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# Mapping The Biopolitical Mind: The Rhetorics Of Neoliberal University Networks

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MAPPING THE BIOPOLITICAL MIND:  
THE RHETORICS OF NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY NETWORKS

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A thesis presented to

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in the Program of

Communication & Culture

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ABSTRACT

The thesis will begin by sketching a brief history of neoliberal governmentality in relation to the contemporary university before showing how this interconnectivity legitimizes itself inside an institutional framework where the university's role shifts away from the guardianship of national culture to the production of biopolitically charged bodies enmeshed in the rhetoric of excellence. I argue for a rereading of the development of urbanization that is contemporaneous with the increased practice of a long-term neoliberal university planning for potential growth whose stakeholders would include the university, the city and the corporation. The imminentization of capital in the "digital economy" collapses traditional notions of space-time and in the shift from national culture to biopolitically charged studentship there is a shift away from a labour power that produces capital to a new type of human capital; I argue against sociologists of education and in favour of the concept of thought as alienation.

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Dedicated to my mother and my father

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## MAPPING THE BIOPOLITICAL MIND: THE RHETORICS OF NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY NETWORKS

*'Traditional' theory is always in danger of being incorporated into the programming of the social whole as a simple tool for the optimization of its performance; this is because its desire for a unitary and totalizing truth lends itself to the unitary and totalizing practice of the system's managers. 'Critical' theory, based on a principle of dualism and wary of synthesis and reconciliations, should be in a position to avoid this fate.*

Jean-François Lyotard

*From the perspective of neoliberalism the system is entirely just.*

Carlos Alberto Torres and Robert A. Rhoads

*Our approach is going to be a practical one – where industry, business and government tell us what the economy needs. Our goal is to devise made-in-Toronto solutions for i-banking, i-business, i-news, i-industry, i-medicine, and i-everything.*

Sheldon Levy, President of Ryerson University

### 1. NEOLIBERALISM: THE ELEPHANT IN THE CLASSROOM

#### 1.1. ECONOMIZING THE HUMAN

What has been the historical *raison d'être* of the university and how has it changed over time? Tones analysing the proliferation and/or decline of new forms of knowledge in the university – focusing on everything from the decline of bioethics in medical departments to the increasingly blasé attitude of that discourse known as Cultural Studies – have offered us the chance to give pause and think through the sea change that higher education is experiencing today. It can be argued, however, that most of these critical analyses ignore some of the more



global and social mechanisms at work. Specifically, many of the challenges that higher education currently faces come from the fact that universities have undergone – are still undergoing – profound periods of neoliberalization. Renowned sociologist and educational policy analyst Raymond A. Morrow tells us that in the neoliberal model higher education

is ideally integrated into the system of production and accumulation in which knowledge is reduced to its economic functions and contributes to the realization of individual economic utilities. This strategy has direct ideological effects in that the cultural legacy of higher education as a form of “humanization” is marginalized as wasteful and unproductive, thus leaving it to the commercial mass media to form the postmodern consumer subject without unsettling questions from educational systems.<sup>1</sup>

Morrow’s definition presupposes two objectives for higher education; first, that the university has traditionally been and should continue to be associated with the notion of “humanism” and, second, that the university should somehow produce or provoke unsettling questions for its “subjects.” What he neglects to mention is that these two objectives are interlinked, sharing a symbiotic development; the mode of questioning in which the university operates does, or at least *should*, produce humanism, and vice versa. The counterforce to humanist questioning in Morrow’s description is to be found in the “economic functions” that do not so much deter human inquiry as define its terms, especially considering the fact that neoliberalism functions according to its own special mode of “productive” questioning. In the neoliberal mode, Morrow perceives a sort of attack on the humanist tradition. In order to come to terms with the problem of neoliberalism in higher education, then, one must first come to terms with these two epistemologically different notions of questioning. The consequences inherent to each lead to two very different conceptions of what education is supposed to be.

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<sup>1</sup> Morrow. xxxi.

Neoliberalism is actually *not* a new form of liberalism, as if it had evolved from an old breed of politics stretching back to the overthrow of the Ancien Régime. It functions in very much the same vein as classical liberalism, the difference being that we have entered new technological paradigms that make processes of liberalization move at unprecedented rates, thus creating an era where the gulf between the sovereigns of the neoliberal network and those at the bottom has become larger than it ever has before. The decline of *social* liberalism – the idea that liberal ideals should include things such as social justice – might have something to do with the rise of the prefix “neo” in order to indicate a more dehumanizing mode or flavour of liberalism. But the humanist tradition, of which liberalism has always claimed to be a part, faces an even greater problem when we consider neoliberalism in the context of higher education. If questioning is supposed to be the mode of life of higher education, should not neoliberalism fit perfectly into this context? One should recall British philosopher Isaiah Berlin’s “two concepts of liberty” (the idea goes back to Kant) and announce that, right away, we are talking about positive liberty – the possibility of *acting*, or the fact of acting, in such a way as to take control of one’s life and realize one’s “fundamental” purposes after a period of reflection. The notion of reflection, or, thinking, is inherent to this idea of acting or realizing. The word “realize” meant, in the 1600s, to “bring into existence,” from French *réaliser* (to “make real”); the sense that it meant to “understand clearly” was first recorded sometime in 1775. One can also recall the words of the French philosopher Michel Foucault. In his extensive analysis of liberalism during the Collège de France lectures, he reminds us that we should think of

“liberalism,” not as a theory or an ideology, and even less obviously, as a way in which “society” “represents itself,” but as a *practice*, that is to say, a “way of doing things” directed towards objectives and regulating itself by *continuous reflection*. Liberalism, then, is to be analysed as a principle and method of the *rationalization* of the exercise of

government, a rationalization which obeys – and this is what is specific about it – *the internal rule of maximum economy*.<sup>2</sup>

The questioning or “continuous reflection” that is a part of the “internal rule of maximum economy” runs contrary to the type of questioning embedded in a humanist tradition of higher education. To put it even more simply, one could ask how it became possible for an “economizing questioning” to enter the realm of institutionalized “humanist questioning.” What are the consequences for education once these projects overlap?

It is at the interstice of this friction between two types of questioning – the economized and the humanized – that I would like to posit the by now well-known term “biopolitics” in order to denote the way in which contemporary minds are shaped in the university. I would like to use the term biopolitics in a slightly more general sense, meaning a politics that is enacted via various mechanisms that include “forecasts, statistical elements, and overall measures [...] in such a way as to achieve overall states of equilibrium or regularity”<sup>3</sup>; biopolitics as less a “care of self” with regard to medicine and physical health and more in the sense of general “modes of subjectification, through which individuals are brought to work on themselves, under certain forms of authority,”<sup>4</sup> this work involving the shaping of one’s mind/body as a project of *labour*. It is the coming together of the labourer with his or her work in which the labourer is not alienated, where biopolitics is at its highest, and where the new “student body” becomes the premier site from which future generations of biopolitically charged citizens emerge. This relationship causes a number of problems relative to the functioning of universities as we know them today, not the least of which is the economization of the humanist tradition.

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<sup>2</sup> Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 318. My emphasis.

<sup>3</sup> Foucault. *Society Must Be Defended*. 246.

<sup>4</sup> Rabinow and Rose. 197.

What follows will be an attempt to think through the pairing of questioning with humanism as it confronts the dehumanizing effects of neoliberalism on universities. Contrary to those who view neoliberalism as the closest politico-economic approximation to the “natural” state of things, one should stress instead the naturalizing function of neoliberalism as it takes up the practice of biopolitics. There is a tendency to understand neoliberalism as an ontological category with an attendant set of definitions and meanings when it is actually a complex and interconnected set of *practices* that reflects an advanced and more lethal form of capitalism. In order to question how these practices affect higher education, one must examine what the nature of questioning *means* both inside and outside of the humanist and neoliberal paradigms.

## 1.2. HEIDEGGER’S QUESTION

As Morrow states, the *sensitivity* inherent to questioning as a process of living produces what one could call “humanization,” or a human “form-of-life,” the latter a term frequently used by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben. The concept of form-of-life, which has interested Agamben throughout his career, highlights this privileged role of questioning for Being. Prior to questioning, a form-of-life should be understood as “a life that can never be separated from its form, a life in which it is never possible to isolate something such as naked life.”<sup>5</sup> Here, the Greek *zoē* is used to indicate “naked life” while *bios* indicates “politically qualified life.” For Agamben, *zoē* was the “hidden foundation” of a sovereignty that has now elevated it to “become the dominant form of life everywhere.”<sup>6</sup> What this means in terms of *power* is that biopolitics – the regulation naked life – has become the organizing principle of the sovereign relation in the

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<sup>5</sup> Agamben. *Means Without End*. 3-4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 6.

neoliberal paradigm. The “state of exception” is that grey zone – the “zone of indistinction”<sup>7</sup> – between *zoē* and *bios* where the sovereign decides who will be included into the *polis* and who will be made the “inclusive exclusion” (those who are banished from the community at the same time that they are included as a state of exception).<sup>8</sup> The tragic history of eugenics laws might be said to embody the “molar” form of biopolitics while today’s micromanaging “quality of life” class can be said to embody the “molecular” form. In each case, the concept of biopolitics is extremely important in order to understand what we mean when we use terms such as “post-industrial society” and/or “knowledge society” in order to describe the type of social formation that most of us find ourselves in today. Though it might not seem readily apparent, today’s white-collar masses practice a particularly advanced form biopolitics. The “knowledge workers” of the past forty years have inverted man’s (once alienated) relation to labour, and the university – traditionally a knowledge producing institution – has become a factory in the production of a human capital meant to serve economic ends.

Agamben argues persuasively that the form-of-life most proper to being is one where naked life is not disassociated from politically qualified life. Here, “questioning” is seen as *the* constitutive modality of form-of-life, and, thus, of Being. He states that “only if [...] there is thought – only then can a form of life become, in its own factness and thingness, *form-of-life*, in which it is never possible to isolate something like naked life”<sup>9</sup> and that

intellectuality and thought are not a form of life among others in which life and social production articulate themselves, but they are rather *the unitary power that constitutes the multiple forms of life as form-of-life*. In the face of state sovereignty, which can affirm itself only by separating in every context naked life from its form, they are the power that incessantly reunites life to its form or prevents it from being disconnected from its form.

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<sup>7</sup> Agamben. *Homo Sacer*. 10-12.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Agamben. *Means Without End*. 9.

It is in this sense that we should read Agamben's conception of sovereignty as far removed from that of a thinker such as the French philosopher Georges Bataille, for whom the sovereign relation is of key importance. One could say that Agamben's philosophical task is to confront "the originary fiction of modern sovereignty"<sup>10</sup>; however, one must ask oneself whether or not it is *possible* to do away with the sovereign relation entirely. Agamben disagrees with the (much more abstract) Bataillean thesis that there is an external requirement that must orient a homogenous system.<sup>11</sup> But is it possible to escape the external requirement that is the necessary predicate of any homogeneous movement? This "externality" is exactly the type of "superior principle" that Agamben sees as "useless" when it comes to negotiating sovereign power.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Agamben would tell us that such thinking merely reinstalls the sovereign's privileged relation to the state of exception. He instead posits *thought* (questioning) as the universal and unitary principle of a form-of-life that can unmask the (biopolitical) phantom power of the sovereign. But what is it that gives the thought process that is form-of-life its special status as being uniquely different from the thought processes that inform the sovereign's biopolitical decisions in the first instance? Why is the modern sovereign a fiction?

On one level, Agamben's central thesis makes a claim for a type of individual, Cartesian rationale with which one can dispel the power of the sovereign. On a much deeper level, Agamben's general thesis (form-of-life as emancipatory questioning) misses the fact that *questioning is a permanent feature of the type of liberalism that nurtures biopolitics* (neoliberal governmentality). Rather than doing away with the superior principle upon which processes of sovereign-formation (and destruction) are predicated, should one not embrace the logic of the

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<sup>10</sup> Agamben. *Homo Sacer*. 77.

<sup>11</sup> Bataille. *Visions of Excess*. 147.

<sup>12</sup> Agamben. *Means Without End*. 6-7.

process in order to “make it work” for oneself? This then begs the obvious question as to what a more nuanced “counter-principle” might look like in the face of neoliberal sovereignty. The answer takes us back to a theorist who lived through one of the twentieth century’s most violent encounters with biopolitics.

Surprisingly, Agamben is sympathetic to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (once a member of Hitler’s National Socialist Party). In his most widely read work, *Homo Sacer*, Agamben takes up the key concept of Heidegger’s philosophy: *Dasein* (roughly translated as “Being-in-the-world”). He states of *Dasein* that the circular structure by which it

is an issue for itself in its ways of being is nothing but a formalization of the essential experience of factual life, in which it is impossible to distinguish between life and its actual situation, Being and its ways of Being [...] Facticity does not mean simply being contingently in a certain way and a certain situation, but rather means decisively assuming this way and this situation by which what was given (*Hingabe*) must be transformed into a task (*Aufgabe*).<sup>13</sup>

Agamben’s own form-of-life thesis is not unlike the Heideggerian conception of *Dasein* or Being-in-the-world. Where *Dasein* is a Being that is aware of its own Being and comports itself toward that Being by being a being-in-the-world, Agamben’s form-of-life, he tells us, is “affected by one’s own receptiveness and experience in each and every thing” and “living and intending and apprehending.” The same deterministic “facticity” – the hermeneutics of factual life – that he attributes to Heidegger is also echoed in form-of-life; a form-of-life can only become so through thinking “its own factness and thingness.” But how does Heidegger offer us a more radical countermeasure in contemplating the facticity of Being in the face of neoliberalism? If Agamben neglects the fact that neoliberal governmentality operates by questioning the very same facticity as humanist questioning (thus negating his plea for a revolutionary form-of-life as questioning), how does Heidegger offer us a way out of this deadlock?

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<sup>13</sup> Agamben. *Homo Sacer*. 150-151.

In fact, Agamben's plea for questioning finds its roots in an even deeper formulation made by Heidegger in his 1927 masterwork, *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time). In his famous phenomenology of the question, Heidegger writes:

Every inquiry is a seeking [Suchen]. Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought. Inquiry is a cognizant seeking for an entity both with regard to the fact that it is and with regard to its Being as it is. This cognizant seeking can take the form of 'investigating' ["Untersuchen"], in which one lays bare that which the question is about and ascertains its character. Any inquiry, as an inquiry about something, has *that which is asked about* [sein *Gefragtes*]. But all inquiry about something is somehow a question of something [Anfragen bei...]. So in addition to what is asked about, an inquiry has *that which is interrogated* [ein *Befragtes*]. In investigative questions – that is, in questions which are specifically theoretical – what is asked about is determined and conceptualized. Furthermore, in what is asked about there lies also *that which is to be found out by the asking* [das *Erfragte*]; this is what is really intended: with this the inquiry researches its goal. Inquiry itself is the behavior of a questioner, and therefore of an entity, and as such it has its own character of Being.<sup>14</sup>

The *Befragtes* ("that which is interrogated") of which Heidegger speaks is the key notion that separates Heidegger's mode of questioning from Agamben's. For Heidegger, as for Agamben, questioning has its own mode of Being; however, for Heidegger the obverse side of that which is "asked about" and eventually "found out" in questioning is *interrogation*. Interrogation – not to be confused with a *question* – is here the groundless foundation upon which all questioning rests. It is with this notion of bottomless interrogation that we come to the idea that questioning produces anxiety and can be a kind of preparation for death, thus reducing the "simple" diagnostics of question/answer to its true existential nature and stripping it of the economical flavour of "that which is to be found out by asking." In short, Heidegger's thesis regarding the question retains a sense of the groundlessness that is diametrically opposed to the type of positivist questioning found in neoliberal governmentality. While it is true that the

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<sup>14</sup> Heidegger. *Being and Time*. 24. Emphasis in original.



economization and sometimes conservative nature of neoliberalism might imply a questioning that is restrictive in nature, the fact of the matter is that while neoliberalism operates according to a lean internal rule of maximum economy and efficiency, this does not exclude its preference for a general, accumulative growth of the system. Heideggerian interrogation, far from producing a surplus in the form of the “asked about,” in a way always returns to nothing, the groundlessness of existence, without losing any of the facticity of form-of-life or Being-in-the-world. What it loses instead is a certain *utilitarianism*, a philosophy that has deep and rich ties to the history of liberalism. Remembering that one of the university’s two traditional objectives is to produce or provoke “unsettling questions” for its subjects, we can ask ourselves whether or not it is Heidegger’s brand of questioning that is supposed to be nurtured in a humanist education.

After global scale neoliberalization, The University of Tomorrow will look unlike any that have come before, and so it has become clear that what is needed is not simply the occasional reactionary gesture in the face of massive budget cuts and increased student debt but a systematic theoretical articulation of the entire process that continues to undermine truly democratic forms of institutional pedagogy in the university. The first of these articulations must confront the by now extensive rhetoric of “excellence” and the cultivating of a human capital while the second (addressed in Chapter 3) should think through the problems that are inherent to a university-initiated urbanization that sees the city as a unique networked space for capitalist development. The third must confront issues of pedagogy and curriculum (Chapters 4 and 5). The point is to answer and confront the assault on longstanding democratic notions of education, society, knowledge, and the nation-state, whereby the very essence of citizenship and the

conditions for real social change are fundamentally altered.<sup>15</sup> But, first, what does “higher education” mean in this historical context?

### 1.3. HIGHER EDUCATION AS NATIONAL PROJECT

Jeremiads abound, especially since the 1980s, concerning the influence of technology on the shaping of content, and most of these arguments take place at the university, the traditional site for the preservation of knowledge, culture, and, in the early twentieth century’s colleges and polytechnics, the development of technology. Acknowledging the changes in the historical development of the modern university is fundamental if we are to come to an understanding of where we are today, for the university’s function is increasingly being linked to those technologies at the forefront of synergetic innovation. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and especially after its arrival in Paris, the printing press developed thanks to the “bookish tastes of the clerics associated with the university.”<sup>16</sup> In retrospect, the same type of developments can be “shown to have taken place in all the great university towns of Europe.”<sup>17</sup>

The idea of the university began to change with the American universities of the nineteenth century; today we see an emphasis placed on information networks rather than on the national languages and cultures which needed to be established and thought of in terms of a utopian project. What we see now is more of a focus on information networks via a type of urban development; the mapping of the university and its integration into the city has replaced the need to cultivate a language or culture. Rather than the national languages and cultures which once served as its content across the disciplines, the university is now more concerned with the places,

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<sup>15</sup> Castells.

<sup>16</sup> Febvre and Martin. 176.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

the streams, the modes and the sites of knowledge-power exchange that shape our communities. So we have moved from language, from the university and the library, to the university and the city and to urban planning. The university no longer has any power in its ability to offer a central place for the cultivation of a national language or culture – let alone the humanist tradition – and its new project is to align itself with certain authoritative powers (in most cases, private corporations rather than the state) in order to show that it can adapt itself to the “needs” of a progressively fluid knowledge-economy. While the state still has a role to play, it is a state defined, increasingly, in terms of corporate “values,” profit, and “commercializable” research.

In *Imagined Communities*, famed British historian Benedict Anderson offers us a genealogy of acculturation by tracing the development of the printed word through the invention of the printing press and national libraries to the advent of dictionaries and their power in establishing and maintaining a university system. It is a genealogy that describes the way in which information flows related to the development of a national language used to lead into the universities which served as the epicentres of nationalist development and the preservation of national culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. So we see here, at this very early stage, the importance of the university with regard to the organisation of information networks and the project of national culture. Anderson’s research finds that dictionaries were important to the development of the nation and found most of their support in the university system; “the visionary drudges who devoted years to their completion were of necessity drawn to or nurtured by the great libraries of Europe, above all those of the universities.”<sup>18</sup> Universities shared a symbiotic relationship with the development of a national language-network in many of Europe’s different nation-states and so they became key institutions in the development of nationalism on

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<sup>18</sup> Anderson. 71.

the level of language itself. National culture, too, had an important role to play in the pedagogy of the university system.

Outside of the technological-economic streams of university histories, the late Université de Montréal professor Bill Readings has made the salient point that, during the German Enlightenment and, to a lesser extent, the French Revolution, the university and philosophy in particular were meant to preserve *culture*.<sup>19</sup> One should mention, however, that in many ways philosophy's role in the preservation of culture at the university was also determined by the evolution of the printing press. Readings' admirable historiography of the development of what we would today call "Humanities" subjects in the German university fails to acknowledge this element of technological determinism in lamenting the global effects of networked capital on the production of knowledge; Aristotle was first published mainly in Venice, Augsburg, Cologne, and Leipzig due to Germany's relatively lax laws on the publication of subversive material.<sup>20</sup> However, Anderson notes that "the dictum that 'the progress of schools and universities measures that of nationalism, just as schools and especially universities become its most conscious champions' is certainly correct for nineteenth-century Europe, if not for other times and places."<sup>21</sup>

Drawing on the work of Eric Hobsbawm, Anderson builds his theory by outlining the pivotal role that centers for nationalist development had in the revolutionary struggles throughout the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.<sup>22</sup> The university was the location for the preservation of a national culture and so the transformation of society from one ideological paradigm to the next occurred there, and the populations of university students in Europe played a key role in many of

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<sup>19</sup> Readings. 60.

<sup>20</sup> Febvre and Martin. 251.

<sup>21</sup> Anderson. 71.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

these revolutions; the University of Berlin went through such an event and Napoleon's struggle also produced similar changes, specifically in 1810 and 1812 at the Sorbonne.<sup>23</sup> World renowned sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos has noted, in a view similar to that of Readings, that the university "was always tied to the construction of a national project" and that the study of liberal arts and social sciences especially "was aimed at lending consistency to the national project, creating knowledge and shaping the personnel necessary for its realization."<sup>24</sup> But we see a shift after these revolutionary practices and the "guardianship of knowledge" to a much more postmodern, neoliberal conceptualization of knowledge with contemporary long-term planning in the neoliberal university. How, exactly, did these changes occur?

#### 1.4. A BREIF HISTORY OF NEOLIBERAL EDUCATION

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson outlined his famous vision of university-community partnerships during a speech at the inauguration ceremony held for the University of California, Irvine. Johnson claimed that universities "should do for the citizens of the urban nation what they once did for the farmers of the rural nation."<sup>25</sup> While such a comment might seem noble in its earnest endeavour to promote the lives of those living in the university centered, North American metropolises of the early twentieth century to the administrators of a new, large university, Johnson makes one key error, and it takes the form of a glaringly naive presupposition. While the "urban nation" is recognized as being different from the "rural nation," the farmers of the rural nation were of a significantly distinct class and situated – planted, as it were, given their lack of geographical mobility – in a different economic milieu, compared to the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 194.

<sup>24</sup> Santos. 76.

<sup>25</sup> Gilderbloom and Mullins. 122-123.

cosmopolitan elites of the urban nation. The concept of urbanity itself is laden with numerous associations to an increasingly complex web of capital that uses the compactness of the city as fertilizer for advancing the reproduction of capital, a process that would have been impossible for Johnson's agrarians. Universities, today, serve a very different function from those of Johnson's presidency, and the same holds true if we were to look even further into the past. One could trace the university's genealogy back significantly further and speak of a medieval or "feudal society" in comparison to a rural nation, and this distinction would yield an equally complex web of associations, primarily between feudal subject, guild/university and monarchy, but it could in no way stand analogous to the series "citizen," "university" and "state" in the urban nation. It is well known that the first universities appeared roughly between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries as cathedral or monastic schools (university/religion), that the modern universities of the French and, especially, German Enlightenments began to appear roughly between the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century as the traditional guardians of reason and national culture (university/culture), and that the research universities of the first half of the twentieth century (Johnson's urban nation universities) opened themselves to leagues of citizens looking to better their lives after the devastations of World War II (university/excellence). In each case, the function of the university served to meet the unique requirements imposed on it by its surrounding economic and political milieu.

LBJ's proclamation that universities "should do for the citizens of the urban nation what they once did for the farmers of the rural nation" makes little sense if one considers the precedence set by Jonathan Baldwin Turner. In the mid-nineteenth century Turner, an Illinois farmer and Yale graduate, wrote an essay entitled, "Plan for a State University for the Industrial Classes." At this early point, Turner recognized that his countrymen were also in need of a

different type of education given the general transition of society from an agrarian one to one that we would today call “knowledge based.” The difference between Turner and LBJ, however, lies in the fact that Turner saw educating the children of the lower, agricultural classes as a necessary step if the US was to make the transition successfully. At Turner’s request, a New England Congressman, friend and patron Justin Morrill, introduced federal legislation “mandating grants of federal lands to the states to support the development of colleges that would educate the common people in agriculture and the mechanic arts” (the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862).<sup>26</sup> The “common people” that Turner and Morrill referred to were those who were excluded from the quickly developing industrial world. What they envisioned and saw to fruition was nothing less than the inclusion of an entire social caste into the university system. Contrast this with the desire to see education as the augmentation and dissemination of the information/communication infrastructures of an elite group of higher education technocrats in the latter half of the twentieth century and it is easy to see how a new set of interests are being served while cloaked in the analogical rhetoric of times passed. The University of Today is unlike any that have existed before.

What is the University of Today? It has a long and rich history, but it would not be going too far afield to say that it has experienced nothing like the changes that confronted it over the first half of the twentieth century. The rhetoric of a particular notion of progress is unique to the University of the post-World War II era, and it is not to be found solely in the inaugural speeches of LBJ. After the onslaught of World War II veterans who sought to better their education entered into the university population, higher education experienced both qualitative and quantitative changes; quantitative in the sense that universities had to struggle with a massive influx in their student population, qualitative in the sense that education now meant something

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<sup>26</sup> Langenberg. 51.

other than perpetuating ideological agendas based on old notions of agriculture, national culture and/or literary or scientific expertise. New arenas in industrial development meant that a new educational system was in order, and this time it would not be constructed solely for the benefit of the “common people.” Four decades ago, the threat of Soviet dominance in science and technology sent US state investment in higher education soaring, from \$3.59 per \$1, 000 of personal income (in 1961) to \$10.56 in 1976.<sup>27</sup> Santos reminds us that the development of university instruction

in the 30 or 40 years after World War II, was based, on the one hand, on the successes of the social struggles for the right to education, which translated into the demand for more democratic access to the university; *on the other hand, the development of university instruction was based on the imperatives of an economy that required a more highly qualified workforce in key industrial sectors.*<sup>28</sup>

The Cold War meant university enrolment for countless underprivileged youth. Yet, attending university meant a betterment of one’s social position, and the second increase in student populations by the Baby Boomer generation is a result of this ethos having been instilled in the minds of countless post-Vichy American citizens. How did the university accommodate these changes? It did so mostly through the neoliberalization of higher education, a process that involves the rhetoric of a very idiosyncratic idea of progress and a unique type of capital accumulation (more on the second in Chapter 3).

Indeed, the rhetoric of progress in the university is still very much with us today, no matter the repeated calls to re-contextualize it along with ourselves in the new post-industrial society. Former chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley and also president of the University of California Clark Kerr’s “multiversity” of the 1960s has become a reality in most parts of the globe, fracturing the traditional modern university into a web containing numerous

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<sup>27</sup> Rosenstone. 57.

<sup>28</sup> Santos. 66. My emphasis.



constituent and affiliated institutions (separate colleges, campuses, and research centers).<sup>29</sup> It is in many ways an advancement of the conception of the university as handed down to us from Wilhelm von Humboldt. The Humboldtian University, after becoming popular within the Prussian education system, became the template for education systems in the United States and Japan. Humboldt basically positioned the university as a “fusion of process and product that both produced knowledge of culture (in research) and inculcated culture as a process of learning (in teaching).”<sup>30</sup> He prescribed a looser level of state control; the university appeared “as a productive supplement to the state apparatus” in that both were to serve as two sides of the same coin.<sup>31</sup> The state was to protect “the action of the university” while the university “safeguards the thought of the state.”<sup>32</sup> What this means in terms of a fusion of process and product is that in today’s multiversities we are witnessing an advancement of this double articulation in a neoliberal paradigm; the university, as a site of human resource development, produces *jobs* (through research) within a limitless amount of heterogeneous institutions and provides *job training* (in teaching) for life in the corporate world.<sup>33</sup> The corporation thus supplants the place of the state. But what are the consequences of this thinking for education in terms of its original humanist program? The answer is much more complicated than it might first appear.

Where an analysis such as Daniel Bell’s intriguing “social forecast” of higher education in the path breaking *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*<sup>34</sup> proved, for the most part, correct, it fails to account for what the decline of the Humanities might mean for a world that has become increasingly dependent on forms of scientific knowledge and the informationalization of

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<sup>29</sup> Kerr. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Readings. 12.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 68.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 69.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Bell. 165-265.

education. If knowledge plays such a central role in the post-industrial society “in a double sense”<sup>35</sup> – first, sources of information are viewed as being derivative from research and development, and, second, the weight of society is increasingly in the knowledge field – and if this doubling can be taken as “one indicator of the key importance of education,”<sup>36</sup> should we not then give pause as to what this might mean in terms of a certain economic or technological determinism? A few pages later, Bell envisions education marching along the same binary path that English physicist and sometimes parliamentarian C.P. Snow had outlined fourteen years earlier, and the gap, Bell claims, will only grow wider (between science and literature in Snow’s era, science and culture in ours). But where Snow’s *The Two Cultures* offered a glimmer of hope in reuniting the two cultures through primary education – this hope was explicated even more frankly in 1963 with the publication of *The Two Cultures: A Second Look*<sup>37</sup> – Bell’s analysis paints a rather vulgar picture as to what the *telos* of education will entail (more on this notion in Chapter 5). We are reminded of the “deep and growing split between the technical intelligentsia who are committed to functional rationality and technocratic modes of operation, and the literary intellectuals, who have become increasingly apocalyptic, hedonistic, and nihilistic.”<sup>38</sup> It could be said that academics such as Bell and Clark were merely trying to quell (or rub salt into the wound of) the student uprisings of the 1960s. However, their comments on the post-industrial society (or the knowledge society) carry massive import for understanding the neoliberal universities of today.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 212.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 213.

<sup>37</sup> “[W]e can do something. The chief means open to us is education – education mainly in primary and secondary schools [...] There is no excuse for letting another generation be as vastly ignorant, or as devoid of understanding and sympathy, as we are ourselves”. Snow. 61.

<sup>38</sup> Bell. 214.

It is not only the radical students at a few liberal arts colleges who lambast the neoliberalization of higher education, nor is it simply a group of disillusioned contract faculty members who realize that tenure is quickly becoming an increasingly unrealizable prospect. One of the most vocal critics of the marketization of universities is former Harvard President Derek Bok, who has spent the better part of his career decrying what he sees as “efforts within the university to make a profit from teaching, research, and other campus activities.”<sup>39</sup> Bok’s approach differs considerably from those outlined by other ivory-plated pundits like Stanley Fish, Alan Bloom, or Leo Strauss – he does not lament the death of the professionalization of the Classics as the reason for the decline of education – and by opting to circumnavigate dense terminology, he also avoids the at times cryptic theses presented by Bill Readings in *The University in Ruins*. The no-nonsense tone and blunt statement of *facts* presented in such works as *Universities in the Marketplace* and *Our Underachieving Colleges* paints a clear picture of how the university is slowly becoming a crony to corporations in the business world and just another player in the world market of advanced capitalist processes. And he does a fine job were it not for the fact that, to point to a Foucauldian methodology, he ignores many of the specific locations of the exercise of neoliberal governmentality in the university and opts instead for generalizations and symbolic critiques (certain universities sports teams are funded by corporations, as are certain science research centers, et cetera). Is it not possible to take these critiques even further by performing an analysis of the logic that informs the neoliberalization of higher education; what would the epistemological framework of neoliberal governmentality look like? We *know* that universities are inextricably linked to corporations, just as we *know* that the economization of pedagogy will lead to a decline in the Humanities and an influx of university “affiliated” science research labs. The deeper questions that we should be asking are: *how has*

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<sup>39</sup> Bok. *Universities in the Marketplace*. 3.

*the epistemological framework for understanding knowledge changed in the university and what are the political-economic decisions that have allowed this to happen? What is the relationship between neoliberalism's conception of the "natural" state of things and how does this naturalizing process reinforce a biopolitics in systems of higher education?*

What we should know is that it is not only a matter of rampant corporatism, entrepreneurialism, and the vocationalization of the humanities, but that there are much subtler techniques that have been deployed, over long periods of time but even more rapidly in the twentieth century, that see the university less as a site for critical investigation – humanist questioning – and more as a site for the advanced reproduction of capital. There are two ways that this has happened, and they in many ways take the form of a twin symbiotic process. The first has to do with the spaces of the university itself – its sidewalks, buildings, classrooms, et cetera – and the other with what is being taught in them: the informationalization of pedagogy. In each case, a rhetorical logic informs the decisions that are made that affect the lives of all of those who work in or live near the university.

Before venturing further, I would like to offer a few definitions. Specifically, what is meant by “the urban” and “knowledge production” in the current economic climate, and what relationship do they share with the neoliberal University of the Twenty-first Century?

Throughout what follows, the urban will be understood as a complex and heterogeneous field of economic and cultural relations that are, paradoxically, dependent on a synergizing homogenization process that each field must undergo due to their close proximity to one another in the urban landscape (the city-sanctioned transfer of university owned airspace and/or small business property to corporations that erect complexes which serve as stores *and* classrooms, the appearance of “brand” megastores that, unlike a corporation such as Nike, specialize in

everything and gain import under the aegis of a powerful symbol – think souvenir stores that sell *everything* as long as it connotes Canadianness, the M & M’s store in New York, et cetera). The intensity of urban life requires that each heterogeneous series be quantifiably analogous to one another in order for the smooth circulating of capital to progress. Following David Harvey, urbanity will be understood not simply as a function of capital but as today’s unique type of capital, *par excellence*. I argue that, today, the university is situated at the epicentre of this type of urban development given its emphasis, in recent times, on digital, urban, and communication structures. From Shanghai to Abu Dhabi, theorists such as Andrew Ross have argued that the inauguration of fresh, overseas American university campuses serve as indicators of the soon-to-be advanced economic mobility of the “host” city.<sup>40</sup> And while the word “globalization” has become a tired trope in the upper echelons of academia and the popular front, practices like these represent exactly that “bad” kind of globalization that the aforementioned groups seek to confront. “Replace capitalism with something nicer” seems to be, paradoxically, the ambiguous clarion call of a number of armchair cultural theorists whose specialized discourses focusing on the political economy of capital flows often become subsumed by their object of inquiry in a type of analytical oroboros. One could argue that the word “capitalism” itself has lost its relevance; thousands of left-leaning academics gather at critical studies conferences around the world, sometimes in places like Hong Kong and Kingston so that the conference also functions as a vacation, theorizing new sites of critical resistance to capitalist hegemony. How has this happened – that intellectuals can be critical about capitalism while literally *sitting in the sites* of academic neoliberalization – and what does this say about the fate of the Humanities?<sup>41</sup> It is with these practices in mind that the remainder of the thesis poses a new set of particular questions, all

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<sup>40</sup> Ross.

<sup>41</sup> Perhaps this is due to the fact that, as Slavoj Žižek has repeatedly remarked, the history of the Left is always spoken of/defined in terms of its defeat.

relating to the university, critical theory and the Humanities, urbanization, and the managerialization of pedagogy. Finally, knowledge production is perhaps the key factor in facilitating the neoliberalization of higher education. It is intimately linked to the notion of human capital but combines with two other modalities of educational governance: 1) the technologization of education as progress and 2) the appearance of the culture industries onto the scene of education in the form of Cultural Studies departments.

### 1.5. IN THE AGE OF EXCELLENCE AND HUMAN CAPITAL: FOUCAULT'S ANSWER

*Macleans'* yearly list of the top Canadian universities has long been regarded a treasure trove of agglomerated information gleaned from the realms of higher education for those interested in the best of institutional schooling. The 2009 special issue claimed to contain an "evaluation of overall academic excellence at universities across the country." The *Macleans'* website offers readers "customized" versions of the university ranking and, this year, they have even included a new ranking system according to the results of two "major" student surveys.<sup>42</sup> The rationale behind this new type of ranking is supposed to provoke a response in the reader, something like: "what better way to judge universities than by appealing to the comments of the students themselves!"<sup>43</sup> This is confounding, in the absence of persuasive quantitative measures. Britain and Australia have research measurement exercises, instituted at a national level (measuring a researcher's "output"). Interestingly, more and more universities are "opting out" of the *Macleans'* survey – with quite public statements, too. They contest the "accuracy" of the

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<sup>42</sup> Maclean's. Rankings: Maclean's OnCampus.

<sup>43</sup> This is confounding, in the absence of persuasive quantitative measures. Britain and Australia have research measurement exercises, instituted at a national level (measuring a researcher's "output"). Interestingly, more and more universities are "opting out" of the *Macleans'* survey – with quite public statements, too. They contest the "accuracy" of the survey, but one wonders whether they are simply contesting the outcomes, when one's home institution is not ranking very high. See also *The Globe and Mail's* interactive site containing measurement tools.

survey, but one wonders whether they are simply contesting the outcomes, when one's home institution is not ranking very high. However, even a brief look at the survey webpage's comments section reveals that *Macleans'* readers are not as naive as the magazine would have us believe. Comments range from flippant remarks provided by the likes of user "m" ("Universities are no long[er] a place of higher learning but a glorified trade school") to almost-astute critiques like those provided by user "Murdochsroomate" ("this data appears to inform conclusions about how high academic standards are. However, in reality, there are no questions on the survey that determine to what extent these behaviours are motivated by university standards and to what extent they are behaviors that students exhibit DESPITE university standards").

Outside of the mainstream news media which always perpetuates findings such as those found in the *Macleans'* report due a sympathetically neoliberal methodology that privileges competition over equality, even first year undergraduate students have become weary of this type of illegitimate legitimating process. In 2009 at Ryerson University, during a project fair held at the end of a special first year sociology class that focused on the transition from high school to university for students today, no fewer than four of the projects addressed the shadiness of *Macleans'* methodology while dozens of groups chose to critique the standards by which the contemporary university is held.<sup>44</sup> The projects included everything from political-economic critiques of the student loan system to the inequalities between commuting students and those who live in residence. These results should serve as a warning. If even amateur sociologists are able to tune into some of the real problems that are generated by neoliberal higher education, what should that say to those of us who have called academia home over years of study? Either the problem has become so large that it is easy to miscategorise, miss entirely, or – and this is the

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<sup>44</sup> The course was organized and taught by Alan Sears at Ryerson University's Department of Sociology and addressed first year students by asking them *why* they entered university and *what* they thought it was for. See his *A Good Book, In Theory: A Guide to Theoretical Thinking*.

more likely state of things – the problem is so utterly systemic that turning a blind eye, confronting phantom quasi-problems is, more often than not, easier than confronting the real issues. All of these rudimentary observations about the nature of neoliberal higher education could be summed up in one question: as Bill Readings would have put it, what does the *appeal* to excellence mean?

Readings offers us the most profound reading of the current situation of the neoliberal university and the rhetoric of excellence that surrounds it. In his last book, *The University in Ruins*, Readings claims that “the liberal *individual* is no longer capable of metonymically embodying the *institution*.”<sup>45</sup> His argument in that prophetic work was that the

new interest in the pursuit of excellence indicates a change in the university’s function. The university no longer has to safeguard and propagate national culture, because the nation-state is no longer the major site at which capital reproduces itself. Hence, the idea of national culture no longer functions as an external referent toward which all of the efforts of research and teaching are directed. The idea of national culture no longer provides an overarching ideological meaning for what goes on in the university, and as a result, what exactly gets taught or produced as knowledge matters less and less.<sup>46</sup>

Readings’ idea that the university exists today in an “age of excellence” means that “no more *knowledge* can be produced, since there is nothing to be said about culture that is not itself cultural, and vice versa. Everything is culturally determined, as it were, and culture ceases to mean anything as such.”<sup>47</sup> So we see a kind of shift from “culture” to “excellence.” Readings terms this process “dereferentialization.”<sup>48</sup> It is a process whereby the contemporary university distinguishes itself from the modern university of the nation-state through the rhetoric of “excellence,” and we should hear a whole range of thoughts articulated by thinkers like Michel

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<sup>45</sup> Readings. 9. Emphasis in original.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



Foucault to David Harvey on the neoliberalization of education being echoed here. Culture is, in the neoliberal university, seen as the social solidification of economic differences after a global shift in governmental practice from a type of nationalism to a type of political economy that reflects on governmental practices. It is a shift that creates and focuses on “intelligible mechanisms.” Or, as Foucault tells us in the biopolitics lectures, “success or failure, rather than legitimacy or illegitimacy, now become the criteria of governmental action. So, success replaces legitimacy.”<sup>49</sup>

In many ways, universities have begun to align knowledge with success/failure logistics. By planning the construction of university roads around (or, literally through) corporate enterprises, implementing mandatory surveys (such as the NSSE: National Survey of Student Engagement), increasing interest in all forms of distance education, forcing students to experience their lectures in corporate environments or developing ridiculously expensive symbolic buildings on campus, the neoliberal university affects the bodies that make up the student population, and this *affective influence* inaugurates a new conceptualization of knowledge as knowledge-production.<sup>50</sup> What I mean by affective influence is that, after the economization of knowledge by the networked university, the student engages in interchangeable learning experiences and becomes an encyclopaedia in the sense that in the neoliberal university, in a society of control, “one is never finished with anything” while knowledge is available to be traded.<sup>51</sup> Biopolitics, for its part, starts as soon as the university thinks in terms of an “excellence” that breeds competition between students who in turn begin to think in terms of a

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<sup>49</sup> Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 16.

<sup>50</sup> For more on what this type of affective influence might look like and how it operates according to a networked logic, see Jodi Dean’s article “Affective Networks” in Vol II, No 2 of *MediaTropes* eJournal.

<sup>51</sup> Deleuze. “Postscript on the Societies of Control.” 1.

human capital, understood here in the Foucaultian sense, where, as I have already mentioned, labour is a type of investment disassociated from universal truths and moral distinctions:

Broken down in economic terms [...] labor comprises a capital, that is to say, it is an ability, a skill [...] if capital is thus defined as that which makes a future income possible, this income being a wage, then you can see that it is a capital which in practical terms is inseparable from the person who possesses it. To that extent it is not like other capitals [...] the worker's skill really is a machine, but a machine which cannot be separated from the worker himself, which does not exactly mean [...] that capitalism transforms the worker into a machine and alienates him as a result.<sup>52</sup>

As far as Being's relationship to questioning in the context of a humanist tradition in higher education is concerned, Foucault's answer to Heidegger's "groundless questioning" means that the individual student has begun to think of his or her education in terms of the enterprise and entrepreneurship, and that he or she has begun to think of the body in terms of investing in one's self. One can argue that it is through the affects that are produced as the consequence of networked long-term urban and curricular planning by neoliberal universities that practice a no holds barred economic and social forecasting that students begin to think and feel in this way, and that this long-term planning should be explicitly referred to as a type of biopolitics where the student's skill, as knowledge producer, cannot be disassociated from his or her self. This is due to the fact that many of the features of long-term university planning involve the use of statistics, distance education, and the rhetoric of excellence in order to "better the lot" of the university's student population.<sup>53</sup> Many of these plans, from mandatory library surveys and projected completion dates of graduate work, include a type of "free-floating control" that replaces that of the "old disciplines."<sup>54</sup> As soon as the university uses these mechanisms after posing itself the

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<sup>52</sup> Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 224.

<sup>53</sup> For an excellent survey of the negative effects of online distance education see David F. Noble's eye-opening *Digital Diploma Mills: The Automation of Higher Education*.

<sup>54</sup> Deleuze. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." 1.

problem of improving the human capital of the student population in general, “it is inevitable that the problem of control, screening, and improvement of the human capital of individuals, as a function of unions and consequent reproduction, will become actual, or at any rate, called for.”<sup>55</sup> So the learning that is produced at the contemporary university is explicitly tied to a type of educational investment that is more akin to corporate investment and less to important modes of critique and criticism that are slowly disappearing from the university, no matter the growth of so-called “critical” Cultural Studies programs in North America.

It would be another (but important) study to determine the extent to which today’s “critical” Humanities programs – increasingly identified as Communication and/or Cultural Studies – are critical in any real sense – to chart the titles/topics of dissertations in this field and/or the number of people who earn a degree in Cultural Studies yet never participate in the field after the degree is earned (I offer my view in Chapter 4). Or the recent hires of faculty. I strongly suspect a forced neoliberalization of this field as a type of “permanent training” given the university’s entrepreneurializing demands on its faculty to win external grants (which are increasingly informed, particularly in Canada, according to party politics and an extremely narrow understanding of economics – increasingly, Humanities grants are directed towards “commercializable outcomes,” et cetera). So, just as the corporation replaces the factory, “*perpetual training* tends to replace the *school*, and continuous control to replace the examination. Which is the surest way of delivering the school over to the corporation.”<sup>56</sup> The flattening out of disciplines occurs in tandem with a flattening of the student body as such,<sup>57</sup> and, like the corporation, the university begins to lose sight of its social responsibility. Or, it is worse: social responsibility becomes re-cast as economic (neoliberal) responsibility and

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<sup>55</sup> Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 228.

<sup>56</sup> Deleuze. “Postscript on the Societies of Control.” 3.

<sup>57</sup> The student body in general chooses to “request apprenticeships and permanent training.” Ibid. 7.

entrepreneurialism. And indeed, social *irresponsibility* is increasingly coded as “theory” – mere “theory” in relation to increasingly narrow understandings of “practice” (job training, vocationalization, et cetera). Also, those who claim that theory is socially and pedagogically *irresponsible* actually (unbelievably) make the claim that theory is elitist. The opposite is actually the case, and we are in the centre of some Orwellian double-speak. Theory is the only tool that allows us to critique *problems of power*. And so those who say that theory is *irresponsible* or even *immoral*, are actually the (often well-intentioned) vassals of corporations that run the university – those who do not want a critique of power, obviously, but who want “docile bodies” that are well-disciplined.

The neoliberal university as pure “i-society” is a place not for the individual body but for the population in general. As the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze would put it, “[t]he numerical language of control is made of codes that mark access to information, or reject it. We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become *dividuals*, and masses, samples, data, markets, or *banks*.”<sup>58</sup> It is a society that surveys, a sort of “real-virtual” body where the student or the individual is controlled and normalized under the power of an information technology that perpetuates the notion of human capital in the pursuit of abstract goals that are interchangeable.<sup>59</sup> There is a profound logic at work; first, the university deploys a rhetoric of excellence, which requires a type of regulation or self regulation; second, surveillance or mechanisms of control (including “awards” and “merit” and so on); and third, concrete practices whereby the university implements its neoliberal agenda in order to create the “dividuals” that Deleuze describes (the dividual student as the absence of an individual one that might *embody* the institution). In other words, at the cost of the student, “the university of

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> “The neoliberal project is essentially to take “scarce means” and, with no single end in mind, to have to “choose” between alternative ends.” Foucault. 222.

excellence serves nothing other than itself, another corporation in a world of transnationally exchanged capital.”<sup>60</sup> If the university is no longer the place of national culture, as Readings and Santos state, then it is the place of the city as urban development and it is here that the concept of excellence in the university is put to work.

Many of these changes are articulated through the flattening out of knowledge into pure information economies, and there are many university networks that fit into this type of neoliberal conceptualization of capital flows; their long-term projects aim at transforming the old notion of the archive into a site of urban development and technological innovation. Readings captures the philosophical rationale behind these and similar decisions. In explaining the term dereferentialization, he states that “what is crucial about terms like ‘culture’ and ‘excellence’ (and even ‘University’ at times) is that they no longer have specific referents; they no longer refer to a specific set of things or ideas.”<sup>61</sup> Or, as the popular Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek would put it, they become “transcendental signifiers” that can refer to anything and everything, but always partly phantastic; “nonsense within the field of sense.”<sup>62</sup> While the concept of dereferentialization helps us to think the global shift in the neoliberal conceptualization of the university, it does not account for the practices whereby the university puts a concept like dereferentialization to work. Beyond the long-term plans and flashy web sites, the rhetoric of excellence is enforced by a certain turn towards education *as defined by* structures of information and communications technologies (ICTs) and an ideological stance that affirms their neutrality, as if “nothing else could be the case.”<sup>63</sup> It is with the growing appearance of ubiquitous ICT

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<sup>60</sup> Readings. 43.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>62</sup> Žižek. *Organs Without Bodies*. 91.

<sup>63</sup> In a little known essay, Žižek criticises this aspect of the university. He states that “the constitutive lie of the university discourse is that it disavows its performative dimension, presenting what effectively amounts to a political decision based on power as a simple insight into the factual state of things.” See “From Politics to Biopolitics...and Back.”

economies across all discourses that the university enacts the concept of excellence. These are systemically “structuring” technologies and economies which allow the university to speak less of “knowledge” and more of a homogeneous type of “learning system” across all disciplines (witness the decline of Women’s Studies, Post-Colonial Studies, and Philosophy courses and departments the world over).<sup>64</sup> Here in Canada, the University of Toronto recently began the process of sweeping house, eliminating or amalgamating departments altogether; the announcement of the disestablishment of the Centre for Comparative Literature in 2011, the East Asian Studies Department, as well as the dismantling of the Centre for Ethics being the most recent. Also here in Canada, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council’s (SSHRC) buzz words to define these terms are “knowledge transfer,” “knowledge mobilization,” and “capacity building.” The point we should understand is that it is not simply that technology threatens higher education (to say so would be to admit to Luddism), but that we must be cognizant of the sometimes devastating effects of its mishandling; society must weigh in, from time to time, in order to make sure that the original sense of questioning relative to the Humanities and to higher education proper has not altogether disappeared. As even Daniel Bell once said, “[t]echnology does not determine social change; technology provides instrumentalities and potentialities. The way these are used involves social choices.”<sup>65</sup>

Today, the university, as traditional archive of national culture, has made the choice to open itself not to a humanist culture but to the network; we have moved from the nation to the networked city, and the place of the university constantly seeks to become the place of the city. Each modern network is a hub, a node – connected to all others digitally, but also a place where

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<sup>64</sup> The closure or renaming of these courses and departments is often justified by the fact that other, more profitable, areas such as Business or Engineering had to leverage the deficit produced by the former. Most notably, see the recent closure of Middlesex University’s renowned Department of Philosophy.

<sup>65</sup> Bell. xxxviii.

*bodies* find themselves lumped together, that proximity affording certain material benefits but also bringing risks, like SARS and swine flu, or other “contagions,” like terrorist cells, gangs, drugs, et cetera. This urban “architecture” (the living-together of real bodies with virtual ones) is really a networked *architectonic* (in the Aristotelian/Kantian sense, literally the “systematization of all knowledge”) and a form of governmentality. And there is no shortage of publications on this theory of networks, as the slew of texts from the past decade attests.<sup>66</sup> The neoliberal university now seeks similar techniques, sources, and forms of productivity, and also the discovery of new markets or new resources of manpower.<sup>67</sup> However, it will be clear throughout the following that, in Foucault’s words, “we cannot halt at this problem of innovation and, as it were, trust in the boldness of capitalism or the permanent stimulation of competition.”<sup>68</sup>

Networks require *bodies* – in the strict Foucauldian sense – and these bodies orient certain power-relationships within the network of control. As the urban theorist David Harvey has pointed out, bodies are “the only irreducible in Foucault’s scheme of things.” They are the “site at which all forms of *repression* are ultimately registered. So while there are, in Foucault’s celebrated dictum, ‘no relations of power without resistances’ he equally insists that no utopian scheme can ever hope to escape the power-knowledge relation in non-repressive ways.”<sup>69</sup> Every body relationship produces affects – even if they are technologically reproduced via ICTs – including the repressions that the network society produces and maintains. *What are the negative consequences of repressive forms of technologically enhanced affectivity for higher education*

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<sup>66</sup> For the most conspicuous examples, see Manuel Castells’ *The Rise of the Network Society*, Geert Lovink’s *Uncanny Networks: Dialogues with the Virtual Intelligentsia*, Lev Manovich’s *The Language of New Media*, Tiziana Terranova’s *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*, Mark Newman, Albert-Laszlo Barabasi, and Duncan J. Watts’ *The Structure and Dynamics of Networks*, Yochai Benkler’s *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*, Brian Massumi, Detlef Mertins, Lars Spuybroek, and Moortje Marres’ *Interact or Die: There Is Drama In The Networks*, and Darin Barney’s *The Network Society*.

<sup>67</sup> Michel Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 231.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Harvey. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. 45. My emphasis.

*and how might we resist them in the networked society?* In what new forms have these problems appeared since Foucault's famous lectures at the Collège de France? In short, how could we theorize, first, a determinate socio-technological location of the exercise of biopower or of resistance to it in the contemporary neoliberal university networks, and, second, the possibility of autonomous activity and an emancipatory biopolitical praxis? Should we accept the expansion of biopolitics as an institutional requirement to assure an immanent and strategic university network, or should it rather be seen as the organization of a unilateral power relation by a new type of sovereign?

Biomedia scholars Eugene Thacker and Alexander Galloway have argued that while the sovereign might adopt a different form in the networked society it continues to maintain a privileged status in the governing of the social; contrary to the Agambenian thesis, they insist that the network does not eradicate the sovereign relation but rather posits it in different terms; sovereignty can now be attributable to those exercising control over the networks, as contemporary political crises the world over can attest. But it is particularly the "report-back" function of the network that Thacker and Galloway are interested in:

Many today say that new media technologies are ushering in a new era of enhanced freedom and that technologies of control are waning. We say, on the contrary, that *double the communication leads to double the control*. Since interactive technologies such as the Internet are based on multidirectional rather than unidirectional command and control, we expect to see an exponential increase in the potential for exploitation and control through techniques such as monitoring, surveillance, biometrics, and gene therapy. At least the unidirectional media of the past were ignoring half the loop. At least television did not know if the home audience was watching or not. As the mathematicians might say, television is a "directed" or unidirectional graph. Today's media have closed the loop; they are "undirected" or bidirectional graphs. Today's media physically require the maintained, constant, continuous interaction of users. This is the political tragedy of interactivity. We are "treading water in the pool of liquid power," as Critical Art Ensemble once put it. We long not for the reestablishment of lost traditions of solidification and



naturalization as seen in patriarchy or conservatism. We long for the opposite memory: the past as *less* repressive from the perspective of informatic media. Television was a huge megaphone. The Internet is a high-bandwidth security camera. We are nostalgic, then, for a time *when organisms didn't need to produce quantitative data about themselves*, for a time when one didn't need to report back.<sup>70</sup>

At issue here is (1) the “locatability” of this power, and more subtly still, (2) the conditions of possibility for these (surely diffuse) locations of power to *be* empowered in the first place, i.e., those rhetorical conditions (largely affective) that support, condone, authorize, et cetera. Since the publication of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* and texts such as David Harvey’s *The New Imperialism*, it is a well known fact for theorists investigating these and similar relationships that sovereignty on a global-political level has left the domain of the nation and entered the world of transnational capital under the aegis of neoliberalism. Transnational corporations are attempting to exercise increasingly prolific sovereign decisions over populations that were traditionally the domain of the nation, from the privatization of natural resources like water in Bolivia (Bechtel Enterprise Holdings) to the ownership of DNA databases containing the genetic information of entire nations as in the case of Greenland (DeCode Genetics). But it might sound like we are getting off track. Just what does all of this mean for higher education? The answer, in short, is “everything.” The rhetoric of neoliberal governmentality has entered higher education at all levels, both here in Canada, and abroad.

In Canada, The University of Ontario Institute of Technology’s (UOIT) Strategic Plan for 2005-2010 has attempted to encompass multiple neoliberal mechanisms at once.<sup>71</sup> Included among these goals are the recruitment and retention of “excellent students” as well as the

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<sup>70</sup> Thacker and Galloway. 124.

<sup>71</sup> Their “UOIT 2005-2010 Strategic Plan Follow-up Report” contains no fewer than “14 themes, 58 goals and 578 specific action items”.

development of a “higher external profile” for the university.<sup>72</sup> However harmless the pursuit of these goals might appear, the report attempts to address these and other problems from a conspicuously corporate approach. The plan makes clear the university’s desire to, first, arbitrarily increase “the number and amounts of student rewards” and, second, complete “the UOIT branding exercise.” In the first case, UOIT essentially deployed a tactic that flattens-out the quality of education in the university; future students are awarded scholarships and prizes so that potential students might be persuaded to enrol at the university. The decision to implement this first goal is simply a desire to increase the number of students at the institution, not the quality of education. In the second case, the university essentially subscribes to the logic of corporate branding; they are concerned about the symbolic impact of the school’s image rather than the inner workings of its pedagogic system. This news is terrifying in that the time and care that should be given to the act of pedagogy is instead given to an abstract image that is used to entice a high number of students who desire the brand recognition associated with the school to be added to their transcript. Secondly, the logic of this investment in branding implies an epiphenomenon in the form of a high turnover in the undergraduate population, and the university subsequently comes to resemble a busy downtown department store. We should be reminded, here, of Deleuze’s comments on the “soul” of the corporation:

Marketing has become the center or the "soul" of the corporation. We are taught that corporations have a soul, which is the most terrifying news in the world. The operation of markets is now the instrument of social control and forms the impudent breed of our masters. Control is short-term and of rapid rates of turnover, but also continuous and without limit, while discipline was of long duration, infinite and discontinuous. Man is no longer man enclosed, but man in debt.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Deleuze. “Postscript on the Societies of Control.” 7.

What UOIT's plan shows us is that there is a tendency in the neoliberal university to think in terms not of goals that are immediately positive for the student population but rather in terms of abstract practices that will increase their reservoir of human capital in order to increase the "real" capital of the institution.

In the United States, The University of Pennsylvania's "Strategic Plan for the University of Pennsylvania" focuses on a number of neoliberal concerns. First, they express interest in expanding "cross-school and cross-disciplinary programs."<sup>74</sup> This is effectively a bid to increase those ambiguous fields of Cultural Studies that claim no particular area of study (more on this notion in Chapter 5). One should note, however, that it is not simply its status as a multidisciplinary field which makes something like "cultural studies" deserving of the phrase "neoliberal scholarship." What tends to happen is that there is a tendency to combine not different forms of inquiry but already established cultural phenomena, the product of which then masquerades as a theoretical undertaking. It becomes, essentially, a matter of feeding off of materially produced forms of capital (popular television shows, movies, games, et cetera.) in order to produce something that is "academic." Penn wishes to "establish a rigorous, normative protocol" in order to develop programs that belong to academic departments that are "among the top ten in the United States." Their doctoral and professional programs will be the programs of choice for the "ablest graduate and professional students in the nation and in the world," and they will seek to "encourage innovative and efficient teaching." In order to achieve all of this, the university endeavours to generate "\$10 million at the central level in new revenues through entrepreneurial business ventures and better management of existing auxiliary enterprises." As an indicator of the way in which neoliberal long-term planning actually results in an infinite

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<sup>74</sup> The inclusion of a clear "web author" signature is conspicuously absent. Who, exactly, is speaking? Are we left to assume that it is an "invisible hand" that guides those who write?

stream of finance capital accumulation, the plan also mentions that in order to reach the \$10 million goal they will have to “build partnerships with corporations, educational institutions, medical institutions, and others” (meaning, essentially, that you have to spend money to make money). Emphasis is also placed on the development of technology given that the university recognizes “that technology is revolutionizing the ways in which knowledge is acquired, created, and disseminated.” The plan goes on to say that Penn will continue to promote itself “aggressively as an institution that educates the best students and produces future leaders” (university branding), but the rhetoric does not end there. In its bid to develop the university, they will seek to enhance student career placements in order to ensure their success in a competitive job market (the new student body). The inclusion of “best students,” “future leaders,” “career placements” and “competitive job market” all take part in the rhetoric of the neoliberal university.

Education should be more about learning rather than the simple “transmission” of knowledge. Context matters and education implicitly embodies different techniques of questioning knowledge and understanding ourselves. The following chapter will identify several contemporary methods for questioning knowledge – theories that focus on the educational, political, and philosophical dimensions that inform the contemporary crisis of higher education – before arguing for an alternative in the form of a critical political-economic analysis of neoliberal policy change as well as a philosophical critique of its attendant ideological underpinnings.

## 2. THE UNIVERSITY, STATE, AND MARKET

### 2.1. BOURDIEU’S DESACRALIZATION OF PEDAGOGY

There is no shortage of literature lamenting the sorry state of affairs that education has fallen into at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. The last two centuries of industrialization gradually inaugurated a new, mostly state-sponsored, formal school system; however, in recent times, the character of the relationship between minor political and economic crises and education is a good deal more ambiguous. There exist texts from every side of the political debate on education espousing the need for scholastic reforms, yet it is a pity that a great many of them take the form of either a) conflating particular (cultural or national) pedagogical crises with a vision for a more universal (quantifiable) system of education or b) offer a dryly neutral political-economic analysis that connects the crises of education at both the local and global levels. Unfortunate texts written by scholars such as Allan Bloom (*The Closing of the American Mind*) as well as more sympathetic texts written by left-leaning professors like Bill Readings (*The University in Ruins*) belong to the first category, while sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu (*Homo Academicus*), Daniel Bell, and Anthony Giddens belong to the second. The problems with the first group mostly stem from the myopic logic that informs the methodology of their general thesis. For instance, in the first group, we constantly come across “canon” debates and the like, or, in the case of Bill Readings, references to specific philosophical theories on education that are meant to be taken as an antidote to more universal problems relating to higher education. While everyone from Plato to Giorgio Agamben have written at least partially on education, it would be silly to assume that, in order for society’s pedagogic problems to be resolved, *one had to read Plato or Agamben*. Ludwig Wittgenstein famously believed that in order to practice philosophy one did not need to read Aristotle, while the French phenomenologist Henri Bergson claimed that anything that philosophy had to say could be said in plain, simple language.

While someone like Bill Readings makes very clear where his sympathies lie at the beginning of a text, he falls victim to the very same critique that he inveighs against theoretical nemeses like Allan Bloom; namely, he refers to ideas by specific, *culturally determined*, philosophical personalities (a call not unlike Strauss' or Bloom's request for a return of those "lost heroes" and their "great works" of literature or, to offer a modern example, Alain Badiou's prescriptive call for a resurrection of "poetic heroes")<sup>75</sup> – the *Bildungsroman* model of education, in short – in order to approach an answer to the question of what method best suits higher education in a neoliberal world. As far as the sociologists are concerned, books such as John Guillory's *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* follow a similar logic to Bourdieu's (that it is the "cultural capital" embedded in structures that require knowing just *which* are the "great books" that causes inequality).<sup>76</sup> But, to point to a salient point made by Bill Readings, *money* and *prestige* are not directly convertible, that is, unless they are located within a closed national (cultural) sphere,<sup>77</sup> and in a world where the national is on the decline, this analyses proves embarrassingly behind the times. Readings goes on to criticize the logic informing the methodology of thinkers like Guillory and Bourdieu in that "what is proposed is not an alternative to the system but the more equal redistribution of capital within the system."<sup>78</sup>

The "appeal," we are told, of thinkers like Bourdieu is that they can "take into account" the loss of reference (dereferentialization) while still being able to produce "what looks like cultural capital in terms of proximity to or distance from a cultural center." Since, as we noted in the last chapter, the nation is no longer the place of power especially with regard to the university, this center is a phantom. "Capital no longer flows outward from the center, rather it

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<sup>75</sup> See Chapter 1, "What Is Liberal Education?," of Strauss' *Liberalism Ancient & Modern*, Bloom's *Giants and Dwarfs*, as well as Badiou's *Handbook of Inaesthetics* and introduction to *Saint Paul*.

<sup>76</sup> Bourdieu. *Distinction*.

<sup>77</sup> Readings. 108.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 109. Emphasis in original.

circulates around the circumference, behind the backs of those who keep their eyes firmly fixed on the center.”<sup>79</sup> This is perhaps one of the most original features of Readings’ analysis; his position is one kept at a striking distance from traditional Marxist and post-Marxist theorists in that not only does he shy away from the fact that, given the decline of the nation, power no longer moves in a top-down fashion, he also rejects the sideways positioning or “flattening out” of this logic according to the power schemas of someone like Bourdieu. Raymond A. Morrow, too, in a view that is slightly more accusatory, views Bourdieu as “unwittingly contributing” to the infiltration of capitalist business practices into the university; his analysis of “distinction” in higher education serves to (however indirectly) “deligitimize the sacral origins of the autonomy of higher education” and thus helped to undermine its public responsibility.<sup>80</sup> But where thinkers like Morrow view the current “desacralization” of the university as a cultural institution as the product of “nonideological and noncoercive means” based on the interests of the consumers of education and research, it remains to be seen just how “nonideological” market forces are in the debate surrounding higher education. Neoliberalism, like every other “ism,” connects a core set of foundational beliefs and assumptions about how the world works. In this case, a market-driven approach to economic and social policy based on theories that emphasise the role of private business in determining the political and economic priorities of the state. Simply put, the real criticism directed at thinkers like Bourdieu is that education and research should serve some sort of emancipatory goal and not simply interpret the world. Accountability, rather than accounting, should be its primary *raison d'être*.

What option is there left for those in the university who continue to seek an understanding as to how power relations, after the neoliberalization of higher education, have

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 111.

<sup>80</sup> Morrow. xxvii.

drastically altered pedagogy? Following a great many education scholars, one option might be to seek out alternative “post-Marxist” theories; however, the following will take a different approach. The argument of the remainder of this chapter is that a more nuanced and factually grounded theory of educational crises and change must be carried out according to a logic of critical political economy in order to highlight specific instances of the practice of neoliberalization. In order to do this, one must avoid taking certain concepts from Marx’s era as adequate for an analysis of our own social, political, cultural, and economic milieu without obtaining what Toronto sociologist David W. Livingstone describes as “comparable empirical analyses and attendant conceptual revisions.”<sup>81</sup> As I mentioned in the previous chapter, networked space inaugurates new power relations, and while this does not mean the disappearance of things like hegemony or sovereignty, it does mean that they function in new and different ways. The capital flows of neoliberal higher education function, as Readings suggests, by circulating around the circumference, behind the backs of those who do not pay attention to the way in which neoliberalism redefines certain terms at the same time that it renegotiates traditional avenues of political economy. But we should be careful not to conflate the historical with the trans-historical.

## 2.2. THE WORLDLY NETWORKS

A recent collection of essays, authored by some of the most renowned education scholars in the world, was released in 2006. The collection, entitled *The University, State, and Market: The Political Economy of Globalization in the Americas*, stands as a testament to the ongoing struggle that higher education has had to face against a market hegemony that increasingly

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<sup>81</sup> Livingstone. 141.



attempts to undermine truly democratic forms of pedagogy in favour of quick-fix (read: profitable) pedagogic solutions, and it serves as a refreshing critical analysis to which the old generation of Marxist thinkers now appear as the antecedent. Education scholars have shown that the problem is not that the corporation has infiltrated the university from outside, as many political radicals might also suggest, but that the problem is rather with the way in which public subsidies from the state given to the university are increasingly being redirected into ventures that involve a cooperation between corporations, universities, and, more often today, the city. This is coupled with a real decline in investment in higher education. In Ontario this has happened since the mid-1990s during the Jean Chrétien/Paul Martin federal Liberal government and the Mike Harris provincial Conservatives with their “common sense revolution.” The joining of private and public funds has usurped the place that semi-autonomous university practices once held in relation to money handed down from the state. Gary Rhoades and Sheila Slaughter, best known for their coauthored book *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education*, argue that

the privatization embedded in academic capitalism shifts the target of public subsidy. [...] Rather than conflating it with a reduction of public monies for higher education [...] privatization shifts public subsidy toward particular private interests in the postindustrial economy [...] it *redefines* how the public interest is served and to what effects.<sup>82</sup>

What this means is that it is not as simple as saying that there used to be an autonomous university that is now being threatened from the “outside” by corporate capital. Rather, the current situation reflects the fact that new regimes of governmentality, in and outside of the university, are constantly redefining what “public” and “private” mean while at the same time reconfiguring the economic infrastructure of both the university and the market at large. As I noted in the previous chapter, the university never sat under the aegis of full autonomy, yet

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<sup>82</sup> Rhoades and Slaughter. 104. My emphasis.

historically it has found itself answerable to different groups that were not, at least directly, associated with big business. In many cases, its ties to corporations are new and have been made invisible to us since the appearance of would-be philanthropist Carnegies in the latter half of the twentieth century. However, it is also true that, historically, even in the United States which has the highest ratio of private education in the world, “private colleges and universities were not typically for-profit enterprises but rather voluntary associations based on various religious or cultural goals.”<sup>83</sup> In the seventies and eighties, however, education scholarship noted the almost invisible transition of religious or cultural based pedagogy into one that served capitalism by creating compliant, docile workers.<sup>84</sup> Today, in some North American public universities, “state funding is less than 20 percent of the total budget.”<sup>85</sup>

How has academic capitalism permeated the arenas of higher education? It did so in many underhanded and not-so-underhanded ways, but it did so mostly after the installation of a long term governmental planning that involves the process of regionalization. After the creation of bodies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), European Union, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Central America Free Trade Agreement, and others, various processes of harmonization were introduced as an effort to curb disequilibrium and to develop uniform standards for products and trade. What this means is that it is not only a matter of monitoring trade at a transnational level, nor is it only a matter of the conjoining of political and economic interests. As an epiphenomenal effect of such practices, certain norms and values beneficial to specific locals are being advanced and thus usurp the space of pre-existing cultures and belief systems, and the university, like any other institution, is not immune to these new types of power relations.

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<sup>83</sup> Morrow. xxiv.

<sup>84</sup> See Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis’ 1976 study *Schooling in Capitalist America*.

<sup>85</sup> Santos. 65.

Free capital tends to have great influence on governing bodies, and so important socioeconomic decisions are increasingly being made according to what Noam Chomsky calls “unaccountable concentrations of power.”<sup>86</sup> Take the General Agreement on Trades and Services (GATS). The term “services,” like the term “excellence,” is meant to encompass just about anything that falls into the realm of democratic choice (education among them).<sup>87</sup> What this means is that democracy becomes, *as it should* according to economists like Milton Friedman, the “freedom to choose” between commodities and services.<sup>88</sup> And what this has allowed, as we shall see in the next chapter, are long-term planning practices that are, for the most part, initiated by universities in order to advance their agenda for profit and growth. “Projection” and “forecasting” are the key modalities in which neoliberalism operates; in many cases they are what *predetermine* the roles and stakes in the battle for higher education and thus enforce a presupposed logic onto any dialogue neoliberalism might have with bodies of dissent, drastically reducing the possibilities for real democratic change. Higher education, defined as a service under this market logic, thus becomes another venture in not only an economic but *social* forecasting that serves a particular group of elite individuals. And while there is an increasing internationalization in the global universities of today, this does not mean that the quality of education rises or maintains a suitable level apropos the number of incoming students. As economists such as Joseph Stiglitz have warned, the main message behind “globalization and its discontents” points to the necessity of establishing a set of rules that should not only govern a global economy but define whose interests those rules ultimately serve.<sup>89</sup> In the case of higher education, those rules are no longer serving the interest of the student or many faculty members.

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<sup>86</sup> Chomsky. “A World Without War.” 50.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Friedman.

<sup>89</sup> Stiglitz.

Rules and “reforms” are today shaped by regionalizing bodies that are in favour of international competitiveness. These reforms are often as rhetorical and propagandistic as “excellence” in that they are not simply “reforms” but “competition-based reforms” meant to serve the market economy by creating

measurable performance standards through extensive standardized testing (the new standards and accountability movement), the introduction of new teaching and learning methods leading to the expectation of better performance at low cost (e.g., the universalization of textbooks), and improvements in the selection and training of teachers.<sup>90</sup>

Neoliberal economic advocates view the invisible hand of the market as the best possible regulator of goods and services, and so it follows that if we think of education in this way, then from a neoliberal point of view, the most productive way to regulate universities and colleges is to allow the economy to do so. It should be stated that, on top of this economization, privatization is the rule of thumb as far as what type of economy is allowed to proliferate. Let us take a look at some of the transnational governing bodies that are key players in this market logic and how they pressure non-subscribers into joining the neoliberal network.

The privatization of higher education in debt-riddled countries such as Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina typically is advanced by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as a precondition to further borrowing.<sup>91</sup> Privatization policies are “crucial elements of the reforms oriented toward promoting open markets, and, as such, they are important policy tools of neoliberalism.”<sup>92</sup> Education scholars Carlos Alberto Torres and Robert A. Rhoads identify two of the key benefits as seen by neoliberals: first, the pressure of fiscal spending is reduced by the privatization of public sector enterprises, and, second, privatization is seen as a powerful instrument for depoliticizing the regulatory practices of the state in the area of public policy

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<sup>90</sup> Torres and Rhoads. 11.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 11-12.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 13.

formation.<sup>93</sup> Obviously, the first victims of these neoliberal reforms are the economically poorer countries in places like Africa and South America.

In the case of Africa, Santos has called attention to a UNESCO report from 1997 about the sorry state of disrepair that African universities had fallen into by the turn of the century and the subsequent neoliberal strong-arming of Africa by the World Bank shortly thereafter. The World Bank was unable to see the potential benefits of a higher education infrastructure for a developing country and instead declared the situation irreparable; they concluded that

African universities do not generate sufficient return on their investment. As a consequence, the African countries were asked to stop investing in universities and to concentrate their few resources on primary and secondary education, thus allowing the global market of higher education to resolve the problem of the university for them.<sup>94</sup>

South American countries have also fallen victim to the coercive techniques of neoliberalizing transnational bodies. The World Bank's 2002 report on higher education assumes that

Brazil is not going to (i.e., it should not) increase the university's public resources and that therefore the solution is in the expansion of the university market combined with the reduction of the cost per student (which, among other things, serves to maintain the pressure on teachers' salaries) and the elimination of free public instruction, as is now beginning to happen in Portugal.<sup>95</sup>

But these techniques should not be described as unique to large regionalizing bodies.

Outrageously, initiatives started by nongovernmental organizations often cloud their own practices in the rhetoric of "compassionate commerce," "social entrepreneurship," "venture philanthropy," or "corporate social responsibility."

The negative effects of regionalizing bodies on higher education in developing counties are obvious, yet it is astonishing that such negative effects are allowed to continue when "world

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Santos. 65-66.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 66.

expenditure on education has grown to \$2 trillion, more than double the world market for automobiles.”<sup>96</sup> In the US trade balance, education is the fifth largest export service, generating \$12 billion in revenue in 2004.<sup>97</sup> Santos reminds us of the irresistible allure of higher education for would-be investors in goods and services; analysts from large financial management and advisory companies such as Merrill Lynch

think that the educational sector possesses characteristics similar to those displayed by the health field in the 1970s: a gigantic market, fragmented and unproductive, looking to improve its low technological level, with a tremendous deficiency of professional administration and a low rate of capitalization. The growth of educational capital has been exponential and the rates of return are very high: £1, 000 invested in 1996 was worth £3, 405 in 2000, a gain of 240 percent, vastly superior to the general growth rate of the London stock market, the FTSE: 65 percent. In 2002 the USA-OECD Forum concluded that the global market for education was being transformed into a significant part of the world services market.<sup>98</sup>

All of this is indicative of the fact that the World Bank has incorporated many of the items outlined in Chapter 1 into its mandate for global economic growth (the informationalization of pedagogy, human capital, entrepreneurialism, the erosion of public subsidies, etc.). The World Bank is set to begin on the path of transforming a large part of itself into the Knowledge Bank, and much of this is reflected in the ideas that structure the GATS in the area of education. Education is one of the twelve services covered by this agreement. The current ideology of regionalizing bodies such as the World Bank and the WTO is systemically against *public* universities in order to show that higher education “is potentially a commodity like any other and that its conversion into an educational commodity is evidence of the superiority of capitalism as an organizer of social relations.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 68.

<sup>97</sup> Ross.

<sup>98</sup> Santos. 68. Hirtt. 20.

<sup>99</sup> Santos. 70.

In accordance with the logic of the informationalization of pedagogy and the successive appearance of innumerable, profitable online (distance) education programs, the World Bank believes that the “peripheral and semi-peripheral countries” can count on it in order to provide financial aid.<sup>100</sup> In Brazil alone, a line of credit worth R\$750 million was provided to private universities with resources originating from the World Bank.<sup>101</sup> However, some countries have rejected the logic of this seemingly helping hand. South Africa’s rejection of GATS is based on its opposition to the GATS practice of avoiding any type of non-commercial considerations that do not meet its four ways of developing “the transnational mercantilization of educational services: transborder offerings, foreign consumption, commercial presence, and presence of natural persons.”<sup>102</sup>

Proponents of neoliberalism view most of the foreseeable growth in higher education in transborder offerings or “distance learning,” as well as in commercial presence or “satellite branches of institutions.” This belief is predicated on university initiated economic and social forecasts that predict a decline in foreign consumption; many believe that due to a burgeoning system of ICTs around the globe, fewer international students will be attending schools outside of their native country, opting instead to partake in distance learning (on-line classes) or satellite campuses. Due to the nature of these forecasts, there has been fierce resistance to the inclusion of education in the GATS by administrators in WTO member nations, most notably in 2001 by a Joint Declaration of four reputable academic institutions in North America and Europe and the 2002 Porto Alegre Declaration, signed by Iberian and Latin American associations.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 71.

<sup>103</sup> Ross.

Even in the “developed” world, higher education is in such dire shape after the practice of economic/social forecasting and the rampant neoliberalism of the past four decades that it has led to what Bob Samuels, author of the popular blog *Changing Universities*, has called the American University as hedge fund. In an article published for *The Huffington Post*, Samuels describes how Yale endowment manager, David Swenson, “inspired universities throughout the country to shift their investments from secure bonds and treasury notes to volatile equities and commodities.”<sup>104</sup> The latest case uncovered by Samuels occurred in August 2009. Only one month after the state of California drastically reduced spending on its higher education budget, the University of California (UC) shocked many with its decision to lend the state \$200 million while the school was raising student fees, laying off employees, and cancelling classes. But what seemed like a paradox of finance capital lending was actually the result of an economic forecasting that would have adverse effects on the lives of every student and faculty member. UC president Mark Yudof eventually explained, after repeated requests for him to make clear the logic behind such a potentially ill-considered move, that “when the university lends money to the state, it turns a profit, but when it spends money on salaries for teachers, the money is lost.”<sup>105</sup> Higher education thus obtains a new bottom-line principle. The cash nexus takes precedence over any specific issue related to pedagogy and so it is not surprising that, as the recent crises at the University of California can attest, students should mobilize, strike, and occupy buildings when decisions are announced that drastically claw back the resources that should be considered of prime import for teaching and learning.

Before anything like the swindling of financially poor countries or “the university as hedge fund” could exist, various amendments, reforms, and acts were passed in the United States

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<sup>104</sup> Samuels.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.



that began the relatively recent neoliberalization of higher education. One of the first ventures in the marketization of universities came with the Higher Education Amendments of 1972, and one of the key decisions inherent to the amendments was “whether monies should be allocated to higher education institutions in block grants or to students through financial aid.”<sup>106</sup> While many higher education institutional associations fought for the block grants, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and the Committee on Economic Development “articulated a market discourse of student choice” which essentially cast all students as potential consumers.<sup>107</sup> This should have been a call for alarm, given the fact that most federal student aid, in the past, was issued in the form of grants; what the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 initiated were essentially the transferring of such grants into interest-heavy loans. By 2000-2001, loans comprised 58 percent of the total aid given to students in the US, and, over time, huge increases in the cost of tuition have not been matched with comparable increases in financial aid.<sup>108</sup>

Various acts, such as the 1998 Higher Education Act, have perpetuated the neoliberalization of the university by “supporting the expansion and greater public subsidy of for-profit postsecondary schools.”<sup>109</sup> But it was especially with the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980 – widely regarded as the beginning point in the marketization of higher education – that universities “were now in the business of creating products with public monies and taking profit from them.”<sup>110</sup> Immediately following the Bayh-Dole Act was the 1984 National Cooperative Research Act which essentially gave antitrust status to joint entrepreneurial efforts between private and public bodies. It “facilitated collaborative research endeavours that mingled federal and university monies with financial support from the private sector and enabled firms in the

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<sup>106</sup> Rhoades and Slaughter.106.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 107.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

same industry to be cooperative partners in these ventures.”<sup>111</sup> As a result, a 1989 National Science Foundation study found that “more than 100 examples of cooperative ventures” were made possible by the act.<sup>112</sup> The university was now legally in bed with the corporation.

The trickle-down effect of amendments and reforms initiated in the US has had considerable implications for higher education here in Canada. While the World Bank and similar regionalizing organizations might be seen as having influenced decisions such as the Bayh-Dole Act, US think tanks have effected similar decisions north of the border. In the guessing game that is economic forecasting, once advantaged regions in higher education are susceptible to having their students carry the burden of leveraging the fiscal losses of the state.

### 2.3. THE CANADIAN DISADVANTAGE

The evolution of the Canadian university is inextricably linked to the political-economic history of that nation throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. As we have already seen, trends initiated by the United States government as well as transnational governing bodies such as the WTO have a huge influence on education in many countries. But it is not only these governing organizations that have an impact. Large think tanks from abroad, one of whose many tasks include projecting the amount of foreign currency debt any particular nation faces, have become key players in the economic and political future of nations, Canada included.

On October 14, 1992 Standard & Poor’s (S & P), a division of McGraw-Hill that publishes financial research and analysis on stocks and bonds, downgraded Canada’s foreign

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. 108.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

currency debt rating from AAA to AA+. <sup>113</sup> The higher the rating, the more likely other nations will feel inclined to lend and trade with the rated country, while lower ratings can significantly affect the economy of the country in negative ways. The S & P rating appeared at a significant time in Canada's education history, and it in many ways contributed to the disinvestment of public education in the provinces. After the rating was released, the C. D. Howe Institute, this time a Canadian economic policy think-tank, published a report entitled *Avoiding a Crisis*. In it, the Institute suggested that – in an economic manoeuvre comparable to the WTO's handling of Africa and South America – unless Canada eliminated the majority of its vast deficit, other nations might conclude that Canada was no longer creditworthy. <sup>114</sup>

It was just after the publication of the reports by S & P and C. D. Howe that Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Finance Minister Paul Martin, and Ontario Premier Mike Harris began what would become one of the most vicious assaults on the public education infrastructure in Canada. Martin and Harris would be the key players. In the two fiscal years between 1995-96 and 1997-98 alone, Martin achieved a \$33 billion turnaround in Ottawa's fiscal position; however, this miraculous feat was accomplished largely due to clawbacks in federal transfers to the provinces. He cut \$12 billion worth of federal spending, money that would have been used to fund education and health care, the two biggest provincial expenditures. <sup>115</sup> Meanwhile, Harris became embroiled in the controversy that was Bill 160, misleadingly named the Education Quality Improvement Act. The Act, another example of market logic dressed up as positive "reforms," essentially changed funding structures and "forced teachers to work more and with fewer resources – the loudest volley in a program that also included school closures, board

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<sup>113</sup> Martin. 24.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 25.

amalgamations, and the introduction of standardized testing.”<sup>116</sup> Additionally, Harris cut education expenditures by \$2 billion in his first two years. By 1997, public health and education expenditures were at the lowest point they had been or would be in the period 1992-2008.<sup>117</sup>

Harris kept education spending flat even after Canada eventually got out of its recession and as a result postsecondary funding fell by 21 percent during the 90s while enrolment increased by 8 percent.<sup>118</sup> Not many Canadians are aware of the fact that, up to 1995, our country enjoyed the world’s highest level of per capita public investment in education. Contrast this with the fact that, by 2002, Canadian education spending had fallen 17.5 percent behind the US and it is easy to see how economic “needs” are met with public cutbacks. Harris effectively turned the 4 percent per capita spending advantage into a 25 percent disadvantage by the time he resigned in 2002.<sup>119</sup> In 1993, “there was one full-time faculty member for every 18.8 students in Canadian universities. But by 2005, that ratio had deteriorated 23 percent, to 24.4 students.”<sup>120</sup> Today, the numbers sit at 27/1 here in Ontario.<sup>121</sup>

As a result of the disinvestment in Canadian education, regulatory and granting bodies are now beginning to favour business related research in order to stimulate slumping markets. Certain types of initiatives, announced recently, are another instance of the neoliberalization of the university, as well as of our federal granting bodies. In Toronto, Ryerson University has issued application forms promoting and requesting input on digital innovation, an area viewed as having profitable research potential. The form states how “Industry Canada launched a consultation process seeking input from stakeholders – universities, businesses, associations and

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. 26.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> See the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations’ website: [ocufa.on.ca](http://ocufa.on.ca)

others – across the country on how to strengthen Canada's place in the global digital economy.” There is a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) initiative coupled with this, and a whole policy paper available online.<sup>122</sup> Increasingly, SSHRC has taken to the practice of funding research on the economic implications of things like the “digital economy.” What this means is that, now, even social science and humanities funding bodies are increasingly (only) funding things with economic outcomes (i.e., “deliverables”). The SSHRC Knowledge Synthesis Grants on the Digital Economy offer up to \$25, 000 for researchers whose objectives are

- \* to describe the state of knowledge about the digital economy in key areas across Canadian society, including the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, by producing syntheses of research insights, evidence, interpretations and effective practices; and
- \* to identify knowledge gaps in areas that are critical for Canada, and that could contribute to a forward-looking Canadian research and research mobilization agenda for the digital economy.<sup>123</sup>

The death of Canada’s education advantage has meant many things, least of which is the reconceptualization of what research should mean in the Humanities. While tuition fees have skyrocketed and federal/provincial spending has decreased, the university’s curriculum has had to change alongside these and other global/national cutbacks. And these measures are not relegated to the confines of Canadian higher education. As the SSHRC case indicates, with the rise of globalization, universities have undergone prolific periods of internationalization and competitiveness, a process that has altered not only how things get taught in the university, but how the university imagines, builds, legitimizes, and sustains itself.

### 3. FROM SHANGHAI TO TORONTO: URBAN CAPITAL AND THE UNIVERSITY

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<sup>122</sup> <http://de-en.gc.ca/consultation-paper/>

<sup>123</sup> Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

### 3.1. URBANIZATION AS FINANCE CAPITAL

To what extent we are retrieving old patterns of city-states, the *umbilico mundi*, the centre of the world? The offshoring of university campuses has aided in the urbanization of cities around the globe, and Andrew Ross, professor in the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University, has indicated that while “no single organization has attained the operational status of a global university, after the model of the global corporation [...] it is only a matter of time before we see the current infants of that species take their first, unaided steps.”<sup>124</sup> As I noted in Chapter 2, the continuing bankruptcy of state support for the university has meant that higher education has had to mine new wells of finance, and so rather than cultivating a national project it has had to literally turn itself (its textbooks, buildings, archives; the bricks and mortar) into what bodies such as the World Bank and WTO desire it to be in order to sustain itself in a capitalist system; that is, after the last forty years of neoliberal reforms, it has had to *present itself* as a type of good/service. What the rise of academic capitalism in the Global University means is that we see a contemporaneous “glocalization” – localization as city urban planning and globalization as satellite campuses – in the form of an urbanization and regionalization of the cities; far-off capitals transmogrify into their own bustling city-states at the service of American expansionism.

By the late-1980s, Marxist and urban theorist David Harvey already began to note the transition of universities from the guardianship of knowledge to organized knowledge production and to the “ancillary production of knowledge for corporate capital.” Harvey cites everything from the Stanford Silicon Valley to MIT – Boston Route 128. In each case, “high-tech industry connections” in and around universities can be seen as concrete “configurations” which reflect

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<sup>124</sup> Ross.

the flexibility of capital to affect bodies.<sup>125</sup> The interesting point is that higher education sits in a unique position in relation to this type of capital; where “[t]he style of urban life reflects ‘the breakdown of clear class distinctions’ and is ‘accompanied by rising barriers between individuals,’”<sup>126</sup> the university’s physical growth fittingly perpetuates a similar double standard by aligning itself with a rhetoric of inclusion at the same time that it subscribes to certain exclusory urbanization processes that help institutional forms of education legitimize themselves by the same standards as those of capitalist production. Where the university preaches community service it practices private ownership. But how, exactly, is urbanization uniquely neoliberal? For starters, one should remember that urbanization is not always the product of high density populations. In places like Manila, the cost of living has forced residents to live in slums and shanty towns, while massive urbanization in Delhi resulted in tremendous strain on the city's infrastructure. The planned Dwarka Sub City appeared at the cost of the unplanned and congested residential areas of West Delhi. In short, urbanization is anything but a politically neutral phenomenon.

Harvey takes up French urban theorist Henri Lefebvre’s question of the importance of urbanization for capital, but he goes even further than Lefebvre in stating that urbanization is not only a specific *function* of capital but a particular *type* of capital.<sup>127</sup> In *The Urbanization of Capital*, he writes:

Capital ‘in general’ [...] looks to the built environment for two reasons. Firstly *the built environment functions as a set of use values for enhancing the production and accumulation of capital*. The physical infrastructures form a kind of fixed capital – much of which is collectively provided and used – which can be used as a means of production, of exchange, or of circulation. Secondly, *the production of*

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<sup>125</sup> Harvey. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. 160. Harvey’s “space-time compression” theory – the idea that postmodernity arrived with the digital technologies that collapse time and space – is the backbone of this thought.

<sup>126</sup> Harvey. *The Urban Experience*. 169.

<sup>127</sup> Harvey. *The Urbanization of Capital*. 221.

*the built environment forms a substantial market for commodities (such as structural steel) and services (such as legal and administrative services) and therefore contributes to the total effective demand for the products that capitalists themselves produce.* On occasion the built environment can become a type of ‘dumping ground’ for surplus money capital or idle productive capacity (sometimes by design, as in the public works programs of the 1930s), with the result that there are periodic bouts of overproduction and subsequent devaluation of the assets embedded in the built environment itself. The ‘wavelike’ pattern of investment in the built environment is a very noticeable feature in the economic history of capitalist societies.<sup>128</sup>

If this really is the case, what does this mean for the neoliberal university that seems to be increasingly involved in urban development practices? How has the university aligned itself with a specific type of capital – finance capital – in a way that promotes the growth of the university at the same time that it hides the increasing degradation of quality education? If “finance capital has emerged as the hegemonic force in advanced capitalist societies,”<sup>129</sup> the continuing participation of university administration in urban development practices signals a problem.

Finance capital is generally taken to mean the money that is used by a particular party in order to buy what they need to make their products or provide their services or to a certain sector of the economy based on its operation. It refers to the funds that are provided by lenders (and investors) to businesses in order to purchase “real” capital equipment for producing goods/services. So-called “real capital” comprises physical goods that assist in the production of other (surplus) goods and services where finance capital is provided by lenders for a price (interest). Furthermore, finance capital is any liquid medium or mechanism that represents wealth; it is purchasing power in the form of money available for production. As we noted in Chapter 2, deficit spending is the obverse side of finance capital in two ways. First – this is the most dangerous and ambiguous of the two – the party that is in deficit might choose to finance

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<sup>128</sup> Harvey. *The Urban Experience*. 168. My emphasis.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. 88.



another party in order to stabilize both of their budgets (lending what you do not have), or, second, the party that is in deficit will borrow finance capital from another party. While both practices are risky, the neoliberal university is constantly engaging in the first of these two practices.

Universities are continuing to abide by the laws of abstract capital and economic forecasting. While the university as hedge fund exists alongside other dubious investment measures, Harvey reminds us of the equally abstract origin of such economic forecasting in terms of long-term urban planning. Where John Maynard Keynes had meant deficit financing as a short-run managerial device (including financing for schools, urban renewal, and other community infrastructures), the process has always rested on unlimited debt creation no matter how it was worked out. Harvey reminds us that by the 1970s, “the United States was weighed down by what even *Business Week* conceded was a ‘mountain’ of public, private, and corporate debt, much of it wrapped up in urban infrastructures.”<sup>130</sup> The Keynesian city, although increasingly nurtured as a “consumption artefact nourished by service provision, information processing, and the support of command functions in government and finance,” was never meant to be sustained by long-term deficit financing.<sup>131</sup> Yet what we are witnessing today is exactly the proliferation of such practices, the key difference being that where the government usually dealt with deficit financing in Keynes’ time, today such financing occurs across the public, private, and state markets, if and when it is not a combination of all three.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 206.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 211.

Harvey has called the urbanization of capital “the master of creative destruction.”<sup>132</sup>

What this means is that, among all the potential modalities of capital, it is the most fluid and contradictory:

Capitalism has to urbanize in order to reproduce itself. But the urbanization of capital creates contradictions. The social and physical landscape of an urbanized capitalism is far more, therefore, than a mute testimony to the transforming powers of capitalist growth and technological change. Capitalist urbanization has its own distinctive logic and its own distinctive forms of contradiction.<sup>133</sup>

Harvey illuminates some of the contradictions stemming from the urban-capitalist process of accumulation. One of the main points is that there is a big difference between individual capital and capital in general. In describing the three crises of capital (partial crises, switching crises, and global crises) he delineates two different types of switching crises (particular crises are merely those crises that affect a specific location of capital while global crises affect all spheres). *Switching crises* are the more complex since they can involve either a) sectoral switching crises (which involve “switching the allocation of capital” from one sphere to another) or b) *geographical switching crises* (which involve switching the flows of capital from one place to another. Harvey notes that the latter subset of switching crises “is particularly important in relation to investment in the built environment because the latter is immobile in space and requires interregional or international flows of money capital to facilitate its production.”<sup>134</sup> It is this final crises and the contradictions that stem from it – geographical switching crises – that should interest us in the discussion of the double-sided danger of university initiated urbanization processes. Not only are specific things relative to pedagogy negatively influenced by this

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 221.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. 222.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 13.

process; the very nature of it undermines *how we learn in built environments* in favour of an economization of knowledge.

And so the university has become a nodal point and vector for the gathering together of finance capital. Universities, today, are usually in cities, and cities, according to urban theorists such as Harvey and Lefebvre, are the product of finance capital. Many urban theorists ignore the increasingly important role that universities play in urbanization processes as their emphasis shifts from cultivating a national culture to that of aggregating finance capital in the name of research. Universities, as key players in contemporary urbanity, produce and reproduce finance capital, a process that can be explained by looking at just one case study close to home.

### 3.2. THE UNIVERSITY AND THE CITY: RYERSON CASE STUDY

In a recent bid for advancing the neoliberal development of Ryerson University, Sheldon Levy, President of Ryerson, gave two speeches that contained numerous references to the supposedly “important” roles that digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) and long-term urban planning would play in the university’s future endeavours. The first speech, delivered in 2006 to the Canadian Club of Toronto, found Levy outlining his vision of university planning as urban development. The second speech, delivered in 2009 to the ominous sounding Empire Club of Canada, recapitulated the ideas presented in the first speech before moving on to the outlining of a future project that involves transforming a significant part of the university campus around Yonge St. into a singular “digital destination” for Canadians. In the 2006 speech, Levy warmed his colleagues to the decidedly neoliberal idea of cooperation between public and private institutions and particularly to the special arrangements that can be made between corporations, universities, and city councils.

Any discussion about neoliberal universities should first take into account the rhetoric that surrounds the concrete plans for neoliberalization. For instance, the neoliberal conception of the university is often accompanied by an official rhetoric of “excellence”. From the University of Ontario’s Institute of Technology’s desire to recruit only the most “excellent students” to the University of Pennsylvania’s “Agenda for Excellence,” the rhetoric of excellence inaugurates the disappearance of culture from the university and the beginning of a university education that is steeped in a type of “interchangeable” learning where *what you learn* matters much less than *how well you learn it*, and so the neoliberal university emphasizes a type of accounting over accountability.

Levy’s 2009 speech was something completely different. All of the old coercive language was there but this time his rhetoric placed an even greater emphasis on the development of ICTs and urban planning. Levy began by recapitulating his message from the 2006 speech, stating that he wanted “to talk about city-building in terms of the economy – knowledge, wealth creation, and jobs.” But there was a very idiosyncratic idea at work. Quoting Philip Preville from an article in *Toronto Life* entitled “The Good News About the Bad Times,” Levy stated that “Ontario doesn’t make stuff anymore. We let other places do that.”<sup>135</sup> One can hear Deleuze’s comments on the “societies of control” resonating here:

In the present situation, capitalism is no longer involved in production, which it often relegates to the Third World, even for the complex forms of textiles, metallurgy, or oil production. It’s a capitalism of higher-order production. It no longer buys raw materials and no longer sells the finished products: it buys the finished products or assembles parts. What it wants to sell is services but what it wants to buy is stocks. This is no longer a capitalism for production but for the product, which is to say, for being sold or marketed.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Preville.

<sup>136</sup> Gilles Deleuze. “Postscript on the Societies of Control.” 6.

In other words, capital has thus moved from the urban city to other zones and the urban city is now dependant on finance capital. Levy continued: “in Ontario we are moving away from manufacturing, and into technology – and I would refine this by saying we are moving into digital media.” The rhetoric of development used here is unabashedly neoliberal in that, according to Levy, his approach is going to be a “*practical* one” where “industry, business and government tell us what the economy *needs*.” Practical? On whose terms? Needs? Whose are they? It is no longer the students and teachers who make the university; rather, the economy dictates how the university is to operate. Pedagogy was not included in Levy’s discussion, nor did he mention the lower income neighbourhoods that surround Ryerson on all sides. Instead, we were asked (not literally, since it was a private speech) to envision the university in the future, surrounded by a “pedestrian plaza on Gould Street” as well galleries and sidewalk cafes where students could purchase goods and services. The image of the future university was summed up in the following sentence: “On Yonge Street, from Gould in the south to Gerrard in the north, we have *a corridor of high-end digital stores all in one cluster* – and the block hums with activity.” But before anything like this could be imagined, the university had to begin with a pilot project to test the waters. It all started with one of Canada’s first joint-ventures between a university, city council, and private corporation.

In the late 1990s Ryerson University entered into a private-public deal with a large corporation, Pen Equity (a Canadian asset management firm that develops projects for its clients), and the City of Toronto. A case study in *The University as Urban Developer* describes “a joint university-city project adjacent to a public square in downtown Toronto” entitled The Dundas Square Metropolis Project. The deal materialised between each of the parties due to the

fact that Ryerson owned an important piece of land on the northern edge of the square.<sup>137</sup> It is interesting to note that The City of Toronto initiated the project (not Ryerson) because of high levels of crime and a stagnant retail area (filled mostly with dollar stores, adult shops, and other “undesirable” retailers), and so in order to begin the transformation of the whole of Dundas Square into the Canadian equivalent of Times Square (Dundas Square has an annual flow of over 50 million people),<sup>138</sup> they needed to obtain the land belonging to Ryerson. During the planning stages, Ryerson transferred development rights to Pen Equity after the city strong-armed the university into a partnership deal; Ryerson was essentially told that they would gain classroom space and that the city could pass a law which would force them to transfer property rights over to the city anyway.<sup>139</sup> A provision was then made in the city plan to allow Ryerson to transfer development rights to a private institution, a first in Canada. But the project was confronted with numerous difficulties from the start. City Council encountered strong opposition from property owners over the potential expropriation of buildings within the project area. Landowners claimed they were not receiving fair compensation, and so they took the city to court.<sup>140</sup> Their hearing was quickly dismissed on condition that the plan proceeded as expected to completion.<sup>141</sup> Property owners were not expected a share of the profit. Unlike Ryerson’s expropriation threat, the landowners were not treated with the same “stick-and-carrot” manoeuvring.

The lead tenant under Pen Equity, AMC Theatres of Canada, was expected to move into the newly acquired property, and under the new partnership deal Ryerson would receive some much needed theatre space for lectures (Ryerson has had the lowest amount of space per student

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<sup>137</sup> *The University as Urban Developer*. 175.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* 176.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* 181.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

in Ontario).<sup>142</sup> The case study states that recent amendments to “faculty contracts” at Ryerson allowed larger class sizes, which put the university in a position of “requiring larger classrooms to capitalize on potential efficiencies.”<sup>143</sup> While the need for extra pedagogic space is a real problem for an ever-increasing student population, those alleged “faculty contracts” have never materialized. CUPE contracts continue, *as they always have*, to have maximum class sizes; at least since Ryerson became a university in 1993, the Ryerson Faculty Association contract has never had caps on class sizes – Ryerson’s system is, somewhat ironically, “student driven,” i.e., driven by “student enrolment intentions,” in the same way that the general practice of neoliberal governmentality is driven by fluctuations in the economy.

Upon completion of the project, Ryerson saved about \$16 million from the partnership; however, because of massive delays in the project, Ryerson was negatively affected by lack of access to theatres for classroom space. They had to approach Carlton Theatre with a deal similar to the one with AMC in order to use their facilities until construction of the AMC theatres was complete. This cost the university extra money, not to mention the fact that students and staff had to relocate their classrooms several city blocks away. The classes also experienced general disorganization due to the fact that the proposed movie theatres were to be classroom ready, whereas the Carlton Theatre was not. Development delays aside, other negative results of the project’s completion include a large increase of traffic around the university and an increase in crime in Ryerson’s green spaces. The Dundas Square Metropolis Project essentially put a significant number of Ryerson students in the direct path of 50 million non-students and an increasingly commercialized building space filled with franchised stores and advertisements for everything from Universal Pictures to Starbucks. Finally, the deal did not include a penalty

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 177.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. 178.

clause for noncompliance. Ryerson could have been left high and dry, one of the dangerous risks of neoliberal business contracts.

Ryerson recently began the second stage of its long-term plan which again involved the cooperation of a large, private corporation. In 2004 the university hired Nortel Networks to upgrade its digital infrastructure.<sup>144</sup> Nortel's case study explains that the university requested state-of-the-art technology in order to achieve some of the goals mentioned in its long-term plan. The first step in modernizing their network began in 2004 with the deployment of a high performance data network. This included the implementation of VPN (Virtual Private Network) solutions as well as IP telephony (Voice over Internet Protocol) in order to allow for the optimization of their data center. The result came in the form of a "data network foundation which is reliable and future-proof" – whatever that means – according to the case study, along with a "high return-on-investment." There are, however, some basic contradictions inherent to Ryerson's conception of the development of its digital technologies. First and foremost is the problem of equity with regard to those free digital technologies that are available to students outside of the university itself. In 2008, Chris Avenir, a student at Ryerson, was accused of cheating due to a Facebook study group that he created in order to prepare for upcoming chemistry tests. Ryerson's decision to attempt to have the student expelled is not consistent with its goals to advance the digital technologies of the university in order to aid research and learning. If the university has decided to invest in these technologies in order to advance the education of its students, why did it feel the need to reprimand a student whose activities also focused on using technology in order to better his education outside of the forums provided by the university itself?

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<sup>144</sup> "Nortel Network Case Study: Ryerson University."



Students, activists, and community members should be aware of the embedded regulatory forces that exist within the long-term plans of any neoliberal university. Potential resistance can come from students, who might refuse to go to schools like Ryerson due to the fact that they have a reputation for large and impersonal classes (though official propaganda states the opposite). Another site of resistance can come from the professors – not contractually, at first, but in terms of retention. If schools like Ryerson continue to lose top faculty to other schools who have better teaching conditions, then they will have to act, not to protect pedagogical “excellence,” nor to ensure there are teachers in classrooms, but because committed researchers foster a genuinely interesting scholastic environment.

### 3.3. THE GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

The Ryerson case is a typical example of the way in which universities integrate long-term urban planning process into their daily operations. The previous section shows how the city is changed under the aegis of university planning, but what happens when this ideology goes, literally, global? The Global University is an extension of the process outlined above; actually, it is the natural progression of it given capital’s demand for the opening of new markets. University of California, Los Angeles professor Carlos Alberto Torres and Robert A. Rhoades argue that “universities have sought to expand their revenue through a variety of profit-seeking endeavours, including satellite campuses and extension programs around the world.”<sup>145</sup> In addition, many universities in the West are closely linked to the development of higher education systems in less developed parts of the world. US universities received funds to help develop Iraqi higher

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<sup>145</sup> Torres and Rhoades. 12.

education and US officials are currently involved in developing a stronger private higher education sector in Afghanistan.<sup>146</sup>

Ross, who also sits on the editorial board of the EduFactory collective, has recently turned his attention to the notion of the global university. His own institution, New York University (NYU), is intimately linked to the development of infrastructures in Shanghai. In fact, NYU has no less than eight study abroad locations, the others existing in London, Paris, Madrid, Berlin, Prague, Florence and Accra. Ross states: “NYU is a huge brand in China’s private sector, much revered on account of its Stern business school which contributes in no small measure to that country’s ‘MBA fever.’”<sup>147</sup> NYU set up shop in Shanghai only recently, after which they also built a satellite campus in Abu Dhabi.<sup>148</sup>

Ross’ comment that “no single organization has attained the operational status of a global university, after the model of the global corporation” might soon be proved wrong. Corporations such as Wal-Mart have developed initiatives with world-renowned institutions of higher learning such as Cornell in order to train the “docile bodies” that will eventually become its future employees. In this case, online classes are available via eCornell; Wal-Mart’s website states that

eCornell is a Continuing Education program, offered online through a subsidiary of Cornell University. It was created through collaborative efforts between eCornell and Walmart University to help Market and Regional level associates in Walmart Stores USA prepare for continued professional development and sustained company growth.<sup>149</sup>

Is this type of practice anything else but the global university entering the same stage as the global corporation? One of Ross’ more salient points is that the deep revenue streams that are produced by ventures like Cornell’s partnership with Wal-Mart or the opening of satellite

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<sup>146</sup> Del Castillo.

<sup>147</sup> Ross.

<sup>148</sup> See the NYU in Shanghai website: <http://www.nyu.edu/global/shanghai/> as well as the NYU Abu Dhabi website: <http://nyuad.nyu.edu/>

<sup>149</sup> Wal-Mart.

campuses as in the case of NYU Abu Dhabi are viewed “as a way to subsidize unprofitable humanities programs at home.”<sup>150</sup> The following chapter will take a closer look at the philosophical foundations of these programs. Ross also notes that there are really five types of transnational universities: 1) corporate spinoffs, 2) private for-profit education providers, 3) virtual universities, 4) traditional universities that offer distance learning, and 5) for-profit arms of traditional universities.<sup>151</sup> The eCornell and Wal-Mart initiative is a unique blend of types 1 and 5 and perhaps indicative of the way in which the future global university will function not just *as* a corporation but *with them* as well.

#### 4. THE EMPTY PROMISE OF CULTURAL STUDIES

##### 4.1. TRANSNATIONALISM: CONSOLIDATING THE CURRICULUM

While university exchanges are an ancient process, dating back to the medieval European universities (not to mention the early Islamic universities in Africa),<sup>152</sup> after World War II, transnationalism was redefined as part of the training of students from the peripheral or semiperipheral countries in the universities of the metropole.<sup>153</sup> This always involved the partnership of universities from different countries, however, in recent years such transnational relations have advanced to a new level. The new transnationalization is “much vaster than the former one, and its logic is, unlike its predecessor’s, exclusively mercantile.”<sup>154</sup> Other theorists

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<sup>150</sup> Ross.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Santos. 64.

<sup>153</sup> Anderson.

<sup>154</sup> Santos. 64.

in education studies use the word “internationalization” in order to describe this process.<sup>155</sup> For our purposes, these terms will be used interchangeably. One of the largest areas of internationalization has arrived in the form of Cultural Studies departments; however, the discipline is not serving the same function for which its predecessor was originally built.

In 1968, the Canadian government established the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) “in an effort to settle the ongoing debate about the importance of having an arm’s-length organization for the distribution and development aid.”<sup>156</sup> At first, university presidents and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) were reluctant to take part in the development programs that their students wished to initiate; in many cases, the reluctance was due to the fact that “such a project was utopian, likely to prove troublesome and difficult to manage.”<sup>157</sup> That opinion was eventually challenged by Lewis Perinbam (former General Secretary of the World University Service of Canada) and found its way onto the agenda of the AUCC. The group warmed to the idea, and the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) went on to establish “the first international development offices on Canadian campuses.”<sup>158</sup> By the early 1970s, “most Canadian universities reported that members of their faculties were to some extent involved in the CUSO program.”<sup>159</sup> But “international development” would soon splinter itself into another form known as “international studies.”

The first Canadian disciplinary program dedicated to international study appeared at the University of British Columbia in 1947, and throughout the following three decades area-studies programs (European, Slavic, Soviet, East European, Asian, Latin American, and African studies) appeared that worked toward building “a comprehensive understanding of geographic regions

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<sup>155</sup> Bond and Scott.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. 52.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. 53.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

and languages, especially regions in which postwar governments saw either a threat or an arena for trade and political influence.”<sup>160</sup> However, the cost of the programs and the price of international travel eventually led to the closure of many of these centres or at least their amalgamation with larger core departments.

As we have already seen, by the 1980s, university budgets became tighter as the Canadian economy entered one of its worst financial crises, thus triggering the decline of Canada’s education advantage. CUSO offices were eventually driven off-campus or forced to pay rent, and the international programs that were once a stable part of higher education became a profitless burden that had to be profitably re-imagined. Education theorists Sheryl Bond and Jacquelyn Thayer Scott have noted that

On many campuses area-studies programs were the centre of an internationalized education. Sometime in the mid- to late 1980s, as a result of differing intellectual perspectives and the withdrawal of federal funding and the failure of institutions to fully fund programs coming off “soft” money, area-studies programs ran into difficulties. The number of programs declined and those that survived had to be reconceptualised.<sup>161</sup>

In many ways, Cultural Studies has become the name of the discipline that has taken the place of not only International Studies but Women’s Studies, Gender Studies, Comparative Literature, etc. How does the appearance of Cultural Studies onto the scene of higher education relate to the neoliberalization of our universities? Most primarily, the word “culture” is used in the same sense as “excellence” in order to negate notions of accountability, social responsibility and humanist questioning.

#### 4.2. THE OBJECT OF CULTURAL STUDIES

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid. 57.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. 58.

There have been many books and articles decrying the neoliberalization or corporatization of the Humanities. They claim that a corporate rhetoric has colonized the university. While a few courses undoubtedly are designed to “deliver content” with maximal efficiency and minimal cost (think also of all the special “seminars” – all available for a fee – littering the conference circuits), something sinister happens when we uncritically adopt this corporate rhetoric. Students begin to understand themselves as clients gathered under the sign of a corporate brand; research and teaching become organized around “commercializable outcomes” and corporate “stakeholders” working in a “knowledge economy.” But these are not new problems; professors in the Humanities have inveighed against what they see as the strong-arming of critical theory for decades. In one of Bill Readings’ more candid moments, he states:

In the 1970s we were (at least, I was) inclined to believe that a mixture of Marxism, psychoanalysis, and semiotics might prove sufficiently volatile to fuel Molotov cocktails. The combination is now sufficiently stabilized to be available over the counter from your local humanities and social sciences departments under a variety of brand names or under the generic label “Cultural Studies.” We have to recognize that the grounds on which we used to make large claims for the humanities have been undermined.<sup>162</sup>

What this means is that words like “culture” and even “communication” have become catchalls in order to describe the (mostly) uncritical practices that have been put into place in the neoliberal university’s Humanities departments. Unfortunately, these practices are devoid of any type of humanist questioning – a questioning that produces or provokes unsettling questions without economizing question/answer logistics – as long as they are framed in terms of culture. As Readings goes on to state; the idea of Cultural Studies arises at the point when the notion of culture “no longer matters as an *idea* for the institution.”<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Readings. 90.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. 91.

The language we use is tremendously important: it either opens new worlds or extinguishes them. Or it creates something like a reserve. If one university focuses on selling a “practical” and “career-focused” education, does this mean that the students of one that adopts ulterior methods learn impractical skills and are unemployable? Should we not ask instead how the pursuit of a “practical,” “career-focused” and marketized education tends to denigrate theoretical research, the value of critique, and the kind of relationship building that the “modern” university offered? Or have these values also been co-opted by a grammar that perverts their meaning or renders them incomprehensible in the world of efficiency and accountability “best-practices”? How long will it be before we forget how to ask meaningful questions?

What hope does the university have for knowledge in the face of the conflation of theory and business? Some would say that the Humanities, and specifically disciplines like Cultural Studies, offer a way out of the business deadlock, but part of the problem is that we no longer know where to hone our efforts, especially in would-be critical theory courses. In September 2009, Michael Bérubé, a professor of English at Pennsylvania State University, published a by now famous article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* entitled “What’s the Matter With Cultural Studies?” The uproar was immediate and almost unanimous. In it, Bérubé claims that Cultural Studies as a discipline has failed to live up to the expectations held of it throughout the 1960-80s. He is mostly right, but he does not provide an explanation of the philosophical underpinnings that justify such a statement; how is the rationale of a discipline like Cultural Studies weakening the Humanities as a site for critical resistance and humanist questioning?

In this day and age of Žižekian rock star theorists and overly-abstruse philosophers, the institutional study of cultural theory can be understood as firmly entrenched in two camps. The first, pandering to the leftovers of the MTV generation and readers of Totem Books’ *Introducing*

series, are engaged in what can be called a type of theoretical *bricolage*; why shouldn't one be able to reference Lacan's borromean knot in a discussion of early 1990s Norwegian black metal or 4G cellular wireless technology (from a Marxist perspective, of course)? The other camp, which often adheres to a strict nomenclature so esoteric that only those at the graduate level can penetrate their meaning, enjoys a certain performativity of the text; the form of their work, unlike the relatively straightforward and at times journalistic style of the former group, attempts to structurally mimic the logic of their thought. It could be called a type of philosophical, meta-textual performance art. This group would argue that essays have an aesthetic autonomy (see Theodor Adorno's "The Essay as Form"). Each camp exists on one side of an invisible line that can be called the continental/analytic divide, and if we push this sensible difference further we can justifiably say that, in the last analysis, the difference is one of "positive" and "negative" thought; between a positivist logic founded on the necessity of presuppositions (the logic of word games, game theory, et cetera.) and a thought that is intrinsic, parasitic even, to thought itself (deconstruction, Gadamerian hermeneutics, et cetera.). One group envisions a need for answers while the other seeks to identify problems. This difference has been and might always be one of contentious debate, and it is certainly the locus of one of the chief frustrations permeating the theoretical realm of this ephemeral thing we call "Cultural Studies."

At the institutional level, many of these frustrations emanate from the now-classic divide between the British and American schools of Cultural Studies. Tomes have been written on the alleged depoliticization of the field after its move to America (see Alan O'Connor's "The Problem of American Cultural Studies" for some superbly argued pessimism) and in many cases the rise of a milquetoast "postmodernist" in the academy is understood as its direct correlate. Many of these essays argue that where Cultural Studies came "crashing through the windows"



for the British it was not such an antagonistic force for the Americans. Stuart Hall, one of the great founders of Cultural Studies, has emphasized the fact that, for the Birmingham School, Cultural Studies announced itself as a type of intrusion; they did not *anticipate* it. In this original sense, a “cultural study” can be taken to mean the study of unknown cultural formations following the contingency of an encounter; according to Hall, “it is a project that is always open to that which it doesn’t yet know, to that which it can’t yet name.”<sup>164</sup> One can say that the impetus behind the Cultural Studies explosion in America came from the rather counterintuitive tendency, compared to its British counterpart, of culling each and every popular topic under Cultural Studies’ blindingly bright sun. Thus, legitimate material for cultural analysis included not only research on the social effects of new technologies such as television but also research on the popular programs that appeared long after the medium was created. In the American university in particular, there is a tendency to combine not different forms of inquiry but already established cultural phenomena the product of which then masquerades as a theoretical undertaking. We are hardly shocked, today, to see titles like *The Sopranos and Philosophy: I Kill Therefore I Am* littering the “Culture and Philosophy” sections of popular bookstores. These texts do not problematize philosophical concepts or even the nature of television technology and programming; their sole function is to explain one given with another in a type of never-ending cultural exegesis. Certain of the current works on television are just a few examples of the ongoing commodification of a cultural theory that posits presuppositions in place of original concepts in order to avoid new forms of thought. It comes as no surprise, then, that the same tendency towards presuppositions can also be found in what might be called the properly theoretical area of Cultural Studies.

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<sup>164</sup> Hall. 263.

The histories of post-Marxism and, in the past century, psychoanalysis have taught us to rearticulate our thoughts on ideology; the transcendental dialectics once pitted against false consciousness have been dismantled and, thanks to thinkers like Louis Althusser who focused on the psychological implications of Marx's theories, what was formerly a claim on enlightenment has converted to an acknowledgement of the necessary immanence of ideology itself for the human individual (see Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"). Today's postmodern slogan might be "back to bare life," which should not be confused with Marx's concept of *species being* in that the properly heterogeneous and interminable character of ideology is understood as an inextinguishable force that mobilizes every individual life, including those with recourse to a unifying collective "enlightenment." The case, we are told, makes itself clear when one thinks the problem of religion. The question of bare faith does not lend itself to dialectical critique. If we consider faith, as Jacques Derrida does, not as faith in some-thing but faith in faith, faith for faith's sake, then the question of false consciousness proves moot, if not irrelevant.<sup>165</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer poses the question in even plainer terms by using "religion" as a formal signifier to describe something of the faith-based character of every dialectical thought. "Has the end of an illusion arrived," Gadamer asks, or is that the illusion, "thinking that human beings can live without religion?"<sup>166</sup> It would seem, then, that the problem is one of accounting for the exigency of conflicting ideologies without reverting to a dialectics of transcendence.

Reengaging the problem of just what it means to "do" cultural theories might appear at first blush to require a reappraisal of neo-Marxist work on historical-material processes in order to develop new post-"post-ideological" forms of political economy. But can we really be critics

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<sup>165</sup> Derrida. 76.

<sup>166</sup> Gadamer. 119.

of the bad kind of globalization, or, on the other hand, champions of a future of technologically enhanced equity enjoyed between nations of unequal geographic development without asking ourselves an altogether different set of questions? With any extended cultural study, it becomes increasingly evident that a return to an almost embarrassingly basic type of thinking is needed in order to realign Cultural Studies within a much broader philosophical program if we are to avoid the pitfalls of hypocrisy and dilettantism. How can we rescue Cultural Studies from the political whitewashing it has undergone over the course of its meteoric rise over the last few decades?

Without engaging in the practice of dialectical materialism, it would be helpful to pose ourselves a question on those terms; namely, what should be the *object* of Cultural Studies? The answer would tell us if we have any right of claiming an object at all. Most forms of Cultural Studies presume to know this object *too well*, and they wrongly presuppose its existence when and if they avoid the opposite, though no less disastrous, fate of perpetually quibbling over its definition. Georges Bataille, that great thinker of heterogeneity, can again offer us some potential clarity on the issue, in that

a shared orientation has, in itself, a constitutive value: it presupposes [...] the imperative character of the object. Unification, the principle of *homogeneity*, is only a tendential fact, incapable of finding in itself a motive for requiring and imposing its existence; and, in most circumstances, *the recourse to an external requirement has the value of a primary necessity*.<sup>167</sup>

Contrary to the Agambenian claim, the development of any system finds its predicate not in itself but in a heterogenous body that it excludes and which shapes its development. It is true that the Marxist tradition in cultural studies reserves a place for heterogeneity (Marx used the word “antagonism”) underneath the various conflicts in society, but he also said that these antagonisms could be resolved by the objective conditions of reality once it has reached the stage of a totally

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<sup>167</sup> Bataille. 147. My emphasis.

transparent society. Cultural theory, far from believing its reality in the material world, should inherently teach that it is impossible to approach such a resolution even in the realm of discourse; to quote a couple of infamous and often misunderstood post-Marxists, “a non-exclusive public sphere of rational argument is a conceptual impossibility.”<sup>168</sup> The reason for this is that concepts like hegemony and ideology could not exist if there were not some competing hegemonic or ideological force that impeded their full realization. According to this logic, there is always an imperative object that orients a homogeneous system but which, as we shall see, must necessarily remain *unidentifiable* if it is to continue to serve as the impetus behind the system’s future efforts; once the imperative object becomes identifiable, it loses its radically heterogeneous character. As for cultural studies, the concept of heterogeneity, if addressed at the outset of potential projects, might help to inject it with a little bit of relevance. The palpable sense of conflict in the concept of heterogeneity need only be applied to a cultural studies methodology and directed at significant cultural events. In this way one might recognize that, as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe do, plurality is not the phenomenon to be explained, but the starting point of the analysis.<sup>169</sup> If a cultural study creates an identifiable object out of the epistemological framing of its planned project then the discourse’s original *raison d’être*, according to the logic of its historic British interlocutors, has altogether disappeared. Historically, cultural studies were concerned with investigating new forms of subjectivity *after an encounter with the unknown* rather than with perpetuating a phantom objectivity in the name of an academic, yet politically neutral, analysis of commodities. The problem, then, becomes a properly epistemological one: how should we think what it means to encounter a new subjectivity in a world of increasingly advanced neoliberal practices?

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<sup>168</sup> Laclau and Mouffe. xvii.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. 140.

#### 4.3. DELEUZE AND THE “OBJECT” OF THOUGHT

The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze first attempted to think heterogeneity as a new type of difference within the realm of epistemology before turning to the investigation of how this change re-qualifies traditional notions of difference in history, culture, and communication in concrete social formations. He argued that to think was one thing, to think like a revolutionary another; the difference between the two being that the former is susceptible to participating in what is at its base a type of non-thought; that is, a thinking that is not its own; a thinking for the State. Deleuze warns us towards the end of *A Thousand Plateaus*: “the less people take thought seriously, the more they think in conformity with what the State wants.”<sup>170</sup> Thought, as we have been told throughout the history of Marxism, produces concrete effects; certain strands of continental philosophy have also taught us that material substances affect thought; the mind/matter debate is no longer a question for the thinkers of these strands. Philosophy long ago stripped the Cartesian *cogito* of its transcendence and today theorists can say that the force that is active behind the words “to think” exists on the same plane as a cinder block. Deleuze, following Spinoza, was well aware of this point (his second doctoral thesis, one of the requirements of the French system at the time, was a book-length project on Spinoza). However, even in some of his later texts, Deleuze continued to emphasise what has, for most, become an elementary philosophical position: namely, that “concepts are inseparable from affects, i.e. from the powerful effects they exert on our life, and percepts, i.e. the new ways of seeing or perceiving they provoke in us.”<sup>171</sup> In other words, both Thought and Matter are co-dependent elements on

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<sup>170</sup> 376.

<sup>171</sup> Deleuze. *Two Regimes of Madness*. 238.

the same folded line where they have an equal stake in the actual construction of our reality; but this is pure Spinozism.

Deleuze introduced the most radical extension of this philosophy by opening a caesura within thought itself and by “thinking beyond concepts” as it were. In an effort to expose the prejudice of thought (the thought that our thinking has a “good nature”) he attempted to formulate a philosophy that would allow us to reconsider the way in which we *thought* thought, and it involves a type of Nietzschean overturning that is suspicious of *cognisance* itself as it tries to remain open to that which thought cannot lay claim to. It is a reaching beyond the concept that stretches thought to events located at the limits that necessitate thought *a priori*. In his primary doctoral dissertation that would go on to become one of the crowning achievements of his philosophical oeuvre, Deleuze began to articulate this new overturning:

*Concepts only ever designate possibilities. They lack the claws of absolute necessity – in other words, of an original violence inflicted upon thought; the claws of a strangeness or an enmity which alone would awaken thought from its natural stupor or eternal possibility: there is only involuntary thought, aroused but constrained within thought, and all the more absolutely necessary for being born, illegitimately, of fortuitousness in the world. Thought is primarily trespass and violence, the enemy, and nothing presupposes philosophy: everything begins with misosophy. Do not count upon thought to ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks. Rather, count upon the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to raise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think.*<sup>172</sup>

Deleuze’s remarks on the nature of conceptualization differ radically from the positivist notions of thought introduced throughout the Enlightenment and that continue to this day in fields as different as Cultural Studies and Ego Psychology. In order to understand what is at stake in cultural formations, he posits something like a *first axiom*: if the task of thought is supposed to be the construction of new ways of understanding, then it must necessarily seek to avoid all of

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<sup>172</sup> Deleuze. *Difference and Repetition*. 139. My emphasis.

the “identitarian” presuppositions that, strictly speaking, are not a form of thought. For all their differences, the contemporary philosophical equivalent of this thought would be found in Alain Badiou’s conceptualization of “nonidentitarian” politics in his *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*. Badiou states that “there exists a despicable complicity between the globalized logic of capital and [...] identitarian fanaticism.”<sup>173</sup> Later, Badiou, who praises Deleuze for his singularity but who also adheres to certain tenets of a psychoanalysis that Deleuze despised, admits that “Deleuze put it perfectly” in pointing out that capital “demands a permanent creation of subjective and territorial identities in order for its principle of movement to homogenize its space of action.”<sup>174</sup> What is most interesting is that Badiou’s later texts, *Saint Paul* especially, seem to move closer to Deleuze’s conception of the immanent enthusiasm of thought. For Deleuze, as for Badiou, capital and thought are almost diametrically opposed; the first depends on a value generated by the repetition of a type of identitarian thought while the second can exist only when there is an encounter with a type of radical heterogeneity.

According to Deleuze, the New (a type of new subjectivity) does not come from any previously existing incarnation that can be thought; it does not come from our powers of recognition (thus his customary theoretical refashioning of thinkers and artists, and also his rather contentious titling of essays such as “May ’68 Did Not Take Place”). What becomes established with the New is precisely not the New. The New – as difference – inaugurates forces *in thought* which are “not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognized and unrecognizable *terra incognita*.”<sup>175</sup> The New is the product of a fundamental encounter; it is a type of “knowledge,” gained at the expense of the unknowable territory, Deleuze’s *terra incognita*, germinating forth out of an infinite amount

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<sup>173</sup> Badiou. *Saint Paul*. 9.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. 10-11.

<sup>175</sup> Deleuze. *Difference and Repetition*. 136.

of antagonistic concepts that are situated on top of an inaccessible plane of immanence.<sup>176</sup> It is only when these antagonistic concepts collide that an event is created and the space for thinking occurs. Thus, Deleuze's *second axiom*: the New announces itself conceptually via a type of *ruptural event*. The New is ushered in by the event; it is a type of pure heterogeneity, an infinite source of virtual vibrations on the plane of immanence begging to be actualized. If cultural theorists have truly finished with metanarratives, then there can only be heterogeneous beginnings. The object of Cultural Studies as a discipline in the Humanities should then be to think the place from which these beginnings are born by interrogating the way we conceptualize these beginnings and our complicity in the creation of fraudulent thought (or what can be called a kind of false start). The latter thought is a *slow* image of thought, compared to the proliferation of heterogeneous encounters on the plane of immanence that inaugurates new subjectivities. Like Deleuze, theorists who find their home in Cultural Studies departments should attempt to avoid this natural stupor. The creation of a space for the appearance of the New, for new individualities and new identities comes first not from the old image of thought but as a consequence of a multitude of infinitely quick symbiotic struggles whose subsequent mutations are then "comprehended" or conceptualized by *a posteriori* thoughts; thought plays catch up with the event. Since they are always lagging behind, there are dangers in using the old tools of consciousness to understand the New, from misunderstood racism in the streets to male chauvinism in the academy.

Revolutionary thinking is not found in thinking as repetition – recognition – but in thinking as differential repetition initiated by an event. It is intimately linked to a "significant" event, the radically heterogeneous properties of which should not be forgotten. It is a type of absolute *detrterritorialization*, a term that signifies both a space for new zones of becoming and

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid. 139.



the potentiality for the actualization of the *terra incognita* without reference to manifest content. As a concept and as an event, revolutionary thinking is “self-referential or enjoys a self-positing that enables it to be apprehended in an immanent enthusiasm without anything in states of affairs or lived experience being able to tone it down, not even the disappointments of reason.”<sup>177</sup> Basically, and this applies to socio-political events as much as to philosophical ruptures, it is a matter of thinking the event, the previously unthought-of, in a way that leads to the production of new *agencies of enunciation* (“new tools”), and so the task of revolutionary thinking given to a discourse like Cultural Studies becomes letting *new subjectivities announce themselves* after an evental rupture (these events are always described in the news media as “dangerous,” “unnecessary,” or just lacking common sense). This is significantly different from saying “the event gives us something new” in that it does not presuppose to know what the imperative object is. In the rupture initiated by the evental site the new never *is*; it is *only made possible by the agency of the event* and this is why the event itself must be called *evental*. Like Deleuze, cultural theorists could not overstress this point when confronting potential projects. In the deceptively complex short essay “May ‘68 Did Not Take Place,” Deleuze articulated this process:

*The possible does not pre-exist; it is created by the event. It is a question of life. The event creates a new existence, it produces a new subjectivity (new relations with the body, with time, sexuality, the immediate surroundings, with culture, work...). When a social mutation appears, it is not enough to draw the consequences or effects according to lines of economic or political causality. Society must be capable of forming collective agencies of enunciation that match the new subjectivity, in such a way that it desires the mutation. That's what it is, a veritable redeployment.*<sup>178</sup>

Deleuze teaches us that not only is it counterproductive to consider the apparently *a priori* constituent elements of the event but that it is really a form of fraudulent thought that

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<sup>177</sup> Deleuze. *What is Philosophy?*. 101.

<sup>178</sup> Deleuze. *Two Regimes of Madness*. 234. My emphasis.

allows us to do so. Such thinking builds itself on a foundation, which is misunderstood as natural or rational. It is a thinking that reinstalls the metanarrative. The singularly unique function of evental sites is that they necessarily come before the conceptualization or the discursive demarcation of their components. The *third axiom* might be that the “concept” does not “cohere.” Instead, the “concept speaks the event, not the essence or the thing.”<sup>179</sup> It is in this sense that the event can never be extinguished; it is, rather, an infinite source for openings and the zone of a never ending birth. It would not be going too far, then, to say that simultaneously and opposite this, in the moment of their foundation, concepts and their components (whether they be historical, ontological, ideological) are, in a way, already in danger of being en route to their destruction, their closure or at the very least, their self-contradiction; “every detour is a becoming-mortal.”<sup>180</sup> According to this logic, it is easy to see how Deleuze’s philosophy, while being perfectly in tune with the type of Heideggerian questioning that we need more of in the university today, is often misappropriated by theorists and especially artists and cultural commentators who make him out to be something like the philosophical equivalent of such banal bourgeois sayings as “express yourself.” It is, also, somewhat ironic that, before his suicide, Deleuze was working on a new monograph entitled *The Grandeur of Marx*.<sup>181</sup> We can only speculate as to what the final product might have looked like, yet it is safe to say that Deleuze’s approach to Marxism would have been one far removed from a type of naïve, commonsense privileging of an identity politics that is strangely aligned with capitalism in the name of revolutionary cultural praxis. This, one can argue, is instead the myopic logic informing detours through object analysis as they are expressed in contemporary Cultural Studies.

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<sup>179</sup> Deleuze. *What is Philosophy?*. 21.

<sup>180</sup> Deleuze. *Essays Critical and Clinical*. 2.

<sup>181</sup> Thoburn. 1.

The empty promise of cultural studies is that it was never the discipline it set out to be. This would not be an inherently negative problem were it not for the fact that, under the term “culture,” it has thrown everything together. Capitalism produces a type of reification; it is a stop, a gap, a commodification of the ethereal elements of our lives and thoughts. If a subject in Cultural Studies is able to study those objects that have already been identified as a product of capitalist development, it means that the student has become a part of a discourse that is not only once-removed from what the concept of a philosophical interrogation of culture should be, but also an unwitting contributor to the capitalist mode of production. One should ask oneself, in a Socratic sense; how is it possible to think the New if we are busy asking what political relevance something like a *Halo* videogame has for the world? The answer is “none.” Like essays on James Cameron’s *Avatar* or the popular television show *Battlestar Gallactica*, the study of commoditized forms of representation is nothing other than a prolonged soirée with object-obsession in the form of an academic capitalism that veils the negative side of its functionality. A populist or Leftist critique could say that it is “okay” to partake in such activities; after all, “culture is ordinary,” in Raymond Williams’ sense of the term, so that we cannot fault those who partake in certain cultural commodities.<sup>182</sup> I would tend to agree; however, I am thinking more in terms of Ukrainian children who use second or third generation Game Boys while their parents are away mining coal than I am North American academics who choose to analyse similar cultural commodities at the forefront of synergetic, technological innovation. Rather than providing market analyses for corporations such as Rogers and Microsoft to draw on, we need to be open to new subjectivities, not the old commodities, in order to see how they can announce themselves. Rather than perpetuating a positivist sociology of technology, Humanities programs should teach techniques of *détournement* in order to subvert hegemonic and oppressive forms of

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<sup>182</sup> Williams.

technologically enhanced affectivity. Really, it is by reintroducing the concept of alienation onto the scene of higher education that the student can free up space for the New. In other words, *détournement* as questioning, in the original sense that Heidegger has given it, in order to open the space for thought.

## 5. PEDAGOGIES OF ALIENATION

### 5.1. HEIDEGGER'S WARNING

Given the fact that, as I have outlined in the previous chapters, higher education has become explicitly aligned with urbanization and the fostering of human capital, what hope might the university have of reclaiming pedagogy while resisting the temptation of treating education as if it were another commodity valued according to the logic of the open market? If students have become the new managerial class, administrators or entrepreneurs of their own human capital, how should we think, first, the new forms of liberal arts pedagogy that are complicit with this climate, and, second, another type of pedagogical theory that might run counter to the current trends imbedded in relatively new discourses such as Cultural Studies and, even more transparently, Communications? While we cannot return to the Kantian university and set philosophy as the privileged mode of thought there is, in a sense, an even more basic approach to the current “conflict of the faculties” – or, rather, their amalgamation into fields such as communication and culture – that would privilege not a specific *object* of enquiry but a particular *mode of questioning* as the paradigmatic foundation upon which heterogeneous fields of study might plan their course. It could be called a return to the Socratic mode of thought, but my specific term for it will be the *pedagogy of alienation*.

We have seen that the impetus of neoliberal education serves to discredit many forms of critical theory in favour of synergetic solutions, both inside the classroom, with the appearance of Cultural Studies programs, and outside the classroom, with the micromanaging of university space, a positioning technique with emphases on urban capital. If we remember that in this brand of neoliberal university the student-worker's "skill really is a machine, but a machine which cannot be separated from the worker himself, which does not exactly mean [...] that capitalism transforms the worker into a machine and alienates him as a result," then we must rethink what the reintroduction of alienation to this new type of knowledge worker would look like.<sup>183</sup> In fact, alienation becomes a great way to solve the deadlock of human capital in neoliberal higher education and to reintroduce the notion of interrogative (humanist) questioning.

The human capital inherent to the neoliberal conception of the university is in many ways fostered and enabled by ICT economies that see the informationalization of education as the future to understanding knowledge. What these structures allow for is a reservoir of knowledge-as-information from which the individual student can draw, but in the process, the student him- or herself becomes, in a way, a type of databank. It is against this notion of knowledge as a type of standing reserve that we can again look to Heidegger for a way out.

In his essay "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger writes that "technology is a way of revealing"<sup>184</sup> and that "[t]he revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [*Herausfordern*], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such."<sup>185</sup> The *Herausfordern* of which Heidegger speaks means "to challenge, to call forth or to summon to action, to demand positively, to

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<sup>183</sup> Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 224.

<sup>184</sup> Heidegger. *The Question Concerning Technology*. 12.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid. 14.

provoke.”<sup>186</sup> In this sense, one can see that the positivist economizing of neoliberalism is more in tune with the action of technology’s positive summoning, and if we apply Heidegger’s conceptualization of technology to modern ICTs we can then understand information itself as a standing reserve, or, what Heidegger would call the Ge-stell (“enframing”), for neoliberalism. The Ge-stell denotes “the challenging claim that gathers man with a view to ordering the self-revealing as standing-reserve.”<sup>187</sup> One can view information banks in very much the same way as a material object, say gold or oil. This is especially true considering that enframing is fundamentally a calling-forth, it puts “into a framework or configuration” everything that summons forth, through an “ordering for use that it is forever restructuring anew.”<sup>188</sup> You could say that Heidegger may have even had something like the operational capacity of ICTs in mind when he claims that “whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object.”<sup>189</sup>

Heidegger talks about the standing-reserve as a managing, unlocking and expediting, always itself “directed from the beginning toward furthering something else, i.e., toward driving on to *the maximum yield at the minimum expense*.”<sup>190</sup> Though he describes enframing as “nothing technological, nothing on the order of a machine,” it is still the *way* in which “the real reveals itself as standing-reserve.”<sup>191</sup> Even though it might not denote technology or information *per se*, enframing still signals something like the operational nature of information as a type of ordering or technological mentality to the point that “[r]egulating and securing even become the chief characteristics of the revealing that challenges.”<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. 15. My emphasis.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. 23.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. 16.

Enframing, then, can mean a basic function of human consciousness (as a way of ordering). As far as the dangers of modern ICTs are concerned, it is this notion – the creation of the reserve after the coupling of the human mind with information and communication technologies – that signals to us the problem of having something like the economizing rationality of neoliberal governmentality enter the realm of higher education. Even though “when we once open ourselves expressly to the essence of technology we [can] find ourselves unexpectedly taken into a freeing claim”<sup>193</sup> – neoliberals in fields such as Communications would say that this is *always* the case – there is still a great danger, and it is here that we can read Heidegger as an early thinker of biopolitics in that

[a]s soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve.<sup>194</sup>

Heidegger’s man-as-standing-reserve is who populates the new student body in the neoliberal university, and the task of educators, at least in the Humanities, should be to think of a way to alienate the student from this relation to the standing-reserve. In a world where mastery over ICTs equals knowledge, pedagogies of alienation might be the only way to allow for the opening of a space for thought.

## 5.2. THE SPACE OF THOUGHT

What is the *telos* of teaching? It most certainly is not teaching – educating another – itself, for why do long-term, tenure-track academics tend to focus, as they better their careers and

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid. 26.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. 26-27.

build their resumes, more on their own individual research and not on teaching multitudes of young and eager first-year students? The real and deeper question that we should ask is thus not simply “why does one teach?” but “why does one teach philosophy?,” or English, or Cultural Studies, or, et cetera. In the Humanities, the answer might be said to contain a touch of a great scepticism dating all the way back to the Socratics, namely, that teaching and educating should inherently provoke a type of *interrogative*, Heideggerian questioning in relation to predominant or accepted modes of behaviour, learning and technique. In a world of ICTs, immediate and global interconnectivity, and the neoliberal syntheses between disparate economies, faculties and regimes of truth, the Humanities can, in some respects – this is not a universal axiom – lean toward education and teaching as a form of alienation. From modernity to postmodernity, in certain works of continental philosophy and modernist literature, alienation is seen as a great form of emancipation, social justice and hope. One could say that these texts are representative of the unique space for thinking that appears when one has a fundamental encounter with what can be called a sort of alienated, one-way relationship or bond. What would this connection look like? It would be a set-up where the interrogative questioner builds a link with that which forces, nay, *pressures*, him- or herself to think, such as a student’s very first traumatic encounter with Dostoevsky’s Raskolnikov, Freud’s uncanny, Joyce’s Yes, Barbusse’s hole-in-the-wall, or Deleuze’s image of thought.

The notion of humanist interrogative questioning as a recuperative moment in higher education is in danger of being usurped by an economic questioning that erases the space for thought. The practice of neoliberalism – which includes various processes of harmonization – sees interrogative questioning as a profitless expenditure that is unable to legitimize itself in a world of advanced capitalist processes, and so truly critical programs are being eliminated from



universities in favour of research on things such as the “digital economy.” The space for thinking is thus closed down the moment that the question is formulated according to a success/failure logistics. In the age of excellence and human capital we are in danger of slipping from Heidegger’s original question to one of the great dangers that he foresaw in the later part of his life. The humanization that higher education once sought to foster during its development as a national project has led to the inauguration of biopolitically charged student bodies, and the new project of the university – long-term urban planning on a global level – has sped up this process to the point where we no longer have students who interrogate but apprentices who problem solve. What does this mean in terms of what a future counter-pedagogy might look like? Universities, in order to realign themselves with the humanist tradition, must first come to terms with the fact that we have moved too fast, that we must reconsider our relationship to teaching and learning and that the form of life most proper to higher education in the twenty-first century should be one that alienates the student body once again.

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