

Reading the Unpublished, or, ‘the university in the eyes of its pupils’¹

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Review Article

Poetry

by Mandisi Silver
Unpublished, 2004

Untitled collection of poems
by Dillon Govender
Unpublished, n.d.

The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils
by Jacques Derrida
Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism, fall 1983

Introduction

Today, how can we not speak of the university? I put my question in the negative, for two reasons. On the one hand, as we all know, it is impossible, now more than ever, to

¹ This article offers an extended review of Jacques Derrida’s ‘response’ to some of the philosophical traditions that have pondered the “principle of reason” and its vicissitudes since Immanuel Kant’s response to the question *Was ist Aufklärung?* that the German periodical, *Berlinische Monatschrift*, had put to its readers and/or contributors in November 1784. It then concludes by considering two unpublished poetry collections to assess the implications of Derrida’s ‘response’ for some of the ways in which the “principle of reason” has continued to inform writing about the problematic of thought and phenomenon.

dissociate the work we do, within one discipline or several, from a reflection on the political and institutional conditions of that work. Such a reflection is unavoidable. It is no longer an *external* complement to teaching and research; it must make its way through the very objects we work with, shaping them as it goes, along with our norms, procedures, and aims. We cannot not speak of such things. On the other hand, the question 'how can we not' gives notice of the negative, or perhaps we should say *preventive*, complexion of the preliminary reflections I should like to put to you. Indeed, since I am seeking to initiate discussion, I shall content myself with saying how one should not speak of the university. Some of the typical risks to be avoided, it seems to me, take the form of a bottomless pit, while others take the form of a protectionist barrier (Derrida 1983:3).

'Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?'
(Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*).

The university students' publication is the stock of the university's claim to enlightenment and, perhaps, the spoils that it claims for its enlightenment project. So is the unpublished work in the same context. It is partly for this reason that I am undertaking to consider two unpublished collections of poetry by Mandisi Silver and Dillon Govender², both of which have on separate occasions been passed onto me by their authors. The other reason is that, since receiving these manuscripts, and reading widely of and on (the phenomenon of) students' writing, I have pondered its implications for the broad debates on what Derrida terms 'the university in the eyes of its pupils', in an essay that appeared in the Fall 1983 issue of *Diacritics*. This essay taps into, by responding to, some of the questions that have circulated the 'principle of reason' in which the university both participates and from which it recoils, and perhaps which, as Derrida (1983:3) puts the question to the university, is its '*raison d'être*'.

² Both are students at the University of Johannesburg.

Speaking from such a place, namely the university, it is Immanuel Kant who, perhaps against current opinion at the time, introduced into the scene of the history of ideas a different spirit to one that prevailed on the question of enlightenment (*Aufklärung*). Responding to the question, *Was ist Aufklärung?* (What is Enlightenment?), that a German periodical, *Berlinische Monatschrift*, had in November 1784 invited its public to respond to, Kant invoked the principle of the negative: for Kant, *Aufklärung* was a 'way out' (Rabinow 1984:34). However, for Kant, this was not a 'way out' of darkness as a term to which the light of *Aufklärung* is in ordinary speech opposed but, rather, a 'way out' of the darkness with which a certain *Aufklärung* casts its light; in short, like Derrida, albeit not with the same end in view, Kant was writing about 'how one should not speak of' *Aufklärung*.

Having come to Cornell University to speak 'on the subject ... of the essence of the University', as seen from 'the eyes of its pupils What American English calls 'the faculty', those who teach, ... in French *le corps enseignant*, the teaching corps (just as we say 'the diplomatic corps') or teaching body'³, Derrida (1983:5,6) invoked Kant's *Conflict of the Faculties*, in which 'Kant averred that the University should be governed by "an idea of reason", the idea of the whole field of what is presently teachable [*das ganze gegenwärtige Feld der Gelehrsamkeit*]']. Derrida asks: 'What can the University's body see or not see of its own destination, of that in view of which it stands its ground? Is the University the master of its own diaphragm?' (Derrida 1983:5) Derrida (1983.6,5) uses the word 'diaphragm' in two related senses: as the Greek word which literally means 'partitioning fence' and as the literalisation of his injunction that we must ask of the University its 'reasons for being and its essence'—its *raison d'être*:

If the University is an institution for science and teaching, does it have to go beyond memory and sight? To hear better and learn better, it must close its eyes or narrow its outlook? Man can lower the sheath, adjust the diaphragm, narrow his sight, the better

³ Because those who are taught have in various ways responded—indeed, the dialectic cannot be closed between teacher and taught—the students' publication thus becomes another vantage point—another eye—from which the university sees and is seen.

to listen, remember, and learn. What might the university's diaphragm be? The University must not be a sclerophthalmic animal, a hard-eyed animal; when I asked ... how it should set its sights and adjust its views, that was another way of asking about its reasons for being and its essence (Derrida 1983:5).

'What is terrifying about an animal with hard eyes and a dry glance', Derrida (1983:5) avers, 'is that it always sees'. 'Man', by contrast, 'can lower the sheath, adjust the diaphragm, narrow his sight, the better to listen, remember, and learn' (Derrida 1983:5).

Needless to say, this is all metaphorical or, as Derrida puts it, 'figurative': 'Shutting off sight in order to learn is of course only a figurative manner of speaking ... I am resolutely in favor of a new university Enlightenment [*Aufklärung*]' (Derrida 1983:5). Yet it is the import of this figure of the 'diaphragm'—of the sheath or eyelid—that is at the centre of Derrida's warning about 'the risks to be avoided' in speaking of the university: 'one should not speak of the university [as] a bottomless pit [or as] a protectionist barrier'. Unlike those 'animals lacking eyelids', the University has eyelids, 'a sort of sheath or tagumental membrane [*phragma*] which serves to protect the eye and permits it, at regular intervals, to close itself off in the darkness of inward thought or sleep' (Derrida 1983:5). Recall that when Derrida speaks of the University, he speaks of 'the faculty, those who teach'; however, as I point out above, to speak of those who teach, is to speak of those who are taught simultaneously.

Perhaps the question of the university's *raison d'être* is as urgent in South Africa today, against the background of the new continentalism, and particularly with the new call from the men of politics for the orientation of research towards set goals—useful research—as it was at the time that Derrida (1983:12) was pondering it against the background of the homogenisation of 'all the technologically advanced industrialized societies'. However, whatever its impetus, it is a mean question, and in pondering it in 'The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils', Derrida, not unlike Dick Hebdige in 'The Bottom Line on Planet A', (*Hiding in The Light* 1988) makes it no less so. What could be the basis of the relationship between the university's *raison d'être* and what such a phrase as 'useful research' proposes and presupposes?

I want to track this question by considering the import of the philosophical landmarks that Derrida revisits, among which are Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* ([1781] 1964) and Martin Heidegger's *The Principle of Reason* ([1957] 1991), and what such landmarks mean for my consideration of the same question that Derrida asks of the university's modes of existence. From the point of view of the call for the re-orientation of research in Africa towards greater usefulness, in which researchers are implored to propose solutions for Africa's problems, rather than simply identify these problems, it would seem that going over some of the issues that circulate and/or re-circulate the question to which Kant was responding, namely, *Was ist Aufklärung?* (What is Enlightenment?), is imperative; indeed, the university in South Africa, as elsewhere in the world, participates in this question. Derrida postulates that:

Neither in its medieval nor in its modern form has the university disposed freely of its own absolute autonomy and of the rigorous conditions of its own unity. During more than eight centuries, 'university' has been the name given by a society to a sort of supplementary body that at one and the same time it wanted to project outside itself and to keep jealously to itself, to emancipate and to control. On this double basis, the university was supposed to *represent* society. And in a certain way it has done so: it has reproduced society's scenography, its views, conflicts, contradictions, its play and its differences, and also its desire for organic union in a total body (Derrida 1983:19).

On the last point, namely 'organic union in a total body', Derrida (1983:19) avers:

Organicist language is always associated with 'techno-industrial' language in 'modern' discourse on the university. But with the relative autonomy of a technical apparatus, indeed that of a machine and of a prosthetic body, this artifact that is the university has *reflected* society only in giving it the chance for reflection, that is, also, for *dissociation*. The time for reflection, here, signifies not only that the internal rhythm of the university apparatus is relatively independent of social time and relaxes the urgency of command, ensures for it a great and precious freedom of play. An empty place for chance: the invagination of an inside pocket. The time for

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reflection is also the chance for turning back on the very conditions of reflection, in all the senses of that word, as if with the help of a new optical device one could finally see sight, could not only view the natural landscape, the city, the bridge and the abyss, but could view viewing.

The call, therefore, for research to be useful, is not foreign to the university as an apparatus for the reflection of 'political and institutional' demands that, from the point of view of the university's 'absolute autonomy and of the rigorous conditions of its own unity', may appear utilitarian and/or an 'external complement to teaching and research'. I have already pointed out that my concern in this essay is not so much the call for research to justify its usefulness, which on my view is a moot point, as what it means to make such a call in the broader context of the 'double basis' of 'emancipation and control' in which such a call participates.

What is Enlightenment? Legacies

In '*Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*', his response to the question, *Was ist Aufklärung?*, Kant defines Enlightenment as 'man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without the guidance of another person'. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno state that by 'understanding without the guidance of others', Kant means 'understanding guided by reason', which, as Kant argues, 'has ... for its object only the understanding and its purposive employment' (quoted in Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 1979:81). In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant (1964:25) elaborates on reason—on 'the difference between Pure and Empirical Knowledge':

That all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt. For how is it possible that the faculty of cognition should be awakened into exercise otherwise than by means of objects which affect our senses, and partly of themselves produce representations, partly rouse our powers of understanding into activity, to compare, to connect, or to separate these, and so convert the raw material of

our sensuous impressions into a knowledge of objects, which is called experience? In respect of time, therefore, no knowledge of ours is antecedent to experience, but begins with it.

But, though all our knowledge begins with experience, it by no means follows that all arises out of experience. For, on the contrary, it is quite possible that our empirical knowledge is a compound of that which we receive through impressions, and that which the faculty of cognition supplies from itself (sensuous impressions giving merely the *occasion*), an addition which we cannot distinguish from the original element given by sense, till long practice has made us attentive to, and skilful in separating it. It is, therefore, a question which requires close investigation, and not to be answered at first sight, whether there exists a knowledge altogether independent of experience, and even of all sensuous impressions? Knowledge of this kind is called *a priori*, in contradistinction to empirical knowledge, which has its sources *a posteriori*, that is, in experience.

Kant (1964:26) concludes his opening remarks by stating that:

By the term 'knowledge *a priori*', therefore, we shall in the sequel understand, not such as is independent of this or that kind of experience, but such as is absolutely so for *all* experience. Opposed to this is empirical knowledge, or that which is possible only *a posteriori*, that is, through experience. Knowledge *a priori* is either pure or impure. Pure knowledge *a priori* is that with which no empirical element is mixed up. For example, the proposition, 'Every change has a cause', is a proposition *a priori*, but impure, because change is a conception which can only be derived from experience.

From the above, it is possible to conclude that, for Kant, knowledge is fundamentally independent from experience, and can exist in pure and universal form. 'Empirical universality', unlike the *a priori* universality of knowledge (or cognition/Reason), which is valid in all cases, 'is, therefore, only an arbitrary extension of validity, from that which may be predicated of a proposition valid in most cases, to that which is asserted of a proposition

which holds good in all' (Kant 1964:26). I want to return to this point. However, let me pose its other appearance in Leibniz, via the path of the critical pressure under which Heidegger puts it in *Der Satz vom Grund* (*The Principle of Reason*), which is the text of a one-hour lecture course that he gave at the University of Freiburg from 1955 to 1956, and also of the address that he delivered twice in 1956. Heidegger (1991:117f) observes that:

[T]wo thousand three hundred years were needed in the history of Western thinking, which began in the sixth century BC, before the familiar idea 'Nothing without reason' was expressly posited as a principle and came to be known as a law, recognized in its full import, and made unquestionably valid. During this period the principle of reason slept, so to speak. Even up to the present hour we have scarcely thought at all about this curious fact, nor even asked why it may be that this little principle needed such an extraordinarily long incubation period. For it was only in the seventeenth century that Leibniz recognized the long-since commonplace idea 'nothing is without reason' was a normative principle and described it as the principle of reason.

Heidegger (1991:118) then asks:

But was something unique and grand supposed to come to light through this general and little principle of reason? Is the unusually long incubation period a preparation for an unusual awakening, a quickening to a wakefulness that no longer admits of sleep, least of all, an incubation, an ocular slumber[?].

Heidegger's concern here is with the manner in which Leibniz gave the 'general and little principle of reason' the status of an Ur principle. Leibniz's *nihil sine ratione* (nothing without reason) becomes the '*principium rationis*':

The principle is now a Principle. The principle of reason becomes a fundamental principle. But it is not just one fundamental principle among others. For Leibniz it is one of the supreme fundamental

principles, if not the most supreme one Leibniz calls it the *principium magnum, grande et nobilissimum*: the grand, the powerful, the most eminent Principle (Heidegger 1991:118).

It is, thus, the broader implications of the claim that Leibniz makes for the distinctiveness of the principle of reason—as ‘the grand, the powerful, the most eminent Principle’ (Heidegger 1991:118)—that are at stake in Heidegger’s critique. One of Heidegger’s (1991:121) concerns is that:

[T]oday humanity runs the risk of measuring the greatness of everything grand only according to the reach of the authority of the *principium rationis*. Without really understanding it, we know today that modern technology intractably presses toward bringing its contrivances and products to an all-embracing, greatest-possible perfection. This perfection consists in the completeness of the calculably secure establishing of objects, in the completeness of reckoning with them and with the securing of the calculability of possibilities for reckoning.

The perfection of technology is also the echo of the demand for *perfectio*, which means, the completeness of a foundation. This demand speaks from out of the *principium reddendae rationis sufficientis*, from the fundamental principle of rendering sufficient reasons

Modern technology pushes toward the greatest possible perfection. Perfection is based on the thoroughgoing calculability of objects. The calculability of objects presupposes the unqualified validity of the *principium rationis*. It is in this way that the authority characteristic of the principle of reason determines the essence of the modern, technological age.

The logic of Heidegger’s critique of Leibniz’s instrumentalisation of reason as a Principle of all principles, the *principium reddendae rationis sufficientis*, should lead us back to the terms of Kant’s *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* and of his *Critique of Pure Reason*. What, in other words, does Kant mean by knowledge *a priori*? Is it knowledge sufficient to itself, that is, knowledge guided by the Principle of Reason that,

as Adorno and Horkheimer put it, has 'for its object only the understanding and its purposive employment'? (quoted in Adorno and Horkheimer 1979:81). Indeed, it would appear so, particularly since, for Kant (1964:26), there exists 'a *criterion*, by which we may securely distinguish a pure from an empirical cognition'. And,

Of far more importance ... is the consideration that certain of our cognitions rise completely above the sphere of all possible experience, and by means of conceptions, to which there exists in the whole extent of experience no corresponding object, seem to extend the range of our judgments beyond its bounds. And just in this transcendental or supersensible sphere, where experience affords us neither instruction nor guidance, lie the investigations of *Reason*, which, on account of their importance, we consider far preferable to, and as having a far more elevated aim than, all that the understanding can achieve within the sphere of sensuous phenomena (Kant 1964:28).

Of course, the logical question is, what, then, validates these 'certain cognitions' that 'rise completely above the sphere of all possible experience' and in which 'lie the investigations of *Reason*', if it is not experience? Kant (1964:29) turns to 'pure mathematics' as a 'science [that] affords us a brilliant example, how far, independently of all experience, we may carry our *a priori* knowledge'. It is because, even though it is 'synthetical' in its appearance, pure mathematics participates in the '*transcendental* ... all knowledge which is not so much occupied with objects as with the mode of our cognition of these objects, so far as this mode of cognition is possible *a priori*' (Kant 1964:38).

From Heidegger's concern above, it is clear that, for him, the idea of Reason as a Principle poses serious problems. He avers:

And today humanity has gone a long way in following the surge toward something that never before in its history could have happened. Humanity enters the age to which it has given the name 'the atomic age'. A book that just appeared and that figured on having a broad readership, bears the title: *We Will Live Through*

Atoms. The book is equipped with a blurb by the Nobel Prize winner Otto Hahn and with a preface by the current Minister of Defence, Franz Joseph Strauß. At the close of the Introduction, the author of the work writes:

The atomic age can become a prosperous, happy age full of hope, an age in which we live through atoms. It all depends on us! (Heidegger 1991:121-122).

To this, Heidegger (1991:122) responds:

Certainly—it all depends on us; it depends on us and a few other things, namely whether we still reflect, or whether in general we still can and want to reflect. If we still want to enter on a path of reflection, then above all we must come to terms with the distinction that holds before our eyes the difference between mere calculative thinking and reflective thinking.

The ‘apparently harmless naming of an age “the atomic age”’ is, for Heidegger, the ascendance not so much of materialism as of the materialist ‘mind-set’, which is ‘the most menacing mind-set because we most easily and for the longest time mistake the insidious nature of its violence’ (Heidegger 1991:123):

Therefore we ask anew: what, after all, does it mean that an age of world history is moulded by atomic energy and its unleashing? It means, precisely, that the atomic age is dominated by the force of the demand that threatens to overpower us through the principle of rendering sufficient reasons (Heidegger 1991:123).

Let me pause to reflect on the broad implications of the longstanding philosophical exchange that I have re-staged. Indeed, Heidegger says we must ‘reflect ... enter on a path of reflection’, lest we get ‘overpower[ed]’ by a principle (of reason) that in reality reduces thinking to mere *mathesis* or ‘calculative thinking’ (Heidegger 1991:122). In *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things*, Dick Hebdige stages this exchange by constituting two imaginary worlds made up by two British magazines, *Ten 8* and *The Face*.

He tells us that when Alan Hughes, who had come to West Midlands College to give a talk on magazine design to students on a Visual Communication course, 'asked how many of his audience read *Ten 8*... the response was muted and unenthusiastic and prompted the following exchange':

A.H.: 'What's wrong with *Ten 8* then?'

Students: 'It's not like *The Face* It's too political It looks too heavy It's too left wing What use is it to someone like me?' (Hebdige 1988:156)

Thus, in 'The Bottom Line on Planet One: Squaring Up to The Face', Hebdige (1988:155-180) reflects on the broad implications of the students' response, and does so from the point of view of *Ten 8*, a magazine that, as far as he is concerned, thinks—reflects 'on images and things'—rather than, like *The Face*, 'looks', because there is 'nothing underneath or behind the image and hence there is no hidden truth to be revealed' (Hebdige 1988:159). Even though Hebdige and Heidegger could be said to be arguing the same thing, the tenor of Hebdige's argument is one that knows that the stakes in this debate are high. Heidegger is confronting a phenomenon the insidious nature of the violence of which is still very much a matter that can be countered with reflection. The difference in the tenor of Hebdige and Heidegger's 'squaring up', as it were, their charge against the insidious violence of unreflective atomisation of knowledge, is significant, if at least insofar as one can already discern in the desperate tone of Hebdige's charge/framework—i.e. 'squaring up to *The Face*'—the weakening of the opposition between 'looking' (*The Face*) and 'seeing' (*Ten 8*), 'sensing' (*The Face*) and 'knowing' (*Ten 8*). Whereas Hebdige speaks as someone who has at least already conceded defeat on some (significant) fronts, namely that *The Face* is simply one instance at an advanced stage of the irreversible logic of the 'atomic age', and thus speaks like the commander of the army of bitter-enders⁴, Heidegger's speech is heraldic; he is at the initial stages of assembling an army that would confront *not* Hebdige's post-modern 'motley gang of bricoleurs, ironists, designers, publicists, image

⁴ Hebdige informs us that the circulation figures for *Ten 8*, which is the older of the two publications, are 1,500 - 2,500, and for *The Face*, 52,000 - 90,000.

consultants, *homes et femmes fatales*, market researchers, pirates, adventurers, *flâneurs* and dandies' (Hebdige 1988:159) but, rather, a book called *We Will Live Through Atoms*, its supporters Otto Hahn, the Minister of Defence, Franz Joseph Strauß, and/or 'modern technology' generally. Nonetheless, despite their location at the beginning of the atomic age and at its consummate moment, respectively, Heidegger and Hebdige speak from the same position of the critique of what they consider the *disastrous* consequences of reason as a principle sufficient to itself—the *principium reddendae rationis sufficientis*. If, for Heidegger, *We Will Live Through the Atom* is the logical consequence of this principle, for Hebdige *The Face* is also such a consequence, particularly against the backdrop of the view of one of its supporters, Paul Virilio, whom Hebdige quotes as having contributed to the 'Disinformation Special' fifth anniversary issue of *The Face*, entitled 'The End of Politics', the view that 'Classless society, social justice—no-one believes in them any more. We're in the age of micro-narratives, the art of the fragment ...' (Hebdige 1988:160).

It would seem that the next logical question is: what is/are the alternative/s to what appears to be an impasse between 'two worlds', namely thought and phenomenon? Yet another, perhaps more trenchant, question would be: if the consequences of Enlightenment of which Heidegger and Hebdige speak are inherent in the idea of reason of which Kant and Leibniz speak, as many others have agreed, most notable of whom are Adorno and Horkheimer, is the alternative another 'world', as Hebdige proposes? Let me consider Heidegger's alternative and, then, Adorno and Horkheimer's (1986:3) paradoxical statement that:

In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant.

Heidegger (1991:117) observes in the opening remarks of his address:

The principle of reason reads: *nihil est sine ratione*. One translates this with: *nothing* is *without* reason. What the principle states can be paraphrased as follows: everything has a reason, which means each

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and every thing that *is* in any manner. *Omnes ens habet rationem*. Whatever happens to be actual has a reason for its actuality. Whatever happens to be possible has a reason for its possibility. Whatever happens to be necessary has a reason for its necessity. *Nothing is without reason.*

The *principium reddendae rationis sufficientis*, Heidegger argues, trades on giving sufficient reasons for every being's being and, thus, places emphasis on 'nothing' and 'without'. This, for Heidegger, implicitly erases 'is', so that in reality the principle of reason becomes '*Nihil sine ratione*, nothing without reason'. Heidegger asks us to listen—to 'hear' what the fundamental principle of reason says, namely *nihil est sine ratione*—so that we may challenge the atomic age not by installing another age but, rather, by unmasking its collusion with the *principium reddendae rationis sufficientis*' surreptitious erasure of 'is'—of 'est'—in *nihil est sine ratione*. In effect, Heidegger asks us to shift the emphasis from *nihil est sine ratione* (*nothing is without reason*) to *nihil est sine ratione* (*nothing is without reason*), the better to account for being as reason/ground *tout court* ('is' or 'being' is reason), rather than as reason's being. Because we may be asked the question: 'what after all does "being" mean?' (Heidegger 1991:125), which, instead of producing an answer may lead to another question, namely 'what, after all, does "ground/reason" mean?' (Heidegger 1991:126). Heidegger asks us to take 'another path in order to at least open an outer gate', a path that 'may possibly be given to us by the poet whose verse circumscribes that cognition which stands under the sway of the fundamental principle of rendering sufficient reason' (the *principium reddendae rationis sufficientis*) (Heidegger 1991:126). 'Goethe', Heidegger (1991:126) avers, 'says of modern science':

But research strives and rings, never tiring,
After the law, the reason, *why* and *how*.

To this, Heidegger (1991:126) says:

The 'but' at the beginning of the first line sets research over against another attitude and demeanor that no longer tirelessly strive after

the ground/ reason for beings. Whenever we pursue the ground/reason of a being, we ask: why? Cognition stalks this interrogative word from one reason to another. The 'why' allows no rest, offers no stop, gives no support. The 'why' is the word for the tireless advance into an and-so-forth that research, in the event that it simply and blindly belabors itself, can take so far that it perforce can go too far with it.

Research, if it asks 'why' as the principle of *nihil sine ratione*, that is, without 'is',—without 'est'—can advance tirelessly into an and-so-forth which, perforce, means that it can go too far into the abyss—into Derrida's 'bottomless pit'. We must invoke 'is', which is:

The word of being [that] says: being—itsself ground/ reason—remains without a ground/reason, which now means, without why. If we attempt to think being as ground/reason, then we must take the step back, back from the question: 'why?'

But then what are we supposed to stick to?

In the 'Collected Sayings' from 1815 Goethe says:

How? When? and Where?—the gods remain mute!

You stick to the *because* and ask not *why*? (Heidegger 1991:126).

We stick to the 'because', Heidegger says, which 'guards against investigating the 'why', therefore, against investigating foundations. It balks at founding and getting to the bottom of something. For the 'because' is without 'why', it has no ground, it is ground itself' (Heidegger 1991:127). 'If the word of being as the word of grounds is a true word', Heidegger continues, 'then the 'because' also points to the essence of being' (Heidegger 1991:127). The next logical question for Heidegger is: 'Yet what does the "because" [*weil*] really mean?':

It is the shortened word for *dieweilen* [whereas]. An older manner of speaking goes:

One must strike the iron while [*weil*] it is hot.

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Here the 'while' in no way means: 'since—because', rather 'while' denotes *dieweilen* [whereas], which means, as long as—the iron is hot—during. 'To while' [*Weilen*] means: to tarry', 'to remain still', 'to pause and keep to oneself', namely in rest (Heidegger 1991:127).

Again, Heidegger (1991:127) cites Goethe, who says, 'The fiddle stops and the dancer whiles', and avers:

'Whiling', 'tarrying', 'perpetuating' is indeed the old sense of the word 'being' [*sein*]. The while that every founding and every 'why' guards against names the simple, plain presence that is without why—the presence upon which everything depends, upon which everything rests. The 'while' names the ground. But *qua* the Whereas, 'whiling' also names 'the abiding': being. 'Whiling' names both: being and ground; it names the abiding, being as the ground/reason. Being and ground/reason—in whiling—the same. Both belong together.

It is now evident that, for Heidegger (1991:127), as he puts it:

The little principle of reason—'Nothing is without reason'—at first speaks as the grand fundamental principle, the *principium grande*. The principle is grand by virtue of the force of its demands on all cognition.

But, given the shift of emphasis within the very same principle that I have already noted, where 'is' becomes the place at which such a shift takes place:

The little principle of reason—'Nothing *is* without *reason*'—both speaks as a word of being and names this as the ground/reason (Heidegger 1991:127).

If we must avoid the 'typical risks' that are likely to occur when we speak of the university, Derrida warns, we must learn 'how not to speak of the university': not as 'a bottomless pit' or as 'a protective barrier'. Does

Heidegger, in avoiding the first risk, fall into the trap of the second, namely that we must *halt* the question ‘why?’ which advances tirelessly ‘into an and-so-forth that research, in the event that it simply and blindly belabors itself, can take so far that it perforce can go too far with it’?; which is to say, create a protective barrier—a ‘because’—that would keep the university—research—from falling into the abyss of this ‘tireless advance into an and-so-forth’? Heidegger (1991:129) does not think so, because he believes that ‘Goethe’s words’, namely ‘You stick to the *because* and ask not *why*?’

[A]re a hint. Hints only remain hints when thinking does not twist them into definitive statements and thereby come to a standstill with them. Hints are hints only as long as thinking follows their allusions while meditating on them. Thus, thinking reaches a path that leads to what has from time immemorial shown itself in the tradition of our thinking as worthy of thought, and simultaneously veils itself.

Thus, for Heidegger (1991:129)., ‘Perhaps something simple belonging to what is worthy of thought has drawn a bit closer. We name it when we say: being is experienced as ground/reason. Ground/reason is interpreted as *ratio*, as an account’. Research, for Heidegger, owes its dues to the *ratio*, because ‘humans are the *animal rationale*, the creature that requires accounts and gives accounts. According to this determination, the human is a reckoning creature reckoning understood in the broad sense of the word *ratio*’ (Heidegger 1991:129). It is ‘this thinking [which] brought the world into the contemporary era, the atomic age’, and, in view of this, Heidegger (1991:129) asks:

Does the above mentioned determination that humans are the *animal rationale* exhaust the essence of humanity? Does the last word that can be said about being run thus: being means ground/reason? Or isn’t human nature, isn’t its affiliation to being, isn’t the essence of being what still remains, and even more disturbingly, worthy of thought? If this is the way it’s going to be, may we give up what is worthy of thought in favor of the recklessness of exclusively calculative thinking and its immense achievements? Or are we obliged to find paths upon which thinking is capable of responding

to what is worthy of thought instead of, enchanted by calculative thinking, mindlessly passing over what is worthy of thought?

He then answers:

That is the question. It is the world-question of thinking. Answering this question decides what will become of the earth and of human existence on this earth (Heidegger 1991:129).

On the shift of emphasis from 'Nothing is without reason' to 'Nothing is without reason', depends, for Heidegger (1991:129), the future of 'human existence on this earth' and 'what will become of the earth' itself. The question is, thus, on what, according to Heidegger, depends the future of human existence, beyond the 'imagification' and/or 'thingification' of human existence in *The Face*? In other words, how can humanity exist otherwise than as the logical consequence of the atomic age, of what Heidegger calls the interpretation of 'historical existence on the basis of the rapacity for, and the procuring of, a natural energy'? If, for Heidegger, it is what it means to 'live through the atom' that must drive 'thought' and/or 'thinking' in the direction of something more 'worthy of thought itself', for Heidegger, it is, as it were, what it means to 'live through the fragment' that must be the preoccupation of Planet One or, as he puts it, 'the bottom line on Planet One':

I shall go on reminding myself that this earth is round not flat, that there will never be an end to judgement, that the ghosts will go on gathering at the bitter line which separates truth from lies, justice from injustice, Chile, Biafra and all the other avoidable disasters from all of us, whose order is built on their chaos (Heidegger 1988:176).

This is the bitter end which concludes an essay in which, perhaps inevitably, *Ten 8*, which must be the bottom line, becomes only a few convulsive gestural lines in an essay that, save these few lines, belongs to *The Face*. Writing against the tide of modern technology's consummate moment, namely post-modernism, it would seem Heidegger cannot afford the heraldic

tone of Heidegger's 'is', which Heidegger proffers without the weight of defeat that marks Heidegger's alternative. Indeed, Heidegger (1988:173) introduces us to the alternative, planet *Ten 8*, that is all but dead, save the sentiment of its former glory:

Many people of my generation and my parents' generation retain a sentimental attachment—in itself understandable enough—to a particular construction of the 'popular'—a construction which was specific to the period from the inter-War to the immediate post-War years and which found its most profound, its most progressive and mature articulation in the films of Humphrey Jennings and on the pages of *The Picture Post*. We hardly need reminding that that moment has now passed.

The community addressed by and in part formed out of the national-popular discourses of the late 1930s and 1940s—discourses which were focused round notions of fair play, decency, egalitarianism and natural justice now no longer exists as an affective and effective social unit.

Adorno and Horkheimer (1991:124) make the same observation about Enlightenment Reason as Heidegger, particularly where they echo Heidegger's view that, 'So now, research must in a new way direct its prospects to taming the unleashed energies of nature'. In 'The Concept of Enlightenment', Adorno and Horkheimer (1979:9) argue that:

Enlightenment behaves toward things as a dictator toward men. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them. The man of science knows things in so far as he can manipulate them. In this way their potentiality is turned to his own ends.

Like Heidegger, Adorno and Horkheimer draw upon the intransigence of 'thought' as the hope that, because it is not external to, but the flipside of, Enlightenment, will be Enlightenment's 'dissolution' (1979:42). In the same way that, in Heidegger, the principle of reason, 'Nothing is without reason', is undercut not by a new principle but, rather, by a shift in the emphasis within the same principle, for Adorno and Horkheimer (1979:42):

... 'the university in the eyes of its pupils'

[K]nowledge, in which Bacon was certain the 'sovereignty of man lieth hid', can now become the dissolution of domination.

They also say:

[T]he true revolutionary practice depends on the intransigence of theory in the face of the insensibility with which society allows thought to ossify (Adorno & Horkheimer 1979:41).

Let me return to the opening questions of Derrida's essay, 'The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils', his attempt to address them in his essay and, with this, ponder the implications of his views for the views that I have represented so far by some of the university's pupils. Derrida asks: 'how can we not speak of the university?' which, as I have already pointed out, asks us that, in speaking about the university, we must (1) not ... dissociate the work we do, within one discipline or several, from a reflection on the political and institutional conditions of that work and (2) avoid the typical risks, which take the form of either a bottomless pit or a protectionist barrier. This is a precarious demand, which asks discourse about the university to stand over the 'abyss'—the bottomless pit—but not to descend into it. Another way of thinking this demand is to consider it to mean that discourse about the university must learn how to 'blink', to use the figure of the '*phragma*', but never close its eyes. Derrida (1983:18) observes that, even though Kant and Heidegger do 'not say exactly the same thing ... they also do say the same thing'. This is because:

Even though he admits the industrial model of the division of labor into the university, Kant places the so-called 'lower' faculty, the faculty of philosophy—a place of pure rational knowledge, a place where truth has to be spoken without controls and without concern for 'utility', a place where the very meaning and the autonomy of the university meet—Kant places this faculty above and outside professional education: the architectonic schema of pure reason is above and outside the technical schema (Derrida 1983:18).

'As for Heidegger, in 1929, in his inaugural lesson entitled "What is Metaphysics?"', Derrida (1983:18) avers:

[H]e deplores the henceforth technical organization of the university and its compartmentalizing specialization. And even in his *Rector's Speech*, at the very point where he makes an appeal on behalf of the three services (*Arbeitsdienst*, *Wehrdienst*, *Wissensdienst*, the service of work, the military, and knowledge), at the very point where he is recalling that these services are of equal rank and equally original (he had recalled earlier that for the Greeks *theoria* was only the highest form of *praxis* and the mode, par excellence, of *energia*), Heidegger nonetheless violently condemns disciplinary compartmentalization and 'exterior training in view of a profession', as 'an idle and inauthentic thing'....

Such are the stakes in the consideration of Enlightenment Reason—both the consequences of its celebration in Kant and its critique in Heidegger and Adorno and Horkheimer (which nonetheless never leave the domain of reason)—that, for Derrida (1983:18f):

Desiring to remove the university from 'useful' programs and from professional ends, one may always, willingly or not, find oneself serving unrecognized ends, reconstituting powers of caste, class, or corporation. We are in an implacable political topography: one step further in view of greater profundity or radicalization, even going beyond the 'profound' and the 'radical', the principal, the *arkhe*, one step further toward a sort of original an-archy risks producing or reproducing the hierarchy. 'Thought' requires *both* the principle of reason *and* what is beyond the principle of reason, the *arkhe* and an-archy. Between the two, the difference of a breath or an accent, only the *enactment* of this 'thought' can decide. That decision is always risky, it always risks the worst. To claim to eliminate that risk by an institutional program is quite simply to erect a barricade against the future. The decision of thought cannot be an intra-institutional event, an academic moment.

Derrida (1983:19) concludes by arguing that:

All this does not define a politics, nor even a responsibility. Only, at best, some negative conditions, a 'negative wisdom', as Kant of *The Conflict of the Faculties* would say: preliminary cautions, protocols of vigilance for a new *Aufklärung*, what must be seen and kept in sight in a modern re-elaboration of that old problematics. Beware of the abysses and the gorges, but also of the bridges and the barriers. Beware of what opens the university to the outside and the bottomless, but also of what, closing it in on itself, would create only an illusion of closure, would make the university available to any sort of interest, or else render it perfectly useless. Beware of ends; but what would a university be without ends?

Let me, then, come to the second part of my essay, namely a consideration of two instances of the phenomenon of university students' writing. I must state straightaway that, whatever claims to the contrary, my view is also that university students' writing and publication, like the university in which they occur, enjoy 'the relative autonomy of a technical apparatus, indeed that of a machine and of a prosthetic body', and, again like the university, they have 'reflected society only in giving it the chance for reflection, that is, also, for *dissociation*'. Thus, university students' writing and publication have also sought, and made claims of, 'organic union in a total body' at the very moment that they have remained acts of *writing*—of 'dissociation'. Whereas to speak of university students' writing as a *phenomenon*, that is, as though its diversity was reducible to a single form and perspective, may rightly be construed as antithetical to the reality of this type of writing, a case can nonetheless be made for a *kind of* phenomenology of university students' writing and publication. I want to confine my comments to one aspect of this phenomenology, which the two collections immediately lend themselves to, namely the dialectic—call it tension—of openness and closure or, to put it another way, of thought and phenomenon. The first seven-line poem in Mandisi Silver's *Poetry*, entitled 'Poetry', signals such a tension by placing on the agenda of the collection the question of its justification or, in the words of the poem, of the 'justification of [poetry as] senseless syllables'. (line 6) It is also the poem that frames the collection, as it were, that proffers it—'This is it' (line 7)—as it places the question of its justification on the

agenda of its readership⁵. Because the collected poems exist and are proffered beyond the scope of the conventional view of the term 'senseless' as meaning devoid of sense or, as Derrida warns, the 'irrational', a certain amount of provocation is placed on the term itself. This provocation is further enhanced by the warning of the first line, i.e. 'I am composing', which, by its precession of the term senseless, places even more pressure on the sense of 'decomposition', that is, of the emptying of the meaning of the syllables that will become the poetry's ill-fitting frame. Thus, in the first poem, one reads a promise, namely that one is in the presence of both the 'abyss' and the 'barrier', the '*arkhe* and an-archy'. The question, however, is whether or not this is the case beyond the promise of the introductory poem, namely that we must stand over the abyss—the 'senseless syllables'—but also behind the barrier—'This is it'—in order that we may see both the abyss and the barrier.

A cursory reading through Silver's poems reveals a pattern—not necessarily neat—of the 'I' reflecting on itself and, then, on others and back on itself, and so on. Where it reflects on itself, a certain uncertainty suffuses the terms of its reflection. The opening poem, to which I have already alluded, sets the tone for this kind of uncertainty:

I am composing /what is generally called /a poem /some call it verse,
/But I call it /a justification of senseless syllables /This is it.

This is, of course, a poem, spoken of as if it was not, but, rather, a mere introduction to 'real' poems which, however, are also not so 'real'. I want to pursue this dimension of Silver's poetry, for, aside from that the double reflection which characterises all the poems marks the tension (or dialectic) to which I have deliberated at length in the first part of this essay, there is good reason to examine just to what extent Silver takes the Kantian idea of abstraction and, indeed, to what extent those poems in which the self reflects

⁵ There are two senses of resistance that are fastened upon the term poetry in this poem; one is the persona's resistance to poetry and, the other, the resistance of poetry itself to notions of sense, meaning and clarity, at the very moment that both senses of resistance proffer poetry and sense respectively.

on what lies outside of its ego interrupts its strange self-indulgence. It is a strange indulgence in which the 'I' participates, primarily because, in its uncertainty, it is very much in control of the advantages that accrue to its purview the moment it takes on a subject that is not its own doubts, hopes and self-distancing mockery. Even on those occasions when the subject is the persona's own doubts, hopes and self-distancing mockery, there is a sense in which it seems another persona is staging it all, without necessarily being part of it.

'Goethe', avers Heidegger (1991:129), asks research to 'stick to the because and ask not why', not because such is the fate of research but, rather, because we are 'obliged to find paths upon which thinking is capable of responding to what is worthy of thought instead of, enchanted by calculative thinking, mindlessly passing over what is worthy of thought'. What is 'worthy of thought' from the point of view of Heidegger's critique of thought *per se*, is 'responding' or, put another way, the responsibility to something outside of thought itself. In this sense, we cannot be exercised by endless self-reflection by dissociation but, as a matter of course, by hints to worthy causes, provided 'thinking does not twist them into definitive statements and thereby come to a standstill with them'. This is the bottom line in Heidegger and Heidegger's positions. So, when Silver's poem posits the irrational/senseless as the fate, or the lot, of poetry, care must be taken also to read the hint in the same poem that this is not necessarily the case. Let me sample at least two poems in this connection. 'If Only' ponders the anxiety of writing in the aftermath of 'great poets', however, with the same distancing irony and double reflection that makes 'Poetry' a poem and a commentary on poetry simultaneously:

I would like to be a poet .../Only to be Shakespeare's pupil, he my
teacher /Would I write timeless poetry, living a charmed /life of
glory, romance, sweet memories and bitter /death that has cast out its
colored tentacles in mud /Oh, only to be a poet. Gently stroking my
letters /on colored paper... /Epitomizing in honesty abstract matters,
/declaring my love in prolonged sonnets... /... to be a poet, what
alphabetical battles I'll gladly fight.

Again in 'If They Ask', a poem about departure/leaving:

At the break of dawn, only my prints will awake /to make coffee in
tattered minutes, leaving in rushing noises. /Echoes of a voice once
heard will ring off these walls. /My bed, done: any stranger's guide
to wonderland, /my papers in scrupulous writing, keep well /for
these words, death's enemies live still. /I, in acquaintance with him
travel further /At his expense

In these and many other poems in Silver's collection, it seems to be the poet's fate always to seek compromise with words and for words equally to seek compromise with the poet's gentle strokes. Words are 'death's enemies', in ways not unlike Roland Barthes' view of the photograph as 'death-mask'⁶, and the poet, condemned to travelling, can only leave his lover/'dear' (and, by extension, reader) the legacy of words; they embalm time and the opposite is death in its multiple manifestations—symbolic and material. Thus:

This travel worn face /Memories I keep still /Selfishly glaciated by
death's breath-taking miserable touch. /At odds and ends in this
world /But the tears I ne'er cried wet now this paper /And soil your
fingers. /The waves ne'er shook are ferried on the winds' wandering
wings /the farewell ne'er ushered by these life-weary lips /disturbs at
length your conscience. /And yet if they should ask you where I am
/Tell them. Tell them I am gone.

In these poems, words frame the traveller-poet's 'worn face' inasmuch as his 'tears ... wet now this paper /And soil your (the dear one's) fingers'. In this sense, the traveller-poet's *physical* flight has no primacy over the prints that his tears have left behind, which are the words of the poem that now soil the dear one's fingers. There is, thus, a theory, as it were, a cohesive standpoint, that these three poems define. Like Heidegger's shift of emphasis to reveal the paradox in the fundamental statement of pure Reason, at the basic level of the word, 'Poetry', 'If Only' and 'If They Ask' enact such a paradox

⁶ This is a description that John Tagg, in *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (1988:1), gives to Barthes' idea of the photograph in *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1984).

between poetry as 'senseless syllables', namely that they are senseless insofar as their sense cannot be found on the surface of the syllables but, rather, in their materiality: in the way in which they touch and/or are touched and in the way in which they soil and/or leave a trace. Even in the playfulness of the hustler's testimony to his lover in 'Untitled', the wares that he goes out to hustle are:

... words and letters, pictures /And scenes, painted with thoughts
/Vending words, letters, dramatic pauses, /And commas, stops and
images /Multi package ngwana (baby) /For the price of one ...

Needless to say, not only do words define a materiality but, they also participate in the material culture in which the persona is implicated.

Returning to Heidegger's reading of the significance of Goethe's lines, namely, 'But research strives and rings, never tiring, /After the law, the reason, *why* and *how*', and 'How? When? and Where?—the gods remain mute! /You stick to the *because* and ask not *why*?', what the poems 'If Only' and 'If They Ask' so obviously illustrate is the interplay between conditionals ('*why* and *how*' in Goethe above), which frame the poems, and the assertions ('*because*' in Goethe above) which succeed the poems' conditional framework, 'If', only in giving it substance/inflection. Thus, in reading the two poems, one has first to rebut the assumption that conditionals are not in their own right assertions. Let me, however, turn to Dillon Govender's poetry and, then, return to the broad significance of the two collections in the context of my opening remarks, namely that students' writing and publication fall within the ambit of the general legacy of Enlightenment.

What, then, is the dominant framework (and/or motif) of Dillon Govender's poetry? It would seem that, if at least in part, the answer lies in the question that one of the poems ask, namely, 'Is this affair of body or of mind' (?) In 'Broken Mould' the 'fates conspire' and 'destiny may bend the mind', so that *system* underpins the *inevitable* in much the same way that the *inevitable* underpins *system*. As the title indicates, 'Broken Mould' is an attempt to speak after a certain mould of self-representation has broken:

The winds of change have /Moulded me into the ... man /That I see

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in this Mirror. /The razor edges cut /Away at my soul and hides /My true self. /It runs with my blood, /Out of my body /for the world to sneer at.

But you, /You. /Your gaze stares into my /Most inner being, /Your soft blue stare, /To you whom I share /My inner sanctum with /To you who sees 'Me'.

The poem folds the terms of intransigent being—'My true self ... my blood'—into those of 'mirrors', of 'my soul', of the world's 'sneer' and of the 'gaze [that] stares into my ... [m]ost inner being. But there is also no reason why the latter terms cannot be folded into the former in a permanent dialectic which the very title of the poem prefigures. Indeed, what seems to me to frame the entire collection is the difficulty on the part of the persona to make up his mind about the allocation of value/meaning between the mind and the body. The poems 'Confused' and 'Lost Control' do extend this metaphor of productive indecision. In 'Confused', the anguished persona projects onto a 'puddle' created by his tears his desire for speech:

I saw my reflection in the puddle and wept more; /Carrying a thousand burdens upon my shoulders; /I try open clamped eyes; /Nothing

How long can I bite my tongue; /Hide behind a Mask; /and you will still have your eyes shut tightly; /I will keep on wearing my Mask and jester's cap;

And in 'Lost Control':

A sliver of light touches my face, /Raising Unused muscles, /A (brief) smile. /Only to then watch the dark filter the joy.

The dialectic and, it could also be said, tension, between the terms that touch identity and those which penetrate it- even transcend it—are integral to the value and/or meaning of these poems.

The poems that I have considered from the two collections make up a small number of each collection, even of the poems that address themselves to the same or to similar concerns to theirs. What I have done is

focus on a few poems that foreground their own place in the exchange that I have staged between Kant, Heidegger and Derrida. Derrida makes three related points about (1) the university, (2) views from the university and (3) the status of research that I want to recall. About the university, he asks: 'Today, how can we not speak of the university?' because 'it is impossible, now more than ever, to dissociate the work we do, within one discipline or several, from a reflection on the political and institutional conditions of that work'. Concerning views from the university, 'The time for reflection is also the chance for turning back on the very conditions of reflection, in all the senses of that word, as if with the help of a new optical device one could finally see sight, could not only view the natural landscape, the city, the bridge and the abyss, but could view viewing'. This is over and above the constraints of 'social time' and 'the urgency of command' within which the university will always operate. And finally, regarding the status of research, 'Desiring to remove the university from "useful" programs and from professional ends, one may always, willingly or not, find oneself serving unrecognized ends, reconstituting powers of caste, class, or corporation'. Whereas on the last point Derrida appears to differ from Heidegger's critique of the instrumentalisation/usefulness of knowledge, I do not believe that Heidegger is unaware of the responsibility of research to Derrida's 'social time' or his 'urgency of command'; as such, I do not believe that Derrida reads Heidegger very attentively as I have tried to in highlighting Heidegger's emphasis on 'worth', instead of 'useful'. I would thus, in considering the third point above, namely the status of research, align my comments more with Heidegger's notion of 'worth', as it seems to me particularly apt for the present review.

If the general expectation and, as such, critique, of writing (and publishing) in South Africa has been that it must service a cause—and I shall not belabour the Ndebele-Sachs debates here, suffice simply to acknowledge their currency in this connection—then the poems I have considered define a different kind of 'usefulness' and 'cause'. Even those poems in Silver's collection in which the persona appears settled and generous in his reference, such as in 'Educate me, my brother' or 'To the Youth of Jo'burg', the singularity of the poem's place of enunciation is no less marked as in the poems in which such a place is most deliberately inhabited. Consider this extract from 'To the Youth of Jo'burg':

Watchers of these streets, this life, this horror! /When ill-cautioned steps cross black and white streets /and open doors swallow swiveling stringy arms /and white-walled taxis hurriedly carelessly spit you out. /... this is your home. Your town.

Needless to say, the persona clearly speaks from another place than the one inhabited by the addressee, namely the youth of Jo'burg. This distance is not only marked by the titular 'to the youth ...' but, also, by the sense in which the youth as 'Watchers of these streets' is, in turn, watched by a watcher-persona who is not quite one of them, at least not in the way in which they are implicated in 'this horror!' of which he is not part. It is 'as if with the help of a new optical device [he] could finally see sight, could not only view ... the city [Jo'burg] ... the abyss [this horror!], but could view viewing [watchers/the youth]'. Yet this being the case can no longer mean that the *dissociated* persona lacks the *organicism* of *collective* suffering. Even at a time when the 'organic intellectual' was in vogue in South African critique, literature could not keep up appearances under forensic scrutiny. Is this not the direction that writing in South Africa can now claim with more vigour and research take up with more rigour? That is, rather than call writing to the dubious responsibility of being 'useful', should research not now raise the question of 'worth' in the Heideggerian sense?

Conclusion

What I have tried to address in this review is the active process of students' writing in South Africa, against the background of the long history of the question: what is enlightenment? Whereas research exists on the entry of South Africa and South African writing into a certain kind of (Anglo-Saxon) Enlightenment—the colonial library is increasingly being revisited and Tiyo Soga, amongst others, is being dusted up—a close critique of the seminal philosophies of Enlightenment, carried into South Africa in the writings of churchmen and anthropologists, remains under-represented.

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