Debating Higher Education: Philosophical Perspectives 3

Naomi Hodgson
Joris Vlieghe
Piotr Zamojski *Editors*

Post-critical Perspectives on Higher Education

Reclaiming the Educational in the University

Springer

Debating Higher Education: Philosophical Perspectives

Volume 3

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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. 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.

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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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Post-critical Perspectives on Higher Education

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Order of Discourse on Higher Education in Poland," with Professor Helena Ostrowicka (2018).

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Naomi Hodgson, Joris Vlieghe, and Piotr Zamojski

The university in late neoliberalism has seen the best of times and, arguably, the worst of times. Institutions have seen increased opportunities for research funding, widening participation policies have enabled a more representative demographic to attend university (often the first generation in their family to do so), internationalisation has diversified campuses and cities, and seen universities expand their brand into new countries. Our rapidly changing, globalised society has inspired new, cutting-edge courses and research programs that are innovative and create socioeconomic impact. While, for some, these changes have represented opportunities, the dark side of the picture shows these to entail new forms of accountability, measures of success against which academics, departments, and universities are ranked and compared. In a period of increasing global competition and decreasing 'real terms' public spending, universities are asked to justify their existence through their financial stability and through their ability to attract research funding, to recruit and retain students, and to offer a world-class experience and employability credentials to those students. As with many sectors today, the idea of 'do more with less' is painfully familiar. Often, that also means less staff; as an increasingly expensive resource, colleagues who leave are often not replaced or are replaced with staff on a lower salary scale, and often not on a permanent basis. The precariat, or the gig economy, is as much a feature of the university as any industry today, it seems.

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So why do we do it? What is it – perhaps in education specifically – that maintains our will to invest ourselves in this work? One reason, we argue, which sits at the heart of the 'Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy' (Hodgson et al. 2017),[1] of which this project is an offshoot, is hope. Education is premised on hope. Without some sense of the general worthwhileness of education, it wouldn't make sense to carry on. A second reason, also articulated in the Manifesto, is love; specifically, in the Arendtian sense of love for the world (Arendt 1961). In education, this manifests in the belief, put into practice, that something matters. Something is of value to pass on. Here, neither hope nor love are meant to indicate a blind or naïve optimism that 'everything will be fine'. On the contrary, the articulation of the post-critical is premised on the need to defend, to protect, to reclaim that which is of value in education. This stands in contrast to what we find in the above characterisation of higher education in late neoliberalism, where what is of value is that which can be measured, quantitatively or qualitatively: funding income, research impact, research outputs, graduate employability, student satisfaction, and so on. With each of these macro-level metrics come micro-level changes to the day to day practices of the institution – how research is categorised and managed; what and how we teach; how and when we assess, for example – that make certain practices appear redundant, exclusive, or old-fashioned, as new orthodoxies and best practices must be put into effect.

How does a post-critical approach to these conditions help us to respond? The 'post-' in post-critical means, simply, an attitude of inquiry that is emerging after the critical. This is not to say that it is anti-critical; the value of the critical traditions is not denied. Nor is it to say that it replaces the critical, that the work has now finished. Far from it. Indeed, the need to articulate what a post-critical approach entails stems in part from the enduring hold that the critical has over educational research. As we put it elsewhere:

> We could, of course, show more of the ways in which education today is marketized, privatized, data- and output-driven, and we will no doubt continue to do so in a certain manner. But we know this. The question is how we respond in educational terms – or perhaps better, in the name of education, in the name of what we hold as worthy of passing on – so as to protect these aspects of education. In doing so, we challenge ourselves not to default to cynicism, or outright despondency, as we do have a responsibility to find a way to go on. [. . .] the purpose here is a reorienting of critique from one that reveals a hidden "truth" (and therefore maintains the place of such critique in the order of things), to one that articulates those aspects of our current conditions that are left out of view by both dominant discourses and practices, and by the negative critiques that show us how we are oppressed by these. (Hodgson et al. 2017, pp. 80–81)

The post-critical seeks to offer instead an affirmative approach, and to assert that there are things happening in universities that are good and worth preserving. The

[1]The Manifesto, along with responses from philosophers, sociologists, and historians of education, has been published as *Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy* by Punctum Books and is available to buy and in open access here: https://punctumbooks.com/titles/manifesto-for-a-post-critical-pedagogy/

chapters in this book focus our attention on some of these and articulate what is valuable about them, educationally.

As both 'higher education' and 'the university' appear in the title of this book, before we continue it is important to clarify how we understand the two. There are many kinds of higher education institutions, of which the public institution of the university is perhaps the most well-established, though in recent years it has gained many competitors. As Ron Barnett states, 'higher education is big business. It is a major institution of modern society' (Barnett 1990, p. 3). Indeed, it seems tertiary education is one of the most important and growing sectors today, as contemporary societies seek to compete in the knowledge economy.

When Barnett (ibid., pp. 4–10) points to the need to develop an educational approach to higher education (as opposed to an economic, political, or administrative approach), he introduces a crucial difference between educational processes and institutions. Within such a distinction, *higher education* refers to an educational process that *should* take place in higher education institutions (Cf. Gibbs 2014). In that sense, it is a *critical* concept that allows us to judge whether institutions of higher education, including universities, provide a 'higher education' to their students, or not (Barnett 2011, p. 3). Arguably, such a critical approach is increasingly urgent in the face of the incessant growth of the tertiary education sector and the proliferation of higher education institutions. As Barnett (ibid., p. 1) notes: 'with the arrival of mass higher education systems around the world, we are witnessing many different kinds of institutions bearing the name "university".' Indeed, some might say there seems to be some conceptual slippage with regard to the name 'university', with this title being used to name such a variety of institutions that it risks becoming meaningless. Hence, a question of the meaning of the university arises. Rather than seeking to shore up a definition of what counts as a university, and treating the university as a specific institution, in this book we treat the university as a set of practices that students and academics perform within or without higher education institutions. Hence, the focus becomes a specifically educational one; about what we do, not necessarily about where we do it.

We can situate this approach by offering a historical perspective on the university. Originally the name 'university' referred to an association of students (*universitas studii)*, and then to an association of masters/professors and students (*universitas magistrorum et scholarium*) (See Verger 1992). Students and professors were associated by the virtue of the practices they performed together: they were studying, lecturing, conferring, theorising, making notes, etc., all in regard to questions that were simultaneously important and difficult to address. This performative dimension of the association of professors and students is at work when we speak in the title of this book about *reclaiming the educational in the university*. In spite of the currently hegemonic political discourses on tertiary education, in this book we claim that the university is more than just an institution, and that – as such – it can be approached and explored from an educational perspective. Therefore, we propose to approach the concept of higher education not as a means to critique higher education institutions (including institutions that call themselves 'university'), but as a way to affirm the practices, experiences, and settings that are responsible for distinguishing higher

education institutions as universities. Predominantly, these practices, experiences, and settings seem to be devalued, suppressed, and/or in need of (economic or political) justification. To affirm them means, therefore, making attempts to reclaim them from our current – incessantly bureaucratised, alienated, and functionalised – academic life.

Typically, critical analyses of higher education draw our attention to the marketisation of universities, through which they have become commercial enterprises that address students as consumers. These students, in turn, are seen to be merely interested in seeking out safe and interesting experiences, and career opportunities. The academics that teach them have, so the narrative goes, become brainless under-labourers who no longer have the freedom to teach and pursue scholarship in the manner characteristic of the university before it finally fell into 'ruins' (Readings 1996). Today, academic institutions no longer contribute to the dream of social progress and equal opportunities for all; instead, they have become a major component in the sustaining of injustice, intolerance, discrimination, and other forms of systemic violence. Critical perspectives seek to unmask the many ways in which education, as it exists today, is dysfunctional, oppressive, and sometimes dehumanising, and the ways in which we (academics and educators) are ourselves co-responsible for the predicament we find ourselves in (see e.g. Bhopal 2015 on black and minority ethnic academics; Amsler and Bolsmann 2012 on ranking practices).

One response to our conditions then would be to further contribute to this critical literature. Another would be to critique the critical literature itself. Instead, pursuing a post-critical approach, we not only seek to articulate what educational practices are specifically university practices, but also to affirm them in the practice of scholarship and collaboration. Post-criticality by no means entails a denial of all the sector's problems and issues, or of the value of critical work in and on the university. But, as the Manifesto suggests, it does take issue with the risk that this critical discourse has grown weary, and risks leading us only to an attitude of cynical resignation.

The contributions gathered in this book constitute a first attempt to articulate a post-critical perspective on the contemporary university. As we mentioned, this book is in line with the principles we recently set out in the *Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy* (Hodgson et al. 2017), in which we call both for new ways of conceiving of education and of doing educational research. The Manifesto appeared to strike a chord with many working at, and working on, contemporary universities, and hence we sought to bring the post-critical to bear on debates on higher education. In part the post-critical contributes precisely by questioning the terms of the debate and offering an affirmative mode in which this can be conducted. The post-critical approach is not a theory or method to simply be applied to different issues or contexts, however. Hence, each chapter not only addresses or brings to the fore a specific element of the university or higher education landscape, but also tests out the extent to which a post-critical orientation to it can be educational, in the sense of changing our relation to it and how we conceive it.

Using a variety of different methods and coming from both sociological and educational-philosophical backgrounds, the chapters in this book explore

recognisable pedagogical practices, such as the lecture (Marin, Chap. 6) or the study group (Lewis, Chap. 10), whose status in the university today is in question; administrative practices, such as meetings (Jendza, Chap. 7); familiar aspects of the discourse such as the 'student experience', whose meaning is often presupposed in the critical literature in which students and their actual experience is lacking (Budd, Chap. 9); trust, as an element of the culture of institutions that is constituted in the interstices of their formal, measurable practices (Stankiewicz, Chap. 4); subject areas themselves, such as philosophy of education, which has a specific history in different national contexts and whose educational import in some is questionable (Vlieghe, Chap. 11); and the question of practices themselves (Zamojski, Chap. 2; Schildermans et al., Chap. 3): what are the practices that constitute the university as university?

The chapters stand-alone but have been ordered in the book according to the extent to which they address general or more specific concerns. In Chap. 2, Piotr Zamojski more strongly articulates what is potentially anti-educational in critical approaches, and highlights how in maintaining a debate characterized by lamenting the death of the university we, as academics, need to acknowledge our role in it and thus turn our attention to our practices, to the essence of the university, *Universitas*. Hans Schildermans then offers a clear example of what it means to investigate the university in terms of its constitutive practices, in his account of the Palestinian experimental university, Campus in Camps in Chap. 3. Taking the focus on practices into what is, for most of us, unfamiliar territory more acutely expresses what is at stake in the way we conduct our debates and investigations.

The contemporary university is commonly characterised in the critical literature as driven by an economic rationality, and the practices of auditing and accountability this entails are often experienced as indicating a lack of trust in academics' professionalism. In Chap. 4, Łukasz Stankiewicz addresses this less tangible aspect of university practices – trust – to articulate its relevance for the constitution of the university. The dominant economic rationality and apparent lack of trust are evident in many anecdotes academics share about students: not willing to be challenged; expectations raised by paying tuition fees and an incessant focus on their satisfaction; academics not willing to set challenging material for fear of offence or of poor student feedback, putting their own prospects of job security at risk. Christiane Thompson argues that such cultural-critical discourses of the 'university in crisis' that take such trends as their point of departure do not serve well the educational theoretical reflection we claim to care for. Instead, they contribute to the polarizing of debate and ignore the phenomenological constitution of the university as 'the cultivation and participation of a discourse lacking a common ground' (Thompson, Chap. 5, this volume). Thompson offers a post-critical account of the university as characterized by 'participation in partition', drawing on the phenomenology of Bernhard Waldenfels and illustrated by vignettes from her own practice.

Offering a further analysis of a specific university practice, Lavinia Marin takes the lecture as her focus in Chap. 6. Again, typically maligned in those contemporary discourses that promote learner-centred pedagogies and active learning, and those that question its effectiveness, Marin's account of the lecture affirms its educational

value as a space for collective thought, taking an historical perspective to explore why, in spite of its failing to prove its instrumental value, the lecture has endured for centuries and remains a characteristic practice of the university. The collective dimension of university practices also provides the focus for Jarosław Jendza in Chap. 7, in which he focuses on the different forms that meetings take and their constitutive role in the functioning of the university. He draws on empirical research undertaken in a Polish university to characterise the ways in which different groups in the university conceive of others and how power is maintained between them.

The descriptive, phenomenological accounts of practices, such as lectures and meetings, enable their constitutive, and potentially educational, aspects to come into view, rather than framing them already as evidence of the crisis of the university. The cynicism that particular forms of critique can engender is often in evidence when, in response to concerns of unsustainable workloads, burnout, and precarity, university managers develop wellbeing schemes and promote practices such as desk yoga and mindfulness. In these forms, such practices have been almost entirely divorced from their roots in Eastern traditions and thoroughly commodified by Silicon Valley and the Californian lifestyles it promotes via its technologies. A critical approach focused on this aspect, however, overlooks the educational value of such practices in terms of our growth as human beings. In Chap. 8 Oren Ergas draws our attention to the need to address the apparent sense of meaningless and alienation our students express that comes from the aims of higher education being framed by the demands of the economy, not driven by the demands of the question of what it means to be human. Ergas returns to ancient Eastern traditions to articulate more richly the call to 'know thyself' and to do so through attention to the body as well as the mind, illustrating his account using first person narratives and the practices of an undergraduate course in mindfulness and education.

Each of the chapters so far takes up the post-critical approach in view of a particular practice and against a background in philosophy of education. Richard Budd's engagement with the 'Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy' presented in Chap. 9 offers insight not only into the substantive focus of his chapter – the student experience – but also what purchase the post-critical might have on existing paradigms in the sociology of education, particularly the literature relating to higher education. Taking the notion of the student experience out of its managerial register and the concern with student satisfaction, Budd considers what it means to be a student in terms of the actual lived experience of studenthood today. He offers a thorough review of the existing literature to articulate its assumptions and blindspots with a view to situating the student experience physically, that is, topographically. He draws together the sociological and geographical with the philosophy underpinning the ethos of the Manifesto and points to ways in which we might further explore how the lived experience of being a student, outwith the formal pedagogical aspects, is educational.

In contrast to Budd's focus on making visible through our research those aspects of the student experience that are not part of formal education, Tyson Lewis affirms the possibility of study as invisible; that is, as suspending the means-end logic of learning and the need for the measurability and accreditation of work. While

focusing on a specific study practice – study groups – Lewis returns us again to general educational principles overlooked by the dominant discourses of both learning in the neoliberal university and of critical analysis of this. Affirming the possibility of suspension and profanation, drawing on Agamben, in Chap. 10 Lewis describes the practice of convening study groups: these do not require enrolment, nor fees; they do not result in certification; they may or may not take place in the university, and in spaces not specifically designated for studying; there is no curriculum; those who participate may not be formally part of any university. His account affirms the very possibility of study, of undertaking a practice unencumbered by its purpose or outcomes.

In the final single-authored chapter, Chap. 11, Joris Vlieghe returns us to the initial concerns of the book: is it possible and desirable, or not, to give a *post-critical* account of higher education? He pursues this question in relation to the very study of education itself, not to recap debates on the purpose and status of educational studies (debated and low, respectively), but as a case study that lays out the difference between giving a critical account of (a particular dimension or practice of) higher education and sketching a more affirmative, post-critical picture. In doing so, he brings us back to a central tenet of the book: to debate education in educational terms rather than in terms of its external justification.

He reaffirms then a post-critical ethos: that 'after critique' we need to pay attention to practices that are worth our care – and, in doing so, sustain them – but also to make manifest hope in the present. In this spirit, in keeping with the concern to defend and protect 'university' practices, the conclusion to the book was compiled collaboratively, initiated through discussions held in a dedicated colloquium, which gives this final chapter its name. The practice of writing this book, then, has been a collective enterprise of thought, writing, and discussion, and as such is grounded in academic practices we cherish and want to sustain.

As we wrote in the Manifesto:

> we believe that it is time to focus our efforts on making attempts to reclaim the suppressed parts of our experience; we see the task of a post-critical pedagogy as not to debunk but to protect and to care (cf. Latour, Haraway). This care and protection take the form of asking again what education, upbringing, school, studying, thinking, and practicing are. This reclaiming entails no longer a critical relation – revealing what is really going on – nor an instrumental relation – showing what educators ought to do – but creating a space of thought that enables practice to happen anew. This means (re)establishing our relation to our words, opening them to question, and giving philosophical attention to these devalued aspects of our forms of life, and thus – in line with a principled normativity – to defend these events as autotelic, not functionalised, but simply worth caring for. (Hodgson et al. 2017, p. 17)

In this book, asking again what our words mean – what these practices are – takes the form of rearticulating certain university practices in educational terms. Not in view of an external justification or ideal sense. The contributors to this edited volume take up the challenge of reclaiming what we do and experience as people involved in, and who care about, the contemporary world of higher education. It is our belief that there are aspects of academic life we often disregard, but that need to be given more attention – and for which we lack the vocabulary to articulate them as

meaningful practices. This book is a first attempt a finding those words to alter the terms of the debate.

Appendix: Manifesto for a Post-critical Pedagogy-+[2]

Formulating principles, in philosophy of education at least, seems to hark back to a form of normative, conceptual analysis associated with Anglophone, analytic styles of philosophy. But poststructuralist and postmodernist philosophy – at least as they have been taken up in educational theory and in popular thought more generally – often brings with it a relativism, which while potentially inclusive, and certainly constitutive today of the possibility of individual choice, renders the defence of principles difficult. By stating principles in the form of a manifesto, we risk accusations of universalising, exclusive normativity. But, it is perhaps time to question the assumption that these are inherently and always negative. Below we set out principles founded in the belief in the possibility of transformation, as found in critical theory and pedagogy, but with an affirmative attitude: a post-critical orientation to education that gains purchase on our current conditions and that is founded in a hope for what is still to come.

The **first principle** to state here is simply that **there are principles to defend**. But this does not in itself commit us to anything further, i.e. that we ought to do x. This is not normativity in the sense of defining an ideal current or future state against which current practice should be judged. Thus, this principle might be characterised as the defence of a shift from **procedural normativity to principled normativity**.

In educational theory, poststructuralist and postmodernist thought has often been taken up in terms of the politics of identity, and so a concern with otherness, alterity, and voice. Respect for the other and for difference requires that educators accept that we can never fully know the other. Any attempt to do so constitutes "violence" against the other, so to speak. Thus, the possibility of acting and speaking is foreclosed; a political as well as an educational problem, perhaps summarised in the often heard (albeit mumbled) phrase "I know you're not allowed to say this anymore, but. . .", and the bemoaning of so-called political correctness. The acceptance that we can never fully understand the other – individual or culture – ought not to entail that we cannot speak. This rendering of "respect" overlooks that understanding and respect are perpetual challenges and hopes. Here, we start from the assumption that we can speak and act – together – and thus shift from the hermeneutical pedagogy that critical pedagogy entails, to defend a – **second principle** – **pedagogical hermeneutics**. It is precisely the challenges of living together in a

[2]The Manifesto, along with responses from philosophers, sociologists, and historians of education, has been published as *Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy* by Punctum Books and is available to buy and in open access here: https://punctumbooks.com/titles/manifesto-for-a-post-critical-pedagogy/

common world that constitute the hope that make education continue to seem a worthwhile activity. Hermeneutics isn't a (unsolvable) problem, but rather something educators need to create. We shouldn't speak and act on the basis of *a priori* assumptions about the (im)possibility of real mutual understanding and respect, but rather show that, in spite of the many differences that divide us, there is a space of commonality that only comes about *a posteriori* (cf. Arendt, Badiou, Cavell).

This existing space of commonality is often overlooked in much educational research, policy, and practice in favour of a focus on social (in)justice and exclusion, based on an assumption of inequality. The ethos of critical pedagogy endures today in the commitment to achieving equality, not through emancipation, but rather through empowerment of individuals and communities. However, it is rendered hopeless – not to mention, cynical – by the apparent inescapability of neoliberal rationality. But, there is no *necessity* in the given order of things, and thus, insurmountable as the current order seems, there is hope. The **third principle**, then, based on the assumption of equality (cf. Rancière) and of the possibility of transformation – at the individual and collective levels – entails a shift **from critical pedagogy to post-critical pedagogy**.

This is by no means an anti-critical position. It is thanks to the enormous and extremely powerful critical apparatus developed throughout the twentieth century that we are aware of the main features of the *status quo* we are immersed in. But, unlike the inherent critique of societal institutions focused on their dysfunctionality, or the utopian critique, driven from a transcendent position and leading towards eternal deferral of the desired change, we believe that it is time to focus our efforts on making attempts to reclaim the suppressed parts of our experience; we see the task of a post-critical pedagogy as not to debunk but to protect and to care (cf. Latour, Haraway). This care and protection take the form of asking again what education, upbringing, school, studying, thinking, and practicing are. This reclaiming entails no longer a critical relation – revealing what is really going on – nor an instrumental relation – showing what educators ought to do – but creating a space of thought that enables practice to happen anew. This means (re)establishing our relation to our words, opening them to question, and giving philosophical attention to these devalued aspects of our forms of life, and thus – in line with a principled normativity – to defend these events as autotelic, not functionalised, but simply worth caring for.

Education is, in a very practical sense, predicated on hope. In "traditional" critical pedagogy, however, this hope of emancipation rests on the very regime of inequality it seeks to overcome, in three particular ways:

(1) It enacts a kind of hermeneutical pedagogy: the educator assumes the other to lack the means to understand that they are chained by their way of seeing the world. The educator positions herself as external to such a condition, but must criticize the present and set the unenlightened free (cf. Plato's cave).
(2) In reality this comes down to reaffirming one's own superior position, and thus to reinstalling a regime of inequality. There is no real break with the *status quo*.

(3) Moreover, the external point of view from which the critical pedagogue speaks is through and through chained to the *status quo*, but in a merely negative way: the critic is driven by the passion of hate. In doing so, she or he surreptitiously sticks to what is and what shall always be. Judgmental and dialectical approaches testify to this negative attitude.

Thus, the pedagogue assumes the role of one who is required to lift the veil; what they lift the veil from, however, is a *status quo* on which they stand in external judgment. To formulate more positively the role of the pedagogue as initiating the new generation into a common world, we offer the idea of a post-critical pedagogy, which requires a love for the world. This is not an acceptance of how things are, but an affirmation of the value of what we do in the present and thus of things that we value as worth passing on. But not as they are: educational hope is about the possibility of a renewal of our common world. When we truly love the world, our world, we must be willing to pass it on to the new generation, on the assumption that they – the newcomers – can take it on, on their terms. Thus, the **fourth principle** entails a shift **from cruel optimism** (cf. Berlant) **to hope in the present**. Cynicism and pessimism are not, in a sense, a recognition of how things are, but an avoidance of them (cf. Cavell, Emerson).

In current formulations, taking care of the world is framed in terms of education *for* citizenship, education *for* social justice, education *fo*r sustainability, etc. in view of a particular notion of global citizenship and an entrepreneurial form of intercultural dialogue. Although perhaps underpinned by a progressive, critical pedagogy, the concern in such formulations of responsibility for the world is with ends external to education. Traditional or conservative as it might sound, we wish to defend education for education's sake: education as the study of, or initiation into, a subject matter for its intrinsic, educational, rather than instrumental, value, so that this can be taken up anew by the new generation. Currently, the (future) world is already appropriated by "education *for*. . ." and becomes instrumental to (our) other ends. Thus, **the fifth principle** takes us **from education for citizenship to love for the world**. It is time to acknowledge and to affirm that there is good in the world that is worth preserving. It is time for debunking the world to be succeeded by some hopeful recognition of the world. It is time to put what is good in the world – that which is under threat and which we wish to preserve – at the centre of our attention and to make a conceptual space in which we can take up our responsibility for them in the face of, and in spite of, oppression and silent melancholy.

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Chapter 2
Practicing *Universitas*

Piotr Zamojski

Introduction

The argument presented in this chapter was triggered by the clash of two kinds of experiences, which reflect two different positions on university in the current time. One is that the university is dead, or that it never existed in the first place; the other is that – although it is under siege, devalued, and reduced to some kind of poor substitute – the university still thrives, in spite of its fragility. Both kinds of experience, which incline us to take one of these positions, have happened to me many times, but were not strictly personal experiences, as both took place in public situations.

I have experienced the first of these – hearing that the university is dead or never existed at all – a few times, at numerous educational philosophy and theory conferences, during discussions on the 'the crisis of the university'. After a ritual and therapeutic exchange of bitter jeremiads on the decline of the university, a voice of reason stood up and claimed that the university – which all gathered there were mourning – has never existed, that the idea of the university is a fairy tale, and that even the University of Berlin – when established by von Humboldt – was not the incarnation of the Humboldtian idea of the university (Cf. Kerr 1963). In fact – the voice usually continued – the university was never a place of the production of knowledge (at least not before the twentieth century): all revolutionary thoughts were produced against so-called academism, and almost all breakthrough discoveries were made outside the university (Charles Darwin – who never had a university position – often appears here as a suitable example).

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Such an argument, although not very comforting, might seem convincing: there are reasons to believe that the university we believe we are mourning has never actually existed. Naturally, one could counter such a claim by turning attention to the consequences of such reasoning: if the university we all care for and long for has never existed, then we have nothing with which to counter its economic appropriation. But renouncing a valid argument because of its possible political or strategic consequences is in itself a highly problematic, and – we might say – unacademic, strategy.

There is a more serious doubt, however: if the university has never existed, then why are we longing for it, and mourning its decline? Can one mourn something that has never lived? In the literature, a more common standpoint is rather that the university is in ruins (Readings 1996), or that '[i]t is not an exaggeration to claim today that this old [Newman's and Humboldt's] idea of the university is dead' (Simons and Masschelein 2009, p. 1).[1] Perhaps there was some idyllic golden age for universities, but it is *no longer*.[2] That time has passed, and what seems to be left to us now is to mourn the dead body.

I have also had experiences of the second kind, however, that speak of the university's thriving in the face of adversity. As I will argue in this chapter, it seems that we do have such experiences that affirm for us that the university can, and does, come true, that is, can be verified in practice (cf. Rancière 1991). There may also be reasons to mourn it and to long for it, but that do not necessarily assume that the university is dead, or even that it never existed. Perhaps we are not simply daydreaming, taking delusions for reality, or sentimentalising the past. It is precisely from this clash – between the experiences attesting to the impossibility of university (today) and the experiences of *Universitas* taking place *hic et nunc* – that this chapter arises.

The argument developed below surely does not exhaust the matter. Rather, it could be seen as a provocation. But it is also – to a certain extent – an introduction to the theme of *Universitas*, the word I use to name the essence of university. What must be stressed is that the investigation into the *essence* of the university does not entail developing another *idea* of the university. This inquiry does not aim at describing the desired, perfect, and sublime academic community, as opposed to the factual, alienated higher education institutions. Contrary to such an attitude, the

[1] Although I disagree with the point of departure of Simons' and Masschelein's argument, it must be underlined that their body of work is one of the foundations of the post-critical perspective in theorising education. Therefore, the argument that I present in this chapter is in debt to their analyses.

[2] For example, in his analysis of the essence of university, Derrida (2004) uses the phrase 'no longer' throughout the argument in a very significant way. *No longer* can we think of the university outside its institutional and political conditions, as after Heidegger 'we can no longer dissociate the principle of reason from the very idea of technology in the realm of their modernity' (p. 142). Hence, *no longer* can we sustain the division between pure and applied research, and so '[w]hat is produced . . . can always be used' (p. 144). And so the question of the university (originated in the principle of reason, and going beyond it) is reopened: we can *no longer* be sure what university means.

notion of essence refers to *what exists in spite* of these alienating institutional, political, cultural, and economic conditions. Investigating the essence of the university means cutting through the opposition between the normative ideal and the factual conditions, in order to speak about practices that we – as academics – are performing, although these practices are suppressed, forgotten, or made invisible by the dominant discourse on higher education. Regardless of such a devaluation, these practices are still what makes the university. As the currently hegemonic way of understanding what university is all about seems, to a large extent, to be disconnected from these practices, the argument presented below aims at recollecting them (in Heidegger's sense) and reconnecting ourselves to them.

What follows will be presented in three steps. First, I will follow the thread of the crisis of the university, in which I will argue that academics are implicated in that process. This part is a rather cruel critique that emphasises our own role in the destruction of the university. The second step of the argument moves beyond such a critical perspective to affirm the essence of the university, conceived in terms of an event made by humans. This notion of 'essence' refers to the origin of its academic use in eleventh century Bologna, to name the combined students' associations (the so-called *nations)*, or later on in Paris to name the *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* (community of masters and students). *Universitas*, therefore, from the very beginning refers to something made by people gathered *hic et nunc*. Something that is made from their deeds rather than being a solidified effect of some sedimented, institutional structures. This account of the essence of the university will lead us to the third step, concerning academics' responsibility for *Universitas*, and so to the question: what can we do to keep universities alive after all?

Blood on Our Hands

It is important to consider that those who claim that the university never existed might be right, and that we might simply have been seduced by the phantasm of *Universitas*, by some 'ideal types which still constitute the illusions of some of its inhabitants' (Kerr 1963, p. 1). It is perhaps because of this phantasmatic infection that the collision with the institution of the university causes us such pain. Most of the canonical texts on what we call 'the idea of the university' concern ideals of/for institutions (Cf. Peters and Barnett 2018). But, if the university is simply an institution, we should acknowledge that every institution tends to alienate. Indeed, the institutions we call universities became alien to us, and they seem to treat us – the people who create them – as pawns, temporary resources, that are deployed according to demand and procedure; chewed, consumed, and excreted when they are no longer needed. We shouldn't be surprised that institutions are alienating. But equally we should never give up trying to counteract this process. So perhaps it is a question of a technical or a strategic nature that we should pursue: how should we resist what is currently happening in the university?

This might also prove discouraging, however, as we are trying to answer such a question among a constantly proliferating critical diagnosis of the university today. Overall, this diagnosis suggests that the so called 'crisis of the university' is part of a wider set of transformations, due to which every domain of the world seems to be increasingly regulated by an economic logic. Whether it be music, health, literature, nature, science, theatre, or education, we think of them as processes that bring distinctive products, which can be introduced into the chain of commodity-monetary exchange in a way that would make its market value higher than (or at least equal to) the cost of production. Each domain is commodified and our visible consumption of its products becomes a way of accounting for ourselves.

Education – including university education – then is reconceptualised as a service. In this regard, the university is an institution that provides educational and research services that respond to the needs of her clients (Simons and Masschelein 2009).[3] Since these needs are also regulated by an economic logic, education as such (and university education in particular) is seen as an investment with a measurable return rate, from which one might profit (think of the notion of 'added value' used in relation to student achievement).

This leads to the dominance of the vocational perspective when conceptualising the aims of education at any level, and to understanding education in terms of a production process: a process that should be effective and accountable. But with the fact that education is perceived as an accountable production process comes also what bothers universities: bureaucratisation, proceduralisation, and juridification of the work of teachers and students. This multi-layered standardisation of the educational practices of teachers and students is aimed at the evaluation of the effectiveness of their work and, as such, forms a tightening stranglehold around their necks, mechanising and disenchanting (Cf. Weber 1978) the relation between them. Students are not studying anything today – we could say – rather they are collecting credit points, and when they fail an exam, they do not repeat a year, they simply have a debit of points they have to make up in the next semester (which is – by the way – the official terminology recently introduced at my current university).

Naturally, the requirement of accountability (together with bureaucratisation, proceduralisation, and juridification that follows this requirement) also concerns research (services). The colonisation of education by economic logic intertwines with the capitalisation of knowledge and the commercialisation of research (Slaughter and Leslie 1997). This causes a differentiation of academic disciplines in terms of their relative value, assessed in terms of their ability to produce an income, in the form of research funding, outputs, and marketable products. In this sense, the biomedical sciences are far more valuable than philosophy, for example, and

[3]This is the practice found for example in the official documents of the Polish state. For example the recently introduced (October 2018) bill on higher education in Poland speaks of research services (article 11) and educational services (article 79) that a public higher education institution delivers. This way of understanding the role of a public higher education institution is nothing new; it appeared in the previous bill on higher education in Poland, and it is widely spread in the constitutions of other universities. (Cf. Szkudlarek and Stankiewicz 2014).

therefore can be seen as more accountable to the public in any cost-benefit analysis, and in relation to the various metrics, such as citations, H-index, impact, and so on. However, there is no way to simply opt out: either we conform to these academic currencies, or we disappear from the university. It's either publish, or perish. The academic world is governed by a regime of competition, accountability, excellence, and entrepreneurship (see Readings 1996; Simons and Masschelein 2009; Giroux and Giroux 2004), which places enormous pressure on scholars and students.

Regardless of how convincing such a critique is, however, it doesn't seem to go far enough. It doesn't seem to be enough to show that particular phenomena are making the university more and more impossible. Indeed, one could easily claim that the critique summarised above is quite superficial, and not radical enough, that it is purely descriptive, and doesn't go to the heart of the matter. But if we go deeper, what will we find? The business-military complex that governs universities (Giroux 2007)? A neoliberal entanglement of political economy and education, macropolitical strategies of transnational corporations, neoconservative modernisation of public awareness (Apple 2005)? That might be radical enough, but it is also quite overwhelming. Can we – and I mean you and I – do anything about macropolitical strategies of transnational corporations, or the business-military complex, or the neoconservative modernisation of public awareness? Of course, we can protest, we can even resist these strategies to a certain extent, but the fight seems to be lost before it has even started, and the task ahead of us seems impossible to accomplish. We are dealing here with forces, capitals, and trends far stronger than the collective strength of academics, let alone their strength as individuals.

Nevertheless, the task of critique in itself seems to be a tempting one. For sure, it is very comfortable. We can easily channel our frustrations, and to some extent stand outside the object of critique, and thereby free ourselves from the ruins of the university. That is what we do. We are trained to be critical; we do it for a living (one could even say). This is our natural environment, and our default response to the phenomenon.

Following Latour (2004), however, one could ask whether such a natural reaction to the crisis of the university isn't irresponsible and, actually, quite uncritical? To paraphrase Latour: isn't it the case that *we add ruins to the ruins of the university* by just criticising it? In that case, then, isn't it academics who ruin the university? Don't the bodies responsible for national and international policy on higher education consist of academics? The same ones who constitute the university? Our colleagues? I think we should say it loud and clear: we – the academics – are responsible for the death of the university! There is blood on our hands. If the reader feels highly uncomfortable with such a statement, and disagrees, let me put it differently: I am responsible for the death of the university, and there is blood on my hands. Maybe it is time to care for the university, not to debunk its corruption. Do we really help universities, academics, and students by performing radical critique of the university?

By taking the path of critique – a path that seems to be natural for academics – we do not rebuild anything; we do not even learn how to *dwell in ruins* (cf. Readings 1996). Rather we simply confirm what we already experience: the fall of the

university. Naturally, radical critique of today's universities and higher education policy explains what exactly is happening, why, how, and by whom it is done, but it cannot offer any remedy. Radical critique cannot offer any new or old fable, cannot forward any positive project – because that would be against its essential movement of unmasking and demythologisation (Adorno 2004). Hence – as Sloterdijk (1987) observes – such a critique leaves us with a choice between an unhappy and a cynical consciousness.

Following Latour (2004), I call for a new strategy to counter the atrocities and deformations of our times, a strategy that would entail the turn from debunking the status quo towards care for the world. A strategy that might be called post-critical (cf. Hodgson et al. 2017). If we take this path, we would have to ask whether we can still care for the university. And if we can, then what is it that we are caring for? A dead body, ruins, leftovers, or niches, islands of academic resistance, caves sheltering decimated guerrillas of the idea of the university?

I believe that what we still can, and need to, care for is the essence of the university. The essence of the university is precisely what pushes us towards critique. It is what we experience as being dissolved, and as being increasingly more difficult to sustain in the continuously changing organisational frames of the institutions that call themselves universities. However, what seems to be important is that this experience does not simply exhaust itself in the issue of alienation, i.e. the fact that the institutional environment of academic work continuously makes that work less and less possible. Rendering the fall of the university in terms of alienation is a reduction of the problem that makes us overlook something absolutely crucial. By invoking the term 'essence of the university' I am referring to the experiences of academic practices that are endangered by the economic appropriation of the university. These practices shouldn't be defined in terms of 'work' as they are essentially not productive. Nevertheless, they are what academics do together with students, and – I would like to argue – what essentially contributes to the making of the university.

Making *Universitas* Happen

It might be the case that we, academics, are not the origin of the fall of university. I would suggest, however, that our imaginary, our representation of the essence of the university has been obliterated or transformed, and hence our actions, our daily practices (including the practice of critique, but also silence, adaptation, and helplessness) participate in the destruction of university. I am using the word 'essence' here in the sense underlined by Heidegger – as *Wesen*: the way things are essencing or presencing themselves. This of course relates to the Heideggerian notion of *Ereignis*, which can be – as it often is in English – invalidly rendered as a happening, or the 'eventing' of being. Essence points therefore to the way a being unfolds, the way it gives itself, the way it happens (Heidegger 1972).

If we participate in the destruction of the university, then our task should be described with reference to what Heidegger called *Andenken*, which is usually translated into English as remembrance or re-collection. In his book on Hölderlin, Heidegger writes: 'Re-collecting (*Andenkend*) thinking thinks of the festival that has been by thinking ahead to what is coming' (Heidegger 1982, p. 194, as cited in Stambaugh 1991, p. 129). Heidegger refers here to Hölderlin's figure of *the wedding festival of men and gods*. Naturally, Heidegger tracks in Hölderlin's poetry his own theme of being (*sein*) that is forgotten and concealed by Western culture since the rise of metaphysics (the so called: *Seinsvergessenheit*). In that regard, he speaks of a festival as the moment when the normal course of things (e.g. the work cycle, but also the work of metaphysics) is suspended or paused, and the unusual (i.e. the being, *sein*) can appear. In Heidegger's own words: '[c]elebrating is a becoming-free for the unaccustomed element of the day which, in distinction to the dull and gloom of the everyday, is what is clear' (Heidegger 2000, p. 126). Therefore, in the argument presented in this chapter, I render the figure of the festival as the obliterated essence of university that still may come, if we engage in re-collecting thinking.

Indeed, elsewhere Heidegger points to a common origin of memory (*Gedächtnis*) and thinking (*Denken*, *Gedanke*). He writes:

> The root or originary word says: the gathered, all-gathering thinking that recalls. [...] Originally, 'memory' means as much as *devotion*: a constant concentrated abiding with something – not just with something that has passed, but in the same way with what is present and with what may come (Heidegger 1968, pp. 139–140, my emphasis).

If what is coming, or *what calls for thinking* (the *all-gathering thinking that recalls*) is the decline of the university, then what should we recollect? What is 'the festival that has been, is, and may come' in our case? Let me suggest that it could be our experience of *Universitas* – our experience of the essence of university.

What I am suggesting here is, first, that *Universitas* does happen, and should be conceived of in terms of an event. Second, I suggest that it happens by the virtue of our doings, and third, that all academics have experienced it at some point, or even – I would dare to say – that *we do* experience it from time to time. Following Heidegger it could be said that we have forgotten *Universitas*, which would not only mean that we have forgotten what kind of ideas it contains, but – more importantly – what it is, or, to put it more precisely: *how* it is. In defaulting to a critical stance, we seem to have forgotten about the peculiar character of these ideas. We seem to have forgotten that we are not up to some dream, a vision of some perfect institution, that is not alienating, or an image of a carefully selected, ideal community, toward which we should everlastingly approximate.

Contrary to this, and strange as it may sound, *Universitas* has a performative character. *Universitas* describes a certain type of event, made by humans, gathered together in a very special way (Cf. Simons and Masschelein 2009). People bring *Universitas* to life, every time they study, lecture, run a seminar, or confer – to name just a few practices that form the essence of university. To put it in more general terms, *Universitas* happens when people gather because of something they are completely absorbed by, in order to investigate it in public. Then, they forget

about their statuses, positions, functions, and capitals; they suspend everyday life, with its prejudices, needs, demands, political conflicts, concerns, hierarchies, structures of relations and so on. They forget about all of this for a moment, that is, they *suspend* all of that because of the thing that gathers them (cf. Heidegger 2001), and in order to open themselves to the prudent consideration of all possible hypotheses, arguments, ideas, etc., about the matter of concern. *Universitas* entails entering into *the state of being lost to the world*, or to put it another way, the state of devoted attention (Simons and Masschelein 2009, p. 14).

Although it might sound sublime and idealistic, this does actually happen; for example, when we lecture. Naturally, not always, and not in every case, however, it happens that we are so absorbed by the subject of the lecture that we unconsciously exceed its time-limit as a lecturer, or – as a student – we are surprised that time for the lecture has already finished. And maybe even, from time to time, during a lecture we seem to experience – as von Humboldt (1970, p. 247) puts it – the 'number of intelligences thinking in unison with the lecturer'. Undoubtedly, such an exercise in 'collective imagination' (see Marin, Chapter Six, this volume) entails radical attention to the thing of study (Cf. Friesen 2017).

Entering a state of devoted attention is not reserved to lectures. Masschelein and Simons (2013) argue that the centuries-long history of the university, apart from being a history of an institution of higher education, could be also regarded as 'a profane history of the experimentation with and the invention of public, pedagogic forms' (Masschelein and Simons 2011, p. 82). These forms gather people around a subject matter and make them attentive to it, to the extent that it becomes something that actually matters to them. As forms of public thought and public experiments, they provide 'a carefully constructed time and space where people gather around something, where a public is able to think in the presence of something' (Ibid., p. 81). As they note, apart from the lecture itself, one such form is the seminar during which a small group of people is gathered around some-thing (a text, a problem, an issue, a photograph, some data, a particular object, etc.) in a way that turns it into a matter of interest 'to talk about, a thing to refer to, something that provokes thinking and discussion' (Masschelein and Simons 2013, p. 114). As they claim, experiences of such seminars testify to the unique power of this public, pedagogic form. They even use the term 'magic' in order to grasp this extraordinary ability to 'break' the reproduction of roles and affirmations of discourses, and 'undo' the destinations and objectives of people involved (Ibid.). People change their mind while exploring together what stays at the centre of attention during a seminar. In other words, the form of a seminar allows people to detach from their opinions, statuses, alliances, usual discourses, etc., in order to see the thing anew, to look at it with new eyes, grasping what was invisible to them before.

Precisely in between losing the hard ground of one's convictions and gaining a new insight on the matter, one is studying. Studying entails many other practices and gestures (like reading, repeating, showing, listening, looking, wondering, examining, questioning, etc.). Taken in itself, as an endless or 'interminable' human practice (Agamben 1995, p. 64), studying means being in the condition of pure potentiality or

(im)potentiality (Lewis 2013). In that sense, it refers to something that withdraws (ibid., p. 77), and that by its very withdrawal draws us towards itself (cf. Heidegger 1968, p. 9). Interminably following a thing in its withdrawal is what Heidegger calls thinking (ibid.). Without a doubt there is a lot in common between thinking and studying. According to Heidegger, thinking can be compared to walking a path, where walking itself overshadows the destination point. And so can studying: it resembles wandering around without a purpose, rather than a planned journey (Cf. Lewis 2013, pp. 93–94). Hence, not having a distinguishable end or result, studying is not productive. It is abandoned, rather than finished. And so – from an economic point of view – it is completely useless.

Again, it may sound esoteric and rather uncommon. But isn't this really what one experiences when one dedicates her or his time and strength to study the nature of the atomic nucleus, the development of orcas hunting strategies, the dynamic properties of membrane proteins, or object-oriented ontology? These things draw us towards themselves, but they seem also to constantly withdraw. We are getting to know them better, but simultaneously, they are always partly in shadow. Studying is always about the move to bring some light to this concealment. Therefore, we gather, employ public, pedagogic forms, and study a thing together. Indeed, following the Middle Ages origins of the university, it could be said that *Universitas* is a gathering of students (*Universitas studii*), and hence that the distinction between teaching and research is inoperative at the university.

This doesn't mean that there are no professors at the university, however. *Universitas* happens through the gathering of students, being focused on a thing of their study, completely absorbed by its withdrawal and devoted to follow it, wherever it will take them. In that sense, *Universitas* happens only when professors are students themselves (Laboratory for Education and Society 2018, p. 55), when they are also ready to get lost, to lose their positions (i.e. the position of professors, of eminent scholars, etc.), and – in that way – to involve others in their unproductive practice. There is a kind of intimate relation between a thing that 'attracts us by its withdrawal' (Heidegger 1968, p. 9) and a professor who intellectually seduces her students, involving them in her study (Steiner 2013).

A professor is essentially a student, then, who can involve others in studying by virtue of public, pedagogic forms. Together, they initiate a sphere of suspension, where the pressures, divisions, and laws of the current status quo no longer apply, where they can be lost and lose themselves in economically unproductive study. In this, they initiate *Universitas*. *Universitas*, then, is a human act: involving others in study and initiating the sphere of suspension means introducing a beginning that can be taken up by the others, or not (Cf. Arendt 1958).

On the one hand, therefore, it may seem that *Universitas* is a very fragile event, that perhaps it is more likely not to appear. I assume that we have all had experiences of this kind: when people institutionally identified as students refrain from studying. When they reject the invitation to take up the beginning we offer. On the other hand, someone who once became a student in a performative sense of this word, i.e. someone who was engaged in study and took part in making *Universitas* happen, cannot reject this heritage. Indeed, I believe that at a given point in our lives we have

all, as academics, experienced this kind of event. We have all been lost to the world, studying something, thinking, and experimenting in public. To some of us this was an event, in Alain Badiou's (2003, 2005) sense:[4] a happening that we have decided is a turning point in our lives; the event that changes everything because it requires fidelity. It redefines one's life, and the lives of others. In other words, some of us cannot abandon studying.

Fidelity towards the event – as Badiou (2005, pp. 232–234) conceptualises it – is all about recounting the elements of the situation in the face of the event. This means: to decide which phenomena, issues, tasks, objects, practices, etc., relate to the event, and how that changes the way one should relate to them. Or, to put it in another way, how does the event change our life? How does it change the way we dwell in the world? In the case of the event of *Universitas,* fidelity taken in such a way would mean engaging in practices that make *Universitas* happen. This is, being faithful to *Universitas* is to make it happen. This form of fidelity truly testifies to the peculiarity of this event: it is made by humans engaging in particular practices. Or, to put it the other way around: there are certain practices that make *Universitas* happen; by doing something we can make it happen.

This relates closely to the work of Jacques Rancière (1991) and his study of the nature of equality. He claims that equality is an assumption that can be made true (verified in practice) by acting upon this assumption. Just like in the case of *Universitas*, equality is also said to be impossible, and that it never existed, yet – Rancière claims – we can make it happen by acting in a particular way: upon an assumption of equality. I think this is exactly what we should do: to practice *Universitas* in spite of the sense that this seems impossible. This brings us to the issue of our responsibility.

Responsibility for the University

Jacques Derrida (2004) might have been one of the first to ask the question of responsibility for the university. He sees the principle of reason as the origin of the university and through that he makes an important distinction between a responsibility *to* the principle of reason and *for* that principle. There is no space here to engage in a discussion of Derrida's standpoint in detail; however, I would like to take this particular insight further. Indeed, as Georg Picht (1998, pp. 190–191) observed, responsibility has a double reference: one can be responsible *to* an instance that imposes tasks or laws, and we can be responsible *for* something or someone that lies in the effective range of our power to act (cf. Jonas 1984). These two kinds of

[4]It is important to note that the meaning Badiou gives to the notion of an event is different than the one introduced by Heidegger. There is no space here to develop this thread, and to analyse this difference. However, it must be also stressed that these two understandings are not contradictory, and in the case of *Universitas* can be regarded as complementing each other.

references in fact assume two different answers to the question of who is the responsible person. In the first case, one responsible *to* an instance of responsibility is subjugated: she is under the pressure of the power that exceeds her, and therefore she is responsible. In the second case, one has the power to do something, and therefore she *is* responsible. The latter case is an altogether different concept of responsibility – which Hans Jonas (1984) calls 'substantial responsibility'.

These two concepts of responsibility seem to correspond with the two approaches to the demise of the university I have touched upon in this chapter: a critical, and a post-critical. One can emphasise that academics are under pressure from destructive forces much bigger and stronger than themselves, and therefore feel responsible *to* the institution of university (as an instance that makes them responsible). This renders our situation in terms of a choice between conforming or resisting this higher power. However, we can also see ourselves as able to do something, as people with the power to make something happen and to care for that thing. That is, we can see ourselves as responsible *for Universitas.*

As I've suggested so far, we can *make Universitas happen*. Bringing this event to life is something within our power. Hence, if we really care for it, i.e. if we want to be faithful to it, then – I guess – our responsibility *for* it, in the face of its near death, is a responsibility for practicing *Universitas*, in spite of the institutional conditions of alienated universities, and in spite of the global context of the neoliberal order of global capitalism. This responsibility entails – first of all – involving others in studying, even though more and more students are not keen on studying, and we are not praised by university management for involving students in unproductive practices, and it takes a lot of time and effort to do this (see Lewis, Chap. 10, this volume). Arguably, relentless attempts at practicing *Universitas* in spite of the unfavourable conditions, and in the face of the advancing oblivion of the essence of university, requires positioning *Universitas* as a matter of public interest, i.e. as a thing of study. The call for a re-collecting thinking refers to the responsibility for re-establishing our relation with the practices that make *Universitas* happen. This responsibility is taken up by many educationalists today, and it should be clear that the argument presented here would not be possible without their work.

However, the *educational responsibility* for practicing and studying *Universitas* should not be confused with the *political responsibility* for restoring the community of *Universitas*. Using Badiou's vocabulary this would mean: initiating the people of universities into the fidelity to the event of *Universitas* that they already have experienced and are experiencing. We could start by persuading our fellow academics and students that what essentially matters for the university is the event of *Universitas* they all know and long for. Hopefully, this is an intuition they all have, and will admit as right, as soon as they will be able to counter their responsibility *to* the institution of university with the responsibility *for Universitas*. A good way to begin might be to study with them.

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Chapter 3
From Ruins to Response-Ability: Making a University in a Palestinian Refugee Camp

Hans Schildermans, Maarten Simons, and Jan Masschelein

> *To resist a likely future in the present is to gamble that the present still provides substance for resistance, that it is populated by practices that remain vital even if none of them has escaped the generalized parasitism that implicates them all (Stengers 2011, p. 10).*

The University in Ruins

This chapter takes as its point of departure Bill Readings' diagnosis of the university as a ruined institution. After a short presentation of Readings' analysis, the alternative he proposes – namely, to understand university education as a network of obligations – is brought forward. Readings' ethical conception of obligation will be contrasted with Stengers' interpretation of this term, however, in order to arrive at another rendering of obligation that carries the possibility of being an educational one. The major part of the chapter discusses the work of Campus in Camps, a Palestinian experimental university, in order to challenge the theoretical discussion presented at the beginning of the chapter via a focus on concrete and specific university practices. This will give way to a more situated and engaged account of the obligations of university education.

In his book *The university in ruins*, Readings (1996) argues that the contemporary university as an institution no longer finds a point of orientation in a unifying philosophical idea. Whereas the Kantian university was oriented towards the idea of Reason, and the Humboldtian university was oriented towards the idea of Culture, the contemporary university justifies its existence via the discourse of excellence. This demonstrates, according to Readings, that the university under the pressure of

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globalisation has lost its societal mission. He argues that the modern university (cf. Kant, Humboldt) served as the ideological arm of the nation-state. Its function was to provide the nation-state with a *gebildetes Publikum* – an educated public – that could respectively represent Reason or Culture. Hence, the modern university had a nationalist agenda, and due to globalisation and the decline of the nation-state that it involved, the university had to find a unifying principle that did not refer to this nation-state. Readings argues that the university found such a principle in the notion of excellence:

> The need for excellence is what we all agree on. And we all agree upon it because it is not an ideology, in the sense that it has no external referent or internal content. Today, all departments of the University can be urged to strive for excellence, since the general applicability of the notion is in direct relation to its emptiness (Readings 1996, p. 23).

The contemporary university, reconstituted by transnational capitalism and corporate bureaucracy (cf. Jessop 2017; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004), has embraced excellence as its unifying and orienting idea: the University of Excellence.

Readings (1996) explains that the university justifies its existence through the continuous optimisation of research, teaching, and administration, according to the terms of the discourse of excellence. Readings argues that accountability in the sociopolitical sense has been replaced by a pervasive accounting in view of maximisation of efficiency to a 'permanent quality tribunal' (cf. Simons and Masschelein 2006). The assumption is that everything that happens in the university can be and has to be measured in order to optimise the university's functioning in each and every domain. Dereferentialisation is the name Readings gives to this development in which the university no longer refers to an external idea, but becomes caught up in its own output-optimising feedback loops. Readings' remedy, however, is not to create a new point of reference, a re-referentialization of the university towards a unifying idea – one could think for instance of a University of the World, or a University for the Future – but instead he proposes a transvaluation of dereferentialisation. Embracing what he calls an *institutional pragmatism*, his point of departure for reconceiving of the university is its current state of ruin:

> To inhabit the ruins of the University must be to practice an institutional pragmatism that recognizes this threat, rather than to seek to redeem epistemological uncertainty by recourse to the plenitude of aesthetic sensation (nostalgia) or epistemological mastery (knowledge as progress). The ruins of culture's institution are simply there, where we are, and we have to negotiate among them (pp. 170–171).

Readings calls the transvaluation he seeks to induce a form of *thinking without alibis*, an attempt to inhabit the ruins of the university without invoking an 'elsewhere', hence without referring again to an 'idea', whether it be an idea of a university long gone or an idea of a university to come. His transvaluation concerns three domains, viz. pedagogy, institutions, and community. He argues in favour of an understanding of the university as a community of dissensus where the question of the institutional organisation of the disciplines is continuously under scrutiny. Moreover, he posits a university where the scene of teaching, of pedagogy, is conceived as a network of obligations. In the framework of this chapter, it is not

possible to go deeper into Readings' thoughts on the issues of institutions and community. The remainder of the chapter discusses Readings' conception of the network of obligations. In general, Readings' book offers an insightful overview of the history of the modern university and its current predicament under the discourse of excellence. His astute analysis of dereferentialisation is convincing and the alternatives he sketches are compelling. Nevertheless, it will be argued that although it is worthwhile to follow Readings in his analysis, it is preferable to resist Readings when it comes to his alternatives.

Inspired by Isabelle Stengers' ecology of practices and the Palestinian experimental university Campus in Camps, it will be argued that it is necessary to resist Readings' proposition to conceive of university pedagogy as a network of obligations. The aim, however, is not to denounce or criticise this concept, but rather to resist the ethical interpretation of it in favour of an educational one. To do so, the work of Stengers and the example of Campus in Camps offer a way to another understanding of a network of obligations as a name for university pedagogy.

A Network of Obligations

Readings recognises a risk in the claim of the modern university to educate its students to become autonomous subjects. Autonomy indeed would imply independence, a freedom from every obligation. Instead, Readings insists that pedagogy is 'a *relation, a network of obligation*' (Readings 1996, p. 158; italics in original). A network, moreover, that is spread out over sender, addressee, referent, and signification, he argues, of which the referent, in the case of the university, is Thought. As such, Readings replaces the empty idea of Excellence for the empty name of Thought. He explains that:

> Thought is, in this sense, an empty transcendence, not one that can be worshiped and believed in, but one that throws those who participate in pedagogy back into a reflection upon the ungroundedness of their situation: their obligation to each other and to a name that hails them as addressees, before they can think about it (p. 161).

In short, Readings situates the notion of obligation in the relationship between professor and student on the one hand, and in the relationship between the addressees, professor and student and Thought on the other. He argues that Thought intervenes as a third term between speaker and addressee and hence undoes the presumption to autonomy – be it the autonomy of professors, of students, or of an intellectual tradition or science. Thought, according to Readings, is that over which arguments take place that are formulated in a variety of idioms. However, Thought does not provide the metalanguage that can translate all idioms into its own in order to settle all disputes. Rather, Thought makes both a necessity and an impossibility present; namely, that it should be discussed despite the absence of a common language in which that discussion could occur. The community of professors and students has an obligation towards Thought, an empty transcendence that puts those

who are confronted with it onto an indeterminate trajectory of attempts to do justice to the otherness of Thought.

Readings claims that the pedagogic scene is asymmetrical through and through, and that this unequal relation must be addressed in terms of ethical awareness. As such, university pedagogy, Readings insists, belongs to the sphere of justice, instead of the sphere of truth. It is about doing justice to the otherness of Thought that intervenes in the relation between professor and student. This otherness comes in many forms, and culture, desire, energy, tradition, the immemorial, and the sublime are just a few examples he gives. Moreover, he argues that the understanding of university pedagogy outlined above is an educational one. In explaining the etymological roots of e-ducation as 'drawing out', he makes clear that this is not a maieutic revelation of the student to herself, a process of remembering what was always already known, but that it is the 'drawing out of the otherness of thought that undoes the pretension of self-presence that always demands further study. And it works over both the students and the teachers, although in a dissymmetrical fashion' (pp. 162–163). Exposed to Thought, students and teachers have an obligation towards it, to do justice to Thought. 'Listening to Thought', he argues, is not the production of an autonomous subject or of an autonomous body of knowledge. It means rather 'to explore an open network of obligations that keeps the question of meaning open as a locus of debate' (p. 165).

Two remarks can be formulated in relation to Readings' description of the scene of teaching. A first remark concerns the ethical nature of the pedagogic relation he promulgates. He is probably right to claim that university pedagogy is ethical through and through and that it is a matter of doing justice to the otherness of Thought. However, it can be argued that he is too quick to claim that this conception of university pedagogy is therefore educational. From a post-critical perspective it has been claimed that a strong focus on otherness and doing justice to the other undermines the possibility of a genuine and educational conversation (Hodgson et al. 2017). Moreover, reducing education to a matter of ethics disallows understanding university practices from the point of view of an educational conceptual framework that endorses notions such as study or attention instead of otherness and justice. A second, smaller remark concerns the very general nature of Readings' argumentation. Notions such as justice, otherness, and the name of Thought as an empty transcendence fail to grasp the often very specific character of educational practices as they take place in university settings. Therefore, it is appropriate to try to come to a more situated and engaged understanding of university practices. In sympathy with Readings' critical stance towards modern university pedagogy, but wary of his conception of the network of obligations, my aim is to resist an all too ethical and general understanding thereof. Stengers' work on scientific practices as well as the experimental university Campus in Camps have proven to be very helpful to come to a more educational, situated, and engaged account of university pedagogy. Before we set out to elaborate this question in relation to Campus in Camps, I briefly summarise Stengers' philosophy of science.

Obligation is an important concept in Isabelle Stengers' perspective of the ecology of practices. The ecology of practices is Stengers' speculative-constructivist

response to the Science Wars, the fierce debate between deconstructivist sociologists of science and natural scientists about the reality or relativity of scientific discoveries. Stengers' ecology of practices, and her unwillingness to think from the premise that reason can be segregated from opinion, fact from value, opens a perspective in which practices can be understood as specific constructions of requirements and obligations in which the question of what is true always needs to be considered in relation to the practice for which it is considered to be true. In line with Deleuze, Stengers calls this the *truth of the relative*. This does not mean that everything is true, or that truth depends entirely on the position of the one who speaks the truth, but rather that in relation to the specific requirements and obligations of a practice, a proposition can be considered as true. This implies that truth is neither universal, nor relative to the position of the one who speaks it, but rather that it is the effect of a construction that puts its own constraints, the aforementioned requirements and obligations, on the production of truth. Stengers (2010) argues:

> In constructivist terms, we could say that the production of obligations pertains to the register of creation, which *must* be acknowledged in its irreducible dimension, while the assertion of requirements presents the problem of the possible stability of that creation, of its scope, and of the meaning it proposes to embody for others. The concepts of requirement and obligation allow us to keep both the respectful ratification of claims to rationality and the relativist irony that judges them at a distance (pp. 53–54).

Practices are a specific holding together of requirements and obligations. Whereas requirements grant a certain stability to practices, obligations make them diverge.

Stengers explains that Bruno Latour distinguishes four requirements for scientific practices: namely, the formation of alliances with state or industrial power, the achievement of academic recognition, the mobilisation of the world (i.e. relevant technological instruments as well as interested and motivated collaborators), and the production of a public representation of the field. These requirements must be met if the practice is to pass as scientific. An obligation, on the contrary, makes practices diverge. In the case of science, it could, for instance, be the neutrino: it is what puts the scientists to work, makes them think and hesitate (Stengers 2005, 2006). In short, whereas the requirements correspond to the *how* of practices, the obligations correspond to the *what* of practices.

Campus in Camps

At this point, Readings' generalist and ethical institutional pragmatism will be exchanged for a pragmatics of practice guided by Stengers' notion of obligation. This section aims to omit an all too generalist and ethical account of obligation by focusing on a particular university. Paraphrasing Donna Haraway (2016), it is argued that it matters what university we study to study the university with. The university under scrutiny in this section is the Palestinian experimental university, Campus in Camps. The aim is to test how Stengers' understanding of obligation – as that which makes practitioners diverge, hesitate, and think – works in relation to the practice of

Campus in Camps, in order to arrive at a more situated and engaged account of the notion of obligation in relation to university education.

At first sight, the choice for Campus in Camps may seem to be highly arbitrary, and even a bit odd. Why would it be relevant to study a university that in almost no sense resembles the institutions we know best as universities? Campus in Camps indeed does not offer degrees. There are no admissions criteria for prospective students. It does not have an extensive research program of which the results are published in the most cited academic journals. It does not strive for excellence, and it does not seek to attract the interest of industry or other big funding bodies. Its website may have a more stylish design than those of other universities, but you will not find information there about the different faculties, research centres, or curricula, simply because it does not have any. Nevertheless, it is a place where the production of new, situated knowledges coincides with a communal learning process that seeks to engage this knowledge in responding to the questions posed by the camp condition. Focusing on Campus in Camps does not imply the promise to unveil the essence of a university – as if this essence would have become impossible to discern in the longstanding institutions that call themselves universities. Indeed, thought-provoking study practices are experimented with in heavily institutionalised universities as well. Instead, the focus on Campus in Camps wagers on the possibility that this university can be given the power to make us think about the university. This implies, however, not that it needs to be argued why Campus in Camps is a True University, and not an NGO, an artistic collective, a political pressure group, or a community organization, but that it is assumed that, as a university, it gives us something to think with as it is an interesting, remarkable, or important one, and that it is therefore worthwhile to take a closer look at their activities from the point of view of the ecology of study practices.[1] The choice of Campus in Camps is, then, absolutely not arbitrary, but rather comes from a commitment to the idea that writing about is always writing with, and hence, that it is important to carefully consider what to write about. This section contains roughly three parts that correlate with three phases that the participants of Campus in Camps went through.[2] The first part concerns the first year and the writing of *The Collective Dictionary*. The second part deals with some initiatives that were set up in the course of the second year. It will be argued that in the discussions of the first year,

[1]This contrast between the true on the one hand, and the interesting, remarkable, or important on the other comes from Deleuze and Guattari (1994): 'Philosphy does not consist in knowing and is not inspired by truth. Rather, it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that determine success or failure' (p. 82).

[2]Campus in Camps was established in 2012 on the initiative of Alessandro Petti who taught at Al-Quds Bard University and Sandi Hilal who works for the United Nations Relief and Welfare Agency (UNWRA) to create a forum for Palestinian refugees to study, investigate, and discuss the conditions they face on a daily basis and to propose alternative futures. Fifteen students engaged in the program but over the years many opportunities have been created for other people to get involved in the activities, such as public debates or workshops. This chapter limits itself to a presentation and analysis of the first 2 years of their activities. More information can be found on their website. See http://www.campusincamps.ps

conflicting points of view came to the fore. This contradiction resurfaced in the shape of three distinct problems that were central in the second year (Petti 2013, 2018). Exposing this contradiction and these three problems allows us to gain an insight into the obligation of the practices of Campus in Camps. This obligation is the focus of the third part.

The Collective Dictionary

In the first year, the participants of Campus in Camps focused on the establishment of a common language and approach to understand and discuss the contemporary condition of Palestinian refugee camps. *The Collective Dictionary* is a series of publications that contains definitions of concepts they deem necessary to think about the challenges of living in a refugee camp, and specifically the improvement of living conditions, without normalising the exceptionality of the camp. In small groups, the participants conducted interviews, wrote reflections on personal experiences, undertook excursions, and did photographic investigations and documentary analyses in order to get a better grasp – one more grounded in the everyday experiences of the inhabitants of the Palestinian camps – of their living conditions.

At the end of the first year, the participants published *The Collective Dictionary*. In each of the eleven booklets, each around 40–100 pages, one key concept is scrutinised. Throughout the different publications it becomes clear how much the common sense of the camp ruminates about the right of return, the right of an individual to return to her/his past private home.[3] In almost all the booklets there are references to this right, and how it is possible to shed a different light on the right of return by reinterpreting it through the different understandings of what, for instance, citizenship or ownership can possibly mean in the context of the camp. It is this distinction between the right of return on the one hand and the experience of living together in the camp on the other, that will be clarified further here based on fragments from *The Collective Dictionary*. In the following paragraphs, this series of publications will be read from the perspective of an interest in the existing contradiction between the strong claim of the right to return on the one hand and the positive reflections on the communal life in the camp on the other.

The understanding of the right of return can be read most strongly in the booklet *Vision*. In the process leading to this publication, the participants were asked to reflect on the lives of the camp inhabitants in 2040. It was one of the first exercises, taking place in March and April 2012, and aimed at making an inventory of the different views that were held vis-à-vis the right of return. Some of the contributions seem to assume an effectuated right of return: by 2040, people have returned to their

[3]The Right of Return refers specifically to Palestinian refugees. See https://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/israel-palestine-and-the-occupied-territories/refugee-right-of-return.html

original villages, leaving the camp behind as a ghost town. One of the participants even proposed to transform the desolate camp into a museum that testifies to life under the occupation. Others express a mix of a deep despair concerning the possibility of returning, on the one hand, and the hope that return will be effectuated, on the other. 'In 28 years, I expect the camp will be as it is now, but with more buildings and an increased population. . . . However, I hope there will be no camp in 28 years. I hope that we will be back, back to our destroyed villages' (Al-Laham et al. 2013, p. 47). Another contribution that endorses a pessimistic stance towards the possibility of return underscores the ongoing engagement and struggle of the inhabitants of the camp in claiming the right of return. A vision is sketched in which the camp conditions have been so much improved that the exceptionality of the camp has been normalised. Nonetheless, the camp dwellers still hold on to their right of return (Al-Laham et al. 2013).

The publications after *Vision*, however, in general render a more positive view of life in the camp. Instead of starting from the not-yet of the right of return, the participants attempted to grasp the specificity of the camp's conditions and the social relations it fosters. In *Common*$_1$, for instance, a participant compares life in Dheisheh with life in Doha, a small village next to Dheisheh where wealthier refugees can buy a plot of land or an apartment. From her life in Doha, she has learned that the city lacks common traditions and habits because there were no original Dohan people. All residents are new and do not know each other very well. She praises the strong social relations in Dheisheh and the common culture they have built over the years: 'It may be familiar to you that life in a city would be better than in a refugee camp, but to me, because of the camp's social relations, I prefer the camp. Perhaps that is strange to you' (Abu Alia et al. 2013, p. 43). Other participants agree with this positive appreciation of the strong social fabric of the camp. In *Participation*, one of them writes: 'Sharing is a precious concept that is represented in every small detail of our daily lives. We share all that can serve our community and our world' (Hamouz et al. 2013, p. 23). In almost all publications, the notion of *Mujaarawah* – a verb that can be translated as 'neighbouring' – is used to grasp the social commitment to the camp community. The verb expresses the practices of sharing that take place between the different inhabitants of the camp. It includes the sharing not only of food or materials, but also, and most importantly, of knowledge and experiences. One of the participants writes about how the recipe for maftoul, a traditional Palestinian dish, is shared through collective practices: 'Even maftoul itself is a knowledge transferred between the generations. We learned how to make maftoul from our parents, and they learned that from their parents and so on' (Abu Aker et al. 2013a, p. 18).

There seems to be a tension within *The Collective Dictionary* between, on the one hand, the accounts that forcefully claim the right of return and, on the other hand, the accounts that try to come to terms in an affirmative way with the camp condition as it is. At some points, a certain concern or question is raised that grants this contradiction a very powerful presence. In *Responsibility*, for instance, one reads: 'This point came out of our talks with the community group we met: their biggest concern was how we were going to do something in the camp without changing its exceptionality

through normalizing it' (Abu Aker et al. 2013a, p. 39). Affirming the camp as a convivial space with strong solidarity bonds seems to involve the risk of undermining its meaning as a temporary location of precarity and exclusion, and hence its claim to return. In *Participation* this is formulated in terms of the following question: 'Is it historically acceptable to think about the public space of a temporary camp?' (Hamouz et al. 2013, p. 28). Creating a public space in a camp seems to be understood as a strongly political act that risks normalising the camp and turning it into a city, which would ultimately delegitimise the right of return. This debate is echoed in all the publications of *The Collective Dictionary*. At some points, however, the right of return is reconceived through the lens of the camp as a site of living together. It is at these points that both the right of return and the camp experience are affirmed and taken up in an adventure that transforms both terms. The camp condition is conceived there neither as precarious, nor as normal, but rather as a site for collective experimentation in living together. In *Common*$_2$, one of the participants recalls a journey outside the camp to contrast how the younger and older generations understand the right of return:

> When my refugee friends had the chance to go to the occupied territory of forty-eight, their priority was to see the Mediterranean Sea rather than the villages of their origins. Such an act explains and reinterprets the third generation's notion of returning to the common, while reflecting the spirit and idea of the evolving culture within refugee communities in the refugee camps (Al-Saifi and Al-Barbary 2013a, pp. 17–18).

Such accounts shed a different light on the right of return. It is no longer understood as a future return to a past individual home, but rather turns the present experiences of the camp into an ingredient in the collective imagining of future possibilities.

The Initiatives

The second year of the program was more focused on knowledge creation through specific activities such as gatherings, walks, events, and urban actions that more directly engaged with the camp condition. Informed by the reflections and discussions that took place while working on the dictionary, *The Initiatives* aimed to intervene in the spatial ordering of the camp without normalising its exceptional status or blending it into the fabric of neighbouring cities. The participants selected nine sites within the camps and their immediate surroundings to investigate this place and to inquire how these sites constitute what they have called an urbanity of exile. According to them, the very existence of these so-called common places – a desolate pool, the small alleys, the pedestrian bridge between Dheisheh and Doha – begets new spatial and social formations that allow the camp to be conceived beyond its crystallised image as a locus of marginalisation, poverty, and political subjugation. In the course of *The Initiatives*, the participants conducted fieldwork on the sites, discussed the particularities and possibilities of the sites by engaging with the

local context, and formulated propositions for social and spatial interventions (e.g. constructing a small bridge, organising a market).

It can be argued that throughout *The Initiatives* the contradiction between the right of return and the camp experience re-emerges in three different ways; that is, it shows itself in three problems that all run throughout the different initiatives. The first problem concerns the issue of public space within the camp. Since the camp is built according to the most pressing social and spatial needs, public space is almost absent. Nevertheless, there are some sites and places where people gather. Due to the risk of normalising the exceptionality of the camp and hence undermining the claim of return, however, public space is a highly contested issue within the camp. The design, as well the use, of public space was central to the initiative of *The Square*. In 2007, the UNRWA Camp Improvement Program started the conversation about the creation of a public square in Fawwar, a refugee camp with a rather conservative reputation. At that time, the women of the camp in particular raised questions about the creation of such a place, because they presumed they would be the last to benefit from such a project. It instigated a discussion about the presence of women in public spaces, and more generally about the uses of such a square:

> What activities would be acceptable in such a place, who would take care of the space, which community members should be using it, what should be the role of women in this space, and finally what should the space look like and what would be its impact on the surrounding context? (Hamouz and Al-Turshan 2013, p. 17).

In the course of this initiative, the participants organised a collective cooking workshop followed by an English class in the square. Early one morning, the women of the camp assembled to clean the square and to install the cooking equipment. Afterwards, they proclaimed that through these small actions they regained a sense of ownership over the square. During the day they prepared the traditional Palestinian dish maftoul. Afterwards there was an English language class, as the women had expressed a desire to learn this language. In the booklet that was published after this intervention, the concerns that were raised before the event were put alongside the reflections shared afterwards. It was argued that the square cannot be open or public in itself, but rather that, through shared and collective practices, it needs to be made open or public. Rather than a state of affairs, the public square is an achievement to be obtained, time and again.

The second problem has to do with the meaning of the refugee's status in relation to the camp. Increasingly, inhabitants of Dheisheh move, provided that they have the means, to the direct environs of the camp, most notably the Qatar-sponsored village of Doha. This raises the issue of what it means to be a refugee when you live in a city, instead of a camp. Moreover, it requires reflection on what the right of return could mean when refugees start to dwell in such more ordinary places, which again risks normalising the exceptionality of the camp. Due to the increasing outflow of Palestinian refugees who go to live in the neighboring city of Doha, and the urban sprawl around the confines of Dheisheh, the participants were intrigued by how this affected the sense of belonging of the refugees who no longer live in Dheisheh. In *The Bridge*, they investigated the meaning of the desolate pedestrian bridge between

Dheisheh and Doha. Initially, the bridge was built by the inhabitants of the camp and Doha with the aim that children could safely cross the street to go to school. As such, the participants understand it as an example of the resilience of refugees and their capacity to accommodate their own needs. Moreover, they see it as a symptom of how the culture of the camp affects its neighbouring areas:

> The importance and reality of building bridges and connecting camps with the surrounding areas, like the case of Dheisheh and Doha, led to opening new perspectives to influence and combine the existence cultures of cities and villages with those that exist in the refugee camps (Al-Saifi and Al-Barbary 2013b, p. 27).

By 2012, however, the bridge was no longer used, and had instead become a garbage tip. In order to reactivate the use of the bridge, and to open it up to new uses, the participants proposed some activities that could take place: 'We decided to use the bridge to reinforce the relations between the families of the camp and Doha city through social activities that focus on reviving the social meaning of the bridge' (Al-Saifi and Al-Barbary 2013b, p. 66). Instead of using the bridge as a way to cross the street, they intended to make it a meeting place between the camp and the city, where exhibitions, public events, Ramadan activities, or a market could be organised.

The last problem concerns the issue of representation. It is present in both foregoing problems – how to represent, respectively, the camp and the refugee beyond exceptionality and normality – but also takes on a significance of its own in the initiative that deals with the narratives about the Nakba[4] and Palestinian resistance that are told in the camp or made present via graffiti. Although the problems of public space in the camp, the meaning of refugee status, and representation are highly interconnected, it can be argued that in every initiative one of them prevails over the other two. The problem of the representation of the camp and of refugees spans all of the initiatives in some way. Nevertheless, it becomes an issue of its own in *The Pathways*. This publication studies and presents the drawings that were made on the walls that make up the small alleys of the camp. The central concern here is how to tell stories about and make images of the camp and the refugees, without normalising the exceptionality of the situation. The booklet begins with a reflection on the role of graffiti in the coming into being of a camp consciousness:

> Graffiti itself creates a cultural climate through paintings and words that mix life's bitter realities in the camp with the dream or future vision that is an awareness of future generations of refugees and the striving to create an acceptable present for the future (Al-Saifi and Odeh 2013 pp. 15–17).

[4]During the Palestine war of 1948, an estimated 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled, and hundreds of Palestinian towns and villages were depopulated and destroyed. These refugees and their descendants number several million people today, divided between Jordan (2 million), Lebanon (427,057), Syria (477,700), the West Bank (788,108), and the Gaza Strip (1.1 million), with at least another quarter of a million internally displaced Palestinians in Israel. The displacement, dispossession, and dispersal of the Palestinian people is known to them as an-Nakba, meaning 'catastrophe' or 'disaster'.

Throughout the remainder of the publication, different representational strategies for raising a collective consciousness of the camp condition are presented. In general, the participants are quite critical of the capacity of social media to represent what happens inside the camp. They propose to focus more on what they call Nakbaliterature, the stories that they were told by their parents and grandparents, and collective reading and writing exercises.

In the final part of this chapter, the analysis of what makes the participants of Campus in Camps diverge, hesitate, and think will return to the initial question of an educational rendering of the notion of obligation in relation to university pedagogy.

Staying with the Trouble

The construction of The Concrete Tent constitutes an important moment in the activities of Campus in Camps and will allow us to shed light on the central obligation of the study practices of Campus in Camps. It is the result of the collective thinking process that started off in 2011. After 2 years of engaging in the different activities outlined above, the participants deemed it relevant to create a space for ongoing reflection, discussion, and study. The tent gathers the different problems that surfaced throughout *The Initiatives*, and materialises the contrast between the right of return and the refugee experience that has been articulated in *The Collective Dictionary*. Nevertheless, it is not the final product of Campus in Camps, nor is it a solution to the three problems. *The Concrete Tent* not only proposes a representation of both the camp condition and the refugee experience, but also offers a place to think together, to continue the conversation concerning the camp and its inhabitants.

The construction of *The Concrete Tent* brings together the three problems connected to the tensive contradiction that drives the work of Campus in Camps discussed in the previous parts. In Stengers' idiom, it can be argued that *life in exile* is the obligation that activates the study practices of Campus in Camps. At first sight, however, it seems as if the camp is what makes participants think, hesitate, and study. Indeed, the camp resurfaces in each of the three problems outlined above, which can be summarised as follows:

A. How to create public space in the camp without normalising its exceptionality.
B. How to relate to the camp as a refugee living outside its borders.
C. How to represent the camp.

Due to its strong political connotations, however, the camp induces more activist or militant reactions. Therefore it is hard to argue that the camp is the obligation of the practices of Campus in Camps, what makes them hesitate and think. Where the camp can only be opposed or contested, it is life in exile, the fact that people have created a communal way of life in precarious and unjust conditions, that requires hesitation and thinking. More than the camp in itself, it is argued, it is the fact that people have been living in exile for decades that constitutes the obligation of the practices of Campus in Camps. Although the camp is the concrete material condition

that connects the problems of creation, relation, and representation, it is life in exile that makes them study instead of protest. It can be argued that the camp condition is too strongly connected with the right of return, which makes it easier to recognise it as an exceptionality and the refugee as its victim. The camp can, hence, be the stake of a public debate or a political action. As such, however, it can never be a matter of study. It only becomes a matter of study through the obligation of life in exile. This obligation allows the camp to be activated as a matter of study that requires the inhabitants to think, instead of to recognise. Indeed, it becomes possible to start to think about the camp – more specifically around the three aforementioned questions that all have a relation to the camp – and not to recognise it in terms of either victimisation or normalisation, the deadlock dilemma that risks turning every conversation about the camp into a political debate. Life in exile is what makes common sense ruminate and oscillate between the struggle for the right of return, on the one hand, and the affirmation of the camp experience, on the other. Moreover, it is what allowed the participants not only to oppose and protest the camp, but also to study the ways in which they have been living in exile for decades. In sum, it is possible to discern a problem of creation, relation, and representation – stemming from the contradiction between the right of return and the camp experience – that converges around the obligation of life in exile.

Returning to Readings and the challenge to formulate an educational, situated, and engaged account of the university, it is possible to argue that, in the case of Campus in Camps, it is life in exile that is investigated and that requires response-ability. For Haraway (2008, 2016) *response-ability* is the capacity of being able, given *this* specific situation, to respond. Moreover, this response is always a response for and to. It is a response *for* because it takes place in the presence of the problem it engages with; in the case of Campus in Camps, life in exile as it takes shape in Dheisheh Refugee Camp. It is never a response informed by general reasons, but always specific reasons. Hence, it is a response *to*, always situated by the problem it addresses. This renders it impossible to make the different people gathered around the issue bow down to a general principle that transcends their different interests and the different ways in which the situation matters to them. Instead, it requires the possibility for the problematic situation to acquire its own reasons and its own way of coming to matter. As a response for and to the obligation of life in exile, the participants of Campus in Camps decided to construct *The Concrete Tent* as a place for ongoing study.

Their obligation towards life in exile is what made the participants of Campus in Camps think. It made it possible to undo the power of the contradiction between victimisation and normalisation – a contradiction that did not require them to think – and turn it into a contrast. As such, in line with Stengers, it can be argued that, via study practices, an obligation comes into being; an obligation that requires a thinking association of students. Whereas for Readings, obligation was the name for our relation to Thought, an empty transcendence, with Stengers it is possible to argue that thinking is the name for our relation to an obligation. Through Stengers, Readings' ethical position can be recast as an educational one by claiming that study practices require us to ward off all transcendent reasons that could be given,

and to engage with all the divergent dimensions the problem plays into, to effectuate a transformation that takes up these reasons in an always local, situated, precarious, and partial response. In the case of Campus in Camps, the response took the form of a specific spatial intervention, *The Concrete Tent*, that made it possible to deal with the contradiction that instigated their activities. Moreover, the participants have created a place for ongoing study of and discussion about the future of the camp. The intervention is not a resolution to the contradiction. It does not take away the question by giving an easy response. Nor does it allow to take refuge in the imaginations of edenic pasts or salvific futures. It is rather, to give the last words to Haraway (2016), a way of *staying with the trouble*.

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Chapter 4
Rationality and Trust in the Governance of Modern Academia

Łukasz Stankiewicz

Introduction

The expansion of higher education during the last century transformed universities into one of society's most important institutions. In many countries, attending some form of tertiary education is now a prerequisite for finding a middle class job. The democratisation of higher learning and the central place science takes in public consciousness should make the twenty-first century a golden age of university education. However, it is often presented as the period of its downfall. Many scholars consider modern universities to be ruined (Readings 1996), overtaken by the forces of capital and sprawling bureaucracies (Slaughter and Leslie 1997), and root for the age of Humboldtian independence. This sentiment stems from the changes in higher education and science policy that began with the transformation of British academia in the 1980s, and accelerated in the last decade with the increasing importance of international university rankings and a profusion of state-level reforms that aim to make universities more competitive on a global level (Deem et al. 2008).

Modern higher education policy, being influenced almost exclusively by rational choice perspectives, is often incompatible with the understanding of the university as a communal endeavour, based on shared norms and trust. The problem with norms and trust is that they are 'fuzzy' concepts, and discourses that use them cannot compete with the dominant language of economics. This means that the language traditionally used by academic workers to describe their institutions seems increasingly irrelevant (Kwiek 2010). In the policy discourse it has been almost completely displaced by the economised account of the university as an 'entrepreneurial' organisation, providing educational services and producing knowledge that can be used to fuel economic growth (Clark 1998).

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My aim in this chapter is to explore the theoretical and practical problems that arise when a purely economic rationality is used to understand human relations – such as research or teaching – that are inherently based on trust. Trust is a very important concept in the modern social sciences, and although it has been used to analyse the situation of modern universities in relation to their social accountability (enforced by the growing auditing infrastructure) and teacher-student relations (Gibbs 2004; Baert and Shipman 2005; Engwall and Scott 2013), it is, I believe, underutilised, especially when it comes to conceptual work concerning the interplay between the old and new modes of academic governance. I intend to provide an account of what trust is, what its relation with economic rationality consists of, and what both of those concepts have to do with academic work and academic management.

The Problem with Trust

One of the most important passages concerning the stakes of trust can be found in Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1999/1651). Hobbes famously described the state of nature as a permanent war of all against all. This war continues even though everybody is worse off than they could be if they managed to live in peace (leading lives that Hobbes described, in one of the best known passages in the English language, as 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'). What makes Hobbes' account different from any other cynical anthropology is the assertion that people know precisely what needs to be done to live in peace and prosperity. The laws of nature – which Hobbes describes in detail but which can be expressed in a single sentence: 'Do not that to another which thou wouldst not have done to thyself' – are known to all. The problem is that:

> The laws of Nature oblige *in foro interno,* that is to say, they bind to a desire they should take place; but *in foro externo,* that is, to the putting them in act, not always. For he that should be modest and tractable and perform all he promises, in such time and place where no man else should do so, should but make himself a prey to others and procure his own certain ruin, contrary to the ground of all laws of Nature. (Hobbes 1999, p. 105)

It might be argued that Hobbes' state of nature is just a thought experiment, with no basis in reality. But there are in fact anthropological descriptions of societies that function almost precisely as described in *Leviathan* (see Banfield 1967; Rothstein 2005). Even when violence is rare, a society can be trapped in a state where expectations of unfair treatment from others (and a readiness to treat others unfairly) make all but the simplest forms of cooperation impossible.

It is widely assumed that one of the things those societies lack is trust (Rothstein 2005). Nobody plays fair because nobody trusts others to play fair, and because the act of playing fair is futile at best (it cannot change the system, in fact it might even strengthen it, by making it easier for the unfair players to win) and self-destructive at worst. Trust is an important ingredient of cooperation because what people do is

strongly dependent on their beliefs concerning the behaviour of others (Dawes 1980). If we believe that others are trustworthy we have a tendency to engage in collective behavior. If we believe others are treacherous we become treacherous ourselves. This means that in low-trust societies many opportunities for fruitful cooperation do not materialise because people expect to be scammed, and the costs of cooperation (when it happens) are much higher because everybody needs costly assurance that they will not be exploited. The ubiquity of cooperation in modern societies and the indispensability of collective behavior for humans (who, as a species, are not capable of surviving on their own) make the theory of trust an important component of sociology (Gambetta 1988; Sztompka 1999; Luhmann 1979), economics (Ostrom 1990, 2009), philosophy (Baier 1986; Pettit 1995), political science and psychology (Rousseau et al. 1998) with evolutionary biology playing a supporting role (Bowles and Gintis 2011).

Unfortunately, trust is notoriously hard to define and the existing definitions often seem to describe phenomena that are polar opposites. Trust can let us form stable relations (Zaheer et al. 1998) or leave them at will (Yamagishi 2011). It can be based on an ungrounded moral intuition (Uslaner 2002) or carefully gathered knowledge of others' motivations (Hardin 2002). It needs close, personal contact (Mayer et al. 1995) or it can flourish in a society-wide network (Fukuyama 1995). It can be rather rare (Sabel 1993) or so common that without it we would not be able to leave our beds in the morning (Sztompka 1999).

Why is the concept of trust so problematic? One of the reasons might lie in its circularity: my level of trust is dependent on the level of trust in my society, and 'society' is composed of individuals that also determine their level of trust by observing others, including myself. Everybody is determined by, and determines everybody else and there seems to be no final cause that decides on a society's level of trust.

This means that when we are thinking about trust it is very hard to make a distinction between agency and structure, cause and effect, ideas and social reality. In consequence it is also hard to decide if people that trust and are trusted should be seen as elements of an inflexible social structure, or whether their actions and beliefs should be seen in the context of morality or social practice. All those perspectives are justified, and all are present in the academic literature.

The analysis I present below will – by necessity – touch on a small part of what has been written about trust. I will try to present, and contrast, two perspectives that, while partly complementary, leave us with a very different outlook on the way organisations, including universities, should be managed. I will start my analysis with theories of rational choice that inform much of today's policy discourse.

Trust and Rationality

Rational choice theory describes trust (and cooperation) in the context of an inflexible system of interweaved interests. The mathematical tools of game theory enable it to describe how people are 'trapped' in equilibria, where their best choice of action is determined by the sum of choices of other actors and the parameters of the situation they find themselves in (Scharpf 1997, p. 10). A game-theoretic analogue of Hobbes' state of nature is called the n-person prisoner's dilemma. It can be described in the following manner:

> Each of n individuals has a binary choice between cooperation and defection and defection is the individually rational choice in the sense that defection gives every individual a higher payoff than cooperation … But, if all individuals select defection, then the outcome of the game is worse to all of them than the outcome which arises if they all select cooperation. The prisoners' dilemma shows us a serious conflict between individual rationality and group rationality … The natural outcome is that all individuals select … defection even though they realize that they will be better off if they select jointly the action of cooperation. (Okada 1993, pp. 629–630).

One real-world example of an n-person prisoner's dilemma is cooperating on a project with several coworkers, where each person's work contributes to the good of all participants. This means that everybody will be tempted to leave the work to others and reap the rewards without actually contributing. Rational choice theory and empirical reality diverge at this point. To the latter, I might trust my coworkers to do their jobs and, at the same time, resist the temptation to exploit them. Unfortunately, this is not an option for the rational (striving to maximise their own self-interest) agents of game theory. If they believe others will defect, they – naturally – defect too, out of fear of being exploited. But they will also defect – to gain the fruits of cooperation without contributing to it themselves – if they believe others will cooperate. This means that rational actors are capable of working together only when their interests align. In conflict-of-interest situations, any 'rational' community should automatically dissolve into the state of nature.

Many theorists tried to reconcile rational choice with cooperation in the prisoner's dilemma-like situations. One of the most popular answers to the problem is that people should be forced or goaded out of the state of nature by carrots and sticks (Shepsle 2006). It is a conclusion that gave the title to Hobbes' book (The Leviathan is the principal carrot and stick wielder) and also gave rise to the modern art of public management that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Another influential solution, one that actually uses the word 'trust', was formulated by Russel Hardin. Hardin defines trust as 'encapsulated interest': 'The trusted party has incentive to be trustworthy, incentive that is grounded in the value of maintaining the relationship into the future. That is, I trust you because your interest encapsulates mine, which is to say that you have an interest in fulfilling my trust' (Hardin 2002, p. 3). Hardin's subjects care about each other (at least as long as it is in their own interest) and know that the other side cares too. Of course, Hardin's account is still a strictly interest-based perspective, so when he presents us with a

literary example of trust and trustworthiness, he has to conjure a vison (taken from Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*) of two corrupt individuals, connected by stolen money and blackmail (Hardin 2002, pp. 1–3). They 'trust' each other because they cannot incriminate the other side without incriminating themselves and only as long as they both profit from continuing their relationship. The latter ends in betrayal the moment one of them loses the leverage he has on the other. It is a rather bleak view, which seems not to be wholly representative of what people (including, I suppose, Dostoyevsky) usually define as 'trust'.

Even in the quite ingenious and theoretically important solutions described above, there is some sleight of hand at work. We can imagine that it is possible to base the workings of our society on the Leviathan, or of our company on an all-powerful management, but it is rather more difficult to envision how these powerful entities will be able to force all the selfish egoists to work together. The first problem with enforcing cooperation is its cost. As one American psychologist puts it:

> The problem with . . . reward and coercion . . . is that they are very costly. The society . . . must deplete its resources either to reward those tempted to defect, or to establish a policing authority that is sufficiently effective that those tempted will not dare do so. . . . In effect, . . . everyone must cooperate but . . . the payoffs . . . are less than they would be if everyone were to cooperate freely in the original situation. (Dawes 1980, p. 175)

The above analysis does not even go into the problem of how the Leviathan will know whom to reward and/or coerce. As we will see in the discussion of modern management systems, the gathering of information is a significant roadblock in designing coercive systems of cooperation.

Hardin's 'trust as encapsulated interest' injects rational subjects with (conditional) care for others but it faces a similar problem of limited knowledge. To trust I have to know an answer to two questions: does the other side really care about my interests? And: do they want to have a continuing relationship with me? This might be a small problem for hypothetically rational agents, but for real human beings the answer to those questions usually is: I cannot know, therefore I trust. And, conversely: If I knew, I would not have to trust.

Neither of these accounts can answer the question about the sources of knowledge we need to possess in order to rationally trust or coerce cooperation. There are, nevertheless, at least three good reasons to engage with the rational choice perspective. First, no other paradigm describes in such a coherent and convincing way what happens when trust is low or non-existent. People that live in trustless societies – like Sztompka's (1994) *homines sovietici* or Banfield's (1967) peasants from southern Italy – seem to be highly rational. Banfield writes that the people he studied lived by a single maxim: 'Maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise' (Banfield 1967, p. 85), which is as close to rational actors that maximise predicted utility and expect the same from others as we can get in real life. In other words, when trust falls, human behaviour slowly approaches rationality. It stands to reason that if we deal with zero-trust communities, most of the predictions of rational choice theory will hold.

Second, borrowing the game-theoretic notion of an equilibrium – a situation in which 'no player can improve his or her own payoff by unilaterally switching to another strategy' (Scharpf 1997, p. 10) – can enable us to describe (and understand) why it is so hard to leave a low-trust social situation once we have found ourselves in one (Rothstein 2005). Hobbes did not use the concept of equilibrium, but he described it perfectly when writing about the inability of people to leave the state of nature in spite of their universal knowledge of the laws of nature. Third, the rational choice perspective is the dominant way of thinking about interpersonal cooperation in modern theories of public management. And those have had an enormous impact on how universities are dealt with by the modern state. Rational choice describes how societies or organisations work when they are stuck in trustless equilibria. To understand what happens when trust is present, we have to turn elsewhere.

Trust and Freedom

There are two obvious problems with the rational account: people do not always defect when it is immediately profitable (but they might change their behaviour in zero-trust situations), and there is no such thing as perfect knowledge. The third problem I would like to discuss is not, strictly speaking, a feature of rational choice, but it is present in Hardin's account, as well as in many strands of psychology and organisational theory. It consists of defining trust as a purely cognitive phenomenon. Trust – according to Hardin – is a belief in the trustworthiness of another person, based on knowledge concerning that person's interests. More generally we can define cognitive trust as an optimistic hypothesis about the likely behavior of others, that gets verified – positively or negatively – when we act on the basis of it.

I would like to use two examples – a literary and an empirical one – to show how real-world trust might diverge from this definition. In one of his books, a fictionalised account of the time he spent working in Ukrainian colonies for juvenile offenders during the early stages of Soviet rule, Anton Makarenko (1955) – whose works were later the basis for the official Stalinist pedagogy – describes an exchange he had with one of the pupils.

Semyon was a teenage boy that previously left the colony after his close friend was expelled for theft. For a time, he and his friend were road bandits (a tense encounter between them and the colony officials is described in one of the chapters), but in the end he returned to the settlement. There, Makarenko tasked him with transporting money (the whole budget of the colony) from the bureau in a nearby town. After bringing the money for a second time the boy confronted him:

> When he brought me the money he would not let me alone.
> 'Count it!'
> 'What for?'
> 'Please count it!'
> 'But you counted it, didn't you?'
> 'Count it, I tell you!'

> . . .
> He clasped his throat as if something was choking him.
> . . .
> 'You're making a fool of me! You couldn't trust me so! It's impossible! . . . You're taking the risk on purpose! I know! On purpose! . . . If you only knew! All the way . . . I kept thinking . . . If only God would send somebody out of the woods to attack me! If there were ten of them, any number of them . . . I would shoot, I'd bite, I'd worry them like a dog, so long as there was life left in me. . . . I knew quite well you were sitting here thinking, "Will he bring it, or won't he?" You were taking a risk, weren't you?'
> 'You're a funny guy, Semyon! There's always a risk with money. . . . But I thought to myself, if you bring the money the risk will be less. You're young, strong, a splendid horseman, you could get away from any bandit, while they'd easily catch me.'
> Semyon winked joyfully:
> 'You're an artful chap, Anton Semyonovich.'
> 'What have I got to be artful about?' I said. 'You know how to go for money now, and in future you'll get it for me again. . . . I'm not a bit afraid. I know very well that you're just as honest as I am. I knew it before – couldn't you see that?'
> 'No, I thought you didn't know that,' said Semyon, and he left the office, singing a Ukrainian song at the top of his voice. (Makarenko 1955, pp. 369–370)

We might interpret the whole situation in a pedagogical way by saying that Semyon's trustworthiness was in some way produced by Makarenko's act of trust. But there is little in the text to differentiate the pedagogical explanation from a cognitive one – in which Makarenko's actions are based on his correct judgement of Semyon's character. What we cannot explain, using only the cognitive account, is Semyon's emotional reaction to the fact that he is, unexpectedly, trusted. First, by saying, 'Count the money', he insists that the relation should switch back to the usual level of limited trust. When this cannot be done, he tries to define what has happened in terms of a somewhat more common situation (risk-taking). Makarenko turns this redefinition on its head by insisting that risk-taking was present but that it related to competence. He feigns naiveté as to what the boy is really talking about – namely, trust in his integrity, not horsemanship. In the end they reconcile; Makarenko drops his game and Semyon accepts that he is being trusted.

In Makarenko's book, trust is a serious matter. This might be a result of the context – trust must have been in short supply in Soviet Ukraine during the civil war, and Semyon is not a particularly trustworthy person. However, even in much more benign situations, trust (and betrayal) evoke surprisingly intense emotions. In their article describing an experiment in which subjects took part in a game structured around n-person Prisoner's Dilemma[1] (with stakes of what would be about $10 to $40 today), Dawes et al. (1977) write:

> One of the most significant aspects of this study, however, did not show up in the data analysis. It is the extreme seriousness with which the subjects take the problems. Comments such as, 'If you defect on the rest of us, you're going to have to live with it the rest of your life,' were not at all uncommon. Nor was it unusual for people to wish to leave by the back

[1] Participants in the experiments met in eight-person groups. They were to choose either cooperation (that earned them $2.50) or defection (earnings of $12 with a penalty of $1.50 to all other players). They could communicate before choosing their strategy.

> door, to claim that they did not wish to see the 'sons of bitches' who double-crossed them, to become extremely angry at other subjects, or to become tearful. . . . In pretesting we did run one group in which choices were made public. The three defectors were the target of a great deal of hostility . . .; they remained after the experiment until all the cooperators were presumably long gone. (Dawes et al. 1977, pp. 14–15)

In both examples trust generates emotions because it seems to be understood as a source of a strong obligation, ascribed to the people that are trusted (Nickel 2007). The experiment's subject reacted emotionally to a violation of this obligation. Semyon, on the other hand, feared that he might be (inadvertently) accused of such a violation.

The fact that trust generates obligations is a bit counterintuitive. Trusting other people is good for society because trustful societies are better places to live in than distrustful ones. But trust is not generally seen as a social norm. We are not in any way obliged to trust anyone, including our friends (Bicchieri et al. 2011) and family. On the other hand, not betraying someone's trust clearly is a social norm. This stands in contrast to the idea of cognitive trust: if we define trust as a belief in trustworthiness of another, and the one who believes this is misguided, then it is a cognitive error on the side of the person that trusts, not a moral error on the side of the one that is trusted (Hardin 2002).

Trust that obliges means much more than trust based on cognitive considerations. In the case of the latter it does not really matter if cooperation is enabled by trust, or by any other (institutional, coercive) means. In the former it matters very much because the presence of trust profoundly alters the relationship people find themselves in.

Another aspect of trust that is widely recognised in the academic literature, but which is incompatible with the rational choice view, is the role of vulnerability in trusting relationships. In organisational theory trust is usually defined as a 'willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party' (Mayer et al. 1995, p. 712).

Vulnerability is present in both examples of trust discussed in this section. It is missing from Hardin's example because the opportunistic nature of rational agents implies that any vulnerability will be exploited, and one can never depend on the goodwill of others. Trust-as-vulnerability, on the other hand, enables a person to imagine him or herself as simultaneously vulnerable and safe. On the level of a whole community, allowing for vulnerability makes cooperation simpler, less costly, and, *ceteris paribus*, more frequent than in low-trust situations.

The emotive and moral/normative aspects of trust I described make it an element of human relations that is easily distinguishable from informed risk-taking (as opposed to the cognitive account). But it is vulnerability that allows trusting communities to be truly different from those that are stuck in low-trust equilibria. Societies in which one cannot allow oneself to be vulnerable rarely look like the chaotic free-for-all that Hobbes described. They might, in fact, be very well organised in order to compensate for the lack of trusting relationships. A trustless world might be devoid of cooperation, but otherwise peaceful like Banfield's

southern Italy; it might be a collectivist society that aims at draining the world of all unexpected qualities and, rather successfully, exchanges freedom for security (Japan, according to Yamagishi 2011), or a totalitarian dictatorship, dominated by a powerful and paranoid Leviathan (Stalinist Russia, as described by Hosking 2014).

I would argue that the thing that differentiates those societies from one where trust is present is the possibility of freedom. When we lack trust, and cannot allow ourselves to be vulnerable, the freedom that others possess in their dealings with us appears as an opportunity to do us harm. When people do not really have power over one another, the build-up of defenses against opportunism expresses itself in general unsociability, which makes cooperation impossible. When they do, they build coercive systems (that range from 'old boys' networks to secret police and shooting squads) that guarantee cooperation but punish any deviation from the norm.

From that perspective, to trust means to give people freedom to harm us, while believing that they will not. And at least some of this belief comes from the fact that trust obliges the other party to be honest, that is, not to exploit our vulnerability for their gain. Trust is not rational, at least if we think about rationality of the selfish and calculating kind. If we live in trust we are not trapped in a social equilibrium, but we exist in a constant state of uncertainty, since the effects of our actions can be predicted only if others use their freedom in a just manner.

Trust in the University

At first sight it might seem that trust does not play a large role in the culture of academia. One of the basic norms of science identified by Merton (1973) is 'organized skepticism'. In academia, we value those who do not just trust their predecessors (or the religious and state authorities, or the common sense notions of their societies), but who manage to come up with new and unexpected insights about the world.

But a deeper reflection can help us discern many academic activities that could not take place without a certain amount of trust. We are supposed to be skeptics, but this does not mean we start everything from scratch. There are few disciplines (philosophy would be the exception) in which we can, and should, check every assertion our colleagues make. We trust that empirical data is reported truthfully. We are trusted to be reliable when we take part in the process of peer-review, form research teams, choose our preferred subjects, participate in networking, and teach our students. And all of this happens in a rather competitive context. As Bourdieu wrote about what he called 'autonomous fields of production' – a category that describes universities very well: 'The specificity of the most autonomous fields of production lies in the fact that they are their own market or, if you like, that here the producers have only their own competitors for consumers' (Bourdieu 1991, p. 664).

Bourdieu's description works best when we use it to understand the university's research mission. The value of research work cannot be determined independently and objectively by, for instance, the price of knowledge on the market or its

adherence to the law and regulations. For academic work to have value, it has to be judged and appreciated by the academic community. But members of this community are also rivals, competing for academic prestige and the things that come with it, e.g. research funding and institutional power. The process of judging others' work has many manifestations, from peer-review or citing colleagues' research, to reviewing the work of their graduate students. When we engage in those activities, we are supposed to be impartial, but because we are judging our rivals (possibly granting them prestige, money, and power) we are tempted to engage in academic politics, basing our judgment on considerations other than the perceived soundness of their work. Lack of fairness can be a result of clashes between conflicting paradigms or ideologies, efforts of one group to dominate an institution or a discipline, or purely personal animosities. When this kind of interaction becomes common, trust can break down to the point where even the instances of fair judgement are seen as political actions and treated as signals of possible alliance or affronts that deserve retaliation. An academic system (or a discipline, or a single organisation) that reaches such a state is in equilibrium, as nobody can change the way things work by unilateral action, and trying to do so puts one in a precarious position within the system.

A good example of an academic low-trust equilibrium (relating to the process of staff recruitment) can be found in a book by Toshio Yamagishi (2011):

> University professors are recruited mostly through personal connections . . . For the sake of simplifying the argument, suppose all Japanese universities recruit professors only from their own graduates. . . . Suppose there is a vacancy in the department and the professor has a decisive say in the choice of the candidate. Should the professor hire the candidate whose performance is highest regardless of whether or not the candidate is her student? Or, is it more desirable for her to recruit her own student insofar as the student has demonstrated a sufficiently high level of academic performance? . . . Most people outside Japanese academia would think it improper to favor one's own student in hiring a new professor, but it would be a disaster for her students if the professor acted according to the universal standard. If other colleges acted according to the same universal principle in hiring professors, her students would have a fair chance. However, what if other colleges recruit only their graduates and this professor was the only one who acted in a universalistic manner? Her students would be greatly handicapped. . . . Under such circumstances, a professor who treats her own students favorably is likely to be considered a desirable professor, and such 'unfair' behavior is likely to be considered morally right. (Yamagishi 2011, p. 81).

Students must seek out 'unfair' professors and a 'fair' professor is unlikely to have much in the way of social prestige and academic clout. This situation continues, even though hiring the best instead of the familiar candidates would make much more sense from the point of view of science as an institution.

The same logic can be applied to coercive authorship (that takes place when professors present as co-authors of their younger colleagues' work without actually contributing anything, Frost-Arnold 2013), cheating in empirical research, publishing many low-quality papers, and avoiding taking up responsibility in research teams. All these examples pose a similar dilemma: either we treat people fairly, and potentially lose our position within academia, or we seek an unfair advantage and contribute to the degradation of our universities' capability to do what they are

meant to do. If I judge my opponents fairly, do not exploit my students, do not cheat in empirical research, and do not avoid responsibility in research teams when everybody else does, I will – like the poor 'modest and tractable' Hobbesian man – lose out to those who do.

The fact that academic work is based around cooperation of competing parties means that higher education and science institutions are always at risk of getting stuck in some form of a low-trust equilibrium. I discuss the ways in which this problem is usually addressed in the next section.

Academic Technologies of Cooperation

There are two modes of governance that deal with academic dilemmas of cooperation: the Humboldtian and the neoliberal one. I will briefly characterise both of them, and try to show how they deal with the issues described above. The neoliberal pattern of university management is based on a policy paradigm of new public management (NPM), which has its roots in the theory of public choice (Lane 2000), an economic account of the way public institutions work. NPM starts from the assumption that people are rational, self-interested utility maximisers. Because of this assumption, power is conceptualised in a way that basically retraces Hobbes' steps: employees cannot be trusted and need to be controlled, monitored, and incentivised in order to do the work they are contracted to do. Power needs to be concentrated, creating an intra-organisational Leviathan (a manager) that disciplines employees by using financial incentives. The final aim is to create organisations that are based on 'a chain of low-trust principal/agent relationships . . . , [and] a network of contracts linking incentives to performance' (Dunleavy and Hood 1994, p. 9). Now, this model of trustless governance generates some paradoxes.

The first paradox of rational management is that in order to work it needs rational subjects that are receptive to material incentives. But the more agents approach this kind of rationality, the harder it gets to make them work efficiently. Rational subjects are hard to control because, caring only about their interest and not being bound by obligations to the management or their clients, they will do anything to minimise costs (the actual work) and maximise their benefits. The audit culture (Strathern 2000) that is introduced in order to provide managers with information about the system is quickly bypassed by academic workers and institutions that feed their superiors information that is, to a lesser or greater degree, untrue in a self-serving way. As Michael Burawoy writes about his experience with British universities:

> An elaborate incentive scheme was introduced . . . to simulate market competition but, in reality, it generated something more like Soviet planning. Just as the Soviet planners had to decide how to measure the output of their factories, how to develop measures of plan fulfillment, so now universities have to develop elaborate indices of output . . . reducing research to publications, and publications to refereed journals, and refereed journals to impact factors. Just as Soviet planning produced absurd distortions, . . . tractors that were too heavy because targets were in tons, and glass was too thick because targets were in

> volume, so now the monitoring of higher education is replete with parallel distortions that obstruct both production (research) and dissemination (teaching) of knowledge. . . . Academics . . . devote themselves to gaming the system, distorting their output – such as publishing essentially the same article in different venues, the devaluation of books, importing into departments academic rock stars, even on a short term basis – all to boost . . . ratings. (Burawoy 2010, pp. 2–3)

The spread of *bad science*, a phenomenon that started to be documented during the last decade (Sztompka 2007) might be another consequence of rational academic governance.

The second paradox concerns ambiguity. Performance ratings as described by Burawoy are, by design, as unambiguous as possible, whereas academic work (in fact, any professional work) is deeply ambiguous (Bruijn 2007). The traditional way to deal with this was to trust academic employees, giving them a certain amount of discretion and believing that their professional ethics and community oversight will take care of the inevitable temptation to squander public resources. Within the neoliberal system, freedom is limited by lack of trust, and recourse to ethics or professional obligations is impossible, as we cannot talk about ethics while simultaneously setting up organisational arrangements that are based on the assumption that people are not guided by them. The problem is that if we cannot deal with ambiguity by trusting people, we have to do it by formalisation and bureaucratisation – and these two practices are what NPM was supposed to do away with in the first place (Lane 2000).

The problem with ambiguity points us to a third paradox: the relation between rational management and risk. In his article concerning the inefficiencies that we encounter in public institutions, Jason Potts writes:

> The innovation process requires experimentation and a high tolerance over organizations and institutions for both risk-taking and failure. Yet the pursuit of efficiency involves, effectively, the very opposite of this, namely risk aversion, intolerance for experimentation, and a preference for proven 'winners'. . . . This form of distrust is more politely known as transparency and accountability. Yet it leads inexorably to a creeping strangulation of risk. (Potts 2009, pp. 206–208)

One of the professed aims of neoliberal management practices is to allow for risk-taking. But risk-taking assumes a possibility of failure, and not punishing failure is at odds with another rule of NPM: a clear assignment of responsibility. Making academic workers fully accountable raises the stakes of success and failure, and forces people to be both more risk-averse and more calculating. New public management pays a heavy price for its coercive model of cooperation: academic institutions become heavily bureaucratised, awash with perverse incentives and not very conducive to undertaking intellectual risks.

The traditional alternative to NPM, the Humboldtian university, puts great trust in at least some of its workers. In his seminal essay, Wilhelm von Humboldt (2010) envisioned professors as 'lonely and free' individuals, whose search for truth is not to be constrained by management or government regulations. The Humboldtian nineteenth century 'German model' of university governance was characterised by freedom of research and teaching, independence from both state and industry, rule

by professorial oligarchy, strict rules of tenure and a low position of students, graduate students, and (in some cases) non-professors with a Ph.D. If the Humboldtian ideal was fully realised, then what eventually matters in the university – gatekeeping the quality of academic work, allocation of financial resources, and decisions about recruitment – would be solely up to professors, and the university would not have to justify its choices to society.

Humboldtian universities easily deal with all the paradoxes described above. Professors can act with a great amount of discretion, which allows them to navigate murky academic structures and provide assessment that accounts for the ambiguities of academic work. They can freely give and withhold trust, creating a network of obligations that bind academic community. They are well placed to take risks as tenure shields them from the more serious consequences of failure. Additionally, the pressure that makes academic fraud common is diminished, when most decisions about recruitment are based on a personal, qualitative evaluation instead of quantitative ratings. Humboldtian structures are designed to deal with many of the problems specific to an organisation that produces and disseminates knowledge.

All this does not mean that the Humboldtian vision is perfect. It institutionalises trust in the professors, by separating them from other members of academic community and the wider society. This situation might be viable in a small, elite system but it becomes increasingly problematic as the system democratises. When this happens, professors face growing resistance from three sources – the state, the middle class, and their younger colleagues. The state and middle class citizens crave transparency because of their growing investment in higher education and science (Geiger 2004). Younger academic workers, being relatively powerless, are often forced into sub-par job positions, have to endure exploitative relations with professors, and deal with the rampant nepotism that dominates some systems (Allesina 2011). All that makes them rather sympathetic towards radical, neoliberal reforms (Stankiewicz 2018). In fact, the non-professors might already conceptualise their actions as being mainly informed by rational calculation instead of trust or communal norms, and see competitive grant and quantitative rating systems as a way of achieving equality with the professors, and securing a right to own the products of one's labor.

Conclusion

Both types of academic infrastructure of cooperation are imperfect. The Humboldtian model generates a serious deficit of public trust in the university and the supposedly universal communal norms of fairness are often reserved exclusively to the benefit of the professors, while other academic workers live in a world that marries neoliberal rationality with feudal levels of inequality. On the other hand, the solution provided by new public management exorcises trust from academia, without anything to replace it except for the feedback cycle of establishing and evading the top-down, coercive norms of conduct.

So, is there anything to be done? I think much can be achieved by mapping out the rules of the academic game in an unsentimental fashion, by eschewing ideologies and trying to think in terms of an institutional and moral economy of cooperation. This kind of knowledge can already be found in the works of Elinor Ostrom (Ostrom 1990, 2009), Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (Bowles and Gintis 2011; Bowles 2016), Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson (2012), Bo Rothstein (2005), and many others.

One thing that is clear from all those accounts is that there is nothing easy about building communities of trust. There are, nevertheless, several points that can be made. First, trust is systemic. It cannot be addressed at an individual level by targeting people's 'mentality' (Sztompka 1999). People that do not trust are probably right to do so in the context of the system they find themselves in. Second, this does not mean that there is nothing at all to be done at the individual level: by addressing people's capability for moral reasoning (Bowles 2016) it is possible to make them more trustworthy, with a hope that trust will follow. Third, one of the most important features of trust-building is constant communication between parties (Ostrom 1990, 2009). People that engage in it should do so on equal terms and they should be able to influence the way their institutions work.

Fourth, having an influence means that people should have the opportunity to establish rules, as we are generally much better at following self-imposed than top-down rules of conduct (Ostrom 1990). Fifth, a person that consistently breaks his or her obligations towards others should be excluded from the community (Ostrom 1990). Without this option, people that exploit others by free-riding on their work, or people that use power for exploitation, will undermine trust in the fairness of the system and push it towards a low-trust equilibrium (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012).

The Humboldtian model implements many of the elements described above, but it does so in a highly unequal context. Inequality and trust must not be incompatible, but they might – as in the case of income inequality and generalised trust (Uslaner and Brown 2005) – be inversely correlated. Additionally, people occupying the lower ranks of the academic ladder can find it hard to trust professors, who can break obligations towards them without any real consequences. The neoliberal model, in turn, seems to be doing well at excluding people, its assumptions and methods not conducive to a trusting environment.

In sum, creating communities based on trust is a matter of hard work. To trust we need to know others well, and let others know ourselves. We need a lot of social contact, norm-building, and norm-upholding. We need to exclude those who cannot be trusted, while always trying to bring them back into the fold. It is not a world of perfect freedom but of a constant striving to build that which is common.

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Chapter 5
Participation in Partition: Post-critical Approaches to the University

Christiane Thompson

> *'I once saw an adjunct not get his contract renewed after students complained that he exposed them to "offensive" texts written by Edward Said and Mark Twain' (Schlosser 2015).*

Introduction

I begin my consideration of the present state of universities by looking at an article by the American academic, Edward Schlosser. His article focuses on a change in the study culture at universities, which he depicts as a negative development. In his article, Schlosser writes about how several of his colleagues did not have their contracts renewed due to complaints by students: the students did not accept the necessity of being confronted with 'offensive texts' (Schlosser 2015). According to Schlosser, the willingness to be challenged by texts at colleges is waning. The attitude towards reading assignments has become increasingly noncommittal. The study program, i.e. the modules, has become the point of reference in college education. Schlosser recounts how he himself has begun to adapt his own course syllabi to the changed conditions on campus.

It is not just the study culture that has changed at universities, however: 'While I used to pride myself in getting students to question themselves and engage with difficult concepts and texts, I now hesitate. What if this hurts my evaluations . . . ' (Schlosser 2015). This quote shows how certain forms of quality control have had considerable effects on lecturers and professors. Student evaluations have become an important point of reference in the appraisal of teaching quality. These evaluations have effectively placed teaching under surveillance and subject to assessment, which has impacted what it means to study as well as the expectations we place on ourselves and others. Furthermore, these developments characterise students in terms such as 'customer orientation' and 'customer satisfaction'. These

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developments occur in the context of precarious working conditions: higher education as a workplace abounds with short-term contracts, a great deal of competitive pressure, and a high degree of risk for those pursuing a career in academia (see Nelson 2009).

The picture painted by Schlosser concerning the situation at universities raises the question whether the very fabric of education has been torn. Such a conclusion would seem warranted in light of certain traditions of thought within the German-speaking philosophy of education. These traditions view education and *Bildung* as fundamentally concerned with experiences that challenge one's own point of view, elicit reflection, and change one's view of the world and oneself (Thompson 2009). In the first part of this chapter, I will present a phenomenological reading of Käte Meyer-Drawe and Bernhard Waldenfels that seems to support Schlosser's critique. In the second part of the chapter, I will explicate the current critical discourse as it has been introduced with Schlosser's observations, referring in particular to the recent book by the British sociologist Frank Furedi (2017) to exemplify this. I will then delineate more thoroughly the current rhetoric of a 'university in crisis'. It will be shown in the following section that this cultural-critical rhetoric does not serve well for educational theoretical reflection. After describing the shortcomings of the cultural critique, the chapter takes up a post-critical approach: it places the phenomenological description within the context of a plurality of concerns that always bring about, what I term, a participation in partition. In the final sections, suggestions are made as to how one can foster a challenging and sometimes conflicting exchange on dissenting views and concerns.

Phenomenological Considerations on the University and Education

In her phenomenological studies of learning, Käte Meyer-Drawe (2003, 2005, 2008) has analysed the starting points and processes of learning experiences. She points out that learning should not be misunderstood as an act carried out by the learner. Referring back to the Greek term *pathos*, she stresses that learning is rather an experience that happens to the learner. This implies a critique of positions that view learning as an act of construction by the individual. According to Meyer-Drawe, learning takes place in a 'pathic' involvement that alienates learners from their previous references of thought and knowledge.

The following quote describes how learning involves an alienating transition: 'Learning in this respect begins at a time and place when the familiar breaks down and the new is not yet at hand; "because the old world is abandoned and a new one does not yet exist" . . . The path does not lead from darkness to light, but first into twilight, on the threshold between *not anymore* and *not yet*' (Meyer-Drawe 2008, p. 15). Quoting George Herbert Mead, Meyer-Drawe here describes learning as a transition and a threshold between an old and a new world. The transition is

characterised by the fact that the experience of self and world, as well as its measure, have become unclear.

In a different passage Meyer-Drawe refers to the fundamental nature of learning as a change of experience using a quote from Walter Benjamin's 'Berlin Childhood around 1900'. The line by Benjamin, 'Now I can walk but no longer learn to walk' (Benjamin 2006, p. 142) unveils learning's categorial specificity of retreating into darkness (cf. Meyer-Drawe 2008, p. 193). When learning, the old world withdraws, as does the path to the new one. The reference to Benjamin also points to the idea of corporeality central to Meyer-Drawe's thought: the pathic dimension of the learning experience is associated with the incarnation of the subject — in Benjamin's example, this is the nonexistent sense of the child's balance. Here, the child does not yet know how to walk and is discovering his or her world on all fours. In other words, it is in a process of transition to a being-able-to-walk not yet imaginable.

Drawing on Benjamin, Meyer-Drawe characterises the loss of balance as a metaphor for learning. With reference to Plato's allegory of the cave, Meyer-Drawe sees learning as having to do with a disturbance: the learner does not choose to step into the experience of learning. The learning process is rather a renunciation or turning away (*periagogé*), which occasionally even entails elements of force: the learner does not free herself, but is freed from her bonds and brought to the path of knowledge. It is only after adjusting to the new point of view that the now emancipated subject can see the shackles of her old views.

Hence, the phenomenology of learning puts liminal experiences and the acquisition of knowledge in close proximity. The meaning of knowledge only reveals itself through the meaning by which it has questioned something formerly deemed self-evident. It thereby proves itself indispensable because it promises a renewed foundation for the subject's understanding of herself and the world. Put differently, it provides an orientation that had been previously lost. The learner commits herself to this knowledge, but only to find out that this knowledge may also be challenged in the future.

It is in this very context that Bernhard Waldenfels (2009), a central figure in German-speaking phenomenology, defines the university as a 'liminal space' (*Grenzort*). Waldenfels presents the university as an institution without grounds, that is, groundless. One could paradoxically speak of an institution that fights its very institutionalisation. Waldenfels uses the Greek concept of *atopos* in this context, that is, the negation (*alpha privativum*) of the Greek term for place (*topos*). According to Waldenfels, such moments and instances where something is 'atopic' in the sense of 'unpositioned', i.e. where thinking is in a transitory state, are particular to the university. Thus, the university is fundamentally concerned with questioning methods and bases of knowledge. Similar to Meyer-Drawe, Waldenfels connects liminal experience with knowledge. This leads him to see the university as a performative place, as a place that one cannot plan for in advance.

If we now ask how the university institutes itself as a performative place, we can draw another parallel between Meyer-Drawe's and Waldenfels' theoretical work. Both describe the liminal experience as *pathos*. Disturbance can be regarded as a sign for a pathic state. It can be accompanied by various attunements such as despair,

fright, or awe. Waldenfels speaks here of 'liminal affects'. They indicate the questioning of what has formerly been taken for granted. New forms of knowledge come to the fore and provoke conflicts with the knowledge formerly thought to be appropriate. Meyer-Drawe's and Waldenfels' references to ancient Greek philosophy are not a coincidence, considering that both Plato and Aristotle assumed the very beginnings of philosophy itself to lie in the attunement of astonishment and wonder. Ultimately, from a phenomenological perspective, the university and higher education[1] are closely tied to liminal experiences, which the participants experience as unsettling events.

On the 'Crisis of the University' – The Baseline of a Rhetoric

In the preceding section, I presented an approach that links higher education in the university to the liminality and performativity of knowledge production. Against this background, the case discussed by Schlosser at the beginning of the chapter seems to indicate the decay or dissolution of higher education in the university. As a matter of fact, Schlosser criticised students for refusing to countenance uncomfortable ideas (ibid.). There is a growing body of literature on this matter, posing the fear or crisis of knowledge and enlightenment (cf. Williams 2016). It is alleged that the university cannot be maintained given the defensive attitude as well as the increased intolerance of controversial views and uncomfortable ideas on college campuses (cf. Lukianoff 2012).

This intolerance becomes visible in the many prohibitive, precautious, as well as censorious measures and practices. One example has already been mentioned: students have complained about being confronted with uncomfortable ideas in the classroom. This is where the notorious *trigger warnings* come into play.[2] Further intolerant practices include the boycott of invited controversial speakers (or 'no platforming', e.g. on Israeli politics, abortion) or the enactment of speech regulations on campus. Finally, bans on the sale of newspapers or wearing costumes that are considered racist or sexist are pending.[3] In the following, to exemplify the critique of

[1]While Meyer-Drawe speaks about learning, a concept that has been criticised in the educational-theoretical context (Biesta 2005), others have linked the idea of limit experience (in higher education) to the German concept of *Bildung* (Thompson 2009).

[2]University lecturers are increasingly making use of 'trigger warnings' in order to caution course participants that something might come up during class that may cause students emotional harm or discomfort (Lukianoff 2016). Lukianoff (2014) has ironically spoken of 'Freedom From Speech' in order to describe the current developments.

[3]The British online journal 'Spiked' has extensively researched the matter of free speech at universities in the UK. It launched an annual 'free speech university ranking' in 2015 (see Spiked 2018; http://www.spiked-online.com/free-speech-university-rankings#.XBdsf1z7SUk). FIRE is the acronym for the 'Foundation for Individual Rights in Education', which has been fighting for free speech on US campuses since the early 2000s (see FIRE 2018; https://www.thefire.org/).

such developments, I will refer to the work of the British sociologist Frank Furedi, who has studied in detail the situation of the universities in the UK and in the US. Published in 2017, Furedi's book *What's Happened to the University?* offers a sociological exploration of the current transformations of the university.

Furedi condenses his criticism in the notion of 'infantilization' (Furedi 2017). This concept takes up a cultural theme that Furedi has developed before (Furedi 2005); namely, the growing sense of vulnerability and the increasing need to be supervised and protected within the public sphere. With respect to the university, Furedi describes various developments that amount to the 'deification of safety' as well as to 'therapeutic censorship' (Furedi 2017, pp. 9, 14). According to Furedi, students are neither treated nor addressed as adults. In view of the extensive micromanagement within universities, i.e. the enactment of numerous regulations and norms, students are permanently safeguarded. An example that can be given here are the speech regulations regarding 'offensive speech' that have been implemented in many universities in the UK and US. As Furedi has argued elsewhere (Furedi 2016), these regulations undermine academic freedom because they promote an atmosphere of surveillance (Furedi 2016, p. 122; see also Furedi 2017, p. 173). Furthermore, these norms and regulations re-organise social interactions within the university in terms of well-being and comfort, which brings up another aspect that Furedi develops in his book: the emotionalism on university campuses.

Drawing on diverse examples and cases, Furedi contends that reason and judgment lose their significance while, at the same time, matters of social recognition as well as emotional support become extremely important (Furedi 2017, pp. 17–35). Fragility and vulnerability have become primary categories, as illustrated by the above-mentioned trigger warnings. They *precede* the problematic situation and follow the logic of precaution. In other words, they cultivate the idea of excluding everything that might be experienced as 'uncomfortable'. Furedi states: 'Although rarely codified or rendered explicit, an atmosphere of emotional correctness prevails on many campuses, which invariably influences the work of academics. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, once sensitivity is endowed with a special value in academic scholarship and teaching, the range of topics that will be deemed sensitive is likely to expand' (ibid., p. 159). Furedi explains here how such a precautious perspective leads to limitations as well as aggressive reservations.

According to Furedi, these limitations and reservations make the aggressive dimension of emotionalism apparent. Anyone who fails to accept or recognise the regime of social recognition is threatened with exclusion. Schlosser has pointed to the precarious working conditions of faculty staff and the pressure to subordinate to the ordinance of recognition and well-being. Furedi ascertains the proliferation of a medicalised language of psychological distress: the cultivation of a language of discomfort brings about, says Furedi, a 'weaponisation of emotions' (ibid., p. 17). Feelings of discomfort are transformed into protests against sources of discomfort – such as a Halloween costume, an email calling for tolerance of offensive costumes, poetry by white writers, or the Western canon in general (ibid.).

Overall, Furedi situates the transformations of the university within the wider context of a cultural immunisation that devalues reason and judgment. These

transformations effectively undermine the possibilities of education: 'Academic learning is not simply an extension of schooling. It requires students to exercise *intellectual independence*, and the cultivation of that accomplishment is fundamental to the vocation of an academic' (Furedi 2017, p. 163; my emphasis). Does this claim of intellectual independence align with the phenomenological account that has been presented before? At first glance, Furedi's and Meyer-Drawe's as well as Waldenfels' positions appear to be in agreement. They emphasise the significance of disturbance or intellectual challenge at the university. They also attach importance to intellectual exposition, i.e. the openness to calling into question that which has been previously taken for granted. The university as a liminal place requires its members to expose themselves to the perspectives that others offer.

However, there are also differences worth noting between Furedi and the phenomenological account. In the following I will point out the difficulties that I see in Furedi's analysis and critique of culture. Based upon this account, a different – namely, post-critical – framework will be offered to understand the liminality of the university.

Reviewing Cultural Critique

Furedi's book has undoubtedly made a strong contribution regarding the current situation in universities. *What's Happened to the University?* establishes connections between the developments at universities and those in the broader public sphere. Furthermore, the book demonstrates the relatedness of different phenomena, e.g. the presence of emotionalism and the growing 'juridification' of universities (ibid., p. 186). Another point is the problematic 'trade-off' between freedom and security, as Furedi refers to it (ibid., p. 167). This brings him to the final claim of the book, to 'reappropriate academic freedom' (ibid., p. 186).

To be sure, I agree with Furedi that academic freedom is a very important prerequisite of the university as a liminal space. The increasing regulation of speech, of micromanagement in general, and censorship are disquieting. At the same time, I have concerns regarding the way Furedi presents his analysis and how he portrays the role of the university. To be sure, I do not have the space here to sufficiently explicate these concerns. In the following I will pin them down with respect to four themes: I will briefly discuss the *bareness of generalisation*, the problem of *emotionally charged dramatisation*, the problem of *critical enclosure*, and the problem of *rational polarisation*.

Furedi's book, like many works of cultural critique, is rife with *cultural generalisations*. This sense of generalisation is already prefigured in the title of the book: *What's Happened to the University?*. The question suggests that all universities have undergone the same problematic development – and that they are all alike. The logic of generalisation becomes obvious when investigating Furedi's comments on speech regulations. Without further differentiation, they are generally interpreted as 'toxic' for the university, because – as mentioned above – they bring about an 'atmosphere

of surveillance'. There are two problems with this line of argumentation. One is the evocation of fear and concern that can only be overcome by dropping regulations. Here, emotions are instrumentalised in a way that Furedi precisely criticises in his book. The other problem is the undifferentiated view between rules and rule-following (cf. Wittgenstein 2003). The argumentation suggests that the speech regulations are in-and-of-themselves problematic. However, one could also argue that speech regulations are to be interpreted as a consequence of a wide-ranging freedom of speech. The sociologist and political economist William Davies has argued: 'In many ways, speech has never been freer than it is today, including speech that is hostile, emotional and potentially extreme' (Davies 2018, sec. 47). This statement suggests that the overall situation of free speech with respect to academic freedom and its limitations is far more complex than Furedi's analysis suggests. What we need, then, is a differentiating discourse rather than one that provides bare generalisations (characterised by terms such as 'infantilisation' and the like).

The second aspect that I want to critically evaluate is the emotionally-charged dramatisation interwoven with Furedi's analysis. This dramatisation is already apparent when he makes reference to the 'atmosphere of surveillance'. The dramatic presentation of the endangerment of the university becomes obvious in the (extreme) cases and comparisons offered. Take, for instance, the case of Erika and Nicholas Christakis at Yale who 'were denounced for ignoring important racially sensitive issues' (Furedi 2017, p. 18). To be sure, the case happened as Furedi portrayed. Yet the case reconstruction centres around the 'dramatic inversion' of the university that is then again transferred into general formulas: 'illiberal zeitgeist' as well as the 'cultural script of vulnerability' (ibid., p. 19). The problem with this form of dramatic presentation is that it avoids a more nuanced conceptual analysis as well as an empirically-driven examination of the situation. Emotionally-charged case descriptions require a reflection concerning the way that they form the groundwork for analysis.

The third problem, 'critical enclosure', refers to how Furedi narrows down the task of the university to a critical discourse. The readers are permanently addressed to take up the position of critical opposition toward the current developments. The rhetoric of critical opposition, however, bears one central problem, as authors such as Adorno and Latour have pointed out: the critical rhetoric always treats important questions as if they have already been answered. Adorno argued that the cultural critic always speaks as if she herself was not part of the problem (Adorno 2003, p. 11). In his famous essay 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?' (2004), Latour portrays the critical discourse and its ideological distinction as 'fact versus fairy', which limits thinking to a rather superficial scheme (Latour 2004, pp. 238–243). In this scheme the critic is always in the superior position. Regarding the matters to be examined, Furedi's order of critique is unsatisfactory. The rhetoric of critical opposition implies the downfall of the university without being able to pose further questions, for example, on the educational-philosophical notion of vulnerability. This is also the reason why this critique cannot escape the spiral of distancing inquisition that can lead to a trivialisation of critique (Masschelein 2003).

My fourth objection to Furedi refers to the polarisation of argumentation. Like other books and contributions (cf. Slater 2016), Furedi constructs a strong opposition between the 'discourse of enlightenment and rationality' and the 'discourse of recognition and justice'. The university is presented as the home of the rational subject that is supposed to be completely committed to rational argumentation. This is clearly an 'epistemic illusion' (Bourdieu 2001, p. 86). However, we also have to pose the question whether this opposition is really appropriate.

Furedi's description is based on a universalist idea of enlightenment, as Kant developed it in his 'The Conflict of the Faculties'. The process of rationally establishing the truth is *universalised* (with the so-called superiority of the philosophical faculty; Kant 1992). Kant presumed that the public exchange of knowledge would resolve the dispute and eventually bring about further knowledge and enlightenment. Furedi's notion of 'intellectual independence' takes up precisely this idea of enlightenment. There is a sense of an enlightened 'purity' of knowledge that would be, according to Furedi, compromised by emotionalism and vulnerability. Uncompromised academic freedom and rationality are equated and placed in opposition to emotionalism, recognition, and justice. This opposition is well known and illustrates what Foucault has called the 'blackmail of the enlightenment' (Foucault 1984, p. 42): you are either 'for' enlightenment or 'against' it. In my view, this polarisation misjudges what the university is about. The dissent and the opposing positions within the university are not about 'different rational constructions'. In the following, I want to argue that *the university is about how to determine – by thinking and speaking – what this or that knowledge means to us*.

'There are Things We Can Agree About and Important Things': Post-critical Engagements

In this section I want to reintroduce the phenomenological readings offered by Meyer-Drawe and Waldenfels and connect them to a post-critical reflection of the university. I will do so by referring to the title of this section, taken from the title of a paper by Roland Reichenbach (Reichenbach 2000). The quote is from Max Planck: 'There are things we can agree about and important things'. This quote refers to our experience that important issues are usually not resolved by argumentation or logical analyses. Rather, we have the experience of irresolvable disagreement: we experience pluralism. This pluralism is extremely challenging when it refers to *something of importance to us*. The university is precisely the place where issues and things considered important are subject to examination. This means that the centre of the university is not a rationalistic form, but rather a form of plurality: a plurality characterised by a concern. Thus, things and issues that are dealt with at the university require a confrontation with plurality and dissent. The latter cannot simply be resolved: the university draws together contradictory and challenging views of the

things or issues at hand. It is in this context that a post-critical reflection of the university can be outlined.

The word family of the term 'critique' goes back to the Greek verb *krinein*, which means 'to differentiate'. An object of study is put into a conceptual order by placing it under certain distinctions or categories: 'left' versus 'right', 'Kant' versus 'Hegel', etc. Since the early modern era, the basic form of dispute at the university was very much determined by this critical practice. Oppositions were constructed in order to skeptically assess the argumentative spheres of positions to be explicated in theses. The *disputatio* was precisely the practice to *perform* 'knowledge in opposition' as well as to shape the corresponding critical scientific ethos. The 'seminars', as instituted by Friedrich August Wolf, are very good examples with which to scrutinise these knowledge practices at the *classical* German university (Spoerhase and Dehrmann 2011). To be sure, within the context of the *disputatio*, this critical practice could function quite well; for both the institutional arrangements as well as the limited and exclusive realm of scientific knowledge of the eighteenth century upheld this structure.

Given the plurality of knowledge positions and knowledge interests today, it is problematic at this point in time to simply call for 'intellectual debate'. The situation described by Furedi instead leads to questions like: Why should people engage in knowledge exchange at all? What are the contemporary ways and forms of determining and discussing what we know? What gives meaning to knowledge exchange if it is not the promise of a rational resolution? The notion of the post-critical indicates that there is something *beyond* or – perhaps better – *alongside* the critical practice. It is outlined in the question: How can studying and dialogic practice at the university be performed *so that we do not* end up with rationalistic (or otherwise) reductions or even aggressive antagonism? Post-critical means, in other words, that something else must come into play — something that shows that critique is not self-sufficient. Both effort and care are necessary to pursue discourse.

In their 'Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy', Hodgson et al. (2017) write with an orientation 'that is founded in a hope for what is still to come' (Hodgson et al. 2017, p. 15). In my view, this expression captures a sense of responsibility to uphold a general openness and concern that does not belong to a particular philosophical position or critical practice. With respect to the university, there is a relevance and importance to 'take care of concerns' that has to be generally cultivated. It is here that I see the connection to Waldenfels' interpretation of university as a 'liminal space'.

As already mentioned above, Waldenfels presents the university as 'atopic' in the sense of unpositioned. In the current context this means that one cannot consider the university a 'home'. Put differently, the university is not a place where one permanently reaffirms one's *own* critical views and standpoints; instead, deliberations are driven by a concern to cultivate a discourse that is not geared toward complete dissociation. Therefore, post-critical reflections, such as those suggested here, are concerned with the constitution of the university as the cultivation and participation

of a discourse lacking a common ground.[4] As a result, participation refers to, and is always confronted with, partition.

As one might have already ascertained, I see the educational dimension of the university in this activity of cultivation and participation: higher education is about a transformation of the self on the grounds of the transformative quality of discourse – a discourse that is concerned with participation in partition. This is why Furedi's call for an 'intellectual debate' and the 'reappropriation of academic freedom' remains banal as long as it does not consider the limits of rationalisation or reflect on the problems associated with the ongoing deepening of critical polarisation. Yet, it is important to mention here that *I share Furedi's concern*, and his critical account warrants a closer inspection of the sociality of the university. What we need are (further) accounts of practices and forms in order to better grasp the educational dimension of the university, i.e. the participation in partition. In the following section, I want to sketch out a vignette to serve as a point of departure for taking up this task: to expand the post-critical dimension of the university by offering an educational account of practices and forms surrounding a divided discourse.

A Case Vignette on 'Participation in Partition'

In the spring semester of 2017, several colleagues and I organised a lecture series on the topic 'The university as educational space'. Every week the lecture took place at a different university. The lectures were broadcast (via video conference) to the lecture halls of the other participating universities across Germany. So that the audience could see not only the lecturer and the Powerpoint presentation on the screen, but also an image of the respective audiences was visible to the participants in the other lecture halls. The lectures were memorable in the way they extended the university beyond the literal walls of the lecture hall. Different forms of spectatorship evolved. The Frankfurt students, for example, were able to observe students from other universities, and they could also see how these students perceived their lecturer. Furthermore, it was possible to observe how students from other universities had dealt with the reading assignments or when they left the lecture hall early.

The reciprocal spectatorship made aspects and relations of participating in the university visible in new and unexpected ways. The lectures not only elaborated on the topic of the university as educational space, they also 'performed' the university as an educational space. Different moments and zones of togetherness as well as separation were constituted during the lecture – depending, for instance, on whose turn it was to ask questions. The different senses of filled or empty lecture halls, for

[4]It is important to note here that the post-critical does not imply a certain philosophical position or doctrine. Following the account offered by Waldenfels, one could speak of an 'atopic' reflection. This is to say that 'post-critical reflections' do not 'overcome' or 'move beyond' critical reflections. They reside, so to speak, among the critical views that have recognised their inner limits.

example, provided the inquiring voices with a different framework or setting in which to pose their questions. Moreover, the sources of questions from other lecture halls made the volatile nature of discourse obvious. Both in their discursive practice and their gestures, the participants were required to diligently and carefully uphold the productivity of discussion between different lecture halls. In my view, this context allows the members of the university to engage with each other in order to speak about the university and its academic freedom; it introduces the question of what it means to be a member – a student, lecturer, professor etc. – of the university.

During the lectures, different forms of membership related to particular configurations of presence and participation became visible (see also Thompson 2018). In this context I follow Kerstin Jergus (2017) who has argued that presence and participation form complex configurations of togetherness and separation. These can neither be grasped by harmonious notions of community nor by the idea of controversial debate. The following vignette is quite telling in this context.

> During the third lecture it became obvious that the students from the military academy[5] were present in the lecture hall dressed in their uniform. Because of the perspective of the camera, one could see the big, black military boots they were wearing.[6] The camera views of the soldiers next to the other camera views (from the other lecture halls) had an astounding effect on the participants in the Frankfurt lecture hall. Shortly before the end of the session, when the transmission had ended, one of the Frankfurt students a posed question: Are the students who are present as soldiers students in the same way as we are students? From here, further questions emerged: Possibly, the common dress code even brings about a stronger sense of being a common student? How does being a student and being a soldier relate to one another? On that day, the lecture ended with these questions, some of them posed openly, some attempting to make a distinction between student-students and soldier-students.

This vignette does not provide a closing judgment on the matter. Rather, it forms a common point of reference to engage with the question of what it means, for example, to be a student in a lecture hall. Neither does the vignette take up an ideal standpoint of a student or the practice of study or listening. Instead, it draws attention to the importance of the issue and simply calls for a discourse regarding the situation. This might lead to questions about how individuals are to be addressed at the university – in terms of a learner, a student, a speaker, as Biesta has formulated the question (Biesta 2010).

The vignette does not take its point of departure from a general problematic development but rather from an experience. By going back to the concrete situation, it is possible to call into question the 'partition of the sensible' (Rancière 2002), i.e. the ways that we have come to take for granted particular ways of perceiving and giving meaning to something. In this way, the vignette invites examination and research – without passing over into polarisation – as I see this in Furedi's account.

[5]The term 'military academy' should not be mistaken here. The university mentioned here is a civilian institution with soldiers as students (i.e. not a military institution).

[6]It was only after the lecture that a colleague at the military university told me that the students had participated in a military exercise earlier in the day — thus the reason why the students had been wearing their uniforms.

With its reference to experience, the vignette considers equally argumentative speech and attunements. It demonstrates how impressions and affects are inherent to the development of thought.[7] Instead of posing the university as a mere exchange of rational arguments, the vignette widens the scope for a manifold of affects, like disappointment, wonder, huffiness, exhaustion, or anxiety. These affects and attunements represent traces enabling one to research the issue(s) at hand.

The vignette can also be taken as an invitation to enter into a discourse. Due to its abstinence from explanation, it facilitates the step to speak and think about the issue or question that is treated. In a way, we can speak of a profanation, as Masschelein and Simons have referred to it in their research on the university (Masschelein and Simons 2010, p. 45). It is here that the public dimension of the university comes to the fore. To be sure, the public dimension does not require a uniform standpoint or general rationalism. It refers to a matter of concern to be treated in a divided discourse.

Concluding Remarks

The point of departure of this chapter was Edward Schlosser's notes on the changing study culture at universities. According to Schlosser, students refuse to countenance uncomfortable ideas. However, if – as phenomenological accounts (Meyer-Drawe, Waldenfels) suggest – learning and higher education are dependent on critique and the disturbance of former worldviews, then the current situation can be regarded as an immunisation of the university. In the second part of the chapter, I reconstructed the corresponding discourse on the 'crisis of the university'. Frank Furedi's recent book *What's Happened to the University?* was presented in order to provide a more differentiated account of the ongoing 'deification of safety' and 'therapeutic censorship' at universities (Furedi 2017, pp. 9, 14).

Notwithstanding the persuasiveness of Furedi's analysis of the university, it has been shown that the current rhetoric of crisis is indeed questionable: Because of its generalising and dramatising quality, it actually limits the possibility of entering into an educational-philosophically productive exchange at the university. It brings about a polarisation of positions and a thinking in terms of dichotomies. At this point, the chapter introduced the importance of a post-critical engagement. This engagement takes its point of departure from a matter of concern – a matter that cannot rely on agreement and consent. The experience of plurality evokes the question about how a discourse on the matter of concern can be constituted at all. The cultivation of such a discourse by participants who do not have anything in common is the task of the university (as a liminal space).

[7] It was Michael Schratz et al. (2012) who pointed toward this formulation and use of vignettes. Referring to the phenomenological works of Meyer-Drawe, Schratz et al. have elaborated on the bodily and affective situatedness of thought captured in these vignettes.

It is here that the phenomenological reading takes up a different significance: using a vignette from a lecture, it was shown how participation in a divided discourse can take shape. The vignette refers to situated subjects that take part in the university in different ways. Therefore, vignettes transgress the blackmail of enlightenment present in the current crisis discourse of the university and invite us to take a closer look. Finally, by limiting themselves to specific situations, they create a space for speculation and contradiction without bringing about a critical closure of judgment.[8]

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Chapter 6
University Lecturing as a Technique of Collective Imagination: On Seeing Things as If They Had Taken a Bodily Form

Lavinia Marin

> Why aren't lectures scrapped as a teaching method? If we forget the eight hundred years of university tradition that legitimises them, and imagine starting afresh with the problem of how to enable a large percentage of the population to understand difficult and complex ideas, I doubt that lectures will immediately spring to mind as the obvious solution. (Laurillard 2002, p. 93)

Introduction

The lecture is the oldest surviving pedagogical practice in the university, with a respectable age of over eight centuries and counting. In current discussions about the modernisation of the university, lecturing is one of the most criticised practices. Many ask whether the lecture needs to be kept when there are other means of conveying information that are more efficient, less time consuming, more engaging for the student. For example, the recording of speeches, of videos, not to mention the availability of interactive materials, electronic books, and MOOCs are all ways through which information can be easily offered to students without the hassle of physically going to a lecture hall, sitting still, and being possibly bored for 2 h. As the quote above from Diana Laurillard points out, lecturing is not the most obvious solution when looking for ways to give information to others. Perhaps it is time to let go of the lecture, as there are better ways of doing things. But better for what?

If we assume for a moment that the university lecture was not kept around just out of respect for tradition, then we are faced with a difficult issue, one that also plagues other discussions concerning educational practices: is the practice valuable for the

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results it achieves or is it valuable in itself? The fact that the first line of defence for any educational practice is its usefulness for something else, in other words its instrumental value, does not mean that this should also be the last line of defence. Perhaps there are other ways of speaking about the lecture that are not instrumentalist. This is a challenge worth taking up if one assumes a post-critical perspective, which claims that educational practices are worth doing in themselves (Hodgson et al. 2017, p. 17). Let us see how the lecture looks when approached in educational, rather than instrumental, terms.

Instrumental Approaches to Lecturing

The debate on the usefulness or outdatedness of lecturing is often informed by an instrumentalist perspective. To ask what lectures are for implies that we have some goals to achieve and that lecturing is a means to get there. The instrumental approach is puzzling because lecturing has been a means to achieve different aims throughout the history of the university: the understanding of a subject matter, or knowledge transmission – especially in medieval times (Laurillard 2002, p. 93); while, for the Romantics, it was about finding original ideas while speaking to others (Kleist 1951 (1805), p. 42). Although the aims of lecturing changed – at least at a declarative level – the form of the lecture did not change, or not significantly. Instead it was re-conceptualised to serve these new aims (Friesen 2011, p. 95). How is it possible to demand different outcomes from a practice that has remained almost unchanged for eight centuries?

A pithy formulation by Nietzsche characterises the lecturing situation as 'One speaking mouth, with many ears, and half as many writing hands' (Nietzsche 1910, p. 126). The situation has many commonalities with a conference setting, a church sermon, or other public gatherings. Its mediatic setup is also quite straightforward: there is speaking, writing, listening, and looking; paper and voice, images and texts. At first sight, the lecture is about a speaker in front of some listeners who are also writing down some of the words. This situation, which looks a lot like transcription, has led many researchers to claim that lecturing is about knowledge transmission, sometimes even dictation.

There are two main forms of lecturing as transmission: it was either about dictation of books (Durkheim 1938 (1904), p. 169; Clark 2006, p. 83), or the transcription of the master's commentary by the student-scribes (McLuhan 1971; also Kittler 2004, p. 245). In the first case, the main argument is that books were scarce before the invention of the printing press. In the latter, the publishing of lecture notes as manuscripts is taken as proof that professors used students as scribes. Both interpretations are missing something essential: the first generations of medieval students were not taking any notes. The few students who had pens in their hands did so only to correct the mistakes on the manuscript copies that they had in front of them. The very moment at which the university lecture constitutes itself is in the absence of writing. This is strange for a practice of so-called knowledge transmission. Furthermore, lecturing should have ceased once the printing press

was invented – an event that made books more available: 'the Gutenberg revolution makes it clear that practices in the lecture hall are not to be understood primarily in terms of information, its abundance, its scarcity, or its efficient transmission. . . . The printing press alone should have marked the end, or at least the beginning of the end' (Friesen 2011, p. 97). Strikingly, however, it is only after the printing press was invented that students began to take notes in the lecture hall:

> Early modern students became note takers in lectures, sometimes manically, according to some eighteenth-century reports. The sound coming from lectures—that 'clear, dry, tingling sound,' like the wind in late fall—arose from so many taking copious notes in eighteenth-century Wittenberg. 'We knew very many at Wittenberg who spent their three years there attending five lectures each day and who filled the remaining hours by rewriting their lecture notes . . . [or] when not rewriting them, then filling the holes in them by other notes.' (Clark 2006, pp. 86–87)

Student's note-taking is just one striking case in which the practice appears after its instrumental function is made obsolete by other technological inventions. Granted, books were still expensive and often the students could not afford them, yet the note-taking in the lecture hall was never about copying books. Why, then, would someone write while another is speaking? What was it that students could not afford to lose?

A second explanation of lecturing as transmission is that it facilitates understanding. What students could not understand by themselves while reading the book becomes straightforward once a living voice explains it to them, for them. But this implies that the lecture is, again, a matter of transmission, this time not of knowledge, but of an interpretation. The right interpretation, the orthodox one, the only one. Every lecturer hears this question from her students: 'Will this be on the exam?'. Students write what they think the professor thinks is important so that they can deliver it in almost the same wording in the exam. This second instrumental explanation of lecturing is about the transmission of a certain way of seeing the world and doing things, of a paradigm. The students learn how to approach this book, this text, this piece of knowledge by listening to their professor speak about it. The lecturer then transmits a paradigm, something that should be reproduced in the next generations without modifications. The lecture then would be the stage where a certain *episteme* is given to the future generations, inscribing it in the heads of the students via the voice of the lecturer because the voice is more persuasive than the written word. This perspective assumes that university knowledge is fixed and stable. I do not want to go into the debate opened by critical theorists about power and knowledge, submission to and control of cultural capital. Instead of answering in detail to this perspective, I will insert here the words of Wilhelm von Humboldt, not as an appeal to authority, but as an alternative perspective, as worthy of consideration:

> it is a peculiarity of the higher scientific institutions that they always treat science as a problem that has still not been fully resolved and therefore remain constantly engaged in research, whereas the school deals with and teaches only finished and agreed-upon bits of knowledge. (Humboldt 1810)

Often, the lecturer does not know exactly what she is speaking about; she is searching with the students, in front of the students, for a possible answer. And as soon as students receive an interpretation, they are often hit with a competing interpretation. This observation holds also for the hard sciences, when lecturers take pains to explain to students what we do not yet know, what the limits of knowledge are. If lecturing were about the transmission of an interpretation, then this interpretation is quite hesitant and stuttering.

A third instrumental perspective sees lecturing as brainstorming in front of a crowd. This was a Romantic idea, which is lost to our contemporary sensibilities. One of the most pre-eminent exponents of it was Humboldt, in the same text quoted above:

> For the free oral lecture before listeners, among whom there is always a significant number of minds that think along for themselves, surely spurs on the person who has become used to this kind of study as much as the solitary leisure of the writer's life or the loose association of an academic fellowship. (Humboldt 1810)

When Humboldt proposed that thinking is tightly connected to speaking about thinking, not just with others – as dialogue – but also in front of others, he was expressing an observation. This observation had already been made several years before by Heinrich von Kleist, one of Humboldt's compatriots. Kleist proposed that there are multiple ways of being inspired into thinking, and thinking as speaking in front of another is one of the best ways to come up with new ideas:

> The human face confronting a speaker is an extraordinary source of inspiration to him and a glance which informs us that a thought we have only half expressed has already been grasped often saves us the trouble of expressing all the remaining half. I believe that, at the moment when he opened his mouth, many a great orator did not know what he was going to say. (Kleist 1951 (1805), p. 43)

To speak then in front of another amounts to thinking out loud and discovering ideas while formulating them: '[t]his kind of speech is nothing less than articulated thought' (Kleist 1951 (1805), p. 44). It is not about delivering a speech or re-telling old thoughts, but about getting into a mental state where thinking is provoked and called forth. Kleist's technique for the provocation of thoughts includes starting with the problem to be solved, then naming hunches and half-baked ideas, intuitions in no particular order, and just speaking, speaking, speaking in front of the other, until the ideas emerge in speech:

> since I always have some obscure preconception, distantly connected in some way with whatever I am looking for, I have only to begin boldly and the mind, obliged to find an end for this beginning, transforms my confused concept as I speak into thoughts that are perfectly clear, so that, to my surprise, the end of the sentence coincides with the desired knowledge. I interpose inarticulate sounds, draw out the connecting words, possibly even use an apposition when required and employ other tricks which will prolong my speech in order to gain sufficient time for the fabrication of my idea in the workshop of reason. (Kleist 1951 (1805), p. 42)

Perhaps less emphasised but just as important in this technique, is the importance of the other, that 'human face' in front of which one elaborates ideas. It is the other

who guides and directs this process of thinking out loud through the mimic of the face. When we speak and the other does not understand, this acts like a break on our process of thinking. We must stop and re-evaluate, find another approach, different words, so that the other may understand us. At the end of the thinking process, both speaker and listener must arrive at the same understanding, otherwise the thought is not complete.

Kleist's technique points at something essential about the process of thinking, namely that we need to be understood while we are thinking and that the other acts as a kind of resistance to an unencumbered flow of thoughts. But this generative technique was not everything that Humboldt had in mind when proposing lecturing as a research aid. If lecturing were just a technique for speaking as thinking in front of another, à la Kleist, then why do lectures need such large audiences? Wouldn't it be enough to have one student for each researcher to bounce ideas off? In lecturing there is something more going on than the mere generation of ideas and we can better understand this if we remember that lecturing is a collective event. As such, lecturing should be for everyone in the room, not just for the professor's sake, speaking to a captive audience who would much rather be elsewhere. Perhaps, if we turn our attention to the moments when lecturing is enjoyable for all those present, we will see another perspective that the instrumental approach has eluded for us. Let us hasten to look elsewhere yet staying within the lecture's circle.

Moments of Lecturing

Most of the lectures attended throughout our university years have been forgotten. However, there are certain courses for which the lecture becomes an event eagerly awaited by students. The visible success of a lecture series is the auditorium regularly packed with students. However, if one were to ask the students what they were waiting for, what was memorable about this or that lecture, they could not single out an instance, a moment, a word. It is rather the whole lecture, the atmosphere created, which attracts the students; a feeling that something very important is taking place and that they want to be part of it. It is something felt intensely in that moment, yet hard to describe afterwards.

Let us look at someone who managed to recollect these moments, Hans-Georg Gadamer as a student, in order to try to understand what is at stake in the lecture. When Gadamer was a student, he had the good fortune of attending many lectures given by famous philosophers, which were carved into his memory and later written of in his autobiography. One of his most memorable professors was Husserl, whose lectures he recalls thus:

> Husserl's presentation was smooth and not without elegance, but it was without rhetorical effect. What he presented sounded in all ways like refinements of already well-known analyses. But there was an authentic intensity there, especially when he really lost himself in a description instead of developing his programs ... His seminars began with a question posed by him and ended with a long statement in which the answer he had given earlier was

> redeemed. A question, an answer, and a half-hour monologue. But sometimes in passing he gave excellent insights into vast speculative areas that led up to Hegel. In his writings hardly any similarly large vision is to be found. His presentations were always monologues, but he never saw them as such. Once upon leaving he said to Heidegger: 'Today for once we really had an exciting discussion.' And he said this after he had spoken without period or comma for the duration of the session in response to the first and only question raised. (Gadamer 1985, pp. 35–36)

The moments that captured Gadamer's attention irrupted in the texture of a continuous monologue, as unplanned events that took even Husserl by surprise. The idea hinted at by Gadamer is not that Husserl was monologuing like an actor on stage, but rather that he came prepared to say something, he said it, but in elaborating the speech, he lost himself in observations that led him elsewhere. Those observations, though made by Husserl the lecturer, were never replicated in his writings. Simply put, Husserl the lecturer was more fascinating than Husserl the author because something happened to Husserl the lecturer in the encounter with the listening eyes of the students.

Gadamer describes one of those experiential moments when he was sitting in a class and he suddenly saw the thing described by Husserl in his imagination. He was shocked that the description materialised before his eyes. Perhaps that description will not tell us much, like the *punctum* in a photograph,[1] everyone is touched by different things in the same image (Barthes 1981, p. 42). Gadamer mentions in passing a moment from a lecture of Husserl's, which he recalls as a moment of shock.

Another lecturer, Max Scheler, spoke as if he was 'possessed' by thought. In the theatre-hall of lecturing, both speaker and listeners are carried on, like puppets on a string, by the thought that unleashes itself through words: 'Pulling strings, pulling on puppets – no, it was more like being drawn along, a nearly satanic sense of being possessed that led the speaker on to a true *furioso* of thought' (Gadamer 1985, p. 29). It is unclear who was the marionette in this scene; is Scheler manipulated by thinking, or the students themselves? At least from these lines, Gadamer the student was all too glad to follow his professors on these paths to intellectual illumination.

But one of the most enduring influences on Gadamer's thinking was Heidegger, who seems to have been also a memorable creator of lecturing moments: 'when Heidegger lectured, one saw things as if they had taken on bodily form. In a tamer form and limited to phenomenology of perception, much the same thing could be said of Husserl' (Gadamer 1985, p. 47). These moments of the materialisation of ideas in front of one's eyes happened more than once:

> Who among those who then followed him [Heidegger] can forget the breathtaking swirl of questions that he developed in the introductory hours of the semester for the sake of entangling himself in the second or third of these questions and then, in the final hours of the

[1] 'In this habitually unary space, occasionally (but alas all too rarely) a "detail" attracts me. I feel that its mere presence changes my reading, that I am looking at a new photograph, marked in my eyes with a higher value. This "detail" is the punctum' (Barthes 1981, p. 42).

> semester, rolling up the deep-dark clouds of sentences from which the lightning flashed to leave us half stunned. (Gadamer 1985, p. 48)

Gadamer's rich descriptions of these events, these moments of the sudden materialisation of thought in front of one's eyes – when things take on 'a bodily form' – when the image of a marionette becomes unbearably present, when thoughts seem to coalesce in the flash of a moment and suddenly become images; these are the moments that made Gadamer and his colleagues come back to the lectures.

Gadamer was describing different lecturing personalities, with different approaches, but he is always pointing to the same thing, achieved by Heidegger, Husserl, Scheler – and several other figures not mentioned here, Natorp, Hartmann, Jaspers, etc. – this event which takes place in the lecture hall. When reflecting on his many professors, Gadamer remarked that perhaps the same intensity of thinking could happen with other professors (namely, Nicolai Hartmann) who employed a less dramatic style of lecturing, quite the opposite of Heidegger's (Gadamer 1985, p. 48). The conclusion would be that it was not Heidegger's dramatic staging of the lecture that made it so breathtaking, but the event itself that made it possible to connect with others through an act of imagination. The fact that these kinds of experiences cannot be replicated by oneself, alone at one's desk, point at the idea that students are an integral part of the lecturing event, that without them, there would be no intellectual fireworks, no moments of imagination taking on a bodily form.

An Educational Approach to Lecturing

The moments of lecturing described by Gadamer had something in common: in those moments the students experienced a flight of imagination, when ideas took on a 'bodily form' as if one could actually see what was spoken about. When recollecting these moments, Gadamer does not speak of himself, as an 'I', an individual student, but of a 'we'. It is as if he was saying: 'We, the students, suddenly experienced together the presence of an idea, a text, a concept, a law'. Something became present to the students via imagination and this presence of the thing spoken about made students into a 'we'. The shared experience of an event via imagination is what unites the students and the lecturer in a particular way, similar to the way in which witnesses of a catastrophe are united for life by their shared memory.

Nietzsche's famous description of the lecture as 'One speaking mouth, with many ears, and half as many writing hands' (Nietzsche 1910, p. 126) seems to assume that the main character of the lecture was either the professor or the student. Yet Nietzsche omitted to see how lecturer and students functioned together to create something beyond themselves. If we see the two halves of the room as separate entities, the speaker on the stage and the audience at their desks, then it is as if a chasm opens up between them. Then the entire event begins to look like a mechanical marionette show: the speaker utters words that are not his, reciting knowledge passed on by tradition, whereas the students write manically something that they do

not necessarily understand. If we look only separately at the gestures of lecturing, we will end up with descriptions of automatic, almost machinic, movements. If we look at the two sides of the room as performing incomplete gestures, however, we can begin to understand the entire event of the lecture as a collective gesture. In the lecture there is not speech, but speaking to; not writing, but note-taking as listening; not watching but looking and being shown. All the gestures in the lecture can be interpreted as gestures in themselves, but there remains something incomplete about them, as if what is going on in the lecture takes only half of a form. The half-gestures of the individuals unite to form a whole gesture, the lecturing itself emerging collectively as a gesture.

The lecturer's speech is modulated by the interest and attention of the audience. One can read the signs of attention in the ways in which students write, either furiously scribbling everything, or slowly jotting down here and there, by the way they nod, or smile, or frown. All these reactions show that the students are actually present. The importance of the audience shows to what extent the lecture is a co-production. The lecturer by herself cannot produce the lecture. The voice fails, the hand trembles, the line of thought is interrupted. Who can speak to an empty room and make sense? Even if the lecture looks like a discourse made by 'one speaking voice', it has to be open to the possibility of dialogue all the time. The presence of the audience makes possible a kind of dialogue, at least at the level of gestures. It does not need to become a disputation in the medieval sense, but at least a question must be implied: 'The irritated twisting of [students'] face muscles, certain movements of the head, hesitation in taking notes, and so on, remind the professor that his auditors do not understand him' (Meiners cited in Clark 2006, pp. 412–413). And, if the audience does not understand the lecturer, then he should change his pace, his tone, his words. As they say, no theatre show is the same, because the audience changes. The same holds for the university lecture.

While it may seem that the lecture is just another performance, there is a difference: the students perform along with the lecturer and, through their performance, they make the lecture possible. A lecturer cannot conjure the thinking event by herself, in front of a hostile or indifferent audience. Similarly, no matter how interested the students are in the topic, if the lecturer is bored and merely dictating or reading from his notes, nothing can happen. It is only when the lecturer speaks, and the students pay attention, when they follow her along the line of thought with their writing, with their gazes, signalling their presence and attention, that something similar to the flight of collective imagination is allowed to happen.

Instead of using the metaphor of the performance, which privileges the performer on stage to the detriment of the audience, perhaps a more apt metaphor for lecturing would be that of a spiritual *séance*. Something is resurrected in the university lecture, the ghost of past ideas. The lecturer starts with a piece of past knowledge and brings it to life. The lecture is about showing that every piece of knowledge we take for granted was once the incandescent core of a live act of thought. To take an example, Hegel's philosophy might seem irrelevant for us today, as some might say, at least when comparing it to its wild popularity in the nineteenth century. Yet, if we take a text of Hegel and unpack it in a lecture, and then start tracing this or that line of

thought, we might discover that it can still make us think. Issues to which we used to be indifferent before the lecture now shine forth and become inspiring. The problems that animated Hegel's thinking become present for us, urgent even. After a successful lecture, the students should leave the lecture hall with the impression that they have discovered something tremendous, that they feel compelled to explore further.

The lecture at its best becomes an event of collective imagination. The thing spoken about becomes present through the words of the lecturer, yet it is maintained by the students. Their gestures, their faces, their note-taking show that they are thinking with the lecturer, captivated by the thing that shows itself. It is a collective event because the lecturer cannot make the past speak to the present if the present is not interested. In the lecture, thinking is not a dialogue between the lecturer and the students; rather, between all of those present who become students in front of the thing that captures their imagination. In those moments, even the lecturer becomes a student (Masschelein and Simons 2014, p. 179) and this is how we can recognise it more easily. The lecture is not a communicational form, nor a way of teaching. The lecture is like a giant magnifying glass over something from the past that is brought into the present, put into words, and allowed to hold us captive. In this respect, the lecture also functions as a test by showing us what is still part of our world, and whether we still want something to be in it. When something ceases to spark the imagination of a room full of students, perhaps its time has ended.

Conclusion

Universities' schedules are filled with lectures but not all lectures are educational. Sometimes students and professors just 'go through the motions' and a voice speaks to deaf ears who pretend to listen while taking notes half-heartedly. Anyone working in a university knows the rush and hassle of finding 'a warm body to put in front of a scheduled course, just a few weeks before the semester's start' (Kelsky 2015). That warm body placed in front of the students needs to speak of something, anything, to cover the curriculum. This is how many lecturers find themselves pontificating about things they couldn't care less about, and students feel it yet pretend to be listening while they scroll through their social media feeds. These worldly constraints of organising a course, sometimes casted with less than stellar actors, should not distract us from the educational matter at hand. When a lecture is a lecture and not a dictation session, not a presentation of the self in front of others, not brainstorming in front of witnesses, not transmission, then things are allowed to happen. When a lecture functions as a lecture, it is an event in which students and lecturer are united by a unique experience. A successful lecture is an experience of collective imagination in which the lecturer becomes also a student of the thing that discloses itself to all those present. Students and lecturer become witnesses of something that shows itself by letting itself be imagined and thus become present, actual, resurrected from its world of abstraction into something more concrete. The lecture is an event that makes possible a collective experience of relating to a thing and, through this

experience, of relating to each other. It is something worthy to pursue in and for itself. Just as an aesthetic experience is worthy of being pursued for itself, so too is the educational experience. In the moments when a lecture works as a lecture and manages to unite its audience into a collective of imagination, no questions of instrumental value, utility, or employability can appear. The lecture becomes the opportunity to relate to others through a thing that becomes present, concrete, and thus demands our attention, our thinking of it. In those moments, the lecture is not about us, we disappear in an experience of something else, more important than us, but of which we are part. The university lecture manages to create these moments when the issue at hand speaks to us and it is more important than us, the individual students or lecturers, when we understand that things are more urgent and more interesting than us, and we must attend to them. Ultimately, the university lecture is a de-personalising and de-identifying event. In the university lecture, we sit in silence so that something else may show itself and start speaking to us.

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Chapter 7
Modes of Meetings in Academia and the Spectres of University: From *Breaking the Chains* to *Appreciative Mutual Understanding*

Jarosław Jendza

Introduction

In line with the *Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy*, and following the words of Bruno Latour, the starting point of this text is the claim that the critical stance *has run out of steam* (Latour 2004). Hence, another perspective, an attitude of concern and appreciation, is needed. Until Hodgson et al. (2017, 2018) articulated their Manifesto, I had not been able to find the proper glossary and explicit logic to express this attitude. In line with the first principle of the post-critical orientation – *there are principles to defend* (Hodgson et al. 2017, p. 15) – here I will openly defend the claim that *only a specific type of meeting of academic community members might bring into existence a specific type of university*. In other words, these are the specific *scholastic technologies* (Masschelein and Simons 2013, pp. 50–58) that make the specific form of university possible. This claim also follows the logic of the second and the third principles of post-critical pedagogy. The authors of the Manifesto claim that:

> in spite of the many differences that divide us, there is a space of commonality that only comes about a posteriori . . . This existing space of commonality is often overlooked in much educational research . . . in favor of a focus on social (in)justice and exclusion . . . . (Hodgson et al. 2017, p. 16)

Following the words quoted above, I am of the opinion that post-critical and pedagogical analysis of higher education needs to be oriented at the *space of commonality* that *does* come about at the university today. Therefore, while

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presenting some of the results of my research, which is going to be the main content of this chapter, I will focus on the very space that seems to be overlooked. This will have two consequences for what follows.

First, I am not going to include *all* research results that I have obtained while conducting this empirical project. In the outcome space of my research, the university is perceived in numerous and varied ways. In this chapter I am focused on the meeting as a category in particular; however, the main research question of the project was: How do the university members representing various fields of knowledge perceive and conceptualise their roles as academics?

The body of this chapter consists of four main parts. The first is a brief description of the method used in the research, which was conducted in one Polish university. This empirical project is the basis of the argument developed here. Second, I summarise some of the findings of this research, paying special attention to the different modes of *meetings* that take place in academia, which turned out to be the most significant category in the outcome space.

Next, I present the notion of the *spectre* with reference to the university in order to clarify my understanding of this concept and describe its explanatory potential. Finally, the results of the research are presented more fully. At this stage, various modes of meetings in academia are described in the context of the spectres of the university.

The Research Method

The research discussed here was conducted with the use of an approach known as phenomenography (Marton 1988, 1994; Marton and Säljö 2005), which from its very beginnings was connected with higher education research. This approach has its origins in Scandinavian research on the university – especially in regard to teacher education (Booth 1997; Franke and Dahlgren 1996; Gibbs et al. 1982), but it was also used internationally in other educational contexts (Backe et al. 1996; Ballantyne and Gerber 1982). I conducted twenty-eight individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews that were later analysed according to the procedure of phenomenography. Ference Marton says that it is a distinctive, 'empirically based approach that aims to identify the qualitatively different ways in which different people experience, conceptualize, perceive, and understand various kinds of phenomena' (Marton 1994, p. 4425).

In this methodological approach, the first step is to gather data, usually qualitative, and therefore individual semi-structured interviews are the most common method used. This was the case in the research presented here. At this stage, the main aim of the research is to gather the meanings according to which the interviewees perceive a phenomenon, which are later analysed by the researcher.

The second step of the procedure – the analysis of the data – is aimed at the construction of the description categories that emerge from the transcripts of the interviews. This task has three subsequent stages. First, the researcher divides the

empirical material by trying to find different conceptions of the phenomenon. Second, it is then important to discover the conceptual basis of the conceptions identified earlier, which results in identifying a common and limited number of distinctively different condensations of the categories. Having identified the categories, the researcher names them and describes their subcomponents, which enables them to construct empirically rooted descriptions of all the categories identified (Marton 1994).

In the project presented here, the research sample was a group of twenty-eight purposefully chosen academic teachers from each of the faculties of the researched university at various stages of their academic career – varying from first year Master students and PhD candidates, to academics with a doctorate and full professors. Approximately nine hundred pages of transcripts were gathered in this way, which then were analysed according to the phenomenographic procedure outlined above.

In the text below I use the symbol [] in order to refer to a given interview and the question. For example, [1:4] means that the quote comes from interview 1, question 4. The quotes from the interviews used later in the article to illustrate a given mode of meetings are the words of the interviewees; hence they are sometimes controversial and grammatically or syntactically 'incorrect'.

Modes of Meetings in Academia: Research Findings

From the analysis of the empirical material it was possible to identify numerous contexts in which being within the university means meeting other people. In order to reduce the empirical material, I have used the criteria distilled from within the interview transcripts. Each of the distinguished criteria had to refer to seven aspects of meetings: *circumstances*, *place*, *participants*, *topic*, *the quality of relations, level of formalisation*, and *the distribution of voice*. Such reduction of the empirical material led to five different modes of meetings in the university to be discerned.

The categorisation of the modes of meetings described later in the chapter is the result of the analysis; however, it is also partly inspired by Ryszard Kapuściński – and especially by his lectures related to the issue of Otherness (Kapuściński 2008) in which he defines four ways in which different cultures function in their mutual relations. It should be noted, though, that Kapuściński's classification is not a theoretical tool or framework of the original empirical research nor of this chapter. In the procedure of phenomenography, the concepts used to name the categories are always based on the analysis and cannot be borrowed from someone else, from a different author, since they are local, unique, and characteristic of a given research project. However, it is not impossible, while trying to find a proper name for a category, to implement some of the concepts derived from sources other than the empirical material. This is the role of some of Kapuściński's labels related to the cultures he was interested in.

Let me now turn to a very brief and concise description of five different categories – five possibilities – of meetings in academia that emerged from this

research: *offensive* or attack; *separation*; *exchange*; *indifference*; and the last option, *appreciative mutual understanding*.

In the *offensive* mode the representatives of one culture consider themselves superior to those who are seen as the others. Therefore, they feel they should undertake all possible measures in order to eliminate or marginalise the 'lower ones'. This re-affirming of superiority/inferiority positions might just be aimed at reproducing the unequal status quo or deeply rooted hierarchy. Hence, cultures regard themselves as each other's enemies, and so the 'combat readiness', as well as suspiciousness, that exists on both sides are unavoidable. The relation that characterises this mode of meeting consists of conflict and confrontation and can be described as 'colonial'.

It can be said that this mode entails a particular normativity in which all cultures strive to become hegemonic. This mode relies on the language of war, and everything that is connected with it. Therefore the language is abundant with concepts such as: *enemies*, *the things at stake*, *ruins*, *chains*, *uncrossable borders*, *fights, treason*, and *military strategies*. In such a relation, mutual suspicion is a way of people being together, and it is directed not only towards the representatives of the 'barbarian' culture but also towards 'countrymen', as some of them might one day turn out to be traitors.

The language, metaphors, and results of the analysis mentioned above might be difficult to associate with life in the university. One might even say that it makes no sense to compare these colonial situations with the noble institution of university. Unfortunately, this is one of the empirically identified rationalities of the academic scholars and teachers interviewed in this research.

The university – in this sense – is an arena where superior and inferior cultures meet and fight using well-established and accepted weapons in the academic world in order to reach the top positions in its hierarchical structure. One of the most vivid distinctions that can be found in the empirical material is the relation between the scholars and the students, a relation that is referred to as one between the master and their servants.

Shocking as it may seem, one of the interviewees bluntly says:

> Students are as . . . peasants or disciples in church but as soon as you get – as you do – the post at the university you become a noble man . . . and you are almost one of us . . . the professorship is like being a prince or a bishop. [4:5]

Sometimes the offensive character of the meetings in academia is connected with highly formalised gatherings between those in possession of certain power and those who are subjected to this particular form of power. The communication is directed in one way, which means that there are those who are 'in the possession' of knowledge, and those who get to be introduced to a particular piece of information. This form of communication is sometimes associated with the *management of ignorance* in (higher) education, where being informationally privileged is a form of maintaining a given *status quo* (Szkudlarek 1993; Babicka-Wirkus and Rusnak 2016, pp. 84–96). Here is an example:

> There is a rule. We have the Institute Board council when I summarize what had been said during the Senate meeting ... [T]his is the most usual channel of the information transfer or communication. ... this communication is enough. [15:119]

The interviewee quoted above is of the opinion that various groups of the members of academia should have different access to knowledge about the university. In other words, there are those who should know more and those who do not need to be, or even should not be, familiar with certain issues. In this way, the Foucauldian notion of power-knowledge (Foucault 1976) takes the form of an offensive exertion of power aimed at maintaining the status quo of the hierarchical structure of university.

The second possible mode of meetings in academia identified and described in the research is called s*eparation*, which is a clear formulation of the boundaries between different cultures and aims at maintaining and underlining these divisions and differences. In this context, it is the essentially understood uniqueness of either individuals or the scientific disciplines or branches of knowledge that plays an important role (Biesta 2013, pp. 20–22). Biesta, following Levinas, makes a clear distinction and opposition between *essential* and *existential* uniqueness. The first of which is something that '*is constantly there,* [something] *that we can have, possess, and secure*' (ibid., p. 22). Thus, any intercultural peregrination and any forms of multiculturalism are potentially risky since they might lead to the loss of one's identity, i.e. one's uniqueness. If so, it is absolutely essential for the representatives of a branch of knowledge to describe the specificity of a given culture – or in the case of academia – of a given scientific discipline.

This form of meeting can be understood in terms of the concept of narcissism often accompanied in the interviewees' narratives by their feeling of a special, almost messianic role that is attributed to them as the representatives of a certain culture. In the case of academia, the humanities (understood here as the representatives of this very branch of knowledge) could be seen as a culture group, and 'the other ones' in this case are those coming from the so-called 'hard sciences'.

Following the transcripts of the interviews with the humanities representatives, it can be said that they feel somehow naturally entitled to define the mission of the higher education sector, the role of the university, and so on, for they know perfectly well that the university, foremost, should teach the humanities.

Naturally, the marginalised groups (for example, the members of economics and management sciences) will also make some attempts to 'win this war' by showing that the humanities' point of view is archaic and not applicable in today's continuously changing market reality. The humanist stance, they might claim, is therefore irrational.

All this is obviously not very far from the offensive mode. In fact, in the empirical material it was not always possible to say where the offensive mode ends and the separation starts. Nevertheless, both the offensive and the separation modes are largely based upon the concept of an essentially understood uniqueness mentioned above. The empirical example of such a strong distinction is also based on the difference between so called *pure* and *applied* scientific disciplines and, therefore,

when referring to the specificity of a given 'pure' branch of knowledge, the interviewees claim that they are more university-like or academic than the other ones, i.e. those who are applied scientists.

For instance, for the theoretical physicist his discipline is *central* [10:27] and it is the *basis for all the other disciplines* [Ibid.]; in particular, it is superior to chemistry, which is basically *the emanation of physics in micro-scale* [10:29]. This is why, according to this narrative, it is physics that should be treated as the theory that explains the world adequately and thoroughly. Thus, it is more academic and noble than chemistry, which is applicable, practical, and examines the world in its micro scale [10:26]. It is also the paradigm in which a given discipline functions or for which a given paradigm is the dominant one. It is physics that – as the first branch of knowledge that fully implemented the advanced version of the quantitative paradigm – has become the only complete hard science academic discipline [Ibid.].

The chemistry representatives – not surprisingly – have got their own explanations supporting the logic of offensiveness, dominance, and separation, even within chemistry itself. One of the research participants claims that there is a clear difference between laboratory and non-laboratory chemistry [26:11]. Experimental or laboratory chemistry – as this person believes – is not market-driven, is not attractive to third parties such as corporations or factories, and at the same time is not only much more time- and energy-consuming, but also more difficult than theoretical chemistry, since it demands a constant presence at the laboratory Table [26:13]. Therefore experimental chemists are 'the better ones'.

While describing themselves as 'the more academic ones', some interviewees use the concept of *synthesis* as characteristic for their disciplines. In other words, their discipline is seen as knowledge that might be treated as the most advanced in terms of its methodology, conceptual framework, and so on. For example, some scientific disciplines are treated as purely facto-graphical (theoretical chemistry, history, medicine, biology) [21:04], others as purely logical (mathematics, law, linguistics), but the representatives of – in their opinion – 'superior' or more advanced disciplines avoid this reductionist point of view by joining the two prior 'steps' and thus becoming a privileged Truth.

According to one of the scholars interviewed in the research, a good example of such synthesis is laboratory chemistry that is far more advanced than both its theoretical counterpart as well as mathematics. According to that research participant, this fact positions their discipline and its representatives *higher* in the hierarchy of various branches of knowledge [7:69].

Another important dimension that serves for some interviewees as a criterion that justifies a particular positioning of certain disciplines is the distinction between temporality and constancy. This arguments states that there are some disciplines that are focused around things that are changeable, and those that deal with permanent universals. As one of the professors admits:

> You know, not everything is changing. There are things that are stable and those who ... search for such a bit more stable issues are the ones who are philosophers. We are not in social sciences, we are not in the humanities not to mention the hard sciences ... we contribute to everything. [13:29]

Philosophy is everywhere and it contributes to everything. It is interested both in the humanities as well as in hard science [Ibid.]. It functions *above* [13:30] all the other *ordinary* [Ibid.] disciplines.

Almost identical positioning and logic is present in the narrative of one of the respondents representing the field of economics. As she says, it is economics that governs the world and therefore this discipline is the one that offers a deeper understanding of reality [27:11]. It is not as applicable and practical as the management sciences and – to use Kuhnian terms – should be treated as the *normal* or *mature* scientific community (Cf. Kuhn 1970). Economics is a discipline that serves as a base for many other branches of knowledge; this is the discipline that has real potential to change the world, which locates it at the centre of the university and scientific inquiry [27:16].

Generally speaking, in this mode of meeting, there is one culture located *above*, *between*, or in the *centre*, and there are the other ones that are positioned as peripheral. These positional metaphors signal separation and – at times – an offensive. The disciplinary boundaries present in the narratives, and the clearly thematised criteria that justify them, create the culture of separatism and dominance.

The third possibility is the mode of meeting that I name *indifference.* From the very first glance, one might say that *indifference* should not appear within the logic of meeting. How can we talk about meeting if the relation between two cultures is characterised by two-directional indifference? Following Kapuściński's argument, however, locating this specific type of interaction between university people is authorised, as it describes a particular relation, or the meaning of the phenomenon of meeting at the university.

The meetings characteristic of the mode of *indifference* are routine situations connected both with the non-formalised sphere of functioning of the university as well as formalised meetings. In this sense those two subtypes of meetings are in a way treated equally [15:71], [12:11]. In this perspective we could conclude that the meetings that do not have scientific value, generate relations that might be described as *indifference*. An interesting example here could be the meeting that was referred to by one of the interviewees as a *normal seminar*:

> [...] normal seminar during which capability of not falling asleep is the most important skill. After some time a scientist has an immediate impulse of falling asleep at the moment a normal seminar starts. [28:53]

Taking into consideration the fact that, according to this interviewee, a *normal seminar* is not an occasion for creating a community of thought, we need to pose a question of the *norm* of the university seminar. The articles presented during such seminars are treated by the interviewed scholars as trivial and therefore do not provoke thinking. Summarising this mode of meeting it is necessary to admit that the meetings that are not potentially 'profitable' for a particular scholar are treated with indifference. In other words, the rationale behind this logic is as follows: *If I cannot gain anything during this meeting, I'm not going to be involved.*

This leads us to another possibility of understanding and experiencing academic meetings, which is identified in terms of *exchange*. Similarly to the first two modes

described above (an offensive and separation), *exchange* has an active nature, which means that scholars undertake specific actions in order to make this type of meeting happen. Naturally, exchange is neither colonising nor separating. On the contrary, it is perceived as an occasion for a potential gain, including an intellectual profit [8:5]. The exchange is treated by some interviewees as a typical 'win-win' game. It is clearly oriented at achieving some added value during the meetings.

In this context, it is essential to estimate both the contribution and the predicted profit, since the balance between these two factors must be positive. Otherwise, according to the narratives, *there is no sense to be involved* [1:9]. This kind of meeting in academia is dominated by the logic of economy and self-centred productivity. One takes part in a given meeting, 'paying' with their time, expertise, and ideas, and hopes to *bring something home* [1:11], to get something in return. Rationalising this kind of logic, one of the respondents says that the 'university is a classic example of network society' [4:6], therefore it is very important to have as many influential contacts as possible.

These university meetings are located between the professional and private and aimed at the synergy and aggregation of individual potentials. In this context, both purely private and completely professional relations are not fruitful and are, therefore, seen to be senseless. One of the interviewees says:

> I think, that the meetings of this type is located *between*. Purely sociable [. . .] and purely professional contacts do not last long. Both these types do not give me a lot. [4:40]

Conferences are one of the occasions for such meetings; however, the most important function of conferences is making and maintaining contacts, which may result in boosting scientific and economic capital.

The positional metaphor of 'between' is very important here as these bridging meetings happen in between the main parts of the conferences, such as keynote lectures, seminars, or presenting working papers. Therefore, coffee breaks, conference dinners, and any other opportunities for business meetings are far more important and fruitful.

What is more, participating in those main parts of conferences seem to be both unavoidable and absurd additions to these 'meetings in between', which are truly vital.

> The most important element of the conference is the conference dinner – only in the form of buffet, so that you can talk to maximum number of people – this is the optimal element of the conference for me. [4:41]

These meetings seem to be both non-formalised as well as voluntary. Nevertheless, we can find the imperative of creating and maintaining one's own 'brand' and academic fame behind them. The apparent formula of reciprocity as a potential consequence of *exchange* is characteristic for the managerial university and the ideology of neoliberalism (Washburn 2005, pp. 141–145).

This can be very clearly seen when we refer to one of the examples of *exchange* present in the empirical material, where a given credential, a formal certification, seems to be important for both sides in the relation of exchange. For example, a

successfully completed doctorate seems to function like that as it is very important not only for the candidate, but also for his scientific supervisors, reviewers, and mentors, and sometimes for other committees (Powel and Green 2007).

The language of exchange, the logic of 'the win-win game', is very much present when referring to the promotion processes and, without doubt, this phenomenon might be associated with the thousand-year history of the institution (de Foix 1996). However, on the basis of the analysis of the gathered empirical material it can be said that a fairly modern version of these practices has appeared, and that it is very much connected with the contemporary structure of research funding: grants, competitions, and projects financed by a variety of sources and agendas.

The scholars are the competitors in this game and therefore undertake numerous measures to win. The dialogue and long-lasting conversations of those who are affectionate about and collaborating on a given research issue have turned into: *project group briefings* [9:38], *interdisciplinary events* [12:67], *inter-institutional cooperation* [1:4], and *internationalisation* [2:7]. This newspeak, gaining popularity in the academic world, discloses the logic of production, accountability, and measurement, and treats academia as another service provider in the market.

The relations and the qualities of meetings in the last option that I call *appreciative mutual understanding* are radically different from all the modes outlined so far. Appreciative mutual understanding is not thematised in the context of some explicit material space, but actually happens outside or 'on the outskirts' of the institution of the university. What I mean by that is that the research participants either have not mentioned the places at all or have localised them far from the campuses.

Padilla's unfolding matrix (Padilla 1994, 2009, pp. 29–41), which has been used in the research as one of the analytical tools, was strikingly 'empty' here, whereas with all the other modes of meetings the situation was completely the opposite, i.e., it was abundant with various material spaces. The few places that were actually mentioned in the interviews were connected with the research aspect of the academics' work and they are purposefully organised far from the campuses – as some respondents stated [17:11; 16:5; 25:41] – in order to create space for communication.

The spaces are not spacious. They are to provide the participants with physical closeness. In other words, mutual understanding and appreciative communication demand gathering academics in a small material space, far from most institutional technologies (Masschelein and Simons 2013), around the scientific subject matters they care about. In this context, the policies of some most famous universities (Morris 2017) directed at creating enormous, modern, and comfortable campuses seem to be dangerous to this mode of university meeting. Ironic as it may seem, together with the proliferation of the concrete and glass university infrastructure, the chances for appreciative mutual understanding among academics are diminishing, and those who dream about such university gatherings search for them outside the institution of the university [8:17; 13:26].

> They are building this campus, yes, but it is ... it might not be necessarily convenient for everyone, not necessarily everyone has to accept that ... This campus lacks ... from one side I have a vision of the university that is ... a tiny hollow where everybody is sitting on each other ... there is one Mr X sitting and talking to some Mr Y and they are talking. The first

> one wants to listen to the latter one because they have time and it does not lead to any results . . . . [8:17]

> I was in a sense the animator of such meetings, hmm, how should I put it . . . on the outskirts of academia . . . The meetings for which the philosophy of dialogue, the philosophy of meeting was very important. I think it is not trendy anymore. [13:26]

The first transcript extract quoted above, apart from relating to the issue of spaces or places, concerns also the other aspect of this mode of meetings, i.e., their aim. In the previous types of meetings, the aim was very clear and usually explicitly defined. Here, the situation is different, as these meetings are *essentially non-productive,* though they do *not* eliminate the very possibility of some by-products.

However, it must be clearly stated that, it is not only *the place* of the meetings but also *their aims* that are not exposed in the narratives of this type. In other words, the interviewees have not mentioned these two dimensions of the meetings in their narratives. The importance of that non-productivity is sometimes stressed by the interviewees because it creates a sense of the *suspension of the reality* 'amalgamated' with the trans-positioning of realities that are – according to external criteria – irrational. With reference to the phenomenon of studying, the experience of suspension has been thoroughly described by Tyson Lewis (Lewis 2015). The abandonment of the logic of un-productivity and coming back to the world we know very well is thematised by the interviewees as an experience full of the pain and existential difficulty connected with acclimatisation:

> So one day we had to come back. For these three days I didn't know where I was. At home my wife was walking around, and I thought – who the hell is she? [laugh] I just couldn't, I just couldn't get used to. Each of us had the same experience, the same time to acclimatize at home again. Everything was so weird because you had had created very close relation with the people who had been there [during the meetings]. . . . Some wine, phew! Disgusting stuff at times – we didn't have anything . . . but you come into a small room and there are fifty people there!!!, all standing close to each other and talking [shows being squeezed]. It was difficult to leave it and – you know – in the double sense of the phrase. [16:10]

The interviewees mention three types of experiences in this mode that show a certain ambiguity concerning both the relations between the participants as well as the purely quantitative aspect of meetings of this type. The first sub-option – to some extent close to our intuitive perception of mutual understanding – is the meeting of an intimate nature with a very limited number of interlocutors that share an educational *love for the world*, in the sense outlined by Hodgson et al. (2017).

Here we can find the relation of two people dialoguing. This is the relation between the academic teacher and a student, or mentor and mentee. What is striking is that this is not a partnership relation as has been criticised in the Swedish context by Säfström and Månsson (Säfström and Månsson 2015). Some of the interviewees mention that this is a limited group of people that form a mutual appreciative understanding, and the research participants refer to the other people present in such gatherings not as *colleagues* but simply *friends* [16], *close friends* [4; 17], or *family* [22], and observe that it is a *polylogue* rather than dialogue that is taking place there.

The second sub-option of such meetings in academia is thematised as a gathering of fairly numerous participants representing various and varied values and

rationalities, with expertise in diverse subject matters connected with incomparable biographical trajectories [28:11]. This unique gathering consists of people whose diversity as well as multi-directional appreciation forms a peculiar community that does not seem to have *much in common* (Cf. Lingis 1994).

In this sense, the second sub-option is close to the first one, and the only difference is the number of people. This difference is significant, however, as it is a common presupposition that this kind of *universitas* craves for a very limited number of people. Hence, the university should be elitist and serve only the best few. This is not the case here. The mosaic of existential differences and shared *agape* make this kind of university gathering happen. The *issue of formalisation* also plays a key role in this mode of meeting. Let us turn to it now.

The interviewees thematised three different possibilities referring to that aspect: (a) taken for granted, in terms of being not important, and therefore not worth mentioning [6:46]; (b) lack of formalisation as a necessary frame enabling this kind of meeting; (c) purposeful 'un-formalising' of the gatherings. In the *exchange* mode of academic meetings, the issue of formalisation also does not seem to be essential; one might come to the conclusion that in order to increase the productivity of university-based research, the exchange mode of academic meetings is absolutely sufficient. It might be so, under the condition that the development of sciences is a productive process, and functions within the logic of capital accumulation.

Mutual appreciative understanding is a very specific type of gathering that is: (a) deprived of any aim understood as a measurable effect; (b) of voluntary nature; (c) suspends external reality thanks to delocalisation and, thus, creates the conditions for free deliberation around a given *subject matter* (i.e. not around particular people).

At that point it is important to admit, on the basis of the analysis, that the institution of the university creates conditions for this type of gathering and thus is not completely in chains (Giroux 2007) or in ruins (Readings 1996) and needs trustful nurturing rather than suspicious critique.

The Spectres of University

A spectre is a bit like a ghost that might haunt anyone anywhere, something that is widely feared as a possible unpleasant or dangerous occurrence. It might also be associated with the spectrum, as the band of colours seen in a rainbow. A spectre is a weak possibility and thus it is not a *model*, *concept*, or even a *descriptive category* (Cf. Derrida 1994), not to mention a clear *idea* of the university.

In this chapter I introduce the metaphor of the *spectre* as a tool to interpret the research findings. The interpretation 'paths' described below as four possible *spectres of the university* have emerged from the research findings on the basis of subsequent steps of the analysis that led to the categorisation of the empirical material. Therefore, the formulation of the *spectres* should be treated as an attempt to restructure the space of research findings aimed at presenting *possible* changes and transformations of the academic world.

Spectre of the University in Chains

This spectre is definitely scary for anyone that is in anyway connected with this institution. In this university, tribes and territories (Becher and Trowler 2001) are carefully monitored and trespassers are prosecuted, in ways that link very clearly with Bourdieu's idea of *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu 1988). Some believe that they have already lost the university and have to fight back in order to regain it. Combat readiness, suspiciousness, and fight are the main weapons of this spectre. The metaphors of war and positioning shape the language spoken by this spectre.

Spectre of the University in Cells

This spectre is relatively safe. It is usually hidden in a cell and does not leave it until it really needs something. Actually, this is a spectre of the university that involves no collective meeting apart from a few occasions when they have to share or exchange some goods. Indifferent nomads pass by without paying attention to anything or anyone but themselves. At times this spectre might become a homeless zombie that wanders around empty and quiet glass and concrete campuses.

Spectre of the University in Nets

This spectre haunts many beings and forms sophisticated nets in order to be able to get and – if needed – share goods (we call them capitals or tokens) as efficiently and as effectively as possible. The universities are here inhabited by various groups of spectres as they know very well that they can accrue more when they aggregate powers. The cooperation between the spectres from the most distant places around the academic globe is very much welcome for these are international spectre hauntings that have a real chance to be seen and impress many.

Spectre of the University in Rhizome

A rhizome, according to Deleuze and Guattari, might be described with the use of a few characteristics (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), the first and the second of which are the principles of *connection* and *heterogeneity.* As they write, 'any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be' (ibid., p. 7). Following that principle, the university would be both inter-connected and heterogenous, in the sense that all its members, non-human actors, as well their relations, would be inter-dependent. The heterogenous character of such a university makes it a gathering of different cultures and 'functions', none of which is supreme or hegemonic.

The principle of *asignifying rupture* says that '*a rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines*' (ibid., p. 9). There is something in the university-in-rhizome that causes its constant revival based on the powers present within it. That power is the love and passion to start again, sometimes in a different place, sometimes in a different form. The *love for the world* as described in 'The Manifesto' (Hodgson et al. 2017) is the driving force of the constant revival of such a university, of such a gathering.

Principles five and six are the principles of *cartography* and *decalcomania*: 'A rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model' (ibid., p. 12). University-in-rhizome is therefore neither a structure nor an institution willing to obey someone nor is it 'tracing' or 'reproducing'. It would be rather the 'maker of a map' that is open to unpredictability (ibid.).

Finally, 'a rhizome has no beginning or end' (ibid., p. 25). The university-in-rhizome may happen anywhere, and sometimes the institution of the university might be helpful for this particular form of university to come into being. In the last mode of meeting presented above (mutual understanding mode), it was pretty clear and present.

The spectre of the university in rhizome is riskily unpredictable and nobody has ever heard of its purposeful gathering, or at least no one has ever seen it rushing in one direction. This spectre is slow, free, and stops and studies things in detail, which is highly unproductive. One might even say that it is idle, but that would be an unjust assessment. The university-in-rhizome is growing slowly, ignoring the fast pace of all the other spectres of the university.

Who haunts you?

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Chapter 8
Reclaiming the Educational Through Embodied Narratives of 'Know Thyself'

Oren Ergas

> Universities have forgotten their larger educational role for college students. They succeed better than ever, as creators and repositories of knowledge. But they have forgotten that the fundamental job of undergraduate education is to . . . help [students] grow up, to learn who they are, to search for a larger purpose for their lives and to leave college better human beings. (Lewis 2007, p. xii)

Introduction

Expressions of a moral crisis in contemporary higher education, such as the one cited above from Harry Lewis, former Dean of Harvard College, are not hard to come by. Many of these contemporary expressions concern the way in which economic thinking has become the guiding light of higher education. In other words, the consideration of what will happen in lecture halls and what will not has more to do with how the university will survive economically, or how the lecturer will publish and not perish, or students' future employability, than with how indeed the university will fulfill its *educational* role as described by Lewis.

To some degree, one has to face a stark reality of economic Darwinism. In recent decades, universities have been thrust into the market economy (Bok 2009) leading to this kind of 'economic imperialism' (Gilead 2012). If we follow Maslow's (1943) theory of needs, whether at the individual or at the institutional level, the struggle to secure basic survival needs is more likely to send us searching for our next meal than to read Plato. When considered from this 'survival of the fittest' perspective alone, one can almost justify academic policies such as constant concern with grants, dwindling of humanities' departments, and hiring/promoting faculty based on

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impact factors rather than based on actual research contribution to a field of study (which are not necessarily associated). All of these practices can be rationally explained as consequences of higher education institutions' struggle to survive, which force them into organisational decisions that unfortunately erode the very foundations of education.

At the same time, settling for this perspective alone, is only another reflection of the moral crisis of higher education. I view these policies as symptoms of the problem, not as its cause. These are all external conditions that make education into some kind of victim, which education is not. The problem of education is 'education'; that is, we might say, its institutionalisation, as I argue elsewhere (Ergas 2017a). Education (without quotation marks) is an open realm of possibilities that generally includes a process that involves development, knowledge, skills, virtues, self-discovery (though I do not insist on a rigorous analytical definition here). 'Education', however, is the particular way in which a group, a school, or a society embrace an attempt to educate (without quotation marks). The problem emerges when we come to believe that 'education' is in crisis because of external conditions, rather than because we brought them about by the version of 'education' we created. That is, there is a tendency to think that ours is not just a version of education, but rather how it ought to be seen; it's simply that reality is misbehaving hence that is why things are not working for us.

This is where the huge gap emerges between theories we use when we talk about education, and the 'education' that is actually practiced at institutions of higher education. These are simply two very different things, as Dan Barbezat and Mirabai Bush (2014) recently claimed:

> Somehow we have lost our way in higher education and abandoned our mission to create lives of purpose and strong ethical and creative minds. Look at any university or college's mission statement and you'll see they are filled with that sort of rhetoric. However, in the actual education, where does it happen? It mostly does not. (p. xv)

Refraining from an elaborate analysis of the aims of education, even if we merely settle for Lewis's broad words, and Barbezat and Bush's general orientation, we must ask ourselves what does *actual* lecture hall practice have to do with helping students 'grow up', 'learn who they are', 'search for a larger purpose', and 'leave college better human beings'? When these writers speak of education, the aims they speak of rise above one discipline or another, but somehow there is an expectation that these aims will be achieved regardless of whether students choose Law or Physics, Anthropology or Literature. But I seriously ask: how do actual curricula and pedagogies implemented in Sociology, Economics, or Business Management actually contribute to these aims? Do lecturers in Geography, Anthropology, Chemistry, or any other discipline, actually enter lecture halls with the intentions that Lewis has in mind, or do they feel themselves more as 'lecturers', *not* 'educators'; that is, they are there to provide students with state-of-the art 'knowledge' in these disciplines but not to help them seek purpose and become better human beings. The common theme of many critical accounts of higher education, as expressed by students, is a sense of purposelessness in their studies and an alienation from themselves. This is harshly expressed in William Deresiewicz's (2014) *Excellent*

Sheep, which describes a generation of students attending Ivy League universities yet being plagued by a sense of meaninglessness as they find that they are living someone else's dream, while consuming anti-depressants in order to survive the ordeal. It is also found in Parker Palmer, Arthur Zajonc, and Megan Scribner, who argue that students come to higher education 'seeking not only knowledge but a sense of meaning and purpose' (Palmer et al. 2010, p. 4). Barbezat and Bush (2014) summarise this, pointing to what I am getting at:

> We are cheating our students out of the opportunity to inquire deeply into their own meaning and find themselves in the center of their learning, thus providing them with a clear sense of the meaning of their studies. (Barbezat and Bush 2014, p. xv)

I have nothing against acquiring knowledge in one's selected discipline, which must be part of higher education curricula, but the general aims of higher education, as mentioned above, point high above this. They point to what was relevant in Socrates' times and seems to remain so today – 'know thyself'. In this chapter, I demonstrate how educational institutions do the opposite. They expel the 'self' – our inner lives and the right and need to explore who we are – from education. However, the problem is more severe, since not only do they *not* include practices of self-inquiry, but also they 'educate' us to believe that they don't belong in education. The claim I make is hence not only that one's inner life is part of the curriculum, but also it is about reminding ourselves that it is part and parcel of education.

In this chapter I offer two movements that are meant to reclaim this educational ethos as a grounding for what I believe is called for in higher education and also seems to be emerging in some institutions. I nest both of them within the context of Hodgson, Vlieghe, and Zamojski's (2017) recent manifesto for a 'post-critical' perspective on education. The first movement is an exposition to 'know thyself'. I demonstrate how this concept emerges from East-Asian, Western, ancient, and contemporary views that are grounded in educational discourse. I view this as a post-critical perspective in the sense that it broadens the sources from which to consider the educational and grounds the concept of 'know thyself' in a more universal perspective.[1] The second movement concerns turning the critical mind upon itself by means of the body. This is a post-critical movement in the sense that it moves beyond the tradition of *critique* as based in Platonic-Cartesian-Kantian disembodiment and in fact reverses it: this movement comes down to positioning Descartes in a headstand (Ergas 2013). That is, it treats the body as the educator of the mind. This movement intends to demonstrate *how* the quest of 'know thyself' can be reclaimed in contemporary education. Both movements are expressed based on first-person narratives; that is, both will involve either others' or my own personal

[1]There may certainly be discrepancies between the concept and experience of self that I explore from an East-Asian perspective and how it is handled by Hodgson et al. (2017) who are more grounded in Continental (European) perspectives. Nevertheless, I suggest that if we indeed want to move into a post-critical realm, such a move is called for as a means to enable us to take a critical eye on our own post-criticality and its limits. A treatment of potential discrepancies between conceptions of self in these traditions, however, will have to be addressed in future projects.

lived experience. As part of the argument of this chapter, I suggest that if it is a reclaiming of 'know thyself' that we are after, the method applied for such an endeavour must reflect this ethos in its own right. Speaking merely about how Socrates reclaims his 'self' is, as the Zen aphorism suggests, mistaking the finger that points to the moon for the moon itself. We can certainly learn *about* Socrates' self-inquiry (the finger), but education (the pointing to the moon) would be about moving from Socrates' self to examining our own (the moon). The chapter ends with a brief description of a course that I have been teaching at my university that is based on mindfulness practice. The description demonstrates a post-critical education in which, based on mindfulness practice, students turn to their bodies to reclaim themselves in the image of 'education'. It is a post-critical move in the sense that its critique is not addressed at social oppression, nor does it provide yet another 'critical' theory by which to critique 'education'. Rather, it is a critique that turns to the mind itself and educates it to view its own place in the making of 'education'.

'Self-Knowledge' and Education: Ancient Times, West and East

The importance of 'self-knowledge' has been highlighted in both Western and East-Asian cultures; however, in many cases this emphasis has been accompanied by unequivocal statements associated with the difficulties and, in fact, impossibility involved in the pursuit of 'self'. Perhaps the most well-known representative of 'know thyself' as an educational ethos in the Western culture is Socrates, who argued in the *Phaedrus*, 'I am still unable, as the Delphic inscription orders, to know myself and it really seems to me ridiculous to look into other things before I have understood that' (Plato 2013, pp. 229e–230a). Socrates dedicated his life to this pursuit, and in Pierre Hadot's (1995) interpretation the philosophical dialogue – Socrates's pedagogical method – could be seen as both the means and the end of 'self-knowledge'. However, this pursuit has always been construed as leaving much to be desired. Perhaps the medium indeed is the message in this case, for this Socratic project of exploring fundamental moral concepts such as *justice* and *truth* yielded the impasse of *aporia* – mostly a perplexing feeling that one knows that one doesn't know. Nevertheless, Socrates' insistence on repeating this supposedly unfruitful path demonstrated that these dialogues were not meant to *in*-form, but rather to *trans*-form (Hadot 1995). It is the *pursuit* of wisdom, not wisdom itself, that seems to be the aim.

If we venture some thousands of miles east and some hundreds of years earlier, we will find quite similar ideas in East-Asian traditions (e.g., Buddhism, Taoism). A story from the Chandogya Upanishad – the corpus of writings representing the Vedantic tradition dated arguably to the seventh century BC – relates of a great

scholar named Narada who goes to a well-known sage named Sanatkumara and tells him:

> I have studied the Rgveda … the corpus of histories and ancient tales … ancestral rites, mathematics … the dialogues, the monologues, the science of gods … the science of government … All that sir, I have studied … And here I am, a man who knows all the vedic formulas but is ignorant of the self. And I have heard it said by your peers that those who know the self pass across sorrow. Here I am sir, a man full of sorrow. Please, sir, take me across to the other side of sorrow. (Ch. 7.2 Olivelle 1998, pp. 156–7)

The story goes on as Sanatkumara calls Narada's 'knowledge' 'mere names'. He tells him to 'venerate the name', yet points successively to *greater* 'knowledge' eventually leading to the 'knowledge' of *self*. It appears that no matter how rigorous and thorough a scholar Narada was, his knowledge proved frustratingly futile in terms of *self*-knowledge. Sanatkumara called this knowledge 'mere names', perhaps to suggest that it is but a second order abstraction of reality. 'Names' are representations of things; they are not things as such. Sanatkumara told Narada that the knowledge he had acquired will bring him nowhere close to the liberation he seeks from sorrow. Such liberation can only be found when self-knowledge is realised. As Grinshpon (2003) – an interpreter of the Upanishads – generalised, Upanishadic tales 'are about men and women in crisis, awakened to their inferiority, the painful consciousness of a gap between (their own) lesser self and an elusive better self' (p. vii). Thus this story from the Chandogya Upanishad is quite typical, resonating well with other examples (see, e.g. Chandogya 6.8.7 and Lewin and Ergas (2018)).

Socrates' and Sanatkumara's conceptions of self-knowledge and its pursuit, coming from remote places and different historical times, share some similarities. First, as mentioned, in both cases self-knowledge is conceptualised as a superior kind of knowing, which is, at the same time, very difficult or impossible to achieve. Second, when broadening the context in which these examples appear, both locate self-knowledge as the ultimate goal of education. Socrates' (or according to some, his expression of Plato's) statement can be considered within the context of the cave allegory (in the *Republic*), in which he declares it to be an allegory about education (Plato 1968), as well as in the *Apology* in which he defends his *aporetic* pedagogical approach. Both of these contexts position his project as an *educative* one. In the Upanishadic tale, while the long list of studies elaborated by Narada sounds quite esoteric from a contemporary perspective, it nevertheless is a *curriculum*, at least in the narrow sense of a series of disciplines studied over the course of time. A third and highly crucial aspect that also emerges here, and one that is central to this chapter, is that intellectual knowledge and the medium of language by which it is expressed are limited. Unlike intellectual knowing, 'self' does not lend its 'self' to being pinned down through the medium of language. Words seem to take us up to a certain point from which, perhaps as the early Wittgenstein suggested, 'whereof one cannot speak one must remain silent' (2013, p. 7). Nevertheless, unlike the stark deadening sense one gets upon hearing Wittgenstein, Sanatkumara seems to suggest that this end is a different beginning. Perhaps the Socratic *aporia* suggests something along these lines as well, for indeed it represents the state in which all attempts to define the 'form' of a concept based on words are insufficient.

In both West and East, the lure of 'self' enchanted philosophers and sages throughout the millennia since Socrates and Sanatkumara roamed the earth. These pursuits have led to diverse and sometimes opposing dispositions toward this unsettling educational orientation, with some making the pursuit of self-knowledge central to their lives, and others warning against this unachievable and even dangerous task (Shusterman 2012). While there are substantial differences between Western philosophy and traditions such as Vedanta (as well as other East-Asian traditions that emphasise self-knowledge (Lewin and Ergas 2018), the centrality of 'self-knowledge' in both suggests that there is something universal in this human quest. In fact, I argue that while these tales of ancient times and distant places may give the impression that we are speaking of an esoteric pursuit, the next section demonstrates that it is as relevant, concrete, and pressing *now* as it appears to have been in tales of ancient times. In the following, I bring a number of contemporary self-narratives, including my own, in which very similar yearnings are expressed.

Self-Knowledge, Meaning, and Education: Contemporary Times

My own journey can be located directly within the above two reference points. Mutatis mutandis, trade the list of disciplines listed in Narada's story with the more conventional contemporary curriculum one finds in public schooling – History, Geography, Math, Literature, Sciences – but leave sorrow and disenchantment in there, and you will get a feel for what it was like for me. My educational path has been quite similar to the one that public education systems in Western industrialised countries offer. I went through primary and secondary school, doing the things one does there and I was quite a decent student. At the same time, while this external curriculum was going on, there was always this sense that something was missing. I had no clue what it was, but as a child and teenager, while I went through the motions as everyone else around me seemed to be doing, my mind was busy with a myriad other things, which lay miles away from that which the schooling system positioned at the foreground of life. While the teacher was speaking of Napoleon, quadratic equations, and covalent bonds, I was far more preoccupied with things like whether my biceps were impressive enough compared to the guy sitting next to me, or handling a broken heart from a girlfriend who had broken up with me. In spite of my ability to 'perform' academically, a state of lack, like Narada's, lurked behind. Life seemed to be somewhat of a downer and the education I was getting felt like a placeholder for something else. Outwardly, I put up a façade of smartness, cynicism, and toughness, outwitting my teachers, seeking to impress my peers, but I suspect that these were only ways to keep me busy enough and trick my attention away from the void and the turmoil that I was sensing inside.

My story is not that unique. Variations on this narrative have been offered by others. Sean Steel (2014) opens his critique of our contemporary educational ethos with fourteen year-old Jim's narrative:

> There was such a big deal about going off to first grade, but I kept waiting for us to talk about life – you know, why we're all here, what this world's about. The nature of the universe. Things like that. When I'd ask or say my ideas just to sort of get things going, there would be dead silence, and then the teacher would move on to spelling or something. I thought, *OK, I*

> *guess we're getting the basic stuff this year, and then we'll get into the good stuff in second grade* . . . Well, second grade came and went and it wasn't any better. (p. 1)

A child's or a teenager's life might be governed by inner turmoil or philosophical yearnings far more than the 'planned curriculum' tends to reflect. I am not arguing, nor do I believe it possible, that the planned curriculum should cover the inner life completely. I am rather pointing to the fact that the complexity of the inner life is ignored. In fact, if teachers do wish to incorporate this broader perspective into their teaching the very form of the curriculum they are called to teach impedes on such ideas heavily, as Barak (2015) put rather sarcastically:

> Our eleventh graders have two problems: an easy one and a difficult one. The easy one is when they have a family member suffering from terminal illness, or if they suffer a loss in the family. The difficult problem is how to solve a mathematical problem with two variables . . . The fact is, our educational system dedicates three to four hours per week to the hard problem in primary school, and five in high school. The easy problems gets one hour per week, and that hour usually doesn't handle such issues. (p. 172, author's translation)

When I was a teenager, I doubt whether I could articulate things in this way. One's mind is often bound by the shape it is given by social frameworks that define the scope of possibility. There seems to be a mechanism of conformity that undergirds education in which minds are shaped to 'conform with the form' of education.

As Elliot Eisner (1993) argued, education is a mind-making process. Part of mind-making has to do with an initiation of the mind into certain understandings of the form of education and 'school' in and of themselves. This is the problem to which I referred at the beginning: we come to understand the version of 'education' we get through very certain practices we undergo, and tend to see them as if this is how the world was made, rather than how it was made by *us* in very specific ways. As I argued elsewhere (Ergas 2017a), the hegemonic curricular-pedagogical practices in education (across ages) establish 'self-knowledge' as a *null* curriculum, if we apply Eisner's (1994) terms. In other words, as long as our personal thoughts, sensations, and emotions are not discussed at school or at universities, we learn that they are not the 'stuff' of 'education' and 'schooling'. Self is expelled from the game; 'education' and 'schooling' become a social practice of knowing the world and 'leaving self out of it'.[2]

My examples above reflect primary and secondary education but this ethos of the expulsion of 'self' flows directly into higher education as expressed in Deresiewicz's (2014) critique. From a young age, students come to understand 'education' as nothing more than 'doing your homework, getting the answers, acing the test' (p. 13). By the time we get into higher education we are fully ready to become 'excellent sheep' that are pushed into college to build a career, whereas, as he argues,

[2]Though we do hear of discourses such as social-emotional learning and positive psychology beginning to filter into this system these are usually framed as 'interventions'; that is, short-term, highly specific programs that are implemented for a number of weeks, often under the framework of prevention science, rather than based on the virtue of their inherent educational value (Durlak et al. 2011).

the purpose of college is to build a 'self': 'it is only through this act of introspection, of self-examination, of establishing communication between the mind and the heart, the mind and experience, that you become an individual, a unique being – a soul. And that is what it means to develop a self' (p. 84). Yet, as Barbezat and Bush (2014) observed, curricular-pedagogical practice often very actively works *against* this orientation in higher education as 'students are actively dissuaded from finding themselves in what they are studying: all too often, students nervously ask whether they may use "I" in their papers' (p. 6). In such a climate it becomes difficult to consider our interiority as germane to 'education'. Yet, as Sean Steel (2014) describes the conclusions of his own journey, this can become an alienating experience, for at some point one begins to seek greater meaning in one's life:

> I have come to see that all the knowledge of all the books and all the sciences and arts that one can muster during one's lifetime is insufficient to make one wise . . . no matter how many degrees one earns or how high is the stack of philosophic treatises one winds through, the knowledge that one gleans from all this paper and from the pursuit of this sort of knowledge is *not* akin to wisdom or wisdom's pursuit . . . . (p. 4)

Poetically, Steel concludes that wisdom cannot be achieved 'without dying to the self and to all that is *not* wisdom' (p. 4). Steel's statement positions us well within the great conundrum alluded to above. Let us suppose that we seek to reclaim 'self': what exactly are we reclaiming and what does this reclaiming look like? No less, Steel speaks of 'dying to the self': does he, like Socrates, as I interpreted his words above, think about 'self' as false ideas we have about ourselves? What remains when one dies to the 'self'? Steel's words sound quite uninviting . . . Who would want to die to his 'self'?

Though I fully acknowledge that one's ability to testify to one's own wisdom is to be heavily questioned, for all its worth, my own journey connects the above threads in various ways and begins to probe this conundrum. In continuing my own narrative, I express kinship with Narada and then elaborate on the process of 'dying to myself' to demonstrate how our bodies become involved in the education of the mind:

> *I pushed on. There is something in social inertia that keeps one going, even if sometimes this conformism stands on utterly circular and recursive logic: you do what you do because others do it too, yet they too, may be following the same logic. Together you form a self-sustaining cycle with no one innocent enough to question whether the 'Emperor isn't naked'. Yet, for me, at some point the friction was simply too much to bear. I was highly troubled as I sought to find purpose in my own life. Moving into higher education, like Narada, I felt that the academic path failed to respond to my needs. The intellectual 'problems' presented to me by lecturers at the foreground of university life, hardly responded to the lack of meaning and purpose felt within. Paraphrasing Narada's words:* Here I was, a young man full of sorrow, *who had high expectations of the academic life, yet the more he invested in this intellectual style of knowing, the greater the disenchantment grew.*
>
> *Like Narada, I had also heard of a place beyond sorrow. These were the '90s. Contemplative practices like yoga, tai chi, meditation, and others were easy to come by. They came with* The lure of the transcendent *as the title of Dwayne Huebner's (1999) book suggests. This incited my imagination and seemed to be what I needed. While I continued my university education pursuing the intellectual path, I started to dive into these practices that seemed to pull in a completely different orientation. It was hardly love at first sight. In*

fact, for quite some time it exacerbated the bifurcation that I was experiencing; the gap between 'education' as it was shaped in my mind based on its contemporary institutional social forms and the life within.

I suggest that Eisner's claim that 'education is a mind-making process' can be more dramatically stated, viz. as 'education is a self-making process in which "self" is shaped by the ways of "education"'. The sense we have of who we are is shaped wittingly or unwittingly by the kind of social practices in which we engage (or are made to engage in). We are initiated into these practices from a very young age and based on them we are socialised into the meanings that society has built into its institutions. If educational practices dissuade us from treating 'self' as a reliable source of knowledge, wisdom, and meaning, it does not merely create a 'null curriculum' of 'self', but also *educates* 'self' to treat itself as lacking educational meaning or educative potential. If we are constantly oriented *out*ward by the educational system, we are bound to surmise, even if tacitly, that attending to our 'self' – *in*ward – is not a significant orientation; at least not in our society. The meaning of 'education' indeed becomes fully externalised. It is about all the artifacts we acquire (e.g., certificates, grades, degrees) as we move our bodies from one classroom to another, and then between cities and states and over the globe, through high-school, college, university, in the pursuit of knowledge. While in this process, one's eyes and ears are set on the board, the Powerpoint presentations, the classroom discussions, all of which are *ex*ternal. The possibility of education as an *in*ternal journey in which one delves into the *geography* of one's body and mind, the *history* and *evolution* of one's mental states, the *math* of one's changing moods, is not included in this image, and the more we invest ourselves in the *ex*ternal journey, the more this possibility becomes less plausible. To some degree, in order for practices that involve serious 'self' contemplation to become considered as part of 'education' we need to 'die to this self' that had been made to believe that they are not. This cannot be a pleasant process:

As I engaged in yoga, meditation, and tai chi I could not but bring a mind that was 'educated' in the forms and standards of 'education' as a cumulative path of academic excellence, along with me. I thought I 'knew' the game - If you do your homework, study hard, you usually 'ace the test'. I figured that it is only a matter of transferring this ability to the domain of 'self', until I finally 'overcome my sorrows' as life will start to make more sense. I was in for some surprises or perhaps a new kind of 'education'. My body positioned in yogic postures, sitting still in meditation or moving in a tai chi form, became the stage on which my 'educated self' began to perform its show. Knowing not of any alternative, I took to the external forms of these practices. I began to 'perform' yogic postures based on ideas that one can only get from books and those around him. Whether it was about looking like the flexible students around me, or whether it was the whip of an internal ego that competes with itself; from within and from without, my mind did not take stock of its body that was to perform according to external 'standards'. Those problems with the meaning of life did not go away … rather, now, there was another outlet for them to become manifest – painful knees, which after three months in a three-year senior yoga teacher course, became a source for new agony. Prior to the course, I was proudly 'performing' Lotus poses and now I had to skip several postures. No less, after injuring myself during meditation practice, I was the only one in the room sitting on a chair, feeling utterly unyogic, surrounded by fifty other students that looked to me like yogic adepts as they haunted my humiliated mind. Where was

the overcoming of sorrow I was promised? Where was that Self of mine – the better one – hiding?

Somehow, however, that very 'self' knew better. Whether pushed by the dissatisfaction of life as it was, or whether pulled by the lure of the transcendent, I kept practicing. Gradually, it started to dawn on me. The internal talk and troubles of this mind are not that which gets in the way of life. They are *life, or at least a substantial part of it. They are a curriculum in their own right and one that seems to be governed by a completely different grammar. It's a grammar in which more is sometimes less, and an A student is one who is declared the kindest of all, especially when that kindness is addressed to one's self when receiving an F. Somehow, in a way that is beyond my understanding, 'performing' postures externally and experiencing problems internally became a dialectical dance that transformed their nature and the 'self' that was narrating this process.*

This self-narrative is not an attempt to advocate one practice or another, nor to proselytise certain wisdom traditions from which these practices have emerged. The eclectic list of contemplative practices that I have been practicing seriously over the past twenty years include tai chi, yoga, Feldenkrais technique, Vipassana meditation, and mindfulness to mention but a few. Consider them all as 'mere names', as Sanatkumara would suggest. The practices and their place of origin, East or West, are hardly as important as their orientation: education in self-knowledge. Importantly, in spite of my efforts and years, I hardly cracked 'self' but I'm less concerned whether I ever will, since the process of searching became rewarding enough.

Contemporary Manifestations of 'Know Thyself' in Higher Education

How does this connect to the understanding of higher education and addressing its contemporary crises? 'Know thyself' is a curricular-pedagogical *koan.* We know not exactly what we are looking for. There is, however, one crucial *pedagogical* element that seems to be obvious. One can only study that which one attends to, hence it seems quite straightforward to suggest that anyone proposing to cultivate 'self-knowledge' needs to attend *inward* to one's body and mind. As I argue, this is the core of a meta-pedagogical turn that is required in the attempt to address the source of many of the symptoms of the crises of contemporary higher education. In recent years, several scholars across the world have been implementing this turn within the discourse of 'contemplative pedagogies'. This fundamental act of turning attention inward to explore our thoughts, sensations, and emotions is the common denominator of all of these pedagogies (Barbezat and Bush 2014; Repetti 2010). In the following I briefly describe a course that can be nested within this discourse. Its design reflects the kind of transformation that I described in my self-narrative in this chapter.

The course 'Mindfulness, Yoga, and Education' is a course I designed ten years ago for education Bachelor students. It is a rather unique course that is proposed to students as an experiment at its outset. Rather than take the conventional perspective in which a lecturer proposes a curriculum and supposedly initiates 'minds' into it,

this course begins with asking perplexing questions, such as 'what is the mind *prior* to the curriculum that society believes this mind ought to receive?' Too much is taken for granted in our educational system, as if we know where everyone ought to go and what kind of world we are moving into. We should have a reason for education. That reason can be derived from ideation and future aims – a 'Good' society, economic growth, happiness; however, following in the footsteps of the Buddha, I am more concerned with the question: 'what kind of a problem exists in the mind *right now* so as to warrant the need for education?'

In order to study this question I suggest to the students that we need an approach that silences their previous 'education' and allows room for their selves. For education to have a more grounded reason that is not external to us, there is a need to explore who *we* are and where *we* as individuals want to be going. For this to happen, I as lecturer need to literally 'shut up' for a while so that the only subject matter students will hear will be their own minds – their own *selves.* Our lessons begin outside of the Education building, with students journaling privately, writing what's on their mind. After journaling we practice *standing still* and paying attention, with no attempt to create any particular meaning out of it. We begin with seven minutes in the first lesson and build up to close to twenty in the final (14th) session. After we practice silently, we journal again and then go inside the classroom to discuss our individual experiences. Students are asked to practice daily and journal throughout the semester.

Basically, this is simply mindfulness practice, following Jon Kabat-Zinn's (2005) definition: 'Paying attention, in the present, on purpose and non-judgmentally'. Though current implementations of mindfulness in education tend to be associated more with stress-reduction and mental health, these are proposed to students as possible by-products. In this course mindfulness is more in tune with its original conception within Buddhism – a way of inquiry into the nature of 'self'. Since I provide no curriculum in those moments of journaling and standing still, the only curriculum students are exposed to is their own unfolding – that which their mind is drawn to – thoughts, sensations, emotions, affected from within and from without.

Non-judgmentalism in the context of mindfulness practice means accepting that which presents itself to the mind either as an external or an internal event, and simply letting it be. Our basic instinct, and indeed the critical stance, is one in which we immediately want to react to experience and change it in accordance with preconceived notions of what is good. These are broadly the results of 'education' for better and for worse. I argue that mindfulness as we practice it is a post-critical practice, for here we go beyond the critique of reality through the perspective of one ideology or another. We *are* rather than *do*. We doubt the very nature of mind as interpreter and simply let it 'do its thing' as we just bear witness. Undergirding this stance is an assumption, ideological in its own way (from Hodgson et al.'s (2017) perspective, post-criticality means that there are normative claims to be defended), that at least while we practice, this moment is good for what it is, regardless of the kind of content it brings with it. The act of the practice itself is an act in which one first accepts conditions as they are. Activism might or might not come later. If it does

it would be based on a clearer understanding cultivated by a mind that understands itself, rather than being made by a particular understanding of 'education'.

An elaborate account of this course is offered elsewhere (Ergas 2017b) but needless to say this peculiar course is met with a mixture of curiosity and enthusiasm, as well as cynicism and despair. Students find themselves perplexed as they are deprived of that comfortable situation in which all they need to do is just show up to the lesson and maybe engage in class discussion. Here they become responsible for making sense of education when their own embodied experiences are brought into the course's curriculum. Suddenly within a context of higher education that usually provides them with a specific curriculum of *this* course or *that* course, here during mindfulness practice they are given the opportunity to consider the content that arises within their own embodied minds *now* as part of the curriculum. They find that their mind quickly fills in this void, usually with ideas that their education has instilled in them as to who they should become, what they need to do, and whether they are ahead of or behind those around them. To some extent this course is an example of a *post*-critical pedagogy. Here, all forms of social oppression become exposed as reflections of a mind that has been made in the image of society. Rather than continue practicing this hall of mirrors effect, in this course students begin to practice liberation by anchoring this mind in the sensed moments of embodiment.

Over four hundred students have studied this course over the years. Not all of them seize the opportunity to explore themselves, and some dropout, unable to handle the bizarreness of these lessons. Yet the majority take the course seriously, practice at home, and hand in final projects in which they describe incredible processes of 'self' unfolding and gaining a new understanding of the broader terrains that exist for education of which 'education' is but a possibility. Reading these projects reasserts my position time and again: the crises of education begin with the minds that invent it and sustain it. As long as we do not liberate these minds, our external education will only hide minds from themselves imprisoning us in a hall of mirrors. However, contrary to critical pedagogy, the critique here shifts into post-criticality in the sense that the object of critique is not the world *out there*. It is my own mind that learns to see through its own conditioning, its own participation in the makings of 'education', and is thus liberated to embrace the hope that *does* exist in education.

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Chapter 9
Looking for Love in the Student Experience

Richard Budd

Introduction

This chapter represents an early attempt to engage and think with the ethos that underpins the 'Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy' (Hodgson et al. 2017). It does so from a sociology of education perspective, to see how they might inform one another. This engagement takes place in relation to the experiential nature of 'studenthood', of what it is to be – and to have been – a student. While the Manifesto is perhaps oriented towards a positive repurposing of the relationship between educator and student, through a retrieval from its instrumentalised rendering, it is also essential to consider the broader socio-political conditions in which this relationship takes place. The point of (higher) education is that students may – indeed must – be somehow different as a result of their studies, and that their education in turn has a cumulative (positive) effect on how they understand and interact with the world they live in. The world they live in, as students, is not posited as outside the pedagogical experience, but rather around and entwined with it. If post-criticality is above all else about love for the world, what is there that we can love in our current understanding of the contemporary student experience?

The current backdrop to the question of the student experience is well-documented in the academic literature on higher education, which has largely been dominated by discussions and analyses of a steady marketisation and privatisation of the sector in many countries. The attention given to this by scholars is understandable as university life, worldwide, has become more closely tethered to the 'hegemonic imaginary' (Jessop 2008) of the neoliberal knowledge economy. This imaginary is associated with varied but concomitant forms of governance through

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audit and competition, and a steady replacement of state support for universities with personal and private sector funding. The extent to which the precepts of the knowledge economy are hegemonic – i.e. widely accepted – is debatable given the volume of critical academic and student responses to it (Budd 2018), but it is clear that it has had a significant impact on universities on a global scale. It has wide-ranging effects on the currents of knowledge production and dissemination in general (Auranen and Nieminen 2010), on the shapes that universities take (Krücken et al. 2007), on academic practice (Morrissey 2015), and how university degrees are framed and delivered (Naidoo and Williams 2015). It also reaches into the 'before' and 'after' of higher education, in to schools on the one hand, and into labour markets on the other (Ainley 2016; Meyer and Benavot 2015).

Much of the work in this area is normatively (and, I would argue, rightly) condemnatory of some of the changes associated with neoliberalism in the academy and beyond it. It is, in the main, passionate but soundly reasoned, although there is a dearth of empirical evidence in some areas, as we will see. Sociologists would also admit that, as academics, we are complicit through much of our behaviour in enacting and reproducing the 'managerialist' status quo, as the distinction between manager and academic is vague at best (Bacevic 2018). In the spirit of the 'Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy', which is based on a premise that there is good in the world that we should love and therefore preserve, this chapter will seek to transcend the normativity somewhat. As such, it will try to look beyond the 'inherent critique of societal institutions focused on their dysfunctionality [to create] a space of thought that enables practice to happen anew' (Hodgson et al. 2017, p. 3). This chimes with what Stengers (2005) describes as abandoning the 'major key' that is our underlying political or ethical project. By looking for dysfunction, our gaze may be distracted from other aspects that are important, and in turn this may foreclose some avenues for positive thought and action. This is not to say that this author is abandoning his critical stance (or that Hodgson, Vlieghe, and Zamojski suggest that we should) but that its – at least partial – suspension for a time might open up novel and useful spaces for discussion. In other words, rather than simply being critical of critique, we must also offer ways forward. The Manifesto is a timely reminder that we should not lose sight of the many aspects of education that we value, of that which we (can) love; maybe it has two major keys – love *and* undermining dysfunction – but looking both ways may reveal productive paths to follow.

The societal institution under review in this case is, of course, 'The University', and it is evident in much of the literature defending it against alleged and actual neoliberal incursions and colonisation that it is loved. This chapter will first explore where and how students' experiences feature in the (predominantly UK-focused) literature, and this in turn provides a platform for considering where else we might look – or think – to broaden our understanding of students in contemporary higher education. It appears that while we have rich understandings of some aspects of what studenthood entails, there are other aspects that have been largely overlooked. We will see that, in essence, there is little to love in the literature on the student experience; what we know does have value, but at the same time there is still much that we have yet to learn, and perhaps to love.

Looking for the Student Experience

The study of higher education is particularly diverse, being inter- (or sometimes non-) disciplinary, researched by those who see themselves as higher educationalists *per se*, as well as by scholars who – sometimes only occasionally – address aspects of it in relation to their own disciplinary base (Harland 2009). Higher education research has thus been described in varying theoretical or metaphorical ways: as an 'open access discipline' (Harland 2012), as a Bernsteinian 'region' in the sense of a meeting place between disciplines, as a Bourdieusian 'field' of relational positions and roles (Clegg 2012), and as an 'archipelago' of somewhat disconnected thematic islands (Macfarlane 2012). Literature on higher education, as we might then expect, is diverse, which could be seen as a weakness if there is a lack of an agreed canon and if that body of knowledge is disjointed or incoherent. At the same time, though, this diversity permits a broader eclecticism through allowing a range of entry points and positions without privileging an orthodox stance; perhaps 'anti-neoliberal' represents the orthodoxy.

Both Clegg (2012) and Macfarlane (2012) distinguish two chief, discernible themes within research into higher education: teaching and learning in higher education, and research *on* higher education, which is usually related to the creation, implementation, and effects of policy. Macfarlane places research on the student experience within the teaching and learning aspect and also, perhaps problematically, sees philosophy as a separate – and by implication disconnected – entity from pedagogy and policy. In a departure from this stance, this chapter seeks to conjoin sociological and geographical perspectives with the Manifesto's philosophical position by explicitly considering the 'non-teaching' policy aspects that surround university students' experiences. As mentioned earlier, the Manifesto is inclined towards thinking about the framing of the pedagogical nature of education; this is conceivably education's central dimension. However, teaching and learning do take place *somewhere* (Taylor 2017), and the transformations that occur while at university are not limited to the formal educational aspects alone (Ashwin et al. 2016). Crucially, that 'somewhere' is characterised – and mediated – by and through the unique combination of cultural, political, and economic conditions in which it is embedded (Robertson and Dale 2015; Hüther and Krücken 2016). While it is primarily the UK context being considered here, there may – indeed will – be parallels elsewhere, but we cannot be sure where those parallels exist without clear evidence to support any such claims.

To sketch the line of enquiry in advance, there is a great deal of scholarship on the 'policy side' of the literature around the UK student experience, most of which derives from sociologists of (higher) education and, to a lesser extent, human geographers. This body of work could be categorised in a number of ways, but here it has been divided into the following three themes: The Unequal Student Experience, the Marketised Student Experience, and the Topographical Student Experience. Each theme varies in the extent and nature of its coverage, and an exploration of these now follows. The intention is to discover whether adopting a

post-critical eye might afford an opportunity to help us move forwards in our thinking about how and where we might find love in the student experience.

The Unequal Student Experience

Empirical work on the student experience, in the UK at least, is dominated by a focus on the structural inequalities manifest in the underrepresentation of certain social groups in the student body. The largest literature is related to social class and the issues faced by 'non-traditional' or 'widening participation' students, typically working class, with non-graduate parents (Budd 2017a). This connects with the extensively documented observation that young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds score comparatively poorly in school attainment (Frederickson and Petrides 2008). This then translates into a lower likelihood of progressing to higher education (Chowdry et al. 2013), particularly at the most academically selective universities (Boliver 2013). Unlike in many other European countries, British universities select their own students, and the higher status institutions tend to be oversubscribed and have higher entrance requirements. Scholars have shown that they are therefore, by dint of being more academically selective, also more socially selective as those from more disadvantaged backgrounds are less able to mobilise the economic, cultural, and social capital (Bourdieu 1997) required for entry to these so-called 'elite' universities. In other words, they may lack the economic means to live away from home, the secondary school grades and other information about higher education, the latter of which is usually provided by family, peers, and teachers (Reay et al. 2005). This research shows how, in contrast, many middle-class students – from university-oriented schools and with parents in the professions – 'delocate' (i.e. move away from home) to high status universities almost unthinkingly, as a matter of course.

The notion of the accumulation and mobilisation of capitals has also been brought successfully to bear on understanding where inequalities lie within and then beyond the student experience itself. In the first instance, working-class students can find the transition into university more difficult as they know less about the lifestyle and what can be initially quite different modes of study (Pampaka et al. 2012). Second, they might focus their energies more on academic attainment while middle-class students 'in the know' also dedicate time (and money) to amassing other forms of cultural capital through often unpaid internships and what can be expensive extra-curricular activities that boost their employability (Bathmaker et al. 2013). Some universities also aggressively promote these activities by generating anxieties about the congested graduate labour market that the massification of higher education has created (Purcell et al. 2008; Budd 2017b). Furthermore, students from professional backgrounds possess and employ their social capital through family and other connections that allow them to access work experience more easily (Abrahams 2016) – and, crucially, can afford to work for low/no pay for a period. The ongoing effect of this is that students from higher status universities, and particularly those

with the right – and most – capitals, are more successful on the labour market (Chevalier and Conlon 2003; O'Connor and Bodicoat 2017). In this way, social inequalities are reproduced as the middle classes then go on to dominate the professions (Milburn 2012).

Alongside class, there is research on students – albeit much less – in the other 'key' sociological variables of gender and race (Francis et al. 2014), and work incorporating sexuality and dis−/ability is at a relatively early stage of development. Extensively covered are the disparities around gender and degree choice, where women are less likely to study science degrees, particularly around physics and engineering (Clark Blickenstaff 2005). This is despite the fact that they perform as well as boys in those subjects at secondary school and are now in the majority in UK higher education overall (Smith 2011). From the LGBT perspective, Valentine and Wood (2009, p. 10) decry a statistical 'silence' in an almost total absence of national and local level data around sexuality and gender identity in relation to admissions and degree/labour market performance, which 'implies that [this] is a "private" matter'. The educational outcomes in general and around higher education access and success across ethnic groups also vary, with some groups (particularly Chinese and Indian) faring comparatively well but others (such as Gypsy Traveller/Roma) performing poorly (Bhattacharyya et al. 2003). A relatively strong proportional representation of Black students initially appears to tell a positive story as they make up 6% of the UK student population compared with 3% nationally; they are, though, notably absent from higher status universities, attain less well while at university, and are more likely to drop out (Alexander and Arday 2015). The reasons for their lower attainment levels are not well understood (Richardson 2015), although it seems that Black students tend to feel less well prepared for higher education (NUS 2011; Smith 2016). Again, we can see absences of cultural capital within certain social groups, which undermines their ability to make as much of their time at university as others. There seems to be less of a hindrance in terms of attainment for disabled students (Richardson 2009), although they do face greater issues in terms of physical access to buildings, financial costs, and accommodations around their learning environments (Holloway 2001). There is a developing awareness of their needs, but they still remain underrepresented in selective universities (Richardson 2009; Hutcheon and Wolbring 2012).

It is perhaps surprising to note that, in spite of the presence of these broader trends, there is evidence that contemporary students reject the sociological view of structural inequalities around social background, race, and class. Rather, they see themselves as the primary agents of their own success (Francis et al. 2014). Some of this, the authors assert, can be connected to the rise of individualised discourses and the entrepreneurial self-understanding associated with neoliberalism (see e.g. Walkerdine 2011). Francis et al. (2014) did see a broader awareness of less distinct, more permeable boundaries around gender, class, and so on, but at the same time there were still identifiable but somewhat submerged associations around gendered character traits and attitudes to education.

At the national level, large-scale data and analysis is useful because it allows us to discern patterns in admissions and university attainment, but in itself tells us little

about what it is actually like for students at university. However, that there is unequal participation in – particularly elite – higher education does provide indications of the potential experiences of marginalised groups, as 'contexts in which individuals perceive that they have minority status are widely recognised to be negative and stressful (Woodfield 2019, p. 16). Indeed, research on social class (e.g. Reay et al. 2009; Addison and Mountford 2015) has drawn attention to the ways in which working class students may experience alienation or social (and financial) exclusion within universities dominated by their more affluent peers. This can, for example, create tensions between their 'home' identities and the ways in which they may feel expected to act in milieus that are initially unfamiliar in both social and academic terms (Reay et al. 2010; Abrahams and Ingram 2013). Similarly, LGBT students report issues of high stress and low confidence in higher education – and more in relation to staff than their peers (Valentine and Wood 2009) – although it also seems that university offers space for identity development for these students that other spheres of life may not (Falconer and Taylor 2017). Identity is a key theme in the literature on women in the male-dominated discipline of engineering, too, and Powell et al. (2009) have shown the ways in which women feel compelled to enact or undermine their own gender roles in particular ways in order to establish or retain credibility in relation to their male peers. Comparable academic research on the questions around students' race and ethnicity in the UK are still relatively few and far between. However, a report edited by Alexander and Arday (2015) documents indirect discrimination systematic within higher education, while work on the experiences of Black students in the UK by the National Union of Students (NUS 2011) describes widespread experience of institutional racism. More recent research by the NUS (2018) details high levels of anxiety about harassment for Muslim students, and a third of those surveyed reported experiencing some level of abuse.

In brief, there is overwhelming evidence that structural inequalities in society and education more generally are reproduced and even magnified in and through higher education. In turn, this suggests – and there is some evidence to substantiate this – that those in minority groups are less able to engage and attain as those in the majority, and they may also feel less welcome in many ways, too. In other words, their experience of being a student is unequal. There is more literature on social class than other areas at present, but it would appear that the trends observed there also play out in somewhat similar ways, particularly for women, those of minority ethnicity, sexual orientation and identity, disabilities, and religions.

The Marketised Student Experience

On the surface, the policy logic behind the marketisation of higher education is that it empowers students by placing the student experience centre stage, in that the entire system of degree provision becomes shaped entirely around students' needs and preferences. This has fundamental implications for the nature of the relationship between students and universities at both the national and local level. In terms of the

national level, students are expected to demand – i.e. choose – the degrees they like and the aggregate of their choices as a group then dictates which courses are supplied (Sabri 2011). Locally, student dissatisfaction at any deficits in teaching quality are detected and acted upon, ensuring that high standards (and therefore student satisfaction) are enforced and maintained (Naidoo et al. 2011). The national and local are connected in that choice is guided by publicly visible measures of teaching standards such as student satisfaction (of which more in due course), employability, and retention rates. The assumption here is that students will vote with their feet, not choosing options that previous students have reviewed badly or do not have strong employment options, or leaving courses they are not enjoying. These assumptions are, however, flawed, as we will see.

Government policy does indeed appear to place students 'at the heart of the system' (BIS 2011, p. 32) – implying that they have not previously been there – but Brooks' (2017) analysis of higher education policy documents paints a different picture. She found that the government and government agencies describe students not as empowered decision-makers but as childlike and vulnerable to being taken advantage of by universities because the market (i.e. the availability of clear indicators of quality) is insufficiently developed. By contrast, she found that student unions see students as vulnerable *as a result of* marketisation. Sabri (2011, p. 661) describes how the term 'the student experience' emerged from policy documents in 2009 that accompanied a rise in student fees, and has been used in 'repetitive and totemic form' since then. It represents, she claims, 'a powerful . . . move [as a] challenge to (academic) vested interests' that champions consumer power (ibid., p. 659). Furthermore, while potentially being a catch-all for everything that students do at university, 'the experience' is ontologically flat, assuming that students are entirely rational and their tastes and orientations static. This reflects the influence of economic models of an entirely asocial and selfish *homo economicus* that underpin neoliberalism (Marginson 2006). Research shows that students' preferences change over the duration of their degree (Ashwin et al. 2016) and their 'choices' around university can be a cocktail of the selfish, altruistic, ad hoc, and socially structured (Budd 2017b).

Key to determining the quality of 'the student experience' as conceptualised in UK policy is the National Student Survey (NSS), which final year undergraduates across the country complete towards the end of their course. The NSS seeks to capture, at a single point in time, a representation of how well the university has served its learners across the entire duration of their degrees. This creates 'an imagined reality' by eliding a potentially broad set of experiences with a number of relatively abstract questions (Sabri 2013). The timing is also problematic, as these students are often caught up in their most important assignments and will likely be thinking about their post-degree options. In spite of its obvious shortcomings, a great deal of energy is expended in pursuit of the optimised student experience – universities appoint senior positions with responsibility for it (see, for example, Bournemouth University 2016) – and many internal processes are geared around this (Naidoo et al. 2011; Sabri 2013). As Naidoo et al. (2011) explain, though, where universities constantly monitor student perceptions of their degrees to detect any

sources of minor dissatisfaction, this can in fact foster discontent by encouraging a critical dissection of every minor interaction with the university.

Further conflations are also made between 'the student experience' and student engagement. In connection with other external markers, such as degree outcomes (i.e. grades, employment rates, and probable salaries) and student retention rates that feature on university league tables, universities are encouraged to continually upgrade their students' experience. They must, some say, in order 'to safeguard their continued organisational existence … [as] the higher education market has become increasingly competitive' (ITSE 2016). Engagement, though, is difficult for organisations to capture, and the replacement proxies are the observable behaviours of class attendance and active involvement. The pursuit of maximising these in the (supposed) interests of the 'student experience' is resulting in a 'tyranny of participation' (Gourlay 2015); Gourlay points out that much of students' most engaged activity occurs in private study. Within this, Macfarlane (2015) observes that students' agency can become more limited as they are increasingly expected to perform according to what he terms 'presenteeism' (attendance), 'learnerism' (visible engagement), and 'soulcraft' (normative dispositions towards global citizenship). Furthermore, universities are assuming a strong connection between what they can observe and measure and the outward markers of 'excellence' when in fact these 'may have only a limited relationship to teaching quality, student engagement and learning gain at the micro- or classroom level' (Macfarlane and Tomlinson 2017, p.30). Also, as Fulford (2017) identifies, student disengagement in itself can represent an expression of agency through choosing other activities over attendance and in-class performance.

More broadly, there is compelling evidence that changes in satisfaction scores in the UK are very weakly related to demand for degrees (Gibbons et al. 2015), implying much of this effort within universities is, in fact, wasted. It may be more a case that university reputation overall is a stronger predictor of demand, particularly as the UK has a highly stratified university system (Roberts and Thompson 2007), and university status is strongly related to labour market success there (Leuze 2011; Brown et al. 2011). As for attainment and retention, socio-economic background is the strongest indicator of both, and those from more disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to score poorly or discontinue their studies than their wealthier peers (Crawford 2014). Here we can discern the now familiar and enduring presence of a relative poverty of cultural and economic capitals.

The discussion so far has been about particular aspects of the policy and managerial discourse that surround the contemporary student experience in the UK. Within the ongoing and intense academic discussion around this topic, there seems to be a broad assumption that the nature of studenthood in this context is one where the market framing, in conjunction with tuition fees, has reshaped the relationship between universities and students (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005). That is, instead of empowering students to improve the quality of their learning and other university-related experiences, there has been a shift in responsibility for personal development away from the student and towards the university. In short, students are becoming passive and instrumental recipients – i.e. consumers – of a university

degree rather than active and intrinsically-motivated learners; this is potentially being fostered in parallel with an implicit expectation that students are present and perform in, what can be, superficial ways. There is, though, a relative dearth of evidence to substantiate claims of instrumentalism and passivity, and we know little about the marketised student experience. It is also important to note that universities can play a number of simultaneous roles for students, such as landlord, partner in learning, or careers service, and the relationship can therefore take many different and concurrent forms. Higher education, where fees exist, surely presents one of the few occasions where the paying customer is largely responsible for the effort and subsequent outcomes of what they are purchasing.

The signs so far are that students do see themselves as the primary agents of their own pedagogical destinies. Tomlinson (2017) reports that students in his study rejected the label of consumer in the main and said that fees had encouraged them to make the most of their 'investment' by working hard. This was tempered, though, by a realisation that paying fees gave them leverage over the university, a finding mirrored by Budd (2017b), who also found that students in England expected more from their university than (non-fee-paying) students in Germany did. This had less to do with fees, however, and more to do with the relatively close pedagogical relationships characteristic of the UK system. The role of German universities – for reasons of cultural history and perhaps overstretched resources – was more passive and students there felt distant and dissociated from academics.

In terms of instrumentalism, as indicated earlier, students may see university partly instrumentally, but they are not pure *homo economicus*. Both Tomlinson (2008) and Budd (2017b) identify an instrumental orientation towards grades in that optimum degree outcomes were essential for post-degree success, but these were associated with a perception by students of a congested graduate labour market resulting from high student numbers, not necessarily as a marker of their own learning/development. The latter study also reported evidence of a UK university vigorously promoting the employability narrative around extra-curricular activities, work placements, and even recommending that domestic students would improve their career chances by interacting more with international students. It is important to question the motive here: the university is interested in its employability 'scores' and league table positions, and the students want to be successful, but this pressure to instrumentalise everything can engender anxiety in the students and overshadow other aspects of personal or intellectual growth. A UK-Singaporean comparison of the student experience by Muddiman (2018) opens up another dimension, that of the potential mediating role of academic disciplines. From interviews with students in sociology or business, it emerged that 'subject allegiance was more prominent than national context' (ibid., p. 2) in that business students were more instrumental in terms of the end result of their degrees, while sociology students were more altruistic and developmentally-oriented. As she points out, discerning whether this was a case of chicken or egg is difficult, i.e. whether students with a more (or less) altruistic bent choose certain kinds of subjects or the extent to which the subject might a contributing factor. It has been seen elsewhere, though, that sociology students may develop a greater awareness of social justice and social relations, but this naturally varies

from student to student (Ashwin et al., 2013). If the combination of fees, how universities are represented in league tables and marketing literature, and how they may orient themselves around particular forms of student engagement and satisfaction creates a passive disposition in students towards their own development, this produces an obvious paradox. It would entail that neoliberalism places the responsibility for lifelong success firmly on the individual, but encouraging universities to be competitive and more responsive to service users can simultaneously diminish their sense of responsibility for the development that enables them to be successful. There is, though, still insufficient evidence to substantiate the predictions of a passive and instrumentally-oriented student body, and the general lack of research here is perhaps surprising given the length of discussions around neoliberalism in the higher education literature.

The Topographical Student Experience

There appears to be a concerted move in the social sciences towards 'post-humanist' perspectives that seek to increasingly acknowledge and factor in the nature and agency of the non-human in a relational ecology with the human (Taylor 2017). Rather than this being altogether new, however, Whatmore (2006) points out that the current 'material turn' is in fact a 're-turn', in that this relationship has been noted in human geography for some time, but that it is experiencing a resurgence there and across disciplinary boundaries. The two central concepts here, familiar to geographers, are those of place and space. Place corresponds with locations that have discernible boundaries, and it has long been observed how people's lived experience and opportunities vary depending on where they are, as well as by/through gender, social class, and so on (McDowell and Massey 1984). It is also possible to see how places themselves are socially constructed, enacted, and maintained or reproduced, as well as changed (see, e.g. Benson and Jackson 2012). Place, in other words, is structuring but also malleable. Space, on the other hand, is a more elusive concept, but relates to the ways in which people and/or physical/virtual resources flow (or are channelled) through a given territory, market, or other environment of less distinguishable physical form (Thrift 2009). As Thrift explains, thinking of space also suggests that we can consider the rhythms of particular spaces (and places) and how imagery and the way things look can be influential in our perceptions and thus lived experience.

Gulson and Symes (2007) consider education to be a latecomer to considerations of material aspects, and suggest that it offers a breadth of as yet relatively untapped theoretical, methodological, and empirical possibilities. As Taylor (2017, p. 428) suggests, 'all learning is spatially located—it happens somewhere—and that that somewhere is an intimate if unspoken and unacknowledged part of our bodily experience of education'. As already discussed, experiences of education are not solely associated with the exercise of learning in the formal sense, and this highlights the importance of questions around how the student experience might be different

across a range of broader environmental dimensions. It has long been noted by sociologists that where you study matters, largely in terms of the cultural and economic capital associated with particular disciplines and school or university status (Ball et al. 2002; Chevalier and Conlon 2003; Chevalier 2011; Leuze 2011). However, less attention has been paid in higher education to the constitution of education in terms of its physical and social composition, outside the previously noted social minority perspectives. It is to scholarship on these two dimensions – the physical and social – that we now turn.

Ellsworth (2005, p. 123) asserts that 'both architecture and media are implicated in broader social and political issues involving embodiment, inhabitation, space, creating and constructing, desire, sexuality, and economies of exchange'. This would suggest that the concrete ways – both metaphorically and literally – that universities are constituted (and where) can have a real impact on how their students interact and engage, as well as with whom. Greene and Penn (1997) describe how Ivy League universities in the US were initially designed around a model of a central college green as nucleus, with clearly laid out axes connecting faculties to facilitate interdisciplinarity and solidarity. However, not all universities are created from scratch or have the luxury of space, and as universities outgrow their original configurations and have to fit into and around their surroundings, the dynamics of the campus then necessarily change (Halsband 2005). This can, in essence, create or remove barriers between disciplines or social groups, and particularly for urban universities and satellite campuses, the patterns of movement and boundaries – and even noise levels – between different campuses (or universities) will vary and shift.

The relationship between the locale and education can be political and potentially problematic, too. Research by Lipman (2007) describes, for example, how gentrification and local government policy in Chicago created significant issues for working class Latinos around access to schooling, community cohesion, and living costs. For universities, the historical interaction (and, at times, conflict) between 'town and gown' has been well-documented, as universities occupy not only a physical but also a social presence in their locales (O'Mara 2012). Some research suggests that the existence of green spaces on campuses may have some connection with students' quality of life and attainment (McFarland et al. 2010), and the use and appreciation of those spaces depends on the way the university is laid out and may also be gendered (Speake et al. 2013). Who students are, such as whether they live on campus, locally, or commute, also means that issues as central as communal spaces, or as seemingly banal as parking, can all influence how students interact with their university and peers (Finn 2017). It seems, then, that the physical presence of a university can 'speak to' its staff and students as well as the broader population, but there is so far relatively little research that considers the physical issues of place and space for higher education institutions (Speake et al. 2013). It should also be acknowledged that not all student-university (or student-student) interactions occur on a tangible campus either. As universities provide more of their education online (or even all of it, see e.g. Anderson 2001), this has created a 'temporal and spatial expansion of educational processes and practices' that has attracted little scholarly attention to date (Selwyn and Facer 2014, p. 486).

Incorporating notions of place and space in social terms adds further aspects to ways in which we can consider the student experience. As outlined earlier, we already have some understanding of 'who goes where' in the patterns around social class and ethnicity, and how minority students can be marginalised from aspects of university life. However, it seems that the patterns of mobility are more complex than social group alone, in that local (i.e. home) geography seems to have a steering influence on students' propensity to move. Research by Donnelly and Gamsu (2018) shows that students from particular regions of the UK are comparatively more or less mobile than each other. For reasons that may be associated with the differing fee regimes in the constituent countries in the UK, Scottish and Welsh students tend to study in their home country. However, students from the Northwest and Northeast of England are less mobile, as are those from the Southeast/London, where there is a greater concentration of universities. This raises questions about not only the social class and ethnic make-up of universities, but also the extent to which there is (or is not) a mixing of regional, domestic identities. (This is even before we consider the social composition of academic/university staff, see Deem and Morley 2006.) There are financial and social implications of post-degree mobility, too, with those moving to the Southeast/London experiencing a higher 'earnings premium' than those less willing/able to be or move there (Kidd et al. 2017). The UK also attracts a considerable number of students from overseas (around 20% of the overall student body), and this has implications for both the 'home' and international students (see Lillyman and Bennett 2014 for a review). How might the student experience differ, for example, between Bishop Grosseteste University and London Business School; both are of similar size, but in very different places, have contrasting disciplinary shapes, and where the international student body is negligible at the former, it comprises nearly three quarters at the latter (see HESA 2018)?

Despite the long-term (largely middle-class) 'tradition' of students moving away from home, it is puzzling to note that the experience of that delocation has received very little attention. Recent work in this area found that students living away from home may see it as part of 'the experience', and that the dynamics around student accommodation are complex and worthy of investigation in their own right (Holton 2016, 2018). Evidence is also emerging that the number of students who live at home is rising, perhaps linked to the increasing costs of studying (Thomas and Jones 2017). Thomas and Jones found that, in addition to the emotional and financial costs of being 'commuter students', they are more likely to engage in the academic side of university life rather than social and other non-academic activities. Their experience of higher education is therefore going to be very different from those who live on or adjacent to a campus, and this also indicates that their relative social and cultural (capital) enrichment will be different, too. Also, for universities where the majority are local and/or live off campus, the interactions and rhythms of the campus will look very different to those where a large proportion live on site, particularly where the university is relatively isolated.

We can see, then, that understanding place and space in university studies have attracted relatively little scholarship. It seems, though, that they can add fascinating and potentially important aspects to our understanding of what informs or shapes the

student experience. How a university looks and functions in physical terms gives rise to considerations around how people think, feel, move, and interact, and with whom, or alternatively, how they are limited in any or all of those. It also opens up the possibility of exploring these relationships in and around the university, both in terms of which social groups are represented there and how these relate to each other and the broader environs of the university's shape and location.

Summary and Future Avenues

The aim of this chapter was to review what we know about the (UK) student experience, informed by a post-critical perspective. This might, it is hoped, allow for conceptual and empirical gaps in scholarship on this topic to be revealed, as well as to see how the 'Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy' in itself might be applied in practice.

In terms of the Unequal Student Experience, there is a rich literature on the inequalities that working class students encounter before, during, and after attending university. Other minority groups, though, are thus far underrepresented in higher education as well as in the literature on higher education, notably across dimensions of ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and religion. We can see patterns around uneven participation and attainment there, but we know little about the actual experiences and performances of studenthood in these groups. Empirically, undertaking further research on these relatively neglected areas is an obvious step forward. There may, additionally, be theoretical tools better suited to those groups that have as yet seen little application in higher education studies in the UK such as Critical Race Theory (Gillborn 2005), Disability Studies in Education (Connor et al. 2008), and Queer Theory (Renn 2010). From Critical Race Theory, for example, the notion of 'intersectionality' acknowledges and explores the complex interactions between race, class, gender, disability, and so on, rather than focusing on one alone. This offers a richer way of considering those dimensions than a singular focus can, but it should be noted that it can also be appropriated to divert attention *away* from the issues experienced by particular groups (see Rodriguez and Freeman 2016).

Adopting a post-critical stance allows us to identify two conceptual issues with this body of literature. One is that the emphasis is overtly structural, and presents structure in a negative or limiting (rather than enabling or supporting) way, and as such it can sideline our view of students' agency. Second, and leading on from this, there is a tendency towards a 'glass half empty' orientation, in that it produces an image of higher education – and the student experience within that – as consisting almost entirely of the sum of its dysfunctions. There is little identification of anything positive in marginalised students' experiences, for example, and while we should not minimise or ignore the relative inequalities inherent in the system, we need to look beyond them, too. This is where the 'Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy' is explicitly leading us, but there is perhaps a parallel tension here. The Manifesto, in its exposition of its second principle – that of pedagogical

hermeneutics – appears to assert that a space of genuine commonality in education, i.e. without power relations, can be created. It is not to say that this is not an ideal type towards which we should aspire and work, but literature on inequalities around the student experience would suggest that there will always be some degree of uneven power or unequally accumulated capitals 'in the room', so to speak, and we must be mindful of these. Identifying them is a strength of the critical perspective, and in this it offers much of value; while there is little evidence of good news – of love – in this perspective, it does afford an opportunity to see where progressive changes can be made. It could also be argued that the adoption of the critical sociological view, in defence of equality, is an act of love for humankind in and of itself.

There is much debate about how commodification and marketisation could affect how students are oriented towards their time at university. However, our understanding of the Marketised Student Experience is notable for the lack of evidence in this area, particularly as analyses and critiques of neoliberalism have dominated the policy literature in higher education for twenty years or more (Ball 1998; Macfarlane and Tomlinson 2017). This dearth of research does not reflect well on academia as there is, in contrast, a great deal of work on its potential and actual effects on academic practice and identity (Watermeyer 2015). The absence of historical work in this area, too, means that we cannot chart how the student experience might be changing, and we could accuse some scholars in this area of falling prey to their own confirmation bias as the little research there is shows that students are neither entirely instrumental nor passive. This means, in turn, that what we might profess to love in the intrinsic and transformational nature of higher education is not entirely absent in the neoliberal university, but the extent to which it may be being preserved or diminished remains to be seen.

In relation to this, though, it is also important to note that, first, a degree of instrumentalism is not necessarily inappropriate, and that academics themselves are not solely working in the sector for the greater good of humankind (Janger and Nowotny 2013). Second, universities do shoulder responsibilities towards their students regardless of fee levels, but how this is balanced can vary between countries (Budd 2017b) and universities (Klemenčič 2017). We might also question whether all aspects of neoliberalism are inherently 'evil'; despite the conceptual and methodological perversity of measures such as the National Student Survey, for example, that it might encourage universities to reflect on their duty towards their students is not necessarily a bad thing. Other than the work by Sabri (2013) on the NSS cited in this chapter, we are also largely in the dark as to the ways in which individual universities imitate, translate, and edit (Sahlin and Wedlin 2008) national policy on students. Overall, far more research in this area is required to underpin any confidence in statements about the lay of the land, particularly around the different but simultaneously-held relationships between universities and students. We could also benefit by escaping from the 'major key' (Stengers 2005) of outright opposition to neoliberalism to allow for a more nuanced and balanced view of governance in the academy. Within and beyond this, though, it is imperative that we seek to preserve

broader conceptualisations and social purposes of a higher education than are currently dominant in policy and public discourse.

Evidence of the Topographical Student Experience appears to be the slimmest of the three areas, with this aspect having attracted the least attention to date. Scholarship strongly indicates that the material structures of a university will inveigle themselves into students' experiences and opportunities in some way, tempering with whom (and what) they intentionally and accidentally interact – and avoid – within and outside the university. This makes common sense, too, in that being surrounded by dreaming spires, plate glass, or rolling fields, does not feel the same. Furthermore, this interaction with the tangible is further mediated by the composition of the student body as it moves through (or is diverted away from) individual disciplines, campuses, universities, and geographical locations. These can, in turn, only be properly understood within the broader patterns of im−/mobility in the local, national, and global sector as a whole. This set of perspectives offers much in terms of pure interest, as what we might find is largely unknown, and the opportunities for new practices and spaces of thought are wide-ranging. There is an argument, too, that an examination of place is particularly pressing now that we are witnessing an almost unprecedented boom in capital investment in buildings in UK higher education (Dejevsky 2016). In what ways does this enhance (or diminish) the experience of students, a question which might be considered important by university leaders as they build and build while seeking to maximise the 'efficiency, effectiveness, and value for money' of their campus resources (AUDE 2015, p. 2). As for universities and higher education as a social space, other than the minority experiences described earlier, missing to date is a more holistic sense of how/if majority groups might perceive and experience their dominant position in relation to the broader student body. Research suggests that a diverse student population, i.e. a *universitas,* in terms of domestic (Shaw 2009) and international (Luo and Jamieson-Drake 2013) students, can be intellectually and personally enriching. If universities are socially and geographically selective, and if international students are absent from some universities or do not interact with their domestic peers at universities they do attend (Campbell 2012), then these opportunities for enrichment are lost.

In closing, it appears that there is a significant gap in what we know about the Student Experience. The literature to date, being largely critical in orientation and directed towards minority experiences and neoliberalism, has the tendency to paint a somewhat demoralising and, it seems, limited view of the sector in which we work and think. Thinking post-critically – as the Manifesto suggests – has seemed to open up new spaces of thought, asking more questions of research to date than the scholarship currently answers. This chapter also raises a broader question as to where and how we might fruitfully combine the Unequal, Marketised, and Topographical – and other – understandings of the student experience. In order to do so, we may well have to employ methodological approaches rarely seen in studies of this topic, such as international comparative, longitudinal, and ethnographic studies. Comparative research can help us transcend assumptions we might make about our own contexts by identifying what is local, national, and global, such as Muddiman's (2018) observation that discipline may have a stronger normative

influence on students than domestic context. Also, rather than the temporally-limited 'snapshots' of students that most studies (and the NSS) provide, longitudinal work would allow us to see if, how, and where students change, in terms of their epistemological understandings and personal growth (Ashwin et al. 2016). Similarly, we know next to nothing about the ongoing 'effects' of having been to university other than the reductive view of earnings trajectories – what of the long-term benefits of the 'old boys' networks' (i.e. social capital) gained at university, for example?

As the first of two closing points, it should be acknowledged here that the authors of the Manifesto call for a renewal of practices in line with a post-critical pedagogy, and this chapter has largely discerned conceptual and empirical gaps in the literature. There will no doubt be much in future findings that allows us to satisfy our critical appetites by identifying new social injustices, but we must not forget to subsequently act to address these injustices, too. Second, and finally, there is something of an absence in the scholarship cited here that we might consider to be 'good news' in relation to the UK student experience. However, it is evident that scholars are seeking to defend, albeit sometimes implicitly, opportunities for students to exercise positive agency, and the preservation of university degrees that are not flattened into readily observable metrics. The contribution of a post-critical disposition here is perhaps to centre our attentions more on the freedoms and intrinsic personal and social transformations that a higher education can foster, for surely within those there is a great deal to love in the student experience.

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Chapter 10
Profaning the University Apparatus: A Plea for Study Groups

Tyson E. Lewis

Introduction

Recently, I had a discussion with my department chair about my service requirement. We were calculating my workload percentages, which are distributed across service, teaching, and scholarship, for my yearly merit review. She was completely shocked when I revealed that every week for the last year I had been meeting with a group of students to read St. Augustine's *Confessions*. She was shocked for two reasons. First, she truly did not understand what Augustine had to do with art education (my field of 'expertise'). As such, it appeared that our study group was a waste of time better spent on other activities that would help students move through the program and get jobs. Second, she was confused as to why I did not count this on my merit review packet as service. The study group activity appeared nowhere in my self-report, and thus, I could not get official recognition for the time spent with students. She thought I was depreciating the value of my work. When I told her that the group was intentionally an experiment in non-instrumental studying (and thus not outcomes-oriented) and was *meant* to be 'invisible' to the eye of the administration, she could only shake her head at my folly.

I recount this story because it illustrates something essential about studying that all of us who work in the academy should remember: that studying suspends the means-end logic of the university (Backer and Lewis 2015). By this I mean that studying is not productive (in any measurable way), efficient, or easily calculable as service, teaching, or research. While some are lobbying for administration to see the invisible work of faculty, especially faculty of colour (Matthew 2016), I am proposing that some work remain intentionally invisible, and thus not really work at all. In

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fact, I am somewhat reluctant to write this essay on a practice that is clandestine, but at the same time I feel that, after almost a decade of involvement in study groups, it is important for me to discuss this activity in order to share it with others and thus encourage further profanation of the apparatus of the university. The study group is, on my view, a kind of counter-apparatus that exists within the heart of the university but also neutralises the tight connections that it currently supports between the extreme logics of capitalism and education. To argue this point, I will provide an overview of Giorgio Agamben's theory of the apparatus and apply this definition to the university. I will then turn to Agamben's theory of study, and my own practice of study groups, as one possible tactic for exploring the *free use* of the university.

The University Apparatus

Agamben defines an apparatus as that which separates through capture. Moving beyond Foucault's initial definition of the apparatus, Agamben (2009) writes: 'I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings' (p. 14). As such, an apparatus—big or small—stands against free use. Free use here refers to that which suspends or profanes the law of separation. Profanation allows for the 'creation of a new use' by 'deactivating an old use, rendering it inoperative' (p. 86).

For Agamben, religion and capitalism are two dominant apparatuses; in fact, capitalism is merely the secularisation of the religious apparatus. What they both have in common is the operation of separation. Religion, as Agamben (2007b) defines it, is 'that which removes things, places, animals, or people from common use and transfers them to a separate sphere' (p. 74). In turn, capitalism 'generalizes in every domain the structure of separation that defines religion' (p. 81). This is why secularisation is not the opposite of sanctification. Rather it is sanctification's intensification and extension throughout all sectors of society. In the early stages, capitalism separated things from use through four mechanisms: commodification (which internally separates use from exchange value), property (which separates public from private), spectacle (which separates by putting objects on display), and consumption (which 'necessarily destroys things' (p. 82)). The four mechanisms negate use, which is dependent on free access by the commonwealth.

In the second, more 'extreme phase' (Agamben 2007b, p. 87) of capitalism, it is precisely use itself that is taken up and absorbed without being negated. Agamben describes extreme capitalism as a 'gigantic apparatus for capturing pure means, that is, profanatory behaviors' (p. 87). At one time capitalism simply enacted the separation inherent in religion on a mass scale. But now, it no longer separates. Rather, it separates itself from separation, and thus absorbs that which is a weapon against it: profanation. The end game of capitalism becomes the 'nullification of pure means' (p. 88) by enabling the pure means (free use) to become the very way in which capitalism circulates. Think here of the media. For Agamben, it is naïve to

think that the political dimension of the media rests with particular ideological messages or forms of propaganda. Rather, it resides in the way capitalism captures language. Perhaps the best example here is Donald Trump. Trump has been so destabilising precisely because he is so profane. He has profaned the 'sanctity' of political speech. But by doing so, he has not released politics for free use. Rather, he has immunised himself against all oppositional attempts at profanation. Once profanity is effectively absorbed into the political apparatus via media spectacle, the media becomes unprofanable. Absolute acceptance of profanity results in an immunised (unprofanable) apparatus.

In order to think through what kind of apparatus the university is, we have to turn to an earlier essay by Agamben, which focuses on play and ritual. This detour will then enable us to understand how the university is *both* a necessary apparatus for the reproduction of capitalism (embodying its most extreme forms) *and* a point of potential interruption (via studying).

In a chapter titled 'In Playland' (2007a), Agamben focuses on the complex relationship between play and ritual in relation to history. On the one hand, we have pure play, which is a destruction of the calendar and the interruption of ritualised time. Agamben associates play with diachronic time (perpetual change), the punctuation of events, and hot societies (where change is the only constant). He also argues that play unleashes untethered signifiers (the physical form of a sign detached from its meaning). On the other hand, we find pure ritual, which he characterises as stabilising the calendar. Here, synchronic time (how something exists at one point in time), repetition, and cold societies (largely unchanging or inert) are emphasised. Instead of the endless production of signifiers, we find the predominance of preexisting signifieds (the meanings of signs).

While this is an oppositional pair, Agamben (2007a) points out that 'a relation of both correspondence and opposition between play and ritual' (p. 77) exists. In other words, they pass through one another, hence the connection between games and certain sacred rituals, but also between signifiers and signifieds. In this sense, the divide that separates play from ritual is also some kind of bridge between the two that allows transmission to happen. But this raises a question: How can there exist a point of contact between two radically opposing ideas? If the passage from ritual to play and from play to ritual is marked not by continuity but by discontinuity, then there must exist a point of relation *that is not a relation* betwixt and between play and ritual but that both conjoins and separates them.

Agamben proceeds to search for activities, agents, and objects that exist in the paradoxical space and time that is neither play nor ritual yet contains both of them. This would be the point wherein ritual is actualised only through its suspension, and play is only instantiated through its ritualisation. The point of transmission is, according to Agamben, when history becomes possible. Both hot and cold societies lack a sense of historical potentiality precisely because the former is obsessed with incessant rupture with the past, while the latter is mired in the past. History, on his view, is a point of indistinction between play (hot) and ritual (cold), a 'differential margin between diachrony and synchrony' (Agamben 2007a, p. 83). History is precarious and fragile precisely because it appears only in fleeting moments when

ritual and play contact, unleashing what Agamben refers to as *unstable* signifiers, or signifiers that are in potential, meaning they are released from predetermined signification. Agamben writes: 'unstable signifiers, which do not properly belong either to synchrony or to diachrony, either to ritual or play' (p. 88) exist somehow in the margins of both. Such indefinite signifiers are both necessary for history to emerge but are also destabilising precisely because of this ability. The possibility of transmission means that hot societies can be interrupted by a sudden freeze and the cold society can be interrupted by a flare-up of heat.

The zone of the indefinite signifier is marked by the following practices, objects, and agents—all are *dangerous*, meaning that they can suspend the functioning of hot and cold societies. The agents of unstable signifiers are children and ghosts. Children have the ability to become adults (synchrony, stable signifiers) or to stay infantile (diachrony, unstable signifiers). Likewise ghosts have the ability to be dead (synchrony, total fixity) and to wander (diachrony, total instability). For this reason, children and ghosts are threats to society. When children prefer not to grow up, they are criminalised or pathologised; when ghosts prefer to wake from the dead and haunt the living, they must be exorcised. Both exist in limbo, a kind of perpetual state of exception that undoes any guarantee that the social system will remain stable.

Likewise, there are special ceremonies that characterise this zone of children and ghosts: initiation rites and funerary rites. According to Agamben (2007a), 'these do not entirely fit into either the schema of ritual nor that of play, but seem to partake of both' (p. 91). They are neither play nor ritual, but not something else either. They operate in the zone where games become rituals and rituals become games. And through this paradoxical meeting, unstable signifiers can become fixed signifiers (and thus become signifieds), and vice versa.

And finally, there are two objects that are located in the space and time that separates and joins play and ritual: toys and art. Once part of ritual performance, toys are objects released from their sacred duties. For instance, the yo-yo was once a weapon used by ancient Filipinos but is now a harmless toy. In this case, the function of the yo-yo to kill is suspended, and in its state of inoperativity, the potentiality of the yo-yo to be otherwise than a killing implement is opened up. Likewise, art is a special sphere reserved for unstable signifiers that are neither the result of pure play or pure ritual but somehow partake in both without becoming either. This does not mean that toys and art are somehow a-historical, timeless things. On the contrary, for Agamben, toys and art works are immanently historical. As the most direct paradigms of unstable signifiers, toys and art works throw into relief the paradoxical state of limbo between ritual and play where ritual can become play and play can become ritual. They are the remnants of a discontinuous process that is absolutely necessary for society to continue but also threatens to suspend such continuity. Because of this, toys must ultimately be put away, and art must be stored in museums. Playtime ends, and art works become spectacles. Both remove unstable signifiers from free use. As with the criminalisation of children and the terror of ghosts, toys and art take on ominous dimensions.

At this point, Agamben makes an interesting observation concerning the function of the university apparatus. As an apparatus, the university has many ways in which

it captures education. First, the university has become largely commodified. The degree itself is property (cultural capital) that is sold to the student and subsequently owned by the graduate. But also, education has become something of a spectacle (I am thinking here of the importance of sports teams as well as state-of-the-art facilities in 'advertising' campus life). The university has become an image, and this image is bought and sold like a 'brand.' Further, education is a product to be consumed. To learn is to prepare one's self for the job market, which values the acquired skills, dispositions, and talents. This labour market consumes the value of the degree. When the valuation falls because of changes in the labour market (its value destroyed through consumption), one returns to the university for re-skilling.

All of this points toward an internalisation of the capitalist mechanisms of capture, separating education from free use. But Agamben also points toward a deeper resonance between the university and capitalism—one that speaks to the extreme form of neoliberalism. He writes: 'True historical continuity cannot pretend to discard the signifiers of discontinuity by confining them to a Playland or a museum for ghosts (which now often coincide in a single play: the university)' (Agamben 2007a, p. 95). Now, under extreme neoliberalism, universities have become a particular kind of apparatus, which separates us from unstable signifiers precisely by incorporating such signifiers into its structure. It does so in two ways. First, the university can become a playland where students engage in ludic activities that delay responsibility endlessly. This would be the typical vision of the university as a playpen for young adults, where they can go to 'experiment' before they have to enter the 'real world.' A variant of this playland is where students 'play' at being serious students yet fully realise that this seriousness is nothing more than a game. Second, the university becomes a kind of museum that houses ghosts. Academics interpret a canon of texts endlessly; they construct hauntologies of knowledge (as Derrida would say); they write commentaries so as never to bury the dead. In this sense, the university processes endless signifiers that circulate through lectures, publications, and conference presentations that never reach out beyond the ivory tower. Such activity marks the university as both a playland and a rigid museum, simultaneously.

But perhaps most telling is the way in which universities parasitically live off of the unstable signifiers created by and through social movements. As Roderick A. Ferguson (2012) recounts, radical political, social, and economic forms of life and knowledge found in student movements and minority activism have become co-opted, domesticated, and managed through inclusion via the interdisciplines of race, gender, and sexuality studies. Affirmation turns into administration through subtle yet effective 'policies of absorption' (p. 27). In such cases, unstable signifiers are separated into a special sphere and contained within an apparatus. Within this sphere, such unstable signifiers are allowed to circulate, but are never allowed to leave. In this sense, the celebration of voice, style, identity, and intellectual play are ways of administering that which was once open to free use. What is interesting is how this apparatus no longer functions as an initiation rite or as a funerary rite. Instead it functions to keep children playing (in playland) or to keep ghosts

wandering (through indefinite deferral of all burial) but only insofar as such playing and wandering is managed and administered by experts, researchers, and bureaucrats.

Universities are thus not profane institutions but rather apparatuses of capture. They function to capture children and ghosts (unstable signifiers) through administrative tactics. And in this manner, they embody the most extreme strategy of advanced capitalism. As stated above, extreme capitalism now captures pure means as such. Likewise, the university does not try to criminalise or pathologise children or ghosts (transforming them into adults or burying them), rather it absolutises them, celebrates them, keeping unstable signifiers within its walls as a motor driving life-long learning (which ensures one never grows up and thus has to perpetually stay in school) and scholarship (witness the proliferation of journals and publishing houses that make money on tracing the hermeneutical circle over and over again, looking for new ghosts). But in doing so, the university *ceases to be a historical institution*. It cannot act as an initiation or funerary rite and, as such, the exchange between signifiers and signifieds cannot happen.

What is called for, then, is a profanation of the university apparatus. As Agamben (2009) points out, profanation is a kind of 'counter-apparatus that restores to common [free] use what sacrifice had separated and divided' (p. 19). To profane the university is to transform it into a counter-apparatus, or an apparatus that does not capture and separate so much as share in common. If the university itself no longer works to negate unstable signifiers but rather capitalises them, then profanation means taking up these unstable signifiers that are *already* inside the university, circulating within its walls, and opening them up once again for free use. One such tactic is the study group.

The Counter-Apparatus of the Study Group

It is difficult to define studying as we have become increasingly taught to think of all educational actions as manifestations of learning. Learning concerns outcomes and the measurement or quantification of such outcomes according to a standard (Lewis 2017). In the university, education is commodified by turning it into learning, which can be used as a metric for separating forms of life. Thus, a learning populous can be divided into those who have certain degrees and credentials and those who lack these forms of certification. And in this manner, commodification is linked directly to consumption. The labour market consumes degrees (their perceived value), and subsequently destroys them (hence the need for life-long learning).

Because of the dominance of learning logic, study becomes something of an anomaly—a kind of invisible surplus of learning that prefers not to abide by the capitalist logic of separation. Study is, according to Agamben (1995), 'interminable' and is known by those who 'are acquainted with long hours spent roaming among books, when every fragment, every codex, every initial encounter seems to open a new path, immediately left aside at the next encounter . . . ' (p. 64). In this

description, study can have no end, and 'does not even desire one' (p. 64). This description might sound like life-long learning, but there is a key distinction at work here. Learning is always a means to an end (economic viability, for instance). But studying never ends because it is a pure means without reference to an end. This does not mean that it is an end in itself (as if it were something whole, sacred, and complete), but rather that it can be constantly appropriated for new uses not prefigured in the form of an end or telos.

In the university, the study group thus profanes the apparatus of capture to return education to free use. It does so in the following ways. Here I will outline the location, agents, and action of study.

Location: Undercommons

Unlike university courses, you don't need to be enrolled in order to attend a study group. And thus, you don't need to be paying tuition fees. There are no grades, no investments, and no sense of education as private property to be consumed. Study groups exist in the liminal space and time of what Stephano Harney and Fred Moten (2013) call the 'undercommons.' For Harney and Moten, an educational undercommons is precisely the space and time of free, common use outside of the logic of academic resource management. The undercommons is produced through the fugitive planning of studiers, and is an unsanctioned (if not illegal) appropriation of university property in the name of common, free use. The undercommons is, by necessity, invisible. It must be so to avoid capture by administration. Only in avoiding capture can the undercommons remain a space and time for studying without end. Citing Harney and Moten (2013): 'They study without an end, plan without a pause, rebel without a policy, conserve without a patrimony. They study in the university and the university forces them under, relegates them to the state of those without interests, without credit, without debt that bears interest, that earns credit' (p. 67). Studying in the undercommons is not simply a state of inactivity or of waiting or of hiding. Those who study in this invisible, fugitive space and time are busy. But they are not busy as learners who are interested in achieving a goal and then measuring their achievements and failures. Rather, what Harney and Moten seem to emphasise is that the studiers are building the study group itself in a way that *precedes function.* To study in this sense decouples education from a relation to a predetermined end (a functionality that comes before use) in order to affirm itself as a living relation within a 'study group.' In this sense, they do not study *in order to* achieve something or solve a problem so much as to experience study as such, to see what happens in the undercommons, to enter into relation with other studiers.

We can think of this as an invisible, fugitive location that cannot be perceived by those operating within the neoliberal logic of the university apparatus—therefore it is not a spectacle, it leaves only traces or remnants of itself (scribbles on a white-board, a strange arrangement of desks that seem 'out of order,' a torn piece of paper with some notes written in the margin, lights are on when they should have been

turned off, markers are missing, and so on). The study group occupies classrooms in order to suspend their functioning as spaces of separation and open them up to free use and free time that is unscheduled and thus does not appear in any administration spreadsheet. Or, the study group might appear off campus in a house or backyard, thus exploding the boundaries between on and off campus. The activities of the university can spread outward beyond the boundaries of the apparatus, transforming the community itself into a university undercommons. These lateral moves *on* and *off* campus scramble territorial thresholds that bind unstable signifiers to certain locations, and thus avoid capture.

In this way, the study group occupies *infrastructure*. According to David Kishik (2015), infrastructure is 'anything that is understood in and of itself, before a thing finds its expression within the fields of structure or superstructure, before, for example, it manifests itself as either an economic phenomenon or a political one' (p. 75). For Kishik, structure and superstructure are both epiphenomena that are dependent on infrastructure. For this reason, attempts to revolutionise economic production or to overturn political establishments fail when they do not start from an occupation of infrastructure. On my reading, occupying the undercommons of the university is a way to tamper with the infrastructure of the university. This might very well be the reason why Marxists have failed to be able to theorise the politics of the study group (as study groups do not have specified political platforms or manifestos or demands). Instead of directly protesting the politics of the neoliberal university apparatus, the study group hacks into its spaces and resources in order to release them for free use, or a use that is not predetermined by and through the 'proper' university channels.

The study groups I have been a part of have often appeared in odd places, at odd times, and without official recognition. We have never 'booked rooms' or 'reserved resources'. One semester, we read Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* in the lounge area of my former department's office suite, reconfiguring its furniture. We occupied the tables and chairs, often earning strange looks from faculty who came in and out of their offices (especially when we brought out moonshine to help the reading along). Another time, we occupied my Tai Chi teacher's house, taking the reading group off campus. We discussed Heidegger's *Being and Time* together, inviting other members from the extended community left out of university life, including a middle school art teacher, and occasionally, a local poet and a wine merchant. Then again, I found myself reading Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* with student activists in a tent city erected in the commons in front of an administration building. I have also spent considerable time wandering around my current university's campus looking for spots to discuss *City of God*—moving in and out of the student union, darkened classrooms, empty offices, and finally landing on rooftop gardens reserved for more elite guests of the university. In all cases, there is an element of fugitive planning and tactical appropriation of infrastructure at work.

Actors: Studiers

The studier is a learner *as not* a learner. This is a learner whose learning is no longer property, and thus cannot be consumed (by a market). The studier is a perplexing problem for the university apparatus precisely because he or she might prefer not to finish the degree, or graduate on time, or might illegally appropriate campus resources or infrastructure. The studier might show up late because he or she was lost in the library or taken up in a conversation. Instead of completing work, they might prefer not to (even when the professor knows full well they are capable). Thus, the sanctity of the university's rituals are profaned by the studier, who never appears when or where he or she ought to, never does what he or she is expected to. As such, they often seem to be *less than they are supposed to be* (Lewis 2017) according to the expectations of the university apparatus.

But because learning has become a dominant educational logic of the university apparatus, to study places a significant burden on the studier. If enrolled in a program, there is always a conflict of interest between completing assigned work and getting to work in the undercommons. In my own experience with study groups, often graduate students feel some guilt over attending and participating. They are usually strapped for time—overburdened with grading and with reading for classes. As such, they feel that they should be doing something more productive with their time than sitting around in a study group talking about things that are 'off topic' of their research or courses. Instead of getting lost in and through the endless work of the study group, these students feel pressure to produce outcomes that can be measured and thus consumed in the name of their future careers. Why read St. Augustine, for instance, which has no relevance to *my* research or *my* career trajectory as an art educator? Why not read something that will have a *pay off*? Something *relevant* to my field that can result in publications or conference presentations? Such questions plague the studier.

At the same time, guilt over wasting time in the study group is coupled with an equal sense of inspiration at the feeling of *really* studying with others in a group. While a study group might not appear to be any different from a typical university course (there might be someone giving a lecture, there might be a group sharing a text, or there might be someone discussing an idea), the displacement of these rituals renders their function to separate inoperative, and thus gives them over to free use. The classroom *as not* a classroom is the slightest of displacements in the logic of learning, but it makes all the difference. When tuition no longer has to be paid, when grades are no longer operative threats, and when attendance sheets are no longer passed around, studying can appear in cracks of the university apparatus.

Guilt and inspiration are coupled with another competing pair: tiredness and exhaustion. As I have written elsewhere (D'Hoest and Lewis 2015), to be tired is to 'realise' some sort of potentiality in relation to certain goals. Thus, when one takes a test in order to measure skill acquisition, one is legitimately tired for one has attempted to realise a possibility: 'today, I have done what I could'. While it is perfectly acceptable and legitimate to be tired, to be tired always rests on a separation

of some kind. The goal of taking a test is to produce a separation within a class between those who pass and those who fail. To be tired is therefore uniquely related to learning as the educational logic of the university apparatus. Learning always concerns separations between those who live up to the standards and those who do not. The learner passes exams or fails and afterward rests, takes a break. The learning has been consumed by the test, and once this is complete, rest is the reward. One is exhausted, on the other hand, not by realising a set of defined goals but rather by renouncing all preferences, all goals, and all predefined outcomes. One's actions do not dry up or consume one's potentiality but rather remain in contact with such potentiality without giving it over to measure or quantification. Hence, study has no determinant ends after which the studier can rest.

The studier oscillates between the tiredness of meeting deadlines (such as turning in papers, grading, publishing articles, and so on) and the exhaustion of study (which has no deadlines per se). The movement between the two creates a tension, a point at which the tired student wants to rest but cannot because, as a studier, he or she never rests. As such, the studier finds a strange form of relaxation: the rest of learning is the exhaustion of study. Studiers I have seen in my life thus find rest in that which is improbable: late nights in the library, long conversations on the phone about ideas, walks that seem to lose their destinations . . . A 'break' from the tiredness of learning comes in the form of learning as not learning, or learning released for free use.

Action: Initiation

Studying, and the study group in particular, is an initiation rite. Not in the sense that it ensures a transition between signifiers and signifieds so much as it ensures that what is transmitted is transmissibility itself. In reference to the ancient *kachina* ritual of the Pueblo peoples, Agamben (2007a) writes: 'the content of the [initiation] ritual, the "secret" which is transmitted is, in other words, that there is nothing to transmit *except transmission itself*: the signifying function in itself' (p. 96). This is how study makes history possible again: it does not insist on perpetual deferral of meaning (deconstruction, hauntology) or on the fixity of meaning (reverence toward the enshrined and sacred canon) but rather on the very possibility of meaning. In this way, it opens up for free use the signifying function of the university so it can be picked up, suspended, turned into a toy, and studied without an orientation toward an end (publication, tenure, promotion, economic viability, and so on). In this sense, signification as such is the *infrastructure* of history, and this too must be occupied by study groups through their invisible work in the undercommons. The counter-apparatus of the study group is an initiation rite into an educational life worth living, which in the process, reclaims historical possibility from the capture of perpetual playland or museumland.

For this reason, I offer a final, simple suggestion for suspending the university apparatus and thus reclaiming a sense of educational life as historical life:

Pick a text that no one is familiar with and thus can be held in common.
Make sure anyone can attend (they don't have to be students, they don't have to be employees of the university).
Occupy a location that is unsanctioned or invisible to administrative capture.
Collectively read the text and discuss.
If there are outcomes, so what! Don't pay too much attention, as fixation on outcomes will only lead to capture of the unstable signifiers of the study group by the university apparatus (and its publications, conferences, accounting matrices).
Allow studying to initiate learners into educational life and, in this way, make the transmission of transmissibility (also known as history) possible again.

In recognising the potentiality that remains within the apparatus of the university, study groups redeem it. In this sense, the study group is a post-critical form of educational life, one that concerns what studiers are already doing with infrastructure in order to unleash free use (and thus make history possible again). Such use does not exist over there (somewhere else) or in the future (somewhen else) but rather right here, right now, in the undercommons. Whereas critique is always looking away, towards what is lost or what can be gained, the post-critical study group is busy contemplating the potentiality that is. And in this sense, they are exhausted yet happy.

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Chapter 11
Philosophy *As* Education: A Post-Critical Approach to the Position and Future of an Academic Discipline

Joris Vlieghe

Introduction

This chapter speaks to the main concern of this book: is it possible and desirable, or not, to give a *post-critical* account of higher education? I do this by turning to a particular issue related to my own academic discipline, philosophy of education. This chapter is to be read against the backdrop of an ongoing dispute about whether this discipline is a relevant subject matter to teach at universities, but also whether it is an autonomous area of research, important in its own right, and hence, whether it is a discipline in the first place (Ainley 2009; Biesta 2015). My goal, however, is not to develop an analysis of different positions on this issue that would only be interesting for those who are themselves familiar with this particular field of study. Instead, this chapter should be read as a case study that lays out the difference between giving a critical account of (a particular dimension or practice of) higher education and sketching a more affirmative, post-critical picture. I will predominantly refer to the UK context, as I worked there for 4 years as a lecturer in philosophy of education, but the analysis I present here has a wider, international relevance. In many ways the UK university system is a trend setter for many evolutions abroad.

I first give some background pertaining to the above mentioned dispute, mapping out the historical and geographic conditions against which the specificity of the field of philosophy of education should be understood. This will give an idea about why exactly the position of this discipline is under debate. I go on to analyse two possible responses to this situation: first, I zoom in on what is arguably the prevalent response, i.e. approaching philosophy of education as being in need of an external justification. This, I show, almost unavoidably leads to a depreciation of this field of

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study, and – in fact – for a call to get rid of it. I continue by developing an alternative approach, which tries to understand this field of study 'from the inside out', i.e. on its own terms, and from a perspective that takes it fully seriously for what it is in itself. I conclude with concrete suggestions about what a curriculum that takes such an internal approach might look like.

Education Studies and Philosophy of Education: A Brief Historical and Comparative Account

Philosophy of education is a discipline that is typically studied and taught at universities in the Anglophone world (and in that sense it stands apart from, say, philosophy of art or philosophy of science, which are a global phenomenon). In that, it doesn't differ much from the larger field of education(al) studies, which is also rather exclusive to Anglo-American academia (Løvlie and Standish 2002; Biesta 2015). Obviously, at universities outside of the English speaking world, education is also studied and taught. Nevertheless, so called 'education studies' is not entirely equivalent to its neighbour discipline in other European countries. There, a well-entrenched academic area exists, the name of which refers to the German word *Pädagogik*. So, for instance, in Flanders and the Netherlands there are university faculties in *pedagogiek*, or in France and Italy *pédagogie* and *pedagogia* are respected academic fields. The many variations of *Pädagogik* have the same position and rank as other well-established academic disciplines such as zoology, sociology, and theology. This, however, is not the case for education studies.

The difference between *Pädagogik* and *education studies* is not a merely semantic issue, then. It brings into view a substantial difference. Although the English language knows the words *pedagogy* and *pedagogical*, these do not first and foremost denote a specific and unique scientific field. Rather, these words refer to the science of educating and teaching (which in German would be called *Erziehung* and *Didaktik*). So, whereas in the non-English speaking world 'education' forms an *independent* and academically institutionalised field of practice and research, education studies has never had the same status. This stems from the fact that in the Anglo-American context, typically, education studies has only fairly recently been recognised as a genuinely academic pursuit (Ainley 2009; Burton and Bartlett 2006; Lawn and Furlong 2009; Ward 2008).

For most of the twentieth century, education was only taught (and to a much smaller extent also researched) at teacher training colleges outside academia. Until recently, it has remained a purely vocational matter – to the extent that at many Anglophone higher education institutions the preparation programs for teachers are often called initial teacher *training* (which after all suggests the acquisition of automatic behavioural patterns, and not a rounded and critical formation of autonomous humans). The reasons why – only recently – a transition took place in the direction of acknowledging 'education' as a serious academic field go back to the

nineteenth century, and more precisely to John Henry Newman's plea for a *liberal education*, which aimed at the *full* (i.e. deep and broad) development of the person, based on an introduction into a canon of important texts and ideas (Newman 2014). For Newman, this was the *raison-d'être* of the modern university. Crucial to this project is that, before specialising in a particular domain, such a formation of the well-rounded person was a necessary preparation. This applies all the more to the formation of teachers-to-be.

It was only in the 1960s that this idea materialised in the context of teacher education (Ainley 2009; Ward 2008). At that moment, the term *education studies* was coined; education became something that was simultaneously researched and taught at higher education institutions, and this new area of study got a more definite shape. The central idea here, conforming to the ideal of liberal education, was that the phenomenon of education should be approached from a wide range of perspectives, i.e. from already existing academic disciplines. More precisely, education studies was built around four so-called *foundation disciplines*: psychology *of* education, history *of* education, sociology *of* education, and philosophy *of* education (Lawn and Furlong 2009). This means that, in contradistinction to other contexts, the Anglophone world does not know education as an autonomous academic discipline (Biesta 2015). Rather, it is an amalgamation of other disciplines. Moreover, in its first phase, education studies remained very closely related to teacher training (whereas in the *Pädagogik* tradition, the scope of activities to which a pedagogical formation gave a preparation were much broader, e.g. social work, civic education, parenting support, etc.) (Burton and Bartlett 2006).

As a result, and in line with Newman's ideas, teacher training, until then a vocational matter, became intellectualised. Teachers had to be academics, viz. 'bachelors of education' (B.Ed). Another consequence was the establishment of a new academic sub-discipline, philosophy of education, which remains a field of study that is not easy to define (cf. Tubbs and Grimes 2001). It is not a sub-discipline of philosophy (in the sense that philosophy of art or political philosophy are) and it is, as a rule, researched and taught in faculties of education (and not of philosophy). It is worth mentioning that the founding fathers of this discipline, based at the renowned London Institute of Education, namely, Robert Dearden, Richard Stanley Peters, and Paul Hirst, made important contributions to the theoretical foundation of academic initial teacher training programs in the United Kingdom – drawing from the liberal educational idea that neophyte teachers need a profound introduction into the most important domains of (canonised) knowledge (Tibble 1966).

This impacted positively on the professional status of teachers: they were seen as critical and autonomous intellectuals who could – and should – rely more on their own judgment than on plans of action developed by experts and policy-makers. But, since the 1970s, the exact opposite evolution has taken place. This was the case in the UK in particular, due to the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 (in order to tackle the problem of low achievement in British schools) and the ever increasing state monitoring of teaching (e.g. by school inspection) (Burton and Bartlett 2006). This led to a thoroughgoing proletarianisation of the teaching profession. As Burton and Bartlett comment, in initial teacher training '[e]mphasis was

to be placed upon the training to teach rather than on the discrete study of education. The previous "academic" approach was alleged to have failed to prepare trainee teachers adequately for their future role. Sociology and psychology were seen as subversive influences, and philosophy as an irrelevance to classroom teaching' (ibid., p. 386). Hence, teaching becomes a purely technical matter: it is predominantly about ensuring that students pass national tests (or, more cynically put: ensuring that the school at which one teaches gets an excellent ranking in the publicly available league tables of school performance). The professional identity of teachers was redefined in terms of ensuring the desired learning outcomes in their students, which boiled down what it means to be a teacher to the possession of a specifically defined set of skills, i.e. a set of established didactical competences (and nothing else). Instead of becoming academically informed intellectuals, teachers are increasingly expected to be specialised technicians serving a school bureaucracy (cf. Giroux 1985). Hence, the foundation disciplines disappeared.

Nonetheless, a surprising twist in the story has emerged over the last 20–30 years. In this period, the UK has witnessed a rapid and robust democratisation and massification of higher education (Burton and Bartlett 2006; Ward 2008). As a result, many teacher training colleges received university status (i.e. they obtained degree-awarding powers). This means that the majority of existing UK universities today were previously vocational institutions and, in many instances, teacher training colleges (and this, furthermore, entails that schools of education are often the faculties that attract the largest number of students). The rise of these so called post-92 and new generation universities created the opportunity for new study programs, especially in the field of the specialist study of education. By a strange paradox, education studies saw the light of day at many of these institutions, albeit as an academic training that was explicitly *not* aimed at the formation of teachers (Tubbs and Grimes 2001). Typically, education studies consists of a three-year undergraduate or one-year Masters' program built around the four foundation disciplines. Whereas the usual way into teaching in the UK consists of taking a subject degree for three years, one year post-graduate teacher training (PGCE), and one year of teaching practice in school (which then leads to qualified teacher status, or QTS), education studies prepares students for professions outside the realm of formal education. Often, education studies is part of a combined program, meaning that it is taken alongside another educational discipline (e.g. educational management, special needs education, disability studies) or an altogether different discipline (e.g. music, sports, or English Literature) (Ward 2008). As such, education studies – as a combination of other academic disciplines that allowed for an academic study *of* education – got a second life. And so, to a certain degree, did philosophy of education.

Why Philosophy of Education? Taking Stock of the Debate

In the previous section I have tried to render intelligible the particular, if not unique, situation of the discipline (if it is one) of philosophy of education – against the background of institutional and historical evolutions within the Anglophone higher education system, and within the UK more specifically. In this section I want to pay attention to the various ways in which the relevance of philosophy of education can be understood today. Being the kind of anomaly it is, it is to be expected that the presence of this discipline causes a lot of discussion, and that it gives rise to many diverse standpoints and strongly held opinions about the issue. I want to suggest that many of these standpoints and opinions testify to a critical attitude that turns a potentially fruitful debate into a sterile one, and of which the inescapable outcome is that we better do away with philosophy of education altogether.

First, this is because there doesn't appear to be a compelling reason why this discipline should be included in the education studies curriculum. As I explained, this curriculum is an amalgam of different disciplines, which are supposed to cast an interesting light on the phenomenon of education. It is not unreasonable to ask, however, why one should stick to the four disciplines. After all, the fact that philosophy and psychology are on the program is a mere contingency. Maybe we could also include other disciplines, ones that appear to be far more relevant today, and even replace philosophy of education with economics of education, anthropology of education, or – why not? – neurophysiology of education. A further illustration of this felt lack of justification for the presence of the foundational disciplines on the program is the situation when a lecturer in one of those disciplines needs to be replaced – a common problem in view of the extremely volatile academic job-market in the UK. If there were a compelling reason to have these disciplines, it would be imperative that a philosopher in an education studies department is succeeded by another philosopher. However, speaking on the basis of my own experience, in reality this doesn't necessarily happen, and it might well be the case that a sociologist or historian takes the vacant position.

More generally, it is often very difficult for colleagues working at one and the same department of education studies to show sincere interest in each other's work (cf. Lawn and Furlong 2009). Scholars are locked up within the seemingly impenetrable walls of their own discipline and have no understanding, let alone any high regard, of what is happening on the other side of the wall. Taking my own share of the blame, I personally see little use in bringing a psychological perspective to education. At the same time, speaking from my experience, during staff meetings, but also when we present ourselves to the outside world (and especially towards students, e.g. at student open days), lecturers have to act as if the department is one coherent, collegial, and indivisible team of scholars that is driven by one and the same interest.

In turn this might provoke in students a particular attitude that is probably not what we desire from academic formation. If it is not clear why they (have to) study philosophy and sociology (and not economy and neurophysiology) in order to

become a specialist in the domain of education, there is the risk of developing a relativist and cynical stance towards these disciplines. Indeed, one can take a psychological point of view just as well as one can approach education philosophically. But understanding that their psychology lecturer has no true appreciation for what philosophers do, and vice versa, might easily lead students to draw the conclusion that, in the end, it doesn't matter which disciplinary viewpoint to take. Anything goes: one perspective is as valuable as any other. There is no reason to commit oneself to a particular discipline. What one is really being taught is not a genuine passion for philosophy or for psychology, but a chameleon-like capacity to change perspectives whenever it suits.

As a consequence, the foundation disciplines are not something to engage with out of a genuine interest in, and devotion to, or love for, a subject. They are merely instruments one may use, or not, in order to become an educationalist. Moreover, this instrumental stance is reinforced by a double mentality, which is typical for contemporary UK students and stems from an evolution I discussed in the previous section. On the one hand, students often display a 'teaching to the test' mindset, which has also become second nature as a result of the organisation of the secondary school system. As Patrick Ainley suggests, many UK students:

> connect their self-esteem and what they may achieve in later life exclusively to their exam results. Over assessment in schools has made subject knowledge and understanding a thing of the past as school students are put through a routine year after year, practising what exactly to write and where in preparation for exams. (Ainley 2009, pp. 5–6)

On the other hand, British universities are also plagued by a strong consumerist culture (Biesta 2005; Brennan and Patel 2008). This has, partly, to do with the marketisation of higher education that went hand in glove with the previously mentioned massification. The UK university landscape has become a very competitive market, where the survival of a university depends on the number of students that enrol and pay tuition fees – and, indirectly, on the rank the university holds in the league tables, such as the dreaded annual publication of the National Student Satisfaction Survey. This is not without its implications for the position of philosophy within the current education studies provisions. Drawing again from my experience, students often tend to regard philosophy as the most difficult and least relevant of the four disciplines. From an academic perspective this shouldn't constitute a particular problem: even if students don't feel (at first) why a subject is important or interesting, there could be good reasons to take the subject anyway (as it is necessary for becoming proficient in a particular discipline), and it can only be hoped that, by the time they obtain their degree, they will have come to see the significance of the subject at hand. In the consumerist university, however, it may happen that these considerations fall on deaf ears, especially during student-staff liaison committees: students' utterances of dissatisfaction with particular philosophers or philosophical content are almost immediately translated by management as an imperative to revamp one's course in a way that makes it more appealing and easy-going.

Seen from such a perspective, philosophy of education is not a discipline to be envied. Some, however, particularly those among the ranks of the more conservative philosophers of education, hold the opposite view. When confronted with the line of critique developed in this section, they will argue that philosophy is a justified endeavour: philosophy is not just *a* foundational discipline, but *the* foundational discipline *par excellence*. Philosophy comes first and has to lay the foundations before anything else, or anything meaningful, can be claimed about education. That is, philosophers first need to establish what genuine and good education is. To stick to the example set out above, a psychologist might be thinking that they are doing highly relevant work when studying the impact of using computer games on academic achievement. A philosopher of education could show that this is misguided, however, because real education requires 'real life' interaction (e.g. Dreyfus 2001) or because the 'real' achievements of educational processes are not quantifiable (e.g. Biesta 2005). And, it could be added, games install a competitive regime that is at odds with the most fundamental goals of education. Thus, our poor psychologist is like the prisoner in Plato's cave, mistaking shadows for reality. So, she or he ought to first gain a philosophical insight into education. Only with the help of the philosopher can they escape from the darkness of this cave.

It is no coincidence that I refer here to the cave allegory, a powerful image that has strongly influenced the way we conceive of the role of philosophy within educational discourse (cf. Masschelein 2014). To take another metaphor, one might look at the covers of textbooks in philosophy and education, e.g. the frontispiece of Mrinal Miri's *Philosophy and Education* (2014). At the top we see a book that is opened and leaved through. As a result, letters drop from the pages of the book and they fall down, as if casting handfuls of seeds over the not yet cultivated ground. The imagery doesn't leave much to be imagined. The book of the philosophers contains the seeds of all the necessary wisdom. Enlightenment and growth in wisdom for others, viz. for educationalists, is dependent upon first receiving the capacity to receive truth from philosophy.

Turning to the history of this discipline, however, it could be argued that this high-brow account of philosophy as *the* foundation for educational practice and research is nothing more than a myth. Even though one might be used to referring to preeminent 'educational' philosophers within the (western) intellectual tradition, one might just take one's wishes for reality when holding that those philosophers made a real difference. As William Carr comments: '[n]either Plato, nor Rousseau saw themselves as contributing to that twentieth-century academic specialism we now call *educational theory*' (Carr 2006, p.138). In reality, philosophy of education has never functioned as a foundation for existing educational practices. On the contrary, Carr shows that philosophy of education 'cannot *inform* practice because it is itself a form of practice. Educational theorists cannot abstract themselves from the contingent norms, values and beliefs inherent in this practice since it is only within them that educational theorising can take place' (ibid., p. 147). That is, the practice of education has its own history, and if philosophers defend ideas that bear on education, these ideas rather reflect evolutions in practice, rather than the founding of them. This foundational role is at most a fabrication of the philosopher's mind that

goes back to the academisation of teacher training in the 1960s, which might have been the *only* time in history when philosophers had some influence on the realm of education.

From a Critical to a Post-Critical Approach

To summarise, it could be argued that philosophy of education has no true relevance, and for many reasons: the choice of philosophy (and not another discipline) is a contingent and arbitrary one; education studies is itself an artificial amalgam that only superficially forms a coherent field of study; offering students a mixture of various disciplines encourages relativism and cynicism; philosophy of education is not a desirable pursuit from the perspective of student satisfaction; as a discipline it falls short of being a serious, well-established, and venerable academic undertaking. What all these lines of critique have in common is that they assess philosophy of education as *deficient in view of an exterior criterion*, viz. the contingent history of education studies, the daily reality of how education studies departments work, and what students may (and may not) experience. That is, philosophy of education is merely seen as having a functional meaning for something else, and history and experience teach us that it catastrophically fails to do what it is supposed to. The only sound conclusion to draw seems to be that there is no place for philosophy of education in the academic study of education.

How to proceed from here? Of course, one might stubbornly stick to the idea that philosophy has to lay the foundations for education (e.g. arguing that this is a normative issue, rather than a matter of history (not) supporting this idea). Following this thread, however, is not fundamentally different from what the critics of philosophy of education do themselves. The philosophers' self-defence is, so to speak, the mirror image of the critical position. They are two sides of the same coin, in that they look for a justification of a practice by referring to a standard that is found outside of this practice. For the defenders of philosophy-as-foundation, this is crystal clear: education cannot be a meaningful activity in and of itself, so long as it is not judged positively by another discipline that serves as its justification. For those who attack the discipline, on the other hand, the same applies: philosophy of education is supposed to be worthwhile in view of the functional meaning it receives from something that has little to do with philosophy – and again, it shamefully fails the test.

As a way out of this impasse, it could be helpful to identify this search for an external justification as testifying to a critical attitude, and to call for an altogether different approach which, in line with what is at stake in this book, is post-critical (Cf. Hodgson et al. 2017). The basic gesture of the critic is to reveal to a given practice (i.e. the discipline of philosophy of education) that it was mistaken to believe it has relevance, and to do so by appealing to an external perspective that its practitioners have omitted to take into account. Rather than starting from such an extrinsic standard, *in view of* which to judge the (lack of) meaningfulness of a given practice, however, one could also take *a view from the inside out*, and stick with the

fact that this practice could already been experienced as meaningful. At first, this might sound like an outlandish idea. However, I would like to refer once more to the opposition that exists between the tradition of education studies at Anglophone universities and the *Pädagogik* tradition with which I started my reflections in this chapter. In this regard, Gert Biesta (2015) has claimed that today there exist *two cultures of educational research*. With this he means that faculties of education that are rooted in these two traditions have different research interests, and pose distinct questions. It could be claimed that 'what is absent in how the field has established itself in the English speaking world is the idea of a distinctively *educational* perspective on education' (ibid., p. 15). That is, the issues with which one is concerned in the Anglophone world are questions *about* education framed according to the interest of a non-educational discipline. And this causes a real paradigmatic gap. As Biesta suggests, there is a specific and unique way to act and to research that makes sense *from within* an educational point of view, and this is side-tracked when education becomes an object of study undertaken from a point of view borrowed from non-educational disciplines.

I don't want to make too much out of the almost absolute bifurcation Biesta draws (or else I would be guilty of taking a critical perspective), but it seems an interesting approach to defend the idea that education can be approached from an entirely internal perspective. In order to grasp why education is worthwhile, one has to start from the lived reality of education itself – i.e. *from what it means to educate and to be educated*. *Pace* Biesta, I claim is that it is possible to develop such an *internal* point of view, in relation to education studies in general, and even in relation to philosophy of education in particular. I refer here to a recent PhD dissertation by Joey McKay (2017), *Transformation in Student Self-understanding: A critical perspective on Education Studies*. Although, as the title indicates, this study is most critical of the contemporary higher education system and the way neoliberal agendas have colonised it, McKay's work is also post-critical in that it draws attention to the uniqueness of education studies. On the basis of a case study that delved into the lived experiences of students in education studies at a British new generation university, he shows that this program might grant the possibility of a significant transformation in the lives of these students. It makes a difference to their own being that they engaged with this particular program of study.

Following Viktor Turner, McKay (2017) calls this program a *liminal space*: a space of disorientation, ambiguity, and self-loss; an exceptional space that cannot be defined simply in terms of (contrasts with) other spheres of life. The easiest way to fathom what is meant, is to start considering – as Ainley (2009, p. 5) suggests – that 'in comparison with other subjects of study, Education Studies enjoys the advantage of combining the object of study – education – with reflection upon the process of study so that what students study is also what they do (study studying)'. Education Studies concerns education about education, and so what renders Education Studies unique is that object and subject of study coincide. As students of education, their own being as students (and as future educators) is immediately and inevitably implied (much more so than, say, in engineering or business administration). Hence, their self-understanding is constantly at stake. In order to relate to their

object of study, education, they cannot but relate to what is happening to and in their own lives.

Bildsamkeit and Studying Philosophy *As* Educational Experience

At this point, it is important to go back once more to the *Pädagogik* tradition, in order to give a more substantial picture of this self-experience that is at the core of education studies. A term that comes to mind is *Bildsamkeit*, i.e. educability, the very capacity to be educated. For Klaus Mollenhauer (2013), this is what education is essentially all about. He argues that education cannot be meaningfully conceived without this term. And yet, *Bildsamkeit* is more a matter of a presupposition than something that could ever be proven (ibid., p. 65). It is a principle we need to postulate in order to be able to educate. It eludes any attempt at theoretical foundation or empirical verification. As Plato and Saint Augustine already concluded, trying to conceive of our capacity to learn only generates paradoxes. From a purely logical point of view it seems impossible to learn: if we learn a new truth, it is somehow presupposed that we already know it, otherwise we couldn't recognise it as true (Ibid.). And so, education will remain an unfathomable phenomenon.

Mollenhauer's point here is not to subscribe to the arcane, but simply to point to something we have all experienced ourselves. Nevertheless, and possibly because of its paradoxical nature, we tend to forget what we know from experience, i.e., although we have all been educated ourselves – and therefore already know what education is fundamentally all about – we often do and act as if we need first to look for an external justification. If we do so, we are not staying true to our own experience, and we are acting as if education is not something that has (had) meaning in our own lives. We push under the carpet what we implicitly already recognise to be something good and meaningful. We are who we are thanks to our education. In his book, *Forgotten Connections*, Mollenhauer tries to articulate this obliterated knowledge by foregrounding an exceptional case, Kaspar Hauser, a man who was denied any education until adulthood (ibid., pp. 57–64). Here we see, again, in full clarity, what education *is*: that in spite of the extreme privation and seclusion Kaspar has suffered, he *is capable* of seeing the world anew and of entering a world of intersubjective meanings. Due to the exceptional conditions of his life, Kaspar never succeeds in fully achieving the latter. He keeps stumbling and stuttering. But, precisely for this reason, we come as close as possible to what *Bildsamkeit* means. His continual attempts to start speaking, to start becoming a part of our world, display a never fully actualised capacity to become someone other than what one was before – a transition to something new that remains stuck in the exact moment of transition itself. What we see here is an experience of possibility in the purest sense of that word (Ramaekers and Vlieghe 2014). So, what education is fundamentally about is *that we can* begin in new ways. Otherwise put, education takes place against

the backdrop of the confidence that transformation is possible. It is about a strong sense of potentiality. Again, this is not something that could be further proven, explained, or justified. On the contrary, it is a belief we just 'enact' whenever we educate. Something we know, but do not always acknowledge.

Returning to education studies, it could be argued that it offers a unique opportunity to connect consciously and reflexively to *Bildsamkeit*: to fully embrace the capacity of transformation that defines education in its essence. Again, this dimension is obviously also presupposed when studying maths, law, or oriental languages, but it is *only* education studies that turns it into an explicit object of study. And, this also entails that a student of education should not remain indifferent: his or her own self-formation and self-transformation is at stake. Of course, this is not at all to claim that this is *invariably* the case. It goes without saying that, in the light of the critical analysis pursued above, students often relate to their own studies in the most functional and consumerist terms. But, at the same time, the education studies program opens a space of liminality that grants a studious experience and affirmation of transformation.

The question remains, however, what all this implies for the 'foundation disciplines', and for philosophy in particular. In his contribution to a special panel on the future of educational research, Mathias Decuypere (2015) makes an interesting distinction between 'approach-oriented' and 'domain-oriented' research (p. 45). The first regards 'research that goes from the outside inwards: based on a particular approach (acting as a framework), educational researchers ... target (particular aspects of) the educational field, witnessed by nomenclatures such as 'sociology *of* education', 'philosophy *of* education', 'psychology *of* education', and so on' (Ibid.). The word 'target' is of great importance: one starts from a solid fortress of disciplinary knowledge, and one goes out to lay a claim on (an aspect) of the realm of education. Over and against this, Decuypere suggests that we 'start ... from the educational *domain*, instead of from an outside approach by means of which we investigate the field' (ibid., p. 46). With a refreshing candour, he goes on to make a plea for 'educational sociologies, educational psychologies, educational economics, and so on' (Ibid.). That is, other disciplines have their place, but only insofar as they become qualified as 'educational'. Stretching the metaphor, it is from their own fortress that educationalists target sociology, psychology, and other disciplines – not the other way around. I would like to add two things here: first, that what constitutes the educational domain, as Decuypere calls it, can be approximately defined in terms of the experience of transformation, i.e. the *Bildsamkeit* that we all know and practice (in view of our own being educated, as well as in view of our unwavering attempts to educate others). Educational research is a proper and autonomous field of study – a discipline of its own that is important in its own right (like physics or linguistics) – because it brings *Bildsamkeit* to a higher level of understanding and articulation. Second, I fully agree that we must rely on other disciplines and that we have to make them into properly educational disciplines. Another way of putting this is perhaps: educational sociology is fundamentally sociology *as* education (rather than sociology *of* education), and likewise educational philosophy should be

rendered as philosophy *as* education (rather than philosophy *of* education – or philosophy as foundation, for that matter).

A post-critical view entails, first, that we should avow that educational philosophy is an endeavour valuable in and of itself. As lecturers in this discipline we should not start from (or constantly be on the watch for) a justification in terms of how it could contribute to the realisation of outcomes that remain external to what students might actually experience when fully engaging in a study of educational philosophy for its own sake. This, probably, requires from the lecturer a profound love for and devotion to her or his discipline, which allows her or him to show to the next generation why educational philosophy (with its own traditions, (canonised) authors, terminologies, forms of reasoning, its habit of slow reading, its singular way of writing and constructing arguments, its willingness to ask the most fundamental questions, its openness to discussions about literally everything, and so on and so forth) is worthy of attention and effort. Second, taking seriously what students might experience, a post-critical view insists on the fact that doing philosophy is *itself* educational: by engaging with it and studying it one might be profoundly changed as a human being. It makes a difference to one's life, and we should assert that *this* is at stake – i.e. that this is what makes it, ultimately, a meaningful pursuit.

With this brief description of what philosophy *as* education entails, I hope to have made clear what the difference is between a critical and a post-critical approach to a concrete practice, or better a discipline, in higher education. The crucial distinction to make is between an approach that judges the significance of this practice/discipline in terms of an external justification and an approach that wholeheartedly affirms the meaningfulness of this practice/discipline from the inside. Drawing students to the intrinsic significance of such a practice is truly educational, in that it makes a difference to their own being. This is all the more the case when philosophy is taught within an education studies program, and when doing philosophy is experienced *as* an educational transformation itself.

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Chapter 12
Colloquium

Naomi Hodgson, Joris Vlieghe, and Piotr Zamojski, with the collaboration of Richard Budd, Oren Ergas, Jarosław Jendza, Tyson E. Lewis, Lavinia Marin, Hans Schildermans, Łukasz Stankiewicz, Christiane Thompson, Stefan Ramaekers, and Wiebe Sieds Koopal

Introduction

This concluding chapter draws on a discussion that took place at the end of a symposium on this book, to which a number of its authors – Richard Budd, Jarosław (Jarek for short) Jendza, Lavinia Marin, Hans Schildermans, Christiane Thompson – contributed. The wider membership of the Laboratory for Education and Society at KU Leuven were invited to the symposium and some of those present – Stefan Ramaekers and Wiebe Sieds Koopal – also contributed to the discussion. What follows is not a direct transcription of that discussion but refers to particular contributions representative of it in order to draw out some key themes and questions.

From Critique to Post-Critique? Is it Possible to Define Post-criticality?

It is clear that there is a shift towards a new way of looking at higher education and its research, and the contributions to this book show that it is possible to investigate the university post-critically. However, it is also clear that we might still lack a precise definition of the post-critical. Whereas this way of thinking calls for us to take care of things we value, in this case in higher education, Jarek Jendza suggested that the 'idea of post-criticality is [itself] very delicate', and hence we have to be very careful and even 'overprotective in the case of the words we actually use, in order to

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protect the idea of post-criticality'. This care extends to the use of related terms such as 'protect' and 'defend': they might suggest a certain conservatism, which – as should be clear – we want to avoid.

The authors' agreement to contribute to the book stemmed not so much from a shared definition of post-criticality, however, but rather from a shared commitment to the original Manifesto's principles. Many of the contributors to the book seem to agree with one of the principles in particular; the idea of love as being at the core of education, and especially higher education. As Lavinia Marin put it, 'we are all immersed with the university, we work in it, we live in it, we study it, and we also love it! And this aspect of love, is not captured by critique'. Many of the contributions in this book try to address precisely what is not captured by critique, and it is here that we find some consistency between them. But there remains a tension – or maybe just a lack of clarity – between the critical and the post-critical. As Wiebe Koopal observed: 'Criticism is of course just deciding what is important, and in the post-critical we have to decide what we care for, but how do we know what we care for? We have to be critical at first'. Perhaps, but, as Jarek remarked of the symposium discussion: 'I've observed a significant change of language. Basically, we have avoided the dead ends of critique. In each of the presentations the language of love or positivity was present and this is probably something that we share'. It is the idea of the post-critical itself that 'is worth caring for', he continued, 'because it gave us something that we didn't have before: like talking about love in education, which usually was treated as something naïve, and in that sense not scientific. We've got a new language and we have to take care of that'.

During the discussion, the issue remained of whether there was a language of post-criticality beyond merely being what critique is not. Hence, as Naomi Hodgson put it, 'this very conversation is a sign that we don't have a new language and [so] we have to be very careful about it'. There is a risk in trying to summarise a set of chapters or a theme that we make overly bold statements, and we had to ask ourselves whether it was our ambition to capture and define everything that happened during the symposium – and indeed in the university itself – endangering its multiplicity. As Piotr Zamojski observed: 'we are not aiming at another grand narrative that would give us a clear picture of the whole. … [T]here is a kind of incompleteness of the insights that we are formulating. It goes without saying that we have to take into account that there is something else going on, that there is more. But we still need to indicate what we feel is important at a particular moment, as distinguished from everything else that seems to be not so important at this point'.

Rather, what we have seen throughout the chapters of this book, borne out in the discussions about them, is a bringing to the fore of experiences and practices that are of importance, and that can be recognised as such, without aiming at a conclusive theory or an all-encompassing language. So, in that sense, post-criticality is not about pinning down the essence of something. And yet, in many of the chapters it seems that the authors are in search of something essential they wish to preserve. Again, care and caution are needed, which Richard Budd compared to the method of carving statues, attributed to Michelangelo: 'Someone asked him: how it is that you can carve these amazing figures, and he said: I don't, I just free them, I just take off

the stuff that is outside of them. And – in a sense – maybe what we are trying to do is to try to actually capture what it is that higher education is'.

But, before we can start caring, shouldn't we first know what to care for – separate the wheat from the chaff, or the sculpture from the marble? This came up at many points during our discussion. For example, Joris Vlieghe brought up the fact that students' boredom, e.g. during lectures, is often seen as a problem and that it should be avoided, especially within the walls of marketised universities that are tailored to students' needs and that promise them the best possible student experience. This was countered as Joris taking a typical critical stance (i.e., unveiling an ideology that holds students captive). However, his experience of teaching in such a university showed that it was possible to discuss with his students the (lack of the) importance of student experience. Most of them were able to see through the myth; no such unveiling was needed: 'in my experience, students know very well that they are playing the game. It's not that I have to show to them that they have false consciousness. ... So I don't think this is a classical critical stance'. Instead, the experience draws our attention to what is possible in the university, not predetermining the positions of academics and students a priori. The very possibility of having such a conversation is valuable, and drawing attention to it can be called, then, post-critical.

This, of course, doesn't imply throwing the baby out with the bathwater: this is not post-critique at the expense of critique, as Wiebe implied earlier. Referring to the example above, we do not deny that it is important to draw attention to the extent to which marketisation and commodification have colonised higher education, changing the practices and self-understandings constitutive of it. Post-criticality does not deny that the student experience discourse is a myth, a form of false consciousness, and a potentially dangerous one at that. But, the question, driving not only the chapters in this book but also the articulation of the post-critical more generally is: where do we go from there? We can repeat the critical analysis over and over again, complain about the situation, and fill whole conferences with papers about what is going on and its devastating effects. In many ways, taking such a critical view is very therapeutic (it helps us to survive, so to speak), for both author and conference attendees, and it certainly is very tempting. But, as Piotr argues throughout his chapter, such a stance allows us to stand aside, to not take responsibility, and not get involved ourselves with the object we care for, i.e. the university. So, critique can be only a first step.

Indeed, as Piotr put it in the discussion, 'from the outset, post-criticality was actually the next step after critique, not against critique. To a certain extent reading another debunking piece of research does not help to save anything, and actually does not bring much to the discussion itself'. But on the other hand, it is on the basis of the extensive work of critical researchers that we can actually ask the question 'what comes after critique?'. The relationship with critical inquiry in education, including on the university, will remain crucial, then, in the further articulation of a post-critical stance. The critical paradigm is not an adversary; we are not opposed to it. Rather, we are taking it further; we are just taking another step.

The Educational in the University

As this discussion and the chapters of the book illustrate, post-criticality is about drawing attention to experiences and practices in higher education that are meaningful – educationally – and about articulating this meaning, *in spite of* the many tendencies that threaten them (as rightfully analysed by the critical paradigm). The purpose, as Hans Schildermans observes, 'is not so much about describing the practices as they are', nor is it to 'predict what the university will be in the future from a critical-sociological point of view. I think that what our contributions try to do is in some sense activating the possible, instead of describing the probable'. We should leave a language of description and of probability behind in favour of making a new future possible. We do this, Hans continues, by telling all kinds of stories about universities that might mobilise us and inspire action. They make us 'response-able', as Donna Haraway (2016) puts it. These stories, 'instead of causing despair, give a sense of how things can be done differently'. So, the post-critical accounts gathered in this book do not merely diagnose things as they actually are, nor do they predict what mayhem, dystopia, utopia even, is to come. Instead, they might inspire us by changing our relation to the matter at hand, so that new and unforeseen things become possible – new forms of action, unanticipated university practices. They are hopeful.

Next to the concern with what the post-critical is or might be, the notion of what is educational in higher education eludes precise definition too. Christiane Thompson observed that we should not try to pin down what is educational in higher education, 'because pinning down is what we get in evaluations. I think it's more about also opening up possibilities'. Referring to her own use of vignettes, she remarks that these stories:

> are also about trying to find a language for something without already viewing it from certain master distinctions, from a particular interpretation of reality. Just from my experience, this kind of exchange with colleagues on situations is very productive. And it is very different from a course evaluation. And I'm not going to do a bashing of evaluation, but it is really in a very different way possible to keep talking on the vignette like this, whereas evaluation is always in a way the end of it. So for me the post-critical dimension is about the production of something else. How to make space for exploring further issues.

Again, what is at stake is the opening of possibilities – the possibility of possibilities: not casting a judgment on a situation (as is the case when we evaluate the university via course evaluations, student satisfaction surveys, the UK Teaching Excellence Framework, the UK Research Excellence Framework, and so on), but precisely by speaking about what is worthwhile about particular experiences and practices.

This too carries a risk. Christiane and others warned against the tendency in some contributions to put too great an emphasis on the 'extra-ordinary', so that we risk painting too idealistic a picture of how the university is or of what the truly 'educational' looks like. For instance, in many contributions we learn about exceptional experiences and moments of full attention and captivation students might have

during lectures delivered by passionate, eccentric, or extremely talented professors. But, as Christiane adds, 'a lot of times that I was listening to a lecture it was useless. I mean, exhaustion, disappointment, and not wanting to listen to it anymore. You could also do research on boredom during lectures, and I see students bored. And for me the point of the university is actually more about this confrontation of very different impressions'. Boredom in the university is by no means an experience had only by the 'disengaged' student. We have all been to conferences in those same lecture halls and experienced boredom. But this isn't a problem: students – and indeed academics – leave the lecture hall and 'they don't really know yet where [what they just experienced] is going. But it has set something in resonance, and it might not be something like "I know something" or "I understood something", but there is something that . . . maybe just a spark, maybe only a possible experience for much, much later'. In view of this, Richard questioned the current UK practice of judging the quality of university degrees and institutions on the basis of graduate employment rates 6 months after graduation. Attending university might entail a transformation, he commented, 'that may happen at the time, or later on, or not'.

On a much more concrete level, Joris observed 'that there is something fundamentally wrong about much empirical research around the effects of lecturing as opposed to other ways of learning. So, usually, researchers compare the effects of what students have learned, by measuring it immediately after the lecture, with the learning outcomes of people who have studied the same stuff at home, or in the library, as if these were discrete 'learning practices'. This is missing the point, he argued, because the learning in question is not solely the result of the lecture. Normally one takes notes during the lecture, but then these notes will be studied at home, when preparing an essay or revising for an exam: 'This should also be taken up when assessing, or evaluating, or trying to get to the meaning of what happens in the lecture'. In sum, the educational in the university is not necessarily, nor even often, linked to immediate and spectacular experiences. Its effect will be felt or become evident over time, and is often constituted in experiences that, at the time, are perceived as boring and meaningless.

In trying to articulate – but not ultimately define – the educational in the university we have seen consideration of the lecture, study groups, the teaching of educational philosophy and theory, but to what extent is what we are talking about *the* university, or only that part of it valuable to or recognisable to those in the humanities and social sciences?

Jarek initiated this line of questioning, suggesting that we potentially exclude the views, experiences, and practices of academics who represent the natural sciences. He observed:

> Very often it happens that people write about the university, but in fact they write about the humanities. And so, somehow, the humanities feel that they have the right to define what the university is about, whereas we might be talking about the very small part of the university. There is the risk, that when we define the university, we do it exclusively with the reference to the humanities and social sciences.

To some extent this seems to be an inevitable arrangement: because of the nature of the subject of study, people who investigate higher education and the university represent either social sciences or the humanities. So perhaps the question is whether, in our attempts to articulate the educational in the university, we can also speak for the experiences of academics from natural sciences.

Of course, every discipline of knowledge has its specificities, and hence it generates particular uses of pedagogic forms (from the lecture and the seminar to fieldwork), customary ways of approaching various academic tasks (such as exams or laboratory experiments), not to mention the informal rules of behaviour (such as dress code or the style of public criticism). And these will vary also by country and by type of institution. Such particularity exists to the extent that Becher and Trowler (2001) speak of 'academic tribes'. But is there something that links these 'tribes', something that allows them to recognise each other as academics or, to put it more precisely, as people of the university? This seems to be a fundamental question, because if we don't have any commonality apart from being governed by university bureaucracies and external metrics and working on campuses, then perhaps we no longer form a university. So the initial question on excluding, and being able to speak for, the natural sciences in our attempt to articulate the educational in the university actually points to the much more significant issue of the very existence of the university as a set of common practices, forms, and experiences.

Interestingly, the very research Jarek reports in his chapter provides a hopeful clue in that regard. During the discussion he referred to the experiences revealed in his interviews with researchers from natural sciences. These experiences seem to express the mixture of the mundane effort of doing repetitious experimentations, observations, or other research activities, and the sublime suspension of everything that surrounds those who are engaged in them. One of the respondents to his interviews, an ornithologist, said:

> The university in our life is almost everywhere. We spend our holidays with PhD candidates and then we 'go for the birds' – so we . . . observe them for hours so technically we work but we don't. Once I went with my supervisor to Spitsbergen. We had a small tent, rifles, binoculars, and two coffee cups. Was it a university? Yes, of course it was! We would spend hours observing animals and then we would come to our tent, our small university and discuss the results for hours in minus 37 C outside. [Interview 7, pp. 3–6]

This excerpt shows that it might be the case that the experiences of the educational in the university are not exclusive to the humanities and social sciences. Nevertheless, it seems that the voice of representatives of the natural sciences is underrepresented when considering the educational perspective on higher education and the university. Undoubtedly, then, we need to begin such a dialogue on the university with academics outside of the humanities and social sciences.

The University as Practices Not Institution

Significantly, in all of the contributions to this book, the attempt to articulate the educational in the university means going beyond, or even opposing, its institutional dimension. According to Christiane, when stripped of its institutional dimension, the university is a form of plurality turned towards a common concern. Hence, the educational dimension of the university consists of the practices of, what she terms, 'participation in partition'. Hans investigates a university enacted *ex nihilo*, in the conditions of a camp, with no institutional resources. This shows how a university can be made, how can it begin and grow. In his chapter, Piotr claims that the university is something people can practice, which he clearly opposes to the institutional understanding of university. This is also clear in the chapter by Tyson Lewis, who locates the educational dimension of the university in practices that are useless from the institutional perspective. On this view, governed by the goal of the efficient production of measurable learning outcomes, study groups are a pointless waste of time.

Hence, the educational seems to happen at the university in spite of the institutional requirements, as a surplus or an excess of certain practices that are made just for themselves: practices that are unable to be appropriated, that are pure means (cf. Agamben 2000). As indicated in the chapter by Lavinia, lecturing is another such practice. In her writing, the lecture is not regarded institutionally, as a form that organises a particular course, but is approached as an event of collective gestures that resembles a spiritual séance. Similarly, in his chapter, Oren Ergas points to the university as a sphere in which we can try out or exercise our inner life. Joris, too, seems to conceive of the university in terms of arrangements that keep open the potentiality of educational transformation. Respondents to the inquiry reported by Jarek seem to claim that educational meetings – as a specific form of meeting in academia – have no specific place and time and, more often than not, take place off-campus (i.e. outside the physical institution of the university). In order to look for the educational in the university, Richard proposes a way to explore students' experiences, that is, to explore what happens to and between people when they are students of a (particular) university. For Łukasz Stankiewicz, it is in non-institutionalised trust that he finds hope in academia.

It seems, therefore, that asking about the educational opens another dimension to the discussion, one that counters our usual institutional understanding of the university: the dimension of a fragile, relentlessly re-activated, subcutaneous tissue of practices, forms, gestures, relations, and interactions, woven together by the people of the university, in order to make happen something in common that sustains the potentiality of educational transformation. A tissue that is increasingly colonised by the alienating institutions of universities.

Retrieving or Reclaiming?

It was in the face of such colonisation that we, initially, set about *retrieving* the university's educational dimension: this was the term used in the originally-planned subtitle for this book. As indicated at the outset of this chapter, this retrieval is an exercise that draws our attention time and again to the language with which we do so. Caution was expressed throughout our discussion of the risks of speaking of protection and defence, lest we give the impression of a conservative stance. In seeking to find points of commonality in what emerged from the discussions, we risked trying to pin down and formalise the very openness and possibility we sought to invite.

The starting point of our discussion – and only that – was to ask whether any points of commonality between the positions had been identified. The very question seemed, to Stefan Ramaekers at least, at odds with the ethos of the project: was that what we were aiming for?: '. . . of course there are connections, but by asking about the "commonality" are you aiming at consistency or coherence, or do you want there to be running threads?', he asked. The question was not about finding coherence but, as Naomi put it, to see if there are any 'tensions in the way that we are using particular concepts . . . two people might be using the same term, but taking up post-criticality differently'. These tensions might in themselves be interesting to explore further. In such an instance the issue is not to decide which usage or definition to use. Rather, as Jarek states:

> I think this is not about how Piotr or myself understand one particular word. It is just that we have to be overprotective in the case of the words that we actually use, in order to protect the idea of post-criticality. And this idea is worth caring for, because it gave us something that we didn't have before: like talking about love in education could be treated as something naïve, and in that sense not scientific. We've got new language and we have to take care of that.

The idea of being overprotective might again sound conservative, but rather, as we find throughout the discussion and the chapters in this volume, it is a matter of testing our words, seeing whether they can do justice to the practices and experiences and their educational force. Hence, Christiane takes up the idea of commonality differently:

> I just want to articulate this last point . . . not so much in the sense of commonality . . . but more in a sense of shared concern. For me the concept of exploration would fit very well here. You know, you're in need of a language, and I would say that, ok we all are looking for, exploring words, descriptions, places, and maybe the difference lies in what are then the sources for these explorations. And I've already mentioned that there is a word family surrounding care, concern, attention, love . . . Love is actually for me quite a difficult concept, because I wouldn't dare to use it in the sense of – you know – the relationship between lecturers and students. But all these terms mentioned relate to furnishing – instead of saying retrieving – or sketching the education in the university. Not necessarily only the student-lecturer relationship but also more in the sense of topographic or other notions.

Here, as well as in Stefan's question and in a later question from Hans, the question of what is invoked by the notion of retrieving is raised. Jarek stated: 'I have

some doubts about the subtitle or the second line of the title which is "retrieving", and also we have mentioned the word "defend". I believe that when we are talking about "retrieving the university" or "defending the university" we are very close to the critical stance. Generally, I think that what we share is the language and this language is completely different from the one we are used to'.

A further aspect of this is, as Christiane suggests, where we go to retrieve the university: what is the source of this retrieval? Hans asked: 'For instance Piotr has suggested that we could recollect, to go back to memory, Lavinia referred to the notebooks of Gadamer, I went to the Palestinian refugee camp to retrieve the educational in the university, so I think we differ in that regard. So my question is also connected to what kind of university do we look at when we try to retrieve the educational? Do we look at the lecture, do we look at the seminar, do we look at the program on the West Bank, do we look at meetings, or . . .?'. The issue with the term is helpfully summarised by Richard, who draws out the assumption, implicit in the term retrieval, that it is about going 'back to something that we had . . .', a 'mythical' 'golden age'.

As should be clear at this point, this is not what we are aiming at in the explorations gathered here or in the practice of the post-critical more generally. Hence, we needed to address, together, how to (re)articulate the project in a way that expresses that these explorations are not about tying down their meaning, as Christiane's invocation of liminality and partition in her chapter reminds us.

The notion of retrieval brings with it not only a potential normative or ideological weight (as Joris noted, wishing to 'defend' certain principles and practices might be deemed conservative), but also a temporal one: a tension between going back to how things were or how we imagined them to be, and the contemporary policy preoccupation with futurity and preparedness, which Stefan reminded us of. In line with the Manifesto's principles, what is intended here is a concern with the present, with what we do, and can do, here and now. Hence, Joris suggested the term 'reclaim'; not, again, in terms of getting back something lost, but in the sense of (re)claiming: taking back in the present, as Hans sets out with reference to his use of Haraway in his own work:

> I think that the concept of reclaiming still makes sense, because it's not about going back to the past. 'Re-claiming' has its origin in geography, where it means 'to restore the landscape that was destroyed by capitalist policies and industrial developments'. And I think that what Piotr is pointing to [earlier in the discussion] is that the university as an intellectual environment has been poisoned by neoliberal capitalist discourses that try to adopt the critical stance. Re-claiming is to foster these practices that make sense to be in the university. So it's not about going back to the past, or restoring some kind of idyllic past, but rather a way of – to use Donna Haraway's words – staying with the trouble, and trying to make something out of these practices that we still have.

The final summation of the book is a quote from Hans Schildermans, also taken from the symposium discussion: 'What our chapters try to do is in some sense activate the possible, instead of describing the probable. And there we don't give new grand narratives, but rather try to tell stories about the university, stories about experiences we had – from the stories about the university we find in Gadamer's

books, stories we retrieve through interviews we did, stories from the camp – to activate us, and also to inspire action, or to inspire new practices. So they are not saying that this is what you should do, but rather providing another, slightly different, sense of the realms of the situation we are in. Instead of the despair, they give a sense of how things can be done differently'.

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