



UNIVERSITY OF
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Neoliberalism and the limits of critique

(in contemporary universities)

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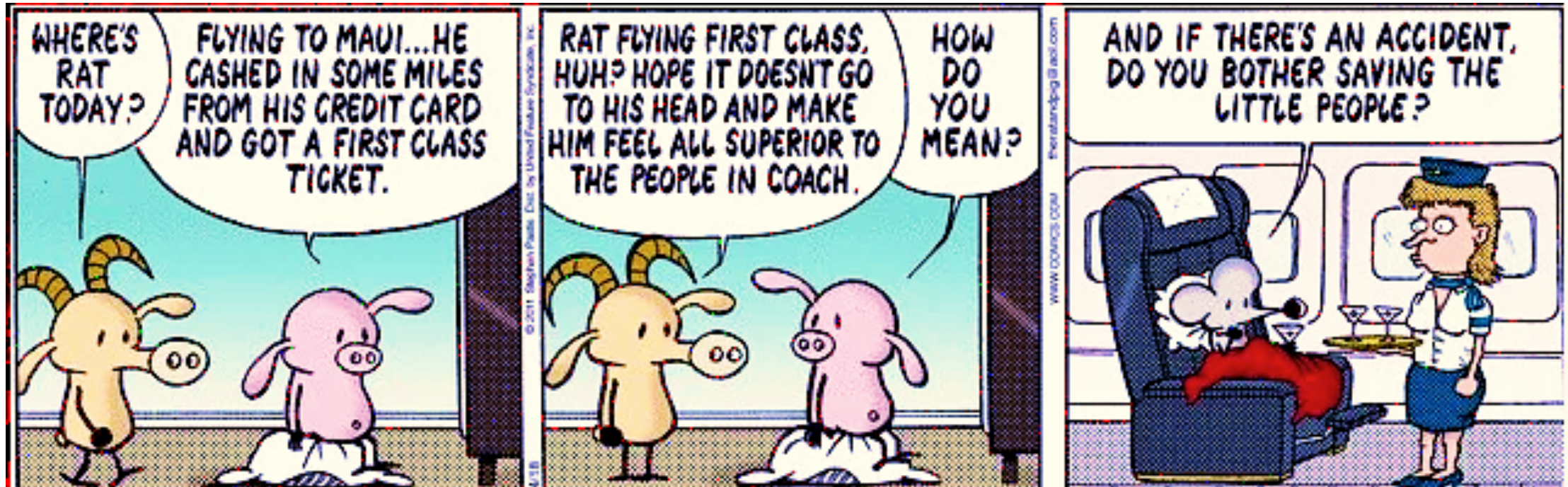
CGHE seminar, Institute of Education

UCL, University of London

Entry points

- Knowledge of reality : acting (in relation to) reality
- Epistemological, ethical, political questions posed by insider/outsider positions
- Positionality // positioning: social theory and politics of knowledge
- Conditions of (im)possibility of critique: political, economic, epistemic

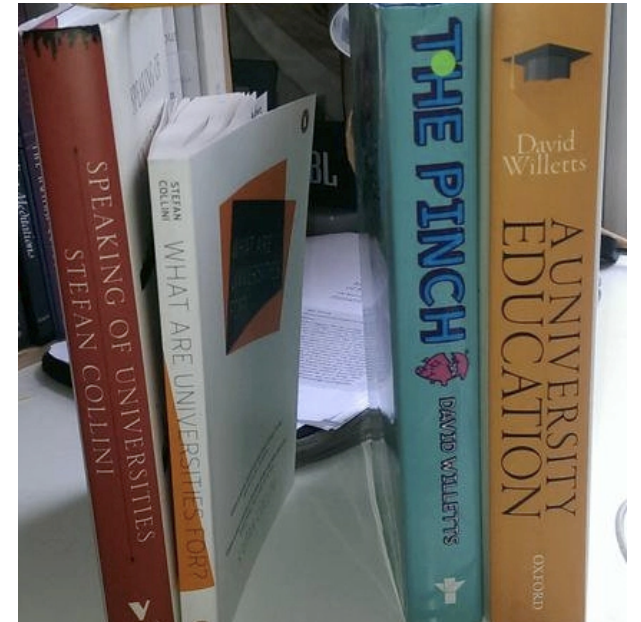
The paradox of critique



'Pearls Before Swine', © Stephan Pastis (pearlscomic.com)

We are going to need a bigger bookshelf

- Connell, R. 2019. The Good University
- Sperlinger, T., McLellan, J., and R. Pettigrew. 2018. Who Are Universities For?
- Willets, D. 2018. A University Education
- Furedi, F. 2018. What's Happened to the University?
- Smyth, J. 2018. The Toxic University
- Fuller, S. 2017. Academic Caesar: University Leadership is Hard
- Collini, S. 2017. Speaking of Universities
- O'Sullivan, M. 2016. Academic Barbarism, Universities and Inequality
- Docherty, T. 2015. Universities at War
- McGettigan, A. 2013. The Great University Gamble
- Giroux, H. 2013. Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education
- Collini, S. 2012. What Are Universities For?
- Docherty, T. 2012. For the University
- Freedman, D. and M. Bailey, eds. 2011. Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance
- Holmwood, J. ed. 2011. Manifesto for a Public University
- Evans, M. 2004. Killing Thinking: The Death of the Universities



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War on universities?

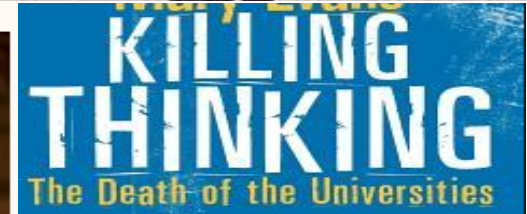
The Guardian view on universities and Brexit: culture wars

Academic civil war as elite universities lobby for others to drop their fees

London Review of Books

study for a degree from

ow who was teaching what post-referendum tribal



Vol. 33 No. 24 · 15 December 2011
pages 9-10 | 2499 words

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Universities under Attack

Keith Thomas

We are all deeply anxious about the future of British universities. Our list of concerns is a long one. It includes the discontinuance of free university education; the withdrawal of direct public funding for the teaching of the humanities and the social sciences; the subjection of universities to an intrusive regime of government regulation and inquisitorial audit; the crude attempt to measure and increase scholarly 'output'; the requirement that all academic research have an 'impact' on the economy; the transformation of self-governing communities of scholars into mega-businesses, staffed by a highly-paid executive class, who oversee the professors, or middle managers, who in turn rule over an ill-paid and often temporary or part-time proletariat of junior lecturers and research assistants, coping with an ever worsening staff-student ratio; the notion that universities, rather than collaborating in their common task, should compete with one another, and with private providers, to sell their services in a market, where students are seen, not as partners in a joint enterprise of learning and understanding, but as 'consumers', seeking the cheapest deals that will enable them to emerge with the highest earning prospects; the indiscriminate

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PROFESSIONAL JOBS SUMMITS RANKINGS

Strategies for success in the Brexit 'culture wars'

Shift to a political divide based on identity and values requires response from universities, experts suggest

Home > Education

War on vice-Chancellor pay is revenge for universities' stance on Brexit, higher education leaders say

The death of universities

Terry Eagleton

HIGHER EDUCATION IN CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE: Practices and Policies 3

Death of the Public University?

UNCERTAIN FUTURES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

And yet...

26/02/2019

BIRMINGHAM UCU

Ballot result and pay update

As announced by UCU this week, nationally we failed to reach the 50% turnout threshold in the pay and equality ballot. The turnout nationally was 41%, which was significantly higher than the previous nationally aggregated pay ballot in 2016, which achieved a 35% turnout, but slightly behind the 42% turnout in the disaggregated ballot in the Autumn term (where every branch was balloted individually). 70% of the



How to explain abundance of critique and scarcity of action?

- Sociology of critique (Boltanski, Boltanski & Chiapello, Boltanski & Thévenot)

⇒ Social conditions of critique

- Theories of performativity (Butler, Ahmed, Fricker)

⇒ Conditions under which speech-acts become effective

What is the relationship between critique and political action?

- Knowledge → action
- *Ideologiekritik* (Marx, Frankfurt School); hegemony and counterhegemony (Gramsci)
- “Metacritical theories of domination tackle asymmetries from a particular angle... of the ***miscognition*** by the actors themselves of the exploitation to which they are subject and, above all, of the social conditions that make this exploitation possible and also, as a result, of the means by which they could stop it” (Boltanski 2011, 9)

Who knows (not)?

What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
195 Richard loves Richard; that is, I and I.
Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.
Then fly! What, from myself? Great reason
why:
Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?
Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
200 That I myself have done unto myself?
O, no! Alas, I rather hate myself
For hateful deeds committed by myself.
I am a villain. Yet I lie. I am not.
Fool, of thyself speak well. Fool, do not flatter.

- *Knowing* neoliberalism → *doing something about* neoliberalism
- Yet, neoliberalism has dimensions that are not (just) epistemic (Davies 2018, Konings 2015, Berlant 2011; Loveday, 2018; also McNeill, 2014; Burrows, 2012; Gill, 2009; Sparkes, 2007)
- How do we account for affective / desiring elements of neoliberalism (including in knowledge production)?
- *Cognification / gnossification* of neoliberalism (Bacevic, forthcoming in *Social Epistemology*)