

**A Review of Hugo Harari-Kermadec, *Le classement de Shanghai: L'université marchandisée*, Lormont: Éditions Le Bord de l'Eau, 2019, 162 pages, ISBN: 978-2-35-687-680-5**

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In August/September 2020 when the national press was heavily in the silly season, a spate of articles on the so-called Shanghai rankings appeared in a number of newspapers such as the French *Le Monde* (12/08/2020), as part of a series of 5 articles on the Shanghai Revolution, and the Belgian *Le Soir* (29/08/2020). This shows clearly that rankings make a good story, and also demonstrates clearly that newspapers do not really understand them. Thus, given the context, a book on the subject can only be of interest.

The book *Le Classement de Shanghai: l'Université marchandisée* (The Shanghai Rankings: The Merchandised University) offers a certain French perspective on the Shanghai rankings, more correctly on ARWU – Academic Ranking of World Universities<sup>1</sup> – but we shall adopt the author's usage. The author, Hugo Harari-Kermadec, a lecturer at the elite Higher Education institution, the *École Normale Supérieure de Paris-Saclay*, writes from a French perspective and mostly on the effect on French institutions in the light of what he believes to be an increasing commercialisation of universities largely brought on by the influence of rankings. His premise is that both rankings and evaluations, he does not clearly differentiate, have turned educational institutions into commercial products. In his opinion, the main culprit is the Shanghai rankings because of their press coverage and influences on politicians and administrators.

The book is a long essay of 158 pages divided into three sections for a total of eight chapters, plus an introduction, conclusion, bibliography and index. The gist of the work can be seen through the section and chapter titles: 'L'université mise en nombre' (Universities reduced to numbers); 'L'effet Shanghai' (The Shanghai effect); 'La nouvelle gestion publique dans l'Enseignement Supérieure' (New public management in

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<sup>1</sup> ARWU (also known as Shanghai Ranking) was the first global university ranking, originally compiled and issued by Shanghai Jiao Tong University in 2003. From its beginning it included multifarious indicators. In 2009, it was thought that it is more objective if ARWU was copyrighted annually by an independent agency that focuses on higher education. Thus, ever since 2009, it has been released by Shanghai Ranking Consultancy. ARWU is considered one of the three most important rankings, alongside *QS World University Rankings* and *Times Higher Education World University Rankings*, which are also published annually. At present, 'the 2020 Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) is released by Shanghai Ranking Consultancy. Since 2003, ARWU has been presenting the world top universities annually based on transparent methodology and objective third-party data. It has been recognized as the precursor of global university rankings and the most trustworthy one.' See the most recent *ShanghaiRanking's Academic Ranking of World Universities 2020 Press Release*; available at <http://www.shanghairanking.com/> [accessed 6 October 2020].

Higher Education); ‘Le prix à payer : débats sur les frais d’inscription’ (The price to pay : debates on fees); ‘La force des chiffres’ (The power of numbers); ‘Diviser pour régner’ (Divide in order to reign); ‘Regrouper pour régner’ (Group in order to reign); ‘Mise à prix’ (A price on its head); ‘Les bon comptes font les bons capitalistes’ (Good accounting makes good capitalists); ‘Déchanter la raison’ (Disenchanted reason); ‘Pour faire place au fétichisme de la marchandise’ (To give way to fetishism of the product); ‘L’université capitaliste ?’ (The capitalist university?); ‘Conclusion: Impossible contre-quantification’ (Impossible counter quantification).

It is quite clear that this is a Marxist analysis implying a capitalist take-over of higher education. To understand the approach, it is also necessary to understand French Higher Education as, contrary to what the author seems to believe, France never really adopted the Newman-Humboldt model that supposedly prevails elsewhere in the world. A very useful potted history of French HE can be found in Christine Musselin’s chapter<sup>2</sup> where she shows how French HE was catapulted from a medieval model to a highly centralised and incomplete version of the Newman-Humboldt model in 1968. In brief, universities were closed at the revolution, and replaced later by Napoleon by so-called *Grande Écoles*, essentially elite institutions with no research basis, which format high level technocrats. This is no longer true as whilst not being universities, most *Grandes Écoles* have a strong research tradition. Universities though still have a monopoly on awarding degrees. Post-war universities were essentially teaching institutions with research concentrated in specialised research units largely under the aegis of the National Scientific Research Council (CNRS). In 1968, research was reintroduced with lecturers supposedly dividing their time equally between teaching and research. The Ministry remained firmly in control and held all the purse strings. In 2007, under President Nicolas Sarkozy, a reform was brought in that gave greater autonomy to universities, mostly financial, within a strict centralised framework. That this was inspired by rankings is basically the theme of this book, which only makes full sense if the particular French context is considered. Further, it should be borne in mind that the author himself teaches in a ‘*Grande École*’, which is Paris-based, and as so much that is Paris-based tends to overlook, and look down on, universities which are outside the capital.

## A Gist of the Book

Back to the book then, the first section looks at the 2007 reforms and links them to the increasing importance given to the Shanghai rankings and the desire to create a series of world class universities that would shine in such rankings. The first chapter gives a very brief history of the beginnings of the Shanghai rankings as being simply a means to compare Chinese and other world universities, without mentioning that the aim was essentially to emulate American and British Universities by creating a series of indicators found in older more prestigious institutions, thereby creating a role model. He then shows how the Minister for Higher Education at the time, Valérie Pécresse, realised that rankings were part of an internationalisation of Higher Education and that France had to be part of that. It then looks at existing rankings in French universities and how some prestigious institutions as the HEC Business school fared. The following

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<sup>2</sup> Christine Musselin, ‘Brève histoire des universités’, in *Les universités en France: Fonctionnement et enjeux*, ed. Frédéric Forest (Rouen: Presses Universitaires de Rouen et Le Havre, 2012), 13-25.

chapter looks at the increasing importance of quantitative indicators through citation indexes and the development of evaluation frames works as the UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), later replaced by the Research Excellence Framework (REF), brought in by Margaret Thatcher in the eighties, therefore pre-dating the Shanghai initiative. The teaching side is discussed with the UK Quality Assurance Agency before introducing the notion of Human Capital, and hence Marx's *Das Capital*, as an indicator of added value. We next look at university fees, starting with the enormous rise in fees introduced by Blair's labour government and the effect this has on HE. This section gives us thus the essential background to what follows.

The second section, 'La force des chiffres', bringing in US News Law School rankings (USN), first introduced in 1987, as an example of ranking by numbers. 'Diviser pour regner' is the methodology, both political and technical brought in by the Pécresse reforms and exemplified internationally by the REF and USN. It shows how the apparent objectivity of figures can be used to preconceived management aims. The counterpart chapter, 'Regrouper pour regner' endeavours to demonstrate how the Shanghai rankings only cover only a very small number of world universities ignoring those that do not fit into the benchmarking system. It then details how the French government decided to create super-universities on the notion that bigger is better so as to enter rankings. These forced mergers came in through the so-called COMUE – *COMmunautés d'Universités et Établissements* (Communities of Universities and [Higher Education] Establishments) that were destined to raise the profile of French Universities on the international scene. Although he does not directly blame the rankings for this move, he shows how the *Conférence des Présidents d'Université* (Council of University Presidents) was split between the Shanghai-compatible universities and the others. He exemplifies that relation between rankings and performance with reference to US Law Schools and on UK Universities after the introduction of the REF. This section concludes with the 'Mise à Prix' effect, literally the price on their heads wherein universities find themselves controlled by mathematical and financial considerations. Academic values have given way to momentary ones.

The third section, 'Les bon comptes font les bons capitalistes' reinforces the authors Marxist analysis the two chapters linked by a single sentence divided between the two: "Déchanter la raison' 'pour faire place au fétichisme de la marchandise'". Disenchanted reason raises the apparently simple question of why pay researchers to research if you cannot obtain a quantifiable return on investment. The corollary is why pay them to teach if you cannot quantify the effect of access to work and high salaries for students. In other words, it is a discussion of a purely utilitarian view of higher education which is totally at loggerheads with the Newman-Humboldt model based on strong academic values. To prove his point, the author applies a Marxist interpretation of the history showing the development from scholastic to Humboldtian model and the development of what he terms the fetishism of reason, which gradually gives way to the fetishism of the product. In accepting that national models play a strong role, he claims that the French model is pervaded by the Republican notions of public service with the researcher/lecturer as civil servant. In addition to this, comes the Napoleonic model of the *Grandes Écoles* that place the state and its needs for trained high level civil servants at the centre of the paradigm. In the post-Pécresse reform period, these values are undermined by inequalities of access to HE and increasing problems of debt. Institutions as Science Po are seen as most fully embracing autonomy by playing with wage structures and using increasing high fees as a means to obtain greater financial

control of the future of the institution. The rest of the chapter analyses the effects of this move to the fetishism of the product using a Marxist interpretation of exploitation through the notion of Human capital. In 'Pour faire place au fétichisme de la marchandise' we see the consequences of this product fetishism through examples in France, the UK and US, and also South America. Shanghai rankings and their ilk have caused academic values to be replaced by those of market value causing the author to raise the question of whether what we now have is a capitalist university.

In a capitalist model, it is necessary to discuss the nature of skilled workers and qualifications and to why some are paid more, or less, than others. This is of course done by heavily quoting Marx himself. What comes out of this is what he terms the tyranny of values, which leads to researchers becoming values that can be bought by rich institutions to raise their ranking profiles. A star system as with football players. This value-based system is criticized as being used on a purely managerial basis to arbitrate between the needs and financing of departments without any reference to their intrinsic value. Further, such an approach plays one against the other by evaluating the worth of individuals according to their output, and the perceived value of that output.

The concluding chapter discusses whether it is possible have quantifiable indicators and offers a series of possibilities for a more equitable Higher Education system. In post-war France, centralised health and social care was termed l'état-providence or the providential state. The state took care of all. It is a return to this that is the basis of this conclusion calling for all students to receive a wage to ensure some form of equality. Such a providential system is seen as being in conflict with autonomy of universities and with current quantification procedures. Thus, he refutes rankings, but accepts statistical indicators provided that they are rethought to give value to knowledge and not have a purely monetary aim. This chapter is more documented than earlier chapters with various sociologists being quoted. It is also entirely about France and makes no mention of how such a system would be adapted in, for example the US and UK which have served as counter examples to the proposed good practice described here.<sup>3</sup>

## Discussion

This is a French book written for an essentially French audience, and presumably one that agrees with the premise that ranking and evaluation are bad for Higher Education and research. The bibliography is almost entirely made up of French publications, thus happily ignoring the vast amount of research in the area in Europe alone. Despite cherry picker counter examples from South America, the United Kingdom and the United States, it is essentially a reflection in glorious isolation.

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<sup>3</sup> There never was a golden age, something that Harari-Kermadec, and many others seem to hark back to. However, amongst the numerous works that map the current decline, we could cite a number that are far more analytical of this decline, also so present in the medical world, where administrators govern, and in which academics are encouraged to sell out to the devil and treat students as clients. Published works include: Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Thomas Docherty, *For the University: Democracy and the Future of the Institution* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011); Jeremy Rifkin, *The Third Industrial Revolution: How Lateral Power Is Transforming Energy, the Economy, and the World* (New York: Palgrave, 2013); Garry Hall, *The Uberfication of the University* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016). The very title of Hall's book, 'Uberfication', neatly sums up the situation.

However, much of what Harari-Kermadec says is perfectly right. Politicians have used the rankings to impose a purely utilitarian view of higher education with increasingly disastrous results. Consequently, the ARWU rankings have had a negative effect on French Higher Education, but more through the deliberate ignorance of politicians and administrators than through the ranking system itself. By deliberate ignorance I mean that politicians have deliberately misinterpreted the system, so that it can be applied to their own ends, which is essentially cutting costs and seeking value for money. This is precisely the merchandising approach that the author quite rightly decries. This was clearly what the Sarkozy government set out to do by deliberately underfunding universities, so that they would be forced to seek capital elsewhere, thereby with only the fittest surviving. The idea of underfunding was also that work contracts could be changed with so-called non-productive lecturers teaching more than their productive colleagues. Production was to be purely a question of quantification of publications graded according to the impact factor of the journals in which they were published. To understand this, it is important to realise that all *Enseignant-Chercheurs* (lecturer-researchers) who have a double role contrary to CNRS researchers who only carry out research, have full tenure for life. Thus, in the Pécresse reforms, civil service contracts, which gave researchers/lecturers tenure, would be weakened by introducing short-term contracts with no possibility of tenure and corresponding lower wages. Change of government lessened some aspects by pulling the possible teeth of the evaluation agency which could no longer grade universities, research groups and teaching programmes. The situation has got steadily worse despite having had a socialist government prior to the current market-oriented one. The current French government asks the banks first on all policy, so that knowledge is very low on their priorities as only the economy counts. However, is this all the fault of rankings and evaluation? Maybe, but the author's ideological position does weaken his thesis and the value of a book that preaches to the converted with often spurious arguments.

The biggest problem with this book is that it is a diatribe that takes as its starting point the fact the Shanghai Ranking is inherently and for universities. Neither the starting point nor the argumentation is clear. Whilst the premise that universities in general have become far too market-oriented may be true, blaming this entirely on the ARWU ranking, to use the correct formulation, is somewhat simplistic. Harari-Kermadec relies heavily on broad generalisations that are not backed up by research into the area. He uses examples to illustrate his viewpoint, but it is not entirely clear that he understands the counter models he uses.

Thus, to argue his case, Harari-Kermadec makes reference to the USN Law School ranking in the USA and the British REF. Both have origins well before the ARWU rankings were built, so the fault clearly lies in the Thatcher-Reagan monetarist policies. In discussing the US Law school model, in order to widen his perspective, the author might like to read Carel Stolker, *Rethinking the Law School*<sup>4</sup>, a masterly work from a leading academic who is not only head of a major university, Leiden, but is also a lawyer and judge. For the REF, there are numerous reports from the British Academy available on line, whilst not forgetting the Metric Tide, the report on the effects of quantification on research.<sup>5</sup> It is too easy to caricature a system from outside and the

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<sup>4</sup> Carel Stolker, *Rethinking the Law School: Education, Research, Outreach and Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> See John Wilsdon et. al., *The Metric Tide: Report of the Independent Review of the Role of Metrics in Research Assessment and Management*, 2015, DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.1.4929.1363; available at

cultural and political contexts of both UK and US HE systems are radically different from the French one. In all cases, the result is that Harari-Kermadec is generally comparing what is not comparable given that HE contexts between countries are so utterly different, and particularly so when France is brought into the picture.

Then there are the inaccuracies. He displays a disconcerting ignorance as to the functioning of the REF with great recourse to hearsay. REF is an evaluation system, not a ranking system. Unlike the Flemish or Norwegian systems,<sup>6</sup> the REF does not distribute funding (73), and UK universities have never relied entirely on direct government funding, their autonomy is real under Royal Charter. Although REF does influence part of the funding for research, the UK has a variety of very different funding sources. In addition, the REF does not evaluate research laboratories (86), as the French system of *laboratoires*, meaning research groups that do not have a direct link to teaching, as these do not exist in the UK, or in most international universities, where departments have a far larger remit involving teaching and research. Very often, Harari-Kermadec makes use of evidence is largely anecdotal, but mention of a US television fiction as proof of the wider effects of a research environment (89) is beyond ridiculous and brings us close to fake news.

That misuse of rankings to justify poor policy decisions is a reality. In a recent article published in *Times Higher Education*, a journalist pointed out that the German excellence strategy harmed research quality.<sup>7</sup> In the summer of 2020, the French national newspaper, *Le Monde*, ran a series of articles on why France missed the boat on Shanghai and had to moved fast forward,<sup>8</sup> whilst the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* carried an article on the absurdity of ranking.<sup>9</sup> The latter is particularly interesting as it does not attack rankings *per se*, but points out the ridiculous situations that arise if policy is based upon them. We can forget the fact that universities have been demonstrated for more and not diminishing means. Such articles show the fascination of the press for rankings, particularly those of ARWU and are actually part of the problem as they instil in the mind of the public that such rankings are actually important for higher education. Another recent article from *The Economist*, headlined with ‘Sacré Saclay: How France created a university to rival MIT’<sup>10</sup> apparently praises a ‘new’ university in France, but actually shows the very negative outcomes of ranking-based policy. The article carries a

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[https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/files/2015/07/2015\\_metricide.pdf](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/files/2015/07/2015_metricide.pdf) [accessed 3 October 2020].

<sup>6</sup> Tim C. E Engels, and Raf Guns, ‘The Flemish Performance-Based Research Funding System: A Unique Variant of the Norwegian Model’, *Journal of Data and Information Science* 3.4 (2018): 45-60.

<sup>7</sup> David Matthews, ‘German Excellence Strategy ‘Harmed Research Quality’, *Times Higher Education*, 10 August 2020; available at <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/german-excellence-strategy-harmed-research-quality> [accessed 6 October 2020].

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Soazig Le Nevé, ‘Pourquoi les universités françaises étaient mal parties pour le classement de Shanghai dès 1793’, *Le Monde*, 12 August 2020; available at [https://www.lemonde.fr/series-d-ete/article/2020/08/12/les-sequelles-du-schisme-de-1793-entre-universites-et-recherche-francaises\\_6048730\\_3451060.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/series-d-ete/article/2020/08/12/les-sequelles-du-schisme-de-1793-entre-universites-et-recherche-francaises_6048730_3451060.html) [accessed 6 October 2020].

<sup>9</sup> Bruno d’Alimonte, ‘Voyage en absurdie: les rankings des universités’, *Le Soir*, 29 August 2020; available at <https://plus.lesoir.be/321330/article/2020-08-29/voyage-en-absurdie-les-rankings-des-universites?fbclid=IwAR2PEfISQXZvcJ3PD2oBAzc1Iyvrwgl3NfqW94HbA95fiU68bIMwzkhXfE8> [accessed 6 October 2020].

<sup>10</sup> Anonymous, ‘How France Created a University to Rival MIT’, *The Economist*, 29 August 2020; available at <https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/08/29/how-france-created-a-university-to-rival-mit> [accessed 6 October 2020].

photograph of the current President of France, who has actually done nothing to help higher education, quite on the contrary, and who was not even in office when the plan was mooted anyway. The obvious question that should be asked is why build a university to rival MIT, not for the benefit of either the students or research, but simply to get in the rankings? The money which was side-lined simply did not go elsewhere where it is desperately needed, and hardly respects the notions of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, but just a misplaced one-upmanship. This is indeed a Shanghai effect, but it is not the fault of the rankings as this is not emulation, which is what the rankings initially sought to inspire, but just political engineering. At a very local level, when the President of a small provincial university proudly announces that they have fallen in line with Shanghai criteria (personal communication), it is not the fault of Shanghai either, but it is deeply worrying as this shows how non-policy can filter down and degrade institutions that will never ever enter the rankings.

In attacking the Shanghai rankings, the author is principally attacking the Pécresse reforms through the three aspects most hated by French left wingers: university autonomy, evaluation by an external agency – AERES, now HCERES, and competitive funding of research through a centralised agency – the ANR. None of the agencies are controlled by the left-wing unions, who actually represents a very small minority of researchers, and this, in their eyes, is the main fault. Surprisingly, the left-wingers do defend the historical evaluation council the CNU, which is renowned for its opacity and arbitrary decisions,<sup>11</sup> but then again, they have a strong representation and can use it to their own means. The obvious question is whether the Pécresse reforms were so bad.

Whatever the motivations behind the reforms, it was clear that something had to be done to improve a system created in the wake of 1968, but which was unable to cope with a mass education system that encourages students to stay in HE for five years to obtain a Master's degree rather than leaving after a three year '*licence*'. This all arose from ill-thought out EU policy that aims, laudably, to give HE to all, but has radically undermined apprenticeships and vocational education. The problem is compounded in France is that HE is available to anyone who has the *baccalauréat*, and when you consider that the pass rate for an examination with standards that have plummeted over the years was 96% in 2020, the size of the problem is obvious. Mass means mass from year one to year five. Such mass education also means you need the staff to teach. If you recruit lecturer-researchers, the cost is high, and you cannot longer guarantee that these will actually do any valid research in the system where promotion carrots are small. One solution already tried was to bring in school teachers who would teach twice as much as lecturers because they do not have the research requirement. This has been disastrous in that it breaks the research-based teaching paradigm of the Newman-Humboldt model, and has also weakened university standards as they have the same voting power as researchers, thus further watering down management at faculty level, and even presidential level as some universities have elected presidents who have no doctoral degree simply because teachers are more willing to take on administrative tasks than researchers.

The Pécresse solution to the need to teach more students was that the evaluation agency AERES would divide members of research groups into the productive and non-productive, the ultimate aim being to increase the teaching load of the non-productive.

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<sup>11</sup> François Garçon, *Le dernier verrou: En finir avec le Conseil National des Universités* (Paris: The Media Faculty, 2012).

The threatened change of status still has not happened, but it did have the highlighting of those who did nothing more than teach, and stimulated some to actually get back into research. It is easy to claim public service, but maybe the public would like some real service and not just words. The reality is: maintaining academic standards, as so many other countries do, without hiding behind a fig leaf of so-called public service with no form of accountability is not a bad thing. One of the great advantages of the COST action European Network for Research Evaluation in the SSH (ENRESSH)<sup>12</sup> is that it has brought to light the wide variety of evaluation methods across the Social Sciences and Humanities whilst demonstrating the value of disciplines to their advantage.

The problem of autonomy, funding and evaluation are closely linked. Underfunding has been disastrous for universities as when in extreme poverty, autonomy is a fiction. University fees are fixed nationally, so universities have no means of increasing that income, and the resistance to increased fees is strong. Some institutions are more equal than others and business schools have greatly increased their fees, but this only further emphasises the poverty of the teaching budget of universities. Research can bring in needed cash through contracts and through national research funding from the *Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR)*. However, there are two problems here: elite institutions do not see why they should compete for funding and the funding is only project-based, which means that individual researchers, especially in the Social Sciences and Humanities are as poor as ever. However, ANR funding has given researchers in all disciplines the possibility to build large cooperative projects and to move from the national to the international scene. Competitive funding is far from being detrimental to research as it requires thinking through a project and encourages cooperation over isolation. Nevertheless, a mixed situation where individuals researchers had the means to control their own destinies, and also to seek larger funding would be a solution, and far better than rejecting national funding out of hand.

The same issue arouses with evaluation. AERES national evaluation agency was never really an evaluation agency, as it lacked the means and the indicators. It was more, and still is, a monitoring of universities, research groups and programmes. An independent external analysis of research through peer review has proven its value and should never be written off out of hand. In the case of AERES, the advice and feedback has helped universities to become more open, more professional and truly international. This monitoring process continued after the reform of the agency by the socialist government, who pulled the teeth of the agency by removing its power to grade evaluations, and changed the name HCERES. It still does a useful job, although the rigour of AERES has in many cases given way to the French back scratching tendency where peers can be too close to those they are evaluating and not genuinely independent.<sup>13</sup> Again, raising standards and promoting cooperation rather than isolation is not such a bad thing.

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<sup>12</sup> ENRESSH was a COST Action that lasted from April 2016 to April 2020, whose aim was to look closely at evaluation methodologies across Europe and to propose best practices in SSH research evaluation. The participants in the project carried out different comparisons between research evaluation systems and came forward with a series of proposals in order to have a better assessment system throughout the European Union and beyond.

<sup>13</sup> On reviewing in France, see Geoffrey Williams, and Ioana Galleron, 'The Good, the Bad and the Downright Mediocre: Quality Judgments in Book Reviews', *Word and Text – A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics*, Special Issue: 'Mediocrity', eds. Ivan Callus, and Arleen Ionescu, 3.1 (2013): 102-18.

Thus, the main problem of this book is its bias in favour of a far-left analysis that wants a return to a centralised government-controlled university system where cash is handed out with no requirement to justify expenditures. The Shanghai rankings are both a cause of current problems through the way the press and politicians interpret them and also a scapegoat for the lack of any clear Higher Education and Research policy that addresses real issues and involves the researchers themselves in finding solutions. Those who are against are often, like Hugo Harari-Kermadec, in privileged institutions and their solutions are generally utopic.

In conclusion, this is very much a work of the French left-wing intelligentsia, still marked by a nostalgia for a Soviet-style communism, that they never actually experienced in reality. They dislike evaluation, whilst happily overlooking the fact that Eastern European Universities maintained very high standards, but also had excessively arcane evaluation by numbers. As George Orwell demonstrated in *Animal Farm*, ‘ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL, BUT SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS.’<sup>14</sup> The disadvantage of quantitative evaluation is that the more than equal may find that they are not as wonderful as they think. We are clearly in a don’t-shoot-the piano-player conundrum. The collateral damage from the Shanghai rankings, and rankings in general, is catastrophic for higher education and research everywhere. However, it is not necessarily ranking, and certainly not evaluation at fault, but what certain politicians have used them for their own ends. There is nothing wrong with emulation, quite the contrary, but the twisted political agenda of the economic progress (sic) lobby is at fault. The way out is not to decry rankings and evaluations, but to work to turn them to good. It is far too easy to criticise without giving truly feasible solutions, and this is something that ENRESSH did well by taking a pan-European view and looking closely at evaluation methodologies, social impact factors and ethical standards, which includes promoting Early Career Investigators. The Social Sciences and Humanities cannot live only on their self-perceived importance but must show themselves to be the equal of the so-called hard sciences. This is a matter of high standards and genuine outreach, whilst firmly condemning and combating inappropriate indicators and ulterior motives from outside academic values.

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<sup>14</sup> George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, in George Orwell, *Animal Farm; Burmese Days; A Clergyman’s Daughter Coming Up for Air; Keep the Aspidistra Flying; Nineteen Eighty-Four. Complete and Unabridged* (London: Secker & Warburg/Octopus, 1976), 63, original emphasis.

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