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# *Nous accusons* – Revisiting Foucault’s comments on the role of the ‘specific intellectual’ in the context of increasing processes of *Gleichschaltung* in Britain

## Summary

In the late nineteenth century, Emile Zola felt the urge and intellectual responsibility to challenge the unethical, unjust and oppressive operation of the French Republic, and wrote an open letter to the President of the Republic entitled ‘J’accuse’. The publication of this open letter led to the formulation of the Manifeste des intellectuels (1897) that demands a non-party space for the expression of an ethically guided politics. ‘J’accuse’ has become a generic symbol for the voicing of resistance against governmental forms of oppression.

On the basis of a re-reading of Foucault’s understanding of the ‘specific intellectual’ (Foucault, 1977 and 1980), this article suggests that we need a non-party space for the public expression of ethically governed politics. The article explores some parallels that can be drawn between the historical phenomenon of *Gleichschaltung* in Nazi Germany and contemporary politics in Britain. While it is acknowledged that the ultimate goals and the ‘legitimizing’ ideological frameworks operating in both regimes are very different, various elements of the processes involved in the establishment, maintenance and extension of control over the populace as well as the increasing muting of resistance show remarkable similarities. Paying particular attention to policy and practice in relation to housing, education and ‘crime control’, contemporary Britain is revealed as characterized by processes that have so far resulted in opportunistic conformity being the reigning norm of

a societal life in which former notions of freedom, civil rights and self-government have become increasingly undermined.

## Introduction

This article will explore some of the parallels that can be drawn between the historical phenomenon of *Gleichschaltung* in Nazi Germany and contemporary Britain. In its historical context, *Gleichschaltung* describes the process by which the Nazis established a system of total control over all aspects of society and eliminated all forms of resistance. The period from 1933 to 1937 was characterised by the systematic suppression and elimination of all non-Nazi influences on society – such as trade union organisations and political parties. Those organisations which could not be eliminated – such as the Church and schools – were brought under direct Nazi control.

A significant event leading to the establishment of Nazi Germany was the fire at the Reichstag on the night of 27 February 1933 – alleg-

edly started by Communist agitators, although this was unproven. (Indeed, at Nuremberg, a captured general, Franz Halder, claimed that Goering had confessed to starting the fire – though Goering himself denied this). Regardless, the German Chancellor, Adolf Hitler, exploited the situation by declaring a state of emergency and persuading President von Hindenburg – by then, apparently verging on senility – to use Article 48 subsection 2 of the Weimar Constitution (which allowed the President to take any appropriate measure to remedy dangers to public safety) to sign the Reichstag Fire Decree – or *Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten zum Schutz von Volk und Staat* (Decree of the Reich President for the protection of people and state). This ruling represented perhaps the first key stage in the establishment of Nazi control in Germany – or *Gleichschaltung*. The Decree suspended (until further notice) a number of human rights contained in the German constitution: rights to personal freedom (*habeas corpus*); freedom of speech; the freedom of the press; the freedom to organize and assemble; and the privacy of letters, mail, telegraphs and telephones. It also allowed personal effects to be seized. The Decree also allowed Hitler to have all political adversaries – mainly Communists – intimidated or arrested. In this climate of terror, Hitler won the Reichstag general elections of March 1933 with a slim majority. When the newly-elected assembly first convened on 23 March it passed the Enabling Act (or *Ermächtigungsgesetz*) giving the Chancellor dictatorial power over German legislation – a second key stage of *Gleichschaltung*. Shortly afterwards, the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) were both banned (Noakes and Pridham, 1984).

An illustration of the process of *Gleichschaltung* can be found in Mark Roseman's account of the Wannsee Conference on the 'Final Solution' – held on 20 January 1942 in a

grand Berlin villa on the shores of Lake Wannsee. This meeting was attended by fifteen top Nazi civil servants, and SS and Party officials who – in a less than two-hour meeting – agreed to sentence six million people to death:

Despite the euphemism of evacuation, the minutes unmistakably contain a plan for genocide – formulated in sober, bureaucratic language, deliberated on in civilized surroundings in a once cosmopolitan suburb of Berlin. Serious, intelligent men had conferred together and delved into the details of the half-Jew, the quarter-Jew. (Roseman, 2003, pp.1-2)

Wannsee remains a powerful symbol of *Gleichschaltung* and the way compliance and complicity with Nazi barbarism was secured. Roseman suggests radical, racist nationalism had been a powerful influence. For instance, one attendee, *Staatssekretär* Dr Freisler of the Reich Ministry of Justice, had written an essay in 1936 entitled 'The protection of race and racial stock in the emerging German legal system' arguing that the racial mixing of previous centuries in Germany had to be reversed (Roseman, 2003).

Contemporary Britain is characterised by similar processes of *Gleichschaltung* – albeit towards different goals and adhering to different ideologies – that, thus far, have resulted in opportunistic conformity becoming the reigning norm of society, in which former notions of freedom, civil rights and democracy have become entirely fragmented:

When conformity becomes the reigning norm ..., a process is initiated that leads to an even more finely tuned streamlining and ranking in accord with that norm. (Blacker, 1998, p.352)

This article could therefore also be understood as a contribution to research on 'Crimes of obedience' that are, according to Jamieson, definable as: 'Harmful acts committed by a subordinate in obedience to the orders of a

superior' (Jamieson, 2001, p.193). Jamieson highlights the importance of work conducted on this area within criminology:

Social scientific work on 'crimes of obedience' is important for the way it highlights the different social contexts and social processes that are associated with the production of what otherwise might be dismissed (and therefore not explained) as immoral, evil or pathological acts. In his writing on the Holocaust, for example, Zygmunt Bauman has emphasized the inescapable importance of understanding the processes through which immoral regimes are institutionalized and given a 'normal' authority .... (Jamieson, 2001, in McLaughlin and Muncie, p.194)

Given the devastating situation of the 'order of things' in contemporary Britain discussed in this article, the British state should now be openly challenged in the name of basic democratic values. On the basis of a re-reading of Foucault's understanding of the 'specific intellectual', this article relates its core concerns to specific localised contexts and suggests that it is crucial to re-establish a non-party space for the public expression of ethically governed politics. However, first the 'historical field' that prepared and started the processes of *Gleichschaltung* will be explored.

## Setting the stage for *Gleichschaltung*: British social policy

Processes of *Gleichschaltung* have become increasingly evident in British social policy since the 1980s – coinciding, we would suggest, with the rise of the new managerialist hegemony within the British welfare state. The underpinning for this development can be traced back to the 1960s – evident in such work as *Policing the Crisis* by Stuart Hall *et al.* (1978) which detected *inter alia* the disintegration of the so-called 'social democratic consensus' and a shift towards what Hall conceived as 'authoritarian populism'. Hall expanded his

concept after reading Nicos Poulantzas's book *State, Power, Socialism*, published in 1978, which identified an intensification of state control over every sphere of society alongside a decline in the institutions of democracy and curtailment of 'formal' civil liberties – a development Poulantzas described as 'authoritarian statism'. Hall recognised in Poulantzas's account similarities with issues he himself had been struggling with in *Policing the Crisis*. However, he took exception to Poulantzas's assessment in two ways. Firstly, Hall suggests Poulantzas failed to recognise the 'anti-statist' strategy within the political agenda of the emerging neo-liberal New Right – 'freeing' people from the dependency of the welfare state in an appeal to populist sentiments. Secondly, Hall believed Poulantzas had neglected the way advanced capitalist states construct popular assent through processes that neutralise and eliminate opposition, and incorporate elements of popular opinion into their own hegemonic project. Building on this refinement of Poulantzas's thinking, Hall reconceptualises 'authoritarian statism' as 'authoritarian populism' so as to capture the contradictory features of the newly emerging social order:

[A] movement towards a dominative and 'authoritarian' form of democratic class politics – paradoxically, apparently rooted in the 'transformism' (Gramsci's term) of populist discontents. (Hall, 1988, p.153)

'Authoritarian populism' characterises the crossing of a major political watershed – constituting a major new political strategy. It is about embarking on a hegemonic project that seeks to 'reconstruct the terrain of what is "taken for granted" in social and political thought – and so to form a new common sense' (Hall, 1988, p.154). The rise of Thatcherism represented a revival of liberal political economy ('freedom to choose') alongside a new populism focusing on immigration, 'crime', unpopular trade union practices, social security 'abuses', taxa-

tion, inefficient state bureaucracies and other ‘crises’ ascribed to the decay of the post-war settlement. The public sector was portrayed as an unproductive burden on the ‘wealth-creating’ sector and tax payers. Thatcherism, aided by the ‘popular’ press, identified the essence of the British people as self-reliance and personal responsibility. Consequently, proposing that the role of government should be confined to maintaining conditions for the ‘market’ to function properly – viz. a stable money supply – seemed ‘common sense’ and allowed the Thatcher government (and subsequent governments) to extend ‘market criteria’ into all areas of welfare organising – health, education, ‘social’ housing, social protection and social care. Thatcherism rejuvenated elements of neo-liberal doctrine, not in the form of an economic argument (which does not win votes) but in terms of social values that translated hard-faced economics into populist moralistic discourses – ‘you cannot pay yourself more than you earn’, ‘the enemy within’ and ‘crises of the state’ – which subsequently justify ‘corrective’ interventions. ‘Crises precipitate and make necessary “urgent” action, “serious” measures, “wholesale transformation”’ (Robinson and Tormey, 2003, p.6).

The post-war boom had, by the 1960s, become a recession followed by a recovery; and then, by the end of the 1960s, a full-scale recession. Consequently, domestic policy in Britain came to be dominated by ‘crisis management’ – viz. Keynesian interventionism – mainly under Labour. This created a major contradiction for the Labour Party. In order to gain electoral support, Labour needed to be seen to represent the interests of the working class and organised labour whilst, at the same time, showing it could manage the economic crisis. Managing the economy requires solutions which are mainly designed to win favour with key sections of capital and framed within the limits of capitalist survival. This requires, therefore,

not the advancement of working class interests but the disciplining of the working class. It is because of such a contradiction that Labour’s approach to industrial relations collapsed during the winter of 1978/79. With the political left in disarray, Thatcherism offered an alternative political trajectory built on traditional values (‘nation’, ‘the family’, ‘duty’, ‘authority’, ‘freedom’, ‘standards’) and a revived neo-liberalism (‘self-interest’, ‘competitive individualism’, ‘anti-statism’). The repertoire of Thatcherism offered a new alliance with the working class based on a ‘populist’ unity – a crusade to make Britain ‘Great’ once more. Thatcherism operated on both the real and contradictory experiences of the population under Labourite corporatism, counterposing the sweet sound of ‘freedom’ against state bureaucracy (at home) and the threat of socialism (from central-eastern European regimes).

### ‘Crises’ of social welfare

Margaret Thatcher was elected to power in 1979 on a manifesto pledge ‘to restore the balance of power in favour of the people’ (Conservative Party Manifesto 1979, p.2) and against state bureaucracy. Central to this would be the creation of a ‘property-owning democracy’ (p.7), partly through the sale of council housing. Council housing was perhaps one of the most enduring images of the wider failings or ‘crisis’ of state welfare in Britain – tower blocks in particular emerging as:

... a monstrous emblem of the futility of all State-led social reform... [A] tombstone not just of council housing but of the entire welfare state. (Wright, cited in Jacobs and Manzi, 1996, p.548)

Paul Harrison equates the architecture of public housing with ‘crimes against humanity’:

The architecture of public housing until the later seventies was a catalogue of disasters .... In the case of private housing, consumers have the power

of money: what they don't like, they won't buy. With public housing, consumers have no choice .... (Harrison, 1983, pp.205-206)

Peter Saunders (1990) described council tenants as a 'trapped ... state-dependent underclass ... clients of a patronage state ... locked ever more tightly into dependency and powerlessness' (Saunders, 1990, pp.369-370).

Such constructions of 'crises' with council housing since the 1970s have helped to legitimate sustained assaults on the sector – effectively, the privatisation of council housing through the Right to Buy; stock transfer and the erosion of the role of local government in housing provision; and the widespread promotion of so-called 'market efficiency' and 'value for money' through encouragement for owner occupation and the housing association movement – all presented as 'common sense'. The rationale for council housing in British social policy – the historic failings of the market and the housing association movement to meet housing need (Burden *et al.*, 2000) – has become completely lost. A consequence of these measures has been an unprecedented rise in homelessness. The number of homeless households accepted by local authorities in England rose from 110,810 in 1996/97 (shortly before New Labour came to power) to 130,000 in 2003/04, whilst the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation topped 100,000 for the first time in 2004 (NHF, 2005).

Another area of social welfare where the notion of 'crisis' preceded radical intervention is education. By the late 1970s, an education system that had previously been regarded as largely adequate was suddenly considered 'in crisis' by all major political parties. Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan's Ruskin Speech in October 1976 attacked what he called the 'educational establishment' for 'not adequately preparing children for the world of work' and

for not realising the higher standards 'needed in a complex world' (Tomlinson, 2001, p.21). However, there was no evidence to support the view that education standards had fallen, suggesting that the education system was being made a scapegoat for Britain's economic crisis of the late 1970s, and paving the way for the radical Thatcher reforms of the 1980s (Tomlinson, 2001).

## On the (ab)uses of language by so-called New Labour

*Gleichschaltung* in Nazi Germany operated very much on all levels but was in important respects dependent on the use of language in order to manipulate and confuse. What was veiled by this change of wording was a massive breach with all previous notions of freedom, civil rights and self-government.

Victor Klemperer (1975) recorded that a climate of indifference characterized the German society of the Third Reich rather than any particular widespread or strongly articulated annihilationist sentiment against people of Jewish belief. As interaction is a dialectical process and not a puppet-like response to some omnipotent external stimulus, it is important within this article to try to trace the interrelationships between ideology, propaganda, cultural production and cultural consumption.

The populist machinery around Blair, his 'spin', were/are all trying to present an ideological commitment to a strong, visionary leader and were/are made manifest in propaganda and other forms of cultural representation. The government's attempts at ideological manipulation via an image of vision are resorted to in the Home Office Strategic Plan for communities: 'The Home Office and the services it oversees are united by a common vision of achieving social change. This is captured in our strategic objectives' (Home Office,

2004, p.9). In order to represent his ideologically-driven task of ‘winning the soul of [the] people’ (Mosse, 1966, p.8) and his self-image as a ‘man of destiny’, Hitler was often portrayed as a combination of, on the one hand, ‘man of the people’ – shaking hands in the midst of crowds, amongst the workers – and, on the other hand, as a distant heroic leader, the ‘conscience of the nation’.

In his book, *LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperii*, Klemperer offers a profound critique of the language of the Third Reich. Born in 1881, Klemperer was head of Romance and Literature at the Technical University in Dresden, and had several books published on seventeenth and eighteenth century French literature before being expelled from his post in 1935. He was then forced to live in what were known as Jewish houses. Only because he was married to a non-Jew was Klemperer able to remain free until receiving his deportation notice on 13 February 1945. (Luckily, he was able to escape as Dresden was heavily bombed that night). He kept a diary of his experiences in which he focuses in detail on the changes in language and its uses in the Third Reich. These are published in two volumes: *I Will Bear Witness – A Diary of the Nazi Years: 1933-1941* and *To the Bitter End: 1942-1945*. Klemperer’s documentation of the language of the Third Reich observed sharply how Hitler and his government calculated with the numbness of broad parts of the population. New words that often sentimentalised and a constant representation of struggle allowed for intense manipulation. Similarly, notions of a ‘crisis in education’, of imminent terror and ‘criminal gangs’ etc., are fostered under New Labour while ‘solutions’ – represented as ‘choices’ and ‘concerns’ – are simply being dictated.

In New Labour rhetoric, there is always a ‘crisis’ in almost every field, and therefore, always a need to ‘do something’, to ‘act’ and to ‘take the tough

decisions’. ‘Crisis’ therefore sets in motion a disturbingly standardised machine of institutional normalisation, acting as the Trojan horse for turning each sector into another colony of the New Labour ‘project’. (Robinson and Tormey, 2003, p.7)

## The subjugation of the housing system

A good example of this project can be found in the recent case of the take-over of an English housing association – Solon Wandsworth Housing Association. Decision-making in respect of resource allocation and housing investment priorities have, since the Thatcher reforms of the 1980s, increasingly rested with the Housing Corporation and away from local government who, throughout the previous one hundred years, were primarily responsible for the provision of subsidised rented housing. The Housing Corporation is an unelected QUANGO responsible for the regulation of the English housing association movement. One aspect of the Housing Corporation’s enhanced powers within English housing policy has been the imposition of the neo-liberal ideological hegemony on the housing association movement. An extreme example of this is the recent decision of the Housing Corporation to enforce a take-over of one housing provider – Solon Wandsworth Housing Association (SWHA), the last collectively-run housing association in England. This case study (see Cooper 2004) also highlights the degree of violence that elements within the new managerialist class are prepared to exert in imposing their ambitions.

SWHA had a good record of providing sustainable, high quality, affordable social housing over its 35-year history. However, it became a victim of the market discipline, primarily for not exploiting its commercial opportunities sufficiently; or, in the words of a Housing Corporation appointee, in a sufficiently

‘aggressive manner’ (TGWU, 2004, p.21), in accordance with the ‘common sense’ laws of neo-liberal political economy, even though such activities have contributed to the ‘residualisation’ of housing association estates (Burden *et al.* 2000). The main criticism in the Inquiry Report into SWHA (conducted under powers contained in the 1996 Housing Act) was, however, reserved for the collective management structure:

Solon’s real weakness flows from the ineffective working of its collective institutions, which have proved ineffective and inefficient ... Because the meetings endeavour to operate by consensus they take a very long time ... [and] implementing decisions is a matter of negotiation. (Cooke-Yarborough and Bohm, 2004, p.51)

This is a clear argument against democratic decision-making within organisations. Following the Inquiry, the Housing Corporation concluded that SWHA had ‘mismanaged’ and that its assets should be transferred to another housing association. Geoff Martin, the Battersea and Wandsworth TUC organiser, described the Corporation’s actions as an ‘asset-stripping scandal’ (cited in Weaver, 2004, p.5):

It has been well known to everyone in the housing sector game that the plan was to destabilise Solon and to shift its lucrative asset base over to a favoured association that fits the housing corporation’s idea of a social housing provider. (Cited in Weaver, 2004, p.5)

The struggle between the Housing Corporation and SWHA comes close to the kind of conflict between what Bourdieu would describe as ‘the left hand of the state’ (an egalitarian workforce struggling to maintain crucial social values such as collective democracy) and ‘the right hand of the state’:

[T]he total quality managers, the downsizers, the outsourcers, the auditors and the target-setters who, being in the political ascendant, found little need

to disguise their distaste, indeed contempt, for the values and social practices to which the representatives of the left hand of the state had devoted their lives. (Pitts, 2003, p.127)

This case demonstrates the selective way dominant ways of observing shape ‘common sense’ notions of understanding and being, and the policies and practices that subsequently emerge from these processes (see Cooper 2005 for a further discussion of this). Presently, it appears that the new managerialist elite within the social policy making community feel able to operate in any way it thinks fit, without fear of reproach. The Housing Corporation’s assessment of SWHA was ‘legitimated’ through various consultancy reports presented as ‘objective’, ‘reasonable’ and ‘common sense’, hiding the ideological and anti-social assault on the organisation, based on a desire to impose a more ‘market-friendly’ hierarchical regime. This resembles what Paul McCarthy has identified as “‘inappropriately coercive” managerial styles’ – otherwise known as bullying:

Our contention is that bullying behaviours by managers in the era of restructuring arise in the context of a fundamental mission by organisations to deploy capital, equipment and people in a brutal struggle for efficiency and profit in turbulent market conditions. (McCarthy, 1996, p.1)

The discourse of restructuring in the public sector draws on such liberal sentiments as ‘flexibility, excellence, flattening organisational structures, and creativity’ (McCarthy, 1996, p.5), thereby legitimating the change as acceptable and commonsense. However, this ‘rhetoric of restructuring might both mask and reproduce the brutality surfacing in managers’ behaviours as they react to turbulent market conditions’ (McCarthy, 1996, p.3). Drawing on Bauman’s (1991) critique of the holocaust, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, in which he suggests that those responsible for the Nazi death camps were not evil or deviant people

but ‘ordinary men and women trying to acquit themselves well of their ordinary duties’ (Bauman, cited in McCarthy, 1996, p.12), McCarthy argues:

We stand warned that ordinary duties carried out by ordinary managers exercising power in contemporary restructuring deemed to be natural, may produce in postmodern conditions, brutal outcomes which are seen by some people akin to soft fascism. (McCarthy, 1996, p.12)

## The subjugation of the education system

Another good example of the New Labour project can be found in the measures they have taken to subjugate the British education system even further to the needs of ‘business’, confirming the Labour leadership’s acceptance of human capital theory (Becker, 1975) and the argument that the role of the state is to foster conditions that encourage a growth in the stock of human capital – viz. a ‘well-trained’ workforce. This is reflected in New Labour’s White Paper on the Future of Higher Education (DES, 2003). In his foreword to the Paper, Secretary of State Charles Clarke argues the need ‘to make better progress in harnessing knowledge to wealth creation .... To help turn ideas into successful businesses’ (DES, 2003, p.2). This translates into measures aimed at encouraging ‘universities to work with employers’ and rewarding and supporting ‘Higher Education (HE) institutions working with business’ (DES, 2003, p.6). There is also an emphasis given to embedding ‘employability’ and ‘career management skills’ into the curriculum across all higher education courses.

Robinson and Tormey offer an insightful discourse analysis of the White Paper to reveal what they term ‘the true nature’ not just of New Labour’s education policy – ‘the reduction of the educational “commons” to the status of vocational training for the needs of business’

– but also of the New Labour project more generally – ‘the coordination of economic and social life in the interests of capital’ (Robinson and Tormey, 2003, p.1). Rhetorically,

... the government presents the White Paper in an exciting language of ‘freedom’, ‘choice’, ‘opportunity’ and ‘progress’. For instance, the government is offering universities ‘greater freedom’ (p.19), presenting ‘a radical picture of a freer future’ and promoting a ‘move towards new freedoms’ (p.21) ... In fact, the entire plan is built on coercion and manipulation, mainly using government control of resources to bribe and blackmail those involved in HE as well as future students into conforming to the government’s agenda. (Robinson and Tormey, 2003, p.3).

Students will be forced to pay higher tuition fees (behave as effective ‘customers’ and ‘investors’) while HE institutions will be forced to become more enterprising (behave as effective ‘businesses’). University funding is no longer an entitlement or right, but ‘conditional on conformity to the government’s agenda’ (Robinson and Tormey, 2003, p.4) – in New Labour’s case, fulfilling the needs of business.

## The limits of ‘science’ are those of the corporation/state

Political agendas and interests of corporations are increasingly hampering access to meaningful and authentic findings of research, both in the social sciences as well as in the natural sciences. An example of this is highlighted in Nick Cohen’s comments on a disturbing trend of authoritarianism with regards to the government’s reaction to ‘politically uncomfortable’ research findings related to ‘anti-social behaviour’:

Caroline Hunter and Judy Nixon, academics at Sheffield Hallam University, examined councils and housing associations to see if they were jumping to the orders of the hard men in Whitehall. They were, with vigour. A middle-aged couple were being threatened by a housing association ...

although the complaints came from a neighbour who had taken against them from the day they arrived. Others in the street said they did not cause any trouble .... The couple had been model tenants in their old house. Yet eviction beckoned. Instead of promising to prevent abuse, David Blunkett went wild when [Hunter and Nixon's] findings made the press .... The kind of academics who argued with his party would not live 'within a million miles' of anti-social families, he said. 'If this is what our money is going on, it is time for a review of the funding of social science research'. (Cohen, 2000, p.1)

Furthermore,

On 2 February, [Blunkett] told the Economic and Social Research Council that universities which wanted 'our' money must get on message with the programme. Too much research was 'seemingly perverse, driven by ideology paraded as intellectual inquiry or critique'. They were setting out 'with the sole aim of collecting evidence proving a policy wrong'. (Cohen, 2000, p.3)

The implicit claim that Blair's country would facilitate and foster 'ideology-free' research (if science could ever be neutral) is undermined by such pronouncements as these and those evident in other 'research' areas such as GM crops. As George Monbiot writes:

Last October [2003], 114 scientists, many of whom receive funding from the biotech industry, sent an open letter to the Prime Minister claiming that Britain's lack of enthusiasm for GM crops 'will inhibit our ability to contribute to scientific knowledge internationally'. Scientists specialising in this field, they claimed, were being forced to leave the country to find work elsewhere.... GM crops are not science. They are technological products of science. To claim, as Tony Blair and several senior scientists have done, that those who oppose GM are 'anti-science' is like claiming that those who oppose chemical weapons are anti-chemistry. Scientists are under no greater obligation to defend GM food than they are to defend the manufacture of Barbie dolls. (Monbiot, 2004a, p.1)

The 'crimes of obedience, material convenience and opportunism' conducted by some members of the scientific establishment in communion with both the government and corporations are multiple in the contemporary UK. In another piece, Monbiot discusses the case of Dr. Andrew Wakefield, the doctor who ended up having to leave the UK after a political, publicly arranged socio-professional 'assassination', and refers not only to our lack of choices in terms of health care (in this case, alternatives to the MMR vaccine other than those privately searched and paid for) but also the shocking state of both the US and UK scientific establishment.

Just as Wakefield was being burnt in effigy over the weekend, a much bigger story passed by almost unnoticed. The Union of Concerned Scientists released a report showing how American science has been systematically nobbled by George Bush. (Monbiot, 2004b, p.1)

Whenever research conflicts with corporate interests, it is suppressed. So the process of *Gleichschaltung*, while not completed, even extends itself to our very physique:

A study of research papers examining the side-effects of a class of heart drugs called calcium channel blockers found that 96% of the researchers who said they were safe had financial relationships with the manufacturers, as opposed to 37% of those who raised concerns. (Monbiot, 2004b, p.2)

Referring to Sarah Boseley's 2002 article, 'Scandal of Scientists Who Take Money for Papers Ghostwritten by Drug Companies', Monbiot states that:

British and US scientists are putting their names to papers they have not written. The papers are 'ghosted' or co-written by employees of the drugs companies, then signed, for a handsome fee, by respectable researchers. In some cases, the researchers

have not even seen the raw data on which the papers' conclusions are based. (Monbiot, 2004b, p.2)

The production of 'truth' obviously extends itself throughout British society and, while critical articles and books are still published, more widely available and read materials that pass as 'truth' are mere propaganda in Blair's country. As Monbiot has also argued in respect to news reporting over the decision to attack Iraq:

Andrew Gilligan, the BBC reporter who claimed that the government had sexed up the intelligence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, was mostly right. Much of the rest of the media, which took the doctored intelligence at face value, was wrong. The reward for getting it right was public immolation and the sack. The punishment for getting it wrong was the usual annual bonus. No government commissions inquiries to discover why reporters reproduce the government's lies. (Monbiot, 2004c, p.1)

As Monbiot explains:

Much of the problem here is that certain falsehoods have slipped into the political language. *The Guardian*, for example, has claimed on nine occasions that the weapons inspectors were expelled from Iraq in 1998 .... (Monbiot, 2004c, p.1)

In truth,

... the inspectors were withdrawn by the UN, after the US insisted that they should leave Iraq for their own safety. (Monbiot, 2004c, p.1)

After citing many examples of such 'news' reporting in various media, Monbiot argues that such lies are so often repeated by government that they seem 'almost impossible to kill' (Monbiot, 2004c, p.1).

Such tools of ideological homogenisation and de-politisation can account, in combination with the mind numbing effects of consumerism, to some extent for the apolitical drift of much of US and UK populations alike that is often sadly commented upon. As Monbiot also

argues, particularly since 9/11 and the war on Iraq, little by little democracy in the UK is being banned:

The government will neither regulate itself nor be regulated by the institutions which surround it. Parliament chose to believe a string of obvious lies. The media repeated them, the civil service let them pass, the judiciary endorsed them. (Monbiot, 2004d, p.1)

In this context, political action, or even verbal expression as part of the democratic process, are not welcomed (for instance, during the war conducted against Iraq vice-chancellors of some universities actively suppressed the free speech of both academic staff as well as student societies and similar silencing/demonisation of dissent occurred in schools) and, as will be elaborated on later on in this article, may even now be criminalised.

As part of the 'globalisation of Evil' (Scheerer, 2002), even more incredible and dangerous interventions by the state and its 'servants' are believable, marking the decline of democracy. As Norman Dombey remarked:

In the light of the evidence of the Hutton Inquiry, it is entirely believable that MI6 helped Downing Street to persuade the British public that there was a case for war, just as the Office of Special Plans in the Pentagon was doing in the United States .... MI6 has long experience in the dissemination of forged documents to make a political case. (Dombey, 2004, p.3)

## **Fears of 'disorder', 'terror' and the 'anti-social criminal'**

Another area where notions of crisis have been used to impose authoritarian measures is in policy debates around 'community safety' and the way moral interpretations of 'danger' are being accepted in British society and made to appear self-evidently reasonable. Although concern with 'dangerous' and 'threatening'

behaviour has a long tradition going back to the social investigations and commentaries of the mid nineteenth century – Mayhew’s (1861/1967) London, for instance – more and more forms of behaviour which in former times might have been considered a ‘nuisance’ are now being criminalised in the name of community safety. Community safety (as opposed to ‘crime prevention’) was adopted by many local authority-led partnerships set up in the 1980s to tackle neighbourhood crime – even though such initiatives received little support from the then Conservative government, ideologically hostile to the idea of giving local government a stronger role in crime control. Following the Conservative government’s rejection of the recommendations of the Home Office Standing Conference on Crime Prevention Report 1991 (the Morgan Report), which advocated a stronger coordinating role for local government, it was left to New Labour to take over the mantle for community safety.

The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act gave local authorities new duties to set up strategic partnerships with the police to tackle crime and disorder in their locality. In carrying out these duties, crime and disorder partnerships are expected to consult with *all* sections of the local ‘community’ – generating the merely ideological impression of general consent. However, community itself is a highly contested concept. For some, community may be ‘suffocatingly homogenous and intolerant of difference’ (Hoggett, 1997, p.14) – in which case, a community safety strategy may seem a haven for some whilst representing exclusion for others. Moreover, community safety strategies are largely being driven by a performance management agenda where ‘cost-effective measures for the realisation of specific outcomes and reduction targets are prioritised ... “SMART” targets ... “specific”, “measurable”, “achievable”, “realistic” and “time-tabled”’ (Hughes and McLaughlin, 2002, p.60). Con-

sequently, the pressure to deliver ‘what works’ and minimise costs will be prioritised over more imaginative solutions aimed at tackling the structural causes of social problems, ideologically constructed and presented as ‘crime and disorder’.

The 1998 Act reflected New Labour’s keenness to be seen to be tough on crime. It therefore included a range of initiatives targeting ‘anti-social behaviour’ such as measures aimed at ‘unfit’ parents (parenting orders) and their ‘feral’ children (child safety orders, curfew orders and the removal of truants to designated places). It also introduced Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), a civil order that can be served by the police or a local authority on any person aged 10 years or over who has acted in an ‘anti-social manner’ – that is, a manner that caused or was thought likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. If a person does anything which he or she is prohibited from doing by an ASBO they face imprisonment or a fine. Therefore, although ASBO proceedings are civil in nature, a breach of an ASBO is a criminal offence that can incur up to five years imprisonment (Sykes, 2003). The 2003 White Paper, *Respect and Responsibility: taking a stand against anti-social behaviour* (Home Office, 2003), extended ASBOs to begging – thereby criminalising one strategy out of poverty (justified in the name of ‘respect’).

In September 2003 the first national census of anti-social behaviour was launched with numerous agencies from police to street cleaners required to record any ‘undesirable’ behaviour. Within 13 broad headings the ‘anti-social’ included a diverse array of behaviours from prostitution and vandalism to littering, noise, swearing, begging and street drinking. All of these measures might be described as ‘defining deviance up’, but with the paradoxical result that public tolerance to incivility is progressively lowered and public fear of [in particular] young people significantly increased. (Muncie, 2004, pp.237-238)

There can be no mistake about the many ways in which the New Labour government uses language to manipulate and confuse its population. Often, this appears to be done to popularise repressive measures.

Apart from the clear abuse of the political party name, the present government of the UK is continuously engaging in a rhetoric that is mystifying crucial realities. The decontextualized use of already vague concepts allows for dangerous manipulations and populism. In the foreword to the Home Office Strategic Plan 2004-08, *Confident communities in a secure Britain*, Blair claims that:

Like other developed countries we still face difficult challenges from drug addiction, from violent crime and anti-social behaviour and from the very real threat of international terrorism. (Blair, 2004, p.5)

He draws a dramatic and hysterical picture of history before New Labour that can be seen to parallel the populism used by the Nazis that claimed that Weimar had been soft on crime but now the decent German populace would be spared such degrees of criminality and licentiousness (see also Gellately, 2001). According to Blair:

Across the country decent families and communities were close to give up the struggle against the thugs and vandals who made their lives a misery. Vulnerable people felt prisoners in their homes .... Putting this right, tackling crime and the fear of crime, was never going to be achieved overnight. (Blair, 2004, p.5)

Apart from the drama and irrationality of mixing 'crime' with 'fear of crime', the so-called solutions to these diverse but mystified social phenomena consisted not only of a decrease of justice possibilities in courts – as well as more and more policing and surveillance on a formal level of social control – but also a terrifying increase and encouragement for forms of informal/formalised social controls within so-called

'local communities'. Apart from the fact that, as stated before, community is in itself a contested concept – and even David Blunkett wonders: 'How can we reduce crime and anti-social behaviour at a time when traditional community bonds are loosening?' (Blunkett, 2004, p.7) – this concept is taken to new heights of emotive, political exploitation:

[W]e want to revive the idea of community policing, but for a modern world .... And we'll give communities a real say in deciding the priorities for the new neighbourhood policing teams, and more in dealing with anti-social behaviour. (Blair, 2004, p.5)

This 'revival' is historically and politically highly suspicious, and thus reminds us once again of processes within the Third Reich. The notion of *Volksgemeinschaft*, for example, was another important element of Nazi ideology as it evoked images of the secure and stable national homeland, and of a spiritual community to which Hitler and the Nazis would lead the German people. Although it is perhaps a little too much to suggest that post-depression Germany had a 'craving for the return to the womb of community' (Grunberger, 1974, p.67), it is clear that the Nazis were using feelings of insecurity alongside their idealisation of a *Volksgemeinschaft* where equality, stability and reciprocity were promised for all.

The Gestapo would have been unable to function effectively without widespread public support. The common practices of denunciations of fellow citizens and relatives alike by members of the public (Blunkett's 'law-abiding citizens' one must assume) were the basis of many a Gestapo investigation. It was in this way that the National Socialist state succeeded in policing even intimate aspects of personal behaviour. As intended, these denunciations made social and/or sexual relations between people of Jewish belief and Christians, or Germans and foreign forced labourers, very difficult and dangerous to have and maintain. Having gay

relationships, as well as unguarded criticism of the regime, became utterly dangerous, even in the apparent privacy of the home. The reasons why people denounced other people varied, sometimes reflecting actual, active support for the ideologies of National Socialism, but often revealing an apolitical sense of public duty or plainly personal motives such as material gain, revenge and/or jealousy (Gellately, 2001). Moreover, in Germany, in contrast to 'Blair's Britain', the ability of the Nazi state to deliver – however brutally achieved – depended on certain material commitments. These had been enshrined in the Weimar Constitution as moral imperatives – for example, the right to a job and social security. The provision of these helped further to generate consent in Nazi society in combination with the popularisation of repressive police measures.

In Britain, even peaceful dissent and protest will now be criminalised as:

The Home Office proposes 'to make it an offence to protest outside homes in such a way that causes harassment, alarm or distress to residents' .... [T]he police can define 'harassment, alarm or distress' however they wish. All protest in residential areas, in other words, could now be treated as a criminal offence .... The government will also seek to 'suggest remedies' for websites which 'include material deemed to cause concern or needless anxiety to others'. (Monbiot, 2004d, p.1)

John Upton elaborates on the process of 'normalisation' of so-called 'emergency powers' in relation to the introduction of the Terrorism Act:

First, a law introduced as a temporary measure is transformed in due course into a permanent piece of legislation. Second, a symbiotic relationship develops between the ordinary criminal law and emerging legislation as elements of one are incorporated into the other – and the effect is a general tightening up of the statutory criminal law. Finally, emergency powers are used to deal with ordinary crime. (Upton, 2004, p.12)

Moreover, emergency measures can be used against protesters who want to express their opposition to government politics. Since the drafting of the Terrorism Act, peaceful protesters in Britain have already been arrested as potential terrorists.

This phenomena of the 'normalisation' of ideas and practices which might otherwise seem unacceptable can again be related back to the Third Reich. There, the 'Nazification' of social life implied the infusion of Nazi ideology and practice into everyday social discourse and practices that generated a symbolic framework and an intense pressure of conformity.

A socio-political and cultural conformity in a society where non-conformity is publicly punished by the agents of the state, and where the range of cultural expression is increasingly limited, is now also a characteristic of Blair's Britain. The highly repressive Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act, made law in December 2001, represented a distortion of the criminal law as it introduced a distinction between 'crimes' and 'terrorism' on the basis of motives of 'criminal' activities. Upton pointed to another highly dangerous and obviously thus necessarily vague dimension of this Act:

Part IV of the new Act allows the Home Secretary to detain international terrorists indefinitely and without trial. Who qualifies as an international terrorist is, for the purposes of the Act, determined by the Home Secretary's suspicions. A person may also be detained if he is suspected of having 'links' (not defined in the Act) to a terrorist group. So it is possible to be detained merely for being suspected of having links with suspicious people. (Upton, 2004, p.16)

This again has parallels to the Third Reich and obviously links nicely with the encouragement of community policing, the acceptance of 'hear say' evidence and the generation of a 'culture of denunciation'.

Last but not least, the Civil Contingencies Bill (which received Royal Assent on 18 November 2004) – which seeks to 'deliver a

single framework for civil protection in the United Kingdom to meet the challenges of the twenty first century’ (Cabinet Office, undated, p.1) – again used language that left much scope for interpretation and manipulation (in a country already riddled with ‘spin’ and other serial governmental deceptions and lies). An emergency situation herein is defined as ‘an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare, the environment or the security of the UK or a part or region’ (cited in Upton, 2004, p.19). Equally, the list of interventions in the state’s power to control in such an ‘emergency situation’ is once again suitably vague:

By Clause 21, a government may ‘provide for or enable’ the requisition or destruction of property (with or without compensation); the prohibition or requirement of movement to or from a specified place; the prohibition of assemblies of specified kinds at specified places or at specified times; the prohibition of travel at specified times; and last but not least, the prohibition of ‘other specified activities’. (Upton, 2004, p.19)

Commenting on the overall impact of the Terrorism Act, the Civil Contingencies Bill and the Criminal Justice Bill, Upton remarks:

These powers, which may be used if a government judges there is sufficient threat not only to the nation but to a part of the nation alone, would be a powerful weapon in any totalitarian state’s armoury. Here is the key to the absolute control of the nation that Blunkett, in his lighter moments, must dream of. (Upton, 2004, p.20)

In contrast, David Blunkett himself represents these measures as an opportunity:

[W]e are in a unique position to play a powerful part in developing trust and security in society with the law-abiding citizen at its heart.... That is why security runs like a thread throughout the Home Office’s work; on the one hand, protecting ourselves from international terrorists while also ensuring the police and communities have the tools they need

to establish order and security in their neighbourhoods. (Blunkett, 2004, p.7)

## Disregarding the rights of ‘others’

The move towards the intolerant society under New Labour also extends towards an attack on multiculturalism. Following ‘riots’ in northern English towns in the summer of 2001, the government commissioned the Cattle Report to investigate the causes of the disorder. Instead of emphasising the poverty, inequality and racism that divides society, the Cattle Report saw the way forward as ‘community cohesion’ (Home Office, 2001).

Community cohesion ... is about helping micro-communities to gel or mesh into an integrated whole. These divided communities would need to develop common goals and a shared vision. (Home Office, 2001, p.70)

Kundnani is critical of this prescription:

It provides a new formula, in which the separate cultural development that had been encouraged for decades is to be subsumed to the demands of ‘community cohesion’. A set of core values is to put limits on multiculturalism and black people are required to develop ‘a greater acceptance of the principal national institutions’. (Kundnani, 2002, p.3)

Following Cattle, Blunkett called on immigrants to take an ‘oath of allegiance’ to the British state and to adopt British norms. The ‘blame’ for tensions between ethnic groups is placed on the shoulders of ethnic minorities themselves and their ‘inability’ to integrate with the British way of life. Immigrants must assimilate into New Labour’s brand of ‘community’ – homogenised and Anglo-Saxon – even though it is that same community that discriminates against them (Cooper, 2005).

Through conceptualising asylum seekers as ‘bogus’ welfare dependants, politicians and parts of the media have been responsible for

generating racist and xenophobic violence against black immigrants. The dominant discourse on asylum has become particularly hostile recently, generating a 'criminogenic context' at a time of welfare retrenchment (Bloch and Schuster, 2002). Cohen identifies various metaphors used by the media, portraying asylum seekers as either 'natural disasters' (flooding, deluging and swamping) or 'criminals' (bogus liars) (Cohen, 2002). Politicians and other public figures have been quick to jump on the bandwagon: David Blunkett spoke of asylum seekers 'swamping' British schools (*The Today Programme*, BBC Radio 4, 25 April 2002). Chris Fox, president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, argued that the number of refugees entering Britain had reached 'tidal wave' proportions, bringing with it 'a whole new type of crime, from the Nigerian fraudster, to the eastern European who deals in drugs and prostitution to the Jamaican concentration on drug dealing' ('Immigrants "behind crime wave" – police', *The Observer*, 18 May 2003, p.1). The Race and Violent Crime Task Force and the Commission for Racial Equality have both argued that there is a direct relationship between political rhetoric on race and immigration, and increases in racist violence (Bloch and Schuster 2002). In a report to the UN Human Rights Committee, 11 British organisations, led by the civil rights group Liberty argued that 'politicians and media alike have been encouraging racist hostility in their public attitudes towards asylum seekers' (cited in *The Observer*, 1 July 2001, p.1). Moreover, two reports in 2005 – one from the European commissioner for human rights and one from Amnesty International – both questioned the legality of Britain's policy of detaining asylum seekers in detention centres (Dodd, 2005). Apart from the increasing difficulties of finding asylum in Britain and apart from the pressures of assimilation, immigrants now face added danger from the fact that anti-terror legislation has been grafted on to immigration law. While

'due process' has almost become a meaningless phrase, immigrants now are left with no safeguards whatsoever against the powers of the British state.

As if these developments were not bad enough, it is important to further mention one of the most brutal human rights violations within this country – the illegitimate detention of 'suspected international terrorists' in Belmarsh and Woodhill after 2001. As mentioned above, this fate could await anyone now as 'suspicion' is a more than vague concept (apart from the fact that a 'reasonable belief', as defined by the Home Secretary, is likely to be of questionable 'rationality'). However, if nothing else in the long list of atrocities mentioned in this article does, the fact that we live in a country in which 13 people have had to live in cruel, degrading and inhuman conditions without charge, without trial and without prospect of release should make us realise that we in Britain no longer live in a democracy.

### **Re-reading/re-contextualising Foucault's 'specific intellectual'**

While the inherent problems of the notion of the 'universal intellectual' (see Thorpe 2004) are clear, the present *Gleichschaltung* of all areas of economic and social life in the interests of capital does appear to validate a modification of the 'specific intellectual' (Foucault, 1977) as the need to mobilise academic and public resistance becomes more and more pressing. As demonstrated above, through processes similar to the Third Reich's *Gleichschaltung*, socio-political and cultural relations in Britain have been radically restructured in accord with the demands of an unfettered capitalist neo-liberal regime. Neo-liberalism has come to dominate all aspects of economic, social and political life, leading to closure (hegemony) in public debate and, consequently, the erosion of democracy. These processes clearly present,

as Pierre Bourdieu (1998) argues, a threat to any possibility of a civilised society associated with equal rights to welfare, education, health, arts and culture, work and so forth. It is also possible to interpret these dramatic processes and their results in terms of ‘culturecide’. As Stein explains, culturecide is also referred to as:

... *cultural genocide* or *deculturation*, [and] signifies processes that have usually been purposely introduced that result in the decline or demise of a culture, without necessarily resulting in the physical destruction of its bearers.... Culturecide is most often used to describe the experiences of many indigenous peoples. As Arens notes, deculturation, ‘can involve some or all of the following: political and social institutions, culture, language, national feelings, religion, economic stability, personal security, liberty, health and dignity’. Diverse authorities have noted the impact of policies implemented by colonising powers on native populations. (Stein, 2003, p.1 – original emphasis)

It is with this context in mind that this article will now reflect upon the role of ‘the intellectual’ in what is a desperately needed challenge to the oppressive violence of the neo-liberal ‘new order’. Here, Foucault’s reading of the role of the ‘specific intellectual’ offers a useful starting point.

Foucault considered that the role of the intellectual was to study power in its immediate relationship (its localised context) with its ‘object, its target, its field of application’ (Foucault, 1980, p.97). However, it is difficult to simply apply this to the present context of *Gleichschaltung* which extends far beyond the local. While it is clear why Foucault rejected the notion and practice of the ‘universal intellectual’ – both because people have experience, knowledge and understanding of their own contexts, and do not need a patronizing intellectual to guide them, and because of the dangerous legacy of Oppenheimer, who represented this ‘universal intellectual’ (see

Thorpe 2004) – the present *Gleichschaltung* of all areas of economic and social life in the interests of capital does appear to validate a modification of the ‘specific intellectual’.

Blacker claimed about Foucault’s work that:

... what he has to say is of particular relevance and importance to – and is even tailor-made for – intellectuals engaged in research within an institutional setting such as the contemporary university. (Blacker, 1998, p.348)

As demonstrated above and in other contexts (see for instance Beckmann and Cooper, 2004 and 2005), academic engagement in critical research and practice has become increasingly difficult. The role of the oppositional intellectual in this changed context does require a more broad, directly political and public engagement. In order not to appear too patronizing, it is perhaps advisable to refer to a quote of Foucault himself: ‘People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what what they do does’ (Foucault, cited in Popkewitz and Brennan, 1998, p.359)

The relationship between culture, power and knowledge has to be redefined by shifting the political emphasis away from struggles over curricula to struggles over policy that shapes the institutional conditions under which academic knowledge is produced and under which public debates are increasingly stifled. In a societal context that is marked by a widespread disengagement with social and political concerns and characterized by ‘unprecedented levels of cynicism and discontent with politicians and politics in major Western democracies’ (Pearce and Tombs, 1998, p.34) – in which for many, consumerist dreams have replaced interests in values and ethics – it is hard to imagine that people will be able to find the motivation to revolt. Even if they do – such as

the supporters of the Animal Liberation Front – they become demonized and criminalised. The repressive powers of the state have gone haywire and, as Upton states, with the Terrorism Act, ‘the Civil Contingencies Bill and the Criminal Justice Bill, the Home Office has, in a very short space of time, produced a compendium of legislation to keep the whole population well and truly in order’ (Upton, 2004, p.19). Thus, other changes certainly occurred in terms of Foucault’s belief that the power of the state masks a substantial part of itself. ‘Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms. Would power be accepted if it were entirely cynical? For it, secrecy is not in the nature of an abuse; it is indispensable to its operation’ (Foucault, 1990, p.86)

In the context of the growing, blatant corporatization and privatization of education, academics should defend the university as a crucial democratic public sphere, as discourses are not just referential or representational systems but part of the infrastructure ordering practices of and in a society. As Pearce and Tombs elaborate:

... the more that the control of the media is exclusively in the hands of private business corporations and the greater the degree of concentration of media ownership, the easier it will be for a small select group of persuaders to dictate the agenda for public debate and political action. (Pearce and Tombs, 1998, p. 28)

Foucault rightly de-legitimated ‘traditional’ liberal authorities who abused their power in defining ‘the political’ on behalf of absolute beliefs for the individual (everyone) through a critique of the formation of expertise that is utilized to create a basis for claims of authority. Herein he saw the crucial difference between resistance and liberation. However, as the current situation negates basic democratic values, it is suggested that Foucault’s understanding of the ‘specific intellectual’ needs some modifica-

tion without falling back into the trappings of the ‘universal intellectual’. While intellectuals should relate their core concerns to specific localised contexts, it is crucial that they also collectively fight for a non-party space for the public expression of ethically governed politics. It is important for academics to develop an ethical relationship that defeats corporate authoritarianism and other forms of domination. As Barry Smart argues:

Neoliberalism and the associated idea of a global free market economy have acquired a predetermined and self-evident character for policy makers, analysts and commentators. It is one of the more important tasks of social theory to expose both the fragile foundations of such a conception of economic life and the harmful social consequences that have followed from its policy implementation. (Smart, 2003, p.174)

Even according to Foucault, the ‘political task’ should be:

... to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them. (Foucault, cited in Chomsky and Foucault, 1974, p.171)

It is therefore more the ways in which intellectuals engage, and obviously the (universalistic) claim that democracy and ethics have to be re-established, that is the necessary modification to Foucault’s notion of the ‘specific intellectual’.

Compartmentalization between scientific and political decision-making in practice results in non-decisions, which are by default decisions to submit to the technological imperative. In this way ‘can’ becomes ‘ought’ (Bauman, 1993: 186-90). This process of evasion of responsibility, as Bauman argues, has been at the heart of modernity (Bauman, [1989] 2000: 151-200; Forman, 1994). (Thorpe, 2004, p.78)

It is thus important to redefine the role of academics as engaged public intellectuals who aim to trigger, stimulate and broaden public discourses and practices about the meaning of the contested concepts of democracy, citizenship and social justice that, in the present context, have become muted or *gleichgeschaltet*. It was the Dreyfus affair that sparked the emergence of the *Manifeste des intellectuels* in 1897 and, in 1898, Emile Zola published the first of a series of open letters to the President of the French Republic entitled '*J'accuse*'. It is now time to publicly accuse the British government before it is too late.

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