



Apartheid's University: Notes on the Renewal of the Enlightenment

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Abstract

This paper sets to work on strategies for forging new and critical humanities at the institutional site of the university that appears to be trapped in the legacies of apartheid. The paper suggests that the university's responses to apartheid might hold the key for the realignment of its critical commitments in the post-apartheid present. Rather than merely invoking the Enlightenment traditions of the modern university as sufficient grounds for proclaiming a post-apartheid reorientation, I track the career of notions of academic freedom and university autonomy in the outlines of complicity. I show how the concepts of academic freedom and autonomy obscured a prior contract with the state and how that complicity extended a process of subjection. By deploying the postcolonial strategy of *ab-using* the Enlightenment, the paper outlines the failure of opposing apartheid in the name of academic freedom and autonomy.

That failure, I argue, resulted in an inability to investigate the relationship between the university and the state and blinded the university to its role in the creation of racial subjects. Rather than merely casting the university in terms of the foundational concepts of academic freedom and university autonomy, I suggest that it might be more productive to consider the epistemological and political potential of a renewed reference to the Enlightenment. Apartheid's University, cast as continuity of the Enlightenment legacy, might allow us to rewrite its abject script in the direction of resisting the forms of subjection supported by that process of normalisation.

Résumé

Cette étude se propose d'élaborer des stratégies afin de forger d'importantes nouvelles humanités au plan institutionnel de l'université qui semble être prise au

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piège de l'héritage de l'apartheid. L'étude pense que les réponses de l'université à l'apartheid pourraient détenir la clé du réalignement de ses engagements importants dans la période post-apartheid. Plutôt que d'invoquer tout simplement les traditions de lumières (Enlightenment) de l'université moderne comme des raisons suffisantes pour proclamer une réorientation post-apartheid, l'auteur analyse l'évolution des notions de libertés académiques et d'autonomie de l'université en soulignant la complicité. Il montre comment les concepts de libertés académiques et d'autonomie de l'université ont embrouillé un contrat antérieur passé avec l'État et comment cette complicité a prolongé un processus de soumission. En déployant la stratégie post-coloniale *d'attaque* des lumières, l'étude souligne l'échec que connaît l'opposition à l'apartheid au nom des libertés académiques et de l'autonomie de l'université.

One speaks often...of the "cutting edge." We should never forget, however, that to cut, that edge must cut in more than one direction: not merely into the unknown, but into established knowledge as well. Herein, if anywhere, lies a possible future for universities that can neither entirely dismiss the exigencies of "globalisation" nor fully accept its logic of appropriation. Such a university must keep itself open to the cutting edge of the future even if it means collecting a few scars along the way (Weber 2001:235).

As South African universities are faced with the corollaries of structural adjustment in higher education, with institutional mergers and with outcomes-based education, they will have to consider what has become of the Enlightenment foundations of the university (see Readings 1996). Integral to anticipating such an inquiry is a latent question of how the humanities specifically may be harnessed to a critique of normalisation processes in education. In this article, I want to argue that reformulated humanities may seek to inhabit the foundational narrative of the Enlightenment anew. But this would require a shift from a mere defence of the Enlightenment that was undertaken against the onslaught of apartheid, to one that does not necessarily succumb to that which Foucault once called the blackmail of the Enlightenment. What Foucault (1984) finds in Kant's famous response to the question posed by the *Berlinische Monatschrift* is an *Ausgang*, an 'exit', a 'way out' from 'self-imposed immaturity'. Foucault sees in Kant's elaboration of the private and public use of reason the outlines of a contract with the state. Yet, the entanglement in such a contract is also what the Enlightenment seeks to escape. For the purposes of this article, I am using the term Enlightenment as shorthand to designate how the exercise of power is ultimately the very condition for knowledge, even when such knowledge, by virtue of its immanence, is not reducible to power. As Horkheimer and Adorno suggest, the Enlightenment in the twentieth century, notwithstand-

ing its initial promise, tended towards instrumental reason, and *ipso facto*, to domination (cited in Jay 1973:261). Apartheid's University, I will argue similarly, is not antithetical to the Enlightenment or its liberal precedents, but symptomatic of its inner logic.

What I see in this brief outline of an otherwise complex philosophical problem is a demand for renewal of the practice of Enlightenment and a refusal to see it as a static inheritance. More specifically, I want to call attention to the aporia that Foucault recognises in Kant's exposition of 'Enlightenment'. This aporia can be tracked in what I will call Apartheid's University. In slightly altered Foucauldian terms, we may say that Apartheid's University allows us to explore elements of the history of the Enlightenment under conditions of apartheid, while developing an attitude towards the story of resistance and complicity that that history records. In deliberately adopting the phrase 'University of Apartheid' as an inaugural point of my argument, I am making explicit my opposition to a return to the foundations of the University for the mere sake of defending traditions while also stating my preference to operate on the horizon of a contingent future, in the wake of apartheid.

Institutional taxonomies

South African universities were arranged according to a perplexing racial and ethnic taxonomy under apartheid. The English, liberal university was accordingly distinguished from the *volks universiteite*, and these were further distinguished from a convoluted hierarchy of racially and ethnically designated universities. In a purely taxonomic sense, which, I will argue shortly, we would do better to dispense with, the notion of a University of Apartheid often refers almost exclusively to those institutions that were the subject of the Extension of Universities Act of 1959. The result of this legislation was the development of separate ethnically and racially defined institutions, some in the so-called Bantustans and others on the urban periphery of the major cities of South Africa. To comprehend fully the sinister meaning upon which the taxonomy of separate education was founded, we might consider the public radio announcement of the founding of one such institution, the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in 1960. The South African Broadcasting Corporation's report began at what it called the newly formed 'coloured university' with excerpts from a biology lecture on the formation of a zygote through the union of two cells.¹ The decision to begin with a biology lesson on cell formation was not entirely coincidental. It replayed a significant strand in the logic of apartheid as a supposedly naturalised and normative discourse.

The paternalistic undertone of these and other pronouncements conveyed a sense of UWC as a logical outcome of the pseudo-rationalist discourse that

treated race as yet another fact of biological science. The first vice chancellor, J.P. Meiring, offered a justification for the establishment of UWC that made it hard to discern whether he was speaking in the voice of order or reason, or perhaps both. Meiring argued that the creation of UWC was both a logical and rational process. He pointed out that it was a natural outcome of the ways in which schooling was organised in South Africa and flowed from the fact that ‘coloured students were excluded from participating in the life of the open universities such as UCT [University of Cape Town]’.² Furthermore, Meiring claimed that a focused education devised especially for ‘coloured students’ would enable them to ‘better deal with the upliftment of their own communities’.³ These racial precedents are not entirely inconsequential. A normative concept of race would follow a much more circuitous route, one that raises the question of how universities mediate the relationship between the state and its biopolitical premises.

Below the veneer of a pseudo-scientific rationality, three decades of violent resistance threatened to erupt. And with its eruption the Universities proclaimed under the infamous apartheid legislation increasingly resembled spaces of confinement rather than the freedom commonly associated with the pursuits of knowledge. In an essay titled ‘Herrenvolkism and Higher Education’, A.C. Jordan, a leading South African intellectual, aptly caricatured the newly formed institutions based on his experience at the University of Fort Hare:

Since the state of Emergency that was proclaimed after the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, the students in most institutions have found the situation intolerable. At the faintest rumour of a political disturbance of impending protest demonstration anywhere in the country, African institutions are immediately raided for “dangerous weapons” or for “subversive literature”, floodlit and patrolled by armed police for weeks on end. At Fort Hare the Special Branch has virtually a permanent office. The rough handling of students, male and female, by raiding police, has led to positive rioting, and this, of course, has led to arrests and imprisonments. Students as well as suspect African teachers have been dismissed in large numbers since early 1960, and those of them who went to the cities after dismissal or imprisonment could neither work nor prosecute their studies because of the network of laws affecting the African section of the population in the country (Jordan n.d.:20; see also Biko 1987; Matthews 1981).

The creation of institutions in the name of the Extension of Universities Act, however, carried a more sinister consequence. Far from following the supposedly biological course of nature or merely serving as a camp, the Extension of Universities Act had as its parallel justification the creation of homelands which required the formation of racialised and ethnicised subjects. If we were to use

Mamdani's framing, we might say that the Extension of Universities Act supported and perhaps sustained a mode of governmentality that he calls 'decentralised despotism' (Mamdani 1996:37). Only this time it was an attempt to enclose the university by making the pursuit of knowledge subject to the provisions of the law regulating admission to the University on racial and ethnic grounds.

The taxonomic ordering was seemingly further solidified by those institutions that laid claim to the inheritance of the Enlightenment, even when that inheritance ironically served as a statement of opposition to the policies of separate development. But before moving onto this argument, it is important to show why recourse to the Enlightenment tradition was an insufficient condition for overcoming the burdens of apartheid.

In 1989, when the Enlightenment inheritance of the liberal, English-speaking university in South Africa was faced with talk of applying a concept of 'Africanisation' to education, there was a concerted effort to argue against turning the University into a site of cultural (read political) affirmation (Goosen et al. 1989). Not only was this deemed damaging to the pursuit and defence of reason, it would also set back those institutions that had achieved a standing in the world on the basis of their commitment to the universal ideals of the Enlightenment. These institutions, it was thought, could play host to a range of competing positions, be it Marxist, liberal or Africanist. However, with the then pending demise of apartheid, the Enlightenment premises of democratic opposition needed to be acknowledged. Given the history of transformation of the University in postcolonial Africa, the concept of 'Africanisation' would, it was believed, not go far enough in ensuring that the traditional values of the Enlightenment would be preserved (Goosen et al. 1989:85). Implied in the notion of traditional values are the principles of academic freedom and intellectual autonomy. This sentiment formed the basis of a collection of essays on rethinking UCT, in which the authors argue that while the liberal university was in crisis as a result of the policies of apartheid, it would not be feasible to relinquish its traditional values as the foundation of the University. In distinguishing the 'English-speaking liberal university' from the 'ethnic universities' inaugurated under the Extensions of Universities Act and the Afrikaans-medium 'volks universiteite' promulgated under apartheid, the authors of *Rethinking UCT* note:

[T]he third set of universities are the English medium, liberal, "open" universities. These institutions draw directly upon the traditions of the British and European universities. They, along with the *volks universiteite* enjoy a high degree of autonomy from direct state control in the administration of their affairs. But unlike the *volks universiteite* their central ethos is bound up with

an insistence on political neutrality in pursuit of higher goals of human rights. A further distinguishing feature is the extent of the liberal universities' integration into the international academic community. They enjoy a greater degree of international recognition and status than other universities in the country. This is based on an appreciation of their academic performance and their political position relative to the Apartheid state (Goosen et al. 1989:17).

At one level, the comparison between the two university systems merely results in the construction of the historically black university as an unfortunate aberration of apartheid's making. While the University that is the object of Jordan's criticism is rendered possible by the history of apartheid, it is worth noting that reflections of the liberal university in South Africa (cf. Goosen et al. 1989) are largely drawn from universal first principles. The rest, especially institutions created under the Extension of Universities Act, are left to disavow their apartheid foundations. Yet, the growth of the universities that now claim the tradition of liberalism trace their origins to both the universal precedents of the modern university and more recent post-World War II politics in South Africa. While millions of black workers were drawn into the burgeoning secondary industries of the South African city, thousands of white war veterans found their way into institutions of higher learning after the Second World War.⁴ Speaking at a graduation ceremony at the University of Witwatersrand in 1946, the chancellor and member of parliament, Jan Hofmeyr, proclaimed his gratitude to war veterans and state alike:

I need not tell you of our appreciation of your service to your country in time of war, and of our desire to assist you to equip or re-equip yourselves for the tasks of peace. No one, I think, questions the generosity of the State's provision for University training, made as part of our demobilization plan, by way of the erection of buildings, teaching and residential premises, and award of loans and grants to individual students (quoted in Lewson 1988:190).

Hofmeyr's post-war reorientation of the university stressed the constraints that necessarily accompany the experience of freedom. In his address, he pointed out that the circumstances of post-war reconstruction required 'limiting freedom to save freedom' (quoted in Lewson 1988:192). In a rather ironic analogy, he pointed out that the planning that gave Nazism its strength 'had to be countered with planning in the countries opposed to Nazism' (191). Professing the virtues of a freedom bound to order, Hofmeyr added that 'the only freedom which humanity can hope to continue to enjoy is a disciplined freedom' (193). Disciplined freedom was merely a variation on the theme of the repression described by Jordan in which the university presumably placed knowledge in

the service of normalised and supposedly more rational forms of the exercise of power.

Race and the university

Claiming an Enlightenment inheritance arguably left the liberal English university blinded to its role in the formation of racialised subjects. The notions of academic freedom and university autonomy that were at the core of the liberal university proved ineffective in realising the critical potential that gave rise to the university in the first place. The idea of the University organised around the interplay of *wissenschaft* and *bildung* (Habermas 1989; Readings 1996) became, in the South African context, the premise to challenge state intervention in education, while the project of reorienting the university in its relation to the racial policies of the state, especially after 1948, proceeded apace. In his 1946 Hoernlé Memorial Lecture, E.G. Malherbe, principal of the University of Natal, anticipated that the critical popular attitudes about race that had developed in the course of the Second World War, could be a platform for challenging growing racial attitudes in state (Malherbe 1946). The war, he believed, produced modifications in racial attitudes amongst returning soldiers that could be harnessed by educators to effect changes to general racial attitudes in South Africa. This belief proved far too optimistic.

C.W. De Kiewiet's lecture on academic freedom delivered at the University of Natal in 1960 revealed a predicament of despair. Noting how the nineteenth century German University shattered the exclusivity that had defined it earlier, De Kiewiet argued:

It was not until the nineteenth century that the German universities broadened their curricula through the progressive development of scientific subjects, and through applying scientific methods to the study of history and institutions. The new devotion to scientific method and the far more active role of the university in the life of society led the German universities to enunciate the principle of academic freedom with a clarity and an authority it had not had before (De Kiewiet 1960:4-5).

In keeping with this turn, De Kiewiet argues for a development of the concept of an open university as a condition for advancing the interests of academic freedom. He argues for sustaining academic freedom by three conditions. The first is the 'acceptance of research as a deliberate and planned method of discovering new knowledge and incorporating it in the body of existing knowledge, even though the result is a challenge of the conventional view of life' (De Kiewiet 1960:6). The second condition is the entry of the scholars

into ‘problems that lie between nations, races, ideologies and cultures must not expose them to implicit or explicit charges of heresy or treason’ (De Kiewiet 1960:6). If, thirdly, scholars should choose to be neutral or indifferent to the great issues of politics, diplomacy and economics, it must not be because they feel fear. But he also believed that for the university to be a countervailing force against nationalism, racialism and ideology one had to look to the development of the racially segregated institutions of higher learning. Using the example of the United States and the collapse of the idea that separate educational institutions can be equal, he nevertheless pointed to a critical element of dissent in these racially segregated institutions:

The source of the revolt against the old timers and workhorses of negro [sic] leadership clearly comes from the negro colleges. One needs merely to spend a day inside a negro college [in the USA] to recognise the ferment, the impatience and the resentment that emerge in the rise of a new generation of negro leadership with new ideas and procedures. One can only ask what thought has been given to the possibility that the racial universities may become nurseries of a new generation of less tractable leaders (De Kiewiet 1960:11).

I find De Kiewiet’s lecture instructive at several levels, even though the reflections on the racially segregated institution do little to unravel the taxonomy that orders universities in South Africa and perhaps elsewhere.⁵ However, De Kiewiet does allow us to consider the limitations of solely appealing to academic freedom and the founding Enlightenment traditions in opposing apartheid. This, he seems to suggest, is a consequence of the initial contract that binds the liberal university to the state. Three examples from the University of Cape Town may reveal this connection more clearly and point the way to finding in the more general conception of Apartheid’s University the potential for the renewal of the Enlightenment.

The first example relates to the university’s contract with the state. To illustrate this point we might turn to Leslie Witz’s *Apartheid’s Festival* (2003) which details the circuits through which apartheid borrowed the premise of a liberal education as it narrated the foundational fictions of Afrikaner nationalism’s tercentenary celebrations of the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck. Witz argues that of all South Africa’s universities, the one the festival organisers probably expected would offer the largest degree of participation was the University of Cape Town (Witz 2003:158). He adds that this was not only because of the setting of van Riebeeck’s festival in Cape Town where he landed, but also because ‘it represented an important element that had contributed to the development of what the festival defined as the English speaking race’ (Witz: 2003:158). The principal of UCT, T.B. Davie was a member of the festival committee, and Witz tells us, the university presented the higher education float ‘bearing the

“torch of knowledge” and “European Civilisation” through the offerings of different academic disciplines and faculties to the African continent’ (Witz 2003:158).

UCT offered apartheid’s festival an opportunity to access the discourse of Enlightenment, not only through the displays of scientific achievement that involved T.B.Davie, but also through the float of its Speech and Drama Department. This is how Witz describes the particular pageant which headed one of the processions:

“Africa Dark and Unknown.” Masked figures, attired in black robes and shackled in chains, marched alongside the scene of a despotic figure “who held them in mental and spiritual darkness.” One and a half hours later, the same float reappeared but in a different guise. “Africa Awakes” contained a scene of figures dressed in white, symbolising “youth, strength and purity, the foundation on which rests the freedom of the individual and of Africa as a whole” (Witz 2003:138).

More intriguing, when compared to what might best be described as academic complicity, was the radio commentary that accompanied the procession:

From a situation of fear, a period followed of struggle, change, tension, defeat and victory and slowly that character of darkest Africa changed and gave rise to a new nation with its own cultures, its own language, its own direction, its idealism and its own art (Witz 2003:138).

The full consequence of nationalist borrowings of liberal discourse became apparent in 1959 when the apartheid state introduced the Extension of Universities Act. Realising perhaps that the civilisational narrative at the core of the Enlightenment theme had been usurped by the apartheid state to argue for an institutionalisation of separate development, UCT countered by instituting the T.B. Davie Academic Freedom Lecture. The irony was not lost in the re-scripting of the Enlightenment project as a protected knowledge sphere that should be allowed to function beyond the prescriptions of the state.

Ultimately, it seems that concepts of academic freedom and university autonomy grounded the defence of the Enlightenment foundations of the university. The meanings ascribed to these notions became increasingly contested though.⁶ We might, as a second example of the limits of the return to the Enlightenment tradition, consider the crisis that ensued over what became known as the Connor Cruise O’Brien Affair at UCT in 1986. O’Brien, a guest of the Political Science Department, had publicly denounced the academic boycott at the height of the State of Emergency. The protests that followed O’Brien’s reaction to student criticism of his views generated an equally intense public debate on the question of academic freedom. John Higgins (1990) has

shown how in BBC and other media representations, O'Brien emerged as the embodiment of academic freedom, while the 'children of Mao' were increasingly castigated as the threat to the founding principles of the university (Higgins 1990:291-318). Through a series of strategic moves, Higgins carefully, and effectively in my view, unsettles the representational practices around the O'Brien affair. As a final salvo, he shows how in a *Cape Times* report of October 10, 1986, the representative of freedom of speech falls prey to the same 'trap' he sets for his detractors. O'Brien on that occasion claimed:

Universities are about communication and freedom of intellectual communication – not about having people shouted down. Those who do try and do this must be resisted and discouraged and I think in the end there should be no place for people who do that on a university campus if they persist (O'Brien quoted in Higgins 1990:312).

The prohibition at the end of this quotation invites a government inquiry into 'the breakdown of law and order on campuses', according to Higgins (1990:312). The embodiment of academic freedom thus becomes the rival of the very concept of academic freedom. If the concept of academic freedom was in trouble after the O'Brien affair, it was because no meaning of academic freedom could be derived from within the concept. The overemphasis on the defence of academic freedom would disable the renewal of practices of the Enlightenment, especially practices that encouraged taking up an attitude to power, as an effective critique of apartheid.

The third example perhaps gives us a better understanding of the limits of the liberal defence of academic freedom and university autonomy. Gayatri Spivak, who was invited to deliver the T.B. Davie Lecture in 1992 on the eve of the repeal of legislation governing apartheid education, would have been well aware of the crisis of the concept of academic freedom at UCT. She, after all, had contributed an article to the volume in which Higgins' account of the O'Brien affair appears. Rather than simply accepting the invitation to celebrate academic freedom, she chose to relate the troubled concept of academic freedom at UCT to the philosophical foundations of the T.B. Davie Lecture. And for doing so, in the published version of the Academic Freedom Lecture, she offers an apology for disappointing the audience at UCT, noting further that she continues to regret it.

Spivak, for her part, was clearly seeking to contribute to a programme of a postcolonial academe by demanding that it must learn to use the Enlightenment from below, strictly speaking, in her terms, ab-use it (Spivak 1995:119). Rather than serving as a call to action, she opted for discerning the subject of academic freedom in a more general effort of comprehending the situation that

arises with apartheid. Generally, she argues, 'No justification of the *exercise* of academic freedom can be drawn from within academic freedom' (Spivak 1995:141). In other words, because academic freedom is not its own cause, but is rather the effect of a prior political contract, a contract with the state, it cannot be the ground of its own law to itself. University autonomy is not in any literal sense of the word 'autonomy'. On the contrary, it is not literal but figural; the academic freedom it permits is likewise an institutional fiction of freedom. It is a *trope* of freedom to which no academic subject can afford not to subscribe. But to think about the university requires not only insisting again and again on the necessity of this fiction but also in stopping to soberly grasp the implications of its fictive status. It is for this reason that Spivak asks whether it is even possible for academically constituted subjects to learn anything from those who seem not to know how to use the structures [of academic freedom] (Spivak 1995:118). In framing her inquiry in this manner, Spivak finds provocation in a 'troubling' and 'enigmatic' sentence from Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*. Since the sentence is so consequential for what I too wish to argue in this paper, let me quote more extensively from the text:

The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all the superstition in regard to the past. Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to drug themselves concerning their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury the dead. *There the phrase went beyond the content; here the content goes beyond the phrase* (Marx 1994:18, emphasis by Spivak).⁷

The strictures of apartheid planning in higher education were resisted in the name of a foundational Enlightenment discourse that served as a prerequisite for intellectual work and a form of opposition to segregated education. Over the next thirty years, the chief phrases of this discourse—academic freedom and university autonomy—predominated in the critique of apartheid and were eloquently articulated in such notions as history from below, social anthropology, human geography and community archaeology. The supplement that, in each case, modified without displacing the substance of disciplinary inquiry was not coincidental, but respected the architecture already implied in existing concepts of academic freedom and autonomy. By this I mean that any effort at inclusion would have to consider the effects of a prior exclusion. Each of the latter principles of inclusion and exclusion were founded on the tacit agreement, perhaps presumption, that neither would undercut the law that called them into being in the first place.

What happens, however, when one subjects this defence of Enlightenment traditions to critique in the interests of renewing, even diversifying, the practices of Enlightenment? What happens when one asks, like Spivak, what the first twelve T.B. Davie Memorial Lectures were performing (Spivak 1995:130)? One suggestion may be that the line of inquiry leads to a defence of the foundations of a liberal humanities education in which the Enlightenment casting of the humanities is destined to extend beyond the content of apartheid planning. This was at least what seemed to be at stake in one particular objection to Spivak's discourse on academic freedom at UCT by Paul Taylor, a philosopher who is named by Spivak as having radical inclinations:

When I say that we were not doing the best for ourselves, and in fact were doing some harm, by getting a speaker with Gayatri Spivak's particular focus and theoretical orientation to give the annual lecture on academic freedom, this is not, of course, because I think deconstructionists and those broadly under its influence shouldn't be heard at UCT. After all, it is as a defender of academic freedom that I am making an issue of Spivak's lecture. My complaint, rather, is that deconstruction is not an appropriate basis for social criticism or for commentary on practical issues such as the debate about the nature and importance of academic freedom (Taylor 1995:158).

While some, like John Higgins, preferred to see Taylor's response as a mere reversal of the claims of academic freedom, I would argue that it is better to read Taylor's concerns in terms of a double bind that haunts UCT where the figure of academic freedom itself *destines* the phrase to go beyond the content. When Taylor charges Spivak with obscurity, he is of course recalling an all-encompassing phrase, or in his terms philosophical language, that he feels is appropriate for consideration of the question of academic freedom (Taylor 1995). And it is on the grounds of philosophical language that Deconstruction is disqualified from speaking about academic freedom in the example cited. Taylor here fabricates Deconstruction's encounter with language so as to reclaim academic freedom as a specifically philosophical project. He then goes on to criticise Deconstruction for supposedly conflating, even confusing, philosophical inquiry with poetry. At this point Taylor offers us a segue into the philosophical insistence on a language that 'sees clearly' as the very condition for checking authority.

This is precisely where one might begin to locate the *aporia* in Taylor's fabricated history of academic freedom's philosophical roots. Stipulating the use of a language that 'sees clearly' is to demand a concept of language that is precisely communicative, even functional. Caught in the double bind, and refusing to acknowledge the creativity of the philosophical concept for fear of

admitting poetry to infect the sacred domains of philosophical reason, Taylor calls into play the exceptionality of the South African situation for dispatching Deconstruction. This, he hopes, will serve to protect the concept of academic freedom from the unsettling consequences of the deconstructive work proposed by Gayatri Spivak.

Ultimately, Taylor seeks implicitly to remind us of the Enlightenment heritage of the University and Philosophy's specific contribution to arranging the University's opposition to apartheid. Effectively this leads him to disqualify Deconstruction from partaking in a discussion about academic freedom. Perhaps, one sees in this rather awkward moment the very blackmail of the Enlightenment: academic freedom is possible as long as one does not question its premises and political conditions.

At the institutional site of the liberal university, resistance to apartheid took the form of proclaiming Enlightenment principles as a general critique of the racialisation of institutions of higher learning. But this is where a certain paradox presents itself. While the Enlightenment was understood in terms of traditions of knowledge upon which the idea of the university is founded, it is also the basis for setting apart those universities specifically founded in the name of apartheid. The prohibition, not unlike O'Brien's, is only possible if accompanied by an appeal to the higher authority of Enlightenment reason, if not as a tradition then at least as a form of 'practical life' as opposed to academicism and scholasticism (Taylor 1995:169). If at one level it reveals traits of what might be called instrumental reason it also necessarily bypasses the obligation to call into question a prior contract that the university has with the state (Jay 1973:156). It seems that the contract with the state is far more binding than we initially assumed.

The conditions that enabled the rethinking of the liberal English and supposedly open university in 1989 related, in some respects, to the pressures to redefine that university in anticipation of the pending demise of apartheid. In some sense, the uncompromising refusal of 'Africanisation' was also the opportunity to investigate the crisis of the liberal university and its futures. One way to proceed, judging from the argument for re-evaluating the liberal, English and open university, was to proclaim the Enlightenment foundations as sufficient for the pursuit of knowledge.

Increasingly, Apartheid's University is entirely known in terms of the law that founds it. This, I want to argue, is the limit of the taxonomic sense by which Apartheid's University has become known because it relies on the very mechanism that acts as its constraint. I want to argue that we may have to consider a different register for understanding Apartheid's University, one that

necessarily finds in the encroaching contract with the state the desire to find a way out. Such a register, I believe, not only holds out the possibility for a renewal of the Enlightenment, but also allows us to develop a critical intellectual attitude that seeks to disavow the racial foundations at the core of the emergence of the University in South Africa.

Rather than seeing Apartheid's University taxonomically, we may opt to think of it as the predicament from which we need to think our way out. Such a move holds out the promise of distributing the burden of apartheid and not seeing it as the sole preserve of the historically black university. Perhaps we should opt for a strategy that examines the compulsion to inhabit the institutional site of Apartheid's University only to gnaw away at an apparatus that finds in knowledge a correlate for the exercise of power. In the process, it may be possible not only to reestablish the significance of the Enlightenment for the humanities but also offer, I believe, an opening for walking out of the legacies of authoritarianism.

Conclusion

Apartheid's University has increasingly become the taxonomic attribute of those universities created under the Extension of Universities Act. In that same taxonomic ordering, the liberal university is seen as a bearer of the Enlightenment tradition, as protector and defender of academic freedom and university autonomy. At one level, that claim could not be sustained without apartheid's institutional creations serving as a silent referent. At another, the taxonomic ordering of universities in South Africa remains blinded in its role in producing racialised subjects.

The argument of this article opposes the taxonomic ordering as a basis for critiquing the legacies of apartheid. Rather, we have to investigate further how the liberal university, in claiming custodianship of the Enlightenment, is blinded to its role in fostering racialised taxonomies. I find that such an investigation would benefit from a reconceptualisation of Apartheid's University and contribute to forging a renewal of the Enlightenment. Mostly, such a renewal will depend on taking up an attitude towards the taxonomic order of the university which in my argument, amounts to inviting a deconstruction of the racialised subjective premises upon which the apparatus of the university persists. Perhaps, it will chart a way out of our inheritance, if only with the promise of the unforeseen.

Notes

1. Suid Afrikanse Uitsaai Korporasie, Hoorbeeld oor Universiteits Kollege van Weskaapland, 1969, CHR Archives, University of the Western Cape.

2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. This notwithstanding the claim by E.G. Malherbe that the returning soldiers had adopted an altered attitude towards the 'Native Question' (see Malherbe 1946:12-13).
5. I am, however, weary of glib declarations of having overcome the taxonomic structure, as proclaimed by Reingard Nethersole. She argues, erroneously I might add, that

Asmal's Ministry managed to not only eradicate the historical fissure between English- and Afrikaans-medium universities but also brought into the fold of higher education the Historically Black Universities, as the formerly segregated universities are called, which used to be harbingers of a Black Consciousness that foregrounded African cultural values, albeit strongly influenced by the American Civil Rights Movement (Nethersole 2001:46).

6. An earlier example is the case of the attempt to appoint Archie Mafeje to the post of senior lecturer in Social Anthropology which was blocked by the apartheid state and the University Council in 1968. The controversy generated extensive student protests at University of Cape Town (see *Varsity* August 7, 1968; *The Cape Argus* August 22, 1968).
7. The italicised excerpt is emphasised by Spivak although the translation she uses is slightly different to the one cited here.

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