



Academic Freedom in a Democratic South Africa: Essays and Interviews on Higher Education and the Humanities

John Higgins

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How do we understand academic freedom today? Does it still have relevance in a global reconfiguring of higher education in the interests of the economy, rather than the public good? And locally, is academic freedom no more than an inconvenient ideal, paid lip service to South Africa's Constitution as an individual right, but neglected in institutional practice?

This book argues that the core content of academic freedom—the principle of supporting and extending open intellectual enquiry—is essential to realizing the full public value of higher education. John Higgins emphasizes the central role that the humanities, and the particular forms of argument and analysis they embody, bring to this task.

Each chapter embodies the particular force of a critical literacy in action, one which brings into play the combined force of historical inquiry, theoretical analysis, and precise attention to the textual dynamics of all statement so as to challenge and confront the received ideas of the day. These provocative analyses are complemented by probing interviews with three key figures from the Critical Humanities: Terry Eagleton, who discusses the deforming effects of managerialism in British universities; Edward W. Said, who argues for increased recognition of the democratizing force of the humanities; and Jakes Gerwel, who presents some of the most recent challenges for the realization of a humanist politics in South Africa.

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