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Chapter 12

Higher Heteronomy: Thinking through Modern University Education

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Introductory Remarks

My purpose in this chapter is to reveal certain conceptual problems in connection with current conceptions of higher education and the connection between aims and means. I will argue that there is a self-contradiction, or at very least a fundamental ambiguity, at the heart of the discussion that renders the question “What is the primary task of a university?” unanswerable. This ambiguity has to do with our currently confused conception of the notion of what it means to *think*. I will use a particular example taken from the Bologna Process to illustrate this problem, but the aim is not to criticize the model as such. Rather, my purpose is to provide a perspicuous representation of what I take to be a dominant mode of reasoning. The case of “outcomes,” which is my chosen example, is as much a symptom as a source of confusion.

As background to what follows, we might consider Max Weber’s distinction between goal-rational and value-rational action. Goal rationality is the adaptation of conduct as a means of achieving one’s ends, whatever these may be. That is, once a problem is formulated—let us say, “How can higher education contribute to public welfare and economic growth?”—rational choice in this sense consists in adapting institutions and behavior so as to efficiently solve the problem so posed. But Weber also describes another sense of rationality of actions where rationality is not merely a matter of effectiveness in weighing and furthering goals. Rational choice in this latter sense has not to do with furthering goals but with furthering certain values, especially values that are viewed as higher or ultimate. In these cases, concrete goals may well be merely means to the furthering of the value(s) in question. As a rule, Weber treats rationality as almost synonymous with efficiency in achieving explicit goals, but my point here is simply that a certain form of life (patterns of thought and conduct) brings

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about evaluations, norms, and values, and these are expressed in the formulation of any problem for which goals are conceived as solutions (Weber 1947).¹

I wish to suggest that there is necessarily a political or, rather, a moral dimension to all descriptions and definitions of the aims and purposes of higher education. Every statement regarding what higher education can or should achieve says something about what we value, how we view the relationship between the individual and the collective, what kind of world and what sort of society we are prepared to build and inhabit, and thus also what we want to change. In other words, the question of what higher education is or should be is, in the last analysis, the question of which values and ideals we as a matter of fact embrace, even if we do not explicitly refer to these ideals as ideals. In this respect, we might consider "education," like "art" or "justice," an "essentially contested concept" (Gallie 1964). Any particular conception of the notion of "education" is actually a specification of an idea, the use of which is essentially normative and evaluative; every application of it is therefore entirely conditioned by those norms and values (which themselves might very well be implicit rather than explicit).

Without a deeper discussion about the intimate connection between education and the values and form of life of which it is an integral part, all planning and evaluation, however meticulous their instruments, are quite literally meaningless, insofar as they are disconnected from the values which constitute their meaning. It is perhaps a sign of the times that we devote our energies and resources to the painstaking development of instruments for the planning, execution, and evaluation of educational institutions, as if the quality of these instruments were of momentous import. At the same time, we tend to forget the fundamental question of what it is that we are planning for, namely, the future. But the matter of what kind of future we hope and plan for is not itself a technical problem, neither is it merely a matter of economics or administration. Nor is it primarily a political concern. It is ultimately a philosophical and ethical question.

An Education in Autonomy and the Interests of the State

Fit man's education to what man really is. Do you not see that if you try to fit him exclusively for one way of life, you make him useless for every other? [...] You put your trust in the existing social order, and do not take into account the fact that order is subject to inevitable revolutions, and that you can neither foresee nor prevent the revolution that may affect your children. (Rousseau 1969, p. 468)²

¹ "Approprierez l'éducation de l'homme à l'homme, et non pas à ce qui n'est point lui. Ne voyez-vous pas qu'en travaillant à le former exclusivement pour un état, vous le rendez inutile à tout autre [...] Vous vous fiez à l'ordre actuel de la société sans songer que cet ordre est sujet à des révolutions inévitables, et qu'il vous est impossible de prévoir ni de prévenir celle qui peut regarder vos enfants."

Inspired by Rousseau, among others, Kant argues that education (which, for Kant, includes the cultivation of both moral and intellectual qualities) is first and foremost directed toward the actualization of the human potential for freedom and self-legislation (autonomy) both in the individual and, ultimately, in the species. Kant distinguishes between physical and what he calls practical or moral training: "Practical or moral (vs. physical) education is education toward personality, the education of a freely acting being who can support itself and be a member of society, but who can have an inner value for itself" (Kant 1977, p. 712). The aim of education is not to drill the student in a set of skills as in the dressage of a horse, nor to train him in specific teachings and doctrines, but to *enlighten* him: the point is not to teach him what to think, but how to think (Kant 1977, p. 707). Toward the end of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, in a section on method in teaching ethics, Kant writes that the core of moral education is to make the student aware that "he himself can think" (Kant 1997, § 50, A 165). Notice that what Kant is saying here is that thinking for oneself does not arise spontaneously, but it is something that can be fostered, something that the human being can learn: thinking for oneself is something of which every human being is in principle capable, and it is achieved through education (*Erziehung*). It is through education and only through education, Kant claims, that the human being can achieve his humanity, that is, his *autonomy*. Further, through a carefully considered and well-devised program of education, humanity can look forward to a "future happier human species" (Kant 1977, p. 700).

What we see in Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant and Rousseau is a premium placed on the capacity to see the contingencies of the moment and the circumstances in which one finds oneself, including one's own present interests as well as the influence of others, as something upon which one can exert a greater or lesser degree of autonomous thought or action. Further, such a capacity for more autonomous thought and action is not seen as arising spontaneously, but rather as something to be achieved, through the deliberate care of the community, for the sake of cultivating a certain kind of human being. If the one who is to be educated is to devote his life to something more than slavery or manual labor, that is, to citizenship and a profession, then he must receive an education proper to the duties and responsibilities attending these. In particular, he must develop his capacity for responsible action, autonomous judgment, and conscientious decision-making, both in public and private, in matters both practical and theoretical. In short, one might say that the kind of human being to be cultivated through higher education is one capable of sound and independent judgment.²

The educational ideal outlined above bears witness, of course, to another time. In today's discourse, it seems romantic or at very least impractical and impracticable. And indeed, the norms and ideals such as I cite here cannot survive in a vacuum; they are born in and are nourished by the prevailing attitudes, concerns, controversies,

² One might be inclined to think that the current emphasis on "critical thinking" would constitute an example of this ideal. But, as I will argue, the automatized systems that have been introduced to train critical thinking as a general skill display in their conception and construction an instrumentalist interpretation of that goal which is remote from the ideal described here, and even at odds with it.

and problems that someone is trying to come to grips with. What Kant is trying to come to terms with is this: a person, a society, a state, a community, or a regent has a *legitimate* interest in the form and content of higher education. Thus, his question was not whether or not the state powers have the right to involve themselves in the affairs of education but rather under which conditions and upon what grounds this legitimate right can be exercised. In the end, the answer must rest on the nature of that interest. Humboldt writes:

A university always stands in a somewhat closer relationship to practical life and to the needs of the state than an academy does, since a university conducts one of the state's principal tasks: the guidance of youth. An academy, on the other hand, has to do purely with knowledge alone. University professors stand in a very general relationship, insofar as they share with each other the problems of outer and inner institutional discipline, but as regards their specialized work, they communicate with each other only at random, as individual preference may dictate; other than this they go their own way. An academy, on the other hand, is made for subjecting the work of each of its associates to the judgment of all. (Humboldt 1963, p. 258f)

For just this reason, Humboldt argues for the importance of state control of certain university affairs:

The appointment of university professors must be exclusively reserved to the state, and it is surely not good to permit the various faculties more influence in this matter than an understanding and fair-minded administrative body will do of its own accord. For antagonism and conflicts within a university are salutary and necessary. But the disagreements among professors on their specialties can, even unintentionally and without ill will, distort completely their point of view as to what is good for the whole. Furthermore, the quality of the universities is closely related to the immediate public interest of the government. (Humboldt 1963, p. 259)

I understand Humboldt's point here to be this: academic or scientific questions, that is, issues involving the actual form and content of research, scholarship, and teaching as such, ought to be assessed on academic or scientific grounds. But the university is much more than science and scholarship. Its very existence is based on the societal functions that it is to fulfill. And regarding these extramural functions, academic considerations are not always primary. This distinction between the legitimate interests of state power and the community, on the one hand, and the interests of science as a pursuit, on the other, is reminiscent of Kant's famous argument for freedom of speech (Kant 1996). Kant maintains that it is perfectly legitimate for the regent to limit the enlightened citizen's right to public expression insofar as the citizen expresses himself in his capacity as civil servant. As a scholar (or enlightened citizen), he is an equal among equals in the republic of ideas. But as a civil servant, say a clergyman or a tax collector, his rights are limited by his civil function, and he must answer to the state and his fellow citizens, and not only to other scholars. This theoretical distinction between strictly scholarly or scientific considerations, on the one hand, and institutional duties and public demands, on the other, also played out in the nineteenth-century battles over *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lehrpflicht*. The issue of how, when, and why these freedoms could and should be inhibited or not, that is, which values should have priority, was debated on and off well into the twentieth century. I take this to mean two things: that the question arose explicitly as a question

of the rationality of values as much as of how best to achieve explicit goals, and that the issue was considered a matter of the greatest import: the future of the nation.

Since the expansion and democratization of higher education during the second half of the nineteenth century, the practical function of the university (society's legitimate interest in it) has increasingly taken central stage in discussions concerning higher education. The entry and integration of new student groups (the working classes, immigrants, and, somewhat later, even women) posed new problems and raised new concerns. In particular, the university was to provide society with a technically skilled labor force while at the same time providing these new groups with training in the rights and duties of citizenship in a liberal democracy. They were to be freed from the shackles of ignorance and superstition as well as the ethnic, cultural, and kinship loyalties that bind them and deprive them of the opportunity to participate in the democratic process and debate enjoyed by their more privileged schoolmates. What we have here, it would seem, are two distinct aims which, at least when formulated in this way, seem difficult to weld into a single goal.³ For thinkers of the turn of the century, in contrast to today's discourse, it was not self-evident that someone who had studied at a business school or a technical college was by definition "educated." To the contrary, there was a good deal of discussion about to what extent practical instruction could or should be integrated into the university. John Stuart Mill, for instance, in his inaugural speech as vice-chancellor of St. Andrews in 1867, thinks the issue needs to be addressed:

The proper function of a University in national education is tolerably well understood. At least there is a tolerably general agreement about what a University is not. Universities are not intended to teach the knowledge required to fit men for some special mode of gaining their livelihood. The object is not to make skillful lawyers, or physicians or engineers, but capable and cultivated human beings. It is very right that there should be facilities for the study of the professions. It is well that there should be Schools of Law, and of Medicine, and it would well be if there were schools of engineering and the industrial arts. The countries which have such institutions are greatly the better for them; and there is something to be said for having them in the same localities, and under the same general superintendence as the establishments devoted to education properly called. But these things are no part of what every generation owes to the next, as that on which its civilization and worth will principally depend [...] Men are men before they are lawyers, or physicians, or merchants or manufacturers; and if you make them capable and sensible men, they will make themselves capable and sensible lawyers or physicians. What professionals should carry away with them from a University is not professional knowledge, but that which should direct the use of their professional knowledge, and bring the light of general culture to illuminate the technicalities of a special pursuit (Mill 1984).⁴

The situation today is somewhat different, to say the least. In a word, it is not the case that "the proper function of a University in national education is tolerably

³ This was an explicit concern, for example, in John Dewey's classic *Democracy and Education* (Dewey 1916).

⁴ For Mill, astronomy, biology, physics, and mathematics were as important and even indispensable elements of a general or liberal education as law, political science, and, for reasons that can be understood in terms of "multicultural awareness," classical Greek.

well understood." Nor is it true any longer that there is "a tolerably general agreement about what a University is not," if we take that agreement to refer to the general acceptance of the claim that "universities are not intended to teach the knowledge required to fit men for some special mode of gaining their livelihood." To the contrary, the systems that have been devised by national governments and international governing bodies such as the EU for auditing and assessing the value and effectiveness of higher education are based on the criteria of standardization, mass production, and above all, employability. Universities themselves also follow rankings in branch journals, where the value of an education is tied to criteria such as the average income of its graduates 10 years after graduation, and adjust their programs to emulate those at the top of the list. In other words, what Mill took to be the definitive characteristic of a university is not a relevant factor in considering the value of a course of study in today's policy debates and discussions. To be sure, most policy documents, including those emerging from the Bologna Process, stress the role of the university in promoting ethnic tolerance, gender equality, and "democratic attitudes." And these are often tied in some unspecified way to training in "critical thinking." But it is difficult if not impossible to demonstrate convincingly the value of studying classical subjects such as philosophy, astronomy, and Latin in promoting these goals. For, as I will argue later, the rationality of offering such courses of study cannot stand and fall on their efficiency in promoting certain goals, but rather in promoting certain values, in particular, the value of autonomy (defined as the cultivation of the individual's capacity for independent grounded judgment). This distinction and its consequences will be the topic of the next section.

The Goals of Higher Education as Policy

It goes without saying that such subjects as theoretical physics and intellectual history are unlikely to achieve the same success in attracting and retaining students or guaranteeing their future employment as more practical programs. The only rational argument in terms of desirable goals for their continued existence would have to be Socrates': however useful they may turn out to be, they will only be valuable if they are taught and learned as worth knowing in themselves. But in a society in which value is strictly measured in terms of foreseeable practical utility and economic growth, that is, concrete specified goals, it is perfectly natural that "employability" serves as the umbrella term for the technical competence and vocational skills required by industry, the market, and the public sector. Thus, a good education is by definition an education that produces highly skilled workers in great demand. An excellent education is one in which the students achieve such a high degree of technical accomplishment that they can not only follow technological developments and their attendant economic benefits but also actively contribute to them. An excellent university is hence one that produces innovations and innovators. This ideal constitutes

a radical shift from prior conceptions and ideals,⁵ from ensuring that the coming generation consists of "capable and sensible men" to a concentration on commerce and competition. On a deeper level, however, one can see an alteration in the very notion of what it means to *learn*. As we shall see, while Enlightenment and Romantic thinkers in the classical liberal tradition, such as Rousseau, Kant, and Humboldt, saw cultivating the capacity for autonomous judgment ("Enlightenment") as central to all teaching, what we today in fact are promoting is *heteronomous judgment* as the educational and moral ideal.

Many policy and strategy documents and statements, reports, and proclamations emitted by universities as well as by governmental agencies, the EU, and the OECD have included remarks and formulations, albeit often parenthetical and decorative, in which the university is represented as something more than an essential component in an innovation system or a building block for sustainable economic growth. The first and primary principle in the *Magna Charta Universitatum*, the European universities' bill of rights, for instance, states:

The university is an *autonomous* institution at the heart of societies differently organized because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching. To meet the needs of the world around it, its *research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent* of all political authority and economic power. (*Magna Charta* 1988, §1; emphasis added)

Along with the emphasis on autonomy, one also finds various articulations of the universities' mission to ingrain in the student the habit of *critical thinking*, as in this enlightening passage from the EU's Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks:

Democracy ultimately depends on the active participation of educated citizens. Education at all levels thus plays a key role in developing democratic culture. In addition to transferable (transversal) skills, the active participation of citizens requires a broad education in a variety of fields as well as the nurture of democratic attitudes and values and the ability to think critically (*A Framework* [...] 2005, p. 24).

And further, at every level, from the BA to the doctorate, one of the essential "qualification descriptors" is that the student is "capable of critical analysis," although this is nowhere defined or explained. What is stated is that "competences, such as critical evaluation, were and are embedded or implicit in the assessment values and practices" (*A Framework* [...] 2005, p. 63).

Thus, the capacity for critical thinking and the development of "democratic attitudes" are seen as somehow related to one another and, further, coupled to a

⁵ I have intentionally avoided reference to any of the established theoretical positions regarding the philosophy of education. In my view, the majority of explicitly normative positions ("perennialism," "essentialism," "progressivism," etc.) in the main share the view that higher education ought to contribute something more both to the individual and to society than professional or vocational skills, if we are to justify the existence of institutions such as universities. Where there is disagreement, it has to do with what one takes these higher or broader aims to be and how these are best attained. I have not taken a clearly defined stance in that matter here, although I do suggest that the capacity for judgment (a philosophically difficult concept) is central.

specific "competence," namely, that of critical evaluation. But nowhere in the cited document, nor in related emissions such as the Prague and Berlin Communiqués, is there any elaboration of in what this relation consists or how these capacities are related to the bulk of policy concerned with employability, mobility, and standardization. Similarly, there are references to the importance of independent thought intrinsic to the conceptualization of higher education, such as the qualification descriptor for first-cycle degrees that the students have "developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy" and, for the second cycle, that they have "the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous" (A Framework [...] 2005, p. 67. Interestingly, there is no such explicit formulation regarding the third cycle). Finally, there is an arid observation that "personal development" is still implicitly assumed to be one of the purposes of higher education, although again, its relationship to democratic ideals, critical thinking and the capacity for autonomous judgment is not clear and the connection with employability, the needs of the knowledge-based society and the other necessary competences, such as technological innovation, even less so. What is formulated explicitly and in great detail in these policy documents and formal guidelines adopted by universities throughout Europe, however, is how the goals of promoting mobility, establishing a system of credits and "easily readable and comparable degrees," etc., are to be realized and implemented and their fulfillment assessed. Notably, despite frequent references to "quality assurance" in formal higher education, there is no description of quality that is not already entrenched in the formal criteria for its achievement. (Here one is reminded of Bill Readings' definition of "excellence" as an idea devoid of content. See Readings 1996, pp 21–43.) Nonetheless, teaching staff, department chairs, and deans throughout Europe have been instructed in how to institute and administrate the realization of these value-disengaged goals.

Within this mechanized system of production and assessment, the professional judgment of the teacher has thus largely been reinterpreted as the capacity to administrate the system: to apply the framework and to choose the material which is to fill its templates. The student's faculty of judgment is exercised when she estimates the extent to which she has satisfied the course requirements as these are set out in the "expected outcomes." To be sure, all of this does give the impression that something important has been achieved in the formalization and standardization of the system of higher education, namely, objectivity and neutrality. And it is no accident that these systems are deemed desirable. For they stand in stark contrast to the "subjective" elements in the old forms of teaching and examination. But we should notice that the "subjective" need not be and has not always been associated with unreliability, arbitrariness, partiality, irresponsibility, unfairness, uncertainty, and caprice. Rather, the "subjective" can be understood in a Kantian spirit, that is, as the grounding of knowledge and understanding in the subject, as opposed, for example, to instrumental rote repetition, assimilation, and regurgitation. Hans-Georg Gadamer explains:

It is not accidental that in this respect the word *Bildung* resembles the Greek *physis*. Like nature, *Bildung* has no goals outside itself. (The word and thing *Bildungsziel*—the goal of

cultivation—is to be regarded with the suspicion appropriate to such a secondary kind of *Bildung*. *Bildung* as such cannot be a goal: it cannot as such be sought, except in the reflective thematic of the educator.) In having no goals outside itself, the concept of *Bildung* transcends that of the mere cultivation of given talents, from which concept it is derived. The cultivation of a talent is the development of something that is given, so that practicing and cultivating it is a mere means to an end. Thus the educational content of a grammar book is simply a means and not itself an end. Assimilating it simply improves one's linguistic ability. In *Bildung*, by contrast, that by which and through which one is formed becomes completely one's own. To some extent everything that is received is absorbed, but in *Bildung* what is absorbed is not like a means that has lost its function. Rather, in acquired *Bildung* nothing disappears, but everything is preserved (Gadamer 1975, p. 8.).

Gadamer concludes this reflection on education with the following remark: "*Bildung* is a genuinely historical idea, and because of this historical character of 'preservation' it is important for understanding the human sciences" (Gadamer 1975, p. 8.). And, as I noted in the beginning, education in this sense is most often associated with the humanities. But the idea formulated above is equally applicable to mathematics, physics, law, and political science seen as academic disciplines, rather than as means for achieving social, political, and/or economic goals. For this reason, it is important to keep the question of the dubious function and sinking status of the humanities in today's society separate from the issue of the status and function of the university as a whole. Naturally, there is an important connection between the two, but the ideal of higher education which Gadamer seeks to preserve, that is, that of a formative education the aim of which is to develop the capacity for autonomous thought and action and cultivate "capable and reasonable character" in the coming generation does not stand or fall with the issue of whether or not there should be publicly funded institutions for teaching and research in literature, philosophy, or ancient Greek.

An Education in Heteronomy: On the Demise of the Philosophical Faculty

In this section, I want to describe how the automated systems that have been introduced and developed through the Bologna Process undermine all educational aims with another intent, that is, grounded in other values, than the economic or therapeutic. For the most part, the emphasis in policy documents is the production of degrees, patents, and products (innovation), albeit embellished with a colorful dash of "cultural competence" (*Bildungsziel*) and a somewhat thicker layer of "social competence" (gender equality, ethnic tolerance, etc.) pasted on. The latter is an excellent example of what is meant by the term *heteronomy*. As Kant early on objected with regard to moral indoctrination, any dogma, thesis, or article of faith in the moral realm is easily forgotten or replaced. In William James pithy formulation, "a great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices." But in the Kantian tradition of education in autonomy, to which

Gadamer must be said in a broad sense to belong, such training is in a fundamental sense and of necessity superficial and, ultimately, ineffective, precisely because moral reasoning as such cannot be taught.⁶ Someone who has arrived at a certain conclusion concerning, say, the intrinsic value and inalienable rights of all human beings, cannot so easily forget this conviction, whereas someone who has been schooled to recapitulate a litany of correct and/or desirable attitudes can more easily leave behind the lessons of her catechism. A permanent overcoming of one's own misconceptions, prejudices, biases, and preconceived notions, whether in theoretical physics or in social life, requires that one has arrived at clarity by virtue of one's own intellectual efforts. It presupposes that one takes responsibility for thinking things through for oneself, admitting one's own intellectual shortcomings, flaws, and failings. It requires of the thinker the ability to see that she can be mistaken and the insight that she will most assuredly continue to make moral and conceptual mistakes. Ideally, a good education will instill in someone the commitment to do better next time, to improve her thought processes, and to be on guard against her own intellectual and moral proclivities and inclinations. In short, a good education is characterized by critical thinking in the sense of self-awareness, self-criticism, and self-correction. But there is no ready-made general formula to realize this ultimate value in each and every student. It is not the kind of thing that can be automated and given an ISO number.

One obvious objection to the ideal sketched above is that the university never realized *that*. To be sure, but this is not a serious objection to the ideal *per se*. It is in the nature of regulative ideals, as opposed to practical goals, that they are never fully realized. Rather, they give meaning and purpose to all of our practical aims and ambitions. To say that the old university systematically failed to inculcate this kind of critical thinking is merely to say that it failed to live up to its own ideals. What is striking about the Bologna Process and its implicit assumptions is that this ideal plays no constitutive role whatsoever in the formulation of its goals and regulations (this is what I meant by calling references to critical thinking and democratic attitudes "decorative").⁷ In his renowned speech "Science as a Vocation," Max Weber articulates the difficulty of realizing the ideal even as he argues for its necessity:

It is quite true that perhaps the most challenging pedagogic task of all is to explain scientific problems in such a way as to make them comprehensible to an untrained but receptive mind, and to enable such a person—and this is the only decisive factor for us—to think about them independently. (Weber 2004)

But why exactly is the regulative ideal of independent judgment and autonomous thinking so essential? Weber, like Gadamer, is working through the implications of the Kant's Copernican Revolution in epistemology and the critical philosophy stemming

out of it. This is not the forum to discuss this very complex phenomenon, but there is room for some consideration of the consequences for teaching and higher education.

In the *Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant admits readily the legitimate interests of government in the university as a means of "securing the strongest and most lasting influence on the people." Thus, with regard to the professional training of clergymen, legal officials and doctors, the task of the "higher faculties," he allows that what is to be taught needs to be sanctioned by the state. But with respect to the "lower faculty," that is, the sciences proper, it is not legitimate for the government to "play the role of scholar".

It is absolutely essential that the learned community at the university also contain a faculty that is independent of the government's command with regard to its teachings: one that having no commands to give, is free to evaluate everything, and concerns itself with the interests of the sciences, that is, with truth: one in which reason is authorized to speak out publicly. (Kant 1979, p. 22.)

His argument in sum is that the professional training and teaching of the higher faculties is necessarily based on an organon, that is, edicts, norms, and statutes that issue from an external authority, such as the Bible and ecclesiastical laws in the case of theology, or the code of civil laws in the case of jurisprudence, or medical practice and regulations in the case of medicine. As authority, they "command obedience," as he says. The lower faculty, the faculty of science and scholarship proper, "occupies itself with teachings which are not adopted as directives by order of a superior [...]. Now, we may well comply with a practical teaching out of obedience, but we can never accept it as true simply because we are ordered to." Kant goes on to say that the recognition of the truth of any statement must be grounded in the subject; acknowledging that something is true is something that the individual *does himself*. No one can do it for him. And "the power to judge autonomously—that is, freely (according to the principles of thought in general)—is called reason." Thus, the lower faculty, then known as the philosophy faculty (which included both moral and natural philosophy, that is, what we today would call the humanities and the natural sciences, respectively, although Kant makes the division between empirical or "historical" sciences, such as history and geology, and theoretical or "purely rational" sciences, such as mathematics and philosophy), "must be conceived as free and subject only to laws given by reason, not by the government." Further, every university must have such a faculty, "since *truth* (the essential and first condition of learning in general) is the main thing, whereas the *utility* the higher faculties promise the government is of secondary importance." Kant explicitly contrasts the offices of the "businessmen" of the higher faculties, with the critical task of the scientist and scholar. Further, it is the task of the lower faculty to interrogate freely, which is to say, rationally, the business of the higher ones (Kant 1979).

In his short popular essay mentioned earlier, "What is Enlightenment?" (Kant 1996), Kant argues that the essence of Enlightenment is the question for intellectual autonomy, the duty and right to make use of one's own reason without relying on external authority (i.e., heteronomy). This is not to say that knowledge produced outside of oneself is not valid, but rather that Enlightenment consists in a specific *attitude* toward that knowledge, namely, a critical (free, rational) one. A judgment arrived at

⁶ For a nuanced exposition and analysis of Gadamer's idea of *Bildung* in a philosophical context, see Odenstedt 2008.

⁷ For a comparison between former academic ideals and contemporary ones in this context, see Rider 2009.

by virtue of one's own reason is grounded; in contrast, religious dogma, moral orthodoxy, and even civil laws that are merely obeyed, but not thought through by the individual, can easily be rejected or replaced by others. This means that even if a prejudice or preconceived or inherited idea is in fact true, that is, the content is correct, its form is flimsy. The attainment of truth as the product of one's own thinking is solid, since we know how we arrived at it, and, if need be, can retrace our steps. In this sense, the heart of science and scholarship has more to do with the form (a self-critical attitude) than the content (a systematic knowledge of facts). One can have knowledge in abundance, without a critical attitude toward that knowledge, in which case it is not scientific, properly speaking. It becomes science only in and through reason, which is always autonomous; it is in the nature of scientific thinking to be self-legislating, that is, not to take anything merely on authority. The corpus of professional knowledge and training, in this sense, cannot be coterminous with science, for the former is by its nature heteronomous.

Applying the stricture that a state or community has a legitimate interest in the affairs of the university, we may say that the state can reasonably intervene in the form and content of what is taught in the interests of the state, but not with matters involving the interests of science. In Kant's day, the former were institutionalized in the higher (professional) faculties. Today, one could say that the state sees no value in the interests of science as such (evident, among other things, from the fact that ministries of education and research have been replaced by agencies for research and innovation, where education and research are relegated to components of the innovation system). In a conception of the mission of the university as serving public interests solely by virtue of what it can contribute in a concrete and foreseeable way to the interests of the public, there is really no justification for the idea of academic freedom.

For the intellectual core of "academic freedom" is precisely the right to freely, publicly, and with no hold barred criticize with the use of autonomous reason even the most basic assumptions of our society and its beliefs (even those belonging to the social institution called "science"). This requires, however, that there are no set assumptions about or externally imposed demands on what *form* or structure this freedom should take, which would be tantamount to a self-contradiction (heteronomous autonomy). Interestingly, we can here see the link between a "democratic attitude" and "critical thinking," at which the Bologna Process vaguely gestures. In his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant offers three "maxims" for the human understanding: "They are: 1° to think for oneself; 2° to put ourselves in thought in the place of every one else; 3° always to think consistently. The first is the maxim of unprejudiced thought; the second of enlarged thought; the third of consecutive thought" (Kant 1914, § 40). Kant goes on to explain that reason can never be passive, for passivity "belongs to the heteronomy of reason," also called prejudice. And the greatest prejudice of all, according to Kant, is to see the world and its workings as something beyond the grasp of human reason. This picture renders us passive and enslaved by and obligated to the authority of others. But a man whose mind has been "enlarged," however limited his natural gifts, can be educated to disregard "the subjective private conditions of his own judgment, by which so many others are confined, and reflect upon it from a universal standpoint (which he can only determine by placing

himself at the standpoint of others)" (Kant 1914, § 40). In short, Enlightenment means being able to see clearly that one has starting points which are contingent and can reasonably called into question. Finally, "the third maxim, viz. that of consecutive thought, is the most difficult to attain, and can only be attained by the combination of both the former, and after the constant observance of them has grown into a habit. We may say that the first of these maxims is the maxim of Understanding, the second of Judgement, and the third of Reason" (Kant 1914, § 40). Thus, if we transport Kant from Königsberg to Bologna, as it were, the argument would be that a lasting, genuinely open attitude is both a condition and product of achieved Enlightenment. "Democratic values" as orthodoxy are both fragile and inconsistent. But the openness to be attained comes through efforts of autonomous reason, not professional training. Thus, one cannot and should not expect academic achievement in technical skills or vocational education to be concomitant with an enlargement of the mind. In short, professional or technical training is not in and of itself an education. In the liberal tradition to which Kant belongs, the utility of autonomous reason lay in that the citizens of a state can, without violent revolution, over the course of time and through open debate, argument and discussion, realize a better form of government and a better form of life, without reliance on or obedience to external authority. But this vision requires, above all, patience. It is an alternative to revolutions, which merely replace one authority or orthodoxy with another, where no genuine human progress is made. So there is a connection between the cultivation of critical thinking and the advancement of democratic attitudes, but it is not a matter of the content of what is taught, but the *form*.

Now let us contrast this view of education with the primary purposes of the Bologna Process: to increase student mobility by ensuring transparency, coordination, and commensurability between different universities and to provide "quality assurance." The term quality, as we noted earlier, covers quite a bit of terrain, from formalized quantified measurement of success in accordance with (political and economic) stakeholder interests and demands to more qualitative associations having to do with student satisfaction and such. In each case, what is discussed and described in the documents that have emerged from the Bologna Process, on national as well as regional levels, are specific technical adjustments precisely in the *form* of education and evaluation. In these schemes, the focus is shifted from the active role of the teacher to the role of the student who learns:

Traditionally within higher education, and largely irrespective of national agendas, programmes have been predominantly planned by the provider(s), with the coherence of the programme setting the context for any quality assurance, whether this is based on implicit/ subjective or explicit/objective criteria. [...] To accommodate such changes new approaches to quality assurance will be required, including some that can cope with a primary interest in units of study and their combination. (A Framework [...] 2005, p. 51)

Thus, to ensure quality, the form of education should accommodate nonacademic interests and demands, rather than the nature of what is to be taught. And what Kant called "the subjective private conditions of his own judgement," from which he thought a proper education could liberate a student by teaching him how to think universally, is now to be the foremost consideration for the form of higher education.

It is no innocent modification to move from Kant's idea, in which the student should first and foremost learn to think for himself and realize that in fact he can, to a formalized system in which what is to be attained are various certifiable "competences" and skills. To the contrary, the system now being implemented throughout Europe would seem to lead to the student as well as the teacher relying more on external authority and protocols than on his own capacity to think:

"Externality" is increasingly recognised as an essential part of quality assurance, and so it should be within the development and application of new national qualifications frameworks. For such frameworks to be of benefit to stakeholders, including intending and current students, and their employers, the frameworks need to be expressed in terms that are understandable and relevant. (A Framework [...] 2005)

Further, the imposition of externally imposed forms of teaching and assessment has implications for qualifications, curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment, as well as quality assurance. They are thus likely to form an important part of 21st century approaches to higher education (and, indeed, to education and training generally) and the reconsideration of such vital questions as to what, whom, how, where and when we teach and assess. The very nature and role of education is being questioned, now more than ever before, and learning outcomes are important tools in *clarifying the results of learning* for the student, citizen, employer and educator. (A Framework [...] 2005; emphasis added)

What this says, in plain English, is that in the coming century, the very nature and role of education is to be "clarified," by an external authority, for students, citizens, employers, and educators. Quality assurance, in the framework of the Bologna Process, is synonymous with heteronomy.

I do not argue that a thorough course of study in traditional comparative literature or moral philosophy or Latin or astronomy or political science can or does inoculate the student from prejudice, narrow-mindedness or antidemocratic, sexist, racist, or misanthropic attitudes or opinions. But neither do courses in multiculturalism, gender studies, or queer theory. What can achieve such an aim, in the best case, is learning *how to think* (among other things, but not exclusively, about what would constitute the common good in a given question), which is not the same thing as the accumulation and systematization of facts, or a corpus of methods and theories. And it is most certainly not guaranteed by formal certification. If a state is genuinely interested in the good of the nation, from a liberal point of view, the best governance of science and scholarship *as such* would be academic self-governance, that is, the government would refrain from impeding the free exchange of ideas, both with regard to form and content. This is not, however, an argument for the autonomy of the modern research university, which is today largely the extended arm of industrial policy and professional certification agencies. It is an argument for allowing for an institutionalized form of education in intellectual autonomy, a "faculty of reason," one might say. How such an institution is to be organized is another question, but one simple answer is that the rules and dictates placed upon schools for engineering, dentistry, medicine, etc., with regard to the form of teaching do not apply to what was once called "basic research" (which includes much of the humanities, but also parts of the natural sciences such as pure mathematics) and studies in the subjects pertaining to these. A truly liberal form of government ought to allow for at least one institution where such autonomous activity can take place and be accessible to those seeking what Kant called "Enlightenment."

Concluding Remarks

It is something of an irony that so much of the rhetoric surrounding the notion of utility in education and the student-centered perspective is associated with the name of John Dewey. Dewey's idea of utility and relevance is actually strongly at odds with the assumptions behind the Bologna Process:

The vice of externally imposed ends has deep roots. Teachers receive them from superior authorities; these authorities accept them from what is current [...]. The teachers impose them [...]. As a first consequence, the teacher is not free, it is confined to receiving the aims laid down from above. Too rarely is the individual teacher so free from the dictation of authoritative supervisor, textbook on methods, prescribed course of study, etc., that he can let his mind come to close quarters with the pupil's mind and the subject matter [...]. Educators have to be on their guard against ends that are alleged to be general and ultimate [...]. That education is literally and all the time its own reward means that no alleged study or discipline is educative unless it is worthwhile in its own immediate having [...]. In education, the currency of these externally imposed aims is responsible for the emphasis put upon the notion of preparation for a remote future and for rendering the work of both the teacher and pupil mechanical and slavish [...]. (Dewey 1916, p. 108f.)

What I have attempted to demonstrate is that there is an inherent contradiction between the idea of autonomous science and democratic values, on the one hand, and the mechanized objectivity and imposition of external demands by an unquestioned authority, on the other. I have been at pains to admit the need for higher-level vocational and professional training in contemporary society and recognize the needs of the state to safeguard public interests in higher education, both with regard to how resources are allocated and in terms of the regulation of certain kinds of public services. But the issue of the implementation of the Bologna Process as a general framework for all higher education is about something else. It undermines "the philosophical faculty" not only in Kant's institutional sense but also in the deeper sense of the individual's capacity for independent thought engaged and engendered as an essential institution in a free society. By relegating basic science and intellectual development to more or less necessary components in a system, the goals of which have nothing to do with science or intellectual development *per se*, it deprives them of their autonomy, which, I have tried to show, is in a sense their *raison d'être*. If this sounds romantic and old-fashioned to our ears, it means that we deem autonomy and the pursuit of truth as an ideal to be anomalous and an anachronism and that we no longer see the value in teaching our sons and daughters that they themselves can think.

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