

## The language of higher education

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Rhetoric, or persuasion, was recognised in classical times both as central to education and as dangerous when misused. Since the time of Kant, a feature of western thinking has been the creation of a special language to accompany a special idea. Making language prior to or separate from its referents is of its nature an authoritarian activity. The managerialist language which surrounds us today threatens to reduce higher education to a managerialist endeavour, to replace conversation in the discipline with empty managerialist phrases, and to disguise the commonplace in jargon. These are anti-educational manifestations which should be resisted.

**Keywords:** language; epistemology; abstraction; managerialism; authoritarian; discourse

### Introduction

Seeing then that *truth* consisteth in the right ordering of names in our affirmations, a man that seeketh precise *truth*, had need to remember what every name he uses stands for; and to place it accordingly; or else he will find himselfe entangled in words, as a bird in lime-twiggs; the more he struggles, the more belimed. (Hobbes 1981, 105)

That language can be used not merely to help us make sense of the world but to construct the world has long been recognised. For the Greeks, rhetoric was *πειθω*, or persuasion, an art Gorgias saw as a form of magic. It was considered sufficiently dangerous to be outlawed in Athens during the oligarchic coup of 404 BC. The Romans absorbed Greek notions of rhetoric during the first century BC and, when Quintilian set down his principles of rhetoric in the first century AD, showed they had transformed it into the centrepiece of higher education, where it became an indicator of a man's moral character and level of culture.

The ancient Greeks and Romans were aware that language could be exploited for both good and ill. My concern here is to indicate what I consider to be a contemporary manifestation of the exploitation of language for ill. I shall first trace what I think are the historical origins of our distinctly modern problem, discuss some examples relating specifically to higher education, and then try to explain why I think they are pernicious. I conclude with an exhortation to all teachers in the higher education sector to be aware of the dangers of misused language and to avoid themselves slipping into such misuses.

### Epistemological origins

In the western philosophical tradition it was Locke who first indicated that the tools of persuasion, that is, words, require examination. Unfortunately, his major metaphysical assertion, that nothing exists but particulars and anything classified as general is ultimately particular, served to focus his successors on subjective approaches to epistemology. This had two consequences: a

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rapid expansion of the meta-language of philosophy and a significant growth in the social and political claims of individual philosophers.

Immanuel Kant can be said to have initiated the process. In saying this I mean to denigrate neither Kant nor his work, but to suggest that his philosophical preoccupations and the manner in which he expressed them are a consequence of Locke, and that the power of Kant's ideas has seduced his successors into an over-emphasis of idiom, which is seen as the location rather than as the medium of thought.

Kant introduced the concepts of analytic and synthetic propositions, of a priori and empirical propositions, of the categorical imperative. His first major critic, Hegel, introduced speculative reasoning, the dialectic, and argued for the importance of contradiction and negation in human existence. In other words, by the early nineteenth century, western philosophy had become the empire of abstract nouns.

Generality, of course, is necessary for predication which, in turn, is necessary for sense, and generality need not involve abstraction. From their very different perspectives Reid, Frege and Wittgenstein have taught us that: Reid through his arguments that the human mind connects directly with the world rather than through the medium of abstractions, Frege through his distinction between sense and reference, Wittgenstein through his emphasis on the primacy of the deed to the word. My point is that idealism and teleology suffused the early nineteenth-century philosophical climate, with serious consequences.

### Theories of everything

The consequences are those of imperfect understanding and/or simplification of complex notions. If the object of external perception is held to consist of ideas and if there is an impulse to discover ends or final causes, thinkers less rigorous and less scrupulous than Kant and Hegel will be tempted to rush straight for the most personally congenial theory of everything.

Auguste Comte was one of those who did. He wrote of the law of three phases, by which he meant that society had passed through a theological and a metaphysical phase and had now arrived at a scientific phase. Such a theory of history would have been unthinkable before Hegel, and the words 'law' and 'scientific' introduced a new and distinctively nineteenth-century note.

The most famous post-Hegelian, of course, is Marx, who drove his abstractions – capital, labour, means of production, proletariat, bourgeoisie, surplus value, and the rest – to the limits of their capacity. Again, to say this is to denigrate neither Marx nor the enduring power of his insights, but to note that, after Kant, movements or breakthroughs in western thinking had become inseparable from the invention and/or reinvention of abstract nouns.

A corollary of this process is a tendency to ascribe human agency to abstract nouns. A Marxist, for example, might well speak of 'the new demands of history,' although history is a human label for past events. The events themselves, of course, do not possess consciousness and cannot, therefore, demand anything. Someone familiar with Marxist discourse will not take the phrase, 'the new demands of history,' in a literal sense; s/he will take it to mean that circumstances change with the passage of time and necessitate different types of human response. The point of my illustration is that a special language, intelligible only to initiates, now intervenes between thought and those who wish to understand it. Thought, in other words, has become privileged; has become, in fact, a political instrument. You cannot talk to a Marxist unless you speak in Marxist language.

Behind this lies the Lockean notion, considerably extended by Kant (and, of course, by Berkeley and Hume before him), that the human mind is an active participant in the construction of reality. This is a critical notion that cannot be separated from the way in which it is expressed. E.H. Carr, in a famous lecture, described history as 'a continuous process of interaction between

the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past' (Carr 1964, 30). I would describe human experience of the external world in similar terms, the key word being 'process.' 'Construction,' on the other hand (and it is not a word that Locke himself used, as far as I am aware), implies patient, systematic building resulting in a fixed structure. The practical meaning of such an epistemological attitude, as Marxism illustrates, is that reality becomes whatever an ambitious intellectual says it is, and the language employed by the intellectual becomes the instrument by which s/he seeks to enforce consensus. The spectre of authoritarianism haunts all post-Kantian discourse.

### Warnings

Those who care about language have long been aware of this. The *locus classicus* of authoritarian language critique is Orwell's (1984) *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and the Czechs, to take one people who endured over 30 years of communist tyranny, advert continually in their literature of the period to the hijacking of language for purposes of political control: Havel's play, *The Memorandum*, Klíma's novel, *Love and Garbage*, and Holub's poem, 'Skinning,' are but three memorable examples.

Academic writers, too, have examined the way language can be employed to distort reality. Bogacz (1986) shows the tenacity – amounting almost to collective psychosis – with which 'abstract euphemistic spiritualised words and phrases' were employed in Great Britain during the First World War to disguise and then to compensate for the atrocious realities of that conflict. A distinguished multilingual critic and commentator who believes, as I do, that the relationship between language and political inhumanity is a crucial one, has written as follows (Steiner 1967, 117–18).

A language shows that it has in it the germ of dissolution in several ways. Actions of the mind that were once spontaneous become mechanical, frozen habits (dead metaphors, stock similes, slogans). Words grow longer and more ambiguous. Instead of style, there is rhetoric. In stead of precise common usage, there is jargon. Foreign roots and borrowings are no longer absorbed into the blood-stream of the native tongue. They are merely swallowed and remain an alien intrusion. All these technical failures accumulate to the essential failure: the language no longer sharpens thought but blurs it.

Vast amounts have been written on language, its use and abuse, its cultural context, its political implications and so on, and the phenomenon I am describing would be excellent material for discourse analysis *à la* Foucault. But the theoretical apparatus of post-structuralism and its associated academic approaches is one of the most obvious and sinister examples of the problem I indicate. In asserting, for example, that theoretical systems claiming universal validity are totalitarian, post-structuralist critics adopt an authoritarian posture themselves. This is not a coincidence. Discourse analysis introduces a whole battery of fresh abstractions – deconstruction, deixis, *différance*, *discours*, indeterminacy, narratology, *scriptible* (note the large number of unabsorbed foreign borrowings) – that allow the authoritarian spectre to take tangible form.

### Authoritarian language today

The collapse of the Soviet Union and its European satellite regimes at the end of the 1980s provoked a surge of ideological triumphalism on the part of convinced capitalists, especially in the United States of America. The consequences of this can be felt in the language we use every day, which is not the same as the language we used during the Cold War, but which has many structural similarities with the language used on the other side of the Iron Curtain during the Cold War.

This language manifests less in the productions of a Fukuyama (whose place in the Comtean tradition is obvious) than in the contamination of the language of everyday life by an authoritarian

discourse. The origins of this discourse are in classical economics, mediated by neo-classical economics, which together supply many of its abstractions. Beginning from the false premise that 'resources' are 'scarce,' prevailing economic orthodoxy includes concepts such as the 'law' of supply and demand, marginal utility, equilibria, and perfect competition.

Superimposed, not entirely logically, on this economic framework is what is popularly known as managerialism, a creed embraced by those who believe in free markets as Marxists believe in the class struggle. Managerialism qualifies less as a philosophical position than as an ideological simplification of human life. Its main features are the belief that the differences between organisations such as Ford Motor Company, the University of Melbourne, KPMG, and The Salvation Army are less significant than their similarities, that efficiency is the supreme organisational virtue, and that efficiency is expressed through delighting customers (everyone is a customer in the managerialist world-picture). These beliefs are the foundations on which the edifice of managerialist language is constructed.

### **Managerialist language and higher education**

The effects of managerialism in the higher education sector have been discussed at length and with passion in books and professional journals since the mid-1980s. My purpose here is not to rehearse arguments with which readers will already be familiar, but to warn that the conversation is at times a soliloquy because the language used can entrench the books and articles in a particular mode of authoritarian discourse, making the debate, in the most literal sense, academic.

The origins of this discourse, as is well known, are in the shift in public policy that occurred in the 1980s and for the history of which Slaughter and Leslie (1997) is still the standard text. Slaughter (1985) noted that the pedagogical assumptions of the key policy documents were rooted in the nineteenth century and had a distinctly moralistic flavour although, at the same time, their assumptions about the purpose of education were almost exclusively economic. Human capital theory has provided the bridge over which eighteenth-century notions of laissez-faire can, in the company of neo-classical economic theory, cross from agriculture and the manufacturing industry to higher education.

Many senior members of the academic profession have not been slow to adopt the language of these ideas; the contamination has, in many cases, been voluntary. The Vice-Chancellor of a new private university in Australia, for example, criticised the older universities as representing a monopoly in which 'the consumer is denied an effective choice in education,' and asserted that 'the flexibility and discipline of the market' would ensure that private universities attained a standard of excellence (Marginson 1997, 474).

The Vice-Chancellor, like a Marxist, attributes human characteristics, flexibility and discipline, to an abstraction, the market. He commodifies education. He talks about 'a standard of excellence,' without giving any clue as to what 'excellence' in this context may mean. Shamanistic abuse of abstract nouns is the distinguishing feature of authoritarian discourse. Like the Marxist, the Vice-Chancellor is held fast by the language he has embraced and he cannot be communicated with except in that language.

A more systematic and less anecdotal examination of this language may be helpful. At the beginning of the 1990s, Gareth Williams reflected on the 1983 report on British higher education, *Excellence in Diversity*. I quote his description of the strategic aims of the report and juxtapose my interpretations of those aims in Table 1 (facing page).

The essential difference between generalisation and abstraction is that generalising involves confrontation with particulars whereas abstraction does not engage with particulars at all. The strategic aims listed in Table 1 derive exclusively from abstractions – 'opportunities,' 'access,' 'specialisation,' 'quality,' 'activities,' 'development,' 'efficiency,' 'changing academic, social,

Table 1.

Strategic Aim (Williams 1991, 23)	Meaning
To provide opportunities for all who are able to benefit from some form of higher education and to encourage access from a broader social spectrum.	Higher education should be accessible to as many people as possible.
To reduce undue specialisation in secondary education and the initial years of higher education.	Concentration of learning within a specific academic area is undesirable at undergraduate level.
To create a climate within which the quality of teaching and research can be maintained, at a time when underlying demographic trends will make competition more difficult.	Social engineering should be employed to maintain academic standards.
To stimulate research and other academic activities not directly linked to student numbers.	Social engineering should be employed to ensure that academic staff do more than just teach.
To encourage institutions to prepare realistic development plans.	Institutions, if they prepare development plans at all, do not prepare realistic ones.
To increase the capacity of universities, polytechnics and colleges to respond positively to changing academic, social, economic and industrial needs.	Social engineering should be employed to align tertiary institutions with government policy.
To promote efficiency in the use of resources.	Tertiary institutions are inefficient.
To create a framework for policy and management studies that will help leaders of academic institutions meet the challenge of adaptation without growth.	The precise meaning is unclear but the underlying idea appears to be that institutions assume additional responsibilities without compensation.

economic and industrial needs' – and are therefore impossible to assess in any meaningful way. The consequences for educational practice of such language can be inferred from the ways in which these strategic aims were to be achieved. I list them in Table 2 overleaf.

The direct path from abstraction to authoritarianism could scarcely be clearer. The political motivations are irrelevant; abstraction reveals not a political attitude but an existential one. Abstraction is the language of conformity and control. The word 'education' appears (once), but the proposals could apply to anything; their implications are both transferable and substantively meaningless. There is no reference to particulars because the language is incapable of engaging with particulars; anything connected with enacted learning and teaching is beyond its range. I would suggest that this accounts for the dearth of substantive remarks about education in the hundreds and hundreds of pages of reports produced by the 1997 National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing 1997).

The consequences of such language are apparent in academic conversation about higher education. Consider the following (Cutright 2003, 123).

The continuing dislocation of the contemporary university from centrality in knowledge production, knowledge utilisation, cultural transmission, and legitimisation of both the church and state has led many a reflective soul to ponder the very *raison d'être* of the institution.

This sentence is the first of a book review in the reputable academic journal, *Higher Education*. Note the abundance of abstractions: 'centrality,' 'knowledge production,' 'knowledge utilisation,' 'cultural transmission' and 'legitimation.' What they reveal, among other things, is that the author has capitulated to the authoritarian discourse of managerialism. He acquiesces to the managerialist view that 'knowledge' is a product to be 'utilised.' He accepts that 'culture' can be 'transmitted,' like a radio signal. He implies, despite much contrary historical evidence, that in

Table 2.

Proposal (Williams 1991, 23)	Meaning
Diversification so as to provide for the interests and needs of a much wider clientele.	Institutions will provide courses of study in non-traditional areas.
The restructuring of basic undergraduate courses so as to provide two years of fairly general initial higher education followed by two years of more specialised study for those who would be going on to specialised professional or academic work.	A specialised education will be provided only if it is vocationally justified.
The establishment of a review body to monitor teaching quality in universities.	Academic teachers will be accountable to a group of bureaucrats.
More explicit focusing of research efforts between and within institutions and a clearer separation of funding for teaching and research.	Disinterested research will no longer be permitted.
Radical modification of tenure arrangements in universities.	No one's job will be guaranteed.
Regular performance appraisal of members of academic staff.	Academic work will conform to a set of managerialist indicators.
The erosion but not the abolition of the binary system.	The distinctions between a university, a polytechnic and a college will be collapsed.
More positive policy leadership by central government.	The government, not the individual institution, will determine educational priorities and methods of operation.
Diversification of funding sources and mechanisms for both institutions and students.	The government will reduce its level of financial investment in higher education.
The establishment of a national centre for higher education management and policy studies.	A group of bureaucrats will determine the direction of British higher education.

the past the university (all universities are the same, of course) functioned to 'legitimise' official religion and the apparatus of government.

There is a pleasing simplicity about all this, only slightly marred by the initial mixed metaphor (dislocation is not a continuing process; something is either dislocated or not), but it has little to do with serious inquiry or debate. The abstract nouns are pushed around like counters in a board game, clinically detached from whatever it is they are supposed to denote. Consider the following (Scott 2006, 1).

High technology and rapid globalisation are altering work, leisure time, and formal schooling structures. At the heart of this new information society, academic institutions are pivotal organisations. Yet, they must remain flexible enough to respond to emerging social demands, technological change, and economic realignments.

These remarks appear in another reputable academic publication, *The Journal of Higher Education*. The initial sentence is a familiar cliché from popular books on management, as is the label, 'new information society,' in the second (Toffler is another writer in the Comtean tradition). The author then warns that academic institutions must be alive to continuing social, technological and economic changes, which seems to mean that an organisation should be aware of the context in which it operates – hardly a ground-breaking insight. But the intellectual poverty of the sentences is obscured by the layer of abstractions: 'technology,' 'globalisation,' 'formal schooling structures,' 'information society,' 'social demands,' 'technological change,' 'economic realignments.' High-sounding words, deployed as if they mean something in themselves.

A sentence from the *Cambridge Journal of Education* represents a third major variation on the theme (Skidmore 2006, 503).

Drawing mainly on the theoretical ideas of Bakhtin on the dialogic nature of language, a number of authors have stressed the educative potential of teacher–student interaction which enables students to play an active part in shaping the agenda of classroom discourse.

The author appears to be saying that researchers have discovered that if there's some genuine conversational exchange between the teacher and the students in the classroom you get a better educational result. That, I would have thought, was obvious, with or without Bakhtin, and certainly without hideous phrases such as, 'the dialogic nature of language,' and, 'the educative potential of teacher–student interaction.' (What does a teacher do in the classroom if not interact with students?)

It would be grossly inaccurate to suggest that all contemporary academic writing on higher education resembles the quotations above. But contamination by managerialist discourse is widely apparent. It shows itself in the three ways indicated: through application of the terms of managerialism to higher education, through substitution of the clichés of managerialism for thought, and through the costuming of the obvious in layers of anodyne verbiage.

Most academic teachers nowadays will be familiar with the Likert-scale questionnaires completed by their students which purport to assess the quality of their teaching. The equation of quality with customer satisfaction is a paradigmatic example of the authoritarianism of managerialist discourse; a huge and vitally important debate about the nature of educational quality is simply foreclosed by the imposition of a definition of quality unique to the discourse. As feminists know, the authoritarian discourse of managerialism makes it extremely difficult to be successful in the world in which it is employed without being suborned by it (Cox 1996, 53–74).

The discourse is authoritarian because it is employed to eliminate difference. Draining the nuance from a term and replacing it with a crude simplification or, more usually, an emotive connotation, is the first step. For example, words like 'accountability,' 'excellence' and 'quality' have become synonyms for 'good,' although none of these words, including 'good', has an absolute meaning that transcends context. On the other hand, the synonyms for 'bad' have become very precise: few publications, low scores on the student questionnaire, insufficient research grants, failure to partner with 'industry' (i.e. profit-making enterprises). Authoritarian discourse is always very clear about what is to be punished. Conformity is both its desideratum and its hallmark, and can be illustrated.

The University of Sydney measures its organisational performance by benchmarking against world class peers and industry. (The University of Sydney 2007)

The University of Toronto is committed to being an internationally significant research university, with undergraduate, graduate and professional programs of excellent quality. (The University of Toronto 2007)

We will be internationally recognised as a world class research university. We will build the research strength necessary to become world leaders in selected subject areas. (Durham University 2007)

Its mission is to be an internationally recognised, research-led university, known for the excellence of its teaching, research, and service to its local, national and international communities. (The University of Auckland 2007)

Wits's mission is ... to maintain and enhance its position as a leading university in South Africa, in Africa, and in the world by sustaining globally competitive standards of excellence in learning, teaching and research. (University of the Witwatersrand 2006)

The mission of The University of Texas at Austin is to achieve excellence in the interrelated areas of undergraduate education, graduate education, research and public service. (The University of Texas at Austin 2005)

‘World class,’ ‘benchmarking,’ ‘globally competitive,’ ‘excellence’ – the demotic patois of managerialism can be found in the publications of English-speaking universities across the globe. Mission statements, of course, rarely reflect language at its most nuanced and muscular, but that mission statements for universities have become *de rigueur* with the advent of managerialism is itself an illustration of the conformity that results from adoption of the discourse.

### Why we should resist

I have suggested that this phenomenon of language contamination is not new but rather a populist outbreak of a disease that has afflicted the western academic community for two centuries. It is important, I think, for those who see higher education in more than instrumental terms to recognise the symptoms of the disease and to quarantine the affected writings. If they are allowed to spread unchecked we will all become infected.

Authoritarian discourse is propagandist, not informative. Acceptance of its particular abstractions imprisons you within its idiom, repetition of its phrases replaces argument with sloganeering, and habitual use of it turns the most commonplace observation into a baffling edifice of jargon. Authoritarian discourse is of its nature anti-educational.

It is anti-educational because it is simplistic and exclusive. The ‘law’ of supply and demand, for example, represented by enthusiasts as analogous to the Newtonian laws of motion, has become an authority against which it appears futile to appeal. The relationship between supply and demand, an interesting and immensely complex economic question, has been simplified and popularised, forcing those concerned with higher education to justify their activities in the crudest terms of basic accounting. And that accounting, with its tidy concepts of fixed costs, variable costs and unit costs, developed in the 1920s for the manufacturing sector, is applied to all organisations, not just universities. Ford Motor Company may conceivably find such an accounting model useful; whether the same is true of The Salvation Army, or even of KPMG, is another matter. But the discourse takes priority over the reality it purports to represent.

There is no need for any educational researcher or policy-maker to adopt this language. Van Manen (1990), for example, presented an approach to social inquiry grounded in human particulars and fully alive to the implications of the language in which it is expressed. He recalls words like ‘relationship,’ ‘love’ and ‘mystery’ from popular debasement and restores them to their central location in the educational process. Higher education, as a field of inquiry, must use language that is inclusive and experiential, and van Manen has demonstrated how such a language can work.

But it is not necessary to replace one discourse with another; speaking and writing authentically requires not special training but awareness and vigilance. I think this is the point Austin was making when he responded to R.M. Hare (Warnock 1973, 40n).

How would one respond, say as an examiner, to the offer of a bribe? Hare (if memory serves) said that he would say ‘I don’t take bribes, on principle.’ Austin said: ‘Would you, Hare? I think I’d say “No, thanks”.’

‘I don’t take bribes, on principle’ is accompanied by an implied edifice of moral and philosophical theorising absent from the simple and direct ‘No, thanks.’ An ability to recognise when sophisticated reasoning impedes rather than facilitates communication is helpful if language is to be used authentically.

That relationship is central to teaching and learning has been known in the east at least since the days of Confucius and in the west at least since the days of Socrates. And relationship exists between a person and the language s/he employs. That relationship can be inauthentic, meaning the language is full of abstractions which are pseudo-objective labels for unexamined emotions, or it can be authentic, meaning the language is particular and transparent, allowing whatever it



is intended to represent to be seen clearly. It's the difference between saying, 'I have never understood,' which means you have never sought to understand, and saying, 'I don't understand.' It's the difference between saying, 'the fact remains,' which means that you don't want to look beyond the particular fact, and saying, 'I regard this fact as more important than the other facts of the case.' It's the difference between saying, 'economic reality,' and saying, 'there is a view held by many economists that...'

Educational bureaucrats – the type who write university mission statements – are notoriously given to authoritarian discourse. But there is no reason why tertiary teachers and researchers should succumb to the disease. There are many reasons why they should not. The issue at stake has been presented with force by Don Watson (2003, 166).

Managerialism came to the universities as the German army came to Poland. Now they talk about *achieved learning outcomes*, *quality assurance mechanisms* and *international benchmarking*. They throw *triple bottom line*, *customer satisfaction* and *world class* around with the best of them ... The debates at the centre of Western civilisation are now truly academic because they cannot be conducted in the language of managerialism or taught under managerial criteria in universities. Not only is managerial language inadequate to these fundamental questions about the nature of truth, it has no respect for them. It is not a language for serious inquiry or explanation, or even for thinking.

Many managers, economists and accountants will object, and rightly, that they do not accept this authoritarian discourse. But the point is not whether they believe it; the point is whether they are doing anything about it. University teachers and researchers in all disciplines have a responsibility to resist language in which it is impossible to tell the truth. No one need take to the streets or jeopardise his or her job. But it is incumbent on all of us to think about what we say to our students and how we say it, and to think about the language we use in the papers we write. We can't measure the value of an insight, so we shouldn't try. How would we measure the value of a Platonic dialogue? Of Euclid's *Elements*? Of Raphael's portrait of Leo X? Of *De revolutionibus orbium caelestium*? Of *Hamlet*? Of Newton's *Principia*? Of Beethoven's music? Of Einstein's relativity theory?

There is plenty of room to resist managerialist language in the academic conversation about higher education, a major forum of which is the higher educational journal. The language of public policy need not be acquiesced in, let alone reinforced, by what we say to one another. An academic's duty is to avoid authoritarian discourse and write instead in language that is, as one of the greatest of English poets said, 'simple, sensuous, and passionate' (Milton 1958, 326).

### Notes on contributor

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Bakhtin (1895–1975) saw language as residing in the 'dialogues' between a literary work and its author, a literary work and its readers, and between the author, the work and the readers on the one hand and the social and historical forces surrounding them on the other.

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Fukuyama (1952–) argues that the end of the Cold War signalled the end of ideological struggle in human history; economic and political liberalism will inevitably triumph.
- Havel, Václav. 1981. *The memorandum*. Trans. Vera Blackwell. London: Eyre Methuen.  
Havel (1936–) was a dissident playwright and thinker who was harassed and imprisoned under the Czech communist regime (1948–1989). He subsequently served as President of Czechoslovakia and, following Slovak secession, as President of the Czech Republic. *The Memorandum*, first produced in 1965, is a dissection of authoritarian bureaucracy and the corruption of language.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1956. *The philosophy of history*. Trans. J.B. Sibree. New York: Dover.

- . 1991. *The encyclopaedia logic, with the Zusätze: Part I of the encyclopaedia of philosophical sciences with the Zusätze*. Trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett. *The Encyclopaedia Logic* includes the fullest description of the dialectic of Hegel (1770–1831), including the much-debated notions of contradiction and negation. *The Philosophy of History* outlines Hegel's view of history as a progression in which each successive movement emerges as a solution to the contradictions inherent in the preceding movement.
- Hobbes, Thomas. 1981. *Leviathan*. Ed. C.B. Macpherson. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin. Hobbes' (1588–1679) pioneering examination of what would later be called the social contract contains interesting reflections on the uses and abuses of language, one of which, on the necessity of definitions, I have chosen as an epigraph.
- Holub, Miroslav. 1990. Skinning. In *Vanishing lung syndrome*, trans. David Young and Dana Hábová, 12–15. London: Faber and Faber. Holub (1923–1998) described *Vanishing Lung Syndrome* as his last words to the Czech communist regime. 'Skinning' uses the metaphor of skinned rabbits to explore what happens when the skin of language is separated from the flesh of reality.
- Hume, David. 1999. *An enquiry concerning human understanding*. Ed. Tom L. Beauchamp. Oxford: Oxford University Press. For Hume (1711–1776), human nature was explicable only in terms of 'perceptions,' which refer to all objects present to consciousness and come in two kinds: impressions and ideas.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1893. *Critique of pure reason*. Trans. J.M.D. Meiklejohn. London: Bell. ———. 1998. *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*. Ed. and trans. Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. In the introduction to the *Critique*, Kant (1724–1804) poses his famous question: 'How are synthetic a priori judgements possible?' Categories are related to the form rather than the matter of experience. It is impossible to summarise Kant: he must be read. Carefully.
- Klíma, Ivan. 1990. *Love and garbage*. Trans. Ewald Osers. London: Chatto & Windus. Klíma (1931–) writes of lies and decay. His narrator works on a sanitation crew and believes that 'jerkish,' a language of 225 words developed in the USA for chimpanzees, is the language of the future.
- Kogan, Maurice, and Stephen Hanney, eds. 2000. *Reforming higher education*. London: Jessica Kingsley. A paradigmatic example of inauthentic language: the essential issues of managerialist corruption of higher education remain unexplored even while a show is made of discussing them ('We located UK universities as being at the free and chartered end of the spectrum of public institutions, but shifting into a position partly determined by a particular form of radical conservative theory' etc.).
- Locke, John. 1975. *An essay concerning human understanding*. Ed. Peter H. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Locke (1632–1704) denied the existence of innate ideas, arguing that every idea we have derives ultimately from experience. Tellingly, in Book III of the *Essay*, Locke argues that words denote things only indirectly; general words denote general ideas which become general through separation from other ideas and particular circumstances, a process he calls 'abstraction.'
- Manen, Max van. 1990. *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. Professor van Manen can speak without embarrassment of 'a moral vocabulary of teaching.' While I do not share his European appreciation of abstract nouns ('this text describes a human science research approach, showing a semiotic employment of the methods of phenomenology and hermeneutics', p. 1), I would recommend strongly a visit to his website: <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/MAX/>.
- Marginson, Simon. 1997. Imagining Ivy: Pitfalls in the privatization of higher education in Australia. *Comparative Education Review* 41, no. 4: 460–80. Marginson has been a sophisticated critic of the public policy framework surrounding the 'corporate' university. In this article he highlights the contradictions inherent in a policy that simultaneously supports private higher education while continuing to fund and direct public higher education.
- Marshall, Alfred. 1947. *Principles of economics: An introductory volume*. 8th ed. London: Macmillan. Marshall's (1842–1924) work discusses marginal utility in Book III, Chapter III, 'Gradations of consumers' demand.' Supply and demand are discussed throughout, but especially in Book V, where the concept of equilibrium is treated. His influence is still strong in microeconomics today.
- Marx, Karl. 1954–1959. *Capital: A critique of political economy*. Ed. Friedrich Engels. 3rd ed., trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. 3 vols. London: Lawrence & Wishart. Most of Marx's (1818–1883) key terms, including means of production and surplus value, are treated in the first volume of *Capital*.

- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1967. *The communist manifesto*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.  
Although they do not use the term, Marx and Engels (1820–1895) are very penetrating on the ‘commodification’ of human relationships in the *Manifesto*.
- McDowell, John. 2000. Towards rehabilitating objectivity. In *Rorty and his critics*, ed. Robert B. Brandom, 109–23. Oxford: Blackwell.  
Since the publication of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) Rorty has been one of the most discussed of contemporary philosophers. My affinities with him will be obvious. McDowell’s essay is a provoking critique of Rorty’s denial of any epistemological authority to which to appeal, and includes discussion of Plato’s *Gorgias*.
- Milton, John. 1958. Of education. In *Prose writings*, 319–30. London: Dent.  
Milton’s (1608–1674) pamphlet sets a severe standard for the young but resonates with his belief in virtue and hard work as the basis of moral freedom.
- Newton, Isaac. 1934. *Sir Isaac Newton’s mathematical principles of natural philosophy and his system of the world*. Rev. Florian Cajori and trans. Andrew Motte. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.  
Newton’s (1643–1727) three laws of motion, relating to inertia, acceleration and reciprocal actions, are outlined at the beginning of his work as axioms and their corollaries (13–28).
- Orwell, George. 1984. *Nineteen eighty-four*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.  
Orwell (1903–1950) wrote his celebrated dystopia in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, a conflict that had illustrated in the most hideous ways the ultimate consequences of separating language from the realities it should denote. Orwell’s presentation and analysis, from Newspeak to Minitrue are faultless; *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a masterpiece of understanding.
- Plato. 1979. *Gorgias*. Trans. Terence Irwin. Oxford: Clarendon Press.  
Plato (c.427–347 BC) takes oratory as his nominal subject, but the central concern of *Gorgias* is ethical: men must discover and do what is right. Gorgias himself is presented sympathetically, but the dangers of oratory are shown through the unscrupulous figure of Callicles.
- Quintilianus, Marcus Fabius. 1921–1922. *Institutio oratoria*. Trans. H.E. Butler. 4 vols. London and Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann and Harvard University Press.  
In the final book of his treatise Quintilian (c.35–c.100) explicates the ethical basis of oratory.
- Reid, Thomas. 1983. First principles of Necessary Truths. In *Philosophical works*, ed. Sir William Hamilton, 452–61. 8th ed. Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms.  
Thomas Reid (1710–1796) succeeded Adam Smith in the chair in moral philosophy at Glasgow. *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* was published in 1785 and the sixth essay, ‘Of Judgment,’ contains the ‘First principles,’ the foundation of Reid’s epistemology, as its sixth chapter.
- Romilly, Jacqueline de. 1975. *Magic and rhetoric in Ancient Greece*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.  
The first section of de Romilly’s (1913–) book is a stimulating account of Gorgias’ attitude to rhetoric.
- Scott, John C. 2006. The mission of the university: Medieval to postmodern transformations. *The Journal of Higher Education* 77, no. 1: 1–39.
- Skidmore, David. 2006. Pedagogy and dialogue. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 36, no. 4: 503–14.
- Slaughter, Sheila. 1985. The pedagogy of profit. *Higher Education* 14, no. 2: 217–22.  
A review of seven of the more widely discussed reports on the state of education in the United States of America that were issued in 1982 and 1983.
- Slaughter, Sheila, and Larry L. Leslie. 1997. *Academic capitalism: Politics, policies, and the entrepreneurial university*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.  
An examination of the changes in what the authors call ‘the nature of academic labor’ between 1970 and 1995, concentrating on the period of major change in the 1980s and 1990s.
- Steiner, George. 1967. *Language and silence: Essays 1958–1966*. London: Faber and Faber.  
Steiner (1929–) has a formidable academic pedigree – Paris, Chicago, Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge – and is multilingual. The essays in *Language and Silence* explore ‘the relations of language to the murderous falsehoods it has been made to articulate and hallow in certain totalitarian regimes’ and to ‘the great load of vulgarity, imprecision and greed it is charged with in a mass consumer democracy.’
- The University of Auckland. 2007. About the University: Introduction. <http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/about/uoa/>.
- The University of Sydney. 2007. A commitment to quality. <http://www.usyd.edu.au/about/index.shtml>.
- The University of Texas at Austin. 2005. Mission. <http://www.utexas.edu/welcome/mission.html>.
- The University of Toronto. 2007. Mission. <http://www.utoronto.ca/aboutuoft/missionandpurpose.htm>.

Toffler, Alvin. 1980. *The third wave*. New York: Morrow.

Toffler (1928–) divides history into three waves: agricultural, industrial and informational. We are witnessing, he writes, 'the death of industrialism and the rise of a new civilization' (18).

University of the Witwatersrand. 2006. Mission and vision. <http://web.wits.ac.za/AboutWits/Introducing-Wits/>.

Warnock, G.J. 1973. Saturday mornings. In Sir Isaiah Berlin et al. *Essays on J.L. Austin*, 31–45. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

John Langshaw Austin (1911–1960) was White's Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford. Warnock's essay recalls the Saturday morning meetings of Oxford philosophers presided over by Austin who, like the later Wittgenstein, held that the way in which words are used is an essential aspect of their meaning.

Watson, Don. 2003. *Death sentence: The decay of public language*. Sydney: Knopf.

Watson's (1949–) book is a polemic which does not cohere as an argument but conveys with great force the debilitating effects of managerialist language.

Williams, Gareth. 1991. Finished and unfinished business. In *The future of higher education* ed. Tom Schuller, 22–34. Buckingham, UK: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1963. *Philosophical investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. 2nd ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

The later Wittgenstein's (1889–1951) conception that the sense of a sentence is determined by the circumstances in which it is uttered is both immensely complex and profoundly true.