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An Analytical Proposal for Understanding the "Higher Education European Space": A View from the University of Barcelona

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The Context and a Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Situation at the University of Barcelona[1]

The present situation (January 20, 2009) derives from a series of events which have occurred since November 13th, 2008. These included a demonstration against two laws, the LUC (*Llei Catalana d'Universitats*, Generalitat de Catalunya 2003)[2] and the LOU (*Ley Orgánica de Universidades*, Government of Spain 2007) which was closely followed by another demonstration held on November 20th which was organized to take place at a pan-European level. This culminated in Barcelona with the occupation of the Chancellorship of the University of Barcelona. The decision to organize the occupation was reached by a large assembly of approximately 500 students. From that point onward, the stipulations of the students were articulated in three main demands: 1) The abolition of disciplinary measures used against students in previous protests at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. 2) The call for a referendum for the faculty members, students and the whole staff of public universities. 3) A moratorium on the Bologna plan or implementation of the Higher Education European Space.[3] The aim of these demands is to develop a model of a public university that fulfils the needs of society, needs that should not be reduced to and confused with the needs of the business sector.

The occupation of the Chancellorship of the University of Barcelona aims to fulfill three functions: 1) To disseminate the students' message to society at

1 The authors of this article are students and a professor in the area of social anthropology who have actively participated in the campaign against the neoliberal reforms currently taking place in the University of Barcelona. This article mainly draws from the following sources: six formal interviews with academic officials; numerous informal conversations with professors and students of several departments and faculties within the University of Barcelona; participant observation in meetings convened by the Commission for "new degrees," departmental meetings, student assemblies and finally, in the assembly held in the premises of the Chancellorship of the University of Barcelona which began on November 20 2008 and continues to the date of writing, January 20th, 2009. We have also used other sources including documentation from official agencies, student unions and assemblies´ reports; the reports from the Spanish lobbies promoting "Entrepreneurship" and Education; manifestos and other publications issued by University staff, students, booksellers, editors and free-lance writers. Among them we can list the following: ENQA 2005; Bricall 1998; Capella 2009; Carreras 2006; Corominas 2008; Moreno 2008 & 2009; Ministerio de Educación 2003, 2007; Narotzky 2008; Pardo 2008, Universitat de Barcelona 2007, 2008; Vázquez 2008. We acknowledge the helpful collaboration of Joan Roura, Pere Morell and all of the people interviewed.

2 Autonomous government of Catalonia.

3 Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior (EEES). See http://www.eees.es/es and http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/.

large; 2) To discuss and study the present situation with the aim of ensuring the rights of students, professors and staff; 3) To strengthen the co-ordination between students' assemblies and different faculties and other universities within Catalunya. During 2008, there was an intensification of students' protests against the Higher Education European Space, the *Ley Orgánica de Universidades* (Government of Spain 2007) and the *Llei Catalana d'Universitats* (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2003). In these protests, the students utilized the existing apparatus for representing their viewpoints and also the spontaneous assemblies which soon became coordinated and established as the platform for opposition. The existing forms of representation have proved themselves to lack the dynamism needed to successfully challenge the neo-liberal reforms. In contrast, the actions of the students that have emerged from the assemblies have re-created the kind of strength that can oppose the inertia of bureaucratic bodies.

We are now at a turning point in history. We have an opportunity to radically reform the existing model of education. Such a reform will necessitate a conscious detour from an increasing bias which conflates the right to study with the conjunctural needs of capital.

In order to understand the events which are currently taking place, we propose the relevance of several theoretical concepts. We begin by using the concepts of technologies, programs and strategies developed by John Gledhill (1994)[4] in his rendering of Foucault's ideas. We will use also three categories formulated by Marx: alienation, fetishism, and formal and real subsumption.[5] Lastly, we will use the concept of "democratic despotism" from Tocqueville (1961).

Technologies

According to Gledhill, we understand the concept of technologies as practical devices used to survey, discipline, administrate and mould people. In the application of these technologies, we can see theory being converted into practice. At the present time, the main technical devices being put into operation at the University of Barcelona consist of operative concepts closely connected to computer applications. This means that professors and students are subjected to compulsory categories which determine the learning methodology and, as a consequence, interpret the fields of study. Here the ideological offensive is unmercifully systematic. The government and the chancellorships of the universities have created agencies of ideas such as "innovation," and "quality." They are control mechanisms—Foucault's *modalités instrumentales* (Foucault 1980a:240; Gledhill 1994:126, 147-150)—which are designed to perform the role of technologies of power. The use of computerized application forms restricts professors' academic-instructional freedom (in Spain: *libertad de cátedra*) and the right to education accorded by the Spanish Constitution. Students and professors have to adapt their minds to the conceptual categories introduced by these technologies in their courses. These categories do not permit professors to accommodate the teaching and learning needs specific to each discipline. They try to put all courses on the same low

4 Although Gledhill recognizes in Foucault's concepts the "somewhat vague (meaning) when abstracted from his concrete reconstructions of historical transformations," he renders a clear theoretical statement for Foucault's concepts. Gledhill bases his reading of Foucault mainly on Foucault 1980b. Other sources quoted by Gledhill are Foucault 1979 and 1985. We have consulted the original French collection of Foucault's works other than books to find that the most precise typology of power relations are given in terms very close to Gledhill´s synthesis. Thus, Foucault acknowledges *le système des différenciations, le type d'objetctifs, les modalités instrumentales, les formes d'institutionalisation, les degrés de rationalisation* (1980a:240). However, we feel that the concepts offered by Gledhill give us a better analysis and understanding of power relations in our object of study.

5 We use the Marxist concept of ´alienation´ and the associated concept of fetishism as described in Fromm 1962 and Marx 1974. For the sociological consequences of Marx's theory of alienation we rely mainly on Schaff 1979. For a general philosophy of history implicated in the same theory, we refer to Mészáros 1975. These works have helped us to construct a theory of alienation which has contributed to an understanding of the interrelationship between power and economic interests. In the present historical case, this offers us a deeper understanding of neoliberalism. The theory of formal and real subsumption originates from the Marxist analysis of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. It has mainly been expounded by Godelier 1991.

level of learning.[6] Lobbies of pedagogues (mainly organized in "Institutes of Educational Sciences") have become university police who ensure that this new low level of Culture and University Studies is adhered to. They coerce the teaching staff into taking their courses on instruction and applying their ideology. This is because a part of the salary of the professors depends on attendance at these courses. The ideology attempts to equalize the level of university teaching with that of elementary school teaching. The university student is treated as though he or she is a permanently immature individual who has to be pragmatically guided and submitted to the labour market in the most efficient way. This new University Education is designed to make people exploitable in the market arena, educating them in enacting formal social relations, in how to manage a particular public presentation of the self, one that fits the image they learn from curricula, and all the typical forms of capitalist alienation. In fact, anything instead of the conscious and critical knowledge of the world around them. In addition, grants are increasingly given to perform administrative tasks. For example, in order to become a professor or researcher, the student must learn how to submit themselves to administrative and managerial tasks. The contents of study and research are abandoned and replaced by administrative constructs that have been created to discipline people within a formalistic void. Several manifestos, such as *Propostes per a un millor govern de la Universitat de Barcelona* (University Of Barcelona, 2008) have appeared criticizing these undertakings, but the Education agencies defend their "democratically elected" authoritarian impositions (since they are assigned by democratically elected politicians). Here emerges a rude contradiction: bureaucracy expands into a system that incorporates increasingly complex and expensive technologies of power, but, at the same time, the entrepreneurial ideology would seem to claim that education should be developed without the assistance of such bureaucratic policing and mess.

This perversion of the University is not just the result of the strength of neoliberal policies issued by governments but is also a consequence of a servile choice taken by professors. There are three main inducements for professors to join the neoliberal offensive against the University: The first is the offer of managerial posts as opposed to "tiring" teaching and research tasks. These posts are not subjected to academic evaluations, thus it is only a matter of putting in time in order to collect the extra salary. The second inducement is the upward political career path awarded to top university managers who fulfill the goals of the neoliberal offensive, just like private sector managers who are rewarded after dismissing employees or relocating the firm to countries with fewer workers' rights. The third and final inducement is the commitment of the University to the neoliberal ideology that allows professors both to conduct research as a mere business activity as opposed to a form of academic investigation, and to do only business for the sake of the University. We think that these inducements explain statements made by top administrators at the University of Barcelona and the Polytechnical University of Barcelona such as "It is an opportunity we cannot lose" and "We have to perform our duty as any responsible manager of a private firm." The current motto is "It doesn't matter if you don't like it, it is the future for everything anyway." There is no longer a chance to reform rogue or savage capitalism but to yield entirely to its "fascination."

Programs

The Programs target a specific object in social reality in order to obtain a wholly new functionality and rationality.[7] In this case, the University as an institu-

6 To pedagogically achieve these aims it is stated that learning has to supersede teaching, redefining professors as tutor-managers or coordinators of autonomous learning (Cf. interviews with the Vice-chancellor of several things including "European convergence" and the book *Propuestas para el cambio docente en la Universidad* (Martínez Martin et al. 2006). The creative side of the proposal masks the actual low intellectual level of the proposed assistance. For instance, the courses of the ICE (the lobby and institution of pedagogues) are not competent to instruct professors to manage the specific databases of their fields of knowledge, or to construct useful websites for their courses. Rather, they simply show them how to assemble websites found through Google searches.

7 Cf "*les degrés de rationalisation*" in Foucault 1980:240 and Gledhill 1994:126, 147-150.

tion is the object being targeted for radical change. The programs that aim to achieve this change are twofold. First, there is the statement of what is the true meaningful nature of the institution and secondly the deployment of tools (strategies which will be discussed in the next section) that ensure the persistence of this statement. Neoliberalism defines the true, meaningful nature of the University as an institution vitiated by a permanent budget deficit, a great deal of useless learning and a lack of fitting with the market. Thus the University becomes defined by a lack of functionality and a supposed failure to listen and respond to that permanent euphemism for private profit in a changing market led by oligopolistic economic powers, the "needs of society." The main point of the program consists of the conceptualisation of the University as an economic institution and as performing a kind of betrayal for not fulfilling what is supposed to be its main duty: to serve private profit in the market arena. The solution to this betrayal comes from an audit contract aimed at getting the University as an organization to be inspired by the ethos of private business. At the University of Barcelona this idea was originally voiced in the "Bricall Report" (Bricall 1998). This report echoes similar initiatives taken by universities all around the world, usually known as "New Public Management." The report does not proceed on the basis of researching the reality of the University (cultural, human and social) but from an analysis of the structure of its financial accounts under the idea that these have to be brought in line with the rationale that drives private business accountancy.

This displacement of the social and cultural aspects of the University is matched by a discourse on equality. It is stressed that equality will come from the application of the rationality of private profit, in the sense that the new University will reach more people. But what is being seen here are an increase in registration fees and an accumulation of new accreditation titles (also increasingly expensive). The adaptation to the rationality of private business has brought a "new idea" to the new University managers: to justify the introduction of new titles in response to purported specific demands whereas at the same time it is admitted that degrees have to be general and adapted to a market demand for unskilled employees.

Once these programs are started, a discourse must also be introduced and circulated. It patronizes, as if conscious of some of the contradictions involved, and promises utopian measures: the elimination of fees for "excellent" students, benefits that will be given to poor students who are supposed to become rich after leaving the University, alongside many more cynical naiveties.

Strategies of Power

These are understood as executive practices for the fulfillment of the Programs. In this sense, we take into account the given inequalities in society. In addition, strategies are opportunistic in the sense of maximizing efficiency for the fulfillment of the programs.[8] This opportunism is what gives relevance to media accounts of events, as well as the opinions of "think tanks" and lobbies. That is to say that the strategies of power take into account the synergy between several vehicles of propaganda and media conjunctures. In the European context, these strategies increasingly focus on legal and normative stuff. For the last fifteen years most of the European states have developed regulations and laws adapted to the "law and economics" ideology. The main purpose seems to have been ideological as well as practical. For the moment, the ideological enterprise appears to be more powerful than the practical one, since higher education is still a difficult field to be wholly incorporated into private management styles. Notwithstanding, the ideological offensive looks very important and the mimesis with private management is introduced in spite of the non-capitalist nature of the relations of knowledge which develop within the University[9]. To

8 Cf "*le système des différenciations*" and "*les degrés de rationalisation*" in Foucault 1980:239-240 and Gledhill 1994:126, 147-150.

9 The University as a lively community of scholarship is built on the basis of a universal socialization of its members in fields of knowledge, a responsible transmission of knowledge with a straightforward communication of doubts and findings, a publication of relevant results, and due respect given to the spirit of the human experience of research, study and teaching. As we will see later, the real subsumption to capitalism destroys these human qualities.

this end, staff reduction, costs reduction in general, audit recurrence and similar implements are introduced in the University, vexing the institution as a vital and independent source of knowledge.

The right to an education melts away and is replaced by a set of measures that fall under the belief that the imitation of business methods will produce the best results for the University. Also, it is claimed that this betterment of the University is being undertaken for the "good of society" and such a claim is made within a social and politically correct discourse that dismisses any critical initiative. This trend gives rise to concepts such as investment, debt, employability, opportunity, redundancy, labour market, and entrepreneurship. At the same time, the media develops discourses about the University as an obsolete, impractical and parasitic organism that can only acquire a healthy status if conducted according to the style and values of private profit. In spite of the current economic crisis that started in September of 2008, this discourse has been re-enforced without any regard to the human costs.

Alienation

From the multifaceted and wide-ranging debates about Marx's theory of Alienation we retain the phenomenon of the relationship amongst persons being mediated through the abstract properties of things. In this case, the value of personal communication at Universities is formalized and abstracted in administrative tools and formulae that are organized to be the only ones to give meaning to social relations at the University. That is to say that the new power relations are establishing abstract concepts to acknowledge and give value to all relationships among individuals at the University, as abstracted from the real value that pertains to interpersonal relationships. The main field of experience to be alienated is the complex phenomena of studying, learning and teaching. These obtain an "exchange value"—or the only formal social value—in technically and impersonally issued protocols. In short, anything that is contrary to the living act of studying, teaching and learning with all of its imponderability is taken as a mark of quality and excellence to improve the University.

Alienation is a result of totalitarian capitalist actions as well as a useful tool for making capitalism increasingly totalitarian, since alienation destroys effective human solidarity. Through the creation of a series of unrealistic protocols for the evaluation of teaching and learning, the personal communication of scholarly matters becomes alienated. Rather, people communicate via impersonal bureaucratic topics and systems of measurement. This is an old defect of the bureaucratic side of the University which today is magnified by the stress being placed on communication occurring through increasingly alienated means. Computer language is favoured for its usefulness as a tool of alienation.[10] The student no longer becomes engaged in conversation, dialogue and the improved construction of arguments but in questions and answers and the recall of clichés favoured by the "cut and paste" function of the computer. Also, learning is transformed through the administration of watered-down tests for which arguments and nuances are irrelevant. The increase in the frequency of exams and other evaluations (sold as a right for the students to know the state of their knowledge almost hourly) estranges them from cultivating an attitude of thinking about and studying topics and questions with amenity. Thus, students get increasingly alienated from their work and what motivates them to do it. A bureaucratic routine substitutes for the incorporation of will, thought and emotion in learning. The student (and the professor in her or his research) no longer feels the work that she or he produces as a part of herself or himself, with all the limits and possibilities of its expression. Instead, the entire meaning of studying is abstracted into receiving a mark and a title, worse than in previous periods, because there are more titles to be obtained and

10 See, for example, *Informe Universidad 2000* (Bricall, 1998). According to this report and similar ones, the improvement of the quality of the University professorship is based only on the mastering of computer programs and associated languages. It is not based on educational results obtained by virtue of an improvement in the exposition of the contents of fields of knowledge. Also, it is considered a betterment of the University's "quality" to accept as professors people who have only worked in business and to validate their "business or applied research" as equivalent to "scientific research."

more marks to attain. The development of the personal being becomes obstructed by the new control mechanisms. Although the official discourse stresses creativity, the new pedagogy absorbs and destroys its chances. This is alienation. Exceptions confirm the rule, for there is resistance to this totalitarian neoliberal offensive.[11]

The alienation process attempts to transform the student into an automaton ready to accept the precariousness of the labour market as a matter of fact. The "best" curricula are rather proofs of personal vulnerability and the ability to perform acrobatics to adapt to the capricious market rather than sound pursuits of personal development performed with intellectual work. The University thus contributes to the loss of social rights under an increasingly totalitarian capitalism.

Fetishism

The bureaucratic products issued through the alienation process become fetishized in the sense of acknowledging in them all the personal qualities previously seen as belonging to individual persons. Thus people connected to the University receive an acknowledgement of their personal qualities only through the qualities of things. This situation engages people in a de-personalized and de-intellectualized race to obtain these fetish-trophies in terms of money, projects, titles, or mentions of "quality" and "excellence." Thus only through the appearances of these objects can teaching, study and research be valued for each person. Of course, this is a long established fetishism in any university but today it becomes unduly exaggerated by a new step having been taken in the bureaucratic production of protocols and a mimesis with capitalist trademarks.

Knowledge is appreciated only in terms of the money received for research projects, utilitarian networking and title productivity (receiving degrees, diplomas, masters, doctorates and so on). These things are the fetishes that are supposed to grant knowledge to individuals. The neoliberal trend deepens the conventional fetishism and makes the quantitative accounting of all of it easier. The "final product"—the title—is valued as a commodity. The period of studying and teaching becomes valued in a productivity ratio whereby the time period expended is related to the securing of this commodity.[12] The University has to sell titles following a high standard of productivity: aiming for less time being expended, good quality commodities and lower costs for their production. This means that there is less time to teach and study. Instead, time is only used to get instructions about where to "find things" without knowing why and how. In the same way, good quality just means good advertising.[13] Lesser costs mean lowering the salaries of

11 If we take into consideration the numbers of professors who have adhered to a couple of manifestos against the neoliberal offensive we can estimate resistance on the part of between roughly a quarter and a fifth of the teaching staff of the University of Barcelona. The official ratio between teachers and students is misleading because it includes both professors and people who do not teach or teach half time or even less. The University is divided between professors with a *reduced* assignment as faculty members (with their time dedicated to work in the bureaucracy) and people who are *fully* professors. The current competitive race amongst many professors is to obtain as many reductions of their teaching as possible.

12 There are students influenced by the neocapitalist ideology who identify their fees as investments. This is more apparent in private universities where fees are very expensive. Then they press for a prompt profit and complain about "too much studying" as if money was the main means to produce the title. Thus neocapitalist excellence rejoins the atavistic practice of buying university titles.

13 The web pages of the Spanish universities advertise their instructional programs as if they were for people prepared to acquire academic ignorance: without reference to actual content they claim fame, prestige, excellence, quality and innovation. Leading ideologists for a neoliberal university are eager to write about quality, excellence and innovation at the university without being able to define the terms because otherwise they can only define the qualities of simple commodities. Thus the language of innovation, excellence and the rest is simply evocative of who rules in the market place; it is "their language." Actually, the main function of these terms is to suppress the ethics of the university, made from responsibility, generosity, honesty and enthusiasm in study and research. Instead, "quality" or "excellence" can only be defined with numerical standards imposed through measuring such things as the "impact of publications" and the completion of application forms for self-evaluation and the obtaining of funds for managing "research."

future professors.[14]

Besides, there is a neoliberal representation in which all the unquantifiable personal qualities related to studying are considered unacceptable. The quality of teaching depends on the labels of quality, excellence and so on, officially obtained by the institution, not on the contents actually given and actually received. Thus the relations between abstract concepts give value to personal undertakings.

Fetishism means that knowledge is only acknowledged in titles. The university becomes a factory of titles in which the students' disposition as clients of a ready-made product is understood better than the uncontrolled effects of teaching and learning throughout their whole life. There are students who defy this "offer" and contradict academic authorities. They think that to study means to face new questions, to learn new arguments and become prudently committed to fields of knowledge. The effort and prudence involved in responsible study is a life-time task. It has nothing to do with the accumulation of titles and certificates.

Formal and Real Subsumption

Until recently, the university was subsumed only formally to the market and capitalism. The university has had its own rationale and organization which could serve capital and the market, but it did not involve an incorporation of market and capitalist relations within its own structures. This incorporation is what is meant by real subsumption. Nowadays, the power relations already described introduce straightforwardly market and capitalist relations inside the university. The move is above all ideological, since it is absurd to transform the university into a strict capitalist business or a market relationship. Thus the main phenomenon to be observed in this trend is a mimesis of business procedures applied to the university, no matter how nonsensical and pantomimic they become in reality. What is to be acknowledged by the idea of "society" (=market) is the ideological servitude to the initiative.

The transformation of free relations of knowledge into a mimesis of capitalist rationality inside the university is done by internal and external agencies. The interests that have created such agencies have agglutinated into various lobbies. These lobbies correspond to corporate professional groups (i.e. pedagogues), local political parties and groups formed as a result of ties of "friendship" and the patronage linked to those who hold high offices. These agencies[15] are instituted with absolute power and they coerce, often through salaries, professors and students to adapt themselves to the ideological and bureaucratic mimesis of the private enterprise inside the university. The absurdity of the task and the privileges of these agencies have turned them into strict parasites of research and teaching.

The main political move for the real subsumption of the university to capitalist ways and manners comes from its obedience to capitalist auditing[16] "suggestions." The conference of chancellors of Spanish universities succumbed to this absurdity in 1998 when they decided to obey a report that evaluated the university in terms of the economics of business management. Thus, the "new" professors are supposed to replace decrepit figures and lead as top executives administering other professors and students.

Real subsumption also means the replacement of the logical concepts of intellectual exchange with the jargon of business. The university cuts its expenditures in salaries and grants given to the people who spend their time exclusively in teaching and research. It also "invests" half-heartedly in technologies (hardware, software and management). In addition, the university "invests" in agencies whose main aim is to ensure that the university connects to, and serves, the ideology of private profit. The recruitment of teach-

14 Usually the death or retirement (including the "invitation" for early retirement) of a professor means the creation of a "new" professorship (lecturership) that is badly paid and submitted to the new standards of "quality" (bureaucratic assessments of the potential and actual newly-hired professors' training and publications).

15 There is the characteristic linguistic abuse of acronyms in the agencies (EUA, AQU, ANECA, ENQA, EURASHE) and in their programs and strategies to signify a policy of compulsory "intelligence" (to be a know-all, a bighead).

16 Marilyn Strathern and John Gledhill, among others, have pointed out some time ago the offensive of "audit culture" in British Universities. See Strathern 2000.

ing and research faculty becomes frozen whereas the recruitment of bureaucrats, public relations people and other commissioned staff soars.

Also, there has been the creation of supposedly independent agencies to achieve these goals. (See ENQA 2005.) But such agencies happen to be public agencies which perform self-evaluations every five years, or private firms that have contracts with the public sector. Some of them are only independent from the university when the professors that work for them do not represent the university. The rest serve the programs and strategies of corporate business power as can be seen in their formation and contents. The whole reform of the "European" University is not coming from the requests of professors and students in accordance with the problems encountered in their fields, but from the demands of the ideology of totalitarian capitalism which seeks to recuperate what profiteers have paid in taxes in more facilities for the exploitation of labour.

Democratic Despotism

Today, the powers that have been referred to above are engaged in the overall process that Alexis de Tocqueville labelled Democratic Despotism. The present offensive against the University takes advantage of the conditions in which most democracies of present day capitalism indulge. The power elites have developed a democratic society envisaged by Tocqueville (1961) in which political despotism becomes "wider and sweeter (softer) and degrades people without tormenting them"[17] as compared to the despotism of the Ancien Régime. Tocqueville sees the power of Democratic Despotism as based on a strict individualist alienation and developing "immense and tutelary...absolute, detailed, regular, providential and soft" (1961:434). Tocqueville adds that it resembles paternal power but that instead of preparing children for adulthood it keeps citizens in an eternal childhood, by making them think as children. It is precisely this paternalistic aspect of despotism that is illustrated clearly in the methods that are being implemented for the "reform": they try to create an immature student, especially devoid of autonomous reflection. It turns out that this change favours the corrupted character most adapted to the market empire. The strategies and techniques to fulfill this end have built a synergy between a naive pedagogy working with the categories of elementary schooling,[18] the neoliberal destruction of social rights and the baroque growth of a "Eurobureaucracy."

Tocqueville keenly described how bureaucracy becomes an important aide for building Democratic Despotism. He tells us how in such situations the reigning power, after having modelled each citizen to its will, becomes a massive offensive for society at large, covering it with a network of "little rules, complicated, meticulous and standardized."[19] This description fits exactly the constant avalanche of bureaucratic information issued by the competing agencies in introducing "quality" inside the University today. They even issue glossaries to guide readers of this information so that they can understand the new language of formal despotism: passwords without a meaningful content for learning or teaching.

The bureaucratic offensive couples with the political one and, to express this in terms of Tocqueville, it addresses people "not in destroying their wills but in softening them, making them yield and be conducted by others... It does not destroy but hinders new births, it does not tyrannize but bothers, represses, weakens,

17 "*il serait plus étendu et plus doux, et il dégraderait les hommes sans les tourmenter*." Translation from French to English by authors. Tocqueville 1961:433.

18 As shown in the syllabi and actual courses of the Institute of Education Sciences (ICE) at the University of Barcelona (the trend seems to be common for all Spanish universities): they deal with "emotions in the class," "attention curves," "creative interaction" and so on as in an elementary school context. There is no psychology related to maturity, not even for "self-learning"! Recent courses (2008) given to university professors indulge the characteristic paternalistic behaviour which tries to create an atmosphere of naivety, "discovery" and conformism (including the encouragement of the use of childish and paternalist joking relationships and advice). An increase in one's salary depends on attendance at these courses and acquiescence to that sort of stuff.

19 "*un réseau de petites règles compliquées, minutieuses et uniformes*" (Tocqueville 1961:435).

extinguishes, brutalizes" (Tocqueville 1961:435).[20] Tocqueville concluded that some democracies introduced freedom in politics together with despotism in their bureaucracies attaining "very strange singularities."[21] He refers mainly to the contradictions that arise when dealing with common sense and everyday matters by means of authoritarian "solutions" and to the uncontrolled granting of concessions for demagogic purposes.

For the majority of professors and students, it is apathy that reigns in the University. The mere bureaucratic effect of the "reform" of the University with its application forms, reports, committees and meetings produce a minority of eager climbers and a majority of apathetic individuals.

Moreover, the people in power who have to face students and professors operate by continuously offering to engage in dialogue, by giving lip service to democratic correctness and legalistic procedures, holding meetings with official representatives as well as improvised leaders of students. They offer hours and hours of dialogue and take serious notes about any comments and criticisms that are presented. But never do they give in.[22] In the Spanish context the present day authorities try to impose a totalitarian program[23] consciously avoiding all the methods that could evoke the Francoist regime. Thus only when "democracy is in peril" ("not for the sake of our interests") will they appeal to the use of force.[24]

Addendum

On March 18 2009, the rector of the University of Barcelona called in the police (without any previous notice) to expel the students that were occupying the chancellorship building where the rectorate is located. From that moment and during the successive demonstrations that followed, the police charged brutally against students, journalists and passers-by. There were more than a hundred people injured including about twenty journalists. Several Human Rights organizations and the Lawyers' Professional Association have demanded responsibilities to the government.[25] Thus, the dialoguing style of the political and academic authorities had changed abruptly to a repressive action. Also the academic authorities imposed a lockout on several faculties for the rest of that week. For the moment the tactics of the authorities seems to rely on the representation of a "subversive minority" which can only be dealt with by the police (about three thousand students demonstrated in Barcelona on the night of the 18th in a spontaneous march). The protest against the neoliberal destruction of the University is thus minimized and criminalized. We do not accept this "official matter-of-factism" and there are hopes to regain a critical perspective on behalf of students and professors in order to stop democratically the neoliberal destruction of our University.

20 To this Tocqueville adds significantly that this peaceful, soft and ordered servitude makes a fair couple with "some of the external forms of freedom." (Tocqueville 1961:435).

21 "Les peuples démocratiques qui ont introduit la liberté dans la sphère politique, en même temps qu'ils accroissaient le despotisme dans la sphère administrative, ont été conduits à des singularités bien étranges" (Tocqueville 1961:437). In a final note (p.466 for page 438) Tocqueville talks of the "general apathy" as the cause of both anarchy and despotism. He concludes that it is this apathy which has to be fought against otherwise it will create anarchy as well as despotism "almost indifferently."

22 The absolute intolerance to reform the neoliberal strategies and technologies is complemented by a new censorship: the agencies of "quality" are intruding in the design of course syllabi by cutting and altering anything "too critical" no matter whether it has been already approved by departmental meetings and Studies Councils (the organisms that approve syllabi according to the University Statute and composed by professors and students of specific fields of study)

23 This is a broad political issue that goes beyond the topic of the University.

24 The presence of the police has returned to the University after years of absence due to the clash between the intransigence of academic authorities who only indulge in long "dialogues" and the impatience of students facing matters that they are told are "fait-accompli."

25 On September 18th, 2009, 115 people (including students) that were aggressed by the police during the day of the eviction from the chancellorship have filed a criminal complaint against the police and its authorities as responsible of the harsh charges against the population (Personal communication from the lawyer). As well, there is a civil complaint in progress.

Several examples from among numerous news stories about these events can be found at the following links:

•http://www.elpais.com/articulo/sociedad/Batalla/campal/Barcelona/desalojo/encerrados/UB/elpepusoc/20090318elpepusoc_4/Tes

•http://www.lavanguardia.es/ciudadanos/noticias/20090318/53662613336/caos-y-cargas-policiales-indiscriminadas-durante-una-nueva-marcha-antibolonia-mossos-barcelona-via-l.html

•http://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-heridos-24-estudiantes-32-mossos-carga-policial-barcelona-20090319063457.htm

•http://www.telecinco.es/informativos/sociedad/noticia/862782/862782

• http://www.tv3.cat/videos/1091179/Aldarulls-per-Bolonya-a-la-placa-Universitat

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