

UNIVERSITIES AT WAR





FORCE OR THE BODY POLITIC AND THE 'SOVEREIGNTY OF NATURE'

I obeyed, I suppose, an innate feeling ... which held that hierarchies founded on privilege and money were the worst offence against nature.

(François Mitterrand, *Ma Part de Vérité*, quoted in Short, Mitterrand, p. 261)

1.1 THE ANATOMY OF CAMPUS VIOLENCE

The university, as an institution that is both in the world and of the world, has a particular relation with force. That relation is not just to be found in its physics laboratories, those spaces on the campus where we explore the forces that constitute the world and worldliness, the way that the world and indeed our universe hangs together by a play of material forces (mass, density, gravitational pull, atomic energy and so on). I mean more than this. The university has a relation to what we can call the politics of force, to the ways in which force shapes the polity. What, then, is the proper relation of the *worldly University* to *civil society* itself?

In the wake of the student revolutions of 1968, Hannah Arendt produced an extended essay, *On Violence*. There, she pondered the relations of violence to power, strength, authority and, crucially, force itself. She ponders carefully the precise meanings of these terms and indicates that 'Force, which we often use in daily speech as a synonym for violence, especially if violence serves as a means of coercion, should be reserved, in terminological language, for the "forces of nature" or the "force of circumstances" (*la force des choses*), that is, to indicate the energy released by physical or social movements'.¹

¹ Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston, MA, 1970), 45.



This is useful here: at one level, it is precisely the 'forces of nature' that, in various and extremely sophisticated ways, our physics laboratories deal with, and it is the *force des choses* – the force of circumstances – that engage our social sciences and even our humanities and arts in diverse ways. At a fundamental level, then, the university and its faculties must take an interest in force: natural force in its laboratories and material cultural and historical forces, interpersonal forces, in its libraries and seminars.

I explore here the nature of the relations that obtain between the university institution and force as such, and I examine how an interest in force relates to the other categories that interested Arendt in the study of violence that, for her in 1968, is so centred on student protest movements. I will also engage some issues regarding contemporary student movements in relation to this. Above all, however, my abiding interest is in relating the force of nature to questions of sociocultural power and authority and in how these can be articulated by a university that is avowedly worldly, in and of the material world.

Arendt was writing in the wake of student uprisings in the United States and across Europe in 1968. Those uprisings, though having various local specific inflections (such as conflicts over access to women's dormitories for male students in Nanterre), had one very specific initial fountainhead: unease with American involvement in the Vietnam War. They also had a steady supply of energy, in the students who mobilized across campus and cities in great numbers. As Patrick Seale and Maureen McConville put it in their contemporaneous book (with photographs by Chris Marker), *French Revolution 1968*:

Students are far better equipped for insurrection than most adults recognize. They have time to plot; freedom from bread-and-butter constraints; the confidence of their class and education; faculty buildings in which to meet; above all, *energy* – the energy to march from one end of Paris to the other, to fight all night, and still be fit enough to draft, print and distribute a revolutionary tract before dawn. Adults are no match for such demonic stamina.²

That was in 1968. Some 50 years later, the position of the student has dramatically changed, as has the socially widespread understanding of what the university is for in a civil society. The more recent version of the student – our contemporary – has been stripped of much of this dynamic energy and force: she or he is seen increasingly as potential 'human capital', essentially as

² Seale and McConville, *French Revolution 1968* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1969), 71.

an operative of the systems of capital and resource management (including human resource management) in societies that are centred primarily on market economics.

The essential physical and imaginative dynamism of the Paris 1968 student has been supplanted by the dynamism of money and of a particular contemporary version of society as one based on 'growth' or what Robert and Edward Skidelsky call 'politically orchestrated insatiability' in their study of *How Much is Enough?*³ The growth in question is measured not only by how much the individual contributes to GDP, but also by how much she or he earns in their private capacity as an employee in work. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, in *The Spirit Level*, call the belief in an axiomatic good of growth itself into question: 'Economic growth, for so long the great engine of progress, has, in the rich countries, largely finished its work'.⁴ When the political establishment continue to regard growth as the foundation of all measures of the good life, we end up with 'segregation by poverty and wealth', where 'the rich are willing to pay to live separately from the poor' (p. 162), with the concomitant breakdown of the social sphere itself.

Disregarding such arguments, we now face a situation where, in succinct polemical terms, the student of today has become increasingly treated as a valuable resource (or fodder) for the ongoing smooth operations of the neo-liberal economic machinery that constitutes and governs our current 'advanced' or rich societies where economic growth has supplanted any idea of a good life as a foundation for the social or public realm. The situation, however, is not limited to advanced economies only but is also being exported and imitated elsewhere. Commenting on the United Kingdom's post-2010 'experiment' following the Browne Review's substantial step towards full privatization of the sector, Stefan Collini writes that 'the fate of British universities cannot be considered in isolation'. The pressures that the so-called 'market democracy' has put on the university are damaging British institutions, certainly, but

unfortunately, the UK has put itself in charge of the pilot experiment [and] ... Other countries are looking on with a mixture of regret and apprehension: regret because the university system in this country has been admired for so long, apprehension because they fear similar policies may soon be coming their way.⁵

³ Robert and Edward Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough?* (Penguin, London, 2013), 77.

⁴ Wilkinson and Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (revised edition, Penguin, London, 2010), 5.

⁵ Stefan Collini, *London Review of Books* 35: 20 (24 Oct 2013).

In the market-driven audit culture that dominates the present conception of what the university is for, students do not have 'time to plot', rather all their time is 'accounted' for. So-called continuous assessment has converted learning time into a constantly pressurized surveillance of continual examination; preparation for that examination is itself accounted for in 'contact-hour' time, which has to be maximized (quantity, being measurable, trumping quality in this). Far from being free of 'bread-and-butter' issues, student debt, constantly exacerbated by a process whereby the costs of general education of the population are transferred to individuals as personal debt, is a constantly increasing worry. To counter that, students now are increasingly part-time, given that they have to try to find paid employment simply to sustain them in their period of study. And all for what? The promised 'graduate financial dividend' may indeed be there for some, but in a world of increasingly precarious employment, many will find the economic yield less substantial than the initial investment of time and energy – or they'll join that high dream of capitalism and become the unpaid intern, or, worse still, the intern who pays for their own internship, and thus pays for the privilege of working.

The gains of modern technology are also now invading the very idea of the university as a place for people to meet, the kind of literal 'body politic' of a *collegium*. As faculty are increasingly enjoined to deploy computing technology as if it were an axiomatically good teaching-aid, lectures are podcast, seminar notes are posted on-line and, in many cases, students no longer need to be physically present as a material bodily force in a classroom. The identity of a scholarly community – a community shaped by the interplay of forces among a collective – is atomized and neutralized by the elimination of communal space and its dissolution into separate individualized cells. The classroom itself is in danger of becoming a purely virtual space, an Amazon resource that substitutes the real or historical engagement of the market with a virtual and atomized individualism: the virtual replaces the virtuous. Collegial force is dissipated through the technology, and the idea and even the very existence of a collegium, such as the students of 1968 would have known it in *le grand amphitheatre*, the Great Amphitheatre of the Sorbonne in 1968, is diminished.

All of these changes are changes in the dynamics of force and energy, not just of individual students but also of the university itself. It is not simply the case that students have become less politically engaged – the frequent lament of *soixante-huitard* faculty; rather it is the case that the university institution, as a force within civil society, has been systematically diminished.

In 1968, however, the protests happened with a tremendous release of forceful *energy*, and they were countering the violence of US involvement in Vietnam and what was seen at the time as the incipient triumph of what

Eisenhower had christened the 'military-industrial complex'. This is the context for Arendt's writings on violence, and it is worth looking at the speech in which Eisenhower coined his resonant phrase. His speech, the last he made as US President, on 17 January 1961, delivered an austere warning.⁶ He pointed out that it is only very recently that the United States had established an arms industry at all, but that the industry has grown massively, such that 'the very structure of our society' is affected by it and by the 'grave implications' that are entailed in the development of such massive technologies of force. The situation is now one where, as he put it, the 'solitary inventor' has been 'overshadowed by task forces of scientists in laboratories and testing fields'. The research required for developments in this area is so sophisticated that it has had to become intensely professionalized.

The consequence of this is that the university sector itself, as the locus of that professionalization, is radically changed. In Eisenhower's words, 'the free university, historically the fountainhead of free ideas and scientific discovery, has experienced a revolution in the conduct of research'. This revolution is one in which what we would now call 'research-grant capture' has become, in and of itself, often more important than the actual research being done: 'Partly because of the huge costs involved, a government contract becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity', he states.

Eisenhower is seeing here, somewhat prophetically, what eventually does happen in the university sector. Two things come about. First, money, in and of itself, becomes a key determinant of 'what Universities are for'. This is a kind of madness, according to Edward and Robert Skidelsky in their consideration of economics in relation to 'the good life': 'Making money cannot be an end in itself – at least for anyone not suffering from acute mental disorder' (p. 5). Secondly, government-grant capture aligns the forces of the state with the forces of the university, in ways that threaten the founding propriety of the Haldane Principle, designed to ensure that universities do not become government propaganda machines.

In the light of this emerging state of affairs, Eisenhower issues his sternest warning:

The prospect of domination of the nation's scholars by Federal employment, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present – and is gravely to be regarded. Yet in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite.

⁶ Public Papers of the Presidents, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1960, 1035–1040, available at: <http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/indust.html>.

This, very interestingly, is also close to a position adopted, much earlier, by Hannah Arendt. In 1946, she received a copy of a text written by her former mentor, Karl Jaspers, in her New York home. The text was his revised *Idea of the University*, a text rewritten and redesigned essentially to help detoxify the German tertiary sector after the atrocities of its politicization under Nazism.

Arendt admired the book, and pointed out that, given that a revived university sector would be extremely expensive, then the state should bear the costs. However, she added that, notwithstanding this, it would be good – even necessary – that the professoriate does not become civil servants. She was profoundly aware of the dangers – as had been seen under Nazism in Germany – of having a tertiary sector whose forces united with, or were forced to identify with, those of government. Indeed, article 5, section 3 of the German constitution formally enshrines the strict separation required: 'Kunst und Wissenschaft, Forschung und Lehre sind frei. Die Freiheit der Lehre entbindet nicht von der Treue zur Verfassung'. That is, 'Arts and science, research and teaching shall be free'. However, this guarantee of freedom – with subtle nicety – does not absolve the teacher or learner from the separate duties of citizenship: 'The freedom of teaching shall not release anyone from allegiance to the constitution'.

In his presidential valedictory speech, Eisenhower is aware of how the military-industrial complex can lead to a skewing of the proper relations among the government, the university and general society or culture, by eliding the separation between one's duty as a citizen and one's scholarly duty to follow where intellectual curiosity leads, and by making the latter subservient to the former. Indeed, the relation of science to government had been an abiding concern for Eisenhower. In an earlier address, given to a symposium in basic research sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences and other private organizations, and entitled 'Science: Handmaiden of Freedom', he argued that 'the search for fundamental knowledge can best be undertaken in areas and in ways determined primarily by the scientific community itself. We reject a philosophy that emphasizes more dependence upon a centralized approach and direction. Regimented research would be, for us, catastrophe'.⁷ Eisenhower's presidency, at least insofar as it touched upon science and research into issues of force, is governed by the Cold War ideology that took a specific direction with the successful launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union. Science might well have been the 'handmaiden of freedom', but it was also a key element in advancing the geopolitical position of the United States in the world.

⁷ Available at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=11387>.

This Cold War framework for scientific research in the mid-20th century is a clear manifestation of how 'worldly' the university needs to be. Yet, being 'worldly' does not involve a strategic political position in which communities and people are best served by direct governmental control of scientific research. Eisenhower was profoundly aware of the entire legitimacy of governmental interest in science, but, with an invocation of Tocqueville on American democracy, he also argues not only that science should be returned to the primary determinations of intellectual curiosity, but also that this should be done in the interests of good democratic citizenship.

In practice, then, one aspect of the student revolts of which Arendt writes in 1968 – revolts whose archaeological prehistory goes back to the Cold War and its confrontation of different ideologies – is shaped by an attempt to recall the university to what, in mid-20th century, was seen by some as its proper activity, of engaging force in ways that eschew its deviation into violence – war – within and between cultures. The challenge issued by the students of 1968 was to become a direct challenge to state authority.

The difference is that such a position is virtually and constitutionally impossible now; so great has been the capture of the university's force by the overpowering and overbearing force of the state. Eisenhower's caution and warnings have been ignored. Successive governments, of all political persuasions, have arrogated to themselves the right to determine the nature and direction of research and teaching, and successive Quisling sector leaders, self-styled 'CEOs', 'Presidents' and Vice-Chancellors, have been quick to acquiesce, spying either personal advancement or advancement of their own institution over others, gained through their supine compliance with state power. However, it is no longer the intimacy of the university with military force that is at issue in the present state of affairs, rather the intimacy of the university is now forged with economic forces, to the detriment of its social responsibilities and authority.

Arendt defines authority as something that can be vested in persons or institutions. The institutional example she offers first is that of the Roman senate, and, in such cases,

the hallmark of authority 'is unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey; neither coercion nor persuasion is needed ... To remain in authority requires respect for the person or the office. The greatest enemy of authority, therefore, is contempt, and the surest way to undermine it is laughter.' (Arendt 1970, p. 45)

And, in 1968, as Seale and McConville pointed out, Daniel Cohn-Bendit 'turned clowning into a punishing political weapon. Totally unimpressed by

age, rank, or authority – by all the protective cant of the adult world – his talent was to keep a mocking finger pointed at the Emperor's testicles' (p. 57). While Eisenhower's world was dominated by the fear of nuclear tragedy, Cohn-Bendit was able to see the power of comedy as a political weapon – and to reclaim the university as a site not for catastrophe but for criticism and for play, for provisionality. Yet, just two years later, on 4 May 1970, the university found itself again at the centre of an issue of force, not in Paris but in Ohio. That day, troopers from the Ohio Army National Guard fired on students in Kent State University, killing four and wounding another nine. This event yielded one of the most iconic images of the period, John Filo's photograph of Jeffrey Miller, one of the four dead, with Mary-Anne Vecchio crying out beside his corpse. 'Tin soldiers and Nixon coming, we're finally on our own', sang Neil Young with CSNY. State violence here crushed the authority of a protesting student body. Such confrontations are, in our own time, becoming increasingly common, even if less dramatic than a situation involving firearms and death. 'Cops on campus' are increasingly visible as a means by which university authorities seek to quash protest, dissent or criticism, and violence crushes play.

Our guiding question here is about the authority of the university, and I explore how that authority might be gleaned from the engagement with primary force. Two things will be of special importance: first, the question of the proper separation of mission or purpose as between university and state (what we might call the forces of circumstance or the place of the university, as a worldly institution, in the public and social sphere); second, the ways in which this worldly university engages primarily and crucially with the forces of nature, or with what is described at one point in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* as the 'sovereignty of nature'. The year 1968 was partly shaped by attitudes to war, and specifically to US involvement in Vietnam, at least in terms of the worldly political dimensions of student protest. It is appropriate, then, in a development of some observations laid out in my *Introduction* chapter, to consider how the Great War helped shape the origins of the modern and contemporary university, and it is to this that I now turn.

1.2 TYRANTS IN THE MARKET OR FINANCIAL VIOLENCE

The French thinker and poet, Paul Valéry, thought about these issues, though not explicitly in terms of the university institution; he thought about them in terms of the relation of civilization to the violence that is endemic in war and in a wartime economy and environment. In April 1919, he sent two letters (published as *La Crise de l'Esprit: or Crisis of the Mind*) to *The Athenaeum*, a literary journal based in London, that was modernist, internationalist and broadly

liberal in political outlook. He was writing from Paris in the immediate aftermath of the Great War, which would turn out to be but the first of a series that caused terrible destruction, especially to the civilizations of Europe.

The letters begin with a stark statement about the fundamental fragility of civilizations. The very opening sentence of the first letter states the position clearly. Like the character of Hamlet who will later play a key role in the letters, Valéry holds a skull before us and gives us a *memento mori*: ‘Nous autres, civilisations, nous savons maintenant que nous sommes mortelles’ (we, the civilized, now know that we too are mortal).⁸ In the wake of the Great War, we now know that civilizations are themselves as fragile and precarious as the life of an individual human being. The letters are framed by an insistence on this precariousness, by an awareness that what we know as civilization has at least one disconcerting trouble: it may be merely a transitory historical state of affairs and is no protection against the flow of change, the secular dimensions of historical mutability that can allow others, through force, to assume violent or authoritarian superiority in world affairs.

The central argument of the letters derives from Valéry’s ‘fundamental theorem’ regarding civilization and the world system or world order. That theorem states that the world is fundamentally predisposed to inequality and that this inequality derives from physical forces that are themselves given by basic geography and population demographics. Some parts of the world are more richly endowed than others in natural resources. They have a more fertile soil, a subsoil containing more valuable minerals, a landmass that is well irrigated, an infrastructure that makes transport and the like easier, greater population numbers and thus greater force and strength and so on. There is, as it were, a natural inequality across the world’s regions and that inequality is intrinsically governed by – and potentially guaranteed by – the primacy of the forces of nature or what Adam Smith had thought of as the logic of ‘natural advantage’.

The planet, argues Valéry, can be described at any given instant in terms of this play of unequal forces. It is a terminology that we might now be more readily familiar with under the developments in geography and other disciplines that depend on an understanding of what Trotsky called ‘uneven and combined development’. Interestingly, then, it seems clear that through the tumultuous events of the latter half of the 1910s, not just in Europe but also in revolutionary Russia, there developed a profound awareness of intrinsic inequalities as a fundamental problem or issue for the world order. It is perhaps

⁸ Text available at: http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/Valery_paul/crise_de_lesprit/valery_esprit.pdf.

not surprising, then, that the discipline of 'International Relations' (IR) began, properly, as a university discipline also in 1919.

That disciplinary beginning has its roots precisely in the Paris Peace Conference that ended the Great War and helped establish the League of Nations. One great supporter of the League of Nations was David Davies, Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire in Wales, who (with his sisters, Gwendoline and Margaret) endowed the first university professorship in IR (named for Woodrow Wilson), in the University of Aberystwyth. IR as a discipline brings the question of geopolitical force right into the heart of the university in the early 20th century, and it does so in a way that tries to regulate the relations between the forces of nature on one hand (geographical terrain) and the force of circumstance on the other (governmental policy – especially foreign policy – based in organizations of nation states).

Yet, asks Valéry, how is it that if the theorem is right, we find that Europe, which is less well-endowed and less massively populated than elsewhere in the world, nonetheless finds itself in the first rank of strength and development in the world? IR would have talked about 'power' in response to this. Valéry's answer lies in what he describes, less philosophically or theoretically – and in terms that the present day would find rather suspect – as the 'European psyche'. The description that he offers of this psyche is interesting for its proximity to those characteristics that are often associated with the institution of the university. He describes its qualities: a burning but disinterested curiosity, a scepticism that is not pessimistic, an attention to mystery that does not resign itself to unknowing and eager aspiration for progress. He proceeds to offer a specific single example: Greece, the site of the foundation of *geometry*.

This is where we get to the absolute core of Valéry's argument, and also to the centre of why it is so important for our contemporary understanding of the relation of force to the university. Geometry, a science that begins from the measuring of the earth itself as a physical entity, allows for the very exploration of space itself, and at every level, not just physical space (its primary concern) but also, through this, the spatial organization of virtually all of the components of knowledge itself. Geometry *organizes* otherwise random forces and allows us to find and essentially to control physical space and the human lived environment through the deployment of definitions, axioms, theorems and even the fundamental lexical and syntactic organizations of languages in which we find the possibilities of proofs. Even grammar – the foundation of our mutual social cooperation through language and understanding – is a kind of subset of geometry, and, as Philippe Sollers would claim in the wake of 1968, 'grammar is already a question of the police' and thus related directly (if jocularly) to the polity.

The domain of scientific knowledge, then, is where we find a way of allowing the intellect to engage with force, in such a way that brute force – the natural order of inequalities – does not necessarily hold sway. In fact, the balance of powers between Europe (in this case) and the rest of the naturally more forceful world is swayed entirely by the triumph of what Valéry now associates with civilizational force itself, the force that we might recognize as that of the university. The intellectual activity – here, that of Greek geometry – acts as a counter to the otherwise unequal celebration of mere physical force or violence: it counters the ideology of ‘might is right’. Geometry is to the classical world, then, what IR is to the modern. We can put forward the crude analogy here: the university exists to counter social, economic and political inequalities of brute natural force, and it does so through the kinds of abstract thought that govern the operations of geometry.

In 1919, however, this was not the whole story for Valéry. Science and its achievements are not necessarily always good but are often subject to laws of unintended consequences. The horrors that he had just witnessed in the war are not just the result of some simplistic prevalence of evil; rather what happened is that positively good intentions (hard work, solid principles of discipline and so on) were turned to bad ends through some fundamental perversion of their intrinsic qualities – that is, by accident and not by design.

To be sure, wrote Valéry, science must have made great progress: ‘Il a fallu, sans doute, beaucoup de science pour tuer tant d’hommes, dissiper tant de biens, anéantir tant de villes en si peu de temps’ (‘we needed a great deal of science, surely, to kill so many men, destroy so many goods, annihilate so many towns in such little time’; p. 4). The real struggle, as he sees it, is not so much whether science is an intrinsic good as much as whether it addresses properly the issue of unequal natural forces, the ‘sovereignty of nature’. It is less a question of whether science should be in the dock and more a question of the relation of science (vested here in Valéry’s ‘European psyche’) to the intrinsic inequalities that the world’s natural resources and geopolitical conditions give us. That is to say, how can science counter the fundamental force of superior numbers, superior natural resources that make the world a potentially unequal place, a place condemned to organize itself through bullying force? For us, here, now the same question persists, but with the wider frame of reference: how might the university counter the potentially negative effects whereby nature – or an ideology that presents itself as ‘natural’ – holds sway over us by some basic and crude force?

Further, Valéry is troubled not just by this fundamental issue, but even more by how he sees it actually playing out in 1919. Given what he had described

as the fragility and secular mutability of civilizations (we will all die), he is now profoundly aware, after 1919, that what we had seen as the supremacy of geometry is, like many good scientific things, leading to bad ends. Valéry points out that once we have realized the power of geometry, it changes its own nature. Geometry allowed, in its application, for a means whereby science becomes power: science becomes a means of domination that in turn yields great wealth and allows for an exploitation of the entire planet. At this point, geometry has stopped being 'an end in itself' and 'an artistic activity'. Rather, now, knowledge – which had been a value in terms of its own accomplishment or, as we would more conventionally put it, an end in itself – became instead a *commodity*, desirable not just to a select few but also across the entire world.

This – knowledge transformed into stable commodity – thereby changes its own intrinsic nature and form and becomes a thing marketized: 'elle deviendra chose du Commerce, chose enfin qui s'imite et se produit un peu partout' ('it was to become a matter of Commerce, an imitable product available everywhere'). In short, knowledge becomes a business proposition, something for sale across a wide market in the world. This is the start of a supposed 'knowledge-economy' which, in this bare form, reveals itself for what it is: knowledge inserted into world economies in marketable form as a series of commodities: more simply put, information and data for sale or rent. In its extreme and somewhat perverted form, we know this as the metadata that has become the currency of surveillance for those arms of state called 'security services', like the NSA or GCHQ.

Now, we should be clear that the widespread deployment of knowledge is not itself the problem, rather the problem is that, thus widespread and equally shared *through its commodification and marketization*, the very force that gave Europe its superiority over the primacy of natural force, with its intrinsic tendency to bullying and coercion, no longer has that countervailing power. When the whole world shares this same geometry, a geometry no longer identified with intellect (or civil society) but with market-wealth (or commercialization), then we return to that prior state of affairs whereby those who have more natural resources (in this case, individual wealth) reassert their own fundamental force.

Robert and Edward Skidelsky indicate what is wrong-headed in this. The primacy of money as a major determinant of social life, they say, troubled Aristotle – and troubles them – because of 'its power to subordinate the proper end of every human activity to the ancillary end of money-making' (p. 75). This yields the corruptions that we know only too well in contemporary societies: 'doctors think only of their fee; soldiers fight only for pay; sophists trade wisdom for gain' (p. 75). Further, money breeds insatiability:

Use-values have ... a controlling end: the good life. To pursue them beyond this point is senseless. Money, by contrast, has no controlling end ... Money is the one thing of which there is never enough, for the simple reason that the concept 'enough' has no logical application to it (p. 75).

Those UK vice chancellors (but they are not alone; this is not a solely UK-based phenomenon) who have been awarding themselves extravagant salaries may know the full meaning of this. In 2014, while limiting academic pay increases to a maximum of 1%, some have awarded themselves pay raises of 22% or, in one extreme case, 39%. This latter represented a pay rise of some £105,000, or roughly four times the full annual average UK salary. These are being awarded not only to VCs who claim that they cannot afford to pay academics any more, but also to VCs who keep newly emerging PhD-holding academics to zero-hours contracts, hourly rates that are significantly below the national minimum wage, and who outsource support staff, transferring them to private-sector companies who give them a free option: accept even lower pay, or lose your job. There are, of course, honourable exceptions among the United Kingdom's VCs, but they are, indeed, exceptional. In some cases, as Aditya Chakraborty points out, the increases are precisely like those awarded to the bankers post-2008: rewards for failure.⁹ Just as the banks ruined economies by 'diversifying' and growing too big to fail, so universities, thinking of themselves as commercial businesses, lose sight of their primary and central activities. The result is inequality that scars the sector as a whole and calls into question the primacy of the economic and financial force that clearly threatens to corrupt the university.

Finance, or individual wealth, now becomes the key and determining force, and it is a force that has co-opted its countervailing authority, that of civilization or, tragically, of the university.

I noted above that geometry was to the ancient world what IR is to the modern. Here, there is a further comparison available: geometry is to the ancient world as *oil* and similar resources are to the modern. Oil, as one of the most important natural resources in the contemporary environment, threatens the world order with not only war but also the resulting mass inequalities against which mere intellect cannot fight back. The ownership of oil, as well as of gas and even water, is increasingly in the hands of either private companies or individual oligarchs: this is the logic of neo-liberal 'privatization'. It is also a

⁹ See <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/03/new-breed-fat-cats-university-boss-vice-chancellors>. What we are seeing here is the dying embers of an unsustainable greed, as CEOs, in virtually all sectors, grab what they can, knowing that the neo-liberal greed game might well be up.

geopolitical condition that governs conflict, as we have seen in Iraq, Ukraine and elsewhere. In the Middle East, the appropriation of land through occupied settlements is vital as a source of underground water in a parched desert environment.

The world of privatized utilities is generative of anti-civil attitudes. And, as it is with actual worldly political conditions, so also it is with institutional conditions within the polity, including the privatizing and commercialization of knowledge within and through the university. As Shakespeare has it, we are in a position where ancient grudges are reborn, where 'civil blood makes civil hands unclean' or where 'The blood-dimmed tide is loosed', as Yeats had it in 'The Second Coming', a poem more or less contemporaneous with Valéry's letters.

In this state of affairs, Valéry asks, is the European spirit amenable to being spread more generally, without detriment to those – like those in Europe – who are weak in natural or physical force, weak in natural resources and smaller in mass numbers? Is there any freedom to act against the threat of an establishment of inequality based on force? The answer he offers returns us to the fundamental task of what we would now call research: 'it is perhaps by seeking this freedom that we create it'; and the search will involve a study, within the thinking individual, of 'the struggle between the personal and the social life'.

This is a fundamental struggle for a specific kind of democracy, as outlined by John Stuart Mill. Mill feared the 'tyranny of the majority', and he tried to answer it with a strict separation of individual personal desire and the social good. As he put it in *On Liberty*, 'To individuality should belong the part of life in which it is chiefly the individual that is interested; to society, the part which chiefly interests society'¹⁰. The predicament of force, as it concerns us, is thus also an issue regarding democracy, and the marketization of knowledge is one of our world's greatest threats to democracy.

Clearly, Valéry's anxieties have some contemporary counterparts, and they also speak of some contemporary issues. He wrote in the wake of war, and we now find ourselves discussing the future of the university in an allegedly globalized environment, but one where the greatest global experience might well be quite simply that of war itself. The contemporary wars are also, fundamentally, wars over natural resources, be it water in the Middle East, or oil in Iraq and after, or the resources, controlled by multinational corporate entities, to feed a burgeoning world population. In the face of this, issues around democracy have become crucial, and it is crucial that the contemporary worldly university finds some way of engaging these issues. What is or should be the relation of a

¹⁰ Mill, *On Liberty* (Penguin, London, 2006), 132.

centre of alleged civilization, or at least of civil society, to the violent destruction of cities, of traditions and of cultural forms and practices? How can we find a means of countering the prevailing tendencies to govern by force: either direct physical force in tyrannous jurisdictions or the indirect coercive force of market-poverty and structural inequalities of wealth?

We might re-position the terms of Valéry's argument. We might pose the question of whether the university – as an institution that is central to civil society in real and material terms – can or should be a bulwark against not just crude force but also against larger and world-scale uneven development. If so, then the university essentially can become a force for the growth of various kinds of equality, an institution whose guiding principles might be shaped by a desire to counter the hierarchies that are yielded by the accidents of physical force or the accidents of geopolitical circumstance (*la force des choses*). This would entail an exploration of the place of the institutions of knowledge in a world polity that is increasingly dominated by economics, and by an economics whose neo-liberal version is guided by a necessary but destabilizing growth in inequality. Such a growth in inequality is one that some conservative thinking wants to identify precisely as 'natural', a kind of genetic *force of nature*, opposition to which or even criticism of which must appear 'unnatural' and thus also even unspeakable, intrinsically monstrous.

In sum, how is it that the university, characterized as an institution driven by the primacy of demands for knowledge, addresses the politics of force in the contemporary material world? In asking this, we need to learn not just from the contemporary moment of uneven developments that describe only some privileged parts of the global environment as 'civilized', but also from previous civil societies and previous explorations of force and learning. Given, further, the clear relevance of Mill's anxieties about the potential tyranny of the majority that lurks within representative democracies, we also need to find ways of addressing the proper relation between education as a matter of individual and personal interest and education as a worldly public good for civil society.

For this, we can turn to the illustrative example of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, a play that seems preoccupied with the potential emergence of democratic power set against ruling patrician privilege. It is here that we see a key political exploration of the politics of natural force, the 'sovereignty of nature'.

1.3 ENTITLEMENT AND THE RIGHT TO THE UNIVERSITY

At issue is a contestation between the authority of force on one hand against the authority of civil society on the other hand. This is an issue concerning democracy. What is the relation of the university to civil authority? From

whom does it derive its cultural standing and authority, its 'rights to the city', its right to speak in the polity or its right to speak truth to power? What is it that 'entitles' the university as an institution and that gives it an authoritative name and identity? How, in short, does an institution of learning get the authority to call itself a university?

This is the world that Shakespeare explores in one of his most pertinent Roman plays, *Coriolanus*, performed for the first time roughly in 1607, and perhaps coincident with England's 'Midlands Revolts'. These were essentially struggles between landlords who enclosed and privatized land and commoners who gathered together in protest, levelling the enclosure hedges and so on. What was at issue in those revolts was fundamentally 'a political struggle over the constitution of authority in the countryside'¹¹.

At one level, the play is fundamentally about 'entitlement', and about who should have cultural and political entitlement to power and rule. On one hand, Caius Marcius is literally 'entitled', as he is renamed to become Coriolanus. On the other hand, as the play makes clear, are not the people of the city themselves entitled to food, when it is in abundance, and are they not also entitled to their voices and votes, in order to underpin civic or civil authority in the figure of Coriolanus? This is the opening of *Coriolanus*, essentially: a people up in arms against a patrician Roman authority, the people lacking bread while the patricians revel in abundance, 1607's version of the 99% and the 1% so succinctly described in our time by the economist Joseph Stiglitz. There is, as it were, a massive structural inequality with respect to resources. This situation exemplifies what Stiglitz calls 'the price of inequality' and its attendant problems, when he points out that 'Countries rich in natural resources are infamous for rent-seeking activities',¹² and *Coriolanus* was set in precisely such an economics.

Coriolanus himself is a clear manifestation of brute physical or natural force. He fights entire armies alone and vanquishes them. He is a manifestation of the 'sovereignty of nature', to borrow a pregnant phrase from the lexicon of his great enemy and rival, Tullus Aufidius. Yet he is also a pure force that becomes mythologized through his literal 'entitlement' as seen in his new name 'Coriolanus'. The play, however, is one that is written partly to examine the very idea of such patrician and mythological entitlement, for it plays with an emergent idea of democracy.

Against Coriolanus, we find the ranked masses of 'the people', who proclaim their own entitlement by trying to reclaim the streets. 'What is the city

¹¹ Victor V. Magagna, *Communities of Grain: Rural Rebellion in Comparative Perspective* (Cornell University Press, New York, 1991), 120.

¹² Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality* (Penguin, London, 2013), 49.

but the people', asks Sicinius, the Tribune in Act 3, scene 1, and the people reply, chanting together that 'The people are the city'. The contemporary version of this chant and statement is to be found in the Occupy movement. In *Rebel Cities*, David Harvey asserts the claims of Occupy Wall Street ('it is we who are the public') against the forces of 'mayors, police chiefs, military officers, and state officials'.¹³ The Rome of *Coriolanus* is just one such 'rebel city', an enclosure or privatized space whose ownership and legitimate occupation is being challenged by its people.

In Shakespeare's time, we should recall, 'Empire' did not mean 'British Empire'. Historically, and as we know from the plays, it probably meant something to do with empires that were centred – as for the much later Valéry – somewhere in the Mediterranean. For Valéry, it was a necessity to place the entire shoreline of the Mediterranean in Europe (Smyrna and Alexandria are as much European as are Athens and Marseilles, he argued). If we turn to Shakespeare, we find an interesting state of affairs in this 'centre of the Earth', this world-centre.

Braudel showed how the entire Mediterranean goes into a state of some turmoil after about 1589, with a crisis in France and a crisis across Islam. The death of Henri III provoked, in the region, anxieties specifically about trade: the stories coming out of France were doing real damage to trade, according to Braudel. Meanwhile, following the death of the Turkish ruler, Euldj Ali, in 1587, there was, all across the Islamic Mediterranean, 'une crise d'autorité turque', a parallel crisis of Turkish authority.¹⁴

There is a European crisis (fundamentally associated with trade), and there is a crisis in Islam that spreads across North Africa from the East (Braudel 1993, p. 360). During this period, contemporaneous with the writing of the play, a kind of proto-Arab Spring was happening across North Africa, contributing to fundamentally financial anxieties on the northern borders of the Mediterranean. When Shakespeare thought of empire, it is these empires and not anything specifically 'British' that he had in mind. Perhaps above all, when he thought of the centre of the world's power and gravity, he turned to the empire that was Rome, and, given the history in whose midst he sat, the view of Rome that is culturally 'available' to him was one where there was specifically a crisis of geopolitical power. That crisis is, in turn, shaped by the emerging modern nations around the Mediterranean shoreline and their taste for the acquisition of the world's natural resources (especially silver), the satisfactions of which depended upon authoritative command of the seas.

¹³ Harvey, *Rebel Cities* (Verso, London, 2013), 163.

¹⁴ Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen, vol 3* (Livre de Poche, Paris, 1993), 358, 361.

It is these same power structures that govern today's contemporary version of the question of 'entitlement' and its relation to privilege or to self-serving elites. At stake here is a two-fold question: who 'commands' the forces of nature that shape our world and what is the relation of the university – with its concerns for research, knowledge and thinking – to such material force? What is it that entitles the university to exert a power or authority over brute force? In *Coriolanus*, the question is put directly: what entitles the people to exert authority over the force of nature that is Coriolanus? The answer is also put directly, if controversially: their collective poverty, stemming from the intrinsic inequalities of Rome. It is inequality such as this that legitimizes their revolt, and it is the drive for inequality that leads Coriolanus eventually to the corruption of a fundamental treachery when he proposes to help Tullus Aufidius to sack Rome itself.

Our contemporary world order rehearses a similar series of Mediterranean crises as those described by Braudel in the late 16th century. In nearly all the countries bordering the Mediterranean, there has been a crisis of democracy, occasioned by finance, poverty and the extreme form of inequality that goes by the name of dictatorship (along the southern shores) or technocracy (in the north). Appropriately enough for this present chapter, during Greece's more recent post-2008 financial crisis, Jean-Luc Godard indicated the massive debt that the world owes to Greece. Greece gave us, he said, the word 'donc' – *therefore* – the very logic or geometry that allows us to think logically that 'if P, therefore Q'. Accordingly, and with his characteristic half-joking-whole-serious flourish reminiscent of the impudent clowning of a Cohn-Bendit, and more seriously recalling to our mind Valéry's crisis of the spirit, he argued that we should donate €1 to Greece every time we utter the word 'donc'.

Geometry gives us the birth of modern science (it gives authority, method, verification and so on). Its central determination is to give a form to force, to take the crude banality of physical force and to find a means of containing it and even of countering it. Following my discussion above, it would be a comfort to be able to say that the university is properly the institution that exists to counter the primacy of force in the world, to ensure that 'might' does not necessarily become 'right' simply by coercive violence and threat of domination. The story is more complicated, however – else we would have the solace of arguing that the university can solve the geopolitical problems of the post-9/11 world. Sadly, it is not that straightforward.

In his great foundational text of post-structuralism, 'Force and Signification', Derrida points out that '*Form* fascinates when one no longer has the force to understand force from within itself. That is, to create'.¹⁵ Essentially, geometry

¹⁵ Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (trans. Alan Bass; University of Chicago Press, 1980), 4–5.

lurks behind a criticism that now is troubled by its own inefficacy, a criticism that 'knows itself separated from force' and that celebrates instead its own 'technical ingenuity or mathematical subtlety' (Derrida 1980, p. 5). Commerce, in its commodification of knowledge – or the mathematical subtleties of banking's 'credit-default swaps' or 'sub-primes' and the algorithms that have wrecked large parts of the world economy – is precisely one such attempt to 'contain' knowledge itself or to restrict it and its efficacy for change.

Commerce gives a form to intellectual force in this sense, and thereby precludes creativity. It replaces creativity with consumerism and homogenization, or that false form of 'equality' that simply acts as a cover for the triumph of physical or financial force: money. Georg Simmel, in his *Philosophy of Money*, worried precisely about the homogenizing and 'flattening' power of money, which reduced 'the concrete values of life' to abstract form and to what he called 'the mediating value of money'. In mediating all things, money 'equates' value with price, but it does so to the detriment of things to be as they are: unique and specific.¹⁶

Knowledge, in the triumph of a geometry that brought wealth and equalized the world's uneven powers, was itself a specific kind of force. However, when knowledge is commercialized, subsumed under the form of commerce and commodity, we get an instrumentalization of knowledge that dissociates knowledge from all that is civil or civilizing. Instead, such commercialized 'formal' knowledge starts to exacerbate precisely those inequalities that it might otherwise counter.

In short, to put this into the terminology that we have already seen explored in Arendt, knowledge becomes not power but strength: '*Strength* unequivocally designates something in the singular, an individual entity; it is the property inherent in an object or person and belongs to its character' (Arendt 1970, p. 44). By contrast, '*Power* corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together' (Arendt 1970, p. 44).

If, as the cliché has it, 'knowledge is power', then knowledge has to be non-commercial, nor-marketable: social.

1.4 THE CORRUPTING OF DEMOCRACY

Let us be explicit about the question at issue here. It is more than the usual question that is cast in terms of the social role, or social mission, of the university.

¹⁶ Simmel, *Money; Philosophie des Geldes*, 1900; (trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby; Routledge, London, 1978), 255.

It is more fundamental than this. For Bill Readings, writing in 1994, the 'wider social role of the university is now up for grabs'.¹⁷ Now, however, we have to realize that that mission has indeed been 'grabbed': the university has been co-opted to a specific role, and it is one where the civil society itself has lost out. In what we might call a *coup de force*, the university itself has been weakened, its democratic credentials largely discarded and disengaged, and its large social, ethical and political responsibilities reduced and shrunk into bureaucratic 'accountabilities' in an economic structure that dispenses with any notion of a worldly ecology of learning, thought and criticism.

When François Mitterrand launched his attack in 1964 on what he saw as the unauthorized claims to power that General De Gaulle was amassing to himself through a centralization of power in the person of 'De Gaulle', he was addressing the same fundamental problem that we saw in *Coriolanus*. What Mitterrand saw as a *coup d'état permanent* is entirely akin to the *coup de force* in which the university and its potential for democracy is weakened. Further, Mitterrand's polemic in 1964 is itself instrumental not just in shaking De Gaulle, but also in laying some of the ground for the student revolts just four years later.

Further, and baldly stated, in this *coup*, the university has become an instrument for advancing and furthering inequalities of wealth, presenting such inequalities as 'natural', and thereby disqualifying anything critical of such a position as 'unnatural'. In its most extreme forms, it is not just critical thinking that is now to be penalized, but yet more fundamentally, the very activity of thinking itself. Now, even the very activity of thinking about the conditions of civilization or of worldliness – as opposed to merely efficiently operating a pre-existing and allegedly 'natural' state of economic and political affairs – is precisely what is described as 'alien' or unnatural. 'I think, therefore I am dangerous'.

If thinking is at the core of a university, then we are now witnessing an attack on the fundamental principles of the university, the like of which we have never seen before, going beyond any mere iconoclasm or barbarism. What makes this situation worse is that, as in the Trojan War, the enemy is to be found already within the gates: there is virtually no official countervailing argument or defence launched from within the institution itself. Any such defence is intrinsically de-legitimized because it is axiomatically 'unnatural' – which now simply means unorthodox.

In his study, *Violence*, Slavoj Žižek points out that violence is an essential constituent of what we might call our sociocultural ecology. Violence is, in fact, that state of affairs or condition in which *talk about* our environment

¹⁷ Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Harvard University Press, 1994), 2.

(ecology) is transformed into *laws governing* our environment (economy). This is not quite how Žižek puts it, but his argument helps explain the position I am outlining here.

The governing idea in Žižek's *Violence* is that what we often call violence in our societies is simply the visible portion of a larger-scale 'objective' violence that does not usually reveal itself. This objective violence – a violence that is not just, and maybe not even, a matter of perception or the aesthetics of violence – is grounded in two things. The first (which will concern us less here) is the 'symbolic' violence 'embodied in language' (whereby language itself imposes 'a certain universe of meaning' or delimits what it is possible to think: Sollers' grammar as a 'question of the police'). The second is more important for present purposes. This is what Žižek calls 'systemic' violence: 'the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems'.¹⁸

The university, as a site for engaging the forces that constitute and even sustain the world, cannot afford to ignore its relation to those forces and to this systemic violence. My contention is that the university is that institution that has a responsibility to counter the incipient violence of natural force with a view to ensuring that our world does not suffer from the unequal distribution of strength that derives from happenstance geography, or from inequalities given by individual wealth. Further, it is an institution among whose central purposes is to act as a bulwark against natural force as such – bullying – with a view to reducing inequality more generally.

These arguments place the university at the centre of an ecology. This is slightly different from the arguments recently advanced by Ron Barnett, when he puts forward an idea of what he calls a 'becoming-university' institution that is governed by a quasi-Heideggerian 'care or concern' towards its local and global 'networks' of engagement. This 'feasible utopia', as Barnett calls it, is dedicated towards a flowering of imagination.¹⁹ This is necessary, certainly, but what I am arguing for is something that I think is yet more fundamental.

An ecology is, by definition, a means of understanding our home: an *oikos* shaped by *logos*, a home environment that is understood by how we talk about it, even about how we shape it through the prioritizations of our most important meanings and meaningful activities. What we have witnessed in recent decades across both the developed and developing worlds is a fundamental act of *reduction*. 'Ecology' has been overtaken by 'economy': a home environment or *oikos* that is now governed not by talk or discussion, but instead by *law*, by *nomos*. This seems to raise the stakes and importance of ecology, and

¹⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence* (Profile Books, London, 2009), 1.

¹⁹ Ron Barnett, *Being a University* (Routledge, Abingdon, 2011), 142.

to do so in ways that are normatively associated with the intellectual work of a university. The institution's task, we have often thought (especially in bourgeois liberal circles), is to establish normative laws that govern how we understand and engage with the world around us. This, indeed, is what Readings once called 'the university of culture', that Humboldtian version of the university that proposed norms for a nation's citizenship while also producing the very citizens capable of living up to those norms.

However, at the same time, the laws in question are, in modernity, fundamentally simply financial: the law and all its processes of legislation are governed by money. This yields what we have recently seen: a state of affairs in which democracy itself is skewed by finance. We no longer have the democracy of 'one person, one vote', but rather, as Stiglitz points out, a democracy grounded in the logic of 'one dollar, one vote'. Stiglitz cites a 2010 decision in the US courts (the case is referred to as that of 'Citizens United *versus* Federal Election Commission'). In the judgement on this case, 'the Supreme Court essentially approved unbridled corporate campaign spending', which Stiglitz describes as 'a milestone in the disempowerment of ordinary Americans' (Stiglitz 2013, p. 165). Legislation protecting 'free speech' in this case actually means empowering the speech of those who, with the largest budgets, can drown out the financially less well-endowed. Money talks, citizens don't.

This casts a helpful light on what is, by now, a standard 'realistic' position about the university's relation to public policy. Like many *soi-disant* realistic positions, this one essentially is rather quietist, desperate and expressive of a tacit solidarity with coercive 'public opinion': a state of affairs that is neither an opinion nor genuinely public, and which Christopher Hitchens memorably described, in a debate with Shashi Tharoor in 2007, as 'the greatest threat to free expression'.²⁰ The claim of 'realism' is actually simply an excuse for preservation of the status quo, for it rests on the assumption that what is 'realistic' is, by definition, that which really exists at the present time. Thus, anything that is critical – anything that thinks otherwise, or that even thinks at all – is inherently unrealistic. The net result is that those who are currently in a position of power remain in that position, and 'realism' is their guarantee that their power will be perpetual. Thus it is that power trumps legitimate authority every time, for power regards legitimate authority – based on reason, argument or debate and serious critical thinking – as unrealistic fantasy. As such, legitimate authority, based in democratic argument, can safely be ignored. Power, within the university sector, now never feels the need to justify itself: it just is. 'This is this'. In this respect, it is like the finance industries.

²⁰ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jw3dDbc1BHE>.

This kind of position is laid out by William Melody in an essay on 'Universities and Public Policy', published in 1997, in a collection quizzically entitled *The Postmodern University?* There, Melody rightly indicated in 1997 was what turned out to be an accurate prediction of a general political trajectory over the next two decades. This traces the demise of an idealistic version of the university as an institution that disinterestedly searches for truth in various domains. That institution is increasingly replaced by an institution that 'serves' (or carries out the will of) its funding masters, identified in the UK sector usually as 'government'. Money talks, and government now is itself governed by money. As the 2008 crisis showed worldwide, banks were able – and, indeed, remain able – to hold entire governments and peoples to ransom.²¹

These governments, of course, though democratically elected, find quickly that their programmes are nonetheless shaped largely by private interest groups and their lobbyists, so that government departments increasingly 'make decisions based primarily on assessments of research prepared to support advocacy positions being presented by different special interests' (Melody, p. 77). The reduction of government funding for universities, paradoxically, goes hand-in-hand with an increase in governmental regulation of the institutions and their activities, but that regulation is itself shaped by the demands not of 'the public' – citizens – but rather of special private sector business and associated interests: 'Government is more and more the negotiating arena for special interests, and less and less the representative of the broader societal issues, those that are common to everyone but not the specific responsibility of anyone' (Melody, 77).

This is consistent with Stiglitz's observation that, in the United States, political decisions in Congress are increasingly driven by money, and by the 1% that holds most of it. He writes that in Congress, 'there are more than 3,100 lobbyists working for the health industry (nearly 6 for every congressperson), and 2,100 lobbyists working for the energy and natural resources industries. All told, more than \$3.2bn was spent on lobbying in 2011 alone'. Similarly, in the United Kingdom in 2013, the lobbying industry was worth some £2bn.

We should note that a substantial part of this lobbying is done on behalf of precisely those energy industries and natural resources whose geopolitical enclosure is responsible for the forced and force-based inequalities of the world that gave Valéry his fundamental theorem a century ago. Let us not forget that John Browne, chair of the United Kingdom's 2010 Browne Review, had been chairman of BP, responsible for its massive expansion which many argue came

²¹ See Antony Smith and Frank Webster, eds., *The Postmodern University?* (Open University Press, Buckingham, 1997), 72–84.

at the cost of maintaining safety and therefore led to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010. Further, the lobbying in question has succeeded in ensuring that government-funded university research and teaching increasingly supplement and even replace private sector financing of R&D costs. This is the kind of thing that Stiglitz refers to as 'corporate welfare', and the 'realistic' sector leadership in tertiary education has increasingly been complicit in what is essentially a systematic transfer of commonly-shared wealth into the hands of a few private sector interests or individuals.

In the so-called 'developing' world, this is called 'corruption'. In the so-called 'advanced' economies, it is called realism.

Melody doesn't simply analyse the problems; he also proposes, as a solution, that the university take upon itself a role in trying to shape public policy. This, too, has come about, but in highly muted and co-opted form. It is what is known, especially or primarily in the United Kingdom, as 'the impact agenda', in which the university has to make clear, audit-style, how the research that it does increases GDP, that is, how it contributes to the differential growth of the economy whose taxpayers sustain it (a growth designed to establish a widening of the gap between a wealthy nation and one less well-endowed). This, too, reduces ecology to economy. Yet surely there is substantially more to an ecology – to the university's worldliness – than its economy: there is more to the world and to the establishment of a social environment in which people live together than GDP, or than personal individual wealth.

It is here that we need to address the violence of a situation in which economics coerces ecology into silence. That ecology is better described in terms of the environment of the university itself, the civil society and its citizens who sustain it, authorize it and entitle it as a civil power: an authority.

1.5 THE SECULAR UNIVERSITY

Where, finally, should we stand in relation to the secular university? What is the relation of university to world in our times?

The days of the so-called 'ivory tower' are long gone, and it is unhistorical to want to make some kind of return there, to retreat from the world and worldliness. The university today is secular through and through. In this respect, it is entirely different from the monastic institutions and religious foundations that gave us the original 'idea of the university'. Our contemporary institutions are in and of the world, and this is a good thing.

However, it does not follow that the university should assume a position that accepts the world as it is. What follows is that the university's key questions and guiding principles are worldly, historical. Our preoccupations are and

should be the world as a site of change and historical mutability. Rather than accepting 'what is the case', that Wittgensteinian version of 'the world' – *Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist* – we can construe the university instead as precisely the institution that cannot accept the world as what is the case. It is here that we imagine worlds undreamt of, and it is thus here that we imagine and then realize futures or simply historical and secular change. This to say: it is here that we can research and it is here that we can learn and teach. Crucial to both is the realization that one central thing that the university stands for is making history, not money.

We are of the world in that we assume a position among the forces that shape our social, cultural, political and economic constellations. This means that we should not be 'reacting' to the world as it is but should instead assume a proper responsibility to help shape it. This is our 'contribution' to the economy, to the politics, to the social and the personal: the realm of possibility.

For, in fact, we might say that, in the university, the world is everything that is not yet the case. We must acknowledge our place in the regime of forces. This means that we must act or become agents of possible futures and history. Along with the demise of the ivory tower, we also face the demise of the so-called 'disinterested' scholar. While maintaining a sceptical attitude that accepts empirical evidences for our researches, we should also acknowledge that our researches are necessarily 'directed'. There are things that the university does, spontaneously.

'What are Universities for?' asked Stefan Collini. We might also ask 'What are Universities against?' Collini's question presupposes a kind of neutral answer, investigating what it is that universities do to serve the social domain that subtends them. But we can also hear 'for' in terms of what is it that our current system supports and subtends: are we 'for' scientific progress; are we 'for' aesthetic beauty; are we 'for' the amelioration of social conditions? And so on. We might answer these all in the affirmative. However, that is itself a purely ideal picture. In empirical fact, and by contrast, the university as currently constituted is above all 'for' inequality. It should be against it.

At stake, then, is our university ecology: how do we speak of or how do we describe our place in the world? This question is indeed of global significance. In the 20th century, the post-Second World War world united in what became a successful attempt to eliminate smallpox. The progress here required political will and cooperation among nations for the public good. None of this was for private advantage or competition. Today, we face a similar worldwide problem that, like smallpox, threatens the future of life itself. The university's priorities should be clear in this context. We need to face the force of nature; we need to address how our own forces of circumstance – the way we live now, as Trollope

once put it – is affecting and afflicting the natural environmental realm. Like those GIs who came to the US institutions after 1945, we are caught between the priority of the life of the mind and the very survival of the body. We need to face the force of nature when it comes in the form of all kinds of bullying behaviour, be that in direct physical wars or in indirect forms, as in economic warfare and structural inequality.

Now, more than ever, the university has to be worldly, to find ways of regulating the forces of nature and of circumstance that unite us, not in some 'global race' as the UK Prime Minister David Cameron puts it, not in some competition for advancement that will damn others to the place of losers, but rather forces that unite us in the realization of how some human activities jeopardize the life-chances of the next generation.

We owe a debt – to the world, and to the future generations, and it is to this that I turn in the next chapter.