Debating Higher Education: Philosophical Perspectives 2

Ronald Barnett
Amanda Fulford *Editors*

Philosophers on the University

Reconsidering Higher Education

Springer

Debating Higher Education: Philosophical Perspectives

Volume 2

Debating Higher Education: Philosophical Perspectives is a new book series launched by Springer and is motivated by two considerations.

Higher education has become a huge matter globally, both politically and socially, commanding massive resources, national and cross-national decision-making, and the hopes of many. Yet, there has been no dedicated book series that connects directly with the many debates on higher education.

In parallel, over the last four decades or so, there has been a growing interest in the academic literature in grappling with technical issues in and around higher education. In particular, work has developed drawing on philosophical perspectives and social theory. This is evident right across the world, especially in the journal literature and in research students' doctoral theses. In effect, we have witnessed the formation of a new sub-discipline, a shorthand of which is 'the philosophy of higher education', and which includes perspectives drawn not only from philosophy and social theory but also feminism, ethics, geopolitics, learning theory, and organizational studies.

Through this book series – the first of its kind in the world – the editors want to encourage the further development of this literature. We are keen to promote lively volumes which are informed about changing practices and policy frameworks in higher education and which engage seriously and deeply with matters of public interest, and are written in an accessible style.

Books will take a variety of forms, and will include both sole-authored and multi-authored formats. Importantly, each volume will have a dialogical flavour, engaging explicitly in dialogue with contemporary debates and their contending positions and, where practicable, especially in volumes with many contributors, will themselves exemplify dialogue.

The editors are keen that the series is open to many approaches. We wish to include work that focuses directly on the university as a social institution and on higher education as an educational process; on the idea of the university and on higher education as a sector with political and policy frameworks; on students and learning, and on academics and academic knowledge; and on curricula and pedagogy, and on research and knowledge processes.

Volumes will examine policy and practical issues including, for example, internationalisation, higher education as a set of 'public goods', access and fairness, and the digital era and learning as well as more conceptual and theoretical issues such as academic freedom, ethics, wellbeing, and the philosophy of social organizations.

The editors very much welcome informal inquiries at any time.

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Contents

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John Wyatt taught in schools, then in two teacher training colleges. He was Principal of a Teacher Training College, then Director of a newly formed Institute of Higher Education, now the University of Chichester. His publications, like his teaching, were frequently involved in inter-disciplinary studies, particularly linking Literature, and related studies in Geography, History and Philosophy. On retirement from the Institute, he was Visiting Professor in Education at the University of Southampton and linked as Visiting Fellow with The University of East London. His doctorate was typically inter-disciplinary, relating Wordsworth's re-conception of Nature, as the science of geology gathered momentum. This was a study pub-

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Chapter 1
Considering Higher Education: Thinking it Through

Ronald Barnett and Amanda Fulford

What Is a University?

Just what is a university? What is higher education? Even though higher education has ballooned worldwide – such that it now accommodates around 200 million students – these two questions are not much posed. When they are, what is characteristically offered are answers of two kinds, both of which are entirely legitimate.

Perhaps the most common way of tackling these questions is to offer sets of facts about universities and higher education, as we have already just done. There are x number of universities in the world (about 17,000 as it happens) or y numbers of students or that z% of students are from first generation families. Slightly more sophisticated answers of this kind might take a comparative approach along these lines. It might be observed that research generally attracts a higher status than teaching or that patterns of student financing vary considerably or that universities are increasingly working in partnership with external organisations (even if insufficiently, in some people's views) or that students seem to be suffering from increased levels of stress and are even not infrequently committing suicide.

These are entirely proper and, indeed, valuable ways of trying to understand universities and higher education. And this approach readily lends itself both to serious study among academics interested in higher education and in think tanks and national and cross-national agencies *and* to the development of policy frameworks and institutional and national planning and organisation.

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The other characteristic approach is typically to be found in ordinary conversation about higher education and characteristically takes the form of opinions being expressed in a form that incorporates value-judgments. So, for example, someone – it might be a politician or a member of the public or a university member or a student – might say something along the lines of 'the trouble with universities is that they are insufficiently concerned to prepare students for the real world and for the job market' or 'what's the use of academic research? It's never written in a form that anyone can understand' or 'a healthy system of higher education would see a high level of differentiation between universities'. Such remarks have an element of empirical fact in them – concerning the actual relationship between higher education and the labour market, about the actual character of university research, or of the make-up of a higher education system – and they also contain value elements. They include the beliefs that university is valuable insofar as it prepares students for 'the real world', that academic research has value when it is widely accessible, and that a higher education system.is likely to fulfil its value to society when it is stratified.

This latter set of remarks is, therefore, hybrid in nature. Each remark contains both claims about the way the world of higher education is in the world and expressions of values held towards higher education and universities. Now, it is evident that the veracity about factual claims about the empirical character of universities and higher education could, in principle, be judged with some degree of assurance and ease. The structure of a higher education system could be examined and, say, compared to other systems around the world. Research outpourings could be examined in all their many forms and their accessibility could be ascertained, perhaps by setting up a kind of experiment to see to what extent a random group of members of the public felt that the texts in question were comprehensible. And efforts could be put in hand to determine the fit between the knowledge, skills, abilities and aptitudes that graduates possessed and the demands placed upon them by their occupations in the labour market.

Some of these empirical matters are actually rather difficult to judge, but that doesn't matter here. What is significant here is the values that are present in those remarks. Making judgements about them seems to be, and is, fraught with difficulty. One might be tempted to say of any such belief – and the values within it – that that is just the opinion of x or of y and that's that.

However, to stop there would be to call a halt to our opening reflections prematurely. In investigation empirical claims, one of the ports of call – perhaps the first port of call – would be to see what researchers have said on the matters in question in the past. How have higher education systems been understood and what have been the matters over which they have been differentiated? How has the relationship between higher education and the labour market been seen? What forms do research publications take in the modern era and how are those forms of text themselves portrayed by scholars? In short, one starts with a literature search.

But just the same opening gambit can be put in hand in relation to beliefs, values and ideas about the purposes of universities and higher education. There is a literature that has attended to all of these matters, but it is at least over 200 years old. It is

largely, although by no means entirely, a philosophical literature. We use the adjective 'philosophical' deliberately and for two reasons. Firstly, it is certainly the case that a number of philosophers have turned their attention to the matter of the university and, for example, have offered their own idea of the university. Between the covers of this volume, José Ortega y Gasset and Karl Jaspers fall especially into this camp. Both wrote books bearing the title 'The Idea of the University' or something very similar.

However, many other philosophers have no attention to higher education at all, but yet their work may often be felt to have profound implications for the ways in which we might understand the university and higher education. Indeed, scholars who have attended to these philosophers' work have shown how this is the case. In this volume, Theodor Adorno, Stanley Cavell and Jacques Rancière would all fall under this banner. Although they paid no or virtually no attention to matters of higher education and the institution – or the idea – of the university as such, still their work offers very helpful illumination in this regard.

Secondly, and no less significantly, there are many important thinkers who are not, as it were, paid-up members of the philosophy fraternity – they were, or are not, academics working in the field of philosophy – but whose work, nevertheless, also may be of much help to us in trying to puzzle out the value of higher education or the university or in forming key principles to assist in developing our institutional and educational practices. For example, in this present collection, we have a chapter on the work of the academic, F. R. Leavis, who had a very large influence on the teaching of English Literature (both in universities and in schools) and who was passionately concerned with university education. Some would say that in setting out his ideas of the university, Leavis was unduly pre-occupied with the nature of the University of Cambridge while he was on its teaching staff in the 1940s to the 1960s, but that his ideas provoked heated debate then, there can be little doubt. What is evident is that Leavis is a thinker whose work has had much influence and which can at least prompt some searching questions of our underlying assumptions and, indeed, our practices in higher education.

This is, of course, an overly neat classification. For example, Ernest Gellner – the subject of one of the chapters here – was one of those continental European intellectuals who, in his case, not only effortlessly spanned philosophy, sociology and cultural analysis but also spent time as an anthropologist and held university chairs in three of these areas, including philosophy. Except, though, for one or two rare articles, he wrote nothing about universities or higher education. Roy Bhaskar, the focus of one of our other chapters, was a philosopher through and through (and, indeed, created a whole school of philosophy, that of Critical Realism) but he neither held a senior university position, nor did he express an intellectual interest in understanding the university and higher education. A third example of a far from straightforward academic career is that of Hannah Arendt who began university teaching in her mid-40s and while holding positions at several universities, never had a long-standing position as a senior professor.

While it is true that most of the chapters here are concerned with the work of individuals who were philosophers in some way, we would prefer to use the term

'thinkers' as an umbrella term. Each of the individuals on which our chapters focus *thought* deeply and wrote much about the matters that especially interested them. It is tempting to use the term 'intellectuals' but that term should be resisted here, for it carries much baggage. Some of the connotations of that term are a willingness to be outspoken in the public area, to engage with social and political matters of the day (or at least to be seen as having that significance) and to understand themselves as being part of an intellectual class in society. Doubtless much of this can be said of each of the thinkers on whom we have settled here, but even if it was an apposite term, we wouldn't use it here. Our settling on the thinkers in the chapters of this volume is simply that we felt that their academic thinking has carry-over in illuminating profound matters concerning the university and higher education.

Why especially the thinkers that appear here? There are a number of reasons. Unashamedly, one reason is that we were intent on securing contributions from scholars who had not only written much on higher education, but also who had also written on the thinker in question in each case, and whom we knew could be relied upon to furnish high quality chapters on their chosen subject. A separate strand of our thinking is that we wanted to produce a volume the subjects of whom are thinkers of the twentieth century. This holds for all of the thinkers represented here, with one exception, that of Friedrich Nietzsche, who just falls outside our timeframe (his dates being 1844–1900). Does the exception prove the rule? If not, perhaps we can be forgiven for breaking our rule since Nietzsche provided an impetus and provocation not just for much of twentieth century philosophy but for twentieth-century thought in general.

Our other wish, in making our selection, was to bring together a group of thinkers who, between them, spanned a wide range of traditions and genres and who collectively would provide the makings of a stimulating volume. The thinkers here are a very wide group in that sense, and if we were magically to have them all together for a grand 3-day seminar, we could imagine all manner of cross-currents, not to mention heated antipathies. Would Lyotard and Bhaskar have found any point of contact, the one seemingly wanting to avow all large concepts and ideas, the other wanting not only to do just that but to insist on the presence of a real character to the world, in all its ontologically stratified nature and yet offering the chance of transcendence into a meta-reality? Perhaps Ortega could have found common cause with Jaspers both being existentialists in a way, and interested in transcendental matters of the spirit. Heidegger should have been able to talk to both: there could have been contact with Ortega over his valuing of culture, and with Jaspers over his fascination with existence but, as Steve Burwood recalls here, Jaspers split with Heidegger. Arendt might have sympathised up to a point, in her interests in human agency, but would have found both wanting, in insufficiently playing up the powers of the state. Adorno should have been able to have found common cause with Arendt, for both were conscious of the power to manipulate consciousness within totalitarianism; but his sense of there being an unsurmountable gap between the way the world is and the possibilities inherent in our concepts might have been excessive for Arendt. And so there are considerable points of contact, but also many large tensions between the thinkers portrayed here.

Part I: Questioning the University

Søren Bengtsen's chapter shows how the work of Friedrich Nietzsche poses large questions about the university. Is it too conformist? Is it too settled in its ways? Does it realise that it has considerable possibilities in the world? Is it timid? Might it form its own sense of what is good and right? Nietzsche's philosophy suggests uncomfortable answers to all these questions. The university has powers that it doesn't and perhaps daren't admit nor try to realise. It hides from itself. 'But this is our fault, not the fault of [the university]'. The university has a drive within it that is too easily quelled. If only it would understand its powers, its creative possibilities in knowledge production and its potential for cultural leadership might be much enhanced. The university should dare 'to be terrible', forging new academic and societal values.

Theodor Adorno was another philosopher who posed awkward questions of the university, as Jan McArthur explicitly observes. The questions were doubly awkward. They were awkward in that, in the Critical Theory which Adorno did much to construct, the university was framed as an institution that was complicit in unquestioningly falling in with the instrumentalism that flowed from the Enlightenment; 'thought's complacent agreement with itself'. And they were awkward also in that the university was cast both as a home to the Enlightenment *and* as a place for critique, and it was this latter possibility and responsibility that the university was failing to realise. Of course, there are critics – for example – of neoliberalism, but it all too often rests on a moral superiority. We need a new grammar of intellectual life, that develops creative concepts that work against the status-quo, and thinks them through. This thinking is the first call of a university that forms itself as a source of emancipatory change.

Ernest Gellner, as Ronald Barnett indicates, occupies a somewhat enigmatic position in this book. He hardly ever commented on the university as such but as a polymath – his work made serious contributions to philosophy, social theory, anthropology, political theory and cultural studies – his oeuvre has considerable carry-over into any serious study of higher education. Where, if at all, lies the legitimacy of academic knowledge? To what extent can the university fall back on the idea of objectivity? Do the humanities have any substantial value in a science-based world? Is any kind of independence available to thought? What might be made of the idea of culture? These are just a few of the profound questions that Gellner's work poses of the university and higher education. And both the university and higher education come directly in play here. The university is summoned in the face of Gellner's insights since its place in the world is put in question: is it simply the handmaiden of a tight scientific rationalism, or might it legitimately also offer contributions to the advancement of culture? Higher education, as an educational process, is summoned too: what is it to be literate? What is it to be educated? Gellner's questions are still with us.

As David Scott notes, *Roy Bhaskar* was another thinker who rarely addressed the nature of the university but whose work – in establishing the philosophy of critical realism – poses profound questions of the university. If there is a key question emerging from Bhaskar's philosophy, perhaps it is this: 'Is not the university's

understanding of itself, and of others' understandings of it – and thereby of its position in the world – particularly shallow? Bhaskar's philosophy rested not only on an acute sense of there being a real world, independent of our knowledge of it, but of the world being layered. There are real features of the world that exert their force in the world but yet are not easily discernible. However, a sensitivity to this 'meta-reality' opened the way to the attainment of a 'freedom from desire', through absenting constraints on human flourishing. This 'unfolding of the enfolded' poses searching questions of the pedagogical process: What is to be the character of the teacher-student relationship? What is it to make a judgement? Criticality has to come into play but then what might be meant by *that*?

Part II: Culture and the University

If he did not much use the term 'culture' in his writings on the university, *F. R. Leavis* was nevertheless much concerned with the university in that connection. As Steven Cranfield describes, Leavis was much taken up with the slide of the university – as Leavis saw it – into the 'technologico-Benthamism' of the age. This was a culture that exhibited a mind-set of 'blankness' in the face of instrumental reason. For Leavis, despite its apparent entrapment in industrial civilisation, the university remained a source of hope in its potential in becoming the nucleus of a radically humane self-awareness. 'Only in the university can the needed new function [for the educated public] develop its organ.' Leavis implicitly posed many questions of the university: Could the terms 'culture' and 'university' meaningfully be put together anymore? Could the curriculum be rescued such that it might play its part in this unification (of culture and the university)? What might be the role of literature? And what might be the essence of the pedagogical relationship? To all these questions, Leavis supplied his own trenchant answers. More than that, Leavis posed and gave an answer to the question 'What is a university?' It was a centre of collaborative creativity, vitality and, therefore, of life.

A chapter on *Hannah Arendt* could comfortably have been placed in any of the sections of this volume, for Arendt's work, as Jon Nixon makes plain, is difficult to categorise not least because it spans an intricate network of concepts. We place it here because Arendt's work was surely ultimately about the character of a culture and what makes for a flourishing culture. Central to her work was a distinction between labour, understood as the kind of human activity required for survival, and work, as the kind of activity involved in creating an artificial world where life has some durability and permanence. It was out of work, so considered, that civilisation and human culture arose. In this kind of culture, both thought and action were crucial, bound together by the faculty of judgement steered by a sensitivity towards plurality. For Arendt, both thought and agency exhibited a necessary interplay between a solitary and a public sphere. How is a university to be understood against this background? As a public institution for a truth-oriented conversation between and across the generations. Culture was a matter of never-ending curiosity, inquiry, critique and argument, and the university was an institution that stood – or should stand – for all of these life-forms, in standing as a bulwark against totalitarianism.

The matter of culture lay right at the heart of the thinking of *Ortega y Gasset*, as John Wyatt makes clear. For Ortega, culture was crucial if life was to have meaning: 'Culture is what save human life from being a mere disaster.' But what is culture: 'Culture is the vital system of ideas of a period'. 'Personally [Ortega remarked], I should make a Faculty of Culture the nucleus of the university, and of the whole of higher education'. In explaining his proposal for the university's curriculum, he wanted to apply. His favoured curriculum was to be built around 'the great cultural disciplines' which included the sciences as well as other disciplines. But, Ortega observed, 'the contemporary university…has abandoned almost entirely the teaching or transmission of culture'. Culture was not fixed but was alive, and so higher education had to be alive: the curriculum had to be 'vitalized' and 'charged with enthusiasm', so that the student could be 'active'. This was not a university to be cut off from life but 'in the midst of real life, and saturated with it'.

Although *Alisdair MacIntyre* did not much consider culture directly, he certainly referred to it, looking, for example, to education to provide a general culture so as to enable young people to think for themselves. More especially, however, the matter of culture surely permeates a great deal of his oeuvre. As John Haldane makes plain, MacIntyre has been concerned to draw out purposes or ends of life and has done this by discerning virtues that lie within practices of communities and institutions. These virtues constitute internal goods, which in turn provide cross-generational ends and standards of and for human life. Such a philosophy in places considerable responsibilities upon all educational institutions and practices, not least universities. For MacIntyre, universities in particular were to be sites of critical thought and debate, where the largest issues and disagreements could be worked through, not least to equip students with the wherewithal – subsequently as citizens – to contribute to the continual examination of ends and purposes and the onward flourishing of society. Unfortunately, 'the contemporary research university is by and large a place in which certain questions go unasked…' (MacIntyre 2011, p. 174). The fundamental issues as to the idea of the university, accordingly, have to be worked out as an expression of a philosophy.

Part III: Letting Learn

In many parts of the world, much attention is being given these days to 'the student experience' but what should that look like? As Paul Gibbs shows, *Martin Heidegger* gave a set of answers to this question. Heidegger's central notion is that the teacher-student relationship should be one of 'let learn'. This idea was associated with a penumbra of other ideas in Heidegger's philosophy in general and in his idea of the university. These included that the student's responsibility was that of becoming authentic, of education as a space for the student's *being* to flourish, of the university being infused with spirit and of pedagogy taking the form of a Socratic critical dialogue that amounted to a process of ontological questioning. In this kind of education, the educator's role was one of activating 'concern' in students so that they be released from their otherwise helplessness. Structuring a university in this way

called for a leadership characterised by a spiritual authority, an idea that constituted a direct attack on the traditional Humboldtian model of the university. Heidegger remains an ambiguous figure, and not only for his apparent sympathies for the Third Reich, and those ambiguities spill over into his ideas about the university and the pedagogical relationship but his ideas also remain fruitful today.

'Letting learn' could well be felt to provide a neat summary of the work of Karl Jaspers but it would have to be nuanced since, as is clear in Stephen Burwood's portrait, Jaspers saw the university as a space in which both students and academics could freely pursue their intellectual interests. Neither was the state to curb the academics' freedom but – and just as important – neither were the academics to curb the students' freedom. (It was a concern on the latter ground that led Jaspers to consent to the suspension of Heidegger after World War II, given Heidegger's 'mystagogy of a sorceror'). Of course, this freedom was not absolute for it was to be governed by a spirit of truthfulness. Such freedom also brought its responsibilities in upholding truthfulness in a challenging world. For Jaspers, therefore, the university was – or should be – a lively place, of argument and in defending its interests. The university possessed a certain spirit, a spirit infused with a will to reason and to seek truth: 'Spirit is the potentiality and power of ideas'. This may sound unworldly but, as Burwood notes, it is far from that, even if a spiritual rebirth was now required.

In her chapter on *Stanley Cavell*, Amanda Fulford notes that Cavell's work is, like some others in this volume, not directly concerned either with the institution of the university, nor with the higher education sector. Indeed, his work does not address the practices of formal schooling or education at all. Yet his work is profoundly concerned with a kind of 'letting learn' that he repeatedly returns to in the ideas of the transformation of oneself, and of society. Both amount, for Cavell, to a form of education. Central to the kinds of transformation that Cavell envisages are two related ideas: the development and expression of voice, and our openness to what he calls uncommon schooling. This is not an invidualistic account, but is rather one that emphasises how such transformation is part of what is it to be in community with others. The development of our voice is, for Cavell, ineluctably related to his consideration of what it means to us to possess language within a community of speakers, and to what ideas we chose to give, or withhold, our consent. And our uncommon schooling is thought of in terms of an ongoing commitment throughout our lives – an orientation towards a better self through what we might think of as a letting learn. It is these ideas that have strong resonance with some of the aims and purposes of higher education, and as such, make Cavell a writer and philosopher whose work has import for thinking about the university.

Part IV: Higher Education and Democracy

As Naoko Saito makes clear, the educational ideas of John Dewey were bound up both with his philosophy of pragmatism in general and his concept of democracy in particular. For Dewey, democracy was a matter of the way we live our lives on a daily basis. Democracy was in service to liberty: it was essentially creative and,

therefore, education was essentially also creative. Problem-solving, action, and the transformation of existing reality were all key ideas in this intertwining of democracy and education, but not in a facile or superficial sense, for Dewey saw education as space that opened human experience that, in turn, offered the prospect of human transformation. Dewey did not much concern himself directly with universities and higher education, but his work prompts issues and possibilities. For example, critical thinking (and being self-critical), called for a 'courageous intelligence', at once 'practical and executive' while aware of the instability of one's own self-knowledge. Far from being relegated in their significance, the humanities perhaps might have particular part to play in this joint hope for education and democracy.

In Joris Vlieghe's chapter he introduces *Jacques Rancière* as a philosopher of higher education. As with other thinkers in this volume, Vleighe shows how Rancière is an established name in the fields of political philosophy and aesthetics, and that the importance of his work for the sphere of educational philosophy has only recently become clear. Nevertheless, Vlieghe argues that his thoughts on education form the very heart of the whole of his philosophy, and that his thoughts on the arts and politics cannot be rightly grasped without referring to the key claim that he develops in his most direct writing on education (1991). This claim – that we all share the same intelligence – seems totally going against the grain, but that is the whole point. What Rancière proposes is to act *as if* we are all equally intelligent and then see what happens, that is, to see whether we have made a difference, or not. In what is surely a kind of letting learn, Rancière invites us to act differently and to make a difference to the world we are living in.

Jurgen Habermas, as Ted Fleming indicates, has not just been a contributor to democracy in his writings but has been a public intellectual active in playing a vigorous part in strengthening democracy. Indeed, Habermas' willingness to engage in public debates both with other leading intellectual and with large political issues of the day, not least about the future of Europe, are testimony to his exhibiting in practical manner his philosophy worked out in his oeuvre over the past 50 years. Crudely, Habermas can be depicted as a – perhaps *the* – philosopher of reason. Habermas does not see the contemporary world as non-rational but rather has tried to show that the kinds of reason dominant in the modern world are skewed, or partial, in some way.

Building on the legacy of the critique of instrumental reason fashioned by the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, Habermas has taken two paths. Firstly, he has sought to draw attention to alternative forms of reason, in human understanding, in ecological movements and in the resources that religion has to offer. Secondly, he has sought to lay bare the life of reason that is inherent in any rational discourse, the participants in which are implicitly signing up to validity claims of truthfulness, sincerity and appropriateness. All this has immediate application to both universities and higher education. As institutions supposedly having allegiance to reasonableness, management systems of universities have a responsibility to resemble so far as practicable the 'ideal speech situation' of a rational discourse. And in their knowledge activities, they have a responsibility to open themselves as widely as possible to forms of reason other than technocratic and instrumental reason now gripping higher education across the world.

Afterthought

Bringing together the thinking of several major scholars of the past one hundred-plus years, in the vignettes offered here, has given us, as the two editors, a certain degree of pleasure, not least in our wanting to bring the work of these thinkers to audiences who do not commonly encounter this kind of thinking in debates about higher education and the university. We warmly thank our contributors in living up to our wish to make accessible the work of leading thinkers whose work can be both obscure and difficult. A further pleasure lies in the way in which – for us – the volume as a whole contributes to the task of helping to deepen the global debate about higher education and the university, in picking up fundamental issues and in going into them in some depth, deeper than debate – either in public or even sometimes in the scholarly literature – sometimes allows. Of course, this discerning of the significance of important thinkers for understanding higher education and the university can be only a preliminary to going deeper still into the work and thoughts of the thinkers on view here and others like them.

This kind of thinking about higher education and the university has several virtues. It is a style of thinking that goes deeply into matters, not just on their own account or even just with the intention of shedding light on murky issues. This is a thinking into matters and *through* matters, which both brings out aspects of higher education and the university that are rarely present in the public debate and, moreover, seeks to open paths of possibilities for action. It is a thinking through with intent. It will never be sufficient for wise actions and policies in higher education but it is surely necessary.

A final word: The Editors would like to express their gratitude to a number of colleagues for their unfailing support in helping to realise this volume. Our thanks go to Paul Gibbs, one of the Editors of this series, for his patience and kind support throughout the process. We are also grateful to the anonymous viewers whose critical comments and insights have helped us to make this a better volume. Thanks are also extended to colleagues at Springer: to Annemarie Keur for all her help in the earlier stages of putting this volume together, and latterly to Marianna Pascale who has helped tremendously with the last stages of the manuscript preparation. Finally, special thanks must go to all our contributing authors who have worked tirelessly with us, patiently responding to our queries. Without them, this book would never have never come to fruition.

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Part I
Questioning the University

Chapter 2
Nietzsche (1844–1900): The Will to Power and the University

Søren S. E. Bengtsen

Introduction

This chapter will explore the idea of the contemporary and future university through the lense of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). Nietzsche himself had a strained and ambiguous relation to the university. In his days as a student at Leipzig University and later in 1869–1878 as a young and ambitious professor of classical philology at University of Basel, he was a successful and progressive academic, who, besides his research and teaching within philology, lectured (Nietzsche 2014) and published (Nietzsche 1983) on education for the generations to come. However, in the early 1870s, only a short time into his professorship at Basel, he started to feel discontent with academic life (Hollingdale 1999, pp. 50ff.), which culminated in the aftermath of the publication of his work *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* in 1872, which received a very poor reception in academic circles.

Due to his increasingly ill health, Nietzsche was continuously on leave, for shorter and longer periods at a time, from the university from 1871 until he finally had to resign due to health issues in 1879. During the 1880s, until his collaps into insanity in 1889, Nietzsche travelled and lived in various locations mainly in Northern Italy, Southern France, and Switzerland, from the belief that the warmer climate might improve his condition. The energy and turbulence, physically as well and psychically, in his personal life, very much marked Nietzsche as a wanderer and philosopher of travel, transformation, and becoming. As Walter Kaufmann (1974) remarks, there is a strong relation between Nietzsche's personal life and his philosophy, which resulted in his particular approach in style of writing and thinking, which Kaufmann calls one of 'experimentalism' (Kaufmann 1974, p. 85).

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Even though that prominent and highly influential studies have been published on Nietzsche's philosophy of education (Cooper 2012; Fitzsimons, 2007; Jonas and Yacek 2018), there has been almost no work relating Nietzsche's philosophy more specifically to higher education, or to a philosophy of the university. This chapter will not, therefore, give a presentation of Nietzsche's thoughts on higher education and the university, but will apply core concepts from Nietzsche's later writings, both ones published and unpublished during his own lifetime, to analyse and discuss challenges and potentials for our present and future universities. The focus will be on the university as an expression of the will to power and as an institution that may still be awaiting its proper dawn.

Setting the Scene

The university today struggles to find its, ever more slippery, footing in an audit culture and amidst neoliberal discourses that drain the imaginary power and energy of the university – causing fatigue and self-doubt. Too often we find universities defending themselves from a victimised position, where the rhetoric is dystopian and full of stories of the decline and fall of an era of higher education that always seems to lie somewhere in the immediate past. Rarely, we hear universities speaking in a strong-willed and self-confident way, and addressing issues of higher education from a new, inventive, and imaginary perspective that is oriented not to the past, or a unstable present, but to an optimistic future. Universities themselves can change the constantly emerging, and unsettled, future for higher education, but this requires imaginative power and a reinvigorated belief in the power of the university as an institution. In this endeavor, Nietzsche, may be of help, and we see, in Nietzsche, the determining feature of the institution as being future-oriented:

> Our institutions are not good any more… But this is *our* fault, not the fault of the institutions. After we lose all the instincts that give rise to institutions, we lose the institutions themselves because *we* are not suited to them anymore… The West in its entirety has lost the sort of instincts that give rise to institutions, that give rise to a *future*. (Nietzsche 2010, p. 214)

First, my aim in this chapter is to explore this instinct, the will to power (*Wille zur Macht*), which universities today may be argued to be in need of. This will take my analysis of the concept of power (*Macht*) in Nietzsche and the ways he links it to knowledge and human growth. Second, I shall explore the inner being of such institutions, which Nietzsche refers to, and the ideals for education, personal and societal development, which may be detected in selected passages from a sample of Nietzsche's central works. Finally, I link my analysis to the discussion of higher education today.

Here, I discuss the consequences of changing the higher education discourse from one of decline to one of the dawn (daybreak) and a new beginning. Indeed, Nietzsche may help us unfold an ontology of the future university and a discussion

of the coming of values not yet present and understood. This includes the privilege of the university today as being the herald of thoughts not yet arrived to man, and the bringer of social values not yet comprehended and embraced.

The concept of the will to power plays a central role in Nietzsche's entire oeuvre, at least as an underlying concept in his writings from the 1880s. However, it is being treated most explicitly in the posthumous work (collection of working notes) *The Will to Power* (Nietzsche 1968). Here, power does not refer to either a worldly material power or to hedonistisc displays of pure emotion of pleasure. The will to power is a metaphysical concept of becoming, and is 'not only the basic urge of man but nothing less than the fundamental drive of all living beings' (Kaufmann 1974, p. 206). The powerful life is a life of creation and creativity. As Kaufmann writes, the powerful life is the life of those who 'are in full control of their impulses and need not weaken them', and the powerful man for Nietzsche is 'the passionate man who is the master of his passions' (Kaufmann 1974, p. 280).

The will to power is an expression of a life force that through man makes itself manifest in individual and cultural growth. Here, growth is not meant in the sense of religious or secular, and economic or political, growth – even though such forms of growth may certainly arise as side effects. Karl Jaspers, in his early book on Nietzsche, writes that 'wherever life is, there is also a will to power', and the 'will to power becomes a new specification of the concept "life"' (Jaspers 1997, p. 294). However, life is 'not lived merely at the expense of others; it is lived at one's own expense', and life comes to mean 'that which must always *overcome itself*' (Jaspers 1997, p. 296). This ontological experimentation, excess and creativity is linked to an ethical vein.

The Will to Power of the University

Nietzsche foregrounds the instincts that give rise to institutions; these instincts are the expression of the will to power. In a globalised discourse on higher education, universities have become socio-politically tied institutions, almost reducible to the specific socio-political discourse they entertain in any given national domain. Nietzsche reminds us that institutions for higher education are not themselves direct expressions of the force, or instinct, that drives them. They are merely forms, masks, and experiments grounded in a deeper will to power, which is always excessive to the individual institution. Like everything else, the individual institution is 'only a *means* to something; it is the expression of forms of the growth of power' (Nietzsche 1968, p. 375). Nietzsche allows us to understand the university as a form of being, not to be reduced to a structural, or economic, feature of educational policy or practice.

Seen from the lens of the concept of the will to power, the university has its own drives, and 'an inner will must be ascribed to it [the university], which I designate as "will to power", i.e. as an insatiable desire to manifest power; or as the enjoyment and exercise of power, as a creative drive' (Nietzsche 1968, p. 333). As Robin Small

describes it, the university and education itself is…seen as a search for power' (Small 2016, p. 58). The university is not the kind of institution or professional knowledge domain put into existence to realise a pre-set political or cultural agenda or goal. The university, as an institution, is *defined by the very search* for its own meaning and potential societal and cultural contribution and engagement. Like a plant, the growth of the university is different across the various cultures, political situations, and periods in time. At the same time, the will to power of the university tries to adapt to the specific conditions of the given context *and* strives to exert its own search for power, exceeding its immediate context, through critical knowledge creation and highly specialised research methods.

As Ronald Barnett (2011) has shown, universities have, through the decades and across cultures, taken many different institutional forms with a great variety of higher education curricula depending of the specific circumstances and socio-cultural environments. Universities, however, are not just responding in a mellow way to the national and political soil in which they grow; they change accordingly to the very landscape in which they take root. Indeed, when universities make their will to power manifest and 'reveal hidden and deep layers of reality…[,] higher education changes' (Bengtsen and Barnett 2017, p. 124). Here, we find the understanding that higher education programmes change due to the deeper change within the being of the university, and not the other way around (in what seems to be the understanding in many contemporary discourses on higher education and the university).

The university is always testing itself and experimenting with different forms of knowledge creation. The will to power of the university does not conform to its surroundings, but resists and challenges. We see this in the debates on the rise in student fees and in the debates concerning accessibility to higher education across gender, ethnic groups, social background and age. Here, academic staff and students themselves take action and engage with agendas forced upon them (Waghid and Davids 2018). As Sonja Arndt and Carl Mika (2018) have argued, proper thinking in universities takes the form of 'dissident thought'. As Nietzsche writes, the 'will to power can manifest itself only against resistances; therefore it seeks that which resist it' (Nietzsche 1968, p. 346). This does not mean that the university seeks to dominate other institutions or the wider societal discourses. Resistance, here, means that the university seeks the critical dialogue with its surrounding environment, to enhance the creativity of its knowledge activities, and, basically, to challenge its own power. Contrary to the general opinion that the power of the university increases due to the increase in knowledge production, the reverse is the case from a Nietzschean perspective – that the knowledge creation increases due to an increase in power:

> Knowledge works as a tool of power. Hence it is plain that it increases with every increase of power…the measure of the desire for knowledge depends upon the measure to which the will to power grows in a species: a species grasps a certain amount of reality in order to become master of it, in order to press it into service. (Nietzsche 1968, pp. 266–267)

Grasping a certain amount of reality becomes manifest of the search for, and establishing of, truth. Equally, the process of resistance takes the form of truth-seeking. As the Nietzsche scholar Philip Kain puts it, we must understand this 'in the sense that what gives us the greatest feeling of power is what we *take to be true*', and the '[w]ill to power is a process of constructing truths, that is, what we *take to be truth*' (Kain 2009 p. 41). This is not to be understood in the sense that universities strive to find and establish the final truth, but in the sense that 'truths' and truth-seeking are ways of making manifest the will to power. As Sharon Rider (2018) argues, the university is the 'safe zone' (p. 28) where many conflicting truths may be articulated and critically discussed up against each other, and where the presence of personal and political interest and conviction has limited coercive force. Truth is not the goal for research, teaching and learning; truth is the way the will to power of universities makes itself present and felt. This point helps us see universities as something else and more that innocent victims kidnapped into a game of politics and economy. Even, the will to power of universities would seek that very discourse in order to resist it.

Further, the workings of knowledge and truth-seeking always harden in certain values with which universities identify themselves. These vary according to culture and historical context. In some instances, universities relate truth to a higher religious order and principle, and in others they relate truth to the voice of marginalised ethnic groups or refugees from war. Just as truth, for some universities, may relate to core disciplinary knowledge, independent of societal or political interference, for others it may relate to educational reform and social heritage. As Nietzsche states, '[v]alue is the highest quantum of power that a man is able to incorporate', and different versions and forms of institutions of higher education are 'merely the experimental material, the tremendous surplus of failures' (Nietzsche 1968, p. 380). Here, we see, again, the difference between the university as a deeper will to power versus individual universities (institutions) as examples of that power. The individual university – the specific socio-political and cultural institution – should not aim for a permanent duration and enduring societal relevance and meaning. Individual universities must rise and fall in order to rise again in a new shape, but sronger and more powerful than before.

So, universities *use* truths and *use* values as means to a higher end, but what is that end? Assessing universities through the idea of a will to power helps us see them in a different light, as not merely part of a globalised economy, but also as belonging to a force that sweeps through societies and becomes entangled in such discourses, but that also might resist them (as they would resist any other discourse trying to pin them down and reduce them to *specific* values and *certain* truths). Universities breathe values and clothe themselves in truths – but underneath is a wilder force at work.

The University: A Hothouse for Strange and Choice Plants

Being educated close to the will to power of the university, and close to the original instinct embedded within the force of the institution, is certainly a challenging and transformative journey. Nietzsche does not have any immediate thought that institutions for higher education should produce knowledge workers or even good citizens. Rather, he is suggesting a different idea of formation and knowledge creation. Nietzsche endorses the development of '[t]he jungle-growth "man"', who always appears 'where the struggle for power has been waged the longest. *Great* men… jungle animals' (Nietzsche 1968, p. 504). These jungle-growth men are also referred to as 'higher men' and a 'higher type' (Nietzsche 1968, p. 458), and more generally a 'higher form of being' (Nietzsche 1968, p. 464).

Indeed, Nietzsche did not have in mind a secluded academic hiding away in an ivory tower around a narrow pursuit of knowledge. Instead, the higher type is a person who not only has an understanding of a multitude of perspectives and aims, but who herself has 'the greatest multiplicity of drives, in the relatively greatest strength that can be endured' (Nietzsche 1968, p. 507). Indeed, where the 'plant "man" shows himself strongest one finds instincts that conflict powerfully…but are controlled" (ibid.). This means, academics working closely to the will to power of the university have obtained in them a great multitude of different world views, the understanding of a variety of different societal challenges and conflicts, and constantly critique their own methods and approaches. Formation in higher education is defined by the ability to endure and critically wield these conflicting epistemological and even ontological forces, and Nietzsche advises that we should '[l]ook for the highest type of free human beings where the highest resistance is constantly being overcome' (Nietzsche 2010, pp. 213–214).

Embracing a great diversity of drives and conflicting world views sets the academic apart from other professions. According to Nietzsche, it requires 'the will to be terrible', and '[t]o fight upward out of that chaos to this form … one must be faced with the choice of perishing or prevailing, and this higher type 'can grow up only out of terrible and violent beginnings' (Nietzsche 1968, p. 465). The university, seen from the outside, may be understood as a terrible place in the sense that it trains its members not to be immediately compatible with the general norms of societal membership and relevant knowledge contribution. Indeed, the higher type would 'seem *terrible*…in his kindness', and people might 'flee from the sunburn of wisdom in which the overman joyfully bathes his nakedness! (Nietzsche 2014, p. 114).

Universities that 'give rise to a future' should not only be seen as producers of higher education, but as having a wider sense of purpose and a more enigmatic will to power that exceeds the policy demands and the disciplinary curricula. To embrace the higher type, universities may even have to move beyond educative programmes and explore their creative and excessive powers anew (Bengtsen 2017). Perhaps a more direct and unfiltered engagement between universities and society could be the way to go – a way not mediated through higher education programmes and institutional settings removed from the workings and dealings of professional,

social, and cultural practices. A strong merging with society but without losing the defining and characteristic features of academic activity and becoming.

Nietzsche describes such an institution as a culture with its own 'sphere of life, with an excess of strength for beauty, bravery, culture, manners to the highest peak of the spirit', and which he envisions as, again using organic tropes of language, 'a hothouse for strange and choice plants' (Nietzsche 1968, p. 478). Nietzsche returns to this notion of the 'hothouse' elsewhere in his writings, and he uses these exotic, yet controlled, organic experiments as a metaphor for the proper culture for growth. The 'hothouse' as a guiding metaphor for institutional growth stands in stark contrast to examples of universities that become assimilated into purely instrumental discourses and educational frameworks, which drain the university of its will to power and chain the institution too tightly to policy, measurement and metrics.

To achieve a higher education, we need '[t]hose great hothouses for the strong, for the strongest type of people ever to exist, aristocratic communities' (Nietzsche 2010, p. 214). To really think anew, and to engage in a fully critical knowledge creation process, we have to build academic cultures of excess. The challenge for universities today is that they are too fixated on their identity as institutions for higher education providers for external partners like the government, private companies, public and private organisations, and professional job domains. Universities need to reconnect to the adjective 'higher' in higher education to establish themselves as the powerful places they are. As Nietzsche writes:

> Higher education: essentially the means of directing the taste against the exceptions for the good of the mediocre. Only when a culture has an excess of powers at its disposal can it also constitute a hothouse for the luxury cultivation of the exception, the experiment, of danger, of the nuance: – this is the tendency of every aristocratic culture. (Nietzsche 1968, p. 492)

In this quotation, and in those above, we see that Nietzsche links higher education and knowledge experiments to a certain form of culture, which he terms 'aristocratic culture'. Aristocratic here, following the quotations above, means a 'hothouse community' that is subtle, nuanced, adventurous, critical, courageous, and even defiant. It is not a culture where its members hide from public debate and societal engagement, and it is not a community of loners and strange prophets (who also occupy Nietzsche's work, admittedly). In contemporary Nietzschean scholarship this attention towards a more constructive societal and political dimension is building momentum. In the work of Tamsin Shaw (2007) we meet a Nietzsche who is 'searching for a way to reconcile his naturalism with his realist orientation', and Nietzsche's value-criticism is seen 'to be aimed at recovering…our awareness that natural phenomena can have intrinsic value (Shaw 2007, p. 122). This approach to Nietzsche seems to enhance the strands in his work that implicitly endorse an awareness for biodiversity and the preservation of biological eco-systems beyond the human realm.

Even, in the work of Michael Ure (2015) it is argued that 'Nietzsche aims to establish a political therapy that treats this corruption of higher forms of life', and that 'Nietzsche's therapy focuses on healing higher types of this corruption so that they can pursue their own flourishing (Ure 2015, p. 173). Such political readings of

Nietzsche have gained further momentum over the last two decades since the work of David Owen (1995) on the political implications of Nietzsche's philosophy. This is not like the focus of more traditional Nietzschean scholarship where the overman is celebrated in his isolated disinterest and societal abandonment, but on the contrary, as a social awareness and societal conscience.

In a similar vein, Malcolm Bull (2014) presents Nietzsche's philosophy as a challenge towards 'negative ecologies' (Bull 2014 pp. 55ff.), which are contexts of societal and political nihilism, where universities and higher education do not assume their rightful role as cultural leaders. I argue that higher education institutions, from a Nietzschean perspective, should become creators of '[e]cologies of value' (Bull 2014, p. 67) and help nurturing the soil for the growth of the higher type. Universities in an ecological role, and as bringers of political therapy, is in line with the focus on higher education ecologies in contemporary scholarship (Barnett 2018). For universities to become hothouses for choice and rare plants, and to take root in a wider societal context and engagement, requires a change in our mindset and discourses about universities and higher education from a negative ecology to a more positive ecology with an optimism for higher education. Indeed, such an 'optimistic university is a university-in-the-world and thinks the future *from* the world' (Barnett and Bengtsen 2017, p. 8).

For universities to overcome themselves in the present state of negative ecology, or cultural nihilism, they must explore and reinvigorate their institutional power as an excess to socio-economic discourses. Universities will need to promote their own 'greatness' and role as cultural leaders. However, the most central traits foregrounded by Nietzsche – resistance, dissidence, tension, and overcoming, are all *relational* dimensions. Here, the image of the hothouse points towards exotic ecologies and relationships between universities and their surroundings – perhaps even a new dawn of higher education.

The Dawn of Higher Education

For universities to 'give rise to a *future*', they must be seen as a means, and not an end in themselves, to a wider societal and cultural growth, and even a growth of *life* itself. Institutions for the future, like the overman, should be understood as 'a bridge and not an end; counting itself blessed for its noon and evening as the way to new dawns' (Nietzsche 2014, p. 158). In Nietzsche the overman symbols 'the repudiation of any conformity to a single norm' and is the 'antithesis to mediocracy and stagnation' (Kaufmann 1974, p. 309). Instead of being enslaved by his passions and fears, the overman 'has overcome his animal nature, organized the chaos of his passions, sublimated his impulses, and given style to his character' (Kaufmann 1974, p. 316). Here, I transfer this notion of the overman to the university as an institution and a will to power. By seeing the university as an experiment of thought and value, as a hothouse, we see that in our societies themselves, and not just within the institutions, there 'are so many experiments still to make! There are so many futures still

to dawn!' (Nietzsche 2005, p. 110). The dawn of higher education, in a Nietzschean sense, would be to see higher education not as a follower of socio-economic policy and value, but as societal and cultural leaders, and that academic leadership must be transformed into *cultural leadership*.

However, that universities should assume the role of cultural and societal leaders does not mean that universities should regress to distant ivory towers out of keeping with the surrounding society they are embedded within (and funded by). Neither does it mean that this form of leadership is the only relevant and important form of leadership in societies today. What it does mean is that universities must escape the process of victimisation they often become caught up in, even self-inflicted at times due to despair and lack of alternative identities. For universities to lead societal and cultural development, in the sense I am arguing here, means that new academic and societal values must be forged – values that bring universities and societies closer together. This is what, in his application of Nietzsche, Paul Standish calls 'the university of the day after tomorrow, which will 'demonstrate its essential public place in the democracy to come' (Standish 2011, p. 164). To become a university for the day after tomorrow, universities must be able to 'let go' and to release themselves from their 'most comfortable thoughts, unloosen [their] fixed assurances, [and] be ready to live in a new way (Standish 2011, p. 163).

For universities, living in a new way requires that their knowledge creation activities be situated more directly in relation to societal and cultural growth, and not as a parallel activity. Building these 'ecologies of value' (Bull 2014) and higher education ecologies (Barnett 2018) demands perhaps the dawning of a new curriculum that thinks and researches *from* society and *within* culture. Here, students and researchers are not commenting *on*, and counselling, fellow citizens and their life-worlds, but are engaged *with* the social situations and personal narratives themselves. It demands the academic voice not just to be heard as a natural embedded part of social and cultural debate and leadership, but to be heard as a distinct voice that speaks the language of a higher type of education. For Nietzsche, this voice may sometimes be the voice of the fool and sometimes the voice of the sage, and often intertwined. For new forms of higher education to dawn, universities should not shy away from speaking their own tongue and bringing to the table their own values, even if they may seem strange and even 'terrible'. In their form of cultural leadership, universities must be able to apply:

> the use of a rare and singular measuring-rod, almost a frenzy: the feeling of heat in things which feel cold to all other persons: a diving of values for which scales have not yet been invented: a sacrificing on altars which are consecrated to an unknown God … It would be *backsliding* for us, with our susceptible integrity, to lapse entirely into morality, and actually become virtuous monsters and scarecrows, on account of the over-strict requirements which we here lay down for ourselves. We ought to *be able* to stand *above* morality, and not only stand with the painful stiffness of one who every moment fears to slip and fall, but we should also be able to soar and play above it!" (Nietzsche 2006, pp. 49–50, and p. 80)

To stand above morality, does not mean to suppress others or not to care for societal and cultural change. Indeed, it means to care deeply, and at the same time to care for other forms of growth and change that other institutions and societal

stakeholders may promote, with their own relevance. According to Nietzsche scholars, Peter Berkowitz (1996) and Peter Fitzsimons (2007), we find in Nietzsche an even deeper form of cultural care. Understanding, and passionately feeling into, new and different ways of life, expression, and value, is the new truths universities should explore and critically discuss in the *highest* education. Berkovitz argues that such '"new truth" involves the realization that this good consists in creativity…or the ethics of creativity' (Berkowitz 1996, p. 145).

This is an ethical, and not merely 'moral', form of education. In the dawn of higher education 'the intellect will have been set free to pursue its higher calling… the overcoming of conventional morality…by imperatives arising from the ethics of knowing' (Berkowitz 1996, p. 237). Above morality stands an *ethics of creativity* and an *ethics of knowing*. These are, indeed, the new academic values to be pursued in the future institutions for higher education. Fitzsimons makes a similar point and argues that 'Nietzschean education is involved with the task of making human beings human through developing their intellectual and creative abilities to the full', even though the most 'difficult task is to follow the path towards a higher, yet unknown, self' (Fitzsimons 2007, pp. 161–162).

I argue that the challenge for universities is that this ethics of knowing is often misread by the wider public for it is seen 'to the populace to be a kind of flight, a means and artifice for withdrawing successfully from a bad game' (Nietzsche 2008, p. 606). Universities must, in their role as cultural leaders, make clear and convincing that higher education is not about undermining culture, but strengthening it. My point is that academics and students in higher education do *not* escape this deep culture care, and the academic 'risks *himself* constantly, he plays *this* bad game' (ibid.). Standing above morality means that universities do not hide behind tradition, conventional understandings, and political rhetoric. Universities should not be strategic, but truthful. The ethics of knowing is not about constructing values and forms of societal engagement that conveniently fit present higher education policies, but about opening up values to even greater quality of power; more difference, more tension, more variety and diversity.

The ethics of knowing is educating for the power to embrace and play up against thoughts that are 'variegated…and malicious, so full of thorns and secret spices', so that they make us 'sneeze and laugh' (Nietzsche 2008, p. 689). Universities as hothouses for strange and choice plants of thoughts and values can lead societies into greater diversity and a stronger cohesion through tension and difference. Experimenting, through higher education, with ideas, studies, and societal interventions and engagement will make for eruptions of learning through 'sudden sparks and marvels' (Nietzsche 2008, p. 690) that may seem as escapism at first, but later on may make societies much more robust and powerful in the sense of being able to contain and transform tensions into new values. This task may be the dawn for universities and institutions for higher education to step into the heat of public debate and show the ability to contain it and to transform the tensions and matters of difference into new cultural value. To contribute to society with an ethics of knowing, this may be the dawn for higher education that may 'give rise to a future'.

Conclusion

The argument through this chapter for the dawn of the future university has followed in three steps, from an ontological step, through an epistemological step, to finally reaching the final and ethical step. Hereby, the will to power of the university has been shown to be one of being, knowing, and doing, what was termed an ethics of knowing for the becoming of institutions of higher education that 'give rise to a future'.

First, by applying Nietzsche's term the will to power to an analysis of a deeper ontology of the university, it was shown that universities are other, and more, than providers and stewards of contemporary higher education programmes. The university was shown to have a more critical and wilder will to power that arises from, what I conclusively shall call, its deeper 'ontological instinct' – the critical and self-challenging form of being particular, and perhaps unique, to the university. The being of the university and its will to power strives to realise a forceful potential of its being an institution with ontological excess that can point to not just alternative higher education futures but also a *higher* education for the future.

Second, it was shown that such forceful institutions also thrive in epistemological excess. In their free expression of their will to power, universities become hothouses for strange and choice forms of 'epistemological growth' such as alien world views and disciplinary travels into the unknown. However, these hothouses for epistemological experiment are deeply rooted in their societal and cultural environments, and the depth epistemology is a form of political therapy changing negative ecologies into ecologies of value. In such a way there is a crucial connection between the highest epistemological achievement and the highest potential of societal and cultural change and transformation.

Finally, it was argued that to realise this highest potential in societies, universities must play a central role as cultural leaders and to perform *cultural leadership* through academic work and higher education programmes. Such cultural leadership must take place through an ethics of knowing whereby higher education itself becomes the very power in societies to contain and embrace cultural tension, conflict, diversity and difference, and the tools for the will to power to transform such tensions into new forms of societal and cultural value. Discovering and exploring the will to power of universities, therefore, may become the dawn for a higher education for the future.

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Chapter 3
Theodor Adorno (1903–1969): Restless, Fractured and Uncomfortable Thought

Jan McArthur

Introduction

Adorno's philosophy is notoriously difficult in both its meaning and in his presentation of ideas. He challenges the reader to such an extent that some may feel understandably unwilling to persevere. Adorno's work cannot be understood by select quotes or easy précis of his main ideas. Instead understanding comes from an immersion in the whole, a giving over to trying to see the world in the nuanced complexity that so defines Adorno's work. And it is just this complexity that makes his work so relevant to higher education today, and to understanding its place within society. In addition Adorno's unswerving commitment to exposing the sources of human suffering reminds us of the emancipatory potential of the university, while warning against complacent assumptions that the university is either neutral or benign.

In this chapter I consider four pieces of work from Adorno (three books and an essay) which offer much to our exploration of the question of the university in contemporary society. But these must all be understood in the context of Adorno's wider work. Meaning, both *about* Adorno and *according* to Adorno, is built in constellations of interweaving and sometimes contradictory ideas. Key here is a focus on stepping beyond the confines of the status-quo to enable moments of resistance and escape. The university is taken to be a prime institution of the Enlightenment, with all the attendant virtues and forms of instrumental domination that entails. Engagement with Adorno's critical theory challenges the university to examine its primary purposes and values, including the connections to dynamic forms of knowledge and to the duality of theory and practice.

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It has become the norm to understand Adorno as a thinker of extreme pessimism (e.g. Brookfield 2005) locked up within what Lukács described as 'the Grand Hotel Abyss' (Jeffries 2016). However, 'I suggest that what Adorno offers is not so much hopelessness as a rejection of false hope' (McArthur 2013, p. 21). Many also see such pessimism, the abandonment of hope in Adorno's famous remark: 'To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric' (Adorno 1983, p. 34). This quote is a telling example of how Adorno plays with meaning and pushes the reader to think in new ways. Indeed, contrast it with the last line of his essay 'Education after Auschwitz': 'however, education and enlightenment can still manage a little something' (Adorno 2005a, p. 204).

As Goehr (2005) observes: Adorno 'did not become a public figure *because* his thought is difficult, yet he did become a public figure of uneasy thought' (p. xiii). Put simply, Adorno is a philosopher like no other, with a highly idiosyncratic way of communicating his ideas. But if we understand his thought in the whole, then it becomes clear this is not mere effect – being difficult for the sake of it – but rather evidence of a prolonged commitment to do thought justice. As Herbert Marcuse said upon Adorno's death: 'There is no one who can represent Adorno and speak for him' (Claussen 2008, p. 2).

Adorno was fascinated by the atonal music of Schöenberg; arguing that it requires as much work on the part of the listener as the musician (Adorno 1983). So too, Adorno's philosophy requires some work to be done by those of us who read him. Not simply because of his style, admittedly difficult at times to initially grasp, but also because of the uncomfortable meanings he forces us to confront, and the restless movement of ideas where perhaps we have become more used to neatly packaged, readily digestible thought.

Adorno's style represents a larger philosophical conundrum as he seeks to find ways to think beyond what merely exists, while so clearly situated in the world as it is. Thus Adorno entreats us to understand how only critical thought can lead to change, in contrast to 'thought's complacent agreement with itself' (Adorno 2005a, p. 122). Indeed, Adorno's philosophy acts as a constant reminder against comfort, safety and complacency, and instead inspires a restless effort to appreciate the complexity of fractured moments of life. It is to this end that his work offers much to our understanding of the university today.

Adorno's Life and Work

Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno was born in 1903 in Frankfurt into a comfortable middle-class life. His prodigious talent for philosophy was evident from a young age, as even while still at school Adorno spent his Saturday afternoons reading the *Critique of Pure Reason* with his older friend Siegried Kracauer (Claussen 2008).

Adorno did not like the genre of biography and generally did not accord relevance to the personal details of someone's life when seeking to understand their work. However, it is hard to really understand Adorno's work without reference to

the life he led. Important here are not only the major events and traumas, such as exile from Nazi Germany or the breakdown of his relationship with students in the late 1960s, but also the everyday expressions of pleasure in sharing his complex thought that are revealed in transcripts of his lectures to students (e.g. Adorno 2001, 2002, 2006) and in his careful correspondence with other thinkers including Walter Benjamin (Benjamin and Adorno 1999) and Thomas Mann (Adorno and Mann 2006).

Adorno is most well-known as a central member of the intellectual group of critical theorists that became known as the Frankfurt School (formally the Institute for Social Research). Ironically the Institute was initially founded to be outside traditional university structures, and yet its work and the lives of its members such as Adorno reveal so much about the nature, purposes and potential of higher education. Adorno influenced the early work of the Institute, even though his formal role did not begin until he joined the others in exile in New York in 1938, 4 years after the Institute was forced to leave Germany after the Nazi takeover. This period of exile would be a defining feature in Adorno's, and his contemporaries', work, and a recurring theme.

Adorno's relationship with American society was one of profound ambivalence. Clearly there was appreciation in having found a place of safety where the work of the Institute could continue. But Adorno is somewhat infamous for his strong disdain of American culture, and yet he and his fellow exiles were also careful to mitigate their published work to take account of the sensibilities of their hosts (references to Marx became pointedly less common to the point of practically disappearing). But it was this American society, seen by Adorno in parallel with the totalitarian rule in his native country, that gave rise to some of his most famous work such as *The Authoritarian Personality*, *The Culture Industry, Dialectic of* Enlightenment (with Max Horkheimer) and Minima Moralia.

Adorno was a rapacious observer of the vicissitudes of everyday life, and as one observer commented 'no place seemed to be protected from Adorno's pen' (Goehr 2005, p. xix). Thus we can find from his time in America essays and observations on everything from lonely hearts columns to the size of television sets. It all mattered to Adorno. It all shaped the social world he so staunchly believed needed to be radically changed.

Throughout his life and work music played an important role in all Adorno did. His early childhood and formative years were filled with music, and in many ways this was his great love. As Rose (2014) observes, from the age of 17 until his death Adorno published on music every year of his life. Roughly half of all his published work is on music, so it is important to note that in this chapter, given our focus on the higher education, the emphasis is on that other half of his work. But neither can be understood in isolation from the other: music and aesthetics run through Adorno's thought in mutually reinforcing ways. Indeed, his friend Thomas Mann remarked that rather than choosing between philosophy and music, Adorno always felt he was essentially pursuing both interests (Jäger 2004).

Adorno's return from exile in 1949 to continue being part of the Institute for Social Research gave rise to a different phase in his career. Now 'at home' again, he never fully gave up the persona of exile. For Adorno, and some of his contemporaries,

they returned to a Germany that they struggled to understand, and which evoked great concern. They therefore positioned themselves as exiles of another sort and took up the mantle of reminding Germany that it had to confront its past. What had given rise to Nazism and nurtured it for several years could not now simply be forgotten. It was a commitment to brutal self-reflection on a national level. There was no comfortable ease that democracy had returned, but a relentless questioning of how to build a democracy on the foundations of such totalitarianism.

In time, Adorno took on the leadership of the Frankfurt School and was made a full professor at the University of Frankfurt in 1953. He died of a heart attack in 1969, aged just 65 years, after having endured a turbulent period in terms of his relationships with his students and those involved in the broader student movement – a theme I'll come back to later. Some even suggested that his death was caused by the stress arising from the student protests against him, although evidence suggests that his close friend Horkheimer did not believe this to be the case (Claussen 2008). But it is clear that at the time of his death, Adorno had been deeply affected by student protests and arguments about the role of the university.

Even though Adorno could not be classified as explicitly or predominantly a writer *about* higher education, the university is never far from being implicated in what Adorno did write. His own struggles to find a home within the academy, combined with the challenges he faced dealing with both university administration and students, all shaped the experiences which in turn formed his thinking. Beyond this, the key message which we will see comes through all of Adorno's work, including the four pieces to be discussed here, is that thinking matters. Hence the university, as a site of engagement with complex knowledge matters. However, we should not take that as some end-point in defining Adorno's relevance to higher education. Instead, this is our starting point. For Adorno's work challenges us to look behind the façade and the taken-for-granted. It thus challenges the university to do more to justify itself in the face of these philosophical insights.

There are, therefore, a series of implications to unravel once we accept the importance of the hidden and unseen to Adorno's work. There is much of the university that is not easily seen. This suggests both damage and injustice, and hope and possibilities. Thus, despite a preponderance of managerialist forms of audit and measurement in the contemporary university sector, many experiences of higher education go unnoticed or unacknowledged. And these sites of suffering or injustice matter. On the other hand, the university is simultaneously a site of greater transformative possibilities than might be anticipated. If the university is, and can be, more than that which it simply appears to be in a particular economic, social or national context, then its potential role in promoting human emancipation is profound. It is this which emerges from the radical nature which runs through and through Adorno's work.

Dialectic of Enlightenment

Adorno wrote *Dialectic of Enlightenment* with his close friend Max Horkheimer while living in the United States during the second world war, although it was not published in book form until 1947, and even then only initially by a small Dutch publishing firm. And yet it is little exaggeration to view this book as best representing the critical social theory of the Frankfurt School, and providing a foundation for much of the work that followed.

In the words of Habermas, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is also 'the blackest book' of critical theory (Müller-Doohm 2005, p. 287). Adorno and Horkheimer utterly reject the notion that the Enlightenment represents increasing human freedom, based on a progressive rejection of myth in favour of science. Rather, the Enlightenment, shackled as it is to emerging capitalism, represents a new way of denying such freedom. The Enlightenment, they argue, has at its core the domination of nature; and yet the result is that the human sphere itself has been diminished. For as the world is objectified, then so too are human relations (Jay 1996).

Thus they spectacularly reject established Hegelian or Marxist understandings of history as the process of increased human freedom (Jeffries 2016). In addition, class conflict, so important to traditional Marxism, is replaced as the driver of change by this conflict between humans and nature. In this way, the concept of Enlightenment is itself revolutionised, and comes no longer to belong to 'a particular historical or intellectual epoch', and is instead 'the epitome of modern consciousness' (Müller-Doohm 2005, p. 282). Or as Jay (1996) explains, a fundamental shift in the notion of Enlightenment occurred during this period in the 1940s whereupon it moved beyond simply 'being the cultural correlate of the ascending bourgeoisie' to 'include the entire spectrum of Western thought' (Jay 1996, p. 258). Thus Adorno and Horkheimer draw parallels with the domination so easy to observe in Nazi Germany and the forms of oppression and distortion inherent in pillars of American society, such as Hollywood and the culture industry. Totalitarianism is not the rejection of the Enlightenment, but the working through of its basic tenet and logic (Jay 1996).

It makes no sense, however, to regard Adorno or Horkheimer as anti-Enlightenment. They are as much a product of the Enlightenment as the phenomena they critique: that is part of the dialectic. Similarly, the university is both home to the Enlightenment and, arguably, a place for critique. What this work offers is an insight into the implications of the university understood as an institution of the Enlightenment. But this is no simple position. We can neither subscribe to the view of the cultured, thoughtful university on the inside, poised against a harsh neoliberal society on the outside, nor can we abandon Enlightenment reason and surrender any sense that the university has an emancipatory role to play.

The neoliberal university, which is arguably what we increasingly have, is the natural product of its Enlightenment pedigree. Here, of course, is the great contradiction of the neo-liberal, Enlightenment institution: driven by a commitment to economic choice the options of real choice become ever more constrained. Thus, in the university as in the culture industry what remains is the 'freedom to choose what

is always the same' (p. 167). The dialectic we face within such a university is that dissent, dialogue and critique are both more necessary and more unwelcome. But the threat does not necessarily lie most in obvious values and practices. Domination is not greatest when it is shouted out, but rather when it is whispered; insidious and implicit in values and practices that we accept because they seem to carry a promise of a better form of existence. So some of the more crude and blunt examples of marketisation, such as universities' embracing of corporate slogans and competition in league tables, are not the problem. They are easy to see and oppose. Their obviousness reduces their threat. But it is when we are tempted to buy into more subtle forms of domination that Adorno and Horkheimer's understanding of instrumental reason becomes so telling. Indeed, the university's claim to be a place for critical thought becomes problematic as the university is so heavily invested in maintaining the status-quo – in not thinking critically. So criticality becomes a mirage, a simulacrum. The evocation of the university as a place of critical thought lies uneasy with its place within the social and economic mainstream.

Moreover, it is hard not to be complicit in the commodification of knowledge within the university. Do chapters or books like this advocate for this critical Enlightenment role, or do they act as fodder for the promotion systems that govern our behaviour? Spaces such as this do not generate income, so perhaps that offers the opportunity for critical, transgressive actions? They operate under the radar of the dominant forces which shape academic behaviour, such as the pursuit of research funding. Indeed, promotion opportunities come to be based on how much research funding one has brought in, rather than the quality of the research itself. It matters not what we research in higher education today, as long as we attract a lot of money to do it. As Adorno and Horkheimer said of the culture industry: 'The varying budgets in the culture industry do not bear the slightest relation to factual values, to the meaning of the products themselves' (p. 124).

The challenge which the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* inspires is for us to defend the value of the university as a place of critical thought, while the notion of value itself is degraded, within and outside the university. It is about living academic life both within this Enlightenment institution and beyond its boundaries where we can genuinely critique the status-quo. For Adorno and Horkheimer, the aim at all times is to find ways of escaping the status-quo so as to critically examine that status-quo and to move beyond it. Thus they state, in defence of their particular linguistic style:

> When public opinion has reached a state in which thought inevitably becomes a commodity, and language the means of promoting that commodity, then the attempt to trace the course of such depravation has to deny any allegiance to current linguistic and conceptual conventions, lest their world-historical consequences thwart it entirely. (Adorno and Horkheimer 1944/1997, pp. xi–xii)

Here then is the bleak diagnosis we can draw from Adorno and Horkheimer: the university as an Enlightenment institution is one of domination, and within which language and thought are relentlessly commodified. However, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is also clearly a product of that Enlightenment, and therein lies the hope – bound in the inner tensions of that dialectic.

Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life

When Adorno returned to Germany in 1949 his luggage contained the final, full manuscript for *Minima Moralia*. Upon its publication the success took Adorno by surprise and it was pivotal in his establishing his name so quickly back in his country of birth (Müller-Doohm 2005). Adorno's timing was good as there was a growing intellectual need for an alternative to the neo-conservatism associated with Heidegger's thought (Müller-Doohm 2005) – and to which Adorno had always been so opposed. Popularity also perhaps came from an impression the book offered advice on how to go about the good life, but its meaning is far more complex than that.

Minima Moralia is in three sections, reflecting the years over which it was written: 1944, 1945 and 1946–1947. There are 50 aphorisms in each section. The first set was written as a 50th birthday present for Max Horkheimer, and the volume is dedicated to him – 'In gratitude and promise' (Adorno 2005b). Themes range from profound issues such as totalitariansim, life in exile and the culture industry to more everyday observations on divorce and waving goodbye on a railway platform.

As with all three of the books examined in this chapter, the style of *Minima Moralia* is intrinsically linked to its message. The choice of aphorisms of different lengths instead of standard prose is deliberately fragmented. So too, suggests Adorno's analysis, is modern life. But, true to a dialectical understanding, such fragmentary aspects are both signs of damage and opportunities for hope. As ever Adorno is striving to give voice to ideas and values which seem increasingly impossible in the shadow of the rise of totalitarianism, which itself is the natural rendering of the Enlightenment, rather than its denial. Thus the fragmentary style allows the opening of fissures of resistance: as ever, Adorno seeks to say the unsayable.

In this collection Adorno's exactingly precise use of language reaches its zenith. No word is spare. No meaning is spared. Indeed, Adorno is at play with language in this work – in the most serious way. Rose (2014) describes *Mimina Moralia* as poetic, lyrical and ironic, and observes how Adorno likes to use well-known phrases or titles, changing just one or two words. These changes then produce a meaning opposite to the original, and yet at the same time cast thought back to that original. Thus, through these effects of irony and inversion, Adorno is able to criticise society without recourse to any of the prevailing ideas which he regards as illegitimate (Rose 2014). The fragmentary nature of the diverse aphorisms is a reflection of thought that tries to escape itself.

Minima Moralia does not simply reflect *back* on damaged life, but looks forward to making sense of how to live such a life. And damage itself also harbours twin meanings, encapsulating both the idea of harm and of imperfection. Both are imbued with feelings, emotions and passions. Here then, we can interpret these observations into an understanding of life within the university – understood as a form of damaged life in twin ways. Thus the more obvious way is to reflect on the relentless neoliberal agenda of commercialisation and marketisation. This is where our Enlightenment institutions have logically arrived, following paths that seem like

common sense to those who drive them forward. But these are obvious points to make, and are made often in the literature on higher education today. What Adorno offers is a warning not to those who are driving forwards such a neoliberal agenda, but to those of us who, in our different ways, seek to oppose it. Consider the aphorism, "Antithesis" in which Adorno writes:

> He who stands aloof runs the risk of believing himself better than others and misusing his critique of society as an ideology for his private interest (p. 26).

Indeed, critics of the neoliberal university cannot simply sit back and assume their own moral superiority as such a position is both indulgent and misleading. Again and again Adorno warns against the complacency inherent in the assumption of 'our own superior choice' (p. 27). He concludes:

> The only responsible course is to deny oneself the ideological misuse of one's own existence, and for the rest to conduct oneself in private as modestly, unobtrusively and unpretentiously as is required, no longer by good upbringing, but by the shame of still having air to breathe, in hell (pp. 27–28).

Of course, Adorno is not actually saying that we quietly get on in private in the face of domineering forces; he is in fact warning against the retreat into private life in the face of the damage to the public sphere. We can see this in the ways in which academics retreat into private research agendas, pursuing the approving metrics of promotion, and treating their capacity to generate new knowledge as a currency to be exchanged for endorsement rather than an opportunity for resistance.

Adorno offers inspiration, despite his pessimistic tone, for how to live a damaged life within the university, and the possibilities to thrive in those fissures of resistance. To appreciate this, we must understand the forms of damage inherent in university life; the distortions and mutilations that come with the restructuring of all relations into ones of trade and profit, the closing down of places for open, tentative, and incomplete relationships with knowledge and the rewriting of our purposes in terms of individual achievements rather than social progress. Adorno even appears to foresee our descent into a culture in which everything must be measured and audited in order to be valued: 'Anything that is not reified, cannot be counted and measured, ceases to exist' (p. 47). And yet, rather than despair, it is actually the damage caused by these powerful forces that offers hope for resistance: 'The splinter in your eye is the best magnifying-glass' (p. 50).

There is a powerful message here for academics within our universities today to resist the prevailing discourse of managerialism and consumerisation. We need to think creatively in terms of alternative forms of expression that nurture and support approaches to social life that challenge the status-quo. We must develop not only a new vocabulary for the university and its place in society, but also a new grammar of what intellectual life should mean. Worse than falling into line with the dominant lexicon is to retreat into private silence:

> The obviousness of disaster becomes an asset to its apologists: what everyone knows no one need say – and under cover is silence allowed to proceed unopposed (p. 233).

Thus our challenge is to neither suffer silence nor suffer in silence. As we go about our damaged lives within this Enlightenment institution we can locate those fissures of resistance in which thought can, as Adorno argued, have moments of spontaneity and moments of resistance.

Negative Dialectics

Negative Dialectics is sometimes described as Adorno's *magnum opus,* but it would be artificial to single it out from amongst the overall body of his work. Originally published in 1966, we can again clearly discern Adorno's character in the text itself. It is uncompromising, complex, intimidating and yet meaningful. With *Negative Dialectics* Adorno establishes a new aspect of thought at the heart of his philosophical work – non-identity. Adorno is striving for a richer, more complex, less certain, more dynamic notion of understanding that stands some chance of escaping the oppression of the status-quo. Meaning becomes multi-faceted and ultimately we must accept the 'imperfect match between thought and thing' (Wilson 2007, p. 71). Trying to tie objects to simple or convenient definitions is resonant of the same forms of domination outlined in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Minima Moralia*. The alternative, argues Adorno, is a mutual dialectic between the universal and the particular so as to avoid losing any aspect of the particular in the universal. Here we can see why Adorno's thought can be described as restless: it's always on the move, roaming for meaning and finding only provisional, inadequate moments of rest.

Again we can come back to Adorno's passion for Schönberg's music and see the atonal note in *Negative Dialectics*, and the implications for our own thought such that we must work with an idea rather than rest satisfied having found some label or category for it. Adorno pursues this point considering the idea of freedom, which, he asserts, 'can be defined in negation only, corresponding to the concrete form of a specific unfreedom' (Adorno 1973, p. 231). Adorno uses examples such as the abolition of slavery and women's liberation to demonstrate this approach (Cook 2008). Here we can understand each of these movements as negating the conditions of unfreedom which gave rise to them.

Adorno lays down his challenge to the conventional logic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis leading to a happy outcome. He decries the 'illusion that dialectics necessarily leads to a positive outcome' (McArthur 2012, p. 422). Thus dialectics is always considered negatively, 'as a movement of negation rather than of synthesis' (Holloway et al. 2009, p. 8).

To understand how we can work with negative dialectics and non-identity requires a further idea, developed from Walter Benjamin, to be woven into the approach – constellations. Meaning does not come from a single label or identity, but from intersecting constellations of experience. Thus the inherently dynamic nature of Adorno's thought is evident.

The implications for the university, as a site of knowledge creation and critique, are clear. Adorno's negative dialectics, and the idea of non-identity, stab at the heart

of attempts to tame knowledge into easy metrics or measureable chunks that can be scrupulously audited. Thus arises the modern imperative for researchers to be able to confirm the impact of their work before they begin, in order to receive funding for that research. This changes the foundations of our understanding of the complex knowledge at the heart of higher education. It demands a permanence and incontrovertibility that forces meaning into tight categories through which, ironically, genuine understanding is reduced. Thus the challenge for the university today is both temporal and epistemological. If understanding is dynamic, provisional but not relative, then the patterns of research, of meaning-making, do not fit easily into prescribed timelines and research excellence exercises (such as the REF – Research Excellence Framework – in the UK or the ERA – Excellence in Research for Australia).

There is a further idea developed in Negative Dialectics, that I want to connect with how we live in the university today. And this is Adorno's notion of 'bourgeois coldness' (see also Adorno 2005a, p. 274): the ability to function, and even prosper, while all around is suffering. Thus Adorno revisits his earlier comment, 'To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric' and states:

> it may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems. But it is not wrong to raise the less cultural question whether after Auschwitz you can go on living – especially whether one who escaped by accident, one who by rights should have been killed, may go on living. His mere survival calls for the coldness, the basic principle of bourgeois subjectivity, without which there could have been no Auschwitz (pp. 362–63).

It may seem difficult, even improper, to transfer Adorno's discussion of Auschwitz to the realm of the everyday, but this is a real necessity for, after all, it was a series of everyday actions that enabled the horrors of Auschwitz to take place. But I'd like to suggest that as members of the university we need to revisit the extent to which we manage our professional lives through this attribute of bourgeois coldness. Such emotive terms appear out of place in a discourse of managerialism and quality assurance. But again, surely, the possibilities for transformative education and research lie in those moments when we shrug off this coldness and engage on an affective level. But there is an institutional imperative here, as well as an individual one. It is about the ways in which our universities connect to the social world in which they are situated. And the irony that the more universities mould themselves based on an instrumental sense of economic relevance and being useful to the 'real world', the more they embrace this bourgeois coldness that necessarily distances them from real suffering: and real suffering encompasses the 'real world'.

Theory and Practice

I want to end with an essay of Adorno's titled, 'Marginalia to Theory and Praxis' (Adorno 2005a) because it has a poignant relevance to our understanding of the nature and purposes of the university. We read Adorno's most direct exploration of

the relationship between theory and practice in an essay rather than as intended as a lecture, because student protests against Adorno – and ironically against his perceived resistance to putting theory into practice – prevented him from giving the lecture as planned. Not only did Adorno have his lectures disrupted, but events reached a low point when he called police to evict students from university buildings.

On the surface we could perhaps draw some conclusions here about generational tensions within the university and the very different life experiences of students and academics. But this does not get to the core of what this essay, and Adorno's responses to student protests, reveal. For it was because of his unflinching commitment to the interrelationship of theory and practice, as outlined in this essay, that Adorno felt unable to respond positively to student demands that he *do something*. Thought itself is a staggeringly practical act according to Adorno. And practice without thought is simply tyranny:

> A consciousness of theory and praxis must be produced that neither divides the two such that theory becomes powerless and praxis becomes arbitrary, nor refracts theory through the archbourgeois primacy of practical reason proclaimed by Kant and Fichte. Thinking is a doing, theory a form of praxis; already ideology of the purity of thinking deceives about this. Thinking has a double character: it is immanently determined and rigorous, and yet an inalienably real mode of behavior in the midst of reality. (Adorno 2005a, p. 261)

Again we return to the theme running through Adorno's work of finding those moments and spaces to escape the status-quo. Thus his defence of theory is similarly a defence of intellectual sites of resistance. But this is clearly not to promote theory above practice, but rather at all times to stress the strong interconnection. This was the problem Adorno saw in some elements of the student movement when action, any action, became virtuous in itself, and any inaction deemed a retreat into theory. If we consider the university as fundamentally a place of engagement with complex knowledge, then Adorno gives the most powerful account of why such knowledge matters, and why our forms of engagement with it matter. Opportunities for change and resistance are bestowed by the ability to offer practical opposition by thinking differently to what already is.

Indeed, it is fitting that during this turbulent period in Adorno's academic career he found time to argue for the re-release of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which had been out of print for some time. Adorno strongly believed that this work still had relevance to society and he actively wanted it to 'play a role in the present' (Claussen 2008, p. 338). Thus when some student protesters asked 'what was Adorno doing', the answer is there in the text: he was striving to give voice to the unsayable.

Conclusion

In his seminal history of the Frankfurt School, Martin Jay (1996) observes:

> The role of the intellectual, the Institut came to believe with growing certainty, was to continue thinking what was becoming ever more unthinkable in the modern world (p. 80).

Adorno, in all his glorious obstinacy and idiosyncrasy, bore this belief until his end. My reading of Adorno may be more optimistic than other renderings of his work. But I would defend my position by pointing out that things never became so awful and bleak that Adorno no longer saw any purpose in pointing out how awful and bleak they were. His philosophy offers resistance against the status-quo, and his passionate defence of the value of thought provides a rationale for what higher education can and should be. Understood dialectically, the university is both part of the machine of the status-quo, and a potential source of emancipatory change. But the latter should not be assumed as some feel good given.

The challenge as we consider the future of the university must go beyond complacent agreement with ourselves: marketisation, consumerisation are bad, universities and learning are good. All that we need is to return to the Golden Age when universities were at the heart of all that was noble. No. We don't. No such Golden Age existed. And the current flaws and weaknesses in higher education have not simply been forced upon the academic sector. Government has not simply made us measure everything and only value that which conforms to the demands of the financial spreadsheet. We have been complicit. An astonishingly well-educated workforce has allowed, and at times even encouraged, the very changes that so many now decry. How have we let this happen? That is what Adorno would ask. And there would be no one answer, but many difficult questions.

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Chapter 4
Ernest Gellner (1925–1995): Nought for the University's Comfort?

Ronald Barnett

Introduction

How are we to understand modern society? How are we to understand 'knowledge' in modern society? How are we to understand 'culture'? How are we to understand humanity's understanding of itself? Which tools might best enable communication about the world? These are the kinds of question with which Ernest Gellner wrestled, and all of them are critical to any serious comprehension as to what it is to be a university. It follows, therefore, that the work of Ernest Gellner is indispensable in studying universities and higher education and it follows, too, that his writings should regularly appear in the bibliographies of work in that field. However, one looks almost in vain to see the name of 'Gellner' in the bibliographies of papers and books in the study of higher education. Gellner's writings are largely ignored there. In this chapter, I want to indicate the pertinence of the work of Ernest Gellner for an understanding of higher education, and offer a suggestion or two to account for his neglect in higher education studies.

Life and Work

Ernest Gellner was a British-Czech philosopher, social theorist, anthropologist and cultural theorist who brought a wit, large-scale thinking and insights and a fierceless combativeness in defence of reason, freedom and openness. In keeping with many intellectual Jewish families, his family left its central European home in the 1930s (in Prague), making their way to England. There, Ernest Gellner had his schooling

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and university education. In the late 1940s, Gellner began his university career, quickly moving to the London School of Economics. In 1962, Gellner became Professor of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method, having gained his PhD for an anthropological study on the Berbers of North Africa. He moved to Cambridge in 1974 to be Head of the Department of Anthropology and to hold the William Wyse chair. In 1993, he returned to Prague – now post-communist – and to the new Central European University, where he became head of the Centre for the Study of Nationalism. In 1995, he suffered a heart attack and died in his flat in Prague, just short of his 70th birthday.

A genuine public intellectual, Gellner gave talks, appeared in the mass media including TV discussions, and produced a prolific stream of articles in magazines and pamphlets. It is, though, primarily in his books on which his reputation rests. His first book (1959), *Words and Things*, amounted to an attack on linguistic philosophy, a primary target of which was the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, and which served as a *bête-noire* throughout his life. The titles of just some of his other books indicate his breadth: *Saints of the Atlas*; *Thought and Change*; *Reason and Culture*; *Plough, Sword and Book*; *State and Society in Soviet Thought*; *Conditions of Liberty*; *Nations and Nationalism*; and (posthumously) *Language and Solitude: Wittgenstein, Malinowski and the Habsburg Dilemma*. His intellectual biography has been well charted by John Hall (2010).

Among the intellectual influences on Gellner's thought, two in particular stand out – Kant and Malinowski. Striking is it that one is a philosopher and the other an anthropologist. The observation bears testimony to Gellner's polymath resources. But the two names do more. On the one hand, in Kant, there was a real world even if we can only dimly approach it and will always be deficient in unravelling it. On the other hand, in Malinowski, 'radical empiricism and cultural holism were blended' (Gellner 1998, p. 131). The world was – and is – real, it presents real problems; and those problems cannot be dissolved by an appeal to language or by pointing, a la Wittgenstein, to 'forms of life'. Rather, for Gellner, those problems can be seriously addressed only with a combination of empirical methods and a reflective sense of the culture in which those methods have their legitimacy.

It seems to me that this combination of realism and a synoptic and cultural viewpoint is crucial for any proper understanding of the contemporary university and higher education. It would be – to steal Gellner's words – an 'understanding of both the cognitive and social restraints that limit our options and help to make our choices' (Gellner 1978, p. 299). At the moment, however, we have speculation about the university with rather little regard to the facts of the matter and we have detailed empirical work that rather shies from thinking hard about, and imagining, large options in front of us; but seldom do the twain meet.

Gellner's influence lay at three levels. Firstly, there was his legacy within the specialist academic communities with which his oeuvre directly connected. Gellner's work was especially influential in developing theories both of nationalism and of Islam. Secondly, in the wider world interested in ideas. Gellner's attack on ordinary-language – and Wittgenstein-inspired – philosophy was particularly influential (though not in philosophy) and he came also to be seen as an astute social and

political commentator who could place contemporary events in a broad social and cultural perspective. Thirdly, Gellner's influence was one of manner. In particular, his writing is shot through with wit and incisive commentary and with a beguiling accessibility. This prose style stands in vivid contrast with that of many today who write about the university and higher education.

Thought and Change

Thought and Change (Gellner 1964a) was perhaps the first of Gellner's many books that directly identified and addressed the large themes that were characteristic of his oeuvre. In it, we not only see philosophy, sociology and anthropology simmering but we also see issues that were to preoccupy Gellner such as nationalism and efforts to understand 'knowledge' as a socio-cultural entity. Perhaps the book's central argument could be expressed in this way. From an anthropological point of view, the modern industrialised world has come about quite recently and possesses a characteristic mode of understanding – that of science. However, humanity's understanding of itself has lagged behind, generally so in philosophy and culture, and especially in its ideas of progress and evolution, thought and knowledge, and nationalism and the state. In particular, humanity has come to believe that it stands independently of the world and that its perceptions have a kind of self-sufficiency; that they supply their own legitimacy.

Take, for example, humanity's attitude to what passes for progress. The 'moral objection' – as Gellner puts it – to what passes for progress is liable to dress itself up in such rationalisations as 'the autonomy of moral judgement' and – another option cited elsewhere by Gellner (1991) – an existential choice. But, Gellner urges, 'consider the enormous and indeed comic hubris involved in this. Can we really opt out in this manner?…Is not our attempt at independence bound to be an illusory one?' (1964a, p. 23). With this stance – that of the autonomy of morals:

> We are like a commander of a fortress hurling defiance at the besieging enemy from the ramparts, and blithely unaware that the whole garrison behind him is in the pay of the opponents. [A]ll our fellow rebels and ourselves are but agents-provocateurs of that world which we would defy…[so] fail[ing] to consider the possibility of treason inside. (Gellner 1964a, p. 24)

I can hardly think of a better description of the current state of play in the study of higher education, and in two senses. Firstly, there is much hand-wringing over 'neoliberalism' and 'marketisation' in the literature on higher education. Certainly, there are justifiable concerns to be levied at neoliberalism and the way in which higher education has been marketised (Molesworth et al. 2011). The critics' relentless barrage against neoliberalism and marketisation has set up precisely a sense of universities being besieged from outside their walls. But what has emerged is a complete blankness as to the forces within the academic community itself. And it so

happens that the forces within are engaged in an undermining process at least as formidable as those without.

Particularly striking is it that philosophy and social theory – very broadly understood – have been bewitched over the past three-quarters of a century or so by a succession of intellectual fashions including relativism, ethnomethodology, phenomenography, 'forms of life', 'theory-ladenness', our being trapped by 'ideologies', constructivism, deconstructionism, and postmodernism. The link between these waves of thought is that they each deny – or severely downplay – the existence of a world independent of our understanding the world; and they each implicitly deny, therefore, that there can be serious 'knowledge' that tells us something about the world.

For any philosophy of higher education, the upshot of this way of thinking is that the carpet is pulled from underneath one's feet. For centuries, the university gained its identity through a particular framework of presuppositions, namely that there was a world and it was part of the task of the university to come to understandings of that world through the acquisition of (well-found) knowledge. This acquisition took two forms. On the one hand, the academics were expected to be active in the search for new knowledge of the world – in short, to be involved in 'research'; and, if not themselves so active, were expected to value knowledge and have an interest in 'scholarship'. On the other hand, students were expected to assimilate the fruits of this knowledge, coming to understand what it was to reason about, and form critical judgements about, the world. All of this has been put in the dock by the intellectual fashions just noted. Together, they have amounted to an Exocet through the idea of a world that can be increasingly better known; now, the world is largely what we take it to be or wish it to be. But if this is the case, it is by no means clear as to the purpose of the university. Now, knowledge is simply a meta-narrative deserving only of our incredulity (Lyotard 1984) or is a totem for a form of life with nothing of substance beyond itself and constituting only a 'dissensus' (Readings 1997).

Gellner had no truck with such an introverted and self-serving set of nostrums. For instance, he observes – in that same book – that an assumption under much of this 'post-modern' or 'post-historical' pattern of thought is that 'we cannot jump out of our social, biological, psychological skins: we cannot in our thoughts, cognitions and valuations opt out of this world'. Gellner's commentary was unequivocal:

> I for one do not accept the argument that as we cannot opt out of this world, our judgements must be its judgements. ...We must in the end commit the hubris of supposing ourselves, occasionally, outside this world and sitting in judgement on it, notwithstanding the fact that we also know that we are always part of it. But we must do this with our eyes open, aware of the extreme awkwardness of our position… (pp. 25–26).

This is crucial for any serious understanding of higher education. It can never be sufficient to be concerned solely with concepts – such as 'justice' or 'equality' – or the thoughts of great philosophers for the light that their thought might shine upon what it is to be a university. Nor can it be a legitimate ploy to suggest that the dominant university form as we know it is simply a product of the global North, which has, over centuries of colonialism, subdued the South, as some are now suggesting.

And nor is it sufficient to launch off into a new 'line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari 2007; Guattari 2016), imagining a new, and even utopian, idea of the university. These tacks have value, but they cannot carry the day. For that, we must both seek to understand the world as it is and 'commit the hubris of sitting in judgement on it.'

So, in bringing Gellner's oeuvre into an understanding of higher education, the following observation suggests itself. There *is* much hand-ringing over the marketisation of higher education and the growing intensity of audits – of universities, and of their staffs and of their programmes of study. Such critiques imply that the contemporary university has lost its autonomy and has been *undermined from outside* the campus walls. This is undoubtedly the case but the relentless force with which that case is pursued neglects the possibility that the university has been *undermined also from inside* the walls.

To return to Gellner's words, it is as if the critics of neoliberalism are 'blithely unaware that the whole garrison behind [them] is in the pay of their opponents. [A]ll our fellow rebels and ourselves, are but agents-provocateurs of that world which we would defy….'. What could be more beneficial to the mighty powers beyond the walls of the university than that their work is being aided within the university? The very philosophers and theorists who might have turned towards trying to understand the world, and to envisage new possibilities, have simply given up the ghost and have retreated to quite conservative modes of thought and academic practice that are never going to rock any boats. Both in its dominant academic practices and in its self-understandings, the university retreats, almost oblivious of the turbulent waters in which it finds itself. There will be no radical ideas coming from this quarter.

The Legitimation of Belief

Modernity – that is, the last three-four centuries – is characterised in part by particular kinds of belief systems. At their heart lies the emergence of science but there is a wider penumbra of epistemic elements at work, including ideas of knowledge, truth, reason, understanding and the relationship of the knower to the world. How is all of this to be legitimated? These were the issues in Gellner's (1974) book, '*The Legitimation of Belief*', matters that have taken on particular poignancy of late.

In a characteristic passage in that book, Gellner refers to Thomas Kuhn's (1970) influential study of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Gellner observes that, for Kuhn, data never speaks for themselves but are always theory-laden: 'there are no "pure" data' (p. 79). As Gellner observes, 'Total epistemic decontamination of experience from concepts has never been achieved: moreover, it seems in principle impossible'. But such a state of affairs appears to put empiricism in the dock: 'the pure data turn out to be neither pure nor entirely data'. However, 'it simply will not do to say that because the attempts at "reducing" the 3-D world [the rich world of ordinary experience] to a 2-D world [of neutral pure data] have failed, therefore, the 3-D world, the *Lebenswelt*, must be taken as given. This is a dreadful fallacy' (p. 79) And here Gellner makes a move that is both apparently simple and yet powerful:

this question as to how the world comes to be known 'continues to be insistent… because there is not one but many *rival* 'lived' worlds' (p. 79) [RB's emphasis].

This move accomplishes several things. It reminds us that modern rationality is but one form of life among others, but it also observes that that epistemology has acquired powers that enable it to distance itself from other belief systems *and* to exercise judgement upon them. Gellner was apt to remark in his writings that forms of life never speak for themselves and any appeal, a la Wittgenstein, to forms of life never solves fundamental issues. As he observes in the passage in question, 'facile world acceptance is useless. Our world is not self-justifying.' To the contrary: any view of the world is 'pervaded by doubtful assumptions. It is the pervasive assumptions which need to be queried' (p. 80).

All of this is directly applicable to any understanding of higher education and the university. For instance, in doctoral work within the social sciences, students who are undertaking qualitative research are often to be seen assuming that the data speak for themselves. Faith is kept with the interviewees by quoting them at length, using computer programmes to identify their key words and themes, and ascribing validity to them. Often, there is very little provided in the way of commentary let alone critical analysis. What is at work here is a sense that a form of life is valuable in itself and that justice is best done to it by bringing it out into the open, and letting the interviewees – typically those in impoverished or highly limited situations – express their voice, without interruption or critical commentary.

Present here is a disinclination to pass judgement on the interviewees' perceptions. Being charitable, it could be said that such a disinclination arises from a deep respect held by the researcher toward her/his interviewees who, as remarked, characteristically are drawn from the marginalised, the oppressed, the powerless or those who have recently seen dramatic changes in their lives. However, such a disclination is a direct and inevitable consequence of the 'constructionist' stance characteristically imbued. Epistemology and ontology are entangled here: at work is a sense both that perceptions of the world have total validity and that the world is nothing more than bundles of perceptions. On such a view, it would be quite outré to attempt any kind of judgement of perceptions. And it would be entirely forbidden to counterpose a reading of the world that was independent of the perceptions being revealed.

This stance on the part of our doctoral students is both poor social theory and poor philosophy. A concept such as ideology is implicitly ruled off-side for it commits the crime of drawing attention to the truth-limited character of social perceptions. The idea of ideology allows a judgement to be made to the effect that this group sees the world in such-and-such a way (an impoverished social group considers that a populist political party is acting in their interests) but that the world is actually *in fact* rather different. Note the implication here: our researchers believe that that they are doing full justice to their interviewees but, by not holding up their interviewees' beliefs to judgements in the light of independent readings of the world, are actually cementing and endorsing those beliefs. The would-be radical researchers turn out themselves – albeit unwittingly – to be playing an ideological part in leaving the world as it is.

As Gellner frequently observed, the world never speaks for itself, and nor do forms of life. Indeed, the world sometimes speaks even falsely or irrationally since it is in the interests of segments of the world so to do. If commentary is to win its spurs, it has perforce to exercise judgement. This, as Gellner also observed, is far from easy. One has to commit the 'hubris' (Gellner's word) of believing one is in a position to judge and to believe that one can obtain a position of some independence even though one knows that (as noted) one 'cannot jump out of one's psychological or sociological skin'. Such extra-terrestrial jumping can and must be attempted but never in any 'facile' way.

Reason and Culture

Modernity and the Western world are in difficulty, as Gellner observes. They have at once produced forms of comprehending the world and formed communities upholding the associated forms of reason that are so powerful that they can reflect upon themselves. They are therefore caught in a double-bind. This modernity knows neither whether to laud itself for its powers of reason and ways of understanding the world or to pick at and expose their fallibilities and ultimately to undo them. Linked here is the notion of culture. Modernity knows neither whether to congratulate itself on its knowledge producing culture, or to undermine its culture, since it is bound to be limited, as merely the culture of the North or of the West or of colonial powers or some such malfunctioning. Today, we are witnessing a particular backlash against this set of assumptions, epitomised especially in the North-South polarisation, and in talk of 'epistemic colonization', in which de Sousa Santos (2016) and Connell (2007) are perhaps the leading exponents. And those ideas are finding their way into scholarship on the contemporary university (Guzmán-Valenzuela and Gómez 2018).

Gellner deals with some of these issues in his (1992) work *Reason and Culture*. Reason has set itself up as a critic of culture. For Reason, culture is a-rational and can be safely left behind or disparaged – or both. This, as Gellner observes, was the Descartes' stance. Descartes' 'Cogito, ergo sum' (I think, therefore I am) wanted nothing to do with culture. Humanity became humanity not through culture but through reason. 'In truly rationalist spirit, he [Descartes] decided to declare independence of the accidental assemblage of beliefs, of all cultural accretion, and to set out independently on a re-exploration of the world' (p. 18). This was not merely vaunted reason but the reason of the individual: 'Descartes evidently believed that he could go it alone' (p. 18).

We see this way of thinking in contemporary higher education. Higher education policy making in general and universities in particular have become a culture-free zone. Today, where in university websites or in their mission statements do we see any mention of culture, as such? Where do we see suggestions in university learning and teaching strategies that part of a proper higher education lies in extending the student's culture, in her/his values and relationship with the world? Any such

mention of culture is pretty well absent. The technical reason that results, with its focus on individual students' skills, pretends that it is not a culture.

This contemporary neglect is a recent phenomenon. In the UK, in the 1960s, a major national report – the Robbins Report (Cmnd 2154 1963) – was published, for which an induction into a 'common culture' was one of four aims of higher education. Only a generation later, in the USA, Bloom's (1987) magnum opus, '*The Closing of the American Mind*' expressed a lament for the waning of culture, not least on American campuses. The very idea of Culture, with a capital 'C' as it were, has since become outré, its deployment producing in some quarters nothing but squeamishness.

There are, of course, explanations for this aversion within the academy to speaking of culture and one is supplied by Gellner. The university prides itself on its rationality, its even-handedness and even – à la Weber – its value freedom. Disinterested inquiry had better keep its eyes straight ahead, intent on foraging out the truth of the matters on which it is focused. At best, culture is too fuzzy an idea with which to tarry; at worst, it is liable to import question-begging assumptions as to what is to count as real culture. Such a sensitivity quickly leads to a position of cultural relativism, designed to give equal treatment to all cultures. Culture, as such, is rendered a highly problematic category.

Gellner tackles this matter in a way that has direct application to any proper understanding of academic inquiry. 'Perhaps there can be no culture-free cognition' (p. 19). However, 'what may be possible is that mankind should attain a form of cognition which…is bound to a new kind of culture…; and that this form of cognition is far more potent than any earlier forms of knowledge; and that…it is obliged to shed the illusion that it can vindicate itself, and moreover, it will not be comfortable, and cannot ever recover comfort' (p. 19).

In other words, modernity has bequeathed to humanity powerful ways of understanding the world and this is a major part of its culture. Far from being culture-free, modern inquiry is a dominant cultural form. Note that it will not do to rest a defence on the work, say, of Tony Becher (1989) who brilliantly exposed the multiple cultures that constitute the several 'academic tribes and territories'. Such a set of insights adds but nuances to the general picture that Gellner is painting. The point is that the modes of reasoning that have developed *pari passu* with the evolution of modernity generally and, thereby, the academy, are major cultural forms. And moreover, there is no extra-mural legitimation of modern reasoning *as* a form of culture.

Belief in Reason

Linked to the themes in Gellner's oeuvre is one that has particular application to the contemporary understandings of, and practices, within the academy, namely what might be termed belief in reason. Gellner acknowledges that reason has come in for quite a battering. Indeed, many have sought variously to undermine it, both theoretically and in action. The first of these is perhaps the more important: if reason can be

undermined *theoretically*, then *actions* taken to dislodge or even destroy it would have justification. As it happens, in an era of 'post-truth', the two attacks on reason are, at this very moment, coming powerfully together.

Gellner sees those who would undermine reason by theoretical or philosophical means – the irrationalists – as coming from several directions. They are not those who believe in God and who seek a theological basis for reason. Rather, 'the crucial opponents of Reason, in modern times, are…those who insist that it must cede to a vital force within the world, and…which derives…its vigour…from its intra-mundane, natural status. …From now on, only natives may aspire to rule – and the more indigenous, the better!…the claim is then made that irrational forces are somehow more at home in this world, more truly part of it, than rational ones.' This 'replacement' may be class interest, national interest, economic interest, gender, indigenous culture(s), the 'self', the 'will of the people' and so on and so forth. Reason is now in the dock, accused of harbouring its own interests. And much of modern Western philosophy has underwritten this distrust of reason, pointing out its own lack of foundations. *Rationality is inherently irrational*, is the charge.

This argument is developed across Gellner's oeuvre, and involves commentaries on key philosophical and social-theoretical positions, especially in the philosophy of science and of the philosophies (plural) of Wittgenstein. But, as ever, it is to his anthropological roots that Gellner turns. It is not irrelevant here that Gellner was forcefully critical of (the philosopher) Wittgenstein – especially of the latter's later 'forms of life' philosophy – and instead preferred (the anthropologist) Malinowski.

Gellner accepts that, ultimately, reason cannot be fully vindicated. 'Mundane bondage is the only kind of truth available to us' (1992, p. 131). Further, 'the attacks on reason, on universalism, on rational order, were carried out by rational means, by reason itself.' Now, there is no escape. There is no return to the pure native or to a Robinson Crusoe-type existence. Those who anguish about Western reason do so from within Western reason itself. Reason may have and indeed, does have, a degree of irrationalism in it; 'reason herself is as arbitrary as anything else' (1992, p. 147) but humanity is now embedded in it, conceptually and practically. The irrrationalists seldom are to be seen rushing off to abandon their way of life amid modernity with all that it offers. It is now actually rather difficult to think, to speak and to act without showing *some* belief in reason.

As is becoming embarrassingly evident, all of this has application both to universities and to higher education in the present times. Higher education policy making and university practices are shot through with irrationalism. Nicholas Maxwell (2008) sees it in an irrationalism that lies deep within the knowledge enterprise of universities, it is present in a contemporary discourse that would seek to position the university as parading half-truths, it is present in attempts to shout down speakers on campus, and it is present when a university management takes decisions without proper scrutiny or openness. Can the university still declare itself in favour of a life of reason, not least when it has itself sought to undermine that life? It seems to have pulled the rug from under its own feet.

Conclusions: Nought for One's Comfort?

How then might we evaluate Gellner's oeuvre as a potential resource for the study of higher education? It might be tempting to give Gellner short shrift. After all, he seems to stand out in favour of knowledge, reason and objectivity. Indeed, reason, knowledge and objectivity are to be understood as superior cultural forms that most other communities of the world have been anxious to buy into. None of this is fashionable today. Indeed, the themes of objectivity, of what is in effect Western knowledge, and the very idea of reason have taken successive poundings since Gellner's death, and so the themes and ideas that Gellner relentlessly pursued may seem to hold even less attraction today.

Certainly, Gellner was all the time qualifying his position but it was largely a position of critique rather than of creative construction. For example, as noted, a continual *bête noire* of Gellner's was that of Anglo-Saxon linguistic philosophy. For him, a dependence on Wittgensteinian 'forms of life' could never solve any problems. But it was never clear on Gellner's view as to the tack that philosophy *should* pursue.

Take another example: in addressing the value of the humanities in the modern world, Gellner shrewdly observed that we are all clerks now (1964b, p. 78). The humanities originally gained their legitimacy in being the natural intellectual companions of the clerkly class, those – in say medieval society – who could read and write. But in a world in which the majority of the people are literate, it is no longer clear as to the value that the humanities offer. This might have opened the door wide to a proposal as to a direction the humanities might take so as to have a clear role in the modern world. That Gellner never ventured down this path has to be a regret, not least in a context in which – in many systems of higher education across the world – the humanities are being severely diminished.

In short, in a world that is more sensitive to indigenous cultures, to engaging with forms of life (both human and natural), and in which reason, knowledge, culture are highly controversial concepts, it may seem that Gellner's work offers naught for one's comfort. But Gellner's oeuvre may yet hold resources in helping an understanding of the contemporary university. Manifestly, his work displays a unique intertwining of philosophy, social theory and anthropology. This is so but this interdisciplinary capacity enables him to bring to bear a particular distance and position, from which he offers his insights. With deftness and subtlety, he provides commentaries on understandings of the world. This scope and distance, and its accompanying wry humour, are nowhere to be seen in the contemporary understanding of universities and higher education.

By way of an explanation for this neglect, it may be said that Gellner's general position is that of an endorsing philosophy. He might even be said to be an apologist for Western thought and values. It is hardly surprising if his work is ignored, it may then be alleged, since this kind of endorsing philosophy is now outré. This would be an error. The matters that Gellner addresses – knowledge, ways of understanding, reason, culture, and so on – are vital matters. It might also be observed that Gellner's

sheer range and viewpoint somewhat above the fray is itself not in keeping with the contemporary mindset, which is more of the moment, practical and specific. But such parochialism – for that is what it is – misses a trick. Gellner's body of work is at once critical, synoptic, and confronts the largest matters of human life and ideas and so should be a major resource – if only as a combatant – for any serious thinking about the future of higher education and the university.

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Chapter 5
Roy Bhaskar (1944–2014): The Idea of a University

David Scott

Introduction

A university is an important site of knowledge production. This doesn't mean that it always fulfils this function. Knowledge production comes before two other important human activities: ethics and learning. Both supervene on epistemology. This chapter provides an account of a university and its purposes, developed by one of the most significant philosophers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Roy Bhaskar. It will focus on Bhaskar's ideas as they relate to knowledge and the university. It will not involve a thorough going critical appraisal of those ideas, though many such critiques have been made (for example, see Groff 2004). His critical realist philosophy focuses on the way we can understand how the world is structured, and in turn how we can transform it to accommodate a desire for a better arrangement of resources for human wellbeing. It is thus both a theory of mind and world, and, in addition, and by implication, a theory of the educational purposes of a university.

Ram Roy Bhaskar, generally known as Roy throughout his life, was born in London on May 15th, 1944. He died on the 19th November 2014. He was a social philosopher best known for his work on the philosophy of Critical Realism and metaReality. His father was an Indian doctor who had come to London at the beginning of the Second World War to qualify for his Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS). His mother was English, but had spent most of her childhood in South Africa. He had, in many respects, an unhappy childhood, experiencing a struggle to come into what he called his dharma, or vocation.

He went to St Paul's private school in West London and then to university at Balliol College, Oxford, where he obtained a first class honours degree in Philosophy,

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Politics and Economics in 1966. Offered a choice between these three subjects, he decided to work in economics. He became a lecturer in economics at Pembroke College, Oxford and started work on a thesis on 'The relevance of economic theory for underdeveloped countries'. However, the lack of reference to the real world in this work persuaded him to switch back to philosophy. As a result, he began work as a research fellow at Linacre College, Oxford, on the project of reinstating the importance of ontology (the philosophical study of being) in philosophical discourse and developing a new non-empiricist and non-positivist ontology, characterised by stratification, differentiation and emergence.

This work eventually resulted in his first book, *A Realist Theory of Science*, published in 1975 while he was a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. In it he focused on the natural world, with this being followed by its counterpart, *The Possibility of Naturalism* (1979), which focused on the social world. The theories put forward in these books came to be combined, somewhat controversially, as 'critical realism' in a new philosophy of science and social science. Shortly after, he published a third book, *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* (1987), and here he argued for a strong programme of explanatory critique and ontological realism. Together these three books laid the basis for what he called 'basic (or original) critical realism'. In turn, his philosophy of basic or foundational critical realism resulted in the publication of two further books: *Reclaiming Reality: A Critical Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy* (1989) and *Philosophy and the Idea of Freedom* (1991).

In 1993 a new phase in critical realism, known as dialectical critical realism, was initiated by the publication of his *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom* (1993) and, a year later, by that of *Plato etc.: The Problems of Philosophy and Their Resolution* (1994). These books developed the ontology and conceptual framework of dialectical critical realism, whilst at the same time offering a critique of the whole trajectory of Western philosophy. In 2000 he inaugurated a new, initially very contentious, phase of critical realist philosophy in what has become known as the 'spiritual turn' with the publication of *From East to West* (2000). This was quickly followed in 2002 (a, b and c) by *The Philosophy of metaReality, Reflections on metaReality,* and *From Science to Emancipation*, which together provided the foundations for a third phase of critical realism, metaReality, a phase which combined a strong critique of modernity with a radically new account of the self, social structuring and the universe, oriented, as is dialectical and foundational critical realism, to the survival of the planet and universal wellbeing and flourishing.

He spent a large part of his working life as an independent (of universities) and itinerant scholar, until in the last part of his life he was appointed as a world scholar to the then Institute of Education, a constituent part of the University of London, before it was incorporated into University College London in 2015. Whilst there, he set up the International Centre for Critical Realism. A good account of his life and work is contained in his auto-ethnography, *The Formation of Critical Realism: A Personal Perspective* (Bhaskar with Hartwig 2013).

In this book, he identified a number of intellectual movements that had influenced his thinking. The first set of influences was the anti-monistic tradition in the

philosophy of science and the anti-deductivist tradition. The second was the sociology of knowledge and critiques of ideology. The third was the praxiological turn in the writings of early Marx. This, he argued, required philosophical concepts developed at deeper levels of abstraction to be traced back to their genesis in concrete social conditions. The fourth set of influences was structuralism and post-structural perspectives; and in particular, this involved a rejection of atomistic events as the sole focus of enquiry and an emphasis on the tendencies and powers of objects. And the sixth influence was a reaction to the idea of the primacy of language and language structures in explanations of the world. Fundamentally then, he sought to find a middle way between positivist and interactionist/interpretivist ideas about the social world.

The Idea of a University

There have been, in recent times, many attempts to identify the possible functions of a university. These have included (and there are certainly more): the knowledge-producing university; the entrepreneurial university; the commodified university; the university as a place of learning; the moral university; the critical university; the philosophical university; the university of wisdom; the university of dissensus; the eudaemonic university; the metaphysical university; the concerned university, and the translucent university. In effect, these are public goods, or they refer to a set of public goods (i.e. knowledge, entrepreneurship, commodification, learning, ethical behaviour, criticality, philosophy, wisdom, eudaemonia, metaphysics, care and translucence) that are considered to be superior to other public goods; they thus have a normative dimension to them. All of them are valued, that is, advocates for them are implicitly if not explicitly arguing that this public good is more important than this other possible public good, and all of them supervene on a notion of knowledge. Each of these public goods needs a full philosophical treatment; however, for reasons of space I will only examine in detail the three most important ones: learning, criticality and knowledge.

What distinguishes them are whether they are first-order, second-order or third-order goods, whether they are epistemically adequate or not, and whether they are immediate or future-orientated goods. So, for example, knowledge production is a primary good. Learning is a secondary good as it is dependent on some or other epistemological construction, and entrepreneurship is a tertiary good (both in its depiction of how a university should function and in its desire to develop entrepreneurial citizens) because it supervenes on a number of other primary and secondary goods such as knowledge and learning. The second distinguishing marker is whether they are rational or irrational knowledge construction activities, so commodification, a process involving distortions and reductions, can be considered to be irrational, with pure knowledge actions considered to be rational. Finally, it should be noted that some of these goods are immediate, such as criticality, whereas others are

future-orientated goods such as eudaemonia. All of them, in different ways, are values or virtues.

Virtue ethics is one of the three approaches to ethics that have a normative dimension. It foregrounds the virtues or moral character of the individual and can be contrasted with approaches that focus on duties or rules, as in deontological ethics, or on the consequences of actions, as in consequentialism. The first of these alternatives is a deontological framework, where a judgement is made in terms of a set of absolutely right actions or a set of universal rule-bound precepts. A second alternative is consequentialism. This suggests that a judgement is made in relation to the consequences of the actions of participants in society. Different versions of consequentialism have been developed. One version is actual consequentialism, where an act is judged to be correct or morally right in relation to those consequences that actually resulted from the actions of the individual. Another is direct consequentialism, which suggests that an act is morally right only in relation to the consequences that directly flow from the act itself, as opposed to consequences relating to the agent's motives, or acts of a similar kind.

Virtue Ethics are different from deontological and consequentialist ethics for a number of reasons. They are related to dispositions, and what this means is that the ethical act comprises an inner state, which is already there (in some form or another), having been acquired, seeking to express itself in the world in relation to a problem in the world that requires some action. Dispositions, as inner states, precede, condition and have some influence over actions. A disposition is a character type, an habituation, a state of preparation or readiness and a tendency to act in a specified way. Dispositions then have this persistent quality, although because they are acquired they can in time be modified. They have a strong affinity with a person's chosen identity.

How does one determine what these virtues are? These virtues are in essence valued expressions of the good life; in other words, they offer an ethic about living and are a corrective to other ways of living in and understanding the world. Margaret Archer (2007) in determining what these might be, argues against three individualistic versions of the human being – I have added two more. The first is what she calls economic man (sic.) and she means by this that the person does not and cannot contribute to the common good unless they do so inadvertently. The wellspring for their actions is not derived from the betterment of society or the maintenance of social bonds, because the desire is always to maximise preferences and their utility. A second version of this individualistic ethic is what Archer calls bureaucratic man (sic.) and for her this signifies a contractual social bond rather than a universal one, so that society is organised in opposition to genuine co-operation. The third version of individualism is libertarian in orientation. With the breakdown of familial, communitarian and other types of social bonding structures, there is a compulsion to reinvent oneself at every opportunity. A fourth type is where the individual's actions are habitual, with the person acting in a non-reflexive manner. And a fifth, perhaps, is normative, so that the person chooses to behave in terms of a norm or standard, rather than from the centre of their being in a holistic way. Virtues or ethical

behaviours then are understood as counteractions to this framework and are fundamentally collective in orientation.

The identification of the virtues is the hardest part of the argument to sustain because it opens up a series of unresolved issues, expressed perhaps as a series of questions: What is their (i.e. the virtues) provenance? Why is one set of virtues to be preferred over another? Why should one prefer a teleological account (of society and it has to be extra-individual or broadly social, such as rationality) to a social/political value-impregnated utopian view? Bhaskar provided some answers to these questions, as we will see below, especially with regards to his notions of judgmental rationality and eudaemonia (its provenance is of course much older). Eudaimonia has been translated as happiness or welfare. Etymologically, it derives from two ancient Greek words meaning good and spirit.

Bhaskar believed that the attainment of the eudaemonistic state was difficult to achieve and in part depended on new formulations and reformulations of knowledge in universities. He argued that human beings have to engage in the dialectics of inaction (abstaining from activity in order to be) and the dialectics of action (commitments and the instantiations of values). For him, the fundamental dialectic is 'the dialectic of desire to freedom', which in relation to Bhaskar's (2010) later and neo-Buddhist philosophy transmutes into freedom from desire. At the social level there is a need to create a society in which 'the free development of each is a condition of the free development of all' and this involves the abolition of 'generalised master-slave-type relations', through absenting constraints on human flourishing. For Bhaskar, this is work that can and should be done in universities.

Learning

A principal condition of a university is its learning capacity. A university curriculum is, in essence, a planned programme of learning, or series of learning programmes (in the UK these are heterogeneous since there is no national higher education curriculum), and therefore if we are to understand what it is, we also have to develop a theory of learning. As a concept, learning (for example, acquiring the virtues, and in the process creating dispositions internally) is fundamentally related to knowledge. If, therefore, we are thinking about learning and the practices of learning, we also need to make reference to what is to be and how it is learned, and typically what we are aiming at in such considerations is some form of knowledge. There are two principal categories, knowing-that and knowing-how. (There is also a third category, knowing-by-acquaintance, but this is not central to the argument that I am making.) The suggestion here is that these forms or categories of knowledge are fundamentally different; in other words, there are strong and impermeable boundaries between them. This is misleading, and consequently some of the problems that these strong insulations have created can be resolved. In society these different forms of knowledge are given different statuses or have different attachments of importance. So, for example, vocational knowledge (broadly thought of as being

about processes) is considered to be less important than academic knowledge (broadly understood as being about propositions), but these ascriptions of importance do not lie in the intrinsic nature of each knowledge form, but rather in the way these knowledge forms are realised in particular societies or social units.

Knowledge then, is fundamental to the three types of learning that can be identified: cognitive (relating to propositions), skill-based (relating to processes) and dispositional (relating to embodied virtues). This after all is where the virtues come in. Cognition comprises the manipulation of those symbolic resources (words, numbers, pictures etc.), which points to (though not necessarily in a mirroring or isomorphic sense) something outside itself, though the referent might also be construed as internally-related, or more specifically, as a part of an already established network of concepts. Skill-based knowledge is different from cognition because it is procedural and not propositional. Dispositional knowledge refers to relatively stable habits of mind and body, sensitivities to occasion and participation repertoires. Distinguishing between knowledge of how to do something (or process forms of knowledge), knowledge of something (or judging that claim in terms of its relations within and to a network of concepts), and embodied or dispositional forms of knowledge (assimilating an action and being able to perform in the spaces associated with that action) is important; however, they are in essence all knowledge-making activities, and furthermore can be formulated generically as acts of learning. In addition, learning has a fundamental telos or end point. However, values always supervene on epistemology, about which Bhaskar had a great deal to say.

Bhaskar's theory of learning has the following elements. In basic or foundational critical realism what is said about learning is very much in terms of the development of beliefs. With dialectical critical realism, learning is understood as involving all the components of action, so there is learning at the level of values, learning at the level of wants, and of course, more generally, at the level of being. In his *Reflections on Meta-Reality: A Philosophy for the Present* (2002b), Bhaskar provided a model of learning, which he called 'the unfolding of the enfolded'. This model of the unfolding of the enfolded understands learning not so much as learning of something outside, but rather as the unfolding of an implicit potential that human beings have. The outside is still very important. The teacher is a catalyst; the teacher provides the conditions and means whereby the unfolding process occurs, but the changing emphasis is to see the human being as having from the outset an infinite potential. And what happens in life is that human beings realise or fail to realise some of their potentials. Most of the others are ignored or not called upon.

However, if not enough attention is paid to the external elements, then it is a one-sided model. The model of the unfolding of the enfolded has five elements: the cycle of creativity; the cycle of courting; the phase of formation; the phase of making, and finally, the cycle of reflection. This is not to deny the importance of the teacher, and it is not to deny the role of the catalyst. Knowledge is something the learner is trying to develop. Knowledge always pre-exists the learner, and knowledge and learning are central to any theory of being.

Knowledge

Knowledge has interdisciplinary, or even transdisciplinary, elements. The case for interdisciplinarity starts from the premise that, outside a few experimentally (and even fewer naturally occurring) closed contexts, a multiplicity of causes, mechanisms and potentially theories is always involved in the explanation of any event or concrete phenomenon. There is also a need to consider notions of emergence in any understanding of social phenomena. An emergent level of reality is unilaterally dependent on a more basic one; taxonomically irreducible to the more basic one; and additionally, causally irreducible in the domain in which the basic one operates (cf. Bhaskar 2010). If such emergence is involved, then an open system that has many interrelated mechanisms working on each other needs to be examined through a multiplicity of disciplines. Furthermore, if in addition to an emergent level, a qualitatively new or emergent outcome is involved in the causal nexus at work, then the knowledge required can no longer be generated by the additive pooling of the knowledges of the various disciplines concerned, but requires a whole integration, or genuine transdisciplinarity.

An example of a transdisciplinary form of knowledge is Critical Realism. Bhaskar's version of Critical Realism has the following characteristics: 'a revindication of ontology, as distinct from' but '(ultimately containing) epistemology' (Bhaskar 1998, p. ix); a distinction between the domains of the real, the actual and the empirical; and a belief that objects and generative mechanisms in the world have causal powers which may or may not be exercised, but still exist independently of human cognition or the individual's ability to know them. Further to these, Bhaskar drew a distinction between the transitive world of knowing and the intransitive world of being. He argued that the social world is stratified, and incorporates mechanisms at different levels, with elements of these mechanisms irreducible to those of the level from which they emerged. This implies that objects have emergent properties that interact with each other, and, as a result, new properties are created or emerge from old combinations of objects. This means that the relation between structure and agency is the key framing device at the ontological level; and furthermore, that all observational or experiential statements are framed by a specific set of conceptual relations, that is, all observational or theoretical statements are in some sense theory-laden. As a consequence, any description of the world is both explanatory and potentially transformative of those relations. In short, educational (such as in a university) and social processes take place in open systems.

Three propositions follow from this perspective. The first is that any descriptions we make of human agency and learning practices are dependent upon 'intentional causality or the causality of reason' (Bhaskar et al. 2010, p. 14). Second, these descriptions need to take account of 'synchronic emergent powers materialism' (ibid.), that is, time-sequenced and stratificational changes to the powers of objects, whether discursive or embodied; and thirdly, there is a need to acknowledge 'the *evaluative* and *critical* implication(s) of factual discourse' (ibid. my italics). However, critical realism is an indirect realist theory, and therefore employs

processes of modelling and retroduction to provide accounts of social practices and the relations between them over time.

Judgemental Rationality

Judgemental rationality, for Bhaskar (1979) then, is the key idea and not the natural necessity of objects in the world, though the way that objects become the objects they are, and the relations between these objects as they are and as they will be, needs to be explained. (The university has an important role to play in this regard.) This then also requires a theory of knowledge. A number of arguments have been put forward which attempt to explain why one theory is better than another, and indeed, whether this judgement in principle can be made. The first of these is that there are real issues which impact on our lives and it is these real issues that determine the truthfulness of particular theories. This is an argument in support of ontological realism, but it doesn't take us very far in establishing whether it is possible to determine that one theory is better than another. However, what it does do is indicate that one of our criteria for this determination is the referent of knowledge (indeed that knowledge does have a referent). This is an important step in the argument for judgemental rationality (our ability to decide that one theory is better than another when they are both focused on the same area of social life), but it is not sufficient in itself to establish categorically that it is possible.

The most promising argument in favour of judgemental rationality is that once it has been established that there is a real world that is separate from our knowledge of it, then what follows from this is that there has to be a relation/connection between knowledge development and the world (not in a correspondence or representational sense). This argument rests on the foundational claim that knowledge is not the same as and is different in some important respects from what it claims to be about, i.e. its referent. This means that it then becomes possible to produce knowledge of this connection/relation and of the world itself, even if it is indirect. If it becomes possible to show how the process might work, then we can initiate the activity of grounding our theories in the world as it is and thus establishing in part the truth-capacity of claiming that one theory is better than another. This is the epistemic claim, where accounts of the world are more truthful because they have a better relationship with and to the world. However, this can only be established retroductively. There is a process involved in knowing the world; sensate experience at the empirical level, and knowledge of events and happenings at the actual level only takes us so far, and not as far as the real level of existence, at which reside mechanisms and structures. Retroductive processes then comprise the fashioning of inferential connections between mind and world, and therefore constitute moves, which take us 'from a description and analysis of concrete phenomena to a reconstruction of the basic conditions for these phenomena to be as they are' (Bhaskar 2010, p. 34).

Another argument is that if one theory can explain more significant phenomena than another can, then it is a superior theory. Explanatory power is understood as

relative to the disciplines or fields within which the object of the investigation is situated. However, this doesn't mean that this can amount to the discovery of an ultimate truth. Clearly, if there are anomalies, contradictions or inadequacies in a theory, then it becomes possible for us to argue that this theory is inadequate or insufficient. So in trying to determine whether it is possible to establish that one theory is superior to another, then we also (in addition to our epistemic criterion) have to build in a notion of rational adequacy. And what this implies is that the use of an immanent critique (i.e. critiquing a perspective in its own terms) to establish the possibility of deciding that one theory is superior to another theory, means that the judgement is always internal to a tradition, disciplinary form of knowledge or particular framework. Thus, this criterion is also concerned to establish adequacy as only possible within a discipline or field. However, this seems to rule out the possibility of any form of universal or foundational knowledge. Denying the possibility of universals seems to be a contradiction in itself, since the denial acts in all important respects as a universal.

What are we left with? There are four ways of distinguishing between different theories or models. The first is epistemic: a theory is superior to another because it is more empirically adequate. The second is the converse, so that a version of reality is superior to another because it contains fewer contradictions and disjunctions. A third approach focuses on the giving of reasons, and concludes that some reasons and systems of rationality are superior to others, and therefore should be preferred. A fourth approach is pragmatic: a theory is better than another because it is more practically adequate or referenced to/part of extant frameworks of meaning. A combination of all four reasons is for Bhaskar appropriate, though some of these notions such as the argument from immanent critique are much disputed. Through these means, and only through these means, can we judge between the different purposes or functions of a university, such as knowledge-production, entrepreneurship, commodification, learning, the formation of ethical behaviours, criticality, philosophy, wisdom, eudaemonia, metaphysics, concern and translucence. Criticality is fundamentally important, with the argument being that the real function of a university is to critique current and defective social pathologies in both discourses and actual practices.

Criticality

Adopting a critical approach necessarily implies that a state of affairs is flawed or incomplete and therefore needs to be replaced by an alternative that is not flawed or incomplete in the same way (cf. Scott 2011). The focus here is on the argument used by Bhaskar (1993) in *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom.* This is that from the premise that people have needs and that these needs are unfulfilled, then we are logically enjoined to meet those needs, and thus we have moved from two factual statements without recourse to the addition of a value statement, or even a practically prescriptive statement, to a value conclusion. Identifying a need implies that it must be met.

We can only conclude that inherent in an explanatory critique there is a statement of value and a means for deciding between correct and incorrect actions; in other words, the argument is practically adequate. Social scientists make truth claims about objects in the world. However, in the social world the objects of knowledge include the ideas that people have about those objects, and further to this, those ideas do not just operate as descriptions or explanations, but may causally effect and thus transform the original objects. Many of these ideas will seek to explain the characteristics of that same society. If social scientists seek to explain society and their explanations differ from those held by people in society, then both cannot be right. All this shows however is the possibility of critique. This is different from the natural sciences because physical objects have no conception of themselves and no means of providing an explanation for what they do; in short, they cannot be reflexive.

Social scientists go further than identifying inaccuracies in the accounts that people in society hold about their lives, they also want to explain why these false beliefs are held. What is the false-belief-causing mechanism? Once this is identified, logically and ineluctably the next step is a negative evaluation of it. If we say that some institution or structure causes us to mis-describe objects in the world, then necessarily we are criticising it and seeking to ameliorate its harmful effects, and thus change it. Furthermore, even just reporting the results of an evaluation not only subverts the false-belief-causing mechanism but has the potential to undermine its false-meaning-making powers. Explanation thus has the threefold purpose of describing, explaining and subverting.

Finally, there is the argument from fallibility. Critical realism is critical because human beings accept the idea that their investigations are fallible; and also because the various ways that the world is ordered, and this includes the categorical distinctions that constitute the social order, are not self-justifying, but are determined by particular decisions made by individuals and groups of individuals stretching back in time, and are therefore always subject to critique and their possible replacement by a different set of categories and relationships. Further to this, there is a notion of internal critique, which needs to be applied to both the justification for a critical realist position and those categories and relationships that act to structure the social world.

Some Concluding Thoughts

A university is a site of knowledge production, and thus by implication a place for exegesis and critique. I have suggested that knowledge production always comes before two other important human activities: ethics and learning. Both supervene on epistemology. I have developed here a critical realist account of a university and its purposes, taking much of my inspiration from the work of one of the most significant philosophers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Roy Bhaskar. This purpose I have argued is fundamentally epistemic, and what this means is that

its function is to develop knowledge as a primary social good. From the wholesome development of this primary social good, other important social goods such as learning and wellbeing result.

Though Bhaskar directed his attention to wider matters than education – and in particular education within universities – his philosophy has implications for the way we can understand how the world is structured, and in turn how we can transform it to accommodate a desire for a better arrangement of resources for human wellbeing. It is thus both a theory of mind and world, and, in addition, a theory, by implication, of the educational purposes of a university. This argument only makes sense if Roy Bhaskar's theories about the world and how we can know it are unobjectionable. Unsurprisingly a large number of objections have been made (cf. Scott 2011), which I have chosen not to report on here.

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Part II
Culture and the University

Chapter 6
F. R. Leavis (1895–1978): Thought, Words and Creativity and the University

Steven Cranfield

Life and Work

Frank Raymond Leavis was an English literary critic and university teacher and a major figure on the English-speaking cultural landscape during the middle decades of the twentieth century. In addition to his books of literary criticism, notably *Revaluation* (1936), *The Great Tradition* (1948) and *The Common Pursuit* (1952), he was co-founder of the Cambridge-based journal *Scrutiny* (1932–1953), one of the most influential Anglophone cultural journals of the last 100 years. Apart from non-combatant war service in France during 1915–1918 and external lecturing post-retirement, notably at the University of York, Leavis spent his entire life in Cambridge where he studied, researched and taught, was married (to Queenie Dorothy Leavis née Roth (1906–1981), a notable critic in her own right) and raised a family.

Leavis's educational vision was first set out in *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* (Leavis 1930), *Culture and Environment* (Leavis and Thompson 1933) and *Education and the University* (Leavis 1943), the last-mentioned a compact critique of ideas of the liberal education complemented by a detailed sketch for an imaginatively designed and assessed curriculum of English studies in which History and foreign literatures play a significant part. Leavis's avowed anti-Marxism and equally astringent critique of the authoritarian Right secured him an attentive audience across the English-speaking world, notably in India and Australia.

Critics complained about the influence of so-called 'Leavisites', but Leavis never represented any dominant orthodoxy or institutional power, prompting him to state that he and *Scrutiny* colleagues were Cambridge in spite of Cambridge (Leavis 1986, p. 222). Important later statements on the university and other socio-cultural

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issues, most delivered as public lectures, appeared in *Two Cultures? The significance of C. P. Snow* (Leavis 1962/2013), *English Literature in Our Time and the University* (Leavis 1969) and *Nor Shall My Sword: Discourses on pluralism, compassion and social hope* (Leavis 1972). Leavis collected a number of honorary doctorates and was made a Companion of Honour in early 1978. A few months later he died in Cambridge.

While Leavis disavowed any training in philosophic thought (Leavis 1982, p. 141) he was well-read in philosophy and personally acquainted with several distinguished philosophers, notably Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) on whom he published a memoir (Leavis 1982, pp. 129–145). His final books, *The Living Principle* (Leavis 1975) and *Thought, Words and Creativity* (Leavis 1976), signalled an increasing immersion in conceptual elucidation.

The Essential University-Function

Leavis's fundamental thesis as a teacher-critic is that the intelligent study of English in institutions of higher education should help to create the nucleus of an educated public, morally aware of the threat to society posed by an uncritical acceptance of material and technological advance. Extending and updating the cultural critique of the Victorian Matthew Arnold (1822–1888), Leavis's *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (Leavis 1930) and *Culture and Environment* (Leavis and Thompson 1933) stress a number of developments of the machine age: the levelling-down of standards, substitute living through commercialised leisure activities and the debasement of culture through the mass media and entertainment industries. These developments can be traced to the encroachment of instrumental reason on every aspect of life through a complex of assumptions, beliefs and behaviours that Leavis calls 'technologico-Benthamism' (Leavis 1972, p. 111): a term that describes the confluence of positivist scientific and Utilitarian strands of thought which together weave a powerful modern myth (Midgley 1992) predicated on the scientific determination of the morality of actions through their utility. The technologico-Benthamite mind-set tends to induce a state of 'blankness' in which the thinker cannot:

> admit any other kind of consideration, any more adequate recognition of human nature and human need into the incitement and direction of our thinking and effort [than] technological and material advance. (Leavis 1972, p. 78)

For Leavis, neither Marxism nor capitalism offer sufficient resistance to this mind-set. Marxism in this respect is the reverse side of capitalism's coin: it too presents us with an unsatisfying future that 'looks vacuous…and bourgeois' (Leavis 1986, p. 52). Leavis's proposed response to humanity's felt need for meaningfulness – 'the need that is the product of advanced industrial civilization' – is 'the university', conceived as the nucleus of a radically humane self-awareness, sense of criticality and responsibility for the world: 'There is no other answer; only in the

university can the needed new function [for the educated public] develop its organ' (Leavis 1969, pp. 30–31). This new function, which Leavis dubs 'the essential university-function' (Leavis 1982, p. 179), has discernible aims and but not in any predetermined sense. Citing Polanyian (see below) notions of teleology, Leavis sees this essential function as 'a purposive conception' that is 'telic' [tending to a definite goal] but 'the *telos*…is an implicit denial of finality' (Leavis 1982, pp. 179–180).

Culture, Language and University 'English'

In an increasingly mass civilisation, the task of maintaining and renewing the cultural heritage falls to this (higher) educated public who will necessarily constitute a minority, albeit one with a potential influence incommensurate with its size. For Leavis the charge of elitism that attaches to this controversial minority thesis (see Mulhern 1979) misses the point; while *Scrutiny* writers amassed 'a formidable body of argument whose object…was the preparation of a "revolution in education"' (ibid., p. 100), and Q. D. Leavis argued (in 1937) that '[t]he academic world offers scope for personal aggrandisement much as the business world does' (in Leavis 1968, p. 144), they did not doubt that elites are to be found in all walks of life, ranging from world class football teams, to universities, to groups of social reformers committed to egalitarian educational ideals. For Leavis, to inveigh against all manifestations of elitism in educational policy and practice is counter-productive and serves, paradoxically, to reinforce inequality, build a more dehumanised society and undermine our capacity to call existing power elites to account (Leavis 1972, pp. 119–228). A more pressing challenge for Leavis is to establish how the desiderated educated public, not to be equated with a social class and 'conditioned by its diversity…and its lack of anything like ideological unity' (Leavis 1972, p. 213), can come into being, and achieve confident recognition as such. *Scrutiny* was a calculated bid for a university-based multidisciplinary centre for such a public, but it was overly dependent on unpaid labour and, in Yeats's famous phrase, the centre could not hold.

While Leavis's stance regarding the educated public provides a slightly unstable amalgam of pragmatic and ideal, he is in no doubt that traditional ideas of the university liberal education are no longer adequate, given that we are irrevocably committed to disciplinary specialism and its attendant complex social machinery (Leavis 1943). The new kind of liberal education Leavis has in mind is a matter of fostering, through 'the training of sensibility', among other things a degree of critical resistance to prevailing intellectual, social and commercial trends. In this Leavis anticipates the subsequent approach, if not the ideological (predominantly Marxist) inflections of media and cultural studies (Inglis 1993).

University 'English', as he conceives it in his ideas for innovative curricula and teaching and examination methods (Leavis 1943), is a *sui generis* discipline of thought: it also has a special capacity to interpret technologico-Benthamite civilisation because the latter's anti-creative assumptions are diagnosable in its instrumental

approach to language. Much of Leavis's later writing analyses the kinds of mischief wrought in contemporary discourse when common terms purporting to clarify thought and dispel confusion in public debate and decision making themselves express a muddled and unhelpfully Benthamite mind-set. For example, he cites the description of the social function of 'words' by the British development economist P. T. Bauer (1915–2002) – 'Words are to communication and discussion what units of currency are to a monetary system' (cited in Leavis 1976, p. 147) and, while sharing Bauer's concern about the growing debasement of language in political discourse,[1] demonstrates why this would-be salutary common sense, which posits valuation in a language and a currency as equivalent processes, represents a deeply misleading idea of language. Leavis adds this example in a coda to a book that ponders how 'it all goes back to words – words used to form and establish thought' (Leavis 1976, p. 29), arguing that the function of words in making something communicable is inseparable from the communicating, that words belong to the world that is created collaboratively in a way that is neither merely private nor in the ordinary sense public like units of currency (Leavis 1976, p. 29). Leavis sees a living language as an ongoing, collaborative achievement of purposive human activity which is not reducible to transactional exchange but is rather:

> the heuristic conquest won out of representative experience, the upshot or precipitate of immemorial human living, and embodies values, distinctions, identifications, conclusions, promptings, cartographical hints and tested potentialities. (Leavis 1975, p. 44)

Echoing the phenomenologist Husserl's (1936/1970) notion of *Lebenswelt* (life-world), Leavis argues that reality is humanly created and science offers but one perspective on reality. The achievements of science, moreover, depend on a basic, comprehensive type of collaboration which arises from this humanly created reality:

> [T]here is a prior human achievement of collaborative creation, a more basic work of the mind of man (and more than the mind), one without which the triumphant erection of the scientific edifice would not have been possible: that is, the creation of the human world, including language. (Leavis 1972, p. 61)

Great creative works of art enact a heuristic quest which engages the whole person in thinking about 'the nature, the meaning, and the essential problems of human life…in a valid way…that…precludes and defeats the distorting effects of abstraction' (Leavis 1967, p. 11). 'Valid' here does not equate to any criterion of demonstrable probity but to a form of creative 'imprecision' the goal of which is the 'common pursuit of true judgment' that is both individual and trans-individual, exemplifying 'a rightness that has a compelling impersonal authority' (Leavis 1986, p. 295).

Leavis stresses the value of the intelligent study of literature as a major potential remedy to civilisation's malaise because it has the power to keep, or put us back, in touch with the 'lost intelligence, memory and moral purpose' (Leavis 1943, p. 23) erased by technologico-Benthamism's obsession with the perpetual present. It affirms life as active creation rather than reactive representation or repetitive

[1] Subsequently amplified in post-truth politics: see (Peters 2018) and remarks in 'Philosophical Intelligence in the University' below.

reproduction of the past. Hence Leavis does not propose university 'English' as a form of connoisseurship, but as a mode of inquiry that ministers to an irreplaceable and continuously developing source of knowledge; great literature provides the model and incitement for this necessary kind of thought:

> A major creative writer *knows* that in composing and writing a major creative work his concern is to refine and develop his profounder thought about life (the concluding three-word phrase unambiguously eliminates mathematics). (Leavis 1976, p. 20, emphasis in original)

Literature lives in its recreation among minds 'meeting in a meaning': this process is facilitated pedagogically by a mutually corrective interplay represented schematically by the opening proposition 'This is so, isn't it?' which aims to elicit at best a 'Yes, but –' (Leavis 1969, p. 47). Creative art, like the responses it evokes in us as we meet in a meaning, exists in what Leavis calls 'the Third Realm' (Leavis 1972, pp. 41ff.), a mode of existence that transcends the categories of 'either/or' and 'private/public' (Leavis 1972, pp. 19–69).

Philosophy and Anti-philosophy

If Leavis insisted that university 'English' is a discipline of thought, he needed not just to demonstrate this in practice (Leavis 1975), but explain what is meant by 'thought'. He was thus drawn into philosophising *malgré lui*, as one of his pupils Ian Robinson observes:

> Leavis was forced into thinking about what kind of thinking literary criticism is. The definition of philosophy is notoriously various, but 'thinking about thinking' seems to me (who am not a philosopher) as good a shot as any, at least about one important branch of philosophy. And so…Leavis became a philosopher (2016, p. 128).

Critics have also noted Leavis's habit of engaging in thought which '[has] serious bearings on philosophical problems, most obviously in the field of ontology' (Joyce 2009, p. 24). Attempts have been made to see Leavis as a philosopher of language (Tanner 1974); a philosopher of literature (Moyal-Sharrock 2016); a thinker on philosophical problems (Joyce 2016), and a pedagogue whose teachings embody Aristotelean notions of the good life (Cox 1993). His ideas on language, meaning and the human world are also seen to bear comparison with those of Heidegger (Poole 1974; Bell 1988), Wittgenstein (Dean 1996) and Merleau-Ponty (Harrison 2014).

Leavis, however, describes himself as not only not a philosopher but 'an anti-philosopher' (Leavis 1986). Some philosophers, notably Wittgenstein, are considered anti-philosophers by virtue of their avoidance of theory construction and the view that some philosophical problems are based on misconceptions which require not solving but dissolving (Badiou 2011). Here, though, any commonality with Leavis's kind of anti-philosophy ends. Leavis does not posit, like Wittgenstein (1953, §109), the 'bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language'; on the contrary, language, for Leavis, is 'our incomparable living ally' (Leavis 1975,

p. 25). His declared stance is based on his conviction that the kind of thought advanced industrialised civilisation (and the university) most acutely needs is of an order that eludes much formal philosophy: this latter, according to Leavis, operates according to different criteria of meaning from those discernible in major creative literature, and by extension the critical approaches suited to appreciate such literature, as applied by Leavis's kind of critic. For Leavis the ideal critic is the ideal reader and while there are certain tools and enabling knowledge to hand for the critical task, for example, about period conventions and word usages, there is no predetermined 'method' as such.

Leavis holds that philosophy does not provide a sufficient account of the heuristic function of language because it cannot detach itself from basic assumptions about 'logic' and 'clarity' inscribed in the discipline. Hence Leavis's intemperate put-down that 'philosophers are always weak on language' (Leavis 1985, p. 143). Of course there are approaches such as hermeneutics (Gadamer 1990) and the philosophy of language and ontology (Heidegger 1959) in which the relationship of language to truth and reality is pursued in non-positivist terms. Insofar as Leavis is unaware of these and other contemporaneous developments in philosophy, his stance must be seen as partial, the collateral damage of a campaign to assert literary criticism as an autonomous discipline of thought.[2]

Leavis argues for a constructive and 'mutually necessary' relationship between literary studies and philosophy (Leavis 1982, pp. 186–208) but leaves the details of this relationship vague. If he is sceptical of the relevance to university 'English' of formal or academic philosophy he shows a keen interest in applied, educational philosophy from the outset of his career. A seminal influence on *Education and the University* (Leavis 1943) is the work of the US philosopher-educator Alexander Meiklejohn (1872–1964). Meiklejohn's innovative 2-year liberal arts programme, set up during the 1920s at the University of Wisconsin, and organised around discussions and projects on classical Athenian philosophy and culture, inspired Leavis to propose comparable changes to the teaching and assessment of English at Cambridge. As Richard Storer (2017, p. 1) comments on this acknowledged influence:

> What appealed to Leavis about the experiment was the idea of the 'scheme of reference' – the attempt to understand modern America by being able to compare it to ancient Athens – around which the experimental curriculum was organised. Leavis rejected the idea of an Athens-America comparison but retained the idea of an organising 'scheme of reference' which would enable students – and the university – to get a critical perspective on the 'drift of modern life'. In Leavis's scheme, the study of the seventeenth century as a 'key phase, or passage, in the history of civilization' fulfilled this function.

If we accept Storer's judgment that *Education and the University* (Leavis 1943) is Leavis's 'most important book – the groundwork for what is important in the others' (Storer 2017, p. 1), Leavis's debt to philosophy in establishing his educational bearings is immense.

[2] When the Heidegger parallel was brought to Leavis's attention by the critic and philosopher Roger Poole (1974), Leavis reacted dismissively.

Another important consideration is Leavis's late interest in the philosophy of the polymath Michael Polanyi (1891–1976). In Polanyi's notion of tacit knowing – the idea that 'we know more than we can tell' (Polanyi 1966, p. 4) from which it is argued that all knowledge, including explicit knowledge, is derived – Leavis sees powerful corroborative support for his own epistemological concerns. This enthusiasm for Polanyi has divided Leavis's admirers but from the point of view of a critical and educational *practitioner*, Leavis is undeflected in his belief that university students of literature stand to gain more from reading Polanyi's short essay 'The logic of tacit inference' (Polanyi and Grene 1969, pp. 138–158) than Russell's entire *History of Western Philosophy* (1945). In this choice Leavis was uncannily prescient: we now know (which Leavis did not), that Polanyi's concept of tacit knowing has exerted considerable influence on the philosophy of education (Kinsella 2007) and on understandings of teaching and reflective practice and disciplinary modes of knowing (Schön 1987).

What Are Universities For?

Leavis is among the foremost askers of this question, particularly as it relates to the university's wider social function (Wyatt 1990). 'Why Universities?' (Leavis 1934) is the title of an early Leavis essay in *Scrutiny*, and he is still posing the question in the late essay '"Believing in" the University' (Leavis 1982, pp. 171–185), insisting throughout that any answer must (if we follow Ortega y Gasset's (1930, p. 28) exhortation) start by 'reviewing the problem of [the university's] mission – clearly, decisively, truthfully'. This mission will not be immutable and requires critical reassessment in response to changing circumstances. If the late essay communicates a more prophetic urgency this is because Leavis sees the university under increasing threat: epistemologically, through the hegemony of instrumental reason; ontologically, through a set of economic and political arrangements predicated on dehumanising labour; and sociologically, through the systematic erosion of the main bulwark against these developments, an influential educated public (Leavis 1972, pp. 201–228).

Joe Moran (2002, p. 1) observes that 'Leavis's books and articles on academia were produced over several decades of great institutional change' – in the wake of the Education Act (1944), the implementation of the Robbins Report (1963), student unrest of the late 1960s, the advent of the Open University (1969), and so on. They have an authentic, grounded feel as Leavis engages with educational, socio-historical and philosophical questions 'in terms of a fully particularised theme' (Leavis 1943, p. 10). To read them as definitive scholarly guides to the topics discussed is to misunderstand their purpose, now as then, as stimuli to debate. While Leavis acknowledges the massive changes to higher education he has lived through, he argues that the structural changes within and between periods seldom invalidate his overall thesis but usually serve to accentuate his and *Scrutiny* colleagues' forensic analysis of the underlying 'drift of modern life'. The golden thread in this analysis, from the 1930s to the 1970s, is the conviction that the university has the potential to counter

the pathological anxiety aroused by civilisation's 'sudden loss of confidence, [with] its glimpse of newly imaginable disaster' (Leavis 1976, p. 18) by virtue of its being or becoming a concentrated centre of collaborative creativity. Specifically, 'English' can provide an interdisciplinary meeting place to foster this collaborative creativity. For Leavis, '[t]he problem is to produce specialists who are in touch with a humane centre, and to produce a centre for them to be in touch with' (Leavis 1943, p. 28). The function of the posited centre is not the provision of immediate solutions to humanity's problems but the development of a shared, humanly better centred sense of the questions, with due attention paid to 'scruple [as] the elementary requirement for right judgment' (Ortega y Gasset, cited in Leavis 1976, p. 7). Leavis is an unrepentant advocate of 'complications'.

If Leavis's hopes for 'English' as fulfilling this mediating role have seldom materialised in the way he envisaged (Evans 1993), this does not invalidate his notion of an interdisciplinary space. Many such spaces or 'centres' continue to be created in higher education, although as Storer (2009, p. 106) observes, whether in a mass educational system any forum of this kind can occupy the '"central", difference-making, role that Leavis envisaged for it' is questionable. Even so, Leavis remains one of the most lucid thinkers in calibrating the challenge of how to counter the centrifugal force of disciplinary specialism to make the university more than 'a collocation of specialist departments' (Leavis 1972, p. 63). If debate on this issue has moved on considerably since Leavis in terms of scale (Scott 1995) and global complexity (Zeleza 2016), it has not superseded him.

Leavis enriches our sense of the university as a shared public space, a meeting point of the greater public, a modern-day *agora* (Barnett 2005, p. 7). He upholds the mutual necessity of disciplines as integral to the university's *raison d'être* but equally stresses the creative value of disciplinary boundaries. Failure to recognise these boundaries as such, he argues, results in a blunting of method and too facile a pluralist consensus (Leavis 1972, pp. 161–198). What is at stake is the creation of a space that facilitates bringing together multiple perspectives which work towards shared ground but are maintained in tensed equilibrium. Here Leavis (1972, p. 213, emphases in original) sees a continuity between the university (the 'educated' class) and the educated public it supports:

> Ordinarily, the educated class presents its vital unity as essentially a matter of diversities – diversities that make it the public without which there couldn't be the creative differences (rising into creative quarrelling) that maintain the livingness of cultural continuity. It *is*, in fact, the presence of the continuity, and *that* constitutes its unity.

Losing Sight of 'Culture': The Quarrel with Snow and Robbins

In the previous quotation Leavis articulates some of the grounds on which he picked his own creative quarrel (Leavis 1962/2013) with the idea of 'the two cultures' propounded by the scientist and politician C. P. Snow (1905–1980). According to Snow

(1959, p. 2) 'the whole of western society is increasingly being split into two polar groups': scientists, driven by altruistic optimism, and 'non-scientists', notably 'literary intellectuals' who are 'natural Luddites'. Each group belongs to a mutually uncomprehending 'culture', though Snow never defines the term beyond the remark 'Without thinking about it, [group members] respond alike. That is what a culture means' (ibid., p. 10). That Snow's 'parade of a thesis' (Leavis 1962/2013, p. 44) could be discussed as academically respectable, and be recommended reading for prospective undergraduates in English, came as a profound shock to Leavis. His critique appeared in a lecture, was swiftly printed in the press and provoked considerable controversy on both sides of the Atlantic (Ortolano 2009).

Leavis sees the antinomy of 'sciences' and 'humanities', representing 'two uncommunicating and mutually indifferent cultures' (Leavis 1972, p. 44), as a tendentious cliché; another perceived deficiency is Snow's celebration of the apodictic virtues of technological and material advance in the absence of a historically grounded account of cultural continuity to assess the impact of such change. Snow's confident reductivism and blunt dismissal of any qualms about the massive, ongoing effects of the industrial revolution and his simplistic remedy for humanity's problems – 'For, of course, one truth is straightforward. Industrialisation is the only hope of the poor' (Snow 1959, p. 25) – ignore or distort the historical record which Leavis adduces to illustrate the costs to individuals, communities, culture and the environment. Snow's greatest offence, in fact, for Leavis, is to empty the 'crucial term "culture"' (Leavis 1972, p. 44) of meaning and to strip away its force and power as an ongoing, contestable object of inquiry.

A similar criticism applies to the strategic appearance of this crucial term in the practically contemporaneous Robbins Report (1963). This government commissioned report, which generated the first wave of university expansion in the UK, states as one of the prime functions of higher education 'the transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship' (ibid., p. 8). A Leavisian reading sees this declaration, like Snow's, as essentially static and complacent, since it fails to convey the dynamic nature of culture as 'the creative, and re-creative maintaining of the full human heritage, the vital and unimpoverished human heritage' (Leavis 1986, p. 250).[3] Leavis observes (1972, p. 107), with an eye to the cultural Philistinism that has since imperilled the funding of the Arts globally, that it is logical that Robbins, reading culture materialistically, 'emphasises the supremely relevant importance of psychology and the Social Studies' at the expense of 'English [which] comes under the Arts, and the Arts belong to that margin which…we allocate to the graces of life'. If 'culture' has since become an even more highly contested term in higher education and beyond (Newfield 2008), Snow's technocratic account of it now appears 'antiquated in style and substance' (Edgerton 2005, p. 192), while Robbins draws on assumptions of 'social cohesion' which no longer command

[3] Leavis sees Snow and Robbins as close allies, citing as evidence Robbins's response to the 'two cultures' controversy: 'For reasons which I completely fail to understand, Sir Charles [Snow]'s very moderate indication of danger arouses very high passions. To me his diagnosis seems obvious' (Leavis 1972, p. 99).

automatic assent (Anderson 2010). By contrast, Leavis's formulation provides, in my view, a still fruitful basis for 'creative quarrelling'.

The quarrel with Snow prompted Leavis to expound, in more philosophically-inflected language than *Education and the University* (1943), the ontological function of the disciplines and of the university. The tension generated between disciplinary identities need not be diverted into destructive tribal conflict (Becher 2001); at its creative best it can foster the 'sustained effort of collaborative creativity [that] creates, and recreates, its sense of possible solutions, further problems, and remoter goals as it goes on' (Leavis 1972, pp. 186–187). While disciplinary knowledges exist and continue to develop, they do so, Leavis suggests, not from fixed positions (sciences this, humanities that) but in response to how their 'perception of problems and goals changes' (ibid., p. 187). Here, in a striking anticipation of organisational learning theory (Dierkes et al. 2001), Leavis draws on Polanyi's concept of tacit knowing applicable across disciplines, as glossed by Polanyi's pupil and colleague Marjorie Grene (1910–2009):

> [T]acit knowing…is a reaching out from ourselves to the world – and by the same token a reaching out from past to future, a reaching drawn by the focal point of attention, temporal activity, drawn by the future pull of what we seek to understand (1966, p. 244).

Leavis is acutely aware that his conception of culture, literary studies and the university is likely to be met by much 'blankness' and institutional hostility. As Gary Day (1996) points out, misrepresentation is a hallmark of criticism of Leavis, with critics frequently caricaturing what they think he says or deriding what they would like to think he says. For instance, Leavis's remark 'There's no redeeming the democratic mass university' (Leavis 1975, p. 7) is likely to lead to his being misrepresented as an elitist *tout court* and against widening participation *per se*. Yet he puts it unambiguously on record elsewhere: '*I'm in favour of extending higher education to the utmost'* (Leavis 1972, p. 150, emphasis in original). Leavis sees the goal of *university* expansion being driven by highly suspect premises about culture and citizenship and the technocratic democracy these presuppose. 'We'll smash the oligarchy!' was the reply made by the shadow Secretary of State for Education to Leavis's tentative inquiry about how he would help achieve the real university when his party was a government (Leavis 1972, p. 210). Leavis retorted: 'I could only return, "There are oligarchies everywhere", adding that there were even said to be oligarchies in *his* democratic party' (ibid., p. 211, emphasis in original).

Philosophical Intelligence in the University

An equivalent consideration applies to misrecognition of Leavis's philosophical acumen. Michael Bell (2016, p. 172) states that Leavis's 'significant philosophical intelligence was exercised in a domain [literary criticism] where few would expect it and still fewer would recognize it'. Unless we account ourselves literary critical readers of a particularly astute kind – though Leavis thinks we all have the capacity

to be 'ideal readers' – we are apt to look in Leavis for where we think this intelligence should be manifest (in knowledge 'about' philosophy and explicit theorising) and miss it where it actually is. Leavis is alert to this propensity in his critics, as the following self-reported example of misrecognition illustrates. Reflecting on a university seminar on Newman's *Idea of a University* during which a co-discussant has gathered that Leavis's argument (which to infer from Leavis's account has probably entailed his concern to foreground our 'thought about life') shows him to be 'a vitalist', Leavis comments:

> No thought of any philosophy or intellectual system, of course, had been in my mind; I merely meant to evoke in my hearers a strong present sense of what they of course knew, and to insist on its crucial relevance. But do they know it? Do people know it? They do and they don't. (Leavis 1969, p. 53)

The disavowal of any philosophical adherence – in this case to Bergsonism[4] – segues into questions about the paradoxical working of a mind-set that reveals knowledge yet conceals its significance from full self-recognition. While Leavis is not accusing his co-discussants of intellectual deceit, his inference that our mental models both enable and constrain how we interpret the world may seem merely truistic. Critics may also see this as further evidence of Leavis's presumed 'anti-philosophical' aversion to making explicit his theoretical groundings (Anderson 1968): we might understandably expect a collegiate discussion on the idea of the university to generate a principled elaboration of the issues at stake. However, this is one of those occasions in Leavis where, as Bell (1988, p. 137) argues, it is equally necessary 'to meditate on the truth of the truistic'. To dismiss Leavis's subsequent reflection because it constitutes no recognisable philosophical argument or counter-argument, would be to miss the point; it is not that kind of argument. It is possible to express one's principled philosophical intelligence on matters of shared interest without being tied to a specific intellectual system.[5] What stops us being more clear-sighted philosophers on the university, Leavis implies, may be our disciplinary blinkers.

Leavis's philosophical intelligence encapsulated here brings into focus two mutually dependent recognitions. The first, and more cautionary, is that we cannot legitimately call upon philosophy to carry the major burden of putting into words our deepest ethical convictions; in this respect Leavis appears to have arrived independently and by a different route at a position similar to that of the later Wittgenstein, fundamental differences between them notwithstanding (Moyal-Sharrock 2016). The second, its positive corollary, is that what more appropriately carries this burden is something more encompassing, which Leavis calls 'life'. 'Life' *is*, he insists, 'a necessary word' (Leavis 1972, p. 11), and to use it to evoke the realisation of

[4] After Henri Bergson (1859–1941) and the concept of the vital impetus (*élan vital*).

[5] The phrase 'a strong present sense of what they of course knew, and to insist on its crucial relevance' is unlikely to pass unnoticed by those teachers and researchers in higher education seeking to insist on the crucial relevance of their knowledge in other than quantitative and economic terms (Fanghanel 2011).

certain crucial home truths too frequently taken for granted does not pigeon-hole one as a vitalist.

What counts as philosophical intelligence? And what as intelligent thought? Leavis contends, notoriously, that some if not many philosophers are not necessarily the most reliable guides to answering these two questions. In this he also appears to have more in common with Wittgenstein than either of them supposed at the time, at least by Leavis's account (Leavis 1982, pp. 129–145). Not that Leavis exempts literary criticism from caveats about answering the second question either; indeed, he habitually reserves his harshest words for what he sees as the widespread failure of 'advanced intellectuals' in his own discipline to uphold standards of critical debate.

Leavis's excursions into thought, words and creativity reveal how some philosophers, no less than academics across disciplines, educational policy makers, even major creative writers on occasion, can be strikingly *un*intelligent, for example, by mistaking sentimentality in spoken and written language for the expression of genuine feeling or believing a computer can write a poem.[6] Moreover, these are not incidental lapses of attention or random episodes of emotional indulgence in which 'critical intelligence is switched off' (Leavis 1936, p. 179) but tend to signal a more 'radical disorder' (Leavis 1948, p. 91) in the relationship of thought to feeling and expression. While the contemporary university is increasingly prone to this disorder, and increasingly implicated in propagating it, university 'English' for Leavis has a special capacity and duty to diagnose its causes and 'bring the critical intelligence [back] into play' (Leavis 1936, p. 173), with vital benefits to the common language and cultural health and well-being. Leavis does not subscribe to any 'literary values' (Leavis 1972, p.97), however, holding that an important feature of literary studies 'is that they lead constantly outside themselves' (Leavis 1943, p. 35). They thus serve an important civic function, including subsequently in an era of the appeal to easy emotion in post-truth politics (Peters 2018) which, were he a witness today, Leavis might have seen prefigured in Snow.

Conclusions

Regardless of our disciplinary groundings, Leavis enhances our capacity to engage with the idea and the reality of the university in two interconnected ways: one is how he illuminates our understanding of the significance of thought, words and creativity for a culture that tends to undermine all three, of language as the collaborative creation of its speech community (Bell 1988); the other is how he applies this notion of collaborative creation as a criterion for assessing contributions which

[6] 'I was told … "A computer can write a poem." I replied…that it was one of the things I *knew* to be impossible' (Leavis 1972, p. 142, emphasis in original).

philosophical and literary critical thought, severally or together, might make towards reconceiving the idea and practical performance of the university.

Leavis demonstrates through socio-cultural critiques and exemplary critical readings of creative texts (an equally important vehicle of his philosophic intelligence only hinted at here) how it is not only possible for, but incumbent on, someone in his assumed role as teacher and cultural vigilante to arrive at what appear to be, and frequently are, discussible philosophical positions on common problems. However, just as some philosophers conduct their philosophising through discussion of other philosophers – Deleuze (1991) on Bergson, for example – Leavis seldom draws attention to his own, in a sense 'disposable' thought; instead he foregrounds the type of thought for which he contends, focusing on the object of a shared attention. He is, in other words, a supremely committed teacher; moreover, he opens the door wider for educational practitioners to develop and exercise their own philosophical intelligence, including about the university.

Leavis's idea of the university, as a concentrated centre of collaborative creativity embracing a world of uncertainties and incompletenesses – the only spirit in which, according to him, specialist experimental thinking in the university can be carried on (Leavis 1943, p. 59) – challenges us to ponder the meaning of 'original contribution to knowledge' in its widest pedagogic senses, beyond a criterion of university-based research. To judge, with David Holbrook (1984, p. 160), Leavis a philosophical and psychological naïf – using 'concepts [that] are home-made, amateur and dogmatic' – misses something important. Leavis's 'human world' (Leavis 1972, p. 61), for instance, of which the university is not only a would-be vital part but also a precipitate of its expression, is not a simplified reformulation or appropriation of Husserl's (1936/1970) lifeworld. In its discursive context, it emerges as a manifestation of Leavis's hard-won heuristic thinking, though this is not to say that he claims this idea as his own or that it has been devised by him *ex nihilo*, as when he reminds his listeners and readers that 'my thinking is – as any use of the language in which one thinks and expresses one's thoughts must be…in subtle ways essentially collaborative' (Leavis 1969, p. 47).

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Chapter 7
Hannah Arendt (1906–1975): Embodying a Promise in the University

Jon Nixon

Introduction

Hannah Arendt was one of an illustrious circle of Jewish artists and intellectuals who managed to escape Nazi Germany during the 1930s. Together they formed what the historian Tony Judt described as 'a very special and transient community, that twentieth-century republic of letters formed against their will by the survivors of the great upheavals of the century' (Judt 2009, pp. 88–89) Many, of course, never made it, among them Walter Benjamin who died attempting to cross from occupied France into Spain. Among those who did survive were Theodor Adorno, Erich Auerbach, Bertolt Brecht as well as Arendt herself. Each of them shared a similar intellectual and cultural background, having studied or worked if not together then in many of the same institutions. Although differing in age, each had also experienced the rigours of World War I, the brief and abortive German Revolution that followed, and the years of deep economic deprivation that were a consequence of the punitive terms set by the Treaty of Versailles. Working in different fields, on different topics and in different locations, each went on to produce work that was to have a huge impact on the arts and humanities and on the social and political sciences for generations to come.

Arendt's unique contribution to this collective endeavour was as a political thinker who insisted in working outside the frame of any particular discipline and on matters of world-wide concern. She was an uncompromisingly independent thinker who was always attempting to reconcile her republican values – her belief in the public realm as the space of democratic politics – with the pragmatic complexities

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of *real politic*: how are those values being eroded, denigrated or simply abolished within our current systems of governance? How are they being pushed forward, given a voice, a presence? Crucially, how might we develop a citizenry with the resources necessary to find that voice and insist on that presence? Unforgiving of the atrocities of fascism, as it manifested itself in Nazism, and appalled by Stalin's atrocious version of Marxism, she sought to articulate a notion of politics that was radically different from both these ideologies – and, indeed, radically different from any political regime based upon the adherence to a particular ideology.

Thinking, argued Arendt, is an innate human capacity. It enables us to have present in our minds a multiplicity of standpoints in a process she called 'representative thinking': '[t]he more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue… the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking'. This innate and defining feature of humanity means that our mental horizons are not static and fixed, but constantly shifting and expanding. 'It is', she maintained, 'this capacity for an "enlarged mentality" that enables men to judge' (Arendt 1961/1977, p. 241); and it is this ability to form judgements that opens up the possibility of what Arendt understands by human action, as opposed to routinised behaviour or mindless activity. If thinking involves a withdrawal from the public realm of human action, judgement marks the specific point of re-entry: the point at which purposeful, considered action becomes a possibility.

Life and Thought

She was born on 14 October 1906 into a middle class Jewish family in what is now part of Hanover in Germany.[1] Three years later she moved to Konigsberg with her parents. Her father died from syphilis when she was 7, after which she lived alone with her mother until the latter's remarriage in 1920. In the mid-1920s she studied at the universities of Berlin, Marburg and Heidelberg. As an 18-year-old undergraduate she embarked on a sexual and deeply emotional affair with Martin Heidegger, a 36 year old married professor whose work had already received international acclaim. (For highly authoritative analyses of the intellectual influence of Heidegger on Arendt, see Dana Villa, 1996; 1999, pp. 61–86; 2008, pp. 302–337). She completed her doctoral study under Karl Jaspers on the topic of love and St Augustine (Arendt 1996). In the aftermath of her affair with Heidegger, she married Günther Stern in what was to be a mutually supportive but fairly short-lived marriage. Following the Reichstag fire in Berlin in 1933, she fled to Paris via Prague and Geneva and began 18 years as a stateless person.

Following the German occupation of France, she was briefly detained in Gurs Internment Camp in southwestern France. She escaped with her mother and made her way to the USA by way of Spain and Lisbon, arriving in New York in May 1941.

[1] Elizabeth Young-Bruehl's (1982) *For Love of the World* remains the most authoritative and comprehensive account of Arendt's life.

She settled there with her second husband, Heinrich Blücher, a former member of the Spartacus League whom she had met in France. Her mother followed them to New York shortly after. Ten years later – in 1951 – she gained US citizenship. That same year her hugely original and highly influential study of Nazism and Stalinism – *The Origins of Totalitarianism* – was published to wide acclaim. (Arendt 1951/1973).

Within the USA she rapidly gained a reputation as a controversial and outspoken public intellectual. Her article ('Reflections on Little Rock') opposing the federally imposed integration of public schools (consequent upon the US Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* to outlaw school segregation) was judged so inflammatory by the editors of *Commentary* – who had commissioned it – that she initially withdrew it from publication (Arendt 2003, pp. 193–226). (She agreed to publish it with a prefatory note in *Dissent* in 1959) When her report on the Eichmann trial was initially published in 1963 as a five-part article in *The New Yorker*, it caused a storm of protest and controversy on both sides of the Atlantic (Arendt 1963/2006). Her response – in an article entitled 'Lying in Politics' – to the 'top secret' document, *The Pentagon Papers*, sections of which were published in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* in 1971, was no less uncompromising in its forensic analysis of the systematic and consistent lying to the American people by government authorities regarding the death and casualty toll resulting from the Vietnam War (Arendt 1972, pp. 1–47).

In 1974 she suffered a heart attack while delivering the Gifford Lectures at the University of Aberdeen. A year later she suffered a second heart attack in New York and died on 4 December 1975 at the age of 69, leaving behind her a vast and varied body of work together with the unfinished typescript of her magnum opus, *The Life of the Mind* (the subject of her Gifford Lectures) which her friend Mary McCarthy prepared for posthumous publication (Arendt 1978). Much of her wide-ranging correspondence with friends and colleagues (notably, Heinrich Blücher, Kurt Blumenfeld, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Mary McCarthy and Gershom Scholem) has also been published in the years following her death. (Kohler 2000; Arendt and Blumenfeld 1995; Ludz 2004; Kohler and Saner 1992; Brightman 1995; Arendt and Scholem 2010).

In her writing, Arendt never loses touch with the lived experience of what she is writing about: her first-hand experience of totalitarianism, of exile and statelessness, and of being a Jew in a dangerously anti-Semitic society (See, for example, Arendt 1951/1973, 1957/1997, 2007). These are the themes that drive her work forward and give it a sense of overall coherence (notwithstanding its immense range and variety).

New Beginnings

The notion of natality – of human life as a unique beginning – is central to Arendt's thinking. It is a core element within an intricate network of concepts that spans her entire corpus: a network that includes action, appearance, freedom, judgement, labour, natality, plurality, persuasion, power, public space, violence and work. Her

lifelong preoccupation with these concepts – their interrelations and the distinctions between them – is a further characteristic of her work. The pattern changes with each new shift of the kaleidoscope – each new twist of the argument – but the core conceptual elements remain constant.

To understand Arendt's mode of thought we need to pay close attention to her distinctive use of these concepts. For example, the distinction, as elaborated in *On Violence*, between power as empowerment through collective action and force (particularly when expressed through violence) as destructive of power is crucial to an understanding of her thinking as it develops across the full range of her political writing (Arendt 1970a, pp. 44–46). Similarly, her distinction between labour as the type of human activity that is required for human survival, and work as the type of activity involved in creating an artificial world where life has some durability and permanence, is not only central to the argument developed in *The Human Condition*, but underpins all her thinking on the development of human society and the rise of post-World War II consumer society. Work, as distinct from labour, produces the enduring artefacts of civilisation and human culture (Arendt 1958/1998, pp. 79–93).

Natality – the incontrovertible fact of human birth – is vitally connected to Arendt's notion of action: 'the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting'. The initial new beginning heralds a unique entry into the human world, but this first birth opens up the possibility of further new beginnings in which the individual enters the world of human action: 'In this sense of initiative, an element of action, and therefore of natality, is inherent in all human activities' (Arendt 1958/1998, p. 9). Although she stresses the human capacity to begin, to initiate, we do not act in isolation. To act is to assert both one's common humanity and one's unique human agency. Through our actions we insert our own distinctive selves into our shared world of human affairs.

Education was for Arendt one of the doorways into that world. However, she made a sharp distinction between the education of children and the education of young adults. Her two essays on the former – 'Reflections on Little Rock' and 'The Crisis in Education' – are premised on the assumption that children are as yet unformed, and that adults have a responsibility to guide them into the world of human affairs while protecting them from the full blast and turmoil of that world (Arendt 2003, pp. 193–226; Arendt 1961/1977, pp. 173–196). This assumption lay behind her highly questionable attack on the federal imposition of integrated schooling, as advanced in 'Reflections on Little Rock',[2] and her reflections, in 'The

[2] In response to 'Reflections on Little Rock', Ralph Ellison, the famous black writer, accused Arendt of failing to understand the plight of the Southern Blacks. Arendt subsequently wrote to him acknowledging her error (Young-Bruehl 1982, p. 316). More recently Danielle S. Allen and Kathryn T. Gines have both written detailed critiques of the argument put forward in 'Reflections on Little Rock', pointing out Arendt's factual errors and highlighting what they see as her misguided opinions America' (Allen 2004; Gines 2014), while Richard J. Bernstein has acknowledged that Arendt 'failed to understand the disastrous consequences of hostile political, economic, and social discrimination of Blacks in America' (Bernstein 2018, p. 50).

Crisis of Education', on 'the dangers of a constantly progressing decline of elementary standards throughout the entire school system' (Arendt 1961/1977, p. 173). Arendt seems to have been acutely aware of the vulnerability of the child in an adult world.

Her views on the education of young adults – and of the role of the university in that process – were markedly different. What few reports we have of her own teaching style within the university context suggest that she was centrally concerned with enabling her students to think for themselves, express their own opinions, and argue and deliberate with one another. Jerome Kohn, now the pre-eminent Arendtian scholar, studied under Arendt in the late 1960s. In an exchange of letters with Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, another erstwhile student of Arendt who went on to become her biographer, Kohn recalls the experience of being taught by Arendt during that period of student unrest and violent demonstrations against the war in Vietnam.

> For this theorist of action, teaching itself was an unrehearsed performance, especially in the give-and-take, what she called the 'free-for-all' of the seminar, where she asked her students real rather than rhetorical questions and responded, usually in entirely unexpected ways, to theirs. In her seminar, every participant was a 'citizen', called upon to give her or his opinion, to insert him or herself into that miniature polis in order to make it, as she said, 'a little better' (Young-Bruehl and Kohn 2001, pp. 254–255).

In *On Violence* Arendt inveighed against what she saw as 'this new shift toward violence in the thinking of revolutionaries' (Arendt 1970a, p. 15). What she found particularly shocking was the blurring of the distinction between power and violence (concepts which, as we have seen, she held to be antithetical). She reserved some of her sharpest criticism for Jean-Paul Sartre whom she saw as falsely glorifying violence in the name of empowerment, but had little time for – and little contact with – any of the fashionable Left Bank intellectuals of the day, the exception being Albert Camus whose moral integrity and honesty she greatly admired. (In a letter to Blücher posted from Paris on 1 May, 1952, she wrote: 'Yesterday I was with Camus; he is without doubt the best man they have in France. All the other intellectuals are at most bearable' (Kohler 2000, p. 164)).

Her attitude towards *non-violent* civil disobedience was very different. On 19 February1965, she wrote to her friend and early mentor, Karl Jaspers, regarding the student protests at the University of California, Berkeley, where students were demonstrating for the right to be politically active on campus, to have a voice in university decisions, and to end discrimination against minority students: 'Their organization is superb. In Berkeley they've achieved everything they set out to achieve, and now they can't and don't want to stop.' She added that the students involved in the protests now 'know what it's like to act effectively' (Kohler and Saner 1992, p. 583). The campus had become an extension of the 'free-for-all' of the seminar room: an *organised* 'free for all' in which 'every participant was a "citizen", called upon to give her or his opinion, to insert him or herself into that miniature polis in order to make it…"a little better"' (Young-Bruehl and Kohn 2001, p. 255).

Arendt was not suggesting a headlong rush from thought to action. She was adamant that thought and action are distinct, and that judgement is something different again. Nevertheless, these concepts are vitally connected. Her notions of 'representative thinking' and 'enlargement of mind', writes Dana Villa (1999, p. 88), 'point to the faculty of judgement as a kind of bridge between thought and action'. Only when thinking has done its work and judgements have been formed does the action begin; but, conversely, '[o]nly when action has ceased and words such as courage, justice, and virtue become genuinely perplexing does thinking actually begin' (Villa 2001, p. 19).

What binds together thought, action and judgement is the notion of plurality. '[W]e know from experience', writes Arendt in her 'Introduction *into* Politics' (which formed the basis of a course she gave at the University of Chicago in 1963), 'that no one can adequately grasp the objective world in its full reality all on his own'. She continues:

> If someone wants to see and experience the world as it 'really' is, he can do so only by understanding it as something that is shared by many people, lies between them, showing itself differently to each and comprehensible only to the extent that many people can talk *about* it and exchange their opinions and perspectives with one another, over against one another. (Arendt 2005, p. 128, original emphasis)

To understand the world is to comprehend it in all its plurality. Only through a process of shared comprehension can we begin to form judgements which position and define us within that world. When these judgements coalesce around common interests, individuals achieve the collective agency necessary for concerted action.

This dialectic of thinking, judgement and action lies at the heart of Arendt's political thought as it developed in the wake of her pioneering *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt 1951/1973). It suggests the need for an in-between space in which thinking, judgement and action are allowed free play: a safe space between the private world of solitary thought and the public world of human action; a space in which opinions can be aired and judgements tested. Friendship, as I have argued elsewhere, constituted for Arendt one such in-between space which enables individuals to flourish together (Nixon 2015, 2016). Education provides a similar space: a privileged space in which to venture out, test the water, 'think with enlarged mentality – that means you train your imagination to go visiting…' (Arendt 1978, II, p. 257).

The Power of Promise

The stories we tell ourselves about ourselves reveal an agent, but, writes Arendt, 'this agent is not an author or producer'. Embroiled as we are in 'innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions', the outcomes of our actions collide and coalesce in wholly unpredictable ways. Such is that unpredictability, claims Arendt, 'that action almost never achieves its purpose' (Arendt 1958/1998, p. 184). This unpredictability,

she maintains, is the price we pay for the irreducible plurality of the human condition: a condition which results from our freedom of will and results in the tangle of unforeseen – and unforeseeable – consequences. We are equal in our shared capacity for action, new beginnings; but distinct in the particular actions that define our unique trajectories.

Human beings can minimise the impact of the unpredictable by acting in concert and thereby reducing the clash of conflicting wills and intentions. When we act in this way we generate what Arendt understands by power, the 'only limitation [of which] is the existence of other people… [H]uman power corresponds to the condition of plurality to begin with'. Nevertheless, power is 'dependent upon the unreliable and only temporary agreement of many wills and intentions' unless provided with the durability and potential permanence of binding agreements that stand as a bulwark against the uncertainty of the world (Arendt 1958/1998, p. 201). Arendt wrote of such agreements with reference to 'the power of promise', the effect of which is 'the enormous and truly miraculous enlargement of the very dimension in which power can be effective' (Arendt 1958/1998, p. 245). We cannot predict or control the future by virtue of our binding promises, but we can begin to shape and work towards a common future. It is that dimension of temporal enlargement – 'the enormous and truly miraculous enlargement' – that gives validity to the promise.

Public institutions are the embodiment of the kinds of promises to which Arendt is here referring: promises regarding, for example, our health and wellbeing, our access to justice, the right of every child and young person to a basic education. Without our hospitals, law courts, schools and universities, the practices we associate with these institutions would lack the wherewithal for development over time. We may criticise our institutions, but, without them, the promises they embody would be baseless. Their existence as the cornerstones of liberal, democratic society vindicate Edmund Burke's famous definition of society as a partnership 'not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born' (Burke 1790/1961, p. 110).

Although Arendt herself did not make the connection, we might view universities as the embodiment of a promise given by one generation to succeeding generations to pass on whatever truths – albeit partial and provisional (but always hard-won) – have been gathered from the ongoing practice of research, scholarship and teaching. Of course, such truths are constantly revised, challenged and refined by the coming of the new and the young. Indeed, without those new beginnings truth would wither into irrelevance, and, over time, become an untruth – or, even worse, one of the old lies used to justify the unjustifiable. Nevertheless, the responsibility of each generation to pass on the goods of its collective learning, and, in so doing, expose them to the scrutiny of future generations, remains of paramount importance.

In her essay on 'Truth and Politics' Arendt drew a distinction between 'rational truth' and 'factual truth'. 'Facts and events', she argued, 'are infinitely more fragile things than axioms, discoveries, theories – even the most wildly speculative ones –

produced by the human mind'. Moreover, she insisted, once a 'factual truth' – as opposed to a 'rational truth' – is lost, no rational effort will ever bring it back:

> Perhaps the chances that Euclidian mathematics or Einstein's theory of relativity – let alone Plato's philosophy – would have been reproduced in time if their authors had been prevented from handing them down to posterity are not very good either, yet they are infinitely better than the chances that a fact of importance, forgotten or, more likely, lied away, will one day be rediscovered. (Arendt 1961/1977, pp. 231–232)

In highlighting both the vulnerability and significance of 'factual truth' Arendt anticipates Edward W. Said's insistence that the prime task of the intellectual is 'to protect against and forestall the disappearance of the past', and, through the practice of research, scholarship and teaching, to stand against 'the invidious disfiguring, dismembering, and disremembering of significant historical experiences that do not have powerful enough lobbies in the present and therefore merit dismissal or belittlement' (Said 2004, p. 141).

The urgency of that task is highlighted in Richard J. Bernstein's stark reminder of what can happen to societies that blur the distinction between truth and untruth:

> What happened so blatantly in totalitarian societies is being practiced today by leading politicians. In short, there is the constant danger that powerful persuasive techniques are being used to deny factual truth, to transform fact into just another opinion, and to create a world of 'alternative facts'. (Bernstein 2018, p. 74)

But truth can only be valued by those who have a disposition towards truthfulness. We may differ as to what personal qualities constitute such a disposition and how they are acquired, but without them – and the possibility of them being acquired and re-acquired by successive generations – it would not be possible 'to protect against and forestall the disappearance of the past'. Arendt herself placed great emphasis on what she saw as the *existential* nature of truth: its manifestation in the human dispositions and qualities that are unique to a particular individual. In accepting the Lessing Prize of the Free City of Hamburg in 1959, she spoke of Lessing's philosophical legacy not only in terms of his ideas but also in terms of his unique personal qualities, chief among which she identified as his openness to 'incessant and continual discourse':

> He was never eager really to fall out with someone with whom he had entered into a dispute; he was concerned solely with humanizing the world by incessant and continual discourse about its affairs and the things in it. He wanted to be a friend of many men, but no man's brother. (Arendt 1970b, p. 30)

Similarly, in her 1957 piece honouring the life and work of Karl Jaspers, she wrote of her friend and former mentor as a uniquely generous individual who in his limitless communicability embodied the core principle around which his work cohered:

> The principle itself is communication; truth, which can never be grasped as dogmatic content, emerges as 'existential' substance clarified and articulated by reason, communicating itself and appealing to the reasonable existing of the other, comprehensible and capable of comprehending everything else…Truth itself is communicative, it disappears and cannot be conceived outside communication. (Arendt 1970b, p. 85)

Without the active engagement and interaction of human minds, facts, axioms and theories are reduced to mere 'dogmatic content'. Truth requires an ethos, a whole series of dispositions – a culture of curiosity and inquiry, of critical discourse and argumentation – if it is to speak to the future and allow the future to speak back. One of Arendt's great achievements as a public intellectual was to open up the institutional spaces within which such a culture might develop and flourish. Her own New York apartment – shared with Heinrich Blücher – became a hub of intellectual dialogue and conviviality; Schocken, the New York publishing house where she worked as editor in the late 1940s, became a major focus for new ideas and cultural exchange; and, of course, the seminar room and lecture theatre became – under her tutelage – a place of dialogue in which ideas were developed and challenged, questions asked and explored, and students encouraged to think for themselves.

Arendt, like so many of her generation, witnessed the world descend into the bleakest inhumanity. The emergence of totalitarianism, was, she argued, an event without precedent and fell outside all the existing moral and political categories; outside any existing conception of criminality. The task for her generation was, she believed, to reclaim our shared humanity – our capacity for new beginnings – and restore it for future generations. That task is as urgent now as it was then. Now, as then, authoritarianism is on the rise, anti-pluralist rhetoric grows ever more strident, and the anti-politics of majoritarian populism erects ever more boundaries (Galston 2018; Graziano 2018; Müller 2017). Education offers no panaceas; no easy solutions; no certain certainties. Nevertheless, Arendt was adamant that education is where each generation must start if it is to set about the task of reclamation, and, in so doing, fulfil its promise to succeeding generations.

'Education', Arendt wrote (and here she was referring to the education of both children and young adults):

> is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and the young, would be inevitable. (Arendt 1961/1977, p. 196)

Concluding Reflections

Arendt developed neither a theory of education, nor any extended exposition regarding the ends and purposes of education. Nor did she ever pronounce on the role, function or idea of the university within 'Western' society (or, indeed, any other society). She was well aware that universities in Germany had not only colluded but embraced fascism. She was also aware that one of her mentors – namely, Heidegger – had been complicit in the dismissal of Jewish colleagues from their academic posts; had been an enthusiastic supporter of Hitler; and had failed to offer any explanation or apology for his actions in support of a fascist regime that sought to destroy the moral bases of liberal education. There is little wonder that she chose to keep her distance from an institutional system that had failed abjectly to measure up to the challenge of totalitarianism, nor that in moving from Paris to New York she chose

to live the life of an itinerant intellectual with brief but albeit significant forays into the world of academia. After all, the 'idea of the university' had spectacularly failed.

Nevertheless, the particular conceptual constellations that have been the primary focus of this chapter – thinking, judgement and action; plurality, unpredictability and promise – yield some rich educational insights, and possibly some ideas as to how the university of the twenty-first Century might define its role within a democratic polity.

First, education affords the opportunity of new beginnings, of entry into the world of human affairs, and of a remaking of ourselves within the ever broadening horizons of enlarged mentality. The university is – by this reckoning – the means by which students achieve a sense of civic and global responsibility: a sense of citizenship that reaches beyond the legalities of state citizenship to the more complex and fuzzy cross-border politics of what she termed 'wordliness' – of *reaching out*.

Second, education is the fulfilment of a binding commitment – a promise – between generations to preserve what is worthwhile in human thought and culture and to expose it to the judgment of posterity. From this perspective, the university is both a repository of received wisdom and informed opinion and the crucible within which such wisdom and opinion is to be challenged and endlessly critiqued. But always with the possibility of reformulation, recapitulation – of *moving on*.

Third, education is the process whereby we begin to take responsibility for our political destinies. Arendt taught us that we have the capacity to act together, and, in so doing, to make freedom a human reality. But – as she maintained – such freedom is premised on the notion of shared understanding. What she never insisted upon – but what we can infer from her letters and writing – is that the university might possibly be one of the institutions that make such shared understanding possible. Not only *reaching out* and *moving on*, but doing so *together*.

Arendt believed in the power of collective endeavour. Indeed, she insisted that power, as opposed to force, is generated when – and only when – people act together in the spirit of shared understanding based on contestable and contested opinion. She provides us with no blueprint of what the liberal university might look like, but she does provide us with a dire warning that the institutions of civil society – of which the liberal university is a cornerstone – are a crucial bulwark against the authoritarian populist movements that are once again gaining ascendancy across Europe.

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Chapter 8
José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955): The University's Social Mission: To Enrich Individual Potential

John Wyatt

Introduction

Ortega y Gasset was born in Madrid, educated in Catholic schools in Spain, then studied at the University of Madrid and gained his doctorate there in 1904. He then studied in Leipzig and Berlin, and worked with German philosophers in the University of Marburg. In 1910, he returned to Madrid where he was appointed to the university's Chair of Metaphysics. By this time, he had abandoned his Roman Catholic faith. His growing number of publications on major European thinkers from Goethe to Kant and his wide range of interests (many concerned with novelists and artists) helped to create a highly original thinker, not bounded by traditional neo-Kantian philosophy. He is usually associated with the philosophical context of ontology. From 1914, and increasingly from the 1930s onwards, Ortega's publications became influential in the United States and in Latin America. Their English titles indicate the direction of his committed teaching: *Meditations on Quixote*, *The Dehumanization of Art*, *The Revolt of the Masses* and *History as a System*, as well as the key text for this focus on the university and on its teaching, *Mission of the University*.

Providing a philosophical category for José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) is not a simple matter. In broad terms, he shared in the widespread abandonment of traditional European idealism. Some have classified him as an existentialist, and he certainly engaged with contemporaries in this field, but with many differences. The term vitalism would be relevant for discussion of a major element in his theoretical and practical interests, that is to say a strongly held belief that the formation of living beings is not to be explained purely by scientific/biological materialism, but by individual experience of historical and contemporary events and by social and individual processes of learning.

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Ortega is noted for coining his own terminology for his visions and arguments. For instance, he incorporated reason into the above classification and coined "ratio-vitalism" or 'vital-reason'. This concept is defined as a creative engagement with our own circumstances. In this engagement, reason provides the essential energy to examine our own thinking. Ortega avoided being identified with one social science, such as sociology or psychology, yet used many of their perceptions. Philosophy is for him an essential study with social responsibilities. These are to examine the nature of what has happened and what is happening in ever changing circumstances, to explain to the contemporary generation what is to be learnt from historical events, and, supremely, to teach new generations how to learn.

Mission of the University

As an analyst of Ortega's life and work puts it, 'to live is to contend with the world and to account for the world that surrounds him in life' (Terricabras 2003, Chap. 4). Ortega y Gasset certainly experienced a life in contention with the world, for he engaged at political and journalistic levels, as well as in his academic duties, in Spain's disturbed civic life in the 1930s. Civil war forced Ortega and other intellectuals, notably Miguel de Unamuno and José Gaos, to leave their home country. Ortega worked and taught in Argentina and the United States. He returned to Europe, to Portugal in 1945 and to Spain in 1948, where he was permitted by the fading Spanish Fascist government to continue to teach and to write. There were significant developments of his thinking about the institutional forms which university education took after 1945. He was also responsible for the formation of organisations of what we would now call 'adult education' in USA and in Germany, as well as in Spain.

Ortega's contributions to the philosophy of higher education began initially in 1930 with his major publication, *Mission of the University*. Any summary of Ortega's philosophical achievements would recognise the significance of the key word in that title, a term he also employed in later instances. 'Mission' has a double meaning, relating to an educational institution both internally and externally. This mission is integrated so as to transform a student's life force and so to transform the state of civil life.

The origin of *Mission of the University* arose from the disturbed period in his and in his country's life before the Civil War. From his professorial post at the University of Madrid, Ortega made known his passionate belief that Spain was in a dangerous political state. His reputation engaged student interest, and, in 1930, he was invited by the Madrid Students Union Federation to give an account of the reforms he considered to be urgent in order to revive learning in the Spanish university system. This lecture was extended to form the work which is the core of the subject of this chapter. It was published in Spain as *Sobre Reforma Universitaria: Mision de la Universidad*, and as *Mission of the University* in the United States and Britain in 1946.

The opening chapter of Ortega's *Mission* elaborates the key word of its title. A university should aim to influence the country in which it resides, and to achieve this by its own internal educational policies. These are not to produce a standard product for a mass society, a seriously negative term for Ortega, but to enrich the individuality of students by their learning experience. He is deeply critical of the contemporary Spanish universities and of interference in them by the Spanish state. He condemns the existing system for its 'slovenliness' and for 'the lack of all decorum, of all self-respect, of all decency in the state's manner of performing its peculiarly delicate function' (Ortega 1946, p. 32). However, he is not without hope because he believes that the university can reform itself by following the guidelines he proposes. A social group can become in form by following certain experiences of learning. Then graduated individuals in key social, economic and political positions will be able to exercise positive social action, inspired by their learning experience. History very often proceeds by jumps, and individuals can make history jump the right way.

What he is proposing for the university itself is not a revolution but 'a tempered spirit of reform'. Current teaching in Madrid University was based on a traditional 'function' (note the noun here – not 'mission') to train learned professionals, and to engage in scientific research. A university inspired by Ortega's *Mission* would not abandon these objectives, but they would follow, not lead, the curriculum. It is important to accept Ortega's message that he is not thereby proposing a utopian state staffed by utopian elites. Always deeply conscious of the lessons of history, he is aware of the dangers of utopian politics and its consequent uniformly standard culture. It will be obvious from this brief summary of the premises of Ortega's *Mission* that he was exposed to criticisms of elitism and, inevitably, because of the restricted financial access to universities, to the endorsement of upper-class political control. He was not out to create a graduate class that would necessarily act directly to create a conformist state. They would, however, be able to 'influence action', because they were individually activated by their learning. These early chapters of *Mission* identify the difference between 'mass man' and 'individual man'.

The cultivated student would participate in a broad 'curriculum in science, law and beauty' (McClintock 1971, pp. 28–29), and this shared broad range of studies would be experienced in a distinct learning community. It is vital for the development of future and existing socially contributing citizens to withdraw from time to time with other citizens, to reorganise their inner being. Ortega therefore sees the ideal graduate not as someone who has completed learning, but as someone who continues to learn and to think about what their new life means. In a later work, Ortega defines the advantage of the well-educated character as the ability to 'abstract himself in reflection' and then return to the world of action as a protagonist (Ortega 1968).

Separating Ortega's cultural curriculum from how it is to be taught does not do justice to the fact that they are intertwined. I shall bring the two together, after an initial explanation of his emphasis in identifying the individuality of students and the necessity of a teaching plan related to the core concept of teaching. Pedagogy is a central theme of Ortega's argument in *Mission*. The university's teachers must be

conscious of the individuality of each student, for each student is travelling a path with a personal history and with an individual response to the experience of higher education. Thus, the chief message of the text is one of enabling and guidance, an encouragement to learn and to reason. The function of the university is not to shape and to train for a specific, preconceived career or profession. Appropriately for a philosopher who has a serious concern for the shaping effects of individuals engaging with changing circumstances, he advises small group and individual teaching, which may even offer voluntary attendance.

Ortega directs university teachers' attention to the lessons of history. Public life for which the university is preparing the student is unpredictable. The student must experience learning without rigid visions of the future. In Chapter 3 of *Mission*, Ortega justifies this emphasis by an anthropological summary. Primitive societies had, and still have, less to learn and so their learning can be acquired easily, but modern societies and their economies have complicated demands and they experience rapid periods of change. The university is therefore a necessary agent in influencing the complex world in which we now live. However, those who teach in the universities of the modern world must be aware of what is strictly necessary for their students, so that their learning can be thorough, full of understanding, and not superfluous. University teachers must not be primarily engaged in research into new forms of knowledge at the expense of their teaching duties. Ortega himself wrote of the 'economy' and the 'scarcity' of learning, and writers about Ortega's pedagogical plan have given the title "a parsimony of learning" to this doctrine of a controlled scheme of teaching and learning.

Now we can turn to the inter-related questions: what does the individual student learn and how can the university offer relevance but not specialisation? Ortega rapidly establishes the word 'culture' as the heart of his proposal for a new university curriculum. We have at this point to put aside the current meanings of this term. To Ortega it meant much more than a collective noun for the arts, or even for a form of sociological significance, such as a sense of collective experience. He regarded the use of 'culture' in his own time as worn out, while choosing to reissue it in his own interpretation in a variety of ways. For instance, in explaining his proposal for the university's curriculum, he applied 'culture' to the whole range of studies in which there was a scientific component as well as other academic components. In Chap. 4 of *Mission*, the term 'the great cultural disciplines' has echoes of German 'Wissenschaft'. Ortega's project consisted of five sectors of human knowledge (I place in brackets the equivalent terms from traditional education):

1. The physical scheme of the world (physics);
2. The fundamental themes of organic life (biology);
3. The historical process of the human species (history);
4. The structure and functioning of social life (sociology);
5. The plan of the universe (philosophy).

Ortega rejects the contemporary specialised disciplines dominated by scientific investigation and preparation for the professions. He was clear as to the demands that modern living made on scientific research and publication, but he also calmly

argued that that activity could quite easily progress outside, close to the university's walls as it were, but not dominating the core of learning in the heart of the university. 'Personally, I should make a Faculty of Culture the nucleus of the university, and of the whole of higher education' (Ortega 1946, p. 68). This cultural collection was not to be stacked high with specialised information or techniques, because content must be selective in each disciplinary area and so related to the requirements of the individual learner. The curriculum justified this parsimony on the grounds that the university should aim to be an uplifting principle in the modern world, not an exploding arsenal of knowledge. He recruited a saying of Goethe's to confirm his new curricular doctrine and its benefits to the formation of the student: 'Free yourself from what is superfluous to yourself'.

This summary has, I hope, conveyed Ortega's reassurance that the purpose and tone of the ideal university are both a withdrawal by students away from immediate social action, but, conversely, also to equip the student for a post-university commitment *to* social action. His attention to history made him aware that graduated students will face new threats in their engagement in social action. His schema can however equip the learner with the facility to live authentically, so that the unknown can be faced effectively. Existentialist thinkers of his time also identified the unpredictable and risky nature of life, some with an offering of the exhilaration of risk, but Ortega's focus on the unpredictability of life is different. He is keen to encourage confidence, not pessimism, as illustrated by a remarkable figure of speech from his 'In search of Goethe from within', an essay in *The Dehumanisation of Art* (Ortega 1968, p. 156) where he judges life to be at risk of 'permanent shipwreck', but with safety for some. It is, however, not the sensation of being shipwrecked or the angst of uncertainty, but the movement of the shipwrecked man's arms which keep him afloat.

Ortega's proposal is that, with the right preparation, in a state of uncertainty the graduate should be able to act appropriately. Mankind has the power to make himself. This is a doctrine of Vitalism: 'Whether he be original or plagiarist, man is the novelist of himself' (Ortega 1968, p. 156). Mankind has no fixed biological nature, but 'what he has is …history' (Ortega 1961, p. 157). History is a fixed point of reliability for a journey to the future. Ortega's scheme of university education is designed as cultivating potential, based on where the student starts, not, as in the modern skills and employment-related syllabus, on where he or she should finish.

Following and Enlarging *The Mission*

When Ortega returned to Europe after the end of World War Two, and in visits to the United States and Puerto Rica, his involvement in new spheres of Higher Education, involved interesting developments in education for adult learners. His years abroad had both endorsed his commitments to the public duty of the philosopher and so widened his interest in new institutional structures for Higher Education. His residence in Argentina, where he was involved in Liberation policies for change in

universities, included contacts with South American thinkers and with the previously named José Gaos, then teaching in Mexico, with Father Ignacio Ellacuria SJ in the Jesuit University of San Salvador, and with Xavier Zubiri, whose Spanish essays were widely distributed in Latin America. Together with philosophers from the United States, they played their part in his newly expanding vision for a Philosophy of Higher Education.

Like the mission argued in the book of that name, these new Ortegan initiatives into higher education were aimed at cultivating a productive habitat for learning. Significantly, Ortega himself wrote that these institutions were designed 'to learn what is not taught because no one knows how yet'. Their fundamental role was to involve a participatory audience whose discussions would 'spread out', fertilised by 'convivencia', that is 'living together'. Their field of discussion was, again to use Ortega's key term, the human sciences. As early as 1948, despite Franco's continuation in office, Ortega was able to found an Instituto de Humanidades in Madrid, with the aid of his pupil/disciple, Julian Marias, and later at New Hall, Serrano. There were international guests at the opening events, including Arnold Toynbee and Gabriel Marcel. Because Ortega had previously made a valuable relationship with faculties of the University of Chicago, he was able to return there and helped to extend what, in effect, had been an Ortega-influenced school into the Aspen Institute. Similar institutions were promoted under his influence in Puerto Rica and at Darmstadt in Germany. These Institutes involved new roles for universities and for their staff, related to a number of Ortega's philosophical themes elaborated in *Mission*. Again, pre-eminently the role for the student was to step aside from social action, to converse with others in this special community, and to experience the human sciences, before developing a life of social action. They were to become better armed to assist the communities in which they worked, and thus to avoid the deadly blanket of mass experience.

The Influence of Ortega y Gasset on the Shaping of Higher Education

Any consideration of a philosopher's contribution to thinking about the nature and function of higher education has at least two aspects. One is evidence of the philosopher's direct influence on other thinkers. The second is the practical, actual impact of the philosopher's thoughts on the higher education institution itself, and its position in society's various communities. Both aspects of Ortega's thinking in *Mission* and in subsequent initiatives have to be considered in the contexts of the world-wide massive changes in educational organisations and their functions which have taken place since the ending of World War II.

First, we may note the direct influence on those by whom Ortega's philosophy of higher education was received and welcomed. As indicated previously, Ortega's travels and communications, at first in exile and then after 1945 with other scholars

and their institutions, were in three continents. Many were or had been citizens of Spain. Gradually, contemporary thinkers elsewhere identified their debt to him. One was Martin Heidegger. He too was influenced by the thinking of Edmund Husserl and the development of Phenomenology with its questioning about 'what is it like to be human?' or on Ontology/the nature of being. Heidegger's own development of philosophy departed in a different direction from Ortega's original inspiration, although in his later writing he developed an interest in the role of poetic understanding of human experience, which a key modern follower of Ortega also explored.

In the United Kingdom, there were widely circulated references, such as Walter Moberly's *Crisis in the University* (1949) and J.H. Plumb's *Crisis in the Humanities* (1964). I note too the acknowledgement of Ortega's influence on the literary scholar, F. R. Leavis of Downing College, Cambridge. One influential study by Leavis which was relevant to Ortega's theme is *Education and the University: A sketch for an English school*. It was first published in 1943, but revised and republished in 1979 in response to the major post-war university reforms, and in his rejection of the notion of 'Two Cultures', then being widely discussed (in which the natural sciences were being held up as having a cultural status equivalent to that of the humanities).

In the United States, there were influential translations of Ortega's work in a range of fields, but all with attention to how the universities of a nation can create socially active individuals. I refer in the references to the translations by Marias (1970), Ferrater Mora (1957) and Kaufmann (see Ortega 1961), as well as appreciative studies of his influence on universities such as the University of Chicago. Two good sources are by R. McClintock (1971) and J-M Terricabras (2003). As examples of the outreach of Ortega's thoughts on philosophers' roles and the university's processes of individual formation, I briefly now select two thinkers, one a contemporary and one time pupil of Ortega and the other a developer of his thinking.

It is valuable for those studying Ortega's impact to consider the work and life of Maria Zambrano, both for her close attention in her own writing and teaching to Ortega's themes, and for her influence on Spanish and South American higher education. Her autobiographical text, *Delirium and Destiny*, a record of a life inspired by Ortega's thinking, was published in Spanish in the 1950s. It was then updated in a publication by the Fundación Maria Zambrano in Malaga in 1989, and then reached a wider readership particularly in the United States with a translation by Carol Maier entitled *Delirium and Destiny: A Spaniard in her twenties (1999)*.

In the mid-1930s, Zambrano studied courses delivered by Ortega during a year she spent in Madrid. Ortega supervised her philosophy doctorate on Spinoza. Like her teacher, she was exiled from her own country during the Civil War and in the years that followed. She crossed into France with the poet Antonio Machado in 1939, who died there in a concentration camp. Zambrano escaped, to travel and to teach in Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. She returned from exile 45 years later, and it was then she amended her draft of her vivid life story, reducing its earlier strong political overtones. Roberta Johnson describes it as 'the closest thing to a novel she ever wrote' (Johnson in Zambrona 1999, pp. 215–216). Her teaching and writing

generated published collections in the 1950s and 1960 with titles and contents which are rich with the thoughts of Ortega: *Man and the Divine, Person and Democracy*, and *The Creative Dream*.

The influence of Ortega is directly observable in many ways in Zambrano's influential writing, but she pursued a new direction of thinking, directly stimulated by her extensive experience in South and Central America and, eventually, by her return to Spain. One is her major influence on the development of feminism. The second is her adaptation of Ortega's notion of vital reason. Truth, she asserted, is not only to be sought by reason, but also to be discovered within oneself. She used an inclusive term for this new inner human source – 'Poetic Reason'. This was a new enabling philosophical commitment, one major element, amongst other inner experiences such as dreams and religious faith, being literary experience. The individual experience of the arts (note the plural) can enhance an individual's opportunity to relate to the world.

I find continuing developments of Zambrano's extension of the poetic into reason and of Ortega's thinking, first in Martin Heidegger's later works and now in Professor Martha C. Nussbaum's *Not For Profit: Why education needs the humanities* (2012). Nussbaum, a professor at the University of Chicago, has taught in India as well as in the United States. Her book's title and her endorsement of education for social action create echoes of Ortega.

The Impact of Ortega's Thinking on Educational Reforms

I turn now from examples of the direct influence of Ortega on individual thinkers, to consider how, after his death, his thinking on the mission of the university may be identified in public action in the educational system of the 1960s and onwards, when the world's higher education institutions were undergoing major expansion and re-formation. A reader searching for philosophical influence on the sources for emphases on what and how students should be taught is, in a sense, like an archaeologist searching for artefacts relevant to an academic culture. Which flints from Ortega's past are to be dug out of major public statements for university reform?

As elsewhere in Europe, in Britain there was an urgent need for new institutions and reform of existing structures to cope not only with expansion of student numbers but also with new technological and scientific knowledge. In 1963, a set of proposals was published by the British government. *The Robbins Report*, named after its chairman, arose from official investigations with existing university leaders, politicians, civil servants and others and many of its proposals were established very quickly The scale of expansion resulted initially in seven new green field universities and the conversion of colleges of technology into technical universities, as well as the upgrading of the polytechnic colleges to create a 'binary system' (accompanied by the founding of the Council for Academic Awards [CNAA] as a designating authority for degree standards). Reforms of teacher training college courses were also instituted.

Inevitably, the report contains many strands of thought. Issues raised in *Mission*, though not directly acknowledged, are evident in certain proposals. Like Ortega it saw the purpose of the university to generate 'cultivated men and women' for 'the world of affairs', but 'not for conformity with traditional categories'. The graduates of the new systems, the report suggested, would be 'fitted for creative action'. Proposals about the curriculum also displayed Ortegan traces. It encouraged the proposals, which it had already identified in the traditional Scottish university systems of 'broad courses'. Students should be taught 'on a plane of generality that makes possible their application to many problems'. A requirement that there should be continued acquisition of teaching skills by university teachers was also highlighted. The report was, however, firmly committed to the encouragement of research within the university structure.

Conclusions: The Relevance of Ortega Today

Like someone listening to a modern symphony and tracing themes from a distant musical era, I conclude with personal observations about the relevance of Ortega's thinking for the universities of today. The rapid growth of higher educational development, its varied nature, its international significance – even its very name – are aspects of change, which has taken place and continues to take place. These major developments have been far from smoothly planned and accepted. Indeed, the university has been and continues to be seen as the focus for doubt, disagreement and dissent, not least in its role in the preparation of future leaders of society.

Internally as well as externally, university communities have been seriously divided by arguments amongst competing ideologies, such as marketisation, research imperatives, and conflicting models of the desirable academic community. Ronald Barnett's study, *Beyond All Reason: Living with ideology in the university* (2003) presents a bleak analysis of these divisive features of this modern period, although his conclusions of what a liberal university has to offer are those of hope. His positive conclusions are similar to two Ortegan principles. One is the philosophical basis of reason which is applied to social action and the other is his argument for the values of fostering individuality in the context of a learning society which engages teachers and taught in discursive practices. (Notably, Barnett draws explicitly on Ortega elsewhere in his own works.)

I shall end with what I regard as Ortega's primary message, the responsibility of the university for the student's experience. In recent years, this is not only challenged by increased student numbers, but also one of the contentious issues connected with how students should conduct their lives and their commitments as students. One significant difference in many nations between the modern age and Ortega's own experience of undergraduate life is that we have become easily accustomed to the fact that 18-year old students are now adults – voting, capable of earning and of being in debt, and considered as elements of political and marketing elements in many material social systems. 'Student politics' is a familiar phrase and

it is one of the many challenges to university leaders and to their teaching staff. Ortega's thinking on pedagogy continues to be relevant. The graduate is not a product of a mass production procedure.

Inevitably, national governments aim to bring university education into the modern world, and they also manage procedures for university's financial support. In the United Kingdom, for instance, universities are currently tested and assessed by a national scheme, its Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Undoubtedly, this system with its financial implications has made university managements consider in a variety of ways, and give greater attention to, the nature of the university's teaching and its results. The state requires information, which is collected in a nationally arranged system in order to justify the mark of quality claimed by university departments.

Inevitably, the methods of analysis that lie at the heart of the TEF have come under fire, because of what for some has had appearances of commercial satisfaction surveys. However, the scheme and the reason for its inception have raised again the basic principles that Ortega brought to public attention in his *Mission*, which is that what the student learns and equally how the student learns are jointly at the heart of the process of preparation for an active public life. As I read comments from university leaders, I notice that there are steps being taken to reinforce traditional residential collegiate structures, because they are aware that teaching assessment schemes such as TEF have not taken account of the value of a place where students live as well as learn in a dedicated community.

The question of research and its relationship to the university as a total community is now of course a very different issue than Ortega considered. To be clear, Ortega's curricular doctrine was that research-oriented knowledge, with its quest for specialised thinking had its own structure, not relevant to the undergraduate student, because its quest for specialised truth he regarded as not applicable to the requirements of wise pedagogy (Ortega 1946, p. 51). There is however one significant area of learning which is beyond the undergraduate preparation for a lifetime's journey. In today's world of higher education, a sector of part-time learning for a wide range of age groups flourishes in many forms. I believe it owes a debt to Ortega's experience in what we call Adult Education and in what he built as Institutes of Education. Notably, many national schemes of part-time learning for adults continue to have significant university level involvement.

The British Open University, established by governmental decision in the late 1960s, is pertinent here. The scheme from the beginning was involved in the early stages of televised informative material and then in other forms of computer related systems, but there was and still remains a process whereby students studying for degrees through this system have a contact with a tutor and there are significant short residential courses. These and so many other adult education developments contain more than a trace of Ortega's doctrine that learning depends on a withdrawal from normal public activity with benefits from temporarily stepping aside with others. In *The Self and the Other* (Ortega 1968) he stresses that the intellectual should be able 'to abstract himself in reflection'. The alternative to this mode of abstraction is 'frenetic somnambulism' as the threats of life take over the human spirit. Again,

Ortega's mission for learning is not inward looking, for that results in such dire consequences, but outward, 'a spiritual force in action'.

Ortega's continuing gift to the future and to the idea of the university is his style of philosophy. I conclude with the view that, through his influence on thinking about the university, he did more than many of his predecessors to stimulate a new priority for consideration of human learning. Like most philosophers, he used philosophy to explain, but, more than that, he prepared his readers and those he taught for what is to come. One quotation from Ortega typically paints a portrait: 'man as a kind of ontological centaur' for 'we are dealing with an entity whose being consists not in what is already, but in what it is not yet' (Ortega 1946, p. 154). This style of philosophy, based on a vision of the world ahead, with close attention to the lessons of history, made him the model for the discipline in which we now rejoice – a useful and optimistic branch of learning.

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Chapter 9
Alasdair MacIntyre (1929–): Philosophy and the University

John Haldane

Introduction

Alasdair MacIntyre, who was born in Glasgow in 1929, has been a significant figure within Anglophone moral, social and political philosophy for seven decades, growing in prominence since the publication of his best-known book *After Virtue* in 1981. This and subsequent work reflect the diverse range of his intellectual formation and prodigious industry in the preceding quarter-century.

MacIntyre's first degree was in Classics from Queen Mary College, University of London; but even as he studied Greek and Roman history and literature, he was already engaging with contemporary philosophy in a contrasting range of traditions, principally French existentialist, English empiricist and German Marxist, posing respectively the challenges that life is absurd, that the only real knowledge is sense perception, and that political order is an artefact of class struggle.

This broad interest in ideas led him to an MA course at Manchester University where, following graduation (in 1951) he proceeded immediately from being a student to being a lecturer and soon published his first book *Marxism: An Interpretation* (1953) followed by a co-edited collection *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (1955). The latter indicates a further area of MacIntyre's interest, viz. religion approached as a mode of personal commitment, a form of social practice, and a style of ultimate explanation. His position at Manchester had been in philosophy of religion, but his attitude towards the rationality of faith was ambiguous and in 1957 he moved to a lectureship in Philosophy at Leeds. This was followed by 2 years as a researcher in Oxford and in Princeton, and a return to Oxford as a fellow of

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University College, followed by a professorship in Sociology at Essex. Thereafter he had a long train of appointments of increasing prominence and distinction in the USA: at Brandeis, Boston, Wellesley, Vanderbilt, Notre Dame, Duke, and then back to Notre Dame where he remains today in active retirement, 90 this year but still writing.

In 1956 MacIntyre published an article 'Manchester: The Modern Universites and the English Tradition'. Manchester is one of nine civic universities founded in English industrial cities in the nineteenth century. These stood in contrast to the religious and class oriented ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and Manchester especially prided itself on serving the needs of a rapidly developing city, applying science to technology in the interest of production, and the humanities to mental discipline and enrichment in the service of the professions. At the time, MacIntyre's essay on the subject may have seemed disconnected from his main intellectual orientation, but as subsequent decades have revealed, the philosophy of education – especially of higher education, practised not as a sub-disciplinary specialism but as an aspect of broader enquiries – has been an important means by which MacIntyre has given expression to, illustrated, and set tests for his central ideas about ethics and politics.

MacIntyre's Moral Philosophy: Critical Origins

In order to understand how this should be so, one needs to get a sense of some of the main themes of his extensive and sustained investigations of the status, substance and methods of moral thinking. At the time of his Manchester studies the prevailing philosophical views about ethics were that it consists in expressions of approval or disapproval of character, motive and action, perhaps with the further aim of inducing others to share those attitudes. This 'emotivist' or, in a later variant, 'expressivist' approach denied that moral judgements could be true, or that that they could genuinely be reasoned about. Instead they were taken simply to express speakers' feelings and commitments – if indeed their attitudes are sufficiently consistent and stable to constitute 'commitments'. In support of this contention, such philosophers held that no statement of empirical fact implies any statement of valuation or direction. Certainly we commonly think and speak in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, but according to the expressivist these are projections of personal attitude or social convention.

To some extent such a view might seem to be reinforced by Marxism, and by Freudian psychoanalytic theory in which MacIntyre had also become interested, since both of these suggest that behind the appearance of objective morality may lie subjective impulses and reactions. MacIntyre was open to those possibilities as critiques of conventional bourgeois morality, but he thought that the point of criticising it must be that it was false and that some better set of objective values could replace it. However, he also thought that the very methods of analysis and criticism that Marx had brought to bear on the economic view of society favoured in Manchester

and other centres of industrial capitalism, could as well be applied against Stalinism and other forms of totalitarian socialism prevalent in the 1950s.

Thus began his long journey from the borders to the very centre of later twentieth century moral philosophy. While he was reacting against what seemed to him to be naive and self-serving subjectivism (for though advocates of such views denied the objectivity of morality they were not averse to expressing their own attitudes about how society and individuals should behave) another highly distinctive British philosopher, Elizabeth Anscombe, published in 1958 an article entitle 'Modern Moral Philosophy'. In it she argued that talk of moral obligation derived from a religious way of thinking that was no longer widely shared and that it would be better replaced by reference to virtues, i.e., habits of action and avoidance, the having of which benefitted people by enabling them to live well.[1]

MacIntyre's Moral Philosophy: Constructive Development

In *After Virtue* (1981) MacIntyre produced a broad and deep historical and philosophical analysis along similar lines but with additional claims and arguments. First, he proposed that the alienation of moral language from its roots in particular forms and views of life affected all strands of moral thinking, including that based on the virtues which Anscombe had recommended. Second, he argued that to understand virtues (and vices) properly one has to relate them to the activities in which they are expressed and the ends which they serve, and that to do this one also has to understand the ideas of a *practice* and of a *tradition*.

In brief, he distinguished between *external* and *internal* goods. The former are ones that can be specified independently of particular practices that might produce them. Financial wealth is one such good, as is social influence. However, while an athlete or an artist might become affluent or influential through their professions, these are by-products, whereas the attainment of athletic or artistic excellence are internal goods. One cannot say what consummate artistry involves other than in artistic-aesthetic terms and by reference to actual examples of it. Similarly, the excellence of authentic athletic achievement is not describable in other terms such as its inducing an adrenalin rush, nor attainable by other means such as the use of performance enhancing drugs.

Implicit in this account is the idea of a *practice* – for example art, cookery, fishing, gardening, mathematics, philosophy, physics, and so on – which is defined in terms of certain values and purposes, and of skills involved in realising these. Moreover these ends and standards are inter-generational and passed on by means of teaching, training and critical evaluation. Giotto inherited certain painting techniques and representational purposes from his teachers, but also limitations in his

[1] Anscombe, G.E.M. 1958. Modern Moral Philosophy. *Philosophy* 33 (124), 1–19. Reprinted in M. Geach & L. Gormally, Eds). (2005). *Human Life, Action and Ethics: Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe*. (Exeter: Imprint Academic).

conception and means of achieving these. He worked to overcome those and in so doing moved painting forward, but his successors found themselves in the same position with respect to his work, and so on to Mantegna, Michelangelo, Manet, etc. Similarly for Newton and his successors through to Einstein, and again for Smith, Ricardo, Marx and Hayek in the practice of economic theory.

Anyone reading this is likely to be a part of more than one such *tradition* which largely defines their own practice and the internal goods towards which it is directed. Thinking about this returns us to the idea of virtues as being habituated ways of thinking, feeling and acting that serve the pursuit of a given practice. MacIntyre's point is that just as we need excellences of character and activity in different fields or departments of life, so in a sense do we need them in relation to the living of life more comprehensively. These latter excellences correspond to the moral virtues, principally, as the Greeks and Romans proposed: prudence, temperance, courage and justice (supplemented in the Christian tradition by the religious virtues: faith, hope and charity). But noting the diversity and complexity of ways and circumstances of life, MacIntyre recognises many more specific virtues, including those relating to our mutual dependence upon others such as empathy and trust.

Beyond Virtue

Some advantage in terms of specificity, concreteness, and plausible objectivity is gained by shifting from moral systems of principles and rules to human virtues, but the issue of disagreement and the spectre of relativism remain. First of all, virtues are keyed to purposes and ends, and these may differ; but also where there is agreement in broad terms about ends, there may still be disagreement about what constitutes the right way of achieving these. Such issues were the indicated subjects of MacIntyre's next two major works: *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988) and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry* (1990). Subsequent to those he wrote two other important books: *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings need the Virtues* (1999), and *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* (2016).

The common concern of these four works is to show that whatever social and cultural differences exist, there are certain constants in the human condition both in respect of what limits, as well as what enables our lives, and with regard to the means by which we try to discover what is good for us. Again in brief, he argues that thinking about action raises critical questions about whether we ought to desire what we desire, and that leads to enquiries about human nature and what befits it. To answer these, we need to engage in reflection with others thereby rejecting, correcting or enriching prior ideas. In recognising fundamental ethical and political disagreement, we find ourselves faced with competing conceptions of the human good. At the same time, however, there may be a dynamic interaction between these as, for example, when one accepts the insights of the other, but recognises and then overcomes the latter's limitations and internal difficulties.

While this is an abstract description of the situation as he sees it, MacIntyre is gifted in, and enthusiastic about, illustrating this dialectic by reference to richly described cases often drawn from social sub-groups and other cultures. Here a brief example (not one of MacIntyre's own and intended only to suggest form, not texture or detail) will have to suffice. Suppose there is a disagreement between two ways of moral thinking: one emphasises the promotion of general *well-being*; the other urges rights claims, such as the right not be used to serve the interests of others. An advocate of the first position might be persuaded that it was a defect in her original view that it countenanced, or at least was compatible with, sacrificing the few for the many, but she might also counter that a concern for rights only makes sense if a right protects something of value. Next, she might reason that what is of value in a life is connected with the kind of life it is, and that insofar as human beings are concerned, this involves certain sorts of goods: health, companionship, understanding, and so on. In this way the original insight that ethics is about acting towards the end of well-being is preserved, but qualified, through critical engagement with a rival view, now giving priority to *protecting* goods (such as innocence or personal integrity) over *promoting* them.

The upshot of his decades of philosophising – informed by Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas, Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx, anthropology, history and literature, and others and fields besides – is a rich and compelling analysis of political oppression and subversion, cultural confusion and mental corruption, as well of moral vision and progress. His philosophising also suggests various recommendations as to how we might work through to a coherent account of the primary ends of human life, and of the forms of deliberation by which we might work collectively to resolve disputes about what conduces to or detracts from those common ends. As simply illustrated by the previous example, these forms of deliberation have a structure reminiscent of the dialectic of reason proposed by Hegel (whom MacIntyre discovered via his reading of Marx) in which a thesis is confronted with an antithesis, giving rise to a synthesis which in turn faces a new antithesis, and so on towards, if not ever achieving, a final integrated resolution.

Application to Education

There is considerable potential in such analyses and arguments for understanding the practice and institutions of education, and many have sought to apply MacIntyrean methods to this field; but here I am concerned with MacIntyre's own direct contributions to the subject. In addition to the 1956 essay on the 'The Modern Universities' the following are important in the development of his views: 'Against Utilitarianism' (1964), 'The Idea of an Educated Public' (1985), 'The End of Education: The Fragmentation of the American University' (2007); 'The Very Idea

of a University: Aristotle Newman and Us' (2009), and *God, Philosophy and Universities* (2009).[2]

'Against Utilitarianism' was one of a series of lectures organised by Manchester University in which several philosophers and others considered the aims of education. The tenor and thrust of MacIntyre's contributions can be observed in the following quote:

> The failure both of our society and our education lies in its inability to discover ends, to discover purposes which can furnish a sufficient reason for our activities and so render these activities reasonable and satisfying. The root of this failure lies deep in our whole form of social life, a form made articulate and self-conscious in utilitarian moral and political theory. (1964, pp. 1–2).

The point here is that in the face of disagreement about particular values, we regress to favouring policies that promote 'happiness' or 'welfare', whatever the competing values held within a population. But that begs two questions: first, whether other values might constrain the pursuit of happiness and welfare, and second, how these latter are to be understood; and as is clear these questions are interrelated.

At that stage in his intellectual development MacIntyre was reacting against what he saw as instrumentalising views of education driven by socio-political-cum-economic interests, and his focus was on the victims of these forces. In 'The Idea of an Educated Public' (1985) the perspective shifted to the role of teachers and the needs of society as a whole to engage in sustained critical debate about the ends it ought to pursue and how these might approached.

> [T]he two major purposes which teachers are required to serve are, under the conditions of Western modernity, mutually incompatible…The first…is to shape the young person so that he or she may fit into some social role and function that requires recruits. …The second [is that] of teaching young persons how to think for themselves…These two purposes can be combined only if the kind of social roles and occupation for which a given educational system is training the young are such that their exercise requires, or at least is compatible with, the possession of a general culture, mastery of which will enable each young person to think for him or herself. (1985, p. 16)

Although this suggests a focus on schooling, MacIntyre's general point is a broader one, and to make it he moves directly to consider the idea of an educated public in relation to the purposes, activities and context of the Scottish universities in the eighteenth century. Somewhat like the contemporary situation faced by the UK in relation to debates about Brexit, following the 1707 Act of Union (of the Edinburgh and Westminster Parliaments), Scotland was conflicted about its identity and its orientation towards and away from a larger, richer and more powerful neighbour, in this case England. It had to reconceive itself while justifying its continuing institutions especially those of law, church and university, all through informed and serious public debate. This was facilitated by the development of the tradition of liberal arts education, but now in forms that emphasised their relevance, especially that of philosophy, to these pressing challenges. The Scottish Enlightenment was in part a

[2] 'MacIntyre on Education: in Conversation with J. Dunne' (2002) is also useful as an informal summary and application of his views.

product of this application of intellectual enquiry into human nature and the structure and functions of society, along with which went the identification and cultivation of moral values and virtues and of standards of taste, which together express and reinforce civility.

In order for all of this to happen there had to be a general sense of the need of knowledge and judgement, and that was already part of the Scottish culture of education fashioned in the late-middle ages and reinforced by the extensive provision of schooling following the Reformation.[3] That culture enabled the rapid development of a more extensive educated public familiar with forms of rational debate, subscribing to common standards of justification, and in agreement about fundamental values such as were expressed in a literary and artistic cannon that combined elements of classical and Judaeo-Christian humanisms.

MacIntyre's exploration of this interplay between education and politics is not simply a historical study, rather his point is that Scottish society was able to meet the challenge of social change because it was equipped with a form of higher education that addressed important societal and personal needs, while also expanding the constituency of those who could appreciate and contribute to the debates of the time. Correspondingly, his charge against contemporary education – both at secondary and tertiary levels – is that it is unable to achieve the twin aims of fitting people for their place in society *and* enabling them to think critically. This is because these two ends have become separated. To the extent that someone is trained to fit and function in a society focussed on economic and utilitarian ends (with personal morality and other spheres of value being officially a private matter) they are ill-fitted to participate in debates about the nature of human life and its fulfilment. To the extent that they are educated to engage in the latter, they will be resistant to complying with the expectations of the former. In short, contemporary education fails to address the deepest personal and societal needs and does not equip people to deliberate collaboratively about them.

Whither the University?

These reflections concern the relationship between a view of societal and economic interests and the ends of education, and they might encourage one to see the latter as a victim, or at least as a casualty of social and political developments. Certainly this is often how educationalists portray themselves, as struggling against indifference and even hostility to the intrinsic goods of learning. In his later work, however, MacIntyre produces a powerful critique of educational institutions, particularly universities, seeing them as both complicit in pursuing the economic model of social activity, and as having developed in ways incompatible with producing the very

[3] The first Scottish Parliamentary Education Act is that of 1496 requiring barons and freeholders (land owners) to send their eldest sons to school, and in 1560 John Knox initiated a programme for a school in every parish.

thing they claim to be committed to: namely the cultivation of humane learning and understanding. Two essays address these matters explicitly: 'The End of Education: The Fragmentation of the American University' (2007) and 'The Very Idea of a University: Aristotle, Newman and Us' (2009). Both also look, sometimes with disappointment, to developments within Catholic educational theory and practice, a theme also explored in the book *God, Philosophy and Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition* (2009).

The 'Fragmentation' to which MacIntyre refers has several causes and aspects. Of the former, some are intrinsic to the development of understanding – at least as that process is commonly conceived of. One familiar image of the growth of knowledge is as a tree with deep roots in shared experience and reflection both past and present; a broad trunk formed of solid common knowledge, and then spreading branches of diverse subjects, themselves further ramifying into smaller branches in turn developing offshoots, so that the whole structure leads up to a multitude of branchlets. The academic counterpart of the image is the multiplication of disciplines and the growth of specialisation within them, leading to new subjects and studies.

From one point of view these are both causes and effects of progress: as we learn more we see that there is complexity in the objects of study and so we divide intellectual labour into investigating the various elements and aspects separately. What began as general physics led to classical mechanics, which in turn led to thermodynamics and statistical mechanics, and to branchings into electromagnetics and optics, and so on. Similarly what originated in the general study of human action divided into ethics, politics and economics, the last into macro and microeconomics, the latter into developmental economics, econometrics and various other branchings. As well as the subdivision of existing disciplines, the last century saw the creation of new subjects such as management, urban planning, leisure and tourism, communication, nutrition science, women's studies, etc.

So extensive and diverse has been the growth in tertiary education (also feeding back into secondary and even primary schooling) that large universities are now divided into 'Colleges' and 'Schools'. The following is a common list: Agriculture and Life Sciences, Architecture, Arts (divided into separate sections such as Anthropology, Classics, Film Studies, History, International Relations, Modern Languages, Philosophy, Sociology etc), Business, Chemistry and Physics, Dentistry, Education and Development, Engineering, Geosciences, Government and Public Service, Innovation and Enterprise, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, and Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences. This and similarly extensive patterns and titling of divisions originated in the US which continues to lead the course of university development, but notational variants are to be found around the world in developed and in developing countries.

Several aspects of this are relevant. First, institutions of these sizes and structures, funded by fees, grants, gifts and internally commercialised operations, are mid- to large-scale businesses, and are often the single largest employer in the places where they are located. Second, one of the main forms of their self-justification, both individually and collectively as 'the higher education sector', is as

sources of economic benefit: first, as employers and as purchasers and providers of goods and services, and second, as producers of skilled graduates who can enter and progress in employment. This orientation towards economic demands and benefits has meant that the content and practice of teaching and research is increasingly determined not by autonomous intellectual purposes, but by external markets and social forces. Among other effects this has led to conformism and short-termism in the selection of priorities. So we have seen the universities across the developed world lurch from an emphasis on science and technology, to social and communication studies, to teaching and learning transferable skills, to knowledge transfer and impact, to promoting equality and diversity, to social and environmental responsibility, and so on. Each in turn reflects the real or imagined demands of various external constituencies. Typically, these are the main financial providers and (what is generally among those) governments whose own policies tend to be utilitarian and short term: responding to prevailing economic and ideological forces.

Given his background interest in Marxist critiques of capitalism and utilitarianism, his strong attachment to the internal goods of learning and scholarship, and the practices and traditions involved in these, it is unsurprising that MacIntyre is a critic of the contemporary university as I have characterised it. His main concern, however, is with the effects on education and understanding, both in the teaching and learning of students and in the scholarship and research of academics. The proliferation of subjects and the hyper-specialisation of academics has led to a situation in which undergraduates either specialise too early, or gain only an elementary, and often misleading, sense of a wide range of subjects provided in discrete taster modules often taught by junior staff or graduate students. Meanwhile academic researchers and would-be academics focus evermore narrowly initially to acquire a PhD, then to secure a post, then to achieve promotion, and throughout to attain and retain the regard of their researcher peers.

Leaving aside the issue of what may be spurious or valueless research, there is the more comprehensive fact affecting strong and weak alike, which is that while their *focus* is narrowing so too is their *vision*. In other words, what is lost – or never even acquired – is a sense of, and desire for, seeing and understanding how things fit together. Never mind not seeing the wood for the trees, one may never see the tree or even its major branches from one's perch on a minor branch or branchlet. In MacIntyre's conception of knowledge and its relation to human practical, emotional and intellectual fulfilment, it is not that one is thereby simply missing out on something worth having, rather one is disabled from living well and is likely to live badly, being misled by a fragmentary and distorted view of reality and one's relation to it.

What someone needs, he believes, in order to be able to consider questions about the natural world, about social development, and about cultures and ideas different from her own, is a broad undergraduate education providing a serious encounter with three kinds of studies: *scientific* (including basic physics, mathematics, biology and psychology), *historical* (both recent and more distant history), and *cultural* including 'the language, the way of life and thought, the works of literature and other arts, of some one particular alien culture. So we have to begin by learning, say, Mandarin or Japanese or Arabic (MacIntyre 2006).

A suspicion that MacIntyre has an unreasonably high level of expectation of what is possible at first degree level, particularly as he also thinks that the final year should be available for specialisation, is likely to be intensified by reading this linguistic requirement. Through gifts and hard work MacIntyre is himself unusually accomplished in several languages ancient and modern, and more generally he has an exceptional capacity among academics for comprehension across a wide range of subjects and fields. Thus his curricular prescription may be very testing for students and their teachers, and here there may also be, as there often is in his published work, a degree of rhetorical profusion. On the other hand, it may be that we have deflated expectations because of a degradation of the education process as it has shifted from skills to methods, from disciplines to subjects, and from understanding to the piecemeal and often temporary acquisition of information. The thought that these expectations may be unfeasible (given the current form of mass higher education in which academics are encouraged to develop as researchers, and students are recruited into majors and single honours in part to increase departmental population numbers, thereby strengthening the case for additional resources in terms of further academics or money to employ part-time untenured staff and graduate students so as to free academics for more research) is not an objection to, but rather a confirmation of, one of his main themes.

Aquinas and Newman Revisited

MacIntyre believes it is the primary duty of schools, colleges and universities to contribute at different stages to the education of students. What that means is not training in skills, valuable as that *may* be – depending on what the skills are and how they are used – but the cultivation of educated minds. With his adoption of an Aristotelian philosophical approach, which after his conversion to Catholicism in the early 1980s later brought him to embrace Aquinas's version of this, MacIntyre would be apt to put the point, as does Aquinas in his *De Magistro* (*The Teacher*) in terms of the actualisation of imaginative and intellectual potentialities.[4] Education is a co-operative undertaking involving the interplay of mental powers: those of the teacher and of his students, the latter in relation to the instructor and to one another. Previously I mentioned MacIntyre's concern with fragmentation and the remedy in structuring education in relation to some immersion in three broad areas: *science*, *history* and *culture*. But he believes that, so far as universities are concerned, some-

[4] '*De Magistro*' is a title given by a later editor to Question 11, articles 1–4 of Aquinas's *Disputed Questions on Truth* written c. 1256.

thing further is required: not just for students, but for scholars and for the institutions themselves to have some conception of how human knowledge as a whole may be integrated, which is itself related in his mind to the philosophical and theological idea that reality is not a collection of disparate things, but an intelligible unity.

One way of giving content to that idea is through the view advanced by Aquinas in the thirteenth century and re-expressed by John Henry Newman 600 years later: that reality is a coherent integrated creation expressing an order originating in the mind of God. It was this notion that unified the diverse fields of speculation and study in the medieval Catholic universities. It formed the basis for the ordering of philosophical learning, for example proceeding from metaphysics to philosophy of nature, to the study of life ('psychology' in its original sense), to the study of human nature, to that of ethics and thence to politics. Diverse fields of enquiry were then seen as engaging parts of a unified whole. To understand a part, one needed to attend not only to its specifics, but also be able to relate it to the totality of which it is a part. In the same way, an anatomist who specialised in the micromusculature of the human hand would not properly understand what she was dealing with unless she also comprehended it as an organic functional part of the human body.

While MacIntyre shares the view of reality as creation, in invoking the ideas of Aquinas in general and of Newman in relation to education, he is not relying on the presumed truth of that or any other religious doctrine. Rather his point is that if study and thereby knowledge is not to be fragmentary, and in being fragmentary not really cohering into general understanding, then there must be *some* unifying conception of reality at work, be it theistic or atheistic, metaphysical or scientific. In other words, education needs a philosophy, not in the restricted sense of a specialised philosophy of education or educational philosophy, though those are corollaries of reflecting systematically of the aims and purposes of education. Rather, insofar as it is pursued in the context of a university, it needs a general philosophy, a proposed understanding of, as the American philosopher Wifred Sellars famously put it 'how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term' (Sellars 1963, p. 1).

Conclusion

As with his recommendations for the undergraduate curriculum, this may seem a demanding and unrealistic requirement. It should be understood, however, not in terms of first developing a complete account of the nature of reality and of human beings and their place within in it (and then applying that to the organisation of faculties, teaching, scholarship and research), but rather as a developing conception first implicit, then partly recognised as presupposed, then articulated, then devel-

oped in and through specific fields of study. Another way of conceiving the matter is to think of viewing something up close, then drawing back and seeing and understanding it better by having a broader view, then drawing back again to see it in relation to other things, and again at a further remove in relation to a yet broader setting. Far from being an extravagant idea this is precisely what environmental and other holistic studies emphasise as necessary for understanding what may at first appear as unrelated objects.

So MacIntyre's proposal is that education can only really take place in the context of an environmental view of its various parts corresponding to an integrationist view of reality itself. As well as serving as a counter to isolated specialisation and partial and incomplete descriptions and explanations of things, this proposal also relates to MacIntyre's view of the logic of practical deliberation and the development of ethics. For there the task is to try to see how different values and considerations bearing on action might be integrated into a coherent scheme, and that in turn means working from immediate and partial ends to more comprehensive ones, reasoning towards a conception of the nature and way of achieving, both instrumentally and constitutively, a good human life. Thus in a way is the circle completed: from ethics to education to ethics, and his more general point is that all education properly speaking is the expression of a philosophy, and that being so it had better be a coherent one.

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Part III
Letting Learn

Chapter 10
Martin Heidegger (1889–1976): Higher Education as Thinking

Paul Gibbs

Background

Martin Heidegger 1889–1976 has been acclaimed as one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century[1] attributed with changing the way we think about philosophy and the way we engage in the world. His most celebrated work, *Being and Time* (1923/1962) resonates with his understanding of ancient and medieval philosophy and places temporality as central to his adventure in trying to understand being. His notoriety is not solely reserved for his philosophical work, but also for his with an engagement with German National Socialism which may have contributed to his appointment as Rector of the University of Freiburg, but caused him to lose his ability to teach after the end of the Second World War. His ground-breaking work in ontology and metaphysics determined the course of twentieth-century philosophy on the European continent, and exerted an enormous influence on virtually every hermeneutics, psychology, and theology.

Heidegger is a complex character. His work is in places brilliant, his turn from temporality to language brave and the ever-present flow of mysticism, spiritually stimulating. These influences make his work often difficult to read but repays the effort if one suspends a traditional philosophical frame work. In what follows is an attempt to understand his work directly in relation to the university. His work is much richer than this, but space does not allow for discussion. Sufficient to say that Heidegger can inform our ideas of 'higher education' (i.e. sets of pedagogical pro-

[1] Rorty wrote in the Introduction to *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* that work is to be taken against 'background that we should see the work of the three most important philosophers of our century Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey (2009, p. 5).

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cesses) and the unfolding of the student (e.g. in a technological context) and of 'the university' (as an institution, not least in its relationships to the state and its role in the wider society and culture).

The basis for scholarship in Heidegger spans his early works as a philosopher and as a practitioner. Above all else, Heidegger was a teacher, vulnerable to his own vanity, weakness and self-deception. The controversy surrounding his active and less than convincing denial of the atrocities of political force have done his reputation no good, and more recent revelations in the Black Notebooks 1931–1938 (2016) have cast further doubt over his superficial denial of racism. Indeed, Thomson (2003) goes so far as to suggest that Heidegger's 'philosophical views on higher education were largely responsible for his decision to become the first Nazi Rector of Freiberg University in 1933'.

So, given such an introduction, we might stop here and address his work no more, on the premise that all is bad and corrupted that emerges from his endeavours. Although I abhor his racism, I find within his work much that I believe sheds light on what a university might be. He is accepted by most philosophers as a significant contributor to the philosophy of the twentieth century, and his work is becoming more frequently referenced in the philosophy of education literature; acknowledged by many as ground-breaking. It is with his thinking about the university that this chapter engages.[2]

Introduction

Heidegger began his publishing career as a 20-year-old student of Catholic theology at Freiburg University with an article in the then newly founded monthly journal of the Catholic Academic Association. In 1911, he wrote 'On a Philosophical Orientation for Academics' at a time when the role of the German university was under considerable debate. It was written in terms that were to ground his student advocacy in his Rectoral Lecture of 1927:

> a justified egoism must again be more strongly emphasized, one which ranks intellectual and ethical consolidation and development of one's own personality as a basic requirement over and above all other projects and occupations. This is not meant to launch a polemic against any specific tendency among the students. Only this should be set in the foreground: personal development should not take a back seat to outside involvements which are becoming ever more intrusive'. (2007, p. 6)

> Moreover, the young mind searches, driven by an inner, magical urge for truth, to secure for itself the basic outlines of the necessary pre-knowledge. One can then proceed to take up and think through on one's own the 'principal problems of worldviews. One only possesses truth in a genuine sense when one has made it one's own in this way (ibid., p. 17).

[2] See, for instance, Milchman and Rosenberg (1997) and Young (1998).

In this advocacy of personal development as personal responsibility, Thomson (2003) sees, and I agree, that what guides Heidegger's engagement with the university (and indeed his existential phenomenology) is a place where thinking ought to be a process of ontological questioning, and that a philosophical disposition is a precursor to engagement with sciences and other studies. This is a challenge given what he sees as the hegemony of technological enframing (*The Question Concerning Technology*, 1953a/1977) and machination, (*Contributions to Philosophy 1936–1938/1999*) which reduce education as a goal in and of itself to becoming no more than a resource the purpose of which is to obtain more for oneself, rather than to appreciate what nature offers. These terms refer to the way in which we see others in the world as resources to be used for our needs, and not in the value they have in themselves (such as lakes for water and natural life rather than as sources of hydroelectricity to be used and ordered up to be used as we desire). We need to find a different way to understand ourselves and flourish, *Bildung*.

It is to restore *Bildung* to its original meaning that Heidegger takes up the notion of education. He does so through a discussion of Plato's allegory of the cave, which provides him with what Thomson calls an ontological education that faces the enframement of education and frees the authenticity of one's becoming from the constriction of enframement. In this, the unity of presence and spirit reinforces a primary link to being, through a more grounded notion of science. It is an awakening to a fundamental comportment, a form of receptive spontaneity, which is discussed more fully as releasement. Turning again to Ehrmantraut, he quotes from the *Einleitung in die Philosphie* that:

> for some time now it has become more evident that the connection between science and the effective idea of *Bildung* has been severed. It is no longer clear in what ways not only the results of science, but *Bildung* in science itself should be directed into the undisturbed growth of a genuine *Bildung* of human communities. (quoted by Ehrmantraut, 2010, p. 46).

Science and the Primacy of Philosophy

In 1919, as the discussion on the German university began to draw its lines, in his lecture series 'Towards the Definition of Philosophy', Heidegger warned against its rash reformation, for its real purpose was yet to be articulated. He argues that the renewal of the university needs to involve a return to inner truthfulness as a prerequisite for a worthwhile, self-culturing life (1919/2008, p. 4). The core of this cultivated life is a notion of spirit that is central to his discussion in 'The Fundamental Question of Metaphysics' in 1935 and to the essence of the university. Conceptually, he considered the university as following parallel tracks of science as practical knowledge, and as cultural value. Yet both, according to Heidegger, 'are misinterpreting and disempowering of the spirit' (1935/2000, p. 50), a spirit of what is was to be German. He argues that the collection of disciplines taught and researched within a body called a university is just 'a name, no longer an originally unifying spiritual power that imposes duties' (ibid., p. 51). This spirit is referred to in the

opening line in his 1929 inaugural lecture, that 'The assumption of the rectorate is the commitment to the *spiritual* leadership of this institution of higher learning'. In this period Heidegger avoids actually defining "spirit". It is not until his essay on the 'Language in the Poem' (1953b) that he clearly offers us: 'Spirit is flame. It glows and shines. Its shining takes place in the beholding look. To such a vision is given the advent of all that shine, where all that is, present' (1982, p. 181).

It can be inferred from his early writing, and is manifest in the 'Rectoral Address', that Heidegger assumes students have an earnest commitment to their studies and to the vocation that they might follow. From this, he concludes that they must have a serious interest in philosophy and be eager to understand themselves and take a stance on this. He sees the educator's role as one that includes activating concern in students and, indeed, in the tutor, to understand, or at least to understand how one ought to exist. It creates a comportment in students toward a serious philosophical questioning of how one ought to be awakened. It assumes that they can see an alternative to the way in which they are and how they might find ways to be different. At the core of the philosophical disposition advocated by Heidegger for his students, and those more generally in the university, is a calling unto oneself to question. This questioning has its roots in the sense of the authenticity developed in *Being and Time*.

According to Ehrmantraut (2010), in Heidegger's Freiburg Lecture Course, Winter Semester 1928/29 ('*Einleitung in die Philosphie'*) Heidegger undertakes an extensive thematic analysis of why students should be concerned with this philosophical disposition, almost as a preliminary preparation, rather than focusing exclusively on their other studies. His justification for this is based on what he sees as a crisis in the relationship of the individual to science, its socio-historical position and its essential meaning. In this argument, Heidegger discusses how science as a representational process ignores the key principles of *Bildung* as a process of human flourishing. In 1931, Heidegger asserted in his lecture 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth*', Bildung* [formation] means two things:

> On the one hand, formation means forming someone in the sense of impressing on him a character that unfolds. But at the same time this 'forming' of someone 'forms' (or impresses a character on) someone by antecedent taking measure in terms of some paradigmatic image, which for that reason is called the proto-type. [*Vorbild*] (2007, p. 166).

Heidegger develops his characteristic of modern science in many places, from his inaugural lecture 'What is Metaphysics' (1929b) through his discussion in 'What is a Thing' (1935), into his much later writing in his 'Memorial Address for Kreutzer' in 1955. From his point of view, science becomes the handmaiden of technology and then, as such, it is put to service in industry, ceasing to address the fundamental questions of being. This leads to thinking, which, controversially, Heidegger claims is safe thinking, whilst the philosopher submits himself to what is worthy of thinking.

This theme is taken up by Heidegger in a short lecture entitled 'Introduction to Academic Studies'. Here, he again concerns himself with the crisis in the German university education system in the early twentieth century. It was a system which, according to him, leaves its graduates helpless once they have completed their stud-

ies, for the university had become (and perhaps is even more so today) just a storehouse of skills to be distributed. He asks if the university misses that which is essential to our understanding of our being and thus to our own flourishing. This is the missing aspect of university education: the creation of hope. The fragmentation of disciplines leads to a fragmentation of reality. This leads to distress and alienation. This loss, which is only met by the questioning of our being, is the essential being of our Being. It can only be found in the wholeness of our understanding; a wholeness that includes a notion of spirituality, which is found in the later writing of Heidegger, especially in *Country Path Conversations* (1944–45/2005).

'Rectoral Address' and 'The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts' (1945)

From the above, the themes of the 'Rectoral Address' can be identified. First, there is the university in crisis (as well as the country). Next, there is a need to reassert the notion of *Bildung* as a way to flourish.[3] Finally, there is the audience of scholars who are seriously interested in learning as a duty or obligation to the state: a 'Spirit is neither empty acuity, nor the noncommittal play of wit, nor the understanding's boundless pursuit of analysis, nor even world reason, but rather springs originally attuned, knowing resolution to the essence of Being' (Heidegger 1945/1985, p. 52).

So to the Address, and its intent to prepare student and teachers for their personal and national *Volk*-identity enhanced as a educative, spiritual-political movement. This is clear from the opening sentence of the Address, in which Heidegger states his position, his mission, as a:

> commitment to the *spiritual* leadership of this institution of higher learning. The following of teachers and students only awakens and strengthens through a true and common rootedness in the essence of the German university. This essence, however, only gains clarity, rank, and power if the leaders, first and foremost and at any time, are themselves led – led by the relentlessness of that spiritual mission that forces the destiny of the German people into the shape of its history (1945/1985, p. 470).

What is more, he takes up the position whereby the university is led not as one amongst equals, but by a manager, much as currently is the practice in a growing number of universities. This facilitates a personal plan for the development of what universities do, not what might be inherent in the notion of the university as a collective, but rather focusing on the power in the head, over the university and its other activities and structures. This is not through his personal authority as Rector, but through the authority of the essence of the German university. Heidegger claims that this is not a political but rather a spiritual authority, which has its source in the German people. This is a direct attack on the structure of the traditional Humboldtian

[3] This was fuelled, I want to suggest, by the Catholic mediaeval causal powers of the Transcendentals, as the spiritual frame for the revival of the university, rather than the Nietzschean will to power that Heidegger describes in *Nietzsche, vol. 2.* (1936–40/1991).

model[4] of the university and the State interventions that support it, and is made more clear in his 1933 address 'The University in the New Reich'.[5] Indeed, Heidegger claimed later that the initiation of a Humboldtian university model was a consequence of the Napoleonic wars, conditions that, he suggested when he delivered his Address (1945/2002, p. 31), differed from those in Germany at the time of Address. The new model appoints a dynamic head to run the university, seeking to reflect the desire of the people for a notion of the university that they may never conceive of, but will to exist. In this, he expects students and teachers to follow his interpretation.[6] This interpretation is presented in stark terms. In the Address, he uses the phase 'only if' as many as five times to emphasise the necessity to will the essence of the German university, to place it under the spirit of the beginning of its spiritual-historical existence, and to resolve to submit to it, so that both the faculty and student bodies are only so because they submit to the spirituality that he mentions.

In Heidegger's 1945 paper 'The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts', he explains his position, arguing that it was:

> to renew itself starting from its essential ground, which is precisely the essential ground of the sciences, that is to say from the essence of truth itself; and, instead of persisting in a technical organizational-institutional pseudo-unity, it was to regain the primordial vital unity of those who question and those who know (1945, p. 481).

The Essence of a Heideggerian University

There is much more that can be said about the Address, especially how it may reflect the National Socialist credo accepted by Heidegger. However, I want to consider the structure that Heidegger is proposing, that of the authority of a head, a university reflecting the needs of its people whilst honouring a tradition of questioning and enquiry. This structure deals with how Heidegger saw the threats to the essence of the university in modern times, a threat mirrored in much of our contemporary literature. This model seems to have had fundamental themes that are echoed in the 'Basic Concepts' in his later writing, especially in his concern of *das Gestell*, the enframing effect of technology (1977) on humanity, that creates a reductive and disingenuous view of education.

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[4] See Sinclair (2013).

[5] Here he speaks of teaching not being based on research as in the Humboldt model which is further developed in his lectures 'The German University' in 1934. Of these lectures Thompson (2005, p. 125) suggests he produces a vision for the future university that is 'a tangled mix of philosophy and Nazi rhetoric'.

[6] There are clear overtones of links to the National Socialists here, but in later writing Heidegger will claim that is imbedded in the spirituality he perceived in the Party and it was in that that he was self-deceived. However, more worrying texts have emerged. Milchman and Rosenberg quote Heidegger as stating 'Revolution in the German universities has nothing to do with surface shifts. The National-Socialist revolution is and will become the complete re-education [*Umerziehung]* of men, of students, and of the young teachers of tomorrow' (1997, p. 75). Heidegger defends himself in such documents as his 1945 *Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts.*

Cooper (2002) identifies three threats in the Address: the disappearance of traditional scholarship, to be replaced by the researcher; the shift of accountability to the professions and away from the academic (for 'knowledge is not in service or the professions but vice versa: the professions effect and administer that highest and essential knowledge of the people concerning its entire existence' Heidegger, 1985, p. 479); and third, the disintegration of the community of inquiry. Here, members of the institution are either reduced to controllable entities under the surveillance of management, or, under corporatisation and marketisation, turned into products and resources that are exploited then discarded when their use-value is finished. Indeed, in both contexts, such reality is evident in contemporary higher education. This is an insidious process, where universities become sites of scientific research and teaching becomes nothing more than 'cultural decoration' (*Contributions to Philosophy,* 1999, p. 108) which lose anything that is essential to being a university, because of the 'political-national mobilisation' (ibid.). In this, there seems to be justification for Young's observation that Heidegger was not calling for 'the subordination of the university to the state, but precisely the reverse' (1997, p. 20).

Heidegger's notion of the university and what he means by its essential nature are perhaps most fully explored in his disposition to the De-Nazification Committee, convened in 1945 to consider his worthiness to teach in universities. In this, he states that:

> The function of the university, as the pinnacle of our educational system, is to assume and to remain faithful…regardless of consequence, because, according to the nature of its task, the university finds itself under a categorical imperative to advance the understanding of intentionality before all other service to society, whether it is the interest of church, state or civil society… To grasp the task of education is thus already to know something essential about the structure of the university that it cannot be an instrument of social engineering or, generally simply a means to an end, without ceasing to educate (2003, p. 30).

Heidegger goes on to discuss why the university is not a place where theory ought to be its singular or core purpose, for 'making theory into its principle, the university inevitably conditions the quality of the pedagogic relation' (ibid, p. 39). It leads to forms of abstract exchange, which are imparted into the learning experience set for the teacher to impart to the student. Necessarily, this leads to learning being governed by the logic of contract, resulting in a *contractualising of pedagogy.* This, he claims, has reached axiomatic status within the university. Heidegger's pedagogical stance is revealed by, 'one must go back to the figure Socrates in order to find an example of teaching and learning at odds with the law of exchange' (ibid.).

It is a place where a Socratic encounter is in opposition to *contractualising of pedagogy,* and where it is replaced by *concrete pedagogy*. Concrete pedagogy, or a *pedagogy of ontological freedom,* as Thomson terms it (2002, p. 137), calls it facing up to the enframing of education, which Heidegger sees that higher educational institutions have fallen into, for it enables students to see how the enframing has engulfed them. In 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth' in a passage on pages 168–72, Heidegger suggests that this is a four-stage process. First, this pedagogy shows the impact of the reductive form of education on our understanding of the world in

showing entities only as resources. Second, this attachment to enframing is broken by allowing things to show up in the context of their being, rather than that assigned to them as resources. The third stage allows students to see the validity of their own accessible and visible form, and the final stage is advocacy of the truth that is revealed, and this advocacy culminates in teaching.

This teaching cannot be a passing on of knowledge and skills, as in the consumer/seller model, but a withholding it in order that the student attain their own answers for learning. Heidegger asks in 'What is Called Thinking' (1951/52) what is learning, and answers it thus: 'Man learns he disposes everything he does so that it answers to whatever essentials are addressed to at any given moment' (1968, p. 4) and 'Depending on the kind of essentials, depending on the realm from which they address us, the answer and with it the kind of learning differs' (ibid., p. 15) He is clearly suggesting that learning allows ourselves to respond to what is essential in that which addresses us.

But what of the teacher? For Heidegger, teaching is a craft that is much harder than learning, for it calls for the teacher to allow the student 'to let learn' (ibid., p. 15). He goes further to declare that, if 'the relationship between the teacher and the taught is genuine, therefore, there is never a place in it for authority of the know-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official (ibid).[7] Teaching, for Heidegger, is an exploration of '(I)gnorance as a mode of suspension [which] interrogates the role of the teacher as one who knows and of the student as the one who does not. The teacher's silence is finally what has to be heard' (Allen and Axiotis 2002, p. 41). Reflecting on his own practice, Heidegger feels that this might be why some have found his lectures odd!

I digress here momentarily to consider expressly political support for the mission statements and strategies of universities in the United Kingdom (and, I suspect, elsewhere), which are demanded to retain government support, and how this technological enframement of universities, as envisioned by Heidegger, is now a reality.

For Heidegger, this is a manifestation of the technological enframing of our world from which universities are not exempt. Heidegger offers a powerful critique of the way in which our educational institutions have come to express a nihilistic, 'technological understanding of being'. In 'What is Metaphysics', he pronounces the death of the higher education institution, proclaiming that 'The rootedness of the sciences in their essential ground has dried up and atrophied' (2007, p. 83). Yet, as Thomson points out in the Rectoral Address, that under his 'deliberate provocation Heidegger is not beating a dead horse; his pronouncement implies that it is fated to wither and decay *unless it is revived*, reinvigorated from the root' (2001). Heidegger's goal was to understand being through the philosophical understanding of Being within which the multiplicity of dispersed disciplines would have a true meaning.

Thomson observes that Heidegger seeks to 'dissolve the concealments it has engendered in order to 'recover' from the beginning of the educational tradition

[7] Heidegger discusses the declination of teachers to teach, based on the downgrading of its activity, which is not seen in his sense but as a form of performativity to be controlled, supervised and measured.

those 'primordial experiences' which have fundamentally shaped its subsequent historical development' (Thomson 2001, p. 243). Indeed, Heidegger would have abhorred, but predicted, how it went further, in terms of the metrics and analytics now determining the quality and worth of research and teaching. This has taken place now that calculative thinking as a mode of investment and money as worth, which emerged as sciences became the source of knowledge unencumbered by the reflection of philosophical deliberation, is taken as the way of becoming at a societal level.

The root of this Heideggerian decline is that of thinking, which Heidegger addresses in a number of his works. It is this that offers a clear understanding of education as *Bildung* through the suspension, the release from the scientific-technological modes of calculative thinking, and their replacement with meditative and poetic thinking. Heidegger's work calling on meditative thinking is initiated in *Discourse on Thinking.* This form of thinking is predicated on the inadequacy of entrapment for thought in forms of logic that have led to calculative thinking, and the fracturing of discourses of wisdom and dislocation of values and emotions from thought. This more critical line can be traced back to the opening lines of his book *What is Called Thinking*? In that book, Heidegger considered that accounts of thinking when construed as some kind of practice are misleading. Indeed, we only 'come to know what it is to think when we ourselves try to think. If the attempt is to be successful, we must be ready to learn thinking (1968, p. 3). Heidegger also added that 'In universities especially, the danger is still very great that we misunderstand what we hear of thinking' (p. 13).

Heidegger's 'Thinking and Releasement' as the Basis for His Ontological Pedagogy

For Heidegger, the student-teacher relationship is not conceived as a vehicle for the attainment of some authoritarian engagement – what is, in in effect, a management tool – but as a genuinely creative encounter in which the lecturer senses the quality of the learning event. This strikes a sharp contrast to effective thinking in the calculative mode. For Heidegger, learning to think is conceived as mystery and wonder. It is based on trusting, which perceives the integrity of the learner and the lecturer. The essence of inceptual thinking, (mediative, free flowing thinking) then, is in the unfolding of the world in wonder rather than attempting to control it. This thinking is non-conceptual; it neither requires concepts to enable us to think nor requires us to have the openness to the world to do so. It is what Heidegger refers to in his later works as 'releasement'. The focus becomes the understanding revealed in the act of the dialogue of the unfolding moment, rather than what is actually said; not in a linear manner, but in hermeneutic circles.

Allowing understanding to emerge, unshackled, from forms of abstract, logical, rational investigation opens up new realities and new truths. Moreover, it allows

letting the nature of the Being of things to come into the context of the present, as a totality of Being. Heidegger commented that '(M)an is obviously a being. As such he belongs to the totality of Being – just like the stone, the tree, or the eagle' (2002, p. 31). This thinking is essentially meditative, and can be considered metaphorically as 'the activity of walking along a path which leads to Being' (1966b, p. 25). Further, it requires a releasement (*Gelassenheit*) of that which enframes and defines the characteristic of man's nature. Releasement seeks the equanimity to allow technology into our lives yet also resist it. It creates the context of meditative or 'inceptual' thinking (Heidegger 1999), as an alternative to calculative thinking that defines and measures reality.

Releasement is a central theme for the later Heidegger, and is first discussed in his *Memorial Address for Kreuter* (1996a). Its reliance is on the notion of meditative thinking, which Heidegger counterpoints against calculative thinking. He argues that meditative thinking is as difficult as any other and concerns us in 'what is closest; upon that which concerns us, each one of us, here and now; here, on this patch of home ground; now, in the present hour of history'(ibid., p. 47). It is about contemplating what this might mean to self and humanity. It is not willed thinking (and it links to the essence of being, as he discussed regarding the work of Nietzsche, 1991), and allows an openness to things; it is open-systems thinking across barriers and between ideas.

Specifically, his extensive explorations into thinking and willing/non-willing in *Conversation on a Country Path* have two central themes. The first is the 'open-region', which is both the place of being and where beings can be with one another in a 'topology of being'; the second is a critique of the willfulness of representational thinking and 'a search for a way of releasement from its grip and into authentic, non-willing manner of thoughtfully dwelling within the open-space of being' (Davies 2010, p. xiii). This concept, especially the discussion of awaiting rather than awakening thinking, creates a transformative way of thinking that opens up a means to understand transdisciplinary thinking. Indeed, there remains a certain spiritual feel to Heidegger's work that might lead one to consider an onto-theological stance, a requirement for a cosmological entity from whom all is understandable. Heidegger foresaw danger in humanity's reliance on calculative thinking (and its manifestation in machination) that prompted his comment in his 1966 *Der Spiegel* interview, 'only God can save us' (Wolin 1993, p. 91).

Heidegger's conversations try to break from the metaphysical and physical to reveal a way of thinking as onto-epistemological enquiry, unlike formal metaphysical questioning. For Heidegger, metaphysics' failure is that it enquires into the being of human beings, not into the notion of Being – on which being is contingent. For him, this 'Being' is the fundamental ontology, representing a thread running through much of his early work and leading to his more poetic, even mystical, later contributions (Young 2002). His struggle is hampered by the use of forms of thinking designed for the understanding of being in its enframement as a technological way of being, especially the calculative thinking that encourages nature, including humans, to be seen as resources in the gift of those in power. His insistence on thinking on Being, as truth, at the core of our understanding of human being, began

to resolve itself in language that is more poetic and mystical to understand Being. In his essays 'What Are Poets For?' (1946a) and 'Language' (1946b), Heidegger suggests that the language of great poetry can allow man to dwell once again in a world in which he is aware of intrinsic values and truth. Irwin describes this well, as 'disfiguring all other ways of knowing' (2015, p. 62).

For Rieser, the poet creates an affective state, so that the clarity and sobriety that is the mark of other kinds of mental activity is lacking in such work: 'During realistic thinking the emotions are muted and their unconscious background is relatively quiescent' (1969, p. 18), and 'In work for driving the creative process the mind of the poet is fixed on the inner world of his ideas and recites them in a chant' (1969, p. 19). This cleaving to an inner imaginary world of dreamlike content is essential to the differentiation of poetical from scientific and, in general, from any practical activity of thinking. This exploration has much in common with Heidegger's approach, with language in the primordial sense, in relation to the constitution of the world, in place of the representational thinking dominated by logical thinking that is 'rule-dominated, formalistic and doctrinal' (Halliburton, 1981, p. 126). For Heidegger, to 'appeal to logic for the purposes of delimiting the essence of thinking is already a questionable enterprise…in the service of thinking we seek to attain precisely that which determines the essence of thinking… Being as unconcealment and this is precisely what was lost due to "logic"' (1981, p. 127).

Concluding Comments

Heidegger's contribution to the philosophy of higher education lies in a number of areas, especially his conviction that thinking and questioning have withered in the modern university and in the techno-scientific world of which it is an integral part. Yet we must, I believe, follow Milchman and Rosenberg in acknowledging that a 'profound *ambiguity* suffuses all that Heidegger said and did about the need to transform the university' (1997, p. 96). In seeking to return the university to its essence, a spirit where questioning, inquiry and thinking are central, he highlights the crisis that can, and in my view has, fallen upon contemporary university. This has taken place through the enframing of education as a technological way of being, under the sway and surveillance of the unaccountable, powerful Other. He offers us a picture of the university aligning itself with interests other than a search for our fundamental comportment.

He does more than this. He offers a form of higher education that, albeit counter to the fashionable massification and means-need model, allows individuals to become educated, in the sense of identifying for themselves the world before the enframement of contemporary science and the commodification pressure of non-liberal policies. He argues for a university both within and outside society, one able to recognise the concerns in which it exists but not hamstrung by dwelling within those communities that it serves. Heidegger sees the need for the university to assert itself in these complex and confusing terms, not to 'go with the flow' with those who wish to use the university as an economic resource. Heidegger sees the univer-

sity as a source of reviewing the spiritual, of willed and of hope for a civilised society, not one fragmented by fractions, disciplines and powerful external groups such as professions and business.

Heidegger's vision for the university is as a place of unity based on the becoming of being, not one that revels in the crisis of the modern university in terms of its essential turmoil as a provider of instrumental skills. It is one where development is the flourishing of one's being through members of the academy who are resolute, able and willing to serve their communities, and as a site for the transformation of human existence. This vision is especially pertinent today. As Barnett and Bengsten comment, 'the *thoughtful university* does not have its have it feet *on* the ground but in the spirit *in* the ground' (2018, p. 4).

Heidegger accepts that, in terms of education, philosophy warrants the description of a teachable science, although it is one that is separate from other sciences. For Heidegger, science implicitly has a notion of Being that is neither warranted nor grounded in the essential nature of *Dasein,* the understanding of which is the task of philosophy. In this, philosophy became the central way to understand Being and so lies at the core of all knowledge creation, for the sake of being.

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Chapter 11
Karl Jaspers (1883–1969): Truth, Academic Freedom and Student Autonomy

Stephen Burwood

Introduction

> We know that truth, striving all around us to be seen and recognized, will live or perish with our ability to realise the ideal of the university in its ever-changing forms.
>
> (Karl Jaspers, *The Idea of the University*)

Should the university serve the state or society? The tension between the public utility and accountability of the university on the one hand, and its core academic mission and the disinterested pursuit of truth on the other, lies at the heart of Jaspers' reflections on the nature of this peculiar institution and his ultimately unfulfilled project of renewing the university. Jaspers' focus was a defence of academic freedom and a broadly Humboldtian conception of the university, and to resist any attempt to subordinate the university to external interests. But how far should this freedom extend, for faculty or for students, and in what circumstances can it legitimately be circumscribed?

The genetic context of his ideas does not mean that his reflections are merely of historical interest; but it does indicate what may be at stake when we give the wrong sort of answer to our opening question. It also shows that Jaspers was not unmindful of the university's changing public role and responsibilities, nor was he content to offer an essentially sterile, unworldly abstraction without utility. In answering our opening question, we need to consider a second: what is higher about higher education? Jaspers has a clear answer to this; but it reveals the somewhat paradoxical nature of freedom within the university and its autonomy in its social context.

Despotism, totalitarianism, or at least autocracy, are still very real threats in many places; but the Humboldtian conception of the university is also threatened by change and technocratic values in its traditional heartland of the liberal democracies.

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This latter threat is just as real, even though it is more insidious. In fact, because it is more insidious, it may be more threatening. Jaspers' conception may nowadays seem the worst sort of unrealistic, ivory towers special pleading; but his idea of the university still has significance for us. Although his idea is ultimately unpersuasive, it helps us see what may be lost and why we should consider its loss seriously.

Life and Work

Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) was one of the pre-eminent German intellectuals of the twentieth century. He is often credited with coining the term 'existentialism' that is used to characterise his and others' philosophical work. He spent most of his professional life at Germany's oldest university, the University of Heidelberg, where he studied law and then medicine. In his early career he worked primarily in psychiatry, developing what became known as the biographical approach to understanding mental illness. His interest in philosophy was present from an early age and is discernible in his psychological work such as *General Psychopathology* of 1913 and *Psychology of World Views* of 1919. After the First World War he began to focus his interest more on philosophy and in 1922 he took over the full professorial chair in philosophy at Heidelberg. His major work in philosophy is the three-volume work of 1932 simply entitled *Philosophy*, which explores three levels of being – orientation to the world, self-reflective *Existenz*, and metaphysical transcendence – and how human existence and human knowledge progresses from one level to another by raising questions that can only be resolved at the higher level.

His early career and his reflections on the nature of the university coincided with a troubled time for Germany and the world. Having initially been published in 1923, in the aftermath of in the First World War and the apparent subsequent triumph of liberal ideals, Jaspers' promotion of the liberal university in *The Idea of the University* was revised and re-issued in 1946 following a second global conflagration and, more importantly, a period during which liberal and humane values were profoundly threatened by despotism and technocracy, the autonomy of German universities severely compromised, and his own university position suspended in addition to being forbidden to publish. He miraculously came through the period unscathed to subsequently lecture on *The Question of German Guilt* and to be considered 'the conscience of Germany'.

The University and the State: Jaspers and Heidegger

To understand Jaspers' thought on the university, we too may take a biographical approach. Of all the infamous academic fall-outs, of which existential phenomenology had more than its fair share, the gradual dissolution of the friendship between Heidegger and Jaspers stands out as one having a disagreement about the university

at its core. They were both committed to university reform and both had a deep distaste of the dominant schools or '-isms' of German academic philosophy as it was then institutionalised. Initially, they 'seemed on a similar plane' with respect to university reform (Kirkbright 2004, p. 135); but political developments in Germany appears to have prized them apart in this as much else.

Most often, the estrangement is attributed to the fact that Gertrud Mayer, Jaspers' wife, was Jewish (e.g. Heidegger 1976, p. 199). Of course, his friend's political affiliations were personally dismaying for Jaspers and he recalls the horror that gripped him on reading Heidegger's evaluation of colleagues for the National Socialist regime (e.g. Biemel and Saner 2003, p. 209). It is true that Jaspers regarded the involvement with National Socialism as Heidegger being in the grip of a 'deceptive intoxication of the masses', which also implicated Heidegger in personally threatening violence. Although this was enough to undermine Jaspers' trust in his friend's changed being (ibid. p. 250), in the end Jaspers considered Heidegger to be politically naïve rather than malicious in intent, recalling a maxim of Max Weber's: 'Children who reach into the wheel of world history are dashed to pieces (ibid.: 211).[1]

In fact, the shadow that fell over their friendship was first precipitated by Heidegger's reported reaction to Jaspers' *The Idea of the University* (Jaspers 1977 p. 97).[2] Jaspers got to hear that Heidegger had expressed a 'very derogatory opinion' of the work – regarding the work as the epitome of trivia at that time (*das Belangloseste von allen Belanglosigkeiten heute*) – and went so far as to exclaim about Jaspers that, 'We cannot be comrades in arms' (Biemel and Saner 2003, p. 281).[3] Jaspers become unsure about the reception of his ideas and increasingly concerned about Heidegger's influence. As early as 1923, Jaspers wanted to discuss certain 'nuances' in a letter from Heidegger but which he was reluctant to address in writing – particularly those concerning his 'university idea' (ibid. p. 50).[4] What these were is not entirely clear, but in that letter Heidegger was in full autocratic flow concerning both students and faculty, extolling the submission to his authority of the former and the uncovering of the 'dreadful and pitiful handiwork' in the case of the latter.[5]

Over the following years it became increasingly clear to Jaspers that the two could not be comrade in arms. By 1933 – the year of rupture and, of course, a

[1] This was a charge that was reciprocated: by 1933 Heidegger had come to the view that Jaspers was "oblivious of politics" (Kirkbright 2004: 135–136), an assessment that has some justification. For example, in the early 1930s Jaspers appears to have thought that the National Socialists were as interested in academic freedom as he was (Biemel and Saner 2003: 255).

[2] My thanks to Christiane Loch for help in translating works in German.

[3] Heidegger denied he had ever said such a thing. Jaspers said that he initially believed him but later thought that he had made a mistake and became uncertain (Biemel and Saner 2003, p. 281). The episode was clearly hurtful for Jaspers and something he found alienating (*befremdende*) (Jaspers 1977, p. 93).

[4] Heidegger's letter was that of 14 July 1923 and Jaspers' reply was on 4 November that year.

[5] On the occasion of their last meeting (see below), Heidegger argued furiously that the number of philosophy professors in Germany should be reduced to two or three. Jasper asked, "Which, then?" He didn't get an answer (Jaspers 1977, p. 101).

turning point for the world – all the unease and growing mistrust he felt was confirmed when Heidegger spoke to the student body at Heidelberg on 30 June under the title 'Die Universität im Neuen Reich' (The University in the New Reich). He derided the institution as a 'refuge for cowards' and declaimed enthusiastically about a revolution in the university, in which it must 'be integrated again into the *Volksgemeinschaft* [community of the people] and be joined together with the state' (Heidegger 1933b, p. 4; Wolin 1993, p. 44). The talk was an open attack on traditional academic freedom and an argument for the complete transformation of academic culture, in which the university would become a mere arm of the state, subservient to its interests and an institution simply serving the wider national community.[6]

Such *völksich* and overtly nationalist and instrumental attitudes to the role of the university were common enough by the time Heidegger delivered his address and were even voiced by other members of faculty at Heidelberg more or less contemporaneously with his speech.[7] But such views were anathema to Jaspers and ran contrary to the necessary freedom that he thought must accrue to the university if it were to be able to fulfil its traditional mission. Thus, in Jaspers' assessment:

> In form, it was a masterful speech; in content, it was a program for the National Socialist renewal of the university. It demanded the transformation of the university's mission (*des geistigen Wesens*) ... He was thanked with enormous applause from the students and some fewer professors. I sat in the front row with my legs stretched straight out, my hands in my pockets, and didn't move. (Jaspers, 1977, p. 101)

Afterwards, Jaspers expressed his disappointment at his friend's failure to defend the great tradition of independent learning that an institution such as Heidelberg represented, a complaint that was rewarded with silence. 'Our origins lie in the European Middle Ages', he later reflected, 'not in the territorial states, which have merely taken us over' (Jaspers 1957, p. 49). This visit was the last occasion when the two philosophers met (Jaspers 1977, p. 100), though their correspondence continued. Later that summer, after Jaspers had had the chance to read for himself the notorious Rectoral Address (Heidegger 1933a), he wrote expressing praise but including a mildly-worded but pointed criticism.[8]

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[6] It was a speech that also helps give the lie to Heidegger's subsequent, post-war self-justifications – e.g. the posthumously published 1966 *Der Spiegel* interview, 'Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten' (Only a God Can Save Us) (Heidegger 1976) – that, in effect, he spoke for the sake of appearances and that his other accommodations of the Nazi programme were only because he intended to use the position of Rector at Freiburg to prevent the post being occupied by "a mere functionary" and to protect the university against overwhelming tendencies that would rob it of its proper function and result in its politicisation (cf. Wolin 1993, p. 43, footnote). In further mitigation, the best he offered was that he prevented scheduled book burnings and the removal of the works of Jewish authors from the Philosophical Seminar Library, and continued to teach Jewish students such as Helene Weiss.

[7] For example, see the 18 May 1933 edition of *Der Heidelberger Student* (Remy 2002, p. 33).

[8] Jaspers said that he tried to interpret Heidegger's Rectoral Address in the best light, even though he no longer trusted him and now regarded him as a "substantial opponent" (Jaspers 1978, #65).

> My trust in your philosophizing, which since our conversations in the spring has renewed in strength, is not disturbed by the qualities of this address that are of the time, by something in it that strikes me as a little forced, and by statements that seem to have a hollow ring. (Biemel and Saner 2003, p. 149)

By the time the Second World War was over, Jaspers was in no doubt that Heidegger was a danger to the idea of the university and a spiritually corrupting influence on students.[9] The problem, even more than his political opinions, was 'Heidegger's manner of thinking, which seems to me in its essence unfree, dictatorial, and without communication, [and which] would be fatal today in its pedagogical effects' (ibid., p. 210). Consequently, his recommendation to Freiberg's de-Nazification committee was that, although Heidegger should be given a pension and allowed to write, he should be suspended from teaching until re-examined on the basis of post-War publications and what Jaspers calls the renovated academic conditions (ibid., p. 211).

Freedom and Truth

What this brief biographical excursion demonstrates – apart from the fact that the intellectual freedom of the university was an issue at the heart of their rift, even if they may have shared other aspects of a reforming vision (e.g. Jaspers 1989) – is that a criticism that is sometimes directed at Jaspers' idea of the university – viz., that is naïvely ideal and ultimately unworldly; a charge neatly summed up as his idea being 'errant speculation' (Burch 1976) – does not do justice to his intentions or the conditions of its inception. Nor does it acknowledge its coherence with his broader philosophical concerns.

His idea of the university is not *simply* unworldly. That is to say, it is deliberately ideal; but this ideality needs to be understood in context. First, it is a response to concrete historical circumstances and is an ideal that he passionately thought real world institutions should strive to realise if they were to survive as liberal institutions serving their core purpose, the pursuit of truth. So, while we can distinguish between the normative ideal and attempts at its realisation, for Jaspers there is a closer relation between the two than the common distinction suggests: while the attempts are guided by the idea, we fully understand the idea only in the process of its actualisation. 'It thus constitutes both a real historical unity in which we

[9] During the 1930s, the tone of their correspondence is civil rather than cordial and, although something of the previous cordiality appears to have been re-established after June 1949, Jaspers' letters to Hannah Arendt during the same period show that the relationship was far from repaired or that Jaspers' high estimation of his old friend revived. For example, he speaks to her of Heidegger as an impure soul, unaware of its own impurity, living in filth and a kind of dishonesty (Kohler and Saner 1985, p. 141).

participate and a frame of reference within which our thinking and acting concerning the university proceed' (ibid., pp. 16–17).[10]

The circumstances that prompted the writing and publication of *The Idea of the University* in the first instance (Jaspers 1923) and then its substantial re-writing and re-issues (Jaspers 1946, 1960; Jaspers and Rossmann 1961) were the same: principally, nationalistically inspired attempts to recruit the universities to a more narrowly circumscribed, partisan role defined by national interests. On the first occasion, it was motivated by a call by the Rector of the University of Berlin for university teachers to protest the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.[11] On the second it was motivated by the efforts of the National Socialist government to determine academic culture. 'It was', he proclaimed of the first attempt, 'as treason against the eternal idea of the university' (Jaspers 1957, p. 48). The second state of affairs was a more serious threat to this idea, as insisting that the university must serve the *Volksgemeinschaft* and not knowledge or truth for its own sake could lead to a rejection of any sense of objectivity in scholarship.

Jaspers' response to these developments was to elaborate a regulative ideal that provides a goal that actual, real-world institutions can and should aim to achieve. The three pillars of this conception are *Lehrfreiheit* (the freedom to teach), *Lernfreiheit* (the freedom to learn), and *die Einheit von Forschung und Lehre* (the unity of research and teaching). Human freedom and the threats posed to it by modern science and modern economic and political institutions were a key concern of Jaspers' philosophy (e.g. Jaspers 1953). Hence, all three concepts have a specific, and not always unproblematic, quality in Jasper's ideal and are closely related to what he viewed as the central mission of the university in its pursuit of truth.

This applies to research, hence the absolute importance of academic freedom, which Jaspers thought was clearly under attack, but also to teaching and learning, especially given that these are intimately intertwined with research as a necessary feature of higher education (Jaspers 1960, pp. 54ff.). Thus, running alongside Jaspers' concern about the conspicuously political developments in the university's social context and attempts to subordinate the university to an external authority, was also an unease at the growing regulation of study within the university (Jaspers 1957, pp. 47–48). 'The universities are no mere schools', he opined, 'but institutions for *higher* learning' (ibid.). The student's complete freedom is thus also necessary, he argued, for 'real intellectual understanding' (ibid.). An instrumental attitude towards study in the student body was therefore precluded as much as it was resisted for the university as whole. 'Anyone who was studying merely in order to pass an examination or to procure for himself a better position, who, instead of gaining

[10] For further discussion, see the contributions to Walters (1996), by Walters and Langley.

[11] Reinforced a year after publication by the censure of the mathematician Emil Julius Gumbel for expressing unpopular views. Jaspers was member of the committee tasked to conduct an internal academic investigation and, although disapproving of Gumbel, vainly attempted to exercise restraint over the committee's conclusions (Jaspers 1957, pp. 49–52; Brenner 2001; Grunenberg 2017, pp. 100–101).

genuine knowledge, wants to have mere examination knowledge poured into him, does not belong in a university at all' (ibid., p.47).

For Jaspers, although the university is state-funded by necessity of material support, it is nonetheless, 'a super-political and supra-national Occidental court of appeal' – that is, a non-partisan intellectual crucible, 'which could maintain the truth against national realities' (Jaspers 1957, p. 48). Truth makes its own demands, and the university cannot be at the same time led by it and by the wishes, desires, or exigencies of the university's political and social context as these only may – and so, more importantly, may not – be compatible with it. However, Jaspers was not naïvely absolutist about truth. As previously indicated, his general philosophy linked the notion of truth with being, and so admitted a resulting uncertainty and diversity, at least with respect to lower levels of being where human knowledge is partial and situated. As a consequence, although there is a unified truth, this is something that remains unavailable to us in our historical reality at the level of world-orientation or *Existenz*. 'We do not possess the one truth and shall not possess it, yet truth can only be one' (Jaspers 1947, p. 839; cf. Jaspers 1960, p. 66).[12] However, to focus on the details of his own conception of truth is to miss the main thrust of Jaspers' point: the academic enterprise must be unfettered in its pursuit of truth and knowledge, in whatever direction this leads – and this means, therefore, that we must be unconstrained in our capacity to investigate also the truth about truth.

A further aspect of Jaspers' conception of truth is that it is essentially dialectical and is realised only in authentic communication with others (Jaspers 1960, p. 75). From this it naturally follows that the pursuit of truth requires interlocutors: a community of scholars freely participating in intellectual exchange and debating in a way that collaboratively maintains the openness of the debate. The university must therefore be a meeting place of different world outlooks, with its members participating in a way of life which is, 'the will to search and seek without limitation, to allow reason to develop unrestrictedly, to have an open mind, to leave nothing unquestioned, to maintain truth unconditionally, yet recognising the danger of *sapere aude*' (Jaspers 1960, p. 81).

The possibility of responding to this impulse was, for Jaspers, nothing less than a human right. If there is one unqualified truth Jaspers assumes, it is that this possibility is an essential feature of human existence – given that 'the all-inclusive context of our lives' is *Geist* (Spirit, mind), personal commitment or resolve, and responsive reason, 'open to the intrinsic meaning of things'. These make possible science and a genuine Socratic or ultimate ignorance, which is not the absence of knowledge but grows with knowledge (ibid., pp. 44–45). 'The university', he argues, 'is the corporate realization of man's basic determination to know' (ibid., p. 20).

[12] For discussions of Jaspers' conception of truth, see Grieder (1986), and Ehrlich (1993).

The Paradoxes of Academic Freedom

Nonetheless, the criticism that Jaspers' idea of the university is unsituated and too ideal is not completely without force. After all, Jaspers does present it as a universal and eternal archetype and, although he admits it is something we can only ever approximate in its historical and concrete form (ibid., p. 21), it is a standard against which a worldly institution may be judged as to whether it *is* a university. However, there are a number of reasons why we might think attempts to realise its immanence might be problematic and that the robust degree of academic freedom it insists upon might be necessarily circumscribed.

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, for example, the Heidegger controversy posed a challenge to the principle of *Lehrfreiheit*. It is a challenge which troubles any position committed to freedom of thought and expression and is what Popper famously termed the 'paradox of tolerance' (Popper 1945, p. 226): how tolerant should a liberal institution be? and should its toleration extend to those with a world outlook inimical to the values and perhaps the very existence of the institution? 'The university does not investigate the *Weltanschauung* [worldview] of a potential member', Jaspers asserted, and was sure that it should concern itself only with its members' 'professional attainment and intellectual standing, mastery of their tools, and integrity' (Jaspers 1960, p. 81). Nonetheless, the paradox directly confronted Jaspers when asked for his view by the de-Nazification committee at Freiburg: should Heidegger be allowed to teach, consistent with the principle of complete academic freedom (in which case he poses a threat to the idea of the university), or should he not be allowed to teach (and so protect the attempt to realise the idea but at the expense of suspending the principle of *Lehrfreiheit*?). Jaspers was well aware of the dilemma and opted for its second horn, as he explained to a later Rector of Freiburg, Gerd Tallenbach:

> To be sure, in my opinion of 1945, I asserted the principle that we must temporarily steer away from the idea of the university according to which everything that has intellectual merit, even if it is foreign to the university's liberality, should have its effect in an institution of higher learning, for the education of a youth whose critical thinking has been weakened by National Socialism demands that we do not expose them, so to speak, to all the possibilities for uncritical thinking. (Biemel and Saner 2003, p. 263)

Jaspers' answer was thus essentially the same as Popper's and subsequent liberal defences of toleration: viz., that there are limits to toleration and these are judged with respect to reciprocation and the robustness of the institution to withstand the latitude granted in such cases. Given the political context in 1945 and what Jaspers considered Heidegger's uncritical and uncommunicative style of thinking – 'At times he operates as if he were combining the seriousness of nihilism with the mystagogy of a sorcerer' (Biemel and Saner 2003, p. 210) – a temporary suspension of *Lehrfreiheit* in this specific instance was necessary and justified.

Arguably, this was not merely a pragmatic response to a difficult political question and it was certainly not a question of hypocritical expediency, for it has some justification rooted in Jaspers' wider philosophy. What he terms 'final freedom', as

it is linked with absolute truth, is something to be pursued but remains unobtainable. Where freedom is achievable, one's freedom is possible only if the objective conditions of the public realm are hospitable and, as the freedom of everyone else is implicated in my own freedom, it is attained collectively. 'Liberty is realised in community, I can be free only to the extent that others are free' (ibid.).

Heidegger's freedom would not have been one achieved in community but bought at the expense of the community. This was not a judgement just about Heidegger's thought in isolation, but contingent on the fragile state of that community and so 4 years later circumstances had changed enough that Jaspers thought, 'the German University can no longer leave Heidegger aside' (Biemel and Saner 2003, p. 264). Nonetheless, the episode also frames a question concerning *Lernfreiheit* and the freedom of the student as it suggests an asymmetrical relationship between student and teacher and not a Socratic equality, as Jaspers' idea proposes. The students at Freiberg needed protecting from Heidegger's influence because of his authority; but this is something he would have retained with respect to them, even when their critical faculties had been re-invigorated.

'Education at a university is Socratic by its very nature', Jaspers says, as both teacher and student are meant to be free (Jaspers 1960, p. 65). Jaspers thus regarded the student as an equal participant in the intellectual enterprise, and rejected what he regarded as inappropriate modes of learning and teaching in the university; viz., what he calls *scholastic instruction* – which involves a mere transmission of knowledge, where the individual teacher, who is not involved in research, is replaceable by anyone equally qualified – and *apprenticeship* – a master and pupil relationship, where one subordinates oneself to the authority of someone with an inherent qualitative difference. 'No hard and fast educational system exists here, rather endless questioning and ultimate ignorance in the face of the absolute' (Jaspers 1960, p. 63).

In essence, Jaspers' approach to *Lernfreiheit* offers a radical version of what has become known as open learning (Barnett 1990, pp. 192–194), with the student in complete command of the programme of study and the absence of authority, rules, regulations, or supervision (Jaspers 1960, p. 67). 'University education', he famously argues, 'is a formative process aiming at meaningful freedom' (ibid., p. 65). But with equality and a complete and meaningful freedom comes complete and absolute responsibility, so living freely in the world of ideas also poses dangers for the student: 'He is free to "go to the dogs"' if that should be an outcome of the student's making (ibid., p. 67).

Consistent with this, when he was himself a student, Jaspers was horrified to be told that the average student needed to be led (Jaspers 1957, p. 47). His vision resists contemporary trends to pathologise passive forms of teaching such as the lecture, but the problem is that the foregoing modes of learning and teaching are neither exhaustive nor entirely exclusive. Nor does he appear to recognise the different ways one might be led, not all of which involve passivity. Wittgenstein reminds us that this may include someone taking you for a walk, being guided by a partner in a dance, or following a track in a field, as well as being guided blindfold, or led forcibly by the hand (Wittgenstein 1953, §172). Apart from the last, all these seem appropriate metaphors for different stages of learning, even of higher learning.

The Socratic level of equality Jaspers promotes is thus something achieved as one progresses, not something one has at the outset. All students, in some degree, need to be guided in a practice and initiated into the 'rules of the art', which constrain both student and teacher alike, and not just 'guided only by his own personal intuition' (Jaspers 1960, p. 53). Here we have a second paradox in the university tradition he champions – a 'paradox of autonomy' – for the very practices in which they are guided *require* students to be autonomous and demonstrate independence of mind.

The Value of Academic Freedom

What is impressive about Jaspers' thought is the depth of philosophical reflection that grounds his conception; but it is also of a type and profundity that is manifestly missing from the mission or policy statements offered by modern university leaders (cf. Burch 1976, p. 15). However, by the time the final version of *The Idea of the University* was published, Jaspers himself conceded that the reality of the modern university – at a complete loss (*unbesinnliche Ratlosigkeit*) and having undergone mass expansion – leads us to question whether the traditional picture is just a fiction. If reform is still possible, he suggests, it must depend upon a spiritual rebirth (*geistegen Wiedergeburt*) that cannot be planned (Jaspers and Rossmann 1961, pp. 2–3). If this assessment is so, is it a conception that can still speak to us?

At a time when academic freedom appears to be increasingly under attack, his robust defence of this key value is still pertinent. Obviously, outright despotism and autocracy are a threat, by their very natures, but in recent years we have also seen how political populism is impatient of the nuance, expertise, and disagreement characteristic of academic discourse. Threats to academic freedom may thus also occur in states where it has been taken for granted as a feature of university life. Here the threat may come in a different and more insidious guise, and may include things like government micro-management, commercial sponsorship of university research, growing managerialism/corporatism within university governance, overzealous political correctness on campus (Palfreyman 2007), or treating students as customers and not as an integral part of the scholarly community.

As perhaps the greatest advocate of academic freedom, Jaspers reminds us why the notion is important, and we do appear to need reminding. For example, in its report on university autonomy, the European University Association lists 'four key dimensions of autonomy', which are organisational, financial, staffing, and lastly academic (e.g. Pruvot and Estermann 2017, p. 7). These cover such things as administrative structures, the ability to raise funds and own buildings, to recruit independently, to promote and develop staff, set student recruitment numbers, as well as the structure and content of degrees. Of course, these are significant aspects of autonomy; but there is barely a mention about why, or even why autonomy itself is important – except to say that it is, 'an important prerequisite for modern universities to be able to develop institutional profiles and to deliver efficiently on their missions' (ibid.), though nothing about what this actually means.

Higher learning is open and uncertain because it stands at the forefront of our will to know and the university is the community of scholars and students that has come together to pursue this end dialectically, and only secondarily to be the legal body that develops institutional profiles (Jaspers 1957, p. 52; cf. 1960, p. 112). 'Within its sphere', Jaspers therefore insists, 'it respects no authority except truth in its infinite variety, the truth which all are seeking and yet no one can claim to possess in final and complete form' (Jaspers 1960, p. 66). It is a vision of the university aloof from politics, yet this aloofness itself serves a purpose – so that there is an instrumental value to the pursuit of truth and knowledge for its own sake. 'Not every state is interested in truth to the point of granting academic freedom. No state anxious to conceal a basic criminality of principle and action could possibly want the truth' (ibid., p. 142).

Thus, the tension referred to at the outset between the university's public utility and its core academic mission is a false one. An institution approximating Jaspers' ideal is not one completely divorced from the state and society in which it resides for it serves the interests of a particular kind of state and society precisely by being free of state control and having truth and knowledge as its aims. In other words – our final paradox – it has utility in its very unworldliness. Those states and societies that claim to value these aims, and to value the formation of meaningful freedom in their citizens, should therefore be careful to encourage and nurture such an institution.

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Chapter 12
Stanley Cavell (1926–2018): Higher Education and the Development of Voice

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Introduction

The inclusion of a chapter here on Stanley Cavell's contribution to thinking about the university and higher education, might seem odd. Cavell does not write explicitly about the university, higher education, nor indeed about education in any formal sense. This chapter argues, however, that the educational force of Cavell's work is significant, and as such is central to understanding his thinking. It will show how Cavell's work offers insights into how we might think about what it means to be educated, and into the nature of a higher education.

Throughout Cavell's work he repeatedly returns to ideas of the transformation of oneself, and of society. Both amount, for Cavell, to a form of education, though not one that should be thought of in terms of schooling, nor indeed of further or higher education. Central to the kinds of transformation that Cavell envisages are two related ideas: the development and expression of voice, and our openness to what he calls uncommon schooling. Both of these are complex and richly nuanced ideas in Cavell's work, and we should not think of voice, for example, as simply being a matter of expressing our opinion about something, or indeed of uncommon schooling as merely a different kind of formal education. Rather, the development of our voice is ineluctably related to Cavell's consideration of what it means for us to possess language within a community of speakers, and to what ideas we chose to give, or withhold, our consent. And our uncommon schooling is thought of in terms of an ongoing commitment throughout our lives – an orientation towards a better self. It is these ideas that have strong resonance with some of the aims and purposes of higher education, and as such, make Cavell a writer and philosopher whose work has import for thinking about the university.

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These ideas of voice and of uncommon schooling open out onto other aspects of Cavell's thinking about our responsibility for ourselves and our society. Taking on and answering such a responsibility constitutes what Cavell terms the 'education of grown ups' (1979, p. 125). Cavell is not advocating here the continuation of formal schooling (perhaps into further education, vocational programmes of study, or into higher education necessarily). The education of grownups, he writes in his seminal text, *The Claim of Reason*, 'is not natural growth, but change. Conversion is a turning of our natural reactions' (1979, p. 125). Such change is not something that happens at one particular point in time, but is ongoing throughout our lives.

Cavell's work as a whole cannot be understood without appreciating his indebtedness to the American philosophers and essayists, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862). His project can be seen as an attempt to reclaim these two thinkers as writers worthy of founding a philosophical tradition in America. The ideas of both Emerson and Thoreau are woven through Cavell's work: the concept of 'uncommon schooling' is an idea he takes from the Thoreau's seminal text, *Walden* (1854/1999), and the idea of the ongoing education of grownups is undoubtedly related to what he sees as 'perfectionism' in Emerson's writings – an idea that he describes as 'the possibility or necessity of the transforming of oneself and one's society' (Cavell 1990, p. 2). There are clear lines of connection here with the how the role of public universities has been differently framed, both as supporting a liberal education through the development of the self, and also as serving wider society through civic and community engagement. This chapter seeks to show that such connections mark Cavell as a thinker whose work has import for our thinking about the university, and the idea of higher education in particular.

Stanley Cavell: Jazz, Philosophy, Literature and Film

Stanley Cavell was born to a Jewish family in September 1926 (with the family's Polish name, Kavelieruskii). His mother, a talented pianist, was in part at least, responsible for his early interest in, and experimentation with, music. During his formative and teenage years, Cavell developed a love for jazz, learned to play the saxophone, and subsequently majored in music at the University of California, Berkeley, and afterward at the Juilliard School of Music in New York where he studied composition. Cavell describes his father, whom he 'feared and hated' (2010, p. 19) as 'my uneducated father from Eastern Europe' (2010, p. 356), a pawn shop owner, who during the years of the Depression, moved the family repeatedly across America between Atlanta and Sacremento, looking to make a success out of the business. But it was not music, or the money lending business, to which Cavell turned, despite his successes in playing in a jazz band in Sacramento, and his pleasure in learning the pawn shop business.

Following his undergraduate studies at Berkeley, he entered graduate school at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in the summer of 1948 where he pursued interests in psychology and literature, while taking classes in logic,

aesthetics, and on John Dewey. After 18 months, he had effectively completed a philosophy major, and this then helped to initiate a move to Harvard in 1951 where he was strongly influenced by the British philosopher of language, and proponent of ordinary language philosophy, J. L. Austin. Shortly before completing his PhD, Cavell was given the position of Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley in 1956. Following a period at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton between 1962 and 1963 – where he recalls meeting 'the virtuosic Bernard Williams (2010, p. 149) – Cavell returned to Harvard, and to the Philosophy Department where he was appointed as the Walter M. Cabot Professor of Aesthetics and the General Theory of Value.

Cavell studied philosophy in the Anglo-American, Anglophone tradition, but his works also show that he is sympathetic to the Continental tradition. This makes him difficult to categorise as sitting firmly in either mode of thinking. A further difficulty is the breadth of his interests, and the (non-philosophical) sources on which he draws. In writing of this, Timothy Gould reminds us that 'Cavell has himself consistently tried to avoid eliminating or papering over some related rifts in his own cultural topography. He insists, for instance, that we should not pretend to have overcome the divisions between "analytic" and "Continental" philosophy; between philosophy and psychoanalysis; between philosophy and literature' (Gould 1998, p. 88). Cavell has also written extensively on the Austrian philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein; indeed, the subtitle of his (1979) seminal work – based on his doctoral thesis – is *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy*. His philosophical oeuvre also engages with Heidegger, and in particular, J. L Austin and ordinary language philosophy.

But Cavell has also engaged throughout his long academic career with sources that are not, or at least not primarily, philosophical. Any reader of Cavell cannot fail to be struck by the extent and breadth of the literary references in his work, a fact that has led some to ask about 'the nature of the intellectual resistance that…has led literary critics to avoid Cavell' (Eldridge and Rhie 2011, p. 3). His approach to philosophy involves the careful and deliberate weaving of his thinking with literary references and quotations, such that often it is impossible to unpick the two. And this is the point. To take just one example, in his (1990) *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (the title itself coming from a literary work of Emerson's), Cavell draws on literary sources from Matthew Arnold, Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Ibsen, Poe, and D. H. Lawrence, to Melville, Whitman, Wordsworth and Shakespeare. But this is not the end of it. The same volume (and this is characteristic across his work), shows that Cavell's writing in the discipline of philosophy is also marked by references and illustrations to art (Jan Vermeer), playwrights (Molière), jazz improvisation (William Day) and opera (The Magic Flute). The breadth of his cultural interests – which cannot be separated from his philosophical project – are perhaps most evident in his writings on Hollywood film. In his 1996 work, *Contesting Tears,* Cavell identifies a genre of 1930s and 1940s Hollywood film that he calls the 'melodramas of the unknown woman' (including films such as *Stella Dallas* and *Gaslight*). In these films, the 'woman's search for a story, or the right to tell her story' (1996, p. 3) is played out through the scenes depicting the repression and the subsequent

recovery of voice, or expressiveness. Cavell's *Pursuits of Happiness* (1981a) identifies a further genre, the 'Hollywood comedies of remarriage' (films such as *His Girl Friday* and *The Philadelphia Story*), of which he says: 'The conversation of what I call the comedy of remarriage is, judging from the films I take to define it, of a sort that leads to acknowledgement; to the reconciliation of a genuine forgiveness; a reconciliation so profound as to require the metamorphosis of death and revival' (1981a, p. 19).

The most significant engagement with other sources has been Cavell's consistent return to two of America's great essayists, and leading figures in the transcendentalist movement: Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. His writing on Emerson – most notably in his 1990 volume, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, makes a claim for what he calls Emersonian Moral Perfectionsim – a mode of thinking that to Cavell 'runs counter to mode of reasoning that philosophy favors' (1990, p. xi), and which is 'not a competing theory of the moral life, but something like a dimension or tradition of the moral life that…places tremendous burdens on personal relationships and on the possibility or necessity of the transforming of oneself and of one's society' (1990, p. 2).

In his engagement with Emerson's contemporary, Thoreau, Cavell turns away from the popular view of Thoreau as an environmentalist who advocates a solitary life of simplicity. While Cavell would not disagree with the fact that Thoreau is an avid, and expert chronicler of the natural history of his native Concord, Massachusetts (as evidenced by his 47 manuscript volumes of his journal covering the period from 1837–1861), he sees Thoreau's most celebrated work, *Walden*, as one of America's first great works of philosophy. In his short volume – *The Senses of Walden* – Cavell describes it, 'a genuine Scripture' (1981, p. xv). It is not (merely) an autobiography. For Cavell, 'To discover how to earn and spend our most wakeful hours…is the task of Walden as a whole' (1981, p. 5). To read *Walden* is to be woken up, just as *Walden*'s chanticleer (cockerel) wakes the author up every morning; it is to embark on our own experiment in living (not to follow Thoreau's); to undergo an uncommon schooling, and to discover that 'morning may not be caused by sunrise, and may not happen at all' (ibid.).

An introduction to Cavell's work must also draw attention to the issue of how Cavell's particular notion of voice (as he develops it from thinking about the repression and recovery of the female voice in certain Hollywood films, to his reflections on his own voice in the discipline of philosophy) relates to his own voice as an author, and to his distinctive writing style. Much has been said about this, and some of it is critical. Michael Fischer's 1989 book, *Stanley Cavell and Literary Skepticism*, gives a clear account of some of the main critics. Cavell's writing, with its intricacies, its deliberate opacities, and its multiple literary allusions, is not intended as mere show; it is rather to make the reader slow down, to *really* read. As Naoko Saito writes: 'The very fact that Cavell's writing is said to be difficult even to native speakers has a deeper implication than one might assume. In fact Cavell implies that a purpose of writing *The Senses of Walden* was to make *Walden* more difficult (Saito 2007, p. 264). It is in this idea of reading, and our relationship to language in a community, that is the starting point for thinking about what Cavell sees as our

'uncommon schooling' (a phrase he borrows from Thoreau's *Walden*). It is in exploring how this idea runs through Cavell's oeuvre that I find his work has an extraordinary resonance for our thinking about higher education.

Stanley Cavell and Education

In his many and varied philosophical works, Cavell does not write explicitly about education. Moreover, his autobiography, published in 2010, contains little more than passing references to his own education. He recalls a teacher telling him that he had no talent for drawing (p. 81); remembers reading *Les Miserables* in the yard during a lunch break, and being late back for a lesson (p. 104); gives an account of his learning that there was a 'normal' time in which to complete work in junior high (and that he did it more quickly – p. 103), and recounts his developing interest in biology from a textbook studied in high school (p. 111). The fleeting accounts of his schooling reflect the description he gives of them as being 'my coma years' (p. 154). Though he recalls the profound impression made on him by one teacher's recognition of his work – what he calls the 'permanent effects of an act of acknowledgement' (p. 155) – it is learning out of school that appears to hold the strongest memories for Cavell, especially the pleasure of learning the pawn shop business from his father (p. 119). Indeed, the title of his 1984 work, *Themes out of School*, hints at the idea of philosophy in, and out of, school (as a discipline in itself, and through works of literature, drama and film); perhaps what are also signalled here are the educative possibilities that lie beyond the confines of formal schooling.

Perhaps it is not quite right to say that Cavell's work does not directly address education; it does not do so in terms of schooling (in the way that, for example, John Dewey does), and Cavell does not write specifically about higher education (beyond brief allusions to his own time at Berkeley and Harvard) or about the institution of the university. This chapter suggests, however, that Cavell's body of work is significant for thinking about what it means to be educated in and through higher education. Indeed, there is a growing body of scholarship within the field of philosophy of education that seeks to address contemporary debates in higher education through readings of Cavell's work (see, for example, Fischer 2006; Fulford 2013, 2017; Saito 2015). But there is no talk in Cavell's writings of the aims of higher education, of university programmes or curricula, of learning objectives, employability or graduate skills; nor do we find accounts of the role of the lecturer or what it is to be a student. Rather, his interest lies in the fact that 'we are educations for one another' (Cavell 1990, p. 31). The kind of education in which Cavell is interested is given expression in a number of interconnected ideas that recur throughout his writings. While in one chapter it is not possible to give anything amounting even to a partial account of the richness and complexity of the educative force of Cavell's thought, two aspects of his thinking – his ideas of voice, and of uncommon schooling – will show how we should take his work seriously in terms of thinking about higher education.

Cavell and Uncommon Schooling

In the chapter titled 'Reading' in *Walden*, Thoreau writes:

> It is time that we had uncommon schools, that we did not leave off our education when we begin to be men and women. It is time that villages were universities, and their elder inhabitants the fellows of universities, with leisure – if they are, indeed, so well off – to pursue liberal studies the rest of their lives. Shall the world be confined to one Paris or one Oxford forever? Cannot students be boarded here and get a liberal education under the skies of Concord? (1854/1999, p. 99).

This is not, of course, a plea for the expansion of the university as institution, or for the establishment of different iterations of formal education. Indeed, the idea of the uncommon school disrupts the way we tend to understand formal education. Rather, our uncommon schooling consists in an education into and through adulthood, one marked by repeated unsettlement and departure. Again, this is not to be confused with what has become known as 'lifelong learning', where there is a tendency to see it in terms of continuing education through formal courses, professional development, and on-the-job training.

For Thoreau and for Cavell, our uncommon schooling is marked by its transformative possibilities (though neither would argue that formal education cannot effect certain kinds of transformation). In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell elaborates the idea of our education as grownups through uncommon schooling, arguing that '…for grownups...it is not natural growth, but *change*. Conversion is a turning of our natural reactions; it is symbolized as rebirth' (1979, p. 125). More is anticipated here than skill or knowledge acquisition, or the development of certain aptitudes; as Naoko Saito and Paul Standish suggest, our uncommon schooling necessitates our 'transformation in ways that we cannot anticipate' (2012, p. 1). Central to this form of education-as-transformation (as to philosophy) is language. Cavell writes: 'In philosophizing, I have to bring my own language and life into imagination…This seems to me a task that warrants the name of philosophy. It is also the description of something that we might call education…In this light, philosophy becomes the education of grownups' (1979, p. 125).

For Cavell, it is from our encounters with language – especially through the written word – that the possibilities of transformation and conversion arise. As Saito and Standish point out, Cavell's philosophy-as-education cannot be separated out from the question of how we should read (2012). Reading – reading philosophically – is a mark of our ongoing education as grownups. But this is not an elitist account. Cavell is not advocating the acquisition of sophisticated techniques that are the preserve of a select few. Rather he recognises a relationship to the written word in particular that affords the possibilities for the transformation of the self. It might be, for example, that in reading a text – a celebrated work of poetry *or* a piece of popular fiction – that we encounter the most familiar of words in a way that throws us back onto them, as it were. They pull us up short, and cause us to look at ourselves, and our society, differently; to do things differently. In this lies the possibility of our transformation, our ongoing education.

Cavell's most sustained engagement with the idea of our encounter with language through reading is found in his short work, *The Senses of Walden* (1981). Written over a relatively short period towards the end of the Vietnam War, Cavell provides in this text a rich account of what the task of reading (in Thoreau's 'high sense'[1]) entails, and what is at stake in the reading of Thoreau's *Walden*. For Cavell, reading with an attentiveness to, and the burden of our responsibility for, language (which Thoreau calls the 'father tongue'[2]), means that we are often distanced from the words that are most familiar to us. This, for Cavell, is where 'The reader's position has been specified as that of a stranger. To write to him is to acknowledge that he is outside the words, at a bent arm's length' (1981, p. 62). To experience this is to be sentenced to reading a text – 'to check its sentences against our convictions' (1981, p. 65). What is at stake here in our reading of a text is how we encounter the words within it. By encountering words in this way – by having the responsibility to decide how to take them – we are both turned away from them, and turned back to them; we give or refuse our assent to them. This is the crisis of reading through which we are transformed.

Such an account should not be thought of in terms of educational theory (let alone a model for teaching reading). Indeed, Cavell writes that 'reading, so motivated, will not readily lend itself to classroom instruction' (1982, p.176). But there are clear implications of Cavell's work for thinking about what it is to read in the university. Cavell says of the kind of reading in which the text possesses us, and we as readers are, 'read'. The reading to which Cavell draws attention, where the reader must assume responsibility for the language, and answer the demand that the words pose (the words to which we are sentenced), is the very kind of reading that awakens us to the further possibilities of language. In taking up Cavell's ideas here, and in using them to think about higher education, we should not take it that he is suggesting that we prescribe texts for students that are complex, unnecessarily difficult, or even abstruse. What is at stake here in our reading of any text is rather how we encounter the words within it. Cavell is here adverting to a relationship with written words (in particular) that is characterised by a sense of strangeness to them such that we are thrust back on them. Such is the task and responsibility of reading.

This goes far beyond the kind of guidance that is typically given to undergraduate students on how to approach reading an academic text, or the techniques needed to demonstrate critical reading skills. These tend to focus on *mastery* of a text. But for Cavell, the kind of reading that activates the father tongue, and our responsibil-

[1] Thoreau writes that reading in a high sense is what 'we have to stand on tip-toe…and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to' (1854/1999, p. 95)

[2] Thoreau distinguishes the mother and father tongue like this: 'It is not enough even to be able to speak the language…for there is a memorable interval between the spoken and the written language, the language heard and the language read. The one is commonly transitory, a sound, a tongue, a dialect merely, almost brutish, and we learn it unconsciously, like the brutes, of our mothers. The other is the maturity and experience of that; if that is our mother tongue, this is our father tongue, a reserved and select expression, too significant to be heard by the ear, which we must be born again in order to speak (Thoreau 1854/1999, p. 93).

ity to words, is one that is never final – never mastered. As Cavell says of reading *Walden*, 'How far off a final reading is' (1981, p. 12). The idea that texts afford the possibilities for the kind of transformation of self and society of which Cavell writes is elaborated in Cavell's claim that reading is a 'mode of conversation' between writer and reader (1990, p. 6), where a text possesses us, reads us, and elicits something like confession. In other words, reading that opens up the possibilities for our transformation requires that we acknowledge and declare our standing in relation to the words themselves – we are answerable to them. This is our responsibility as readers; it is what human beings are sentenced to if they are awake to the possibilities of language. The words stand as invitation to the reader, a gesture to participate, that require her to 'determine her own position in respect to what is said' (ibid., p. 8). The reader finds herself attracted to the alterity she encounters, and recognises herself as 'chained, fixated, and…can turn (convert, revolutionize [her]self); a process of education is undertaken…in which each self is drawn on a journey of ascent to a further state of that self…it is a transformation of the self which finds expression in the imagination of a transformation of society' (1990, pp. 6–7). These ideas have much to say to contemporary discourses in higher education that emphasise the mastery of a body of skills and knowledge – especially in relation to practices of reading and academic writing – and to the evidencing of employability skills. But Cavell's ideas go further here: in forging the link between a particular mode of reading, and the transformation of self and of society, his work can also be said to speak to the aims of a higher education that goes far beyond achievement of programme learning outcomes, or graduate skills for the workplace. An uncommon schooling is not something one signs up for in a university, nor is it suggestive of a different kind of curriculum. Rather, it is an openness to the possibilities of language, an embracing of the responsibility that this brings, and the pursuit of the transformation of self and of society; these are the very things that seem to mark out a higher education.

Cavell and the Education of Voice

For Cavell, the transformation of self and society comes not only through the educative possibilities of our encounter with words through reading, but is also represented as our search for voice. Timothy Gould summarises Cavell's ideas when he writes: 'Voice is meant to provoke us to recover possibilities that we had either dismissed outright or kept at a distance' (1998, p. 51). The concept of voice is both significant and prevalent in Cavell's writings. But to think in terms of 'the' concept of voice, as if it were a unified idea, would be to misunderstand its complexities within Cavell's work. Gould suggests that Cavell understands voice as: 'epitomizing an entire region of questions about the means by which human beings express themselves and the depth of our need for such expression' (Gould, 1998, p. xv), and that it serves as a 'centripetal undertow' to his work (p. 51). Voice in Cavell should not be understood as the mere outward expression of opinion, as when we think, for

example of measures to 'collect' the student 'voice' in universities though module evaluations and national survey questionnaires. Rather, it is a richly nuanced concept that relates to that aspect of our human expression that Cavell sees as having being repressed by some Anglophone approaches to philosophy. Cavell's concern with voice is rooted, then, in his determination to express his own voice in the discipline of philosophy, with what he calls his desire to 'talk at once about the tone of philosophy and about my right to take that tone' (1994, pp. 3–4). So, when Cavell writes of finding his own voice in philosophy, we should not take this to mean that he is referring to his accomplishments in accenting his writing in a particular way, or to his various intricate stylistic devices. Rather, finding voice, for Cavell, is about finding access to philosophy; it is not arriving at a style, but arriving at this work.

Just as in Cavell's notion of reading, our responsibility to, and for, language cannot be separated from our responsibility for the community, so also Cavell's treatment of voice is not only about individual expression, but is similarly tied to the society in which our voices find expression. This interest comes from his work in ordinary language philosophy, with its characteristic formulation of enquiry in terms of 'When we say…we mean…'. Cavell is struck by the way that this formulation is both first person and plural. Its being first person reflects the fact that the finding of meaning here depends upon the sincere assent of the speaker: she must speak from her own sense of what is appropriate, what is meaningful, and what is correct. Its being plural reflects the fact that in so speaking she is not offering a 'merely' subjective response, but is attempting to speak for others – as if to say: 'I see it like this. Surely this is how it is. Please try to see it like this too?... Or tell me where I am wrong.' Such 'agreement in criteria' as Cavell puts it, signals that we are in community; he writes: 'The philosophical appeal to what we say, and the search for our criteria on the basis on which we say what we say, are claims to community' (1979, p. 20). To agree in criteria, is, for Cavell, to be 'mutually voiced…mutually attuned top to bottom' (1979, p. 32). What we consent to, is, for Cavell, an indication of our membership in a *polis*. It is about what *we* say. This does not suggest some kind of generalisation based on a majority view. Nor is it the case that we come together on a particular occasion and arrive at an agreement. It is rather an idea of 'being in agreement throughout, being in harmony, like pitches or tones' (Cavell 1979, p. 32).

The idea of assenting or dissenting in criteria as a search for voice, and as the education of voice, seems particularly relevant in the context of the university, and of higher education. The university is the site for the encounter with new ideas, texts, models and theories, and it is through an engagement with them that students and academics alike come to say whether they represent how the world is for them, or not; whether they assent or dissent in criteria in relation to them. This is the education of voice. It is perhaps easy to see how this plays out in the humanities where theories and texts are consistently under scrutiny, and where responses to them can be understood in terms of the development and expression of voice. However, the same can be also be said of a wider range of academic disciplines, where hypotheses, data and the conduct of tests and trials can be similarly subject to the kind of scrutiny that opens up the possibilities for the education of voice.

For Cavell, the education of voice is seen most clearly when it begins from a point of repression. Indeed, the development of his own voice in his field is ineluctably related to what he sees as its repression by certain dominant forms of philosophy. In Cavell's later works, he develops the idea of the repression, and recovery of voice through his discussions of Hollywood films from the 1930s and 1940s (Cavell 1996). Typically, he finds in a genre of films that he calls the 'melodramas of the unknown woman',[3] the recurrent themes of a woman's demand for an education, a voice, or 'the right to tell her story' (1996, p. 3). In these films, a woman's voice is repressed (by the leading man), only later to be recovered. Such recovery is the acquisition of a new way of speaking, an initiation again into language as it were, where this has been blocked, frustrated or distorted. Cavell sees the recovery as a form of education, not in the sense of formal language teaching, but as a result of a kind of self-transformation or recovery of expressiveness that Cavell identifies as the moment of the woman's '*cogito, ergo sum*' (1996, p. 47). It is in these moments that there is a realisation of a capacity for expressiveness.

In each of the Hollywood melodramas, Cavell identifies a character whose role he sees in terms of a 'voice coach' (1996, p. 58). These characters are not pedagogues in the sense of delivering formal learning or instruction. They rather facilitate the recovery of voice. In the 1944 film, *Gaslight*, for example, Cameron, a detective, is the voice coach for the heroine, Paula. Cameron helps Paula to recover her expressiveness in the face of repression from her husband, Anton. It is as if Cameron is persuaded that Paula's talking will in some way alter her reasoning and her capacity for voicing herself. Cameron does not direct Paula; his voice coaching consists of only the merest of nudges in a certain direction. Another point is significant: the voice coaching is not imposed. Cameron simply asks Paula: 'Will you let me come and talk to you sometime?' Paula is aware that the process of coming to, finding or recovering the voice is an ongoing process; as she says in the final scene of the film: 'This will be a long night'. There is something here too for our thinking about the role of the university tutor as voice coach in terms of exposing students to situations in which they develop the capacity for reasoning, and thus for expressiveness. These ideas also seem strongly related to ideas about what a higher education might consist in: about how those who experience such an education (we might also call it an uncommon schooling) are able both to consent, and to dissent in criteria.

[3] Cavell (1996, p. 3) identifies the following films as representative of the genre: *Stella Dallas* (1937); *Now Voyager* (1942) and *Gaslight* (1944).

Conclusion

What underlies Cavell's emphasis on ideas of uncommon schooling, and the education of voice, is an idea of education that requires, and constitutes, continual transformation. This does not place Cavell alongside philosophers of education whose writings address the aims of education as they are variously understood; rather, that Cavell's' understanding of education in terms of change, or of transformation, lie beyond schooling, or even higher education. The kinds of transformation that we perpetually require are ones that are ineluctably related to what it is to be human, and to live together in the world. Transformation is not the natural result of continued education into higher education; it does not come about either through attending a university. Nor does it imply the kinds of economic transformation, and social mobility, that governments say come from improving one's life chances through continued attendance in institutions that help develop the competences that meet the so-called 'skills gap'. In this sense, Cavellian transformation is unrelated to being a student within the confines of any educational institution of higher education.

So, Cavell must be considered an important figure for this volume. That he can be thought of in terms of relevance to educational thinking is, to a great extent, due to the way that he keeps returning to ideas of teaching and learning, as seen through the kinds of transformation that our ongoing education of language demands. It is in this initiation into, and departure from, our words, that he finds an aspiration towards our own best selves. But there is a further point – something important at stake in reading Cavell's work. To read Cavell *is* to engage in the education of grownups; to receive an uncommon schooling. It is itself educative: it demands the very kind of reading that is a recurrent theme in his work, and opens the possibilities for the kind of education of grownups that he espouses.

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Part IV
Higher Education and Democracy

Chapter 13
John Dewey (1859–1952): Democratic Hope Through Higher Education

Naoko Saito

Introduction

In the course of an illustrious career, John Dewey worked as a professor of philosophy at the universities of Michigan, Chicago, and Columbia. He always understood the importance of philosophy, academic and otherwise, in terms of engagement in practice. Not only was he remarkably productive as an author, publishing over forty books and hundreds of articles; he was also, throughout his career, involved in social and educational policy and political activism. He was a shining example of the public intellectual, a role that he fulfilled almost to the end of his long life.

Dewey is one of the four key figures, with Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and George Herbert Mead, in the development of *pragmatism*, America's most distinctive contribution to philosophy. Pragmatism generally holds to the view that the meaning and value of a belief is to be determined in the light of the consequences of testing it in experience. As a philosophy that takes human experience as centrally important, it has been widely influential in law, education, politics, sociology, psychology, and literary criticism. Dewey is known especially for the manner in which he opposed many of the dualisms that had shaped the development of Western thinking since ancient times. Thus, he demonstrated the interconnectedness of mind and body, thought and action, and above all individual and society.

Dewey's interest in education is widely recognised. He established the innovative Laboratory School at Chicago University, wrote what quickly became landmark books in the philosophy of education, and was active in policy-making in various ways. But he wrote little about higher education. This is not to say that he lacked strong views on the matter, as was evident especially in a debate that ran for most of a decade between Dewey and Robert Maynard Hutchins. Hutchins had been

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appointed to the Principalship of Chicago University, several years after Dewey had left Chicago for Columbia University. The debate was prompted by Hutchins' highly influential book, *The Higher Learning in America* (Hutchins 1978/1936). The book was a defence of academic study for its own sake, with the curriculum built around the Great Books approach. As a defence against the encroachment in the university of vocational studies and external commitments, it was fairly transparently opposed to the social engagement and commitment for which Dewey was known. Dewey reviewed the book, and an exchange of articles and responses ensued. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that Dewey was simply a proponent of vocational studies or that he believed that university education should become primarily an instrument for society's development through economic prosperity. On the contrary, the debate linked crucially to Dewey's interests in democracy, understood not just as a set of institutional arrangements but as a society built around informed citizens in communication with each other. Dewey understood democracy as an ethical ideal as well as an ongoing way of living. The university, at its best, would help in the realization of that idea as well as being one of its most powerful expressions.

Challenges to Dewey's Pragmatism and Higher Education

> [Democracy] is an ideal in the only intelligible sense of an ideal: namely, the tendency and movement of some thing which exists carried to its final limit, viewed as completed, perfected…The idea of ideal of a community presents, however, actual phases of associated life as they are freed from restrictive and disturbing elements, and are contemplated as having attained their limit of development. (Dewey 1927/1984a, p. 328)

So says John Dewey in his book, *The Public and its Problems* (1927). Dewey is known to be a proponent of pragmatism, American's most distinctive contribution to philosophy, and this is a philosophy for action, for the common man and for life. Pragmatism puts emphasis on the process and results of action, such that ideas are tools to resolve problems in life. It is caricatured sometimes as "cash-value" philosophy, but what Dewey – along with William James – propose, is not simply its instrumental use. Dewey's pragmatism, as this chapter tries to show, has rather more to it than that expression suggests: it is a philosophy for human transformation.

Dewey writes for democracy, but what he means by democracy is not simply a matter of political systems: he has in mind, rather more broadly, the way we live our lives – our personal ways of living, our lives on the street, at the table, in our work, and in our daily communication. As the above passage indicates, democracy is not only an ideal to be achieved: it is to be understood in terms of the 'actual phases of associated life', the very way we live our lives on a daily basis. The ideal and the facts of life interact with one another, and this interaction is also at the heart of his pragmatism. In one of his most representative books on education, *Democracy and Education* (1916/1980), Dewey writes that 'Life is a self-renewing process through action upon the environment (p. 4), thereby revealing an influence from Darwin.

Such thoughts are the basis of his famous idea of growth not as growth towards a fixed end but as the ongoing process of growing. Democracy also is growing. Between the two World Wars, when American democracy was in crisis, Dewey still held to his hopes for democracy.

Focusing on Dewey's hope for democracy, this chapter will attempt to show how his pragmatism and philosophy of democracy can have impact on higher education today. Dewey himself does not write much about the application of his philosophy to education (outside, that is, his earlier but still well-known works, *The School and Society* (1899/1976) and *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902/1976) and his middle work, *Democracy and Education*.) Hence, the aim of this chapter is not so much to show the clear-cut relevance of his philosophy to the practice of higher education – which would risk equating with the value of his pragmatism with its instrumentality – as to elucidate the spirit of his philosophy through attention to his words and to their potential to transform how we think about higher education. This is not to contrast practical value with something that might be a purely ivory tower exercise, but to move attention instead to the humanities as the locus of the *ethos* of the university. To this end, there will be a special focus, towards the end of the chapter on continuities between his work on democracy and education, and his writings on aesthetics. This focus will, I believe, serve to show how the scope of his pragmatism extends beyond narrowly instrumental ways of thinking.

Dewey's Democratic Hope

The Global Resurgence of Pragmatism

Let me begin with a contemporary voice that resuscitates Dewey's pragmatism. In his most recent paper, 'The Global Resurgence of Pragmatism' (2016a), Richard Bernstein, one of today's representative proponents and inheritors of Dewey's pragmatism, has demonstrated that pragmatism has not only extended its permanent legacy; he has also demonstrated its unflagging power of *re*surgence and *global* resurgence at that, emphasising that '[t]here is more vital and creative discussion of pragmatism' than there has been for some time (Bernstein 2016a). In particular, Bernstein appreciates Dewey's 'democratic hope' as a trait of his pragmatist utopianism (Bernstein 2016b, p. 103), and this is an underlying theme that runs through this chapter as a task of higher education today.

As a background to the contemporary significance of Dewey's democratic hope, some significant points implicit in the global resurgence of pragmatism are highlighted by Bernstein. First is the multivocal nature of pragmatism. '[T]he story', as Bernstein says, is 'one of continuity' produced in ensemble *and* in disharmony, in the 'plurality of multiple voices' (ibid.). Second is what might be called the power of marginal voices. Though classical pragmatism has from time to time been marginalised, especially with the dominance of analytical philosophy, Bernstein points

out that 'American pragmatism no longer looks like a marginal provincial movement that can be bracketed and dismissed' (ibid.). He elucidates the dynamic movement of pragmatism against the backdrop of western intellectual history, and seeks attention, in particular, to what might be called the global power of marginal and multiple voices within it – an apparently paradoxical relationship between the centre and the periphery, and between continuity and discontinuity. Pragmatism is a philosophy that draws on such apparent paradox as a source of its own development.

Third is its power of crossing boundaries. As a philosophy for life and as an *American* philosophy, pragmatism has the drive to go 'beyond the boundaries of academic philosophy departments' (Bernstein 1992, p. 817), and even beyond its own Americanness. If there is any "permanent" value to pragmatism, it is in its malleability, its capacity to unsettle fixed and stable points of view, in spite of the fact that this makes it liable to be misunderstood. Fourth is what might be called the perfectionist and affirmative thrust of pragmatism. Such pragmatism asks us to think in uncertainties, while neither relying on an illusionary fixed ground, nor falling into anarchism or relativism. Pragmatism's affirmative power is derived from its acknowledgement of contingency: it is a philosophy in response to human finitude.

This perfectionist, affirmative drive – what might be called a perfectionist-anti-foundationalist quest for democratic community within pragmatism – is underpinned by a humanitarian faith, its commitment to 'furthering genuine human emancipation'. And this is something that pragmatism makes possible in its 'anti-skeptical nonfoundational fallibilism'. With such insights the exponents of pragmatism are 'not passé but actually *ahead of their time*' (my italics) (Bernstein 2016a). The power of its resurgence hinges on pragmatism's own power of 'self-criticism', as Dewey says (Dewey 1930/1984b, p. 143). The central question this paper addresses is how to motivate such power of self-criticism and invigorate democratic hope in and through higher education.

What is Dewey's Pragmatism?

Why is Dewey's pragmatism so promising today and how can it be relevant to higher education? His *Democracy and Education* offers some preliminary indication of this. Pragmatism is known as a philosophy for *problem-solving* – addressing the problems that commonly face people and finding solutions. It is a philosophy for use. First and foremost, then, Dewey does not negate or avoid the idea of use, which he takes it to be an essential ingredient of human experience. Against the opposition of 'experience and true knowledge' (Dewey 1916/1980, p. 271), he reclaims the sense of 'knowledge of *how to do'* (p. 192, my italics): pragmatism *is* the philosophy of the *how*, in service to the 'problems of men'. Such knowledge is a medium through which the mind goes along a 'passage from doubt to discovery' (ibid.); and knowledge is 'experimental' (Dewey 1916/1980, p. 197).

Second, such experimentalism is crucially related to Dewey's overcoming of the mind-body dualism, which is reflected in his idea of labour: 'The laboratory is a discovery of the conditions under which *labor* may become intellectually fruitful and not merely externally productive' (p. 284). Such a notion of labour is crucially incorporated into Dewey's well-known advocacy of the idea of 'occupations' in schools (p. 317). (In *The School and Society*, such occupational studies are conceived in terms, for example, of work with textiles or, with young children in the use of building blocks.) In opposition to the dichotomies of play and work, and of practical activities and intellectual studies, Dewey says that education, in the true sense of the word, should not exclude usefulness and, *vice versa*, that the latter should have humane purpose in service to human growth:

> The problem of the educator is to engage pupils in these [occupational] activities in such ways that while manual skill and technical efficiency are gained and immediate satisfaction found in the work – together with preparation for later usefulness – these things will be subordinated to *education* – that is, to intellectual results and the forming of a socialised disposition. What does this principle signify?' (p. 204).

Third, Dewey is critical in particular of the idea of 'literary callings' as 'non-vocational', as highbrow studies. With its focus on experiment, on use and on practical ends, Dewey's anti-dualistic idea points us to a kind of integrated notion of vocational education and studies in the liberal arts (p. 269). Humanistic studies should not be taught as 'isolated subjects', but should be connected with the pupils' experience (p. 295). Rather than some aristocratic ideal of liberal arts, the humanities should be seen as involving study that is more down-to-earth, reflective of the daily experiences of human beings. *Democracy and Education* can be read today as a book that enables us to rethink the humanities as human science.

Fourth, such an integrated notion of liberal arts education reveals the humanities to be inseparable from Dewey's idea of 'creative democracy' (Dewey 1939/1988). Democracy is in service to the liberty and liberation of the human mind. It calls for the kind of freedom that is different from freedom in neoliberalism. Though he does not avoid the idea of cash value and usefulness, Dewey reminds us that democracy as a way of life is a moral ideal that precedes neoliberal notions of economy.

The aforementioned four features of *Democracy and Education* have relevance to a conception and practice of higher education today that is under the spell of the global economy. This reminds us that human growth cannot be separated from questions of economy (Dewey 1916/1980, p. 208), but encourages the realisation, nevertheless, that economy cannot be equated simply with economic growth understood in monetary or utilitarian terms (p. 327). Human beings are educated within and by economy (p. 325), while at the same time education functions as its critical force, without being assimilated into the existing currency of economy. Thinking beyond dualisms, thinking in life as a whole – in fusions of mind/body, means/ends, and fact/value (p. 269) – is at the heart of pragmatism, the philosophy of *praxis*. It bridges 'culture and utility (ibid.). Pragmatism entails the possibility of opening a third way of thinking beyond such dichotomies: thinking in 'middle term', as Dewey puts this (Dewey 1922/1983, p. 96). It is his anti-foundationalist perfectionism that

points us to the dimension of action beyond problem-solving and to his democratic hope. Dewey indicates that action in American philosophy entails something beyond narrow political realism: it must at the same time retain a 'practical striving to transform existing reality' (Bernstein 2016b, p. 102).

Challenges to Dewey's Democratic Hope: Problems Behind Problem-Solving in Higher Education

Since Dewey's time, new (and perhaps continuing) challenges have been posed to higher education. When the language of higher education, as typically manifested in the management of the university, is oriented towards practical use and problem-solving, these ideas themselves – *use*, *practicality*, *activity* and *life* – are subordinated to economic need. In the face of the tide of the global economy, the humanities are in crisis. In the context of the worldwide trend in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) funding in higher education, the humanities are perceived to have lost much of their value, their being seen to be without use. Now is the time to reconsider the alternative value of philosophy and education, to rethink the meaning of thinking in life, and to rethink the role of the humanities in terms of an education for *higher* education. We need critically to re-examine *how* – in resistance to narrow and superficial senses of use and utility, and to debased senses of problem-solving (the application of simple, clear-cut ideas to the immediate solution of problems) – the real use of Dewey's pragmatism might be realised in the name of its global resurgence; and how democratic hope can thereby be awakened among young students.

In the light of this, and at a first level, the following observations might typically be made concerning the problems of higher education. In the drive towards transparency, efficiency, performativity and accountability, what is vague, what is not articulated, and what falls through the net of accountability are expelled. In a way, the goal of education is already given, as is typically seen in universities' mission statements. Despite the emphasis on the individual and on diverse needs and on freedom, this is a freedom for economic growth. There is an emphasis on the immediacy of knowledge – where knowledge is tangible, visible and easily accessible, and where its acquisition is considered to be the object of learning. The task of education, so economicism dictates, is to solve the immediate problems of life.

Behind these problems, however, and behind this language of criticism, there are further problems, which we might think of as *problems behind problem-solving*. These are philosophical problems because they require us to redirect our way of thinking about what knowledge is useful and, more broadly, about what it means to think in and for life. These matters are related to the nature of language, which operates, surreptitiously and intractably, beyond the intentions of its user.

First, there is the dichotomous mode of thinking. Behind the promising proposal of returning knowledge to life, there emerges a division between use*ful* knowledge

and use*less* thinking. This kind of dichotomy originated in Greek philosophy between *praxis* and contemplation, between body and mind. With the renewed emphasis on use as efficiency, however, the dichotomy has been reinforced: there is less space for rigorous thinking as opposed to practical utility – as if knowledge for life meant common knowledge for a mundane life. The problem here is that people – for example, those involved in the management of university – often cannot think beyond such dichotomies, and this narrows the range of usefulness itself. Our ways of thinking are contained within the surface value of language, while at the same time the world cannot appear to us beyond this limited usage.

Second, the quest for secure foundations is reinforced. Complicit with the ethos of anxiety towards uncertainty, the language of stability drives people all the more towards reliance on the (apparently) secure ground of language – whether in educational policy making, curriculum planning or the internationalisation of university. This reinforces the drive towards certainty and secure foundations, as Dewey shows in *The Quest for Certainty* (1929/1984c). Complicit with the drive towards clarity, it stops people from thinking beyond the prevailing currency of words as something on which they can simply rely. The desire for certainty and security is indeed a part of the human condition, yet it simultaneously turns into an intractable foe. Useful knowledge then inevitably comes to be construed as the secure source and object of thinking.

Third, there is the growing phenomenon of the contradiction between the use of language and its effects. In the ethos of what Beck calls 'solidarity motivated by anxiety' (Beck 1986/1992, p. 49) and despite the call for the challenge of life-long learning, the space for the adventurous spirit of thinking is decreasing. Despite an apparently affirmative, even celebratory, response to diversity and respect for difference, the fear of the strange increases and, as a result, language functions in an intolerant way. University students tend not to risk venturing into the unknown, and knowledge is contained within thinking defined by clear boundaries. The most pressing problem, ironically enough, lies behind this apparently benign language, where the outsider is identified and moulded as different from ourselves. This is a threat to democracy as a way of life of the kind that Dewey envisions.

In the light of these problems, how can Dewey's democratic hope be realised in higher education today? How can we activate the motive for a Deweyan democratic hope among students in higher education?

More than 20 years ago, Bill Readings' book, *The University in Ruins* (1996), disclosed the surreptitious power of performativity and obsessive transparency, and since then, the threat accompanying 'the University of Excellence' (p. 43) has become more complicated. While Readings elucidates the problem from the side of the university, William Deresiewicz (2014) does this from the perspective of young students, disclosing how contemporary practice in higher education erodes the mind. The book reveals the degenerate state of American elite universities through an evocation of the unhappy psyche of students – through a glimpse of the 'inner life of excellent sheep' (p. 40). The metaphor of the sheep implies a mentality of timidity and 'violent aversion to risk' (p. 22), of yearning for security and, most impor-

tantly, of closed-mindedness, as they flock together among 'the same kind of people' (p. 210).

Society as a whole does not 'take a chance' (p. 232). At this nadir in the crisis of the humanities – and more generally this crisis of democracy as a way of life – critical thinking dwindles. Deresiewicz's call for radical change – his demand for 'a different kind of brain' (p. 237) and for 'a different society' (p. 235), and his desire to retrieve 'excellence' from the torpor of excellent sheep – requires thinking that takes risks (pp. 110, 236). It requires the critical habit of mind that Dewey envisions at the core of his democratic hope.

We cannot live without the currency of the language of the global economy and useful knowledge. The real challenge is how to transcend this dichotomy between the useful and the useless, and how to cultivate an alternative way of thinking towards democratic hope. The example of the excellent sheep demonstrates that it is the fear towards uncertainty, and the anxiety of inclusion, that block such alternative modes of living and thinking. The drive towards problem-solving in policy making and teaching and learning in higher education thrives on such fear. Apparent cheerfulness, activeness and positivity are the façade of an underlying negativity. When I taught Dewey's text in an undergraduate course, there were some strong reactions from young students. Why do we have to choose to live a Deweyan risk-taking kind of life? Confronted with this question, the foremost task of Dewey's creative democracy in higher education is to resuscitate the passion for democracy – to create the momentum of conversion from 'quiet desperation' (Thoreau 1992, p. 5) to hope. How can people be inspired to be 'active participatory democratic citizens' (Bernstein 2016b, p. 35) and to be drawn toward the ethos of acting together (p. 106)? How can we cultivate the 'motivating force for political action', as Bernstein advocates (p. 196)? To answer this question means to think through the significance for higher education today of Dewey's idea of democracy as a way of life.

There is a further need today to explore the potential of Dewey's pragmatism beyond problem-solving. The importance that is attached at present to 'problem-based learning' (PBL) is partially the result of Dewey's influence. Such an approach to learning acknowledges the importance of more open-ended and creative ways of thinking, as against the offering of merely instrumental, immediate solutions to problems. Dewey's pragmatism, however, as I have tried to show, is committed to an even deeper and more existential dimension of human experience involving human transformation. Dewey's pragmatism, his philosophy of *praxis*, if reconstructed beyond its superficially narrow limits, has the radical potential to convert our ways of thinking about higher education: hence, we might live within an economic system yet without being assimilated into a narrow, utilitarian sense of economy. The key to this line of thought is to be found in Dewey's mature thought – in his later aesthetic writings.

Cultivating the Art of Criticism

> Creative activity is our great need; but criticism, self-criticism, is the road to its release. (Dewey 1930/1984b, p. 143)

The Criticism of Criticisms

What kind of place should a university be if it is to be in service of democracy as a way of life? Genuinely to return knowledge to life, and to regain its usefulness, we need to re-educate ourselves to think in, and for, life, relearning what it means to use knowledge for life. Neither simple evasion nor superficial criticism of the global economy will be sufficient to what constitutes the reality of our lives today. Rather what is needed is a rethinking of problem-solving – that is, to think beyond problem-solving. We must keep questioning what it means to bring our thinking back to life and to keep thinking about the meaning of practicality and usefulness, and about the functionality and instrumentality of knowledge. Education begins when we realise the fact that the language of education may in itself deprive us of our further education, enfeebling our powers of thinking. In order to respond to this need for education, and to our existential and psychological needs, we must re-educate ourselves to think critically. This requires the development of 'courageous intelligence', a kind of intelligence that is 'practical and executive' (Dewey 1916/1980, p. 329). Such criticism is neither simply an abstract kind of analysis nor a mode of solving problems in response to immediate needs. Here Dewey's idea of thinking cannot be simply contained in the stereotypical notion of problem-solving. Dewey's idea of the 'criticism of criticisms' (Dewey 1925/1981, p. 298) is, on Hilary Putnam's account, a matter of 'higher-level criticism', involving 'standing back' and criticizing even the ways in which we are accustomed to criticize ideas, the criticism of our ways of criticism' (Putnam 2004, p. 96). Such criticism is distinguished from the kind of analytical thinking whose main commitment is to clarity. This alternative critical thinking is what might be called thinking beyond problem-solving, and it requires us to delve more subtly and with greater uncertainty into the complexity of ordinary life: it requires activation of the motive and desire for democracy so that each of us can be a driving force for creating democracy from within. The humanities in universities must be the site for the cultivation of such thinking, for cultivating the art of criticism.

Resisting our fated tendency towards inclusion, assimilation and settlement, Dewey asks us to think more critically about ourselves – about what excludes us from ourselves, our ignorance, our failures of understanding – and encourages us to commit ourselves to a mutual unsettling of the ground and, hence, to mutual transformation. Hence, criticism is the crucial condition for realizing Dewey's ideal for creating democracy, and this *from within*: it must have an impact on the way we think and live, and on the ethos of the university.

Aesthetic Judgment and Political Life

What Dewey means by criticism is different from the critical thinking that prevails in education. First, it entails not simply the rational, analytical capacity for problem-solving: more than anything, it requires the affective element of being human – the desire to speak out, of passion to participate, and receptivity to withdraw and accept. Second, such criticism is not a matter of negative fault-finding but a positive, constructive resource for creative democracy. Third and most importantly, criticism is *self*-criticism, which is the crucial condition for pluralistic democracy in the way Dewey envisions this. In fact, all these characteristics can be better found in Dewey's later aesthetic writings – or, to put it differently, his later aesthetic writings constitute the as yet unworked out basis of his earlier educational and political writings. It is not too much to say that the key to making best use of Dewey's idea of democracy as a way of life, its perfectionist thrust for higher education today, lies in his aesthetic writings. What does he mean when he claims that the aesthetic is the precondition of our political life, of the creation and the practice of democracy as a way of life?

Let us turns to his *Art as Experience* (1934/1989). Dewey writes that 'criticism is judgment' (p. 302). What distinguishes judicial criticism from aesthetic judgement is that art 'expresses something new in human experience, some new mode of interaction of the live creature with his surroundings, and hence the release of powers previously cramped or inert' (p. 307). He emphasises the significance of imagination in art: 'Only imaginative vision elicits the possibilities that are interwoven within the texture of the actual' (p. 348). Imagination, Dewey says, is 'the precursor of the changes' (p. 348) and 'the chief instrument of the good' (p. 350).

Though the critic 'reveals himself in his criticisms' (p. 312), this is not simply a subjective matter. The judgement of good or bad is tested in the eyes of the other and it is issued as a 'social document' (p. 312). Furthermore, every critic and artist has 'a bias, a predilection, that is bound up with the very existence of individuality' (p. 327). Intelligent activity should not surrender 'the instinctive preference' (ibid.), and Dewey calls such broader and comprehensive intelligence 'creative intelligence (p. 351).

In order to cultivate the capacity and habit of criticism from within, 'a motivating source of political legitimation and authority' (Bernstein 2016b, p. 191), we need to turn from political judgement based upon rational deliberation – upon ideological neutrality – to *aesthetic judgement.* The force of the argument here plainly draws upon the move in Immanuel Kant from pure and practical reason to the philosophy of the Third Critique, the *Critique of Judgment*. It is in the light of this that teachers and students need to learn to find a measure of life where there is no pre-given set of guidance for life, and to exercise judgement in uncertainty. In this process, aesthetic judgement involves a continual revision of judgement that itself enables the realisation of 'better criteria' (p. 213). It is important here that students do not just acquire skills or accumulate knowledge, but rather can say what they think and feel, and find ways to do this genuinely – where there are no fixed rules. Hence, the

importance of aesthetic education in the nuances, the fine shades, of thought, feeling and expression. As Dewey says, the 'function of criticism is the re-education of perception of works of art' (Dewey 1934/1989, p. 328). And such aesthetic temperament is crucial to our political life, especially for criticism of democracy from within. Aesthetic judgement here puts the emphasis on passive and receptive thinking driven by active or spontaneous intuition. Passion and patience are the preconditions and ingredients of critical thinking for political judgement. These receptive dimensions of human existence seem to be missing in the currency of problem-based learning and active learning, as they are no less in forms of citizenship education that put the emphasis on political competences and skills.

What is needed, and what is continually realised in these processes, are better possibilities of dwelling. To achieve this, it is necessary to think in terms of the range of human sensibility and of the relation of this to the ways that we word the world together – from our highest, most self-aware acts down to our most ordinary and everyday interactions.

> The moral function of art itself is to remove prejudice, do away with the scales that keep the eye from seeing, tear away the veils due to wont and custom, perfect the power to perceive (p. 328).

Far from being aesthetic indulgence, such a moral function of art is necessary to the realisation of pluralistic democracy: it has to do with the felt experience from which, ultimately, political judgements must derive and by which the 'motivating force for political action' (Bernstein 2016b, p. 196) is sustained.

Conclusion: Creating Space for Aesthetic Judgement

At the beginning of this paper, a question was raised as to how to motivate the power of self-criticism and invigorate democratic hope in and through higher education. The discussion in this paper has shown that it is necessary, especially in the tide of the global economy that pervades higher education, to move the prevailing mode of thought beyond problem-solving. It has been pointed out that a preliminary key lies in Dewey's idea of the criticism of criticisms, the idea that critical thinking that goes beyond the instrumental mode of problem-solving, and that asks us to confront us with ourselves, and hence to exercise imagination towards others. I also have argued that such criticism can be enhanced further through a reading of Dewey's later aesthetic writings, with regard in particular to his idea of aesthetic judgement and creative intelligence. Attention to what is involved in the exercise of judgement and intelligence in these respects can and should reorient thinking in curriculum and policy-making.

In conclusion, and as a way of remembering the motive, passion and drive for such criticism, I would like to propose that space for a certain mode of communication needs to be built into higher education so that the university can be the locus of practising democracy as a way of life, especially through the humanities. This

cannot be simply a space for the exchange of ideas. To learn mutually from difference requires a more radical space in which one's self-knowledge, one's sense of oneself, is destabilised. This would be radical along the lines that Dewey himself envisions in his *Construction and Criticism* (1930/1984b). Such a space would encourage us to commit ourselves to a mutual unsettling of the ground and, hence, to mutual transformation. To acknowledge difference while retaining one's ground is one thing: to be aware of the instability of the ground of one's self-knowledge is another. It is, I believe, the latter experience that should await young students at university today. Self-knowledge via self-criticism is a matter of realising what you do not know, and this is a helpful pointer to a possible retrieval of liberal arts education in university.

The 're-education of perception' requires us to remember our own desires, tastes and predilections so that the articulation of these and their testing in relation to the responses of others become sources of criticism and of the exercise of the imagination. The foremost task of higher education, then, is to create the space for the resuscitation of the desire to speak and for the ability to hear. As Dewey says, 'vision is a spectator; hearing is a participator' (Dewey 1927/1984a, p. 371). It requires art, the art of communication. An interdisciplinary humanities curriculum – involving, say, literature, art, film studies, politics, gender studies – may provide the kind of space that is needed. This would be a space in which professors and students can undergo the kind of consummatory experience that Dewey envisions:

> [Democracy] will have its consummation when free social inquiry is indissolubly wedded to the art of full and moving communication. (Dewey 1927/1984a, p. 350)

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Chapter 14
Jacques Rancière (1940–): Higher Education as a Place for Radical Equality

Joris Vlieghe

Introduction

Introducing Jacques Rancière as a philosopher of higher education is not an easy task. Although Rancière is an established name in the fields of political philosophy and aesthetics, the importance of his work for the sphere of educational philosophy has only recently become clear. Nevertheless, it could be argued that his thoughts on education form the very heart of the whole of his philosophy, and that his thoughts on the arts and politics cannot be rightly grasped without referring to the key idea that he develops in a most significant study about education, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five lessons in intellectual emancipation* (1991, originally published in French in 1987): that we are all, as students and teachers, but likewise as political agents and as consumers or producers of art, *equally intelligent*. This is a most radical thesis to which Rancière unyieldingly adheres.

Life and Work

Jacques Rancière (born in 1940) is a French intellectual, who received his training as a philosopher at the École Normale Supérieure under the supervision of one of the then heavyweights of French structuralist philosophy, Louis Althusser (1918–1990). As an active member of the Union of Communist Students, he participated to the 1968 Paris student revolts. But as will become clear later in this chapter, he broke away from both his supervisor and the communist movement, though without ever giving up his strong commitment to the cause of what he calls 'the

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poor'. In fact, his 'thèse d'état' – the highest academic rank one can obtain in French academia (habilitation) – *Nights of Labour*: *The Workers Dream in Nineteenth Century France* (1981), is based on an archival study of the lives of the proletarians class during the era of industrialisation. Part of his work is indeed concerned with bringing under our attention forgotten resources, like the letters or the poetry the French working-class people have produced, or like, in *The Plebeian Philosopher* (1985), the unedited work of Louis Gauny, a carpenter who was also a philosopher.

Next to this, Rancière published over 30 books (many of which are by now translated into English), which cover mostly the fields of politics and aesthetics. His most important publications in political philosophy are *On the Shores of Politics* (1995), *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (1999), and *Hatred of Democracy* (2013). The two most important studies in the field of philosophical aesthetics are *The Politics of Aesthetics: The distribution of the sensible* (2006) and *The Emancipated Spectator* (2011b). Rancière is first of all a writer and public intellectual, and as such he has only been part-time affiliated to the university as a professor.

The Character of Rancière's Work

The reader of Rancière's work finds herself confronted with a most controversial thinker, who like Hannah Arendt, would probably not define himself as a philosopher, but rather as a political activist. The reader is also confronted with a thinker who is not easy to access. I will come back to this point later, but it should be clear that the thesis that we are all equally intelligent has consequences for how teachers and students should relate to one another, but also for how a writer has to address her own readership. Rancière cannot simply position himself as a superior intellectual who teaches others a lesson. Claiming radical equality comes with a particular style of writing, to which Rancière stays true throughout his career, but which makes reading and studying Rancière also something of a challenge and a true adventure. So, in the book which will be central to my presentation of Rancière in this chapter, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, we don't find a philosophy of education consisting of long explanations and logically developed arguments. Rather, we find a story interspersed with reflections. More precisely he offers a historical account of a forgotten nineteenth century educational reformer, Jospeh Jacotot (1770–1840) – told in such a way that it is never clear if it is Rancière himself, or Jacotot, who is speaking (Chambers 2013).

Although Rancière has not explicitly written on the university, his own intellectual path is closely linked with his career in higher education, as will become clear in the next section. Moreover, as I will go on showing in this chapter, his thoughts on the issue of equality in education – and related to this, in politics – has important consequences when conceiving of, criticising, and thinking about how to reform higher education today.

Exposing the Pedagogical Myth: There Is Only One Intelligence

The title of Rancière's first single authored publication, *Althusser's Lesson* (2011a, originally published in French in 1975), immediately speaks to his life-long interest in (higher) education. In this book, Rancière comes back to the beginning of his own career as a student and later as a university assistant of Althusser, with whom he co-published *Lire le Capital*, the report on a seminar series in which Marx' *magnum opus* is read in a so-called purely scientific manner. When 3 years later the Western world, but especially France, was startled by the 1968 student revolts, Althusser and Rancière parted intellectual company. The main reason for this is that Althusser denied the importance of this event, dismissing it as an insignificant student rebellion, rather than acknowledging it as a true revolution. This is, Althusser believed, because it was not informed and lead by those who were competent to organise genuine social change (i.e. the class of intellectuals and the Communist Party) (cf. Lambert 2012). For Althusser, it is of the greatest importance to maintain a sharp and asymmetric division between true scientific insight and mere opinion (ideology), and hence between intellectuals and the larger part of society that cannot achieve freedom without being first enlightened by the academic and political vanguard.

It is with this division that Rancière takes issue in the rest of his work. He will call the idea advocated by Althusser – and in fact by the majority of scholars up till this day – a 'pedagogical myth' (Rancière 1991), i.e. the widely held, but not further critically explored, belief that there exist two forms of intelligence: the superior intellect of those who are academically trained and hence have systematic insight into things, as opposed to the inferior intelligence of those who lack such a training and can only think chaotically and superficially – for instance the immature child that is in need of a teacher, or the marginalised person who doesn't know that she is being oppressed (or why), and who therefore is in need of an emancipator. This pedagogical myth is not just an opinion that only bears on didactical/instructional questions. It is a foundational myth which informs how we give shape to our communal life – to living together in a right way. In that sense, education and politics are for Rancière very closely intertwined. If we really want to change the world for the better, we first need to break with a common understanding of what pedagogy is all about.

It is important to clarify two points here. First, Rancière's critique of the pedagogical myth is not meant to accuse those who believe in it of bad intentions. There is no doubt that Althusser and others against whom he fulminates (e.g. critical pedagogues and critical sociologists, to which I shall come back) desire a world without prejudice, oppression, violence and inequality. But, the issue with these scholars is that, against their best intentions, they actually sustain oppression and inequality. Second, it should be stressed that the thesis of the equality of intelligences is *not* a scientific hypothesis that can be empirically demonstrated. Following what cognitive psychologists have to say, it seems far more reasonable to hold the exact

opposite opinion. However, Rancière is much aware of the counter-intuitive and downright controversial nature of making such a claim. In order to fathom what he truly means, it is important to acknowledge its out-of-the-ordinary and controversial character (cf. Vlieghe 2018). Claiming that we all share the same intelligence is totally going against the grain, but *that is the whole point*. What Rancière proposes is to act *as if* we are all equally intelligent and then see what happens, that is, to see whether we have made a difference, or not. This is why he says that his thesis cannot be proven, but only practically verified (Rancière 1991). In other words, whereas we are spontaneously inclined to act based on differences in intelligence (and we may think to have good reasons to do so), Rancière invites us to act differently and to make a difference to the world we are living in.

This is clear in most educational situations, from raising one's own children to the highest echelons of academia. The default position here is, more often than not, the conviction that there are on the one hand those who possess true insight, and on the other those who are lacking this, and who cannot fully realise their full potential by themselves. This offers a moral and political justification to those with superior intellect to teach others a lesson. But, we can also educate on the basis of the assumption of equality, as Rancière shows in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, a book that will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Stultifying and Emancipatory Education

As previously said, in this book we don't find lengthy and carefully constructed arguments (e.g. against the position of Althusser). Instead, Rancière presents his readers with a story about Jacotot, a French professor, who found asylum in Flanders during the post-1815 restoration in France. Like many teachers, he firmly believed in the pedagogical myth, and so he found himself at his wits end when he had to teach to Dutch-speaking students. The lecturer and his students had no language in common, and hence there was no way to begin with educating the minds of the inferior intellects trusted to him. By happenstance, Jacotot provided his students at the University of Leuven with a bilingual version of Fénélon's *Télémaque*, and he just asked them to compare and study both versions *by themselves*, and later to write in French what they thought about the book. Much to his surprise the Flemish students gained proficiency in French. This counted as an important pedagogical discovery which inspired many progressive educationalist of the day, as it appeared that the illiterate masses could be liberated by the simplest and most inexpensive of means (so called 'universal teaching'). Examples of this abound, and one of the most sensational is the case of an illiterate father who forces his son to compare a prayer he already knew by heart by a printed version of it, which results in the son learning the letters of the alphabet. The 'lesson' to take from these and other examples is that one can teach what one doesn't know. Jacotot and the illiterate father are ignorant and yet they are successful teachers. Hence the title of the book.

The more important 'lesson' is that Jacotot and the father make something happen that is out of the ordinary: in their concrete doings they verify equality of intelligence. They perform it, so to speak. Jacotot and the father are only able to do what they do, because they presuppose that there is only one intelligence, and hence: everyone can learn everything. So *without* relying on the aid of a superior intelligence, students just compare things (e.g. equivalent French and Dutch expressions, spoken and written words), think about them and draw conclusions. Of course, at this point, one could easily bring in two objections: first, what Rancière describes is an exception, not the rule; and second, why does the title of the book still refer to a master: isn't this after all a rock-solid argument for self-steered learning and against teaching?

The answer to these objections is that for Rancière the thesis about intellectual equality goes together with a thesis about inequality, viz. at the level of will-power. Even though everyone has the same potential to learn, not everybody is willing to actually put her intelligence at use. One might lack the readiness to look, to compare, to think and to formulate conclusions. Hence, it is often a necessity that someone else has to invite or demand the student to put her intelligence to work. Interestingly, what defines somebody as a teacher is not so much her superior intelligence, but her superior will-power: somehow, she is able to capture the student's attention and to sustain the student's will to engage with a particular thing of study. Further to this, it should be noted that Rancière is not holding a plea for ignorant teachers. Jacotot and the illiterate father are just limit cases he stages to make the case that it is not knowledgeability which defines the teacher as teacher, but rather the capacity to make people study. Anyway, from this it should be clear that the many interpreters of Rancière who see in him a herald of student-centtred or student-led education are seriously mistaken (cf. Bingham 2018; Biesta 2017). I will come back to this later.

First, I want to recall that the Jacotot story and all of Rancière's reflections have a much larger purport than a merely didactical/instructional one (i.e. they are about more than what the most effective teaching and learning method is). It is of course the case that one can easily identify two 'models' of teachers in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*: the stultifying master versus the emancipatory master. But, these two models or figures have a more profound, educational and political meaning. The point is that one, as a teacher, must choose between two options, and that this choice makes all the difference. The most spontaneous choice is to be an explicatory or stultifying master: out of the best of intentions one takes up the responsibility for the not-yet intelligent student. Because she cannot yet think in an orderly way, one must *explain* things to her, in the hope that 1 day she becomes as bright, or potentially brighter, than her own teacher. One starts thus from the assumption of inequality (between the teacher's and the student's intelligence) with the explicit aim in mind to realise equality at the end. However, despite these good intentions, such a teacher just maintains a structural regime of inequality – a vicious circle from where there is no escape (Rancière 1991, p. 15). This is because it is eventually always up to the master, due to her superior insight, to judge whether or not the desired level of

proficiency, and hence equality, has been reached. There is always someone in a higher position, and the endless loop of inequality is not interrupted.

This, however, only happens when one chooses to be an emancipatory teacher. She starts from the most unlikely assumption, viz. that we all share the same intelligence and that everyone can learn everything. As such, she finally breaks the spell of the pedagogical myth. By this act of interruption true equality and true emancipation can begin. Only now the student can experience that she is able and that she is as able as anyone else. *Genuine emancipation is thus predicated upon taking equality as a starting point*. Whenever equality is forestalled to a point in the future, i.e. as an aim to strive at in view of a present condition of inequality, we get trapped in an infinite loop of verifying over and again inequality.

This entails, first, that what Rancière argues for, is not a particular teaching method (Rancière 2010). I already argued that Rancière's work is not a good place to look for arguments in favour of student-centred approaches. But, one could also be inclined to think that Rancière would be opposed to traditional instruction techniques, such as lecturing. However, Rancière's philosophy doesn't allow for making such claims. Incidentally, Rancière himself is professor emeritus at the University of Paris VIII, and currently teaches – in a very traditional style (!) – at the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee. The point is not which pedagogical method to use, but whether one assumes equality or inequality. Put otherwise, a traditional lecturer can be both stultifying or emancipatory. As I have shown elsewhere (Vlieghe 2018), a Rancièrian case can be built in favour of (a particular kind of) university lecturing. But, then, this practice should be analysed *not* as a manifestation of the superiority of the lecturer's knowledge, *but* as an attempt to share with an audience that something (a subject matter) is of importance, and to make them attentive for this thing. This can only be realised if the lecturer assumes that the students in the audience share the same intelligence, i.e. that they are able to understand what the lecturer is trying to say. Over and against this, it could be argued that sometimes student-centred forms of education can be stultifying, because the teacher refuses to share what she knows and leaves the students to their own devices, based on the belief that students have a different intelligence than the teacher (cf. Arendt 1968).

Rancière Versus Critical Pedagogy and Sociology

So, the importance of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* is not didactical. It is profoundly educational, in the sense that it is about who we want to be as educators: Are we willing or not to start from the assumption that we are all equally intelligent? By doing this, Rancière implicitly takes distance from two major schools of thought in educational theory, that at first sight share Rancière's concern for making a difference to the world through education. Having a closer look, however, it appears that these schools only contribute to the perpetuation of inequality. The first is the so called critical pedagogy tradition: educators the likes of Paulo Freire (1993) or more recently Henry Giroux seem to be in the same tradition as Rancière, as for them the

main task of education is to set free the oppressed by giving them the tools to take ownership over their own education (for instance through inquiry-based community learning projects, based on 'real life problems', through which the poor get a voice and take hold over their own lives). This happens preferably outside formal and institutionalised places like the university. But, this model offers no escape from the stultifying master. After all, emancipation in this model first requires that the oppressed become conscious of their own oppression (and of the reasons why), and this is something they cannot do by themselves. Progressive as critical pedagogy might seem, it reinstalls in fact the vicious circle of inequality (Biesta 2017; Harman 2017). The not-yet enlightened are fully dependent upon those who are already enlightened about the power mechanisms that cause oppression.

The same line of criticism can be raised against the critical sociology of education tradition, a second school of thought that *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* strikes at its very heart. More exactly, Rancière takes issue with the then (and today still) very popular ideas of Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002). In *The Inheritors* Bourdieu, together with Jean-Claude Passeron (1979), shows that our educational institutions, and especially the university, far from contributing to equal chances for children of lower social classes to make it in life, just reproduce social inequality. It is a myth to believe that a system in which education is accessible for all (because it is state-supported and offers study loans to the disenfranchised) will lead to a meritocratic society, that is a world where people get the social position they deserve based on their talents and efforts, and regardless of the social class they are born into. This is, Bourdieu argues, because the system surreptitiously favours children from the higher classes – even if they are not smart and disengaged. This, in turn, follows from differences in what he calls social and cultural capital: children from the well-off embody particular tastes, habits, gestures and manners (*habitus*) and are acquainted with unwritten rules that are identical to those of the teaching staff. The poor have a different habitus and behave differently, and as a result the teaching staff (unconsciously) respond in ways that are to their disadvantage, even if they are as bright and engaged as their richer peers. Furthermore, the poor and marginalised – again due to their specific habitus – often don't see why it would be important to try and gain access to higher education. Hence, the lesson here is that we need to reform the existing educational apparatus: if we leave it the way it is, equal opportunities will forever remain an idle dream (Harman 2017).

The problem which Rancière has with such an analysis is that, despite the good intentions of Bourdieu and others to finally get rid of persisting forms of inequality, it actually reinforces inequality (Hattam and Smyth 2015). The position which Bourdieu takes as a social researcher is in essence similar to Althusser's (who claims that only academics know the cause of the suffering of the oppressed), and also to the figure of the stupefying master. The message that critical sociology conveys is that the lower classes are the prisoner of their ideological convictions and habitus. And unless they become freed from this condition by an outside party, they will forever remain just prisoners. Hence, they need a master who explains and reveals to them the condition they are in. For Rancière, taking such a stance both runs counter to emancipation and it is highly anti-educational. For true emancipation to take

place we must start from the assumption of equality: instead of treating the lower classes as ignorant about their own condition, we should deal with them as equally intelligent. A truly educational attitude consists then of taking everyone seriously and to offer them the possibility to become proficient in something.

To render this less abstractly: from a Bourdieuan position it would be a bad idea to teach students from a lower social background about opera. Listening to Puccini just isn't part of their habitus. Forcing them to do so, only causes them to become more disadvantaged compared to students that already have a high level of cultural capital. In Rancière's book, however, this is a perfect illustration of stultification: opera loving educators affirm and delight in their own intellectual superiority, from which others with a more vulgar taste and lesser intelligence are forever excluded. For Rancière, a true act of educational emancipation is precisely when somebody, against what society expects of her, becomes proficient in something, e.g. that she starts to understand the beauty and complexity of opera (Rancière 1981). In that regard it doesn't really matter *what* it is students learn. The crucial point is *that* they learn something, and as such verify equality. Opera is as good as painting, cooking or woodcraft (cf. Vlieghe 2018).

From the Educational to the Political: Radical Democracy

With this last example in mind I want to move onto another issue: the political and its relation to education. The objection could be raised that it is all well that poor people learn to appreciate opera, but that this doesn't make any difference whatsoever in terms of societal progress. The poor remain poor. They might be emancipated at an educational level, but not politically. The answer to this is probably that an educational emancipation is a first, albeit a most necessary, step to bring about profound societal change (cf. Simons and Masschelein 2010). Before one can start exerting political agency, one must first live through an experience of verifying equality as the result of becoming proficient in something, of having the sense that one is capable (for example, of appreciating opera). So, the point is that the willingness to assume radical equality in the sphere of education entails a further question: are we willing to accept the potential *political* consequences of this? Are we prepared to extend equality to the political? Are we willing to accept that in the political arena literally everyone is capable of political agency?

In his political philosophy, Rancière (1999), introduces a distinction which runs parallel to the opposition between the stultifying and the emancipatory model of education. As a rule, societies are governed according to a *police order*, that is a predefined arrangement of roles and positions based on presumed qualities people have (for example, only men can vote, as women lack political insight or interest). The starting point is of course inequality, as some are wrongly excluded from the political domain. However, truly *political* moments may occur, precisely when the police order is contested by those who had no voice, but who nevertheless raise their voice and hence verify equality (e.g. the Revolutionary heroin Olympe de Gouges,

publicly defending that if women, like men, can be executed at the guillotine, they should, like men, have the right to vote). The essence of politics is thus disagreement (*dissensus*): the possibility to oppose a given ordering of our communal live. Another frequently used expression by Rancière is that political emancipation involves a *redistribution of the sensible*: whereas the police order ordained who can be seen/heard and who not, the manifestation of equality results in a reconfiguration of social reality as we used to sense it.

There are two consequences to this radical conception of democracy that are difficult to digest. First, it is assumed that everyone has the same capacity to make a sound political judgment. Whereas we accept this when a murderer is put on trial and when the hand of fate decides who is on the jury, it is far more difficult to imagine that everyone is capable to be a ruler. Nevertheless, as Rancière reminds us (ibid.), in the beginning days of democracy as developed in Ancient Greece, governors were appointed by drawing straws out of a hat. Second, the always present but utterly unpredictable possibility that someone contests the police order, makes that the political sphere is *never* a stable one. This is, Rancière holds, why throughout history there have been continuously attempts to tame democracy by excluding the possibility of dissensus, and by striving at a consensual regime that clearly ascribes to individual members of the populace what their position and identity is, and also what they are capable of and not capable of.

At this point it becomes again clear that there is a strong tie between education and politics. Both are spheres where stultifying and benumbing people is the rule, but where emancipation is at stake. Politics, in the strong sense of radical democracy, is only possible if people verify equality, and hence it is important that through education they first have had a strong experience of potentiality. Still, it could be said that whereas political emancipation always presupposes educational emancipation, this doesn't hold the other way around. There can be emancipation at the level of education (i.e. having a strong sense of being-able) without this necessarily having to lead to a form of political transformation. So, it seems, Rancière's thought offers the possibility to conceive – in an unconditional an radical way – of equality, but at the same time there might still be an important difference between equality at the level of education *and* at the level of democratic political action. Taking this into consideration, I turn now to recent scholarship on Rancière and higher education, where the tension between the educational and the political is clearly visible.

How to Conceive of Higher Education with Rancière?

A first approach consists of elucidating, criticising and trying to improve our higher education institutions based on Rancière's radical political philosophy. Cath Lambert (2012), for instance, describes two art-based interventions she organised at her University (*Talking Sociologists* and *The Idea of the University*), which were explicitly aimed at interrupting the existing distribution of the sensible in terms of what counts as real knowledge, and who is considered a valid producer of knowledge

in the field of sociology. As such, Lambert's projects show how Rancière's ideas can be related to important contemporary issues such as widening the participation in higher education institutions, and on what basis one can claim to be an expert researcher, or for that matter an expert teacher. Taking the idea seriously that there is only one intelligence, university study is in principle open to everyone, and making claims as to scientific knowledge and expert skills should not be a privilege of an academic class, closed off on itself. Or at least, what is at stake is that we interrupt already existing consensual ideas about who counts, and who doesn't count,as making a relevant contribution to academia, i.e. that we bring about dissensus (in that sense Rancière comes close to the work of Bill Readings [1997]).

More exactly, Lambert's projects involved organising exhibitions where theoretical resources, transcripts of interviews with sociologists, archival documents pertaining to how the sociology faculty came about, were put on display and made accessible to those inside academia that were not supposed to have a voice that matters (e.g. undergraduates), as well as to people outside of academia that are involved in sociological issues (e.g. activists and community workers). This led to discussion, knowledge exchange and knowledge production that were in no way predictable. Indeed, there was a most open atmosphere which fostered dissensus.

Without going into too much detail, it is worth noting that this stress on dissensus is what singles out a Rancièrian approach from a traditional critical pedagogy one (ibid., p. 215). In the last case the stress is on transforming the world so that we finally can live in a more equal and fair community. Over and against such a consensual model, dissensus in Lambert's project is a goal in itself. But, what is striking to see is that her interventions are, and remain, political interventions. What is at stake is realising equality and democracy at the level of the political: people who are normally excluded by the academic police order are given the chance to have their voice heard, and hence to reconfigure the sensible ordering of existing sociology departments.

One can see something similar happening in an action research project Jane McDonnel and Will Curtis (2014) performed with their education studies students around assessment and feedback. The gist of it is that they wanted to subvert a highly undemocratic practice (which clearly opposes two sets of intelligence, the superior intellect of the marker and the inferior intellect of those who receive marks). Students got themselves closely involved in coursework marking teams, and as a result they got a deeper understanding of the whole process. At the same time, the lecturers themselves were challenged in many ways and started to look at assessment differently. At the same time there were long-term effects in that students learned from the whole experience what democracy is all about (also in terms of conflict and dissensus).

Although this intervention focuses on a very concrete educational practice, it remains – again –primarily a political one, i.e. it is aimed at applying Rancière's radical political views on democracy to the university. This is, educational practice

should be organised in accordance with this political idea of equality. There is no mention of something specifically educational that might have happened during this intervention (in terms of an experience of being-able). Furthermore, these two interventions also indicate that there is the danger of instrumentalisation (Chambers 2013, Harman 2017): as if Rancière's political ideas can just be implemented in the world of higher education, that is, as a sort of method one can use in view of pre-established aims. Then, once more, one runs the risk to reinstall the vicious circle of inequality.

As Gert Biesta (2017) warns us in his recent book *The Rediscovery of Teaching* (in which one of the core arguments is that *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* is a book about teaching rather than about learning in a self-steered manner), one can be easily seduced to rely (solely) on Rancière's later work on politics and aesthetics, and then to simply draw lessons from it for the sphere of education. More exactly, he points to the anti-educational logic that Rancière seems to defend in his more recent aesthetical theory. Here, Rancière holds, emancipation is to be defined as the moment that people come up with their own, individual reading of the artwork. Applied to the world of education, this would mean that we encourage students to construct their own stories about the subject of study. This, however, is diametrically opposed to the idea of an emancipatory education. Here, the will of individual students to give their most individual interpretation to things should be transformed by the teacher, so that students truly become attentive for the thing of study. The thing should not be rendered in accordance with individual preferences; instead students should leave their individuality behind and devote themselves to an attentive study of the thing in question, so that they might live through a moment of transformation and emancipation (Vlieghe 2018).

So, I would suggest that a second and more fruitful approach is to stay true to what Rancière says himself about education (instead of applying his political work on education). Referring once more to Biesta (2017), this implies that rather than trying to conceive of (higher) education in terms of a goal that is extrinsic to education (e.g. the political goal of radical democracy), one develops a language of education that is educational through and through. This is, one takes education seriously and one tries to elucidate from the inside what is at stake, viz. that educational encounters between students, teachers/lecturers and the world hold the promise of a deep emancipatory transformation. This would mean, as I have argued elsewhere with Hodgson et al. (2018), that *despite* the many obstacles that come with the contemporary corporatisation and consumerisation of the university, we must look for those practices that allow for moments of verification of equality. The example I previously discussed about lecturing the traditional way might form a case in point. Bringing these practices into the spotlight, and articulating their intrinsic educational and emancipatory potential, comes down to painting a picture of the university as in and of itself a place for radical equality.

Conclusion

Although Rancière has not explicitly written on higher education, his ideas are certainly inspiring for thinking about the contemporary university, and about what university practitioners can do in order to support the idea of an education that starts from the assumption of equality (as something that needs to be performed), rather than from postponing forever equality as an aim to be reached (as an ideal). One of the possible weaknesses of such an approach is that Rancière has not much to say about particular questions that are high on the agenda of philosophers of higher education, and others concerned about the university. For instance, because it is of little or no importance in which subject matter we become proficient – carpentry is as good an opportunity to verify intelligence as nuclear physics is – it is not possible to come to positive conclusions about which contents should be included on the university curriculum. As the examples I discussed showed, a Rancièrian framework only allows for a negative intervention regarding these issues, i.e. for invalidating established claims on how actual university curricula look like. For the same reason, Rancière has little to say about the institutional level of organising higher education. Every institutionalisation counts in his book as the enforcement of a police order which excludes dissensus. Equality only exists at the level of concrete doings. But it should be added that Rancière would probably not see these issues as real objections against his thinking. Rather, as this chapter has hopefully shown, the strength of his arguments has to do with their radicalism and intransigence.

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Chapter 15
Jürgen Habermas (1929–): The Importance of Higher Education for Democracy

Ted Fleming

Introduction

On a recent early morning television programme, a panel discussed whether universities were accurate in their advertising aimed at recruiting students. Universities call themselves "world-class", "world-leader" or "top 100" without being clear about the precise meaning of these descriptions. These statements, though possibly true, are not clear to the customers. In this television moment many current issues facing universities are crystalized: competition for students, university rankings, research and teaching priorities and the gap between highly technical ways of measuring performance versus the priorities of students who have become customers of education. Jürgen Habermas, the German philosopher and critical theorist helps us understand these issues and is useful in plotting a way forward for universities and higher education in general.

Jürgen Habermas

Jürgen Habermas has had a major impact on social and political theory for over 50 years and is generally regarded as the contemporary embodiment of the critical theory tradition of the Frankfurt School. His work involves a constant search to make sense of democracy and its as yet unfinished possibilities (Müller-Doohm 2014, p. 361).

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He was born in Düsseldorf in 1929 to a right-wing conservative father who was a Nazi party supporter. As a result of World War 2 and later listening to the Nuremberg trials on radio, he developed a deep commitment to a Europe of constitutional laws historically rooted in an imperative to avoid another devastating war. When the war ended in 1945, Habermas was 16 and the question of fascism became a priority. He was one of the earliest critics of Heidegger (whose work he admired) who remained an unrepentant advocate of Nazi politics into the 1950s (Muller-Doohm 2014). He studied in Göttingen, Bonn and Zurich before becoming assistant to Adorno at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) led to his appointment as professor at Heidelberg. This work in particular anticipated the current emergence of authoritarian populism in many countries. He later published *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1978), *The Theory of Communicative Action* in two volumes (1984, 1987), *Between Facts and Norms* (1996) and numerous collections of papers. He is involved in public debates about immigration, German integration, democratisation, as well as controversies about the remnants of National Socialist ideology in Germany (Kershaw 2018, pp. 227, 351). His concern with fascism underpins the emancipatory concerns of all his work (Müller-Doohm 2014). He reconstructs Marxism for the modern age and identifies a learning project at the centre of democratic society.

Habermas' defence of European integration and unification and an integrated world order are his preferred ways to transcend present economic difficulties including debt and the threat posed by current waves of populism and nationalism. He proposes a democratisation of European institutions that can fulfil the promise of the European Union and bring rampant market capitalism under political and democratic control. He critiques the inappropriate use of technical reason. His writings continue today with *The Crisis of the European Union* (2012) and more recently *The Lure of Technocracy* (2015). His quest is to ensure that the emancipatory possibility of critical theory is reasonable, well-grounded and on a firm foundation in order to sustain the political struggle for a more just form of life. He is the foremost European philosopher of his age (Müller-Doohm 2014, p. 352).

Habermas has developed and extended the ideas of Marx and Weber as well as Horkheimer and Adorno in his attempt to understand social change and conflict (Muller-Doohm 2014). His version of critical theory incorporates psychoanalysis in its social critique. The dominant social delusions and thoughtless conformity to positions held uncritically are a social neurosis grounded in social repression of basic instincts. He sees psychoanalysis as a form of ideology critique (Ingram 2010). His strength lies in his ability to eclectically borrow, interact with, contradict and integrate a wide diversity of ideas. He has engaged with, critiqued and frequently incorporated the ideas of a wide range of thinkers into his work, including the sociology of G.H. Mead and Weber, the linguistics of Austin and Searle, the developmental psychology of Piaget, Dewey's pragmatism and the social systems theory of Parsons and Luhmann. The recent dialogues with theologian Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) led to a series of publications studying the importance of religion as a cohesive force in society (Ratzinger and Habermas 2007). This approach makes him difficult to study and limits access by a wider audience.

Underpinning his ideas is the assertion that learning how to reason has become distorted under capitalism and reclaiming reason is a learning project. One of his earliest works is the 1967 paper 'The university in a democracy: The democratization of universities' (Habermas 1967) in which he outlines a set of guiding ideas for universities. Most recent, in typical Habermas style, in his acceptance speech at the German-French Media Awards, he launched a scathing critique of the bad faith that underpins current German understandings of loyalty and solidarity in the EU. They are a shallow disguise for German self-interest that masquerade as a benevolent approach to Greek debt relief (Habermas 2018).

This chapter articulates the key ideas of Jürgen Habermas and identifies implications for universities and higher education that transcend the reductionist vision of economic priorities by imagining new possibilities (Barnett 2013) that see higher education as having a critical role in the life of a nation. This involves restoring the idea that higher education is a public good (Kelderman 2015). The state and the economy make demands on higher education to change governance, increase access and identify new courses. The ideas of Jürgen Habermas will be crucial in reconstructing a critical agenda for universities and higher education.

This paper:

1. Identifies the main ideas of Jürgen Habermas – the demise of the *public sphere*; the capacity of *civil society* to be a location for *de-colonising the lifeworld* and the learning potential associated with the *theory of communicative action* and *discursive democracy*.
2. Identifies the way these ideas have implications for universities.

Higher Education

Higher education worldwide is facing unprecedented demands to make significant changes. Biesta (2010) and others (Sutton 2016) lament the disappearance of debate about the purposes of education from public discussions, so this is an opportune time to ask how Habermas might assist in addressing questions about the purposes of universities and higher education. How might universities articulate a vision that includes responding to the demands of the economy for well-educated workers, as well as to the state's demands for cost effective teaching and accountability?

National governments, the EU and the OECD (2014) demand standardised qualification frameworks and quality assurance. There is constant pressure to enhance the research and teaching profiles of universities, to diversify the student population and to recruit students in a global market. Society looks to higher education to underpin economic growth, train graduates for the job market and improve the quality of life. Universities face rising costs, problematic completion rates, challenges of inclusive teaching methods and there are debates about universities as locations for free speech and civility. If we add tenure, contract staff and shifting priorities

towards research, the list may be perceived as endless – or at least becoming a more frequent topic for general discussion in society.

There is also an active discourse that analyses the dangers of allowing unregulated free-market capitalism to set the agenda for higher education and to argue that "public purposes" go beyond the narrow definitions of the economy (Newman et al. 2004). Such educators point to the way reduced government funding for universities is part of the neo-liberal agenda that supports the withdrawal of public institutions from the active pursuit of social purposes, unless that social purpose is economic. These authors bring to the debate a vision of higher education and its role in society as a critical participant in addressing inequality (by widening participation) and enhancing social inclusion, but not achieving this only through economic and individual development, but also through addressing the needs of society for critical and active citizens (Murphy 2001).

Key Ideas

The Demise of the Public Sphere

The public sphere is a community of discourse that involves rational discussion about matters of public concern. It refers to conversations in corridors, on the stairs or on social media. Over time, the location of the public sphere changes. The public sphere was traditionally to be found in coffee houses, but today (in spite of Starbucks!), it is more likely through social media (such as YouTube). Such spaces tend to offer an atmosphere free of coercion and inequalities that would otherwise incline individuals to be silent. Informal discussions in the public sphere can influence the priorities of politicians, as the public sphere acts as an intermediary between the private sectors of society and political systems (Habermas 1996). But under capitalism something has happened to our ability to engage in these discourses, and we are reduced to observers and voters disconnected from decision making processes that lack transparency.

These are useful ideas for creating an expanded vision of universities, for example, in their teaching classrooms where knowledge can be created and tested in a commons. I mean by commons a space of openness that serves as a resource to which all have equal access. This is important as the media have become colonised by powerful wealthy elites and serve their interests. This demise of the public sphere, along with the proposed reclaiming of these spaces, may be vital in understanding the potential role of universities and a way of linking them with sustaining and developing democracy.

Civil Society and Colonisation of the Lifeworld

Civil society is a sphere of interaction between the economy and the state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (the family), the sphere of associations (voluntary organisations), social movements, and forms of public communication. Civil society is attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private sphere, and distils and transmits such reactions in amplified form to the public sphere (Habermas 1996, p. 367). Revitalising civil society and sustaining a critical public sphere are tasks for a critical education that fosters the creation of spaces where citizens can debate publicly and adopt the methodologies of discourse in pursuit of consensual agreements. But civil society can also be a location for conservatism, or a place in which appalling violence is perpetrated – on women, on children, by men against men and against all by para-military forces (Fleming 2002). It can be a location for racism, sexism and non-inclusive and unequal practices. Civil society needs constant renewal.

Habermas (2018), in diagnosing the issues of our times, locates problems in the relationship between the state and economy (system world) on the one and civil society on the other. He identifies two problems. *Firstly*, the state is in an unhealthy relationship with the economy and *secondly*, the functional imperatives of the state and economy combined have invaded civil society. The economy plays a crucial role by creating wealth and providing jobs. When the state and the economy combine, they are a formidable coalition ensuring that the interests of the economy are achieved through lifeworld colonisation.

Higher education is influenced by this reality. If one can locate universities in civil society (or at least outside the system world of the state and the economy), the probability of understanding the demise of universities and the difficulty of proposing solutions is enhanced. In broad terms, if the economic and political-legal systems have become insensitive to the imperatives of mutual understanding on which solidarity and legitimacy of social orders depend, the solution, according to Habermas, is to revitalise autonomous, self-organised public spheres that are capable of asserting themselves against the media of money and power. By implication, higher education might join in taming the economy rather than merely supporting it. Educators argue that grassroots movements, many self-help groups as well as classrooms where participatory research is conducted and collaborative inquiry is pursued, are examples of such public spheres.

Lifeworld Colonisation

The lifeworld is a vast stock of taken-for-granted understandings of the world that give our lives meaning and direction (Habermas 1987, p. 131). Habermas develops the concept of colonisation to describe the relationship between system and lifeworld in capitalist society. Problems arise when the system invades the lifeworld and

intervenes in the everyday processes of making meaning among individuals and communities.

The lifeworld is the set of assumptions on which we base our conversations about what our real needs may be and how we want to live together. The lifeworld is our entire set of socially and culturally sedimented linguistic meanings. It acts as our worldview. If our needs are controlled by money and power, then other needs and wishes are not identifiable. The system's steering media of money and power have become so effective that individuals become invisible, are seen by the economy as consumers, and by the political system as voters or clients. These systems appear to us as natural *things*, and as common sense, indifferent and beyond our control. This reification is what Habermas means by the uncoupling of system and lifeworld. Both lifeworld and system need transformation. Here we can begin a Habermas-inspired argument and critique of the consumerisation of education in which students become customers. The dilemma is whether we wish to be defined as consumers and shoppers (important though this maybe) as well as active and critical citizens in a democracy.

We can see here the beginning of a radical understanding of how the discourses of higher education can be colonised by the functional imperatives of the state and the economy. This is probably the most far-reaching insight from Habermas and informs our understanding higher education. The demands for change in governance and management frequently come from the economy where a different set of imperatives (to those of higher education) holds sway. The challenge for higher education is to identify its role in the context of this analysis and Habermas is an importantally.

By a modest extrapolation of Habermas, education can be seen as a space where invasions of the lifeworld by functional imperatives and steering mechanism of money and power can be brought to the forefront of awareness and examined, challenged, and transformed. We need the system. It has a function and purpose. It is possible to insert lifeworld values, caring behaviours, ethical concerns and principles into the system and so resist and reverse a functional colonisation *of* the system.

Communicative Action

It is reasonable to ask whether all is lost? No. The response is democracy – and lots of it! This is how Habermas proposes rescuing reason from being co-opted by money and power and how we can use reason to build a more participatory democracy. The learning project of Habermas involves the hope that we can resist the decline in social solidarity by becoming aware of, and develop, democratic processes that are already inherent in interpersonal communication. The next (or third) generation of critical theorists have developed this project in the struggle for recognition, especially in the work of Axel Honneth (Fleming 2016b).

Habermas (1962) has always emphasised the crucial role of public debate in identifying people's needs, interests and aspirations. Democratic debates are the

means by which these needs are shared and clarified. In a complex modern society, the quality of democracy ultimately depends not on politicians but on the existence of this public sphere, on people's intelligent involvement in politics and in organisations that help form opinion through discourse. The conviction that free, open, public discussion has a transformative function is central to Habermas's thinking. It is developmental and emancipatory.

In his vision, the goal of a free democracy resides in free communications rather than unalienated labour. To be more provocative: freedom to go shopping and become consumers do not define freedom. Freedom involves an intersubjective communication where needs are defined, agreed and placed into the political arena for implementation. This raises questions for management so that organisations and universities might be appropriate places for more democratic leadership.

Habermas's presents his *Theory of Communicative Action* as a learning project. Two dimensions of the theory are of interest here. First, in discussion, participants aim to reach agreements that can be evaluated or redeemed against criteria that Habermas calls validity claims. Second, there are rules that govern participation in these discourses. All communication is capable of being tested as to whether it is comprehensible, sincere, truthful and appropriately expressed. These validity claims are redeemed in communicative action (Habermas 1979, p. 50). Validity claims are assumptions that we make in an unquestioning manner concerning the truth and sincerity of another's communications. Habermas' suggestion is that the academic disciplines of the university are proper places for these discussions whether in the sciences, humanities or social sciences.

Educators who have appropriated the ideas of Habermas have emphasised that redeeming validity claims involves a highly significant kind of learning. The best prospects for democracy are tied to a learning that exhibits the kinds of conversations in which validity claims are redeemed. These conversations are expressions of our interest in emancipation. Emancipation from what? Habermas says that they free us from the power of false ideas and ideologies that act as unquestioned assumptions. We gather these unquestioned assumptions from our individual history and culture and they have the appearance of common sense. This is the most important kind of conversation higher education can have.

Discussion, debates, seminars are mini-democracies and these teaching moments bring about a learning society when they are involved in communicative action. Communicative action refers to normal communications between people in search of mutual understanding, and is usually based on the assumption that the speaker is truthful, trustworthy, etc. When these assumptions are questioned, the conversation becomes a discourse in which these assumptions are questioned (Habermas 1984, p. 99). The best preparation for involvement in democratic life is to become expert in realising validity claims. Communicative competence is then an important task for teaching in higher education.

The second aspect of Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* concerns the rules that govern these conversations. Habermas outlines a concept of discourse where proposals are critically tested, information is shared in an inclusive and public way, where no one is excluded, and all have equal opportunity to take part.

There are no external coercions and all can suggest and criticise proposals and arrive at decisions motivated solely by the unforced force of the better argument. There must be, in addition, a sense of solidarity among participants involving a concern for the well-being of others and the community at large. These are also the necessary conditions for a democratic society. These discourses are models of the discourses of the university as it pursues knowledge. The university is being re-understood here as a mini-democracy where validity claims and forms of free and open speech are taught and practised.

This discourse of Habermas also has the unfortunate title of an ideal speech situation, indicating that we only approximate to it in reality. In an ideal speech situation, participants are able to evaluate each other's assertions using only reason exercised in an environment of free and un-coerced rational discussion and in pursuit of rational consensus (Habermas 1990, p. 88). However, it is useful to indicate that this is the kind of discourse that universities ought to encourage and see as central to their activity of creating and testing knowledge. It involves the constant search for a consensus as to what is true in contested areas of knowledge, but with the condition that – in the meantime – decisions have to be made about action. We cannot always suspend action until a consensus is reached, and this attempts to balance political pragmatism against the never to be reached consensus of the ideal speech situation. Though agreement is sometimes reached and consensus achieved, it is always provisional and open to further exploration as new contexts and knowledge emerges to prompt further questions.

Habermas: Teaching and Learning

It is now well established in education theory that these conversations are the foundation for critical adult learning and in particular transformative learning (Mezirow 1995, p. 67). Democratic participation and discourse are essential elements of the teaching and learning process.

I am suggesting that civil society, democracy and higher education have in common the ambition to create opportunities for discourse. The commitment is to a form of living together in which we attempt to reach agreement about difficult matters in a discussion that is free from domination. A teacher in this mode attempts to create the identical process, that is for the classroom to become a learning society. In order to have full free participation in discourse there must be freedom, equality, tolerance, justice and a valuing of rationality.

In this, the role of the teacher becomes one of creating situations and classrooms involving the fullest participation in discourse, assisting students critically to assess the validity of their ways of making meaning and exploring perspectives that are more permeable and open to change. Too much teaching has been about work, skills, instrumental learning and how to do things. Higher education has been preoccupied with defining learning tasks and outcomes, behavioural objectives, measurable competence and quality assurance. Too much has been about the

economy and training. These are important areas for teaching and learning, but a different kind of learning is possible. In this way democracy and a civil society are possible and the full potential of a learning society may be realised. It connects higher education with a more caring, just, and democratic world. Highlander College is one of the notable examples of a higher education institution that has taken these ideas on board. Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King were students there and the college was central in the development of literacy programmes. "We Shall Overcome" – the civil rights anthem – was adapted by Zilphia Horton, wife of Myles Horton at Highlander.

Good teaching helps students inquire into the reasons for their interests and the assumptions that underpin them and take action to change society. It is a characteristic of adult learning that childhood knowledge comes under the scrutiny of an intelligence that deconstructs interests embedded in previous learning. This is a defining characteristic of adulthood and of a higher education that has a responsibility to support critical learning in adulthood.

In this vision, it is the lifeworld that gets transformed and the task is to de-colonise the lifeworld. Effective learners in an emancipatory, democratic society – a learning society – become a community of cultural critics and social activists (Mezirow 1995, pp. 68–70). This is not the radicalism of Marx but a self-limiting radicalism where change is brought about by creating autonomous public spheres of debate and discussion, while allowing for the continuing functioning of the economic and administrative systems. This may give teachers a clear mandate to work in the seams and at the boundaries of systems to humanise and transform them so that they operate in the interests of all.

Higher education is involved in the professional development of students and this means that teachers be skilled not only in their own area of practice, but also in recognising when one's activities are being put at the service of the system. Professional development, according to Habermas (1970, p. 47) involves:

> the combination of competence and learning ability to permit the scrupulous handling of tentative technical knowledge and the context-sensitive, well informed willingness to resist politically the dubious functional application or control of the knowledge that one practices.

The system world has adopted as public policy the discourse of lifelong learning and that almost always involves the adaptation by individual learners to the corporate-determined status quo of the economy. Education is both part of the apparatus of the state (by engaging in policy making, delivering programmes and services) and highly critical of it. The relationship between the state and education is complex and frequently includes elements of resistance and contestation as well as reproduction.

Teachers find themselves working very often in the state sector (state funded institutions), many others in the economy (job skills training, organisational change, vocational courses), or in civil society (community education). The challenge is how to bring about a decolonisation of the lifeworld. Part of the problem is that some teachers may systematically distort public communication (education debate) by narrowing discussions to issues of technical problem solving and denying the

very conditions for communicatively rational collective will-formation. This is a danger for higher education.

In outlining a crucial and critical role for journalists in society, Habermas (1996 p. 378) refers to their important role in the construction and support of a critical public sphere. It might be a useful starting point for defining the role of higher education as located in the same public space, and teachers helping students both to decolonise the lifeworld through democratic, critical discourses and also to transform systems (workplaces, organisations and bureaucracies). In this way, the emerging idea – around the world – of universities having 'impact' can be interpreted and implemented in quite new ways.

The influence of Habermas's arguments can be seen most forcefully in the work of Mezirow whose earliest work on Perspective Transformation drew on *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Habermas 1978). Knowledge constitutive interests suggested to Mezirow three domains of instrumental, interpersonal and emancipatory learning (Habermas 1978; Mezirow 1978). According to Mezirow, the conditions or rules of rational discourse are also ideal conditions for effective adult learning. Participants must have accurate and complete information; freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception; openness to alternative points of view; empathy with and concern for the thoughts and feelings of others; the ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments; awareness of ideas and being critically reflective of assumptions; equal opportunity to participate in the various forms of discourse, and a willingness to understand and accept best judgments as provisional until new outcomes from discourse are identified and agreed (Mezirow 2000, p. 13).

Mezirow's reliance on Habermas suggests that it is the function of teachers to create communities of collaborative discourse in which distortions in communication due to differences in power are minimised. As a consequence, teaching becomes a form of rational social action. Mezirow adds:

> …the nature of adult learning itself mandates participatory democracy as both the means and social goal. Following Habermas, this view identifies critical reflection, rational discourse, and praxis as central to significant adult learning and the *sine qua non* of emancipatory participation (Mezirow 1995, p. 66).

Praxis refers to a reconfigured relationship between thought and action so as not to dichotomise them, but to associate them – as in thoughtful action and active thinking. This transformational theory grounds its argument for an emancipatory participative democracy in the very nature of adult learning (Mezirow 1995, p. 68). Higher education privileges the realm of the lifeworld – the realm of autonomous personal and social engagement – in which citizens and workers have been disempowered. The role of teaching is to work in solidarity with workers and citizens here becomes that of inserting democratic imperatives into the system world. People may well have exchanged an active participatory role in the market place and in politics for greater comfort and occupational security offered by capitalism, which legitimates the social order. This is a form of socially constructed silence and what is needed is a new ideology critique addressing this systematically distorted communication. That the political and economic elites believe that these issues are beyond the

understanding of citizens and workers is part of the process that produces a civil silence. The loss of opportunities for dialogue and their accompanying collaborative impoverishment are close to what Paulo Freire calls the culture of silence.

The very foundation of democracy is under threat from the monopoly of technical reason in education. Educators have found in Habermas a social critique with which to analyse the dominance in education of technique and instrumental rationality. The preoccupation, as a result of such critique, shifts from prioritising how to get things done to realising genuine democracy. The psychologisation of education as an individual subjective learning process is a danger, and Habermas offers a theoretical base for concepts of learning that are intersubjective, political and social (Fleming 2016a, b).

Habermas prompts us to see the university as a site of discursive reason or communicative praxis, and we are most rational when we participate in communities characterised by free and unconstrained – and democratic – discourse. He prompts us to see higher education communities as part of the lifeworld. The critical reflection about assumptions and practices in various disciplines is central to this. For self-understanding to be reached in dialogue democracy is necessary. To do its work (of critique) higher education creates the very conditions necessary for a democratic society. For example, students exploring Shakespeare's King Lear may engage in a study of a range of issues from old age, parent-child relationships, power and so on. These discussions can quickly transcend the conventional boundaries of academic disciplines and call for and prompt questions about how knowledge in universities -and indeed in higher education generally – is organised and compartmentalised.

Rather than seeing universities as a collection of disparate academic departments Habermas is suggesting the unifying theme of a lifeworld. Universities, according to Habermas, carry out the functions of socialisation, critical transmission of culture, political consciousness, and social integration. The danger is that too many courses and teaching will focus on utilitarian vocational courses to the detriment of courses that may be of benefit to one's self and society rather than the economy. Too often courses may focus on instrumental learning rather than on communicative praxis and where there is too much emphasis on career and not enough on one's role in society. Higher education is in danger of becoming training rather than education, and thereby becoming instrumental in focus and orientation rather than being a form of communicative praxis.

Conclusion

In a higher education re-imagined in the wake of the ideas of Jürgen Habermas, there would be less emphasis on hierarchical authority and more on participatory decision making; more on dialogue than dictat; the elimination of corporate culture and the nourishing of self-government and a clear priority given to social justice by the institution. Teaching too should match this set of priorities to include social analysis, critical reflection, and reconstructing the teacher-student relationship

where both become co-investigators. Students and teachers would be involved in all aspects of institutional life. And above all of higher education would be redefined as an exercise in democracy, that teaches democracy and aims to reproduce more democracy in classrooms, communities, workplaces and society.

This reconstruction of higher education is intended to lift the agenda beyond the instrumental and utilitarian and functional, and present a more critical and democratic experience that would address the real needs of students and society. This would give higher education a reimagined public good and critical agenda. I can imagine a different kind of early morning television programme that broadens the possibilities for higher education beyond the economy and world of work towards a more critical mandate and so realise the democratic impulse of Jürgen Habermas.

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Subject Index

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Name Index

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