than during the spring of 2009 against the implementation of the LRU.

According to a group of Italian students, the evaluation of studies according to a unit measured in time (the European credit ECTS) would configure an “ideal-type” of student. [11] The acceleration and intensification of the pace of study, the introduction of compulsory classes and the multiplication of courses, seminars and examinations, would thus aim at the “disciplinary subjection of the student to the labor market and the reduction of the student-condition to the status of precariat in training.” [12] An increasing number of students - who are forced to make a living - are part-time or intermittent students at the university, and more and more sign up for food packages, while student prostitution is reaching particularly worrying levels.

The process of putting studies and students in the hands of the labor market began in the 1960s, with the early stages of massification in the university. The logic of these changes within the university is then clearly perceptible: “The pace of technological innovation means a constant rise in the need for skilled labor, reveals the role of the university and the school in the development of

productive forces. This function nevertheless remains indissociably and contradictorily linked to the perpetuation of capitalist relations of production, by the diffusion of the bourgeois ideology which conceals those relations before the eyes of those who will be exploited in the future.” [13]

The tension then intensifies “between the level of training required by the development of the productive forces and the level of training required to maintain and reproduce the hierarchical relations within the enterprise and the relations of exploitation in society in general; hence the recruitment, the hasty specialization, the forced orientation, the piecemeal training”. The impact of Bourdieu and Passeron’s book, *Les Héritiers*, as well as the tumultuous debates accompanying a student unionism searching for its legitimacy, after its great period of radicalization against the Algerian war, on the possibility or not of separating the technical and social division of labor, all reflected this great transformation in the university.

The university was confronted with the explosive contradictions resulting from highly socialized labour and from the massive integration of intellectual work into the production process, as envisaged by Marx in the 1857-1858 *Manuscripts*: “to the degree that large industry develops, the creation of real wealth comes to depend less on labour time and on the amount of labour employed than on the power of the agencies set in motion during labour time, whose ‘powerful effectiveness’ is itself in turn out of all proportion to the direct labour time spent on their production, but depends rather on the general state of science and on the progress of technology, or the application of this science to production.” [14]

The commercial and monetary quantification of proletarianized intellectual work therefore becomes increasingly problematic and fraught with contradictions. These contradictions are forced to respond to evaluation procedures, each more grotesque than the last; applied to university work and research just as they are applied to medical and hospital work. They aim to quantify the unquantifiable and measure the immeasurable in attributing an individual market value to knowledge resulting from a social form of labour which is highly cooperative. [15]

The contradiction inherent in the dual function of the university - to contribute on the one hand to the development of the productive forces through the production and transmission of knowledge, and on the other, the reproduction of the relations of production by its adaptation to the division of labor and by the diffusion of the dominant ideology - did not cease to produce great mobilizations, in 1968, in 1986 (against the Devaquet law), then amplified in 2005 (against the CPE), 2007 (against the LRU), 2009 (against the Darcos / Péresse reforms). The current reforms are part of the process of widespread privatization of the world and the bulimia of a limitless commodification; services, knowledge, life. As early as 1998, the OECD felt that “the education system must strive to shorten its response time, using more flexible formulas than those used by public services.”

In 2002, the United States / OECD forum on the “market for educational services” (sic!) concluded that “trade in educational services is not an accidental excrescence aimed at enriching education through international exchange, but has become a significant part of world trade in services”. Lastly, in 2004, the Unice Education and Training Report (Union of Industries of the European Community) dictated employers’ educational requirements: “Employers believe that more emphasis should be given to the need to develop entrepreneurship at all levels of the education and training system. This is the prerequisite for the education and training system; to contribute to the most competitive European knowledge economy in the world.”

At stake is nothing less than whether knowledge and education are the common property of mankind or whether they should become commodities like any other, [16]whether the university is an inalienable component of public space, or a capitalist enterprise subject to the “knowledge economy”.

Chosen Heteronomies

Government reforms have cleverly tried to present the law on autonomy as the emancipation of a higher education traditionally subject to the supervision of a centralizing Jacobin State. This is the interpretation - naive or perverse - that Bruno Latour, a new convert to academic Darwinism, has also kindly given us: "We might find many faults with the current reform, but it has the advantage of finally giving universities a taste of life without guardianship, and of settling their own affairs, and of recovering a capacity to set their own research agenda that, because of their sluggishness and passivity, has been set by others [...] The bad universities will finally disappear, freeing up resources for others; it's not up to the left to defend the privileges of state nobility." [17]

Yet academic liberty, of those who teach and those who are taught, should not be confounded with autonomy: it is possible to have autonomy without liberty, and liberty without autonomy. Against the 'Academic Party' and its corporatism, Péguy held that the university 'received far more genuine support from without than within', with all due respect to the "bureaucratic power of the rue de Grenelle, of bureaucrats who lose their sense of literature" - *La Princesse de Clèves*! - "and therefore miss the point of science" [18]. The result of these metamorphoses, the material dependance - administrative and ideological - of the university on its 'outside' has only since hardened, without the 'inside' having gained in vitality.

With this submission to the heteronomy of market comes the temptation of an academic utopia, in which the "community" would be dedicated to the culture of knowledge in a completely free and disinterested ways. [19] This ideal of disinterestedness, this requirement that teaching be as fundamental as research, is certainly necessary in societies in which the evolution of the capacities of each individual in the face of the accelerated progress of knowledge and techniques demands a baseline of fundamental knowledge, rather than precocious specialisations which bring about only ephemeral benefits. It was not, it is said, through ordering research on the candle that the light bulb was invented. In the same way, should one make this the exclusive "essence" of the university, and should we provide it the exorbitant privilege, of defining "the life worth living"? Where does autonomy end and the ghetto, confinement, the ivory tower begin?

The "Declaration of Universities' Independence", initiated by the philosophy department of Paris-VIII, illustrates this ambiguity [20]. Starting from the principle that "there are no more forceful constraints than those which the human mind exercises over itself in the form of thought", it asserts that the exercise of the independence of thought "comes only from those who provide others the possibility of testing, attesting, evaluating what is valid". It proclaims that "'the University' defines a space that interrupts the continuity of spaces where order is assured by public forces", and concludes that "any society, any State which contravenes these principles, would be considered not to have 'the University'".

The intransigent defense of the independence of the university thus seems to take the opposite line than that of the student protest of the 1960s. Under the slogans of a Critical University (Berlin), a Negative University (Trent), a Red University (Paris), these protests sought to take the university out of its walls to open it to society. This was our angle of attack at the time against the "university line" of student unionism, which had claimed to found a practice of trade unionism within the university on the basis of the autonomy of the classical university. If the defense of university franchises - stakeholders in a critical public space - is synonymous with the defense of increasingly threatened democratic freedoms, the "interruption" of "the continuity of spaces where order is assured by public forces" is very relative, since university remains a public service, with public funding.

The alternative to this dependence would be to push the logic of financial autonomy to its

conclusion, which would amount to trading one dependency for another. Instead, it aims to establish a kind of duality of power and legitimacy within the same institution: to refuse the state's interfering in what doesn't concern it - to refuse its encroaching on educational autonomy - and to be open to all those directly concerned, students and staff, and to all the other possible interlocutors outside of the academic enclosure. The price, of course, is provoking divisions and oppositions within the mythical "university community" whose supposed unity conjures away all social divisions and political disagreements.

If more and more teachers and researchers are asked to live as employees of the university enterprise, what, as Bourdieu and Passeron wrote with respect to students, is the effect for the whole of this imaginary "community"? "Closer to an aggregate without consistency than a professional group, student life would present all the symptoms of anomie if students were no more than students, and if they were not integrated into other groups (family or parties)". [21]

Towards who - before whom? - does the university, as a component of public space (or even as "oppositional public space" [22]), commit to the principle of "responsibility" as misleadingly proclaimed by the LRU law? In the 1960s, the Berlin Critical University Project, inspired by the Frankfurt School, recalled that the legitimacy of knowledge does not lie in knowledge itself, but in its social functions - and that "scientific work is inconceivable without a free reflection on the political conditions of this work itself and without a critical and practical definition of the place of the university in society". At the apogee of its student struggles, the student movement paraded in Paris in 1963 under the banner: "The University We Want is that of All Workers" [23].

A university of more than two million students - 31 million across the countries involved with the Bologna Process! - cannot consider itself an *élite* university, or as an island of freedom (*gratuité*), in an ocean of unrelenting competition and selfish calculation. With the second massification of universities over the course of 1990s, the place of classic disciplines was reduced to the profit of numerous technical and administrative courses, specialised and "vocationalist".

It would be more than ever a mistake to confuse the "humanities" of yesteryear (*d'antan*) with the university in its entirety, at the risk of isolating the "humanities" from other forms of knowledge (*savoirs*), and of introducing new divisions amongst staff. The activity of thought is, after all, only one of the modalities of human activity, of the social production of knowledge. We should not then imagine the university as a vast *unité de formation et de recherche* (UFR) of arts and philosophy, [24] or that philosophy students themselves live only on water, beauty, and concepts.

Conversely, trying to take things pragmatically, Areser assigns to the university the double task of forming "enlightened citizens", but also "competent workers", through "real training and real diplomas". The authors acknowledged that in saying so they had "had reached the point of substituting, at least on paper, for the executive and legislative bodies, and acting as legislators" - though they certainly pretended to do so "strictly as autonomous intellectuals". Recognising the heteronomy of the university sector, demanding the autonomy of the intellectual (in the name of the *scientificité* of his work), in order to - propose the "rational self-management of the training system".

But doesn't a megalomania affect the authors (*Ambition délirante, s'interrogeaient aussitôt les auteurs*)? The liberal hell is indeed paved with the best democratic intentions: when the relations of force are in favour of capital, the boss dictates the criteria of competence, and determines the value of diplomas. Dreams of rational self-management transform into a bureaucratic nightmare, under the double tutelage of the state and markets.

Should the university be open, or closed?

Péguy opposed the “outside” of the university, the winds of the wider social world, to the “inside” of its dusty confines. In 1968, we wanted an opening onto society in the name of a necessary “critique of the bourgeois university and the critique of capitalist society”. With the liberal counter-reform and the deterioration of relations of forces, this opening to life has transformed (*détournée*) into an opening towards the market.

Geoffrey de Lagasnerie writes that in the 1960s, “the great heretics” (Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida, Bourdieu), encouraged an *insurrection des savoirs* against the universities’ institutional conservatism, and the machine that reproduced both heritage and heirs. Then, at the end of 1970s, the winds of reform having changed, these thinkers pleaded for the restoration of the university fortress’ prerogatives, faced with the concurrent assaults of the media and the doxosophes. [25] In placing the source of critical and creative thought sometimes outside, sometimes inside the university, they thus contributed to the perpetuation of the infernal oscillation (*tourniquet*) between “inside/outside”, rather than putting it into question. These oppositions between the interior and the exterior, science and opinion, work and imposture, in fact only restaged the original confrontation between the *philosophe* and the *sophiste*.

Opposing Bourdieu to Bourdieu in his belated defence of the institution, Lagasnerie saw in this a “critical gesture transforming into its opposite”: a corporate reaction against the threat of a declassing and a degradation of teachers. The “right of entry” inherent to the autonomisation of the university sector is supposed to guarantee a space of discussion, where scientific truth is liable to emerge, thanks to the recognition of one’s peers. For Lagasnerie, this would be to underestimate the effect of social reproduction linked to evaluation criteria that confuse titles and skills, fetishizing the diploma, and thereby renewing the vicious circle of mutual recognition (sanctified today by bibliometrics and citation-swapping). The judgment of peers is more that of the “reproducers over the producers” than the producers over the producers, and the process of autonomization of the institution is accompanied by effects of censure, collusion, professionalization, and closure based on a form of legitimacy guaranteed by the state. It is indeed the state that ultimately traces the boundary between the inside and the outside of the university space.

Lagasnerie’s critique seems relevant, though it does not take the context of struggle and resistance enough into account, such that the conclusion - in the form of “a praise for heteronomy” - relapses into the simplistic opposition it was supposed to go beyond: while the university “favors conservative knowledge”, “the excluded and the rejected margins” are well suited to “introduce heretical innovations”. As if the conservatisms, routines and ideological effects did not also operate “outside”; as if the “insurrection of subjugated knowledge” preached by Michel Foucault could only flare up “outside”; and as if the social production of knowledge wasn’t drawn from multiple sources and resources - notably those of the university, on the condition that those sources and resources went against the dominant logic, in their programmes, pedagogy and division of labour.

Drawn from a 1998 lecture, Derrida’s essay on *The Unconditional University* seems to point in the opposite direction, declaring from the outset his “faith in the University” and “in the Humanities of tomorrow”. [26] The university should be seen as having “an unconditional freedom to question and assert, and even going still further, the right to say publicly all that is required by research, knowledge and thought concerning truth,” because it “professes the truth, and that is its profession” and “declares a unlimited commitment to the truth”. Derrida is aware that this idea of truth is open to much controversy, but it is discussed, he says, precisely “in a privileged way” at the university. This privilege, of uncertain origin, is more specifically granted in the university to “departments belonging to the Humanities”. In the university, therefore, the holy of holies, there would reside the

soul of the venerable institution, “a final place of critical resistance,” a sanctuary protecting a “principle of unconditional resistance” to all the powers; state, economic, religious, all of which limit “the democracy to come”.

Derrida recognizes that this “unconditional independence”, conceived as “a kind of sovereignty, a very original species, an exceptional species of sovereignty” has never been effective. As a sovereignty “to come”, however, it would constitute a sort of regulatory horizon necessary to distinguish “the University *stricto sensu*” from all the institutions of education and research “at the service of economic interests of all kinds”. However, this university *stricto sensu* is likely to prove very restrictive and to reject many productions, transmissions and practices of knowledge.

While the Bologna process was just beginning, Derrida’s warning was no less lucid and relevant. Just as “something” was indeed “happening to the classical-modern university” and its humanities, something that “upsets its definitions”, “something serious” was “happening to the reality and to the concept of work”. Derrida was quick to point out that it was a question of defending the university, “not to shut itself in”, but to “find the best access to a new public space transformed by new communications techniques, information, archivization and forms of knowledge production”. For he doubted “that it has ever been possible to identify an inside of the university; that is, *a proper essence of the sovereign university*”. The limitation that one should be able to say publicly everything that one believes true, but “only within the university”, has indeed “never been tenable and respectable in fact and in law”. And the transformation of public space by cyberspace has made it even more “archaic and imaginary than ever”.

This academic space, however, insisted Derrida, must nevertheless subsist “symbolically protected by a kind of absolute immunity, as if its interior were inviolable”. The subtlety of “as if ...” here makes it possible to avoid the contradiction without overcoming it. The ideal university “to come” “would be what it always should have been or always should have represented, that from its inception and in principle: an unconditionally free institution, sovereign in its speech, in its writing, in its thinking.” That is why this idea must “be professed unceasingly... even and especially if it must not prevent us from addressing ourselves to the university’s outside”. To address in order to give, but also to receive?

Inside / outside, we do not escape! Because it is based on an uncertain border “the university is in the world that it is attempting to think”. It is therefore, neither inside nor outside, but it is “on this frontier” that it must negotiate and organize its resistance. And to take responsibility, rather than close off and reconstruct the abstract fantasy of sovereignty, the theological-humanist heritage of which might have begun to deconstruct, without much acting on – and to do so in order to resist effectively through allying with extra-academic forces. [27]. For the “unconditional university is not necessarily or exclusively situated in what is today called the university”: it “seeks its place wherever this unconditionality can be announced”.

The university’s meaning?

The question therefore arises of what is meant today by the university, and of its specificity in relation to schools, institutes, colleges, and other institutions in charge of the transmission of knowledge and know-how? In defending the university, the temptation is great to reduce the scope to “humanities”, even if they are extended as “humanities to come” as proposed by Derrida, and “to outsource” all kinds of sectors and training, at the risk of reinforcing an arbitrary division between the “world of the mind” and practical knowledge.

“What, in France, for convenience, by habit and by imitation of neighboring countries, is called the

university, does not really exist, if we give to this word the meaning that it has in most of the countries of Europe. Outside France, a university is generally an encyclopaedic institution with real staff and budget flexibility” and which “is situated in an environment of relative competition”, recalled Areser [28], worrying that, “because of their relative specialization - which refers, more or less, to the aberrations coming from the post-May 1968 political conflicts in the former faculties - the French universities, as supposedly autonomous institutions, present themselves as unequal to the needs of the training market” (sic).

The authors conclude however on the necessity of organising resistance pushing against that which might survive academic independence: “With the collapse of this competitive place, and the putting into question of the knowledge that comes from superior training, it is an irreplaceable spirit, civic and critical, a hope for such a spirit, that would disappear, atrophying all general reflection capable of going beyond the limits of the disciplinary specialisations and merely functional economic competences, and withholding from all youth that critical distance from it’s own social destiny, being the condition of an enlightened cultural life and active, democratic participation”.

To defend this critical distance, rather than be isolated in the prohibitive citadel of the university, it is necessary to ally oneself with the “extra-academic forces” evoked by Derrida. But which? Against the commercial imperatives and the bureaucratic controls, the critical forces within the university should seek to join forces with all centers of knowledge production - social movements, societies, clubs, publishers, independent booksellers - to cooperate in the reconfiguration of a public space flattened by the economic horror of neoliberalism. [29]Put another way, we must oppose both a voluntary, co-operative heteronomy and the imposed heteronomy of the market, and instead see clearly the “external connections” that, according to Foucault, link the university not only to the media, editors, and militants, but also the social and the political fields.

Daniel Bensaïd

Notes

[1]The Loi Pécresse being another name for the LRU, after the then-Education Minister.

[2]Areser, or Association for Reflection on Higher Education and Research; a progressive association of academics, of which Pierre Bourdieu was President.

[3]Urgent Diagnoses and Remedies for a University in Danger, Paris, Liber - Reasons for Action, 1997, p. 21. Among the academics consulted for this diagnosis was Laurent Batsch, current president of the University of Paris-Dauphine and zealous advocate of the LRU law.

[4]Daniel Bensaïd and Camille Scalabrino, *Le Deuxième Souffle. Problèmes du mouvement étudiant*, Paris, Cahiers rouges Maspero, 1969, p. 46-48. Also published on Contretemps.

[5]A play on “Magna Carta”.

[6]For a European model of higher education, report commissioned the previous year to Jacques Attali by Claude Allègre.

[7]Le Monde, November 15, 2007. “It must be said and repeated,” wrote Alain Renault two days later, “that a modernized society is a society where the state knows how to impose its power, the power of the public to establish a number of limits and where at each of these limits, a more self-managed sector arises”(Le Monde, November 17, 2007). The obstinate strikers, from university presidents to Biatoss staff, have been able to appreciate the delights of this pécressienneversion of self-management.

- [8]A reference to the opposition to the LRU from “the university community” that developed through the autumn of 2007
- [9]Le Monde, February 3, 2009.
- [10]Guy Debord, *Œuvres*, Quarto Gallimard, 2006, p. 733.
- [11]Aringoli, Calella, Corradi, Giardullo, Gori, Montefusco, Montella, *Studiare con lentezza. L’università, la precarietà e il ritorno delle rivolte studentesche*, Rome, Edizioni Alegre, 2006.
- [12]Judith Carreras, Carlos Sevilla, Miguel Urbán, *Euro-Universidad. Mito y realidad del proceso of Bologna*, Madrid, Icaria, 2006.
- [13]Le Deuxième Souffle op. cit.
- [14]Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, II, Paris, Social Publishing, 1980, p. 192. See Ernest Mandel, *Students, Intellectuals and Class Struggle*, Paris, La Breche, 1979.
- [15]See “Petits conseils aux enseignants-chercheurs qui voudront réussir leur évaluation” by Gregoire Chamayou.
- [16]Daniel Bensaïd, *Les Dépossédés*, Paris, La Fabrique, 2006.
- [17]Le Monde, February 26, 2009.
- [18]Charles Peguy, *Œuvres en prose complètes III*, Paris, Library of the Pleiades, Gallimard, 1992, p. 315. Bensaïd is here referencing Sarkozy’s having said in 2006 that public workers needn’t sit literature exams, mentioning the novel *The Princess of Cleves* specifically - “an anti-elitist demagoguery” that “managed to turn *The Princess of Cleves* into an unlikely symbol of political resistance”, according to Andrew Gallix in *The Guardian*.
- [19]Echoed in the text of Plinio Prado, *Le Principe d’Université*, devoted to “defending the unconditional right to freedom to research and learning”: “The autonomy of critical thought, the responsibility to which and the ethical imperative of which is indissociable (research for a life worth living) requiring its absolute preservation in the university as a zone of ongoing activity, experimentation, investigation and teaching: free, disinterested, non-utilitarian, non-functionalist, not for profit. This is the essence of what is called University.” Book to be published in the fall of 2009, published by Lignes. A first version is available on the website of this publisher www.editions-lignes.com
- [20]Voir le site www.univ-paris8.fr
- [21]Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Passeron, *Les Héritiers*, Paris, Minuit, 1965, p. 60.
- [22]According to Oskar Negt’s formulation. See his essay “Feu sur l’université” in the eleventh issue of *Revue internationale des livres et des idées*, May 2009.
- [23]See Christophe Charle and Charles Soulié’s edited collection, *Les Ravages de la modernisation universitaire en Europe*, Paris, Syllepse, 2007.
- [24]Areser, op. cit., p. 9 and 10.; UFRs, something like “research centres”.
- [25]Lagasnerie also describes the intellectual context of this reversal: the coming to power of philosophical marketing, as illustrated by the “new philosophers” (Deleuze), the proliferation of

“ouvrages d’opinion” (opinion works) to the detriment of serious study (Foucault), and the promotion of “déclassés producers” beyond the judgement of peer reviewers (Bourdieu).

[26]Jacques Derrida, *L’Université sans condition*, Paris, Galilée, 2001.

[27]*Ibid.*, p. 78.

[28]Areser, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

[29]See Wendy Brown, *Les Habits neufs de la politique mondiale. Néolibéralisme et néoconservatisme*, Paris, Les Prairies ordinaires, 2007.

P.S.

- Verso Books, 16 November 2018:
<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4129-should-we-defend-the-university-between-market-constraints-and-academic-utopia>
- This essay has been translated from French by Roberto Mozzachiodi, Joe Hayns, and Rona Lorimer.

Footnotes

- [1] <https://www.contretemps.eu/autonomie-universite-bensaid/>