

Thinking as a subversive activity: doing philosophy in the corporate university

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Abstract

The academy is in a mess. The cultural theorist Bill Readings claimed that it is in ruins, while the political scientist Michael Oakeshott suggested that it has all but ceased to exist. At the very least, we might argue that the current financial squeeze has distorted the University into a shape that would be all but unrecognizable to Oakeshott and others writing in the 1950s and 1960s. I will begin this paper by tracing the development of the modern Enlightenment University over the past 200 years from its roots in late 18th century Berlin to its current predicament. I will then turn my attention to the introduction during the 1990s of nursing education into the University, and examine the particular difficulties and tensions encountered at the interface between a professional practice and an academic discipline. Finally, I will propose philosophy as a way of dwelling in the ruins of the Enlightenment University and of reconciling the corporate demands of the University with the obligations of the nursing profession.

Keywords: education programme, nursing philosophy.

The University in ruins

It is generally agreed that the origins of the modern Enlightenment University can be found in the writings of the German thinkers Wilhelm von Humboldt and Immanuel Kant, whose ideas led to the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810. Kant (1798) argued that the University should ostensibly be

accountable to the state, but ultimately to the principles of truth and reason, while von Humboldt (1810) emphasized the role of the University in developing 'the moral culture of the nation' and of the individual. This model of the pursuit of knowledge for primarily moral and cultural ends spread rapidly across Western Europe and, by the middle of the 19th century, John Henry Newman (1858) was describing the ideal of the gentleman scholar who, with his broad classical education, was morally and practically equipped for any profession or walk of life. The idea of the Enlightenment University as a community of scholars in pursuit of a unified and universally applicable body of

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knowledge *for its own sake* persisted well into the 20th century, where it finally came under pressure from what was by now a fully industrialized state to produce engineers, technicians, and scientists with specific skill-sets, and for whom the classics had little relevance or meaning. As a result of the pressure exerted by governments for universities to make a more substantive and practical contribution to the workforce, many degrees in 'pure' subjects such as philosophy began to disappear, to be replaced by qualifications in applied or professional subjects such as teaching and nursing.

The University of Culture and the crisis of legitimation

In his book *The University in Ruins*, Bill Readings (1996) argued that the original moral and cultural function of the Enlightenment University was closely linked to the development and specific identity of individual emerging nation states, and what he referred to as the 'University of Culture' therefore played a vital unifying role by articulating and disseminating the cultural norms and values distinct to each of the nations of Western Europe and North America. In return, the government funded the university sector and was prepared to allow it a certain degree of 'academic freedom', provided of course that the University continued to uphold and promote the values and cultural norms of the state.

However, Readings identified two developments during the second half of the 20th century which fatally fractured this symbiotic relationship between University and State. Firstly, our ideas of culture began to fragment. The 'culture wars' of the 1950s and 1960s highlighted the growing divide between the arts and the sciences, for example in the public and acrimonious falling-out between F.R. Leavis and C.P. Snow. This was compounded in the 1960s by the breaking down of the barriers between so-called high and low (or 'popular') culture, to the extent that the term 'culture' became more or less meaningless. Secondly, the growth of internationalism and the 'global village' blurred national identities and cultural stereotypes, leading Readings to observe that:

the nation state and the modern notion of culture arose together, and they are I argue, ceasing to be essential to an increasingly transnational global economy. (Readings, 1996, p. 12)

The very *raison d'être* of Readings's University of Culture was therefore under threat, resulting in what he referred to as a crisis of legitimation for the University.

One of the effects of this calling into question of the purpose of the University has been a re-evaluation of how and why it is funded. The original moral and cultural missions of the University had clear benefits to the state, which was prepared to pay for what was a largely non-productive institution. However, as the mission of the University shifted during the latter part of the 20th century from providing a broad education to awarding work-based qualifications, and as the opportunity to gain those qualifications was extended to a greater and greater proportion of the population, it was increasingly expected that the beneficiaries of the qualifications rather than the state would foot the bill, an expectation that has intensified as a result of the current climate of austerity. In addition, as the University began to make inroads into the professional education and training market, it needed to distinguish itself from other more established providers such as technical colleges.

Readings suggested that the University has responded to these challenges in two ways. Firstly, it has wholeheartedly embraced the ethos of the market economy. As he first pointed out in the early 1990s, 'the University is not just *like* a corporation; it *is* a corporation. Students . . . are not *like* customers, they *are* customers' (Readings, 1996, p. 22). Whereas the cultural mission of the University was largely cooperative and collaborative, the market economy in which universities now find themselves pits one against the other and all against the alternative providers of vocational qualifications such as colleges of further education and technical colleges. Of course, the major advantage of universities over other providers is the very fact that they *are* universities, with all the cachet that the title provides. Secondly then, as Readings observed, 'excellence' was promoted as the new selling point,

distinguishing feature and legitimating idea of the University as an institution. However, he further suggested that the term 'excellence' was being used to refer not only to the *quality* of the product being sold by universities, but to the product itself. In other words, universities were in the business of selling excellence.

The University of Excellence

At some point during the second half of the 20th century, the University of Culture was replaced by the University of Excellence. We can see this appeal to excellence in the mission statements, public pronouncements, and aspirations of many universities, including my own, and Readings's book *The University in Ruins* can be read as an extended critique of the corporate University of Excellence. On the one hand, the idea of the University of Excellence is almost tautological: of course universities should aspire to excellence; that is what they are *for*. On the other hand, however, Readings points out that the idea of excellence is 'empty', that it is quite literally meaningless, a signifier without a signified. In order to illustrate his point, he offered the example of the estates department at Cornell University in the USA, which was given an award for 'excellence in parking'. It turned out that the award was actually given for the success of the department in *preventing* staff and students from parking on the campus: for restricting parking rather than for facilitating it. As Readings pointed out, the award could just as readily have been given for attempts either to increase *or* decrease the number of parking spaces on campus, so that 'excellence can function equally well as an evaluative criterion on either side of the issue of what constitutes "excellence in parking"' (Readings, 1996, p. 24). For a university to describe itself as excellent therefore tells us nothing about it beyond an aspiration to do well or to be better in some unspecified way than its competitors, all of which are making exactly the same claim.

For example, my own university, along with many others, aspires to 'excellence in research' (Swansea University, 2009). As a nurse, I might consider excellent research to be work that improves the lives of

patients. As a philosopher, I might consider excellent research to be work that helps us to think differently and more productively about particular problems, or to problematize ideas that were previously taken for granted. This is not, however, what the senior academics and administrators in my university mean by excellent research. For them, excellent research is research which is published in journals with a high citation index, which is cited by other researchers, and which is funded by prestigious grant-awarding bodies; that is, research that is likely to make a contribution to the university's score in what used to be called the Research Assessment Exercise in the UK, but which has recently (and perhaps not coincidentally) been rebranded as the Research *Excellence* Framework.

However, closer inspection will reveal that the term 'excellence' does not apply to the research at all. The criteria for excellence are concerned with what happens before and after the research takes place, with writing and submitting the grant proposal and with writing up and publishing the findings. As far as my university managers are concerned, the aim, objectives, and conduct of the study and its application to the real world are largely irrelevant as measures of excellence. What makes for excellent nursing research is not whether it improves people's lives, but whether it is funded by a prestigious grant-awarding body and written-up in a top academic journal. Furthermore, I have noticed recently that excellent research is no longer being defined by my university simply in terms of the *size* of the grant, but by the overheads that the awarding body is prepared to pay; that is, by the profit that the university will make. Excellent research is, more and more, research that brings in money to the university. The point that Readings was making is that the term 'excellent' is available to universities to promote whatever happens to be expedient at the time. As the University as an institution becomes ever more corporate and money is in ever shorter supply, excellence is being defined more and more in economic terms; as the recession continues to bite, Peter Drucker's concept of the knowledge economy is increasingly being interpreted simply as the economic value of knowledge.

The industrialization of the University

The University, then, is in the 'knowledge business': the business of manufacturing and selling knowledge, information, and qualifications on an increasingly industrial scale. As research grants get bigger, research is being carried out by multidisciplinary teams of specialists in narrower and narrower fields of expertise. Projects are passed along what resembles a factory assembly line from methodologist to literature reviewer to economist to ethicist to statistician to fieldworker to data analyst and so on, until a completed project report with a dozen or so names on it emerges from the end of the conveyor belt. Similarly, class sizes are getting bigger and more geographically dispersed, sometimes across several continents, and teaching is becoming more technological and less personal. This, incidentally, is often promoted as something positive rather than as a financial expediency. The concept of education, which includes moral and social components, no longer figures in the mission statement of my university, and has been replaced by 'learning and teaching' and the 'student experience'. Even this is a misnomer, since there is a growing number of courses and modules which include very little teaching in any recognizable form.

In order to manage the industrialization of research and teaching, Readings suggested that the academic is being replaced by the administrator, that thought is being replaced by efficiency and profitability, that quality is being replaced by quantity, and that academic accountability is being replaced by financial accountancy. Thus, the role of the course leader is becoming increasingly managerial, the role of the principal investigator of a research project is now largely administrative, and both are being called to account for their successes and failures on financial rather than academic or scholarly grounds. And, of course, the student is being replaced by the customer who in many cases wishes to purchase a qualification that can be cashed-in in some future workplace rather than an education whose worth is largely intrinsic. We should hardly be surprised by these developments. Writing over 60 years ago, Michael Oakeshott issued the following warning:

A university will have ceased to exist when its learning has degenerated into what is now called research, when its teaching has become mere instruction and occupies the whole of an undergraduate's time, and when those who come to be taught . . . desire only a qualification for earning a living or a certificate to let them in on the exploitation of the world. (Oakeshott, 1950, p. 117)

In retrospect, we might argue that some faculties and departments in the University have already met the fate that Oakeshott described, and that nursing is perhaps one of them.

The place of nursing in the University

Oakeshott's apocalyptic vision of the end of the University only really became apparent in the UK in the 1980s with the imposition of the Thatcherite economic policy of the internal market. As the University became more and more corporate and was increasingly governed by consumer-driven market forces, it began to shift its focus and tailor its products away from 'pure' subjects which have traditionally been studied at least in part out of scholarly interest, and towards 'applied' subjects which are taken primarily in order to obtain a qualification that has currency in the workplace. Initially, students gravitated towards the well-established and academically respectable technological disciplines such as engineering, but the 1990s saw the arrival of many new subjects and departments in the University with an overt vocational focus, including (among many others) cultural studies, leisure studies, sports studies, business studies, tourism studies, and retail studies. As we can see, this new category of university departments can usually be identified by the word 'studies' in the title, which is appended in order to signify that a pastime, interest, or occupation is now the subject of academic study. These new departments often directly address the requirements of the service industries, and generally consist of a patchwork of modules, topics, and other elements taken from a variety of existing 'academic' subjects, often from the humanities and social sciences.

Nursing in the academy

When nurse training courses first moved *en masse* into the UK higher education sector in the 1990s, they tended to adopt many of the characteristics of these so-called 'studies' subjects. The *Project 2000* curriculum at the time emphasized the importance of knowledge from the social sciences and encouraged patchwork courses that consisted of sociology, psychology, social research, life sciences and, in some cases, philosophy modules, often taught by non-nursing lecturers from other departments. As the academic discipline of nursing matured, it embedded itself into the University sector and started to develop its own academic staff, theoretical perspectives, research methodologies, and epistemological and ontological positions. It subsequently attempted to dissociate itself from the overtly practical and usually vocational approach of the 'studies' subjects and assert itself as a fully-fledged academic discipline in its own right.

However, the development of nursing as an academic subject created a professional, epistemological and often a geographical schism between those who taught nursing and those who practised it. This in turn triggered a number of controversies and disagreements about what nurses should be doing and how they should be prepared for their role. The disputes currently being played out in the academic, professional, and popular press include, among others, whether nurse education is too theoretical or too practical; whether it has been 'dumbed down' or over-intellectualized; whether nurses are over-qualified to perform basic nursing care or not bright enough to take on extended (usually medical) roles; whether they should be educated in a university lecture theatre or trained in a hospital ward; whether nursing practice should involve conceptual problem-solving or the technical application of research-based procedures and directives; and whether the relationship of nurses to doctors should be that of handmaiden, assistant, partner, or replacement. That these issues continue to resist our attempts at resolution should alert us to the possibility that there is something amiss, on the one hand in the relationship between academic nursing and the nursing profession, and on the other between academic nursing and the rest of the University.

There have been numerous diagnoses of the problem, but they can, on the whole, be boiled down to the simple fact that nurse academics, unlike most of their university colleagues, are being pulled in two often conflicting directions. On the one hand, the demands of the corporate University are steering us ever more towards financially driven goals and outcomes, while on the other hand we also have to take into account a variety of professional demands, for example in the UK, the nursing code of conduct to which all registered nurses, including myself, have signed up (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2008). As we have seen, the corporate research agenda exerts pressure on us to listen and respond to the needs of research councils and other grant providers rather than to the needs of practitioners and service providers; to choose research projects based on the size and source of the grant rather than on professional criteria such as the contribution that the study will make to nursing practice and theory; to conduct large multicentre experimental research projects rather than to engage with practitioners and service users in small-scale local studies that will have a direct impact on professional practice and patient care; and to publish our findings in journals with high impact factors which are read and cited only by other researchers rather than journals which are read and acted upon by practitioners.

Likewise, the corporate learning and teaching agenda emphasizes student throughput, retention and demonstrable outcomes on the one hand, and 'student experience' and customer satisfaction on the other. In some extreme cases, this has resulted in students who are patently unsafe and incompetent being pushed through their courses in the name of economic expediency and being awarded diplomas and degrees that entitle them to practise as qualified nurses. In contrast to this corporate customer-focused strategy, education for professional practice entails far more than the simple and straightforward transmission of generalizable propositional knowledge and does not fit with the competencies-based, outcome-driven corporate teaching agenda, nor with the high-tech, high-volume, high-throughput distance-learning approach. Neither does it sit comfortably with the technical rational epistemology of

practice and the simplistic procedural and pathways-driven approach of the evidence-based nursing movement.

In a nutshell, I have suggested that pre-registration nursing education entered the academy at the point when it was turning into a market-driven corporation, and that the values and aims of the nursing profession are becoming ever more at odds with those of the University. As a further complication, the academic discipline of nursing is not readily accommodated in the current university structure: it is not a technology in which research findings are applied simply and unproblematically to practice; it is not one of the dwindling number of 'pure' subjects; and neither does it fit with the growing number of 'studies', most of which are theoretically underdeveloped and whose coherence and identity is achieved through a patchwork of applied bits and pieces from other disciplines. Furthermore, the University (or, at least, *my* university) has no real interest in nursing as an academic discipline beyond its utility as an undergraduate 'cash cow', and has shown little inclination to listen or respond to its particular needs.

The demise of Thought

The academic discipline of nursing is faced with a dilemma, perhaps with an aporia. There is no going back, no return to some golden age of the Enlightenment University and, at least at the moment, no prospect of an exit from the university sector. We must therefore make the best of what we have and of where we find ourselves, albeit in the face of a general disinterest and often a lack of respect from the wider academic community. Some colleagues have responded by playing down or even abandoning their commitments to the nursing profession, to practitioners, and to patients, and have fully and wholeheartedly embraced the corporate mission of grant capture and student throughput. It might even be argued that this is our only option if we wish to thrive or even to survive in the University. As Lyotard (1979, p. xxiv) remarked, the ethos of the times is 'be operational or disappear'.

The challenge for those of us who wish to resist the corporate University from within is therefore to fulfil

the basic demand to be operational lest we disappear, while at the same time exploring new and creative ways of making a scholarly contribution to nursing practice and theory. We must, in Bill Readings's words, find ways of dwelling in the ruins of the University without recourse either to romantic nostalgia, cynicism, or despair. There is clearly no single simple recipe for this, and Readings was suitably vague when it came to the practicalities. He was quite clear, however, that the demise of the academy went hand in hand with the rejection of Thought (his capitalization) as its primary activity and purpose. For Readings, then, the University is in ruins primarily because Thought, as an activity of intrinsic worth rather than as a means to some corporate financial end, is no longer valued or encouraged in either students or academic staff. As Readings pointed out, 'Thought is non-productive labor, and hence does not show up on balance sheets except as waste' (Readings, 1996, p. 175). Thought as an activity of intrinsic worth has lost its pre-eminence in the University, and as we might expect, the devaluation of Thought is inextricably linked to the demise of philosophy as a distinct and unique academic discipline. Thought would appear to offer little to the modern student in search of a vocational qualification, and as Readings observed: 'nothing in the nature of the institution will enshrine Thought or protect it from economic imperatives' (Readings, 1996). But if the devaluation of Thought is linked to the demise of the academic discipline of philosophy, then arguably the reinstatement of philosophy to the academy will bring with it a renewed commitment to critique and the practice of thinking.

Philosophy and the lower faculty

The faculty of philosophy originally occupied a special and privileged place within the Enlightenment University, to the extent that the idea of a University without a philosophy department was until recently considered unthinkable. Writing in the late 18th century, Kant categorized the University into three 'higher faculties' and a 'lower faculty'. The purpose of the higher faculties of theology, law, and medicine was to attend, as he put it, to the eternal, civil, and physical well-being of the people, and this task fell largely

under the remit and control of the state. However, in addition to these three state-controlled faculties, Kant argued that:

It is absolutely essential that the learned community at the university also contain a faculty that is independent of the government's command with regard to its teachings; one that, having no commands to give, is free to evaluate everything, and concerns itself with the interests of the sciences [*Wissenschaft*], that is, with truth; one in which reason is authorized to speak out publicly. (Kant, 1798, pp. 27–29)

Kant identified philosophy as the faculty charged with this critical (in both senses of the word) role. He continued:

The reason why this faculty, despite its great prerogative (freedom), is called the lower faculty lies in human nature; for a man who can give commands, even though he is someone else's humble servant, is considered more distinguished than a free man who has no one under his command. (p. 29)

From the very outset then, philosophy occupied a unique position in the modern University. Philosophers were largely free to think outside of the constraints of government control and accountability, and performed the essential duty of evaluating and regulating the higher faculties. Philosophy acted both as a mediator between the disparate agendas of the faculties of divinity, law, and medicine, and also as the critical function that called them to account. It was able to do this because, for Kant (1787, p. 657), philosophy is unique among the faculties insofar as it has no content of its own but is rather 'the science of the relation of all knowledge to the essential ends of human reason'.

The demise of philosophy

The triple role of philosophy as the defining feature of the University, as the mediator between the other faculties, and as the independent and neutral faculty of critique charged with the pursuit of truth, gradually eroded during the early years of the 20th century. On the one hand, the discipline of philosophy began to turn its gaze inward and to call into question its own relationship with truth. And on the other hand, it

renounced its neutral position with regard to the other faculties and was perceived to turn away from the arts towards mathematics and science. In the view of Jurgen Habermas (1968, p. 4), philosophy moved from providing a reflective and transcendent theory of universal knowledge to what he called the 'pseudonormative regulation of established research'. This scientific turn, under the guise of logical positivism and later of analytical and linguistic philosophy, resulted in a schism within the university and a backlash in the form firstly of German phenomenology and latterly of French post-structural philosophy and literary criticism.

By the second half of the 20th century, philosophy had become detached from everyday affairs and largely inaccessible to the educated lay person. More worryingly, however, philosophy in the 20th century had become too technical and specialized even for academics from other faculties in the University, so that its function since the time of Kant as the gatekeeper of truth and reason was called into question. Suddenly, the idea of a University without a faculty of philosophy was no longer quite so unthinkable. As philosophy departments in the UK began to close, there was a rapid diaspora of philosophers across the whole university as they found new homes in departments as diverse as medicine, geography, cultural studies, and English literature. A number of writers have expressed concern over this apparent resurgence of philosophy across the University. Alain Badiou, writing in 2009, complained that:

if philosophy's existence was declared minimal twenty years ago, one could today maintain that it finds itself no less under threat but for the diametrically opposed reason that it is now endowed with an excessive, artificial existence. Particularly in France, 'philosophy' is everywhere. It serves as a trademark for various media pundits. It livens up cafés and health clubs. It has its magazines and its gurus. It is universally called upon, by everything from banks to major state commissions, to pronounce on ethics, law and duty. (Badiou, 2009, pp. 67–68)

Elsewhere, Badiou (2005) made the distinction between the 'TV philosopher' who is wheeled out to give an opinion on the issues of the day, and the

'genuine philosopher' who constructs her/his own problems rather than merely resolving the problems of others.

If we apply Badiou's distinction to the academy, we can see that there is a danger that the 'applied philosophers' who are found in departments across the University, including nursing, are becoming little more than the TV variety who pronounce on the ethics of this or the epistemology of that, and whose role is to *answer* questions rather than to *pose* them. This fundamental shift in what the academy now demands of philosophy and philosophers might be seen as a response to the growing ethos of managerialism in the corporate University. As one manager in my own department was recently overheard to say to an academic: 'Don't bring me problems, bring me solutions'. As corny and clichéd as that remark might sound, it fits perfectly with the growing corporate culture of measurable outcomes, key performance indicators, and tangible (preferably monetary) results. The role of the philosopher (and, indeed, of all academics) is no longer to problematize but to provide simplified answers to simplistic questions. The University has, to use Michael Oakeshott's phrase, ceased to function as a manner of human activity and has become a machine for achieving a particular purpose or producing a particular result. Thus, while many so-called multidisciplinary teams and departments now employ a philosopher, there is an expectation that everyone pulls together in order to reach a consensus and produce a result, and that the role of the philosopher is to solve her/his particular aspect of the problem at hand as it rolls along the conveyor belt.

The return of philosophy

This expectation that the philosopher will fit seamlessly into the team, will bring a 'philosophical' point of view to the table, and will resolve problems through reasoned discussion and the application of logic is based on what is arguably a naive misconception about philosophy and philosophers. Slavoj Žižek (2005) suggests how a 'true philosopher' might be recognized:

You're sitting in a café and someone challenges you: 'Come on, let's discuss that in depth.' The philosopher will immedi-

ately say 'I'm sorry, I must leave', and will make sure he disappears as quickly as possible. (p. 49)

Philosophers, then, tend not to be team players and are not concerned with simple or simplistic solutions. Žižek (echoing Wittgenstein) continued:

Philosophy is not a dialogue. Name me a single example of a successful philosophical dialogue that wasn't a dreadful misunderstanding. This is true also for most prominent cases: Aristotle didn't understand Plato correctly; Hegel... of course didn't understand Kant. And Heidegger fundamentally didn't understand anyone at all. So, no dialogue. (p.50)

For Žižek, 'true philosophers' generally do not enter into debates about the issues of the day; they do not take sides or give opinions or provide answers. The 'first gesture' of the philosopher is usually to point out that the alternatives being put forward are almost always 'false alternatives' or what Deleuze & Guattari (1994) termed a disjunctive synthesis. As Žižek (2005, p. 51) pointed out, 'we must change the concepts of the debate', that is, we must re-problematize it, which on the whole is not a popular move with fellow academics, managers, and administrators who wish to solve the current problem rather than create a new one.

In his book *The Differend*, Jean François Lyotard made a similar distinction between what he called the intellectual and the philosopher. Whereas the intellectual smoothes over difference and generally supports the status quo 'for the sake of political hegemony' (Lyotard, 1983, p. 142), the job of the philosopher is to problematize disputes and discussions by pointing out incommensurabilities and by attempting to keep debates open rather than resolve them through the imposition of hegemonic power. Lyotard's statement at the very beginning of his book that 'The time has come to philosophize' (p. xiii) should therefore be read as a call to *all* academics to resist the production-line mentality of the corporate University of Excellence and to open up a new space for Thought that refuses to close down debate and discussion for the sake of an artificially coherent, unified, and marketable product. Readings, who was a Lyotard scholar, referred to this attitude of encouraging parallel lines of thought as 'dissensus'. He claimed that it should

form the foundation for a new way of dwelling in the ruins of the corporate University and suggested the need to build a 'community of Thought', that is, a community committed to dissensus. This is not a community of dissent; not a community of opposition; not a community that likes to say 'no'. Rather, it is a community that, to borrow Deleuze and Guattari's term, says '... and ... and ... and ...'; one that encourages a plurality of conflicting opinion with no pressure to achieve a consensus in the name of truth, beauty, or a marketable product (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25). A community of dissensus is concerned not with an end product but with reinstating Thought as a process and as a problematic which, as Readings said, 'does not function as an answer but as a *question*' (Readings, 1996, p. 160).

Readings's invitation to dwell among the ruins in communities of Thought can therefore be interpreted as a return to philosophy in its traditional Kantian sense of the 'lower faculty' of the University. This lower faculty would stand apart from the manufacture and sale of knowledge, information, and qualifications that has become the main business of the University and which is now more or less self-perpetuating and immune to internal critique. For Kant, the faculty of philosophy was 'lower' because it renounced political power and authority in return for academic freedom. Transposed to the 21st century, this would first and foremost entail replacing financial accountancy with academic accountability.

Dwelling in the ruins

The time has come to philosophize, that is to say, to challenge and call into question the basic assumptions on which the corporate University rests. This can only be achieved by members of the University itself, and they have to do it while at the same time sustaining the very institution that they are calling to account. Philosophy in the 21st century is no longer something we can do *instead of*, say, sociology, mathematics, or even nursing. Philosophy in the corporate University must be done *alongside* our academic specialism, from *within* our home department or faculty. To do philosophy in this sense is to critique the ethos of the corporate University as it applies to our particular

academic discipline, to call into question the unspoken assumptions on which that ethos rests, and to challenge and subvert the corporate mission as and when it comes into conflict with the professional ethics and values of nursing. To paraphrase the manager cited earlier, our duty as philosophers is to bring problems, not solutions. For nurse academics, this critique might (or perhaps should) include a deep and fundamental questioning of the relationship between research, theory, and practice; of the meaning of education in relation to practice; of why, for whom, and by whom nursing research should be undertaken; and perhaps even of whether the University is the best and most appropriate home for nursing education and research.

The University is in ruins and there are a number of ways that we, as academics and students, can respond. We can pine nostalgically for the return of the Enlightenment University; we can actively rebel against the corporate machine that has taken its place; or we can sink into an attitude of passive despair. Readings insisted that none of these options were acceptable and argued instead that we should dwell in the ruins without alibis, that is to say, as authentically and productively as we are able, given that we all need at least superficially to satisfy the demands of a corporate mission that we neither agreed nor signed up to. This is arguably more pressing for nurse academics than for geographers, mathematicians, and historians. Firstly, as we have seen, there are tangible points of conflict and contradiction between the corporate demands of the University and the professional demands of nursing practice. And secondly, the requirement by the nursing profession for competent graduates and effective research is in some cases quite literally a matter of life and death. To paraphrase Heidegger, philosophy must be our way of dwelling in the ruined University.

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