'Education Through Research' at European Universities: Notes on the Orientation of Academic Research

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Traditionally, 'education through research' is understood to be a main characteristic of education at the university. In this article we will explore how 'education through research' is argued to be of major importance for the European knowledge society, how there is still a reference to the idea of Bildung *or liberal education, and what research is presumed to be like if it is to have this edifying potential. It will be argued that the edifying potential of research is related to a normative component in the research activity and that this normative orientation and its presuppositions are problematic today. This lays the way for the exploration of alternative approaches to the edifying potential of research (with reference especially to Jürgen Mittelstrass and Jacques Derrida) and for the discussion of what could be at stake for 'education through research'.*

INTRODUCTION

As schools of modernity, modern universities have missions that have linked them closely to the general project of the Enlightenment. This project was grounded in the belief that science and science-based education would enlighten individuals, society (nation/national culture) and humankind as a whole. Universities, at least in their German form, organised themselves as research institutions in which education through participation in research would guarantee *allgemeine Bildung*, or general edification. It was claimed that research should be governed or orientated by truth, and that this orientation would allow people to edify themselves in relation to truth. In this conception, the state was regarded as the guarantor of university autonomy and freedom of research and education. Furthermore, it was argued that the state should play this role since it would indirectly be strengthened through a university-based Enlightenment *Bildung*.

Times, however, have changed, as well as ideas, projects and beliefs. Universities today are increasingly operating within a European/international

framework.[1] Universities are asked to position themselves within a knowledge society—a society that they have helped to create themselves and that they should help to develop further through their research, service and education. Since the knowledge society is argued to be driven by a knowledge economy, European universities should understand that their future orientation is to a large extent an economic one. In addition, the internal organisation of the university is increasingly based on economic or entrepreneurial premises (Clark, 1998). Excellence, performance and competitiveness seem to have become the main concepts used to organise education, research and service at the university and to 'manage' its business.

Against this background, and often with the memory of the Enlightenment project still in mind, a number of scholars have criticised the European project of the knowledge society (and related ventures) for placing the university and higher education in a narrow, economic framework (cf. Wimmer, 2003; Delanty, 2003). They have in particular criticised the narrowness of the economic orientation of the university and of the goal it sets for higher education. Furthermore, they have raised the question of whether this development will allow higher education sufficiently to prepare students for the complex ethical and social challenges they will have to face in the future. Finally, they have asked whether the re-introduction of the former ideal of edification (*Bildung*) could correct the developments that have come about. The question they have raised is whether the ideal of edification still has any meaning, and whether such an idea might still inspire us in the shaping of higher education.

In this article I too shall address this question and the ensuing discussion concerning higher education at the university. It is not my aim to answer this question but instead to try to contribute to its more precise formulation, especially with regard to the European university and the education it provides. First, I shall explore the way that university education is discussed at the European level, where it is striking to find continuing reference to Wilhelm von Humboldt and the German tradition. In the light of this, the general background of the Humboldtian idea of 'education through research' will be discussed, especially with regard to its more recent reformulation in the work of Jürgen Habermas. It will be argued that the edifying potential of research is related to a normative component in research activity and that this normative orientation and its presuppositions are problematic today. This will lay the way for an exploration of alternative approaches to the edifying potential of research—with reference to Jürgen Mittelstrass and Jacques Derrida—and for a discussion of what might be at stake in 'education through research'.

RESEARCH AND EMPLOYABILITY-ORIENTED HIGHER EDUCATION

Although education is still the responsibility of the member states, universities and 'Europe' meanwhile seem to have become indispensable to one another. As institutions of higher education, universities have been affected by and played a role in the so-called Bologna process, the creation

of a 'European Area of Higher Education'. This area has been formed in order to address issues such as the standardisation of programmes, the mobility of researchers and students, and systems of quality assurance designed to allow institutions of higher education and universities to perform on a European scale. Another project, pitched at the European policy level from its inception, is the creation of a 'European Research Area'. Although in this project the role of universities initially received little attention, it has since been noticed that their contribution to knowledge production is of major importance for society. With recognition of the role of universities in these areas, it has been argued that they have a unique part to play in the European knowledge society (that is, in relation to the general objective of the so-called Lisbon strategy).

In order to focus in more detail on Europe's agenda for university higher education it is worth looking at the 'Communication from the Commission' on 'The role of the universities in the Europe of knowledge' (2003) and the report of the STRATE-ETAN (Expert) Group (2002) preceding this document, which offer a clear picture. It is argued that the universities (will) have a key role in the knowledge society and economy through: (1) the production of knowledge (research), (2) the transmission of knowledge (education and training), and (3) the dissemination of knowledge (information and communication technologies, new industrial processes or services). Since it is my aim to focus on the role of higher education and its relation to research, I shall not deal with the issue of service at the present time.

In these documents, the task of the university with regard to education and training is closely linked to its research. In the context of this link, the concept of competencies plays an important role. The outcome of education is formulated in terms of the competencies that are held to be valuable for the knowledge society. But it is argued that for education at the university to fulfil its educational role in the knowledge society it must be embedded in research—hence the phrase 'Research as a ground for employability-oriented higher education' (Commission of the European Communities, 2002, p. 40). The mission of the university is not research *and* education but education *through* research. Moreover, it turns out that the competencies required in a knowledge society are closely related to the competencies of research. And so, at this point, the report of the STRATE-ETAN Expert Group claims:

> . . . it appears quite clearly that the old Humboldtian emphasis on the virtues of research-teaching cross-fertilisation remains surprisingly relevant in the current context. It is very striking that the list of 'employability' competence overlaps quite largely with the competencies involved in the exercise of the modern research activity. Therefore, embedding research into the curricula through the HE (higher education) curriculum, is likely to contribute to the development of those competencies that can be valued in many professional sectors other than professional research. In other words, education through research may be quite relevant and useful to education to other professions than research (p. 40).

What is being argued is that education through research allows students to have competencies that are useful to them not just in their attempts to become professional researchers but in relation to their aspirations of becoming competent professionals, indeed in making them employable. In other words, the knowledge society asks higher education to train professionals with research competencies, and so 'education through research' is regarded as a necessity. The overlap between research competencies and employability competencies, the report claims, is striking.

But what is really striking here is this. The reference to Humboldt is clearly a reference to *Bildung*. Thus, universities are to understand themselves as operating within a tradition of *Bildung*, and at first sight it might be thought that this move makes sense. In fact, according to Humboldt, active participation in research does prepare students to participate in society. What needs to be kept in mind, however, is that Humboldt's argument implies a specific idea of research and education (Humboldt, 1810/1959; Riedel, 1977; Benner, 1990).[2]

First, according to Humboldt, scientific research is an ongoing process oriented towards the truth ('the unity of science'), and he identifies philosophy as the true science that is the incarnation of this fundamental orientation. As a result of this general reflection and orientation, the process of research is regarded as a process of general edification. Second, participation in research is, for students, a necessary condition for a general edification in relation to the truth. Thus, according to Humboldt, this orientation towards truth (towards the totality, the fundamental principles, . . .) that is guiding research transcends any actual society and has, therefore, an edifying and, more generally, an enlightening potential. I shall return to German idealism later on to frame this in more detail. For present purposes I want to argue that the reference to Humboldt is striking indeed, but for a quite different reason.

In the European documents the edifying dimension of research is situated at the level of the competencies of research. These competencies are regarded as being central for sustainable employability in a knowledge economy. But do these competencies still allow for general education— that is, do they incorporate an orientation towards something that transcends actual society? These competencies are oriented, one might say, towards the production of new knowledge through research. Being competent in producing new knowledge is necessary to being economically and socially successful. It is difficult, though, to imagine that the competencies are related to what Humboldt had in mind with his idea of 'education through research'. According to Humboldt, 'education through research' has an edifying potential because research is guided by an idea that transcends society. Put another way, although reference is made to Humboldt and the modern conception of the university, the main reason for arguing for a close relation between research and education in higher education in the European documents is the need for employability in the knowledge society. The university thus no longer is regarded as an institution that offers an orientation for society; rather the opposite seems to be the case: it is society and its needs that should orient the university,

and it is this that underwrites the usefulness of research for higher education.

These preliminary considerations indicate the importance of being careful about how we understand the idea of 'education through research'. Although the same formula is used, the point of departure seems to be quite different. In the European perspective, the point of departure is not the edifying potential of academic enquiry (and research) but the educational needs of the knowledge society. But further exploration is needed in order to have a clearer understanding of this particular perspective on 'education through research', and of how it relates to the Humboldtian perspective.

EDUCATION THROUGH RESEARCH: 'THE PEDAGOGY ISSUE'

The expert report 'Higher Education and Research for the European Research Area' not only focuses on the importance of 'education through research' for the knowledge society but also reflects upon the so-called 'pedagogy issue': 'how to teach/learn employability-related competencies?' (Commission of the European Communities, 2002, p. 43). What is being stressed is that a specific innovation is required for higher education to be properly oriented towards employability. Thus, it is necessary:

> . . . to design curricula on the basis of a definition of what competencies professionals in the field are expected to master rather than what set of knowledge is the most important for the discipline . . . Designing and structuring curricula in terms of competencies rather than content represents quite a break from a longstanding tradition (p. 38).

This reference to a longstanding tradition is a further gesture towards the Humboldtian perspective, but this once again illustrates change in perspective upon the idea of 'education through research'. The points of departure are: (1) employability for professionals in the knowledge society, (2) the implementation of 'competency-based education', and (3) the identification of competencies for an up-to-date curriculum of higher education. Within this perspective it is argued that, although there is a break with the Humboldtian tradition at the level of the organisation of higher education, Humboldtian ideas are being retained: the competencies needed within the knowledge society are similar to those needed to do research. But this similarity is regarded as a kind of 'lucky coincidence': although the point of departure is different from the Humboldtian one, there is a striking continuity with the tradition, so it is claimed.

It is important, however, to focus first and foremost on this particular and different point of departure and not to be blinded by the alleged continuity that is noted in these reflections. What should be stressed is that the idea of 'education through research' articulated here belongs first of all to a perspective on the pedagogical reform of higher education: this is the necessity 'to implement learning environments (teaching methods in particular) that make the mind-sets that are typical of the research activity

salient in the learning process' (p. 40). What is at stake is thus a 'pedagogy issue': how to organise higher education in order to have a learning environment in which students acquire research competencies? In order to understand the particularity of this question and of the perspective on 'education through research' that it inaugurates, it is instructive to consider the answer that is offered.

> Although much remains to be done in this area, extensive educational research has been done to characterise factors, such as best teaching practices and learning environments, that are to facilitate learning of employability-related higher-order competencies. Key dimensions have been suggested to identify those practices. One is the degree of authenticity of the proposed learning environment, that is, its relevance to 'real world' settings (in particular work settings). The other is the degree of 'cognitive apprenticeship', that is, a teacher-learner relationship characterised by a certain form of guidance and tutoring of the learner by the teacher or the tutor in problem-solving learning tasks (p. 43).

What should orient higher education in the knowledge society are not only employability competencies but also the expertise of educational research. In their role as teachers, researchers should have the expertise to translate what is going on in research into research competencies, to organise authentic learning environments for the transmission of these competencies, and to act as facilitators in these learning environments. What is needed in higher education, therefore, are professional teachers who are able to use research as a 'teaching method' (cf. Huber, 2003).[3] A similar argument is made by Ronald Barnett when he claims that research could be 'a strong condition that is aimed at bringing about supercomplexity in the minds of students': 'the issue is whether lecturers adopt teaching approaches that are likely to foster student experiences that mirror the lecturer's experiences as researcher' (Barnett, 1992, p. 623; 2000, p. 163).[4] According to Barnett, however, we should keep in mind the fact that 'knowledge in the context of discovery and knowledge in the context of transmission are entirely different enterprises', and that the position of researcher and the position of teacher/tutor each require their own expertise.[5]

This clarifies once more the way that the idea of 'education through research' is being understood from a particular perspective. It could be labelled as an approach in which 'education through research' is a 'pedagogy issue' and of major importance in the knowledge society. In speaking of an *educational* approach I do not mean to refer just to a specific perspective regarding the reality of education and research in higher education but to a general approach in which the relation between research and education is lit up against an educational horizon: an 'operationalisation' of research determined by educational considerations concerning higher education. Or, to put it otherwise: European higher education should make research operational for educational goals so that students can play a role in the knowledge society; and teachers should keep up-to-date with recent insights from learning theory.

By reframing the European conception of 'education through research' within this educational approach and against this horizon, the reference to Humboldt becomes even less evident. For Humboldt, the institution of the university should not be regarded as an educational institution where the teacher offers a fixed body of knowledge to a student or pupil in order to prepare students for civil society, nor as an institution where the teacher is the tutor of a learning process oriented towards competencies. In the context of the university, research is not there for the sake of the student; both are there for the sake of scholarship ('*beide sind für die Wissenschaft da*') (Humboldt, 1810/1959). An educational operationalisation of research is, from this Humboldtian perspective, quite the opposite of what the university and education at the university should be about. What should orient the university, and thus both the researcher and student, as well as society, is the pursuit of truth.

The point of departure for 'education through research' within the European perspective seems to be not only the educational needs of the knowledge society but also the educational priority of implementing research as a teaching method. It might be argued at this point that criticising the European option as too narrow implies also a critique of the educational operationalisation of research for higher education. But if the concept of edification or *Bildung* is re-introduced in an attempt to compensate for this narrowing, another question needs to be asked: that is, do academic enquiry and research still allow for this broader edification or *Bildung*? In order to formulate this question more precisely it is necessary to focus in more detail on the concept of *Bildung*.

BILDUNG AND *WISSENSCHAFTLICHKEIT*

The idea of *Bildung* was introduced in the 18th century (in Germany), and it remained a leading concept in educational thought and practice until the middle of the 20th Century. It is not my intention to retrace the history of the ideal of *Bildung*.[6] Rather, what I am concerned to emphasise is the way that *Bildung* was originally embedded in a programme of Enlightenment, or of the edification of the individual, of society and of mankind through science. But it is necessary to be more precise here with regard to the meaning of the notion 'science'.

Science or *Wissenschaft* is, to use a Humboldtian formulation, based upon research as an ongoing process to capture reality as a totality in concepts (Humboldt in Kopetz, 2002, p. 43). Now it is important to acknowledge that 'science' is a problematic and potentially misleading translation of *Wissenschaft*. Unlike its German counterpart, the English term is associated primarily with the physical sciences, and by extension with the social sciences; it is contrasted with 'the humanities' and with 'arts' subjects. In order to address this problem in this paper as a whole terms such as 'academic enquiry' have generally been preferred, but let me for the moment stay with this usage. This orientation towards the 'unity of science' throughout research and the articulation of the totality in

knowledge are ultimately taken to be the task of philosophy as 'real science'. However, further clarification is needed here: what is at issue is not so much *Wissenschaft* but rather *Wissenschaftlichkeit*. The latter term is difficult to translate, but it is related to the English notion 'scholarship'—suggesting a deep understanding through general reflection, with both epistemological and ethical connotations (cf. Pritchard, 1998, p. 104; cf. Gellert *et al.*, 1990). What does *Wissenschaftlichkeit* mean? It is the attitude or duty to determine knowledge by nothing other than the pursuit of truth. It is a form of life or ethos oriented towards truth, understood in terms of a grasping of reality in its totality or in the unity of the world. This attitude is thus the condition for reality (*Wirklichkeit*) as a totality that must break through in knowledge.

The assumption being made is that *Wissenschaftlichkeit*—or systematic enquiry driven by 'the spirit of truth'—is at the same time a process of edification of the individual and of society as a whole. Or, to use the formulation of Ernst Anrich: striving for objectivity through science is at the same time a subjective formation of one's character (Anrich, 1960, p. 5). This could be regarded as the background to the original construction of Humboldt's idea of 'education through research': the process of research oriented towards the truth is at the same time a process of general edification.[7] This formulation of ideas is, however, only fully comprehensible within the context of German idealism. Society in this context is regarded as the incarnation of a historical subject; this is a subject that realises itself in its totality through history (cf. the absolute spirit of Hegel). This realisation is a process of the progressive realisation of (self-)consciousness, involving enlightenment at both the individual and the collective levels. And the university—or science through research and education through science—is regarded as the exemplary incarnation (or institutionalisation) of this process.

This short presentation of the Humboldtian concept of *Bildung* clarifies the point that the essential element in 'education through research' is *Wissenschaftlichkeit*; it is an *attitude* and even a *duty* towards truth. Both the researcher and the student are under the obligation of *Wissenschaftlichkeit*; and what the university offers the researcher and student is not just knowledge but first and foremost an ethos. This helps to explain the way that research is understood here. The horizon to reflection upon the role of research and education (as general edification) is the idea of academic enquiry itself, with its aspiration to capture, through knowledge, reality in its totality, that is, the unity of the world. The main background is one of idealism, more specifically of an orientation towards truth that puts both teacher and student in the position of researcher.

Moreover, it should be stressed that in the Humboldtian perspective the idea of the university is closely related to the organisation and development of the (German) nation-state. The developing liberal state is conceived as a guarantee or at least a condition for the autonomy of the university: that is, scholarship is the principle of its free and autonomous research and education (its internal organisation), while the state must ensure that the university is able to institutionalise this autonomy (its

external organisation).[8] The German tradition concerning the public financing of the university and the (non-partisan) appointment of professors illustrates this external organisation (cf. Ash, 1999; Nybom, 2003). However, the question raised here was: why should the state authorise this kind of institution? Why should it allow a 'republic of scholars' to exist? This is a question concerning the meaning of an institution that explicitly claimed *not* to be a kind of institution for higher vocational education and not to have immediate returns for civil society. Moreover, in their disinterested striving after truth, professors in the German tradition overtly distance themselves from direct political and state-related issues. Yet the modern university was argued to have meaning since academic enquiry, and education through enquiry, is regarded as a necessary condition for the individual, for the state and society, and for mankind as a whole to become 'enlightened'.

This short elaboration should make clear that the idea of the university and of *Bildung* through academic enquiry is not to be disconnected from this specific historical, political and philosophical context. It is because of this that it is appropriate to consider whether it (still) makes sense to refer to this idealistic conception of academic enquiry, with its ideas of unity, Enlightenment and truth, when criticising the European project of employability based upon education through research (as a teaching method). Whether it is possible in the present context for academic enquiry and research still to hold their power of edifying humankind is a question that was explicitly addressed by a number of authors throughout the second part of the twentieth century. A short elaboration of the influential answer to this question offered by Jürgen Habermas will allow a formulation of these issues more clearly.

THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS UNFINISHED PROJECT

In the face of the massification of higher education, the development of the vocational dimension of higher education and of specialisation in research has been questioned, and this has led to a call for re-orientation and re-organisation. Karl Jaspers and Helmut Schelsky, for example, argue that the edifying role of research should not (and could not) be situated at the level of the content of knowledge. According to the perspectives of each of these authors, the fragments of knowledge generated in specialised research no longer have the power to provide a general edification. It is argued, however, that the classic idea of such an orientation could and should be guaranteed by any general theory of academic enquiry (Jaspers, 1961; Schelsky, 1963). A supplementary element of philosophical reflection, aiming at unity in formal terms and at integration of thought, should, it is suggested, be elaborated in order for research at the university to keep its edifying potential; this, it is supposed, might compensate for the differentiation of research. More recently, these issues have been discussed by Habermas. But instead of arguing for a compensatory element of this kind—a perspective he himself developed

during the 1960s—Habermas claims that the edifying potential of research is connected to the procedures of communicative rationality. I shall look now in more detail at his ideas in this respect.

The point of departure for Habermas is the differentiated society as described by Max Weber (Habermas, 1981a). In a differentiated society, various domains of action are constructed and develop according to their own governing mechanisms. Academic enquiry, itself differentiated into specific disciplines, is one such domain. Furthermore, the instrumental relation that academic enquiry has to its environment, and to the differentiated society in which it finds itself, has increased. According to Habermas, this functional differentiation has certain benefits. In each domain one is able to look for the best methods to solve problems and to do this without being hindered by 'outside' considerations. In a modern society, a distinction is to be made between the *objective* world of facts and events, the *subjective* world of feelings and desires, and the *normative* world of accepted norms. Answers to questions raised through academic enquiry about facts and events in the objective world are no longer influenced by moral or juridical problems related to the normative world.

According to Habermas, however, this functional differentiation causes a fragmentation of the 'life-world'—the societal bond in which claims to truth, to truthfulness and to rightfulness still remain unified. In contrast to the relations of collaboration that Habermas describes as system, action in the life-world is coordinated predominantly by communication or *Verständigung*. In the course of communication agents are involved in a process of deliberation that aims at mutual understanding. The legitimacy of any linguistic action within the life-world depends upon validity claims that are related to every utterance: (1) that utterances are true or comprehensible, (2) that the participants in a conversation regard each other as truthful (that is, that they can believe in each other's utterances), and (3) that their utterances are right (that is, that they can be placed against a normative background) (Habermas, 1981a, p. 443). These claims, applied to all communicative action, allow agents to relate to the objective, subjective and normative worlds. It is here that the life-world plays a role as the source for cultural knowledge, solidarity and individual competence, and it is this that enables the participants in the communication process to reach mutual understanding and to come to a realisation of aims.

The problems facing modern societies are, according to Habermas, subjection of the life-world and its coordination through communicative action to the imperatives of the system. The 'system' refers to sectors in which the coordination bypasses the burdens of communicative action, relying on abstract and unequivocal communication media, such as power and money. Thus, in these sectors, money and power are the media that coordinate actions and intentions in an efficient way. According to Habermas, this coordination operates in a way that is disconnected from argument because throughout institutions the coordination is incorporated in the convictions and wishes of the members of society. Relations of power, for example, are stable so long as the power is perceived as legitimate, and this is achieved where there are institutions whose purpose

is to provide for a legitimisation of power (in the form, say, of a democratically elected parliament). Hence, when communicative interactions are distorted, the life-world loses its capacity to be a legitimate medium of coordination.

From Habermas' point of view, the problems of present society are caused by the 'colonisation' of the life-world (Habermas, 1981b, p. 293). This colonisation means that partial rationalities, such as instrumental rationality (perhaps in the form of a preoccupation with the economy), penetrate the whole field of interactions. As a consequence also, communicative interactions are determined by the governing media of the system. This is a problem in view of the fact that Habermas—still in the tradition of the Enlightenment—regards history as a process of increasing rationality or, more precisely, as a process of increasing communicative rationality. In other words, he looks at history as the (learning) process of a growing, rational self-determination, both at individual and collective levels. It is a process of learning since it is a possibility that is offered through language itself, and it is one that aims at a finality given as a counterfactual presupposition in language (the possibility of mutual understanding and consensus). Furthermore, in a discourse or a reflected form of communicative action, these presuppositions or claims of validity function as guiding principles. Discourses are focused on argument, and 'In argumentation, the participants have to make the pragmatic presupposition that in principle all those affected participate as free and equal members in a cooperative search for truth in which only the force of the better argument may hold sway' (Habermas, 1990a, p. 235). A discourse thus involves a communicative procedure or communicative means (an ethics of discourse) and reaches beyond particular life-worlds. At the same time (and due to the communicative presuppositions), however, the procedure of the discourse remains related to the mutual understanding of the participants in a common life-world. In short, in a post-conventional context that imposes specific conditions (of justification, of critique) and that makes specific claims upon the participants (a hypothetical attitude towards claims of validity), such a communicative procedure guarantees an orientation towards universal validity.

This general background should help us to understand Habermas' reformulation of the idea of the university at the end of the 1980s (Habermas, 1990). It is the university that can play a role in strengthening communicative rationality owing to the communicative character of academic discourse and argument, and the learning process involved therein. It is through communicative practices that enquiry and research are oriented towards truth (as consensus) and embedded in the life-world. Furthermore, university education is edifying when students are introduced into a scholarly community of communication (a community based upon research). The potential of edification, therefore, is related to the communicative procedures of academic argument. What determines the meaning of scientific education here is the procedure of legitimisation. This involves intersubjective discussion, in which the discussion partners, speaking on equal terms, make claims of validity that seek consensus. Students learn that the validity of judgements and actions is related to

intersubjective rules, and they develop in consequence a communicative competence conditioned by a post-conventional attitude.

Since communicative rationality is regarded as the essential force of individual and societal development in our society, what the student learns has a value beyond the limited scope of the academic community. Moreover, this communicative competence could even be regarded as a basis for containing or limiting the consequences of excessive 'scientification' (cf. Habermas, 1985). Habermas does not, however, think of the university as the institutionalisation of an ideal form of life (as did Humboldt). This would be incompatible with his idea of our society as a *leitbildlose* society—a society without leading or regulating ideas (Habermas, 1990b). He does, however, claim that the university is governed in an exemplary way by procedures through which society also has to come to an understanding of itself. Thus, a quasi-transcendental perspective allows Habermas to argue for the importance of 'education through research' at the university.

In conclusion, we should stress that, just like the idealistic perspective (of Humboldt and, to a certain extent also, Jaspers and Schelsky), the quasi-transcendental perspective is also related to a specific conception of the individual, of society and of history. Habermas still believes in the possibility of an integrated self-understanding and general edification, that modernity is an unfinished project and, more generally, that history has a meaning. The question is whether we can still endorse this vision or belief. There are not many philosophers today who are willing to endorse such a view—quite the contrary. If postmodernity has a meaning at all, then it is that the possibility of an overarching perspective has been abandoned (cf. Lyotard, 1979). The premises of the idealistic or quasi-transcendental perspective on research and academic enquiry are being questioned, as, more specifically, is the orienting, edifying force and meaning of research for higher education in the university today. At the same time, however, the European project of the knowledge society and 'education through research' is being criticised for being too narrowly focused on employability. Thus, it seems as if we still embrace the idea that (the knowledge) society is in need of an orientation and that the university (and its research and education) has a role to play with regard to this orientation, even though we do not know what this orientation of research, and the edification to which it might relate, could look like today. Is there another orientation for the university other than that of the needs of the knowledge society? If we agree that 'both regarding its content and as an institutional form, the university has become fictional', as Weber had already claimed long ago, what could an academic education look like for new generations (Weber, 1917/1984)? In the final section I shall address these questions by exploring two more recent viewpoints.

AN ORIENTATION FOR NEW GENERATIONS?

In elaborating the (Humboldtian) concept of *Bildung*, I have stressed that *Wissenschaftlichkeit* covers an attitude *and* a duty. Both the researcher and

the student are under the obligation of *Wissenschaftlichkeit*. In a certain sense, this is analogous to Habermas' reformulation, where the meaning of research for education is situated at the level of the communicative procedures of the discourse of academic enquiry, and where it involves a procedure of legitimisation that includes substantive claims. Also, with regard to this, there is a kind of duty involved. In both cases, this concerns something that is normative for the researcher and for research, and that is at the same time inherent in academic enquiry itself. Academic activity is guided or oriented in a normative way from the inside or by the type of activity itself. This internal, normative orientation is regarded as the edifying potential of science for the individual and for society. More specifically, owing to this internal orientation, scientific research *is* a process of edification. The question whether this duty or orientation could be objectified as a competency will not be addressed now. What should be stressed, however, is that the so-called employability-competencies (needed within the knowledge society) are regarded as similar to the so-called research competencies, and that this similarity (a kind of happy coincidence) has been the reason to claim (in the European documents) a loyalty to the tradition of Humboldt. The 'essential' dimension of academic research, however—the kind of duty or normative orientation that traditionally gives the university and its members a specific position within, and obligation especially *to*, society—is not referred to. If we want to reflect upon 'scientific education for a new generation' and the edifying potential of research, we should then ask whether there is still a duty in academic research today. Is there still an academic duty or a normative orientation in research that allows for a reflection upon 'education through research' that is different from the reflection inaugurated by the needs of the knowledge society and the need of an effective operationalisation of research as a 'teaching method'? In recent literature efforts have been made to point towards such a duty by reconsidering the specific character of academic enquiry. Here I shall confine the discussion to a short presentation of the ideas of Jürgen Mittelstrass and Jacques Derrida.

Mittelstrass stresses the necessity of an edifying rationality within academic research but argues at the same time that this implies that we rethink what scholarly enquiry and research are and what they should be about. In his view, enquiry should offer not only a kind of *Verfügungswissen* (positive knowledge about causes or a kind of problem-solving know-how) but also an *Oriëntierungswissen* (an orientation for thought) (Mittelstrass, 1989, p. 9; cf. Mittelstrass, 2003a, p. 12ff). The latter can guide our actions, is focused on goals and tries to answer the question 'what should we do?' The former knowledge is a kind of 'positive knowledge', while the latter is a 'regulative knowledge'. According to Mittelstrass, this orienting, regulating knowledge is what is missing in our technical, scientific world. In other words, he holds to the idea of the unity of rationality. Without this rationality, human self-realisation is without orientation, does not have any destination and does not relate to any general edification (*Bildung*): 'It is only as a form of

"edified" self-realisation that the rational nature of human beings is realised' (Mittelstrass, 2001, p. 11, my own translation).

This unity of rationality should be understood in a specific way (cf. Deinhammer, 2003). First, it needs to be situated at the methodological level. Hence it is a unity of the criteria of rationality or a unity in method. Although there are differences between scientific disciplines and methods, the criteria of validity are similar, and all are oriented towards the idea of universality. Mittelstrass also points towards another level, however, to address the issue of unity. In his view academic research is essentially a kind of action guided by theory and method, but it cannot be reduced to these elements. Of course, those engaged in academic enquiry often refer to theory and method in describing the results and pathways of research, but what is overlooked here (even by researchers themselves) is the practical dimension of such enquiry as an activity. He stresses, therefore, that we should look at academic enquiry and research not only as a matter of knowledge generation (with presupposed methods or procedures), or only as an institution within society, but as a form also of the moral life. This moral quality of enquiry escapes our attention, however, since there is a tendency to consider research on the model of the practices of industry and to see it as a product that should be organised accordingly. Although criteria such as disinterestedness, truthfulness and preparedness for self-critique may be methodologically important, they must not be reduced to elements of a method (and, hence, of an instrumental rationality). They relate to the moral quality of academic enquiry; and it needs to be understood that, at this moral level, such enquiry must be oriented towards an idea (Mittelstrass, 2001, pp. 7–8). This focus on 'academic enquiry as a form of life' might be summarised as follows:

> Science is the expression of universal claims to validity, and this both in the sense of being a special form of knowledge formation, that is to say of the scientific formation of knowledge, as well as in the sense of being a scientific ethos, which is also the moral form of science ... The orientation towards the truth typical of the one of these follows the orientation towards truthfulness of the second. That is to say, quite simply, that *truth* determines the scientific form of knowledge, whereas *truthfulness* determines the moral form of science, which as a result belongs to the form of life of the scientist, to his ethos. Our task for the future is thus to make these connections explicit in the practice of science, and to ensure that we act in accordance with that explicit knowledge (Mittelstrass, 2003b, p. 187).

What is at stake for Mittelstrass is a kind of 'enlightenment' of the practice of science (through an ethics of science) and thus the safeguarding of the universal orientation of science.[9] Mittelstrass is, however, also concerned with another way in which to repair the unity of rationality. Achieving a general orientation requires the transcendence of science and education. This is possible, according to Mittelstrass, because the organisation of enquiry into disciplines is the result of a historical development and itself has no theoretical foundation. Moreover, such a

transcendence is a necessity because this disciplinary ethos (based as this is in specialisation) does not allow an orientation towards the universal. Mittelstrass is clear about this: 'Experts, as we define them today, do not have any "general education" (*Bilding*)' (Mittelstrass, in Kopetz, 2002, p. 99, my own translation). It is against this background that he proposes trans-disciplinary and not interdisciplinary research, since it is within this that the disciplines remain the point of departure. The main characteristic of trans-disciplinary research is that it takes as a starting point questions and problem domains as they appear in society (and not as they appear within the limited scope of separate disciplines). Trans-disciplinary research is a problem-oriented form of research striving at the unity of rationality. The transgression of disciplines and courses, moreover, results in a transformation of this disciplinary organisation. It implies a particular personal disposition (or particular intellectual virtues) such as a willingness to think unconventionally. More specifically, as Deinhammer argues, Mittelstrass seems to formulate a kind of scientific-ethical principle: that is, it is only trans-disciplinary research praxis that can address academically the problems we are facing today (Deinhammer, 2003, p. 71).

This short elaboration allows us finally to focus on how Mittelstrass reflects upon the university and, more specially, on the idea of 'education through research'. According to him, the university as it exists today is without orientation. Therefore, he proposes a way towards realising a kind of modern university that would be 'untimely'—that is, that would refer back to the 'classical' university. This university would be based not only upon different scientific disciplines but first and foremost upon trans-disciplinary research, since it is this kind of research that implies an ethos of enquiry orientated towards the universal. Moreover, 'research through education' could and should be reorganised at this trans-disciplinary level. Initiating students into this form of research would be the condition for realising general edification. The student thus should not just learn issues related to theory and method (in the disciplines) but acquire that 'competency of orientation' (towards the universal) that has traditionally been understood in terms of *Bildung* (Mittelstrass, 2001, p. 3). What is at stake is research embedded in enquiry as a form of life oriented towards truthfulness and universal claims of validity.

From a quite different angle, in *Université sans Condition*, Derrida also offers a perspective to re-orient the university (Derrida, 2001).[10] While Mittelstrass still believes in the reconstruction of the unity of enquiry at the level of rationality and the related orientation of the academic form of life, Derrida focuses on the tension within the university between the (traditional) commitment to truth and openness towards the future, or, that is, to the 'event'. The commitment to truth at the university is an unconditional freedom or a freedom to question unconditionally all conditions. Here, the academic is oriented towards the truth and involved in constative statements (in the Austinian sense). A characteristic of academic language (within the humanities) is that it also brings about a reality. The professor professes, she creates a work or an *oeuvre*. But this

performative dimension of such language does not imply that academics create something *ex nihilo*. It is rather the case that academic language can and should be regarded as a kind of committed speech. This commitment, however, could not be reduced to something like a gratuitous or merely personal choice for the academic. Such language is instead a kind of response. It refers to a demand from outside and so is a kind of duty. It is important to stress that this 'demand' is, according to Derrrida, ethical.

At this point, we notice a similarity between Mittelstrass and Derrida but also an important difference. Both stress that questions of truth and method do not cover what is at stake in academic research or in speech of this kind. In his ethics of academic enquiry, Mittelstrass thinks of such enquiry and its orientation towards truth as a form of life. This orientation involves claims of universality, however, in an analogous way to its orientation towards truth. Moreover, the background is the idealistic idea of the unity of rationality. In Derrida's 'ethics of academic enquiry', by contrast, the perspective is quite different. His point of departure seems to be the issue not of truth and truthfulness but of justice. In other words: the performative dimension of academic work (and its constative speech) relates it to the question of justice. The question of justice, according to Derrida, is about the 'experience of absolute alterity', which is not an object of representation (Derrida, 1994, p. 77). This idea of justice (and the question of doing justice) implies that truth-telling at the university, by the academic, does not find the ground for truth in itself but in its relation to the Other. And it is for this reason that the university and academic enquiry must be without conditions: they must be orientated by justice as an *alterity* that cannot be represented. Referring to Emmanuel Levinas, then, Derrida claims that truth presupposes justice (p. 76).[11]

According to Derrida, this has important consequences for the organisation of scientific research and education. Academic enquiry and education organised on a disciplinary basis prevent challenges and demands from outside the university. In a certain sense, the disciplines become prisoners of their own discourses. Derrida proposes, therefore, to orient the university towards *alterity*, engendering a practice of enquiry that is 'grounded' in a duty that precedes every kind of responsibility and engagement that one has chosen oneself.[12] Or, to put it otherwise: we could speak of a university (and this should not be within the walls of our existing universities) where there is a testimony to (and a kind of 'profession' of) the demands of responsibility and justice. Following this line of thought, we might claim that university education, as well as academic research itself, should be neither disciplinary nor interdisciplinary. Instead, it might be said that what is offered in research and education should be determined by the challenges that are being articulated in the lines of fracture of society itself. Paul Standish formulates it this way: 'The irruption of the event disturbs the sovereign authorities of the disciplines of enquiry, it breaks through their horizons, and, rightly received, it puts into "deconstructive ferment" the settled oppositions that have structured so many aspects of the modern world' (Standish, 2002, p. 16). The 'event' places both researcher and

student in a position of responsibility. What is at stake is a kind of 'trans-disciplinary' research and education, orientated towards the need to do justice.

Although there are major differences between the ideas of Mittelstrass and Derrida, both try to articulate the edifying dimension of research by focusing on a normative aspect of academic enquiry itself. Furthermore, they point towards specific (organisational) conditions for the bringing about of the kind of research in the university that might be orientated towards truth and justice. Owing to this orientation, the university would have a meaning for (the knowledge) society beyond its fulfilling of the need for professional people with research competence. Furthermore, from the point of view of Mittelstrass and Derrida, research cannot become a 'teaching method' in competency-oriented higher education because the quasi-technical translation in education of research into competencies tends to forget that the edifying potential of research is always something that cannot (yet) be mastered in terms of the 'technical ideal of competence' (Derrida, 2004, p. 151). The orientation that is needed requires something other than this.

FINAL REMARKS

With regard to the European project, the question is not one of how to compensate for, or correct from the outside, a 'colonised' form of academic research and education. My initial aim of exploring the question whether it was (still) possible to re-introduce *Bildung* into the narrow, European project of the knowledge society led to a focus on the orientation of the research. This allowed me to address and explore questions concerning the normative orientation of academic research and enquiry today. These questions and more specifically the relation between the normative orientation of research and the edifying mission of higher education undoubtedly need further research. But maybe another issue should also be addressed: the normative orientation of *our* research. With Humboldt, the university became a place of research—that is, he introduced academic research, which was flourishing outside the university, into the university and directed its educational mission towards general edification. Nowadays, much research takes place outside the university; that universities might play a role in the European research area was not initially even noticed. My point of departure was, however, that the meaning of the university resided in academic research, and that it thus sustained this Humboldtian perspective—the idea of 'research through education' and the idea of the general orientation of *Bildung*. But if this point of departure could also be questioned, then *my own* reference to Humboldt becomes striking.[13,14]

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NOTES

1. For a (critical) analysis of these developments see Readings, 1996, and Masschelein and Simons, 2003.
2. Whether Humboldt does claim this and whether these ideas have been realised will not be discussed here. For this discussion concerning the collection *Mythos Humboldt* (Ash, 1999) and Mittelstrass, 1994.
3. Similar ideas are formulated in the burgeoning literature concerning the 'research-teaching nexus' or 'research-led teaching' (cf. Brew and Boud, 1995; Brown and McCarney, 1998; Elton, 2001; Jenkins and Zetter, 2003).
4. And as others have stressed: it is a knowledge society and economy that 'requires that students graduate with an ability to analyse and contribute to research'; and similarly, 'the purpose of teaching is so that individuals are able to live in a complex uncertain world where knowing how to inquire is a key to survival' (Brew, 2002, p. 10).
5. This is in line with the 'classic' idea of John Henry Newman of 'liberal education': 'To discover and to teach are distinct functions; they are also distinct gifts, and are not commonly found united in the same person' (Newman in Pelikan, 1992, p. 89).
6. For a more detailed discussion of *Bildung*, see Benner, 1990, and Masschelein and Ricken, 2003, pp. 140–143, as well as the special issue of this journal entitled *Educating Humanity:* Bildung *in Postmodernity* (Løvlie, Mortensen and Nordenbo, 2002).
7. It should be mentioned here that 'education through research' is not itself an expression of Humboldt's but a combination of two other principles: 'science as research' and 'education through science' (Lundgreen, 1999, p. 147).
8. As the title of Humboldt's proposal makes clear: 'Über die innere und äussere Organisation der Höheren wissenschaftlichen Anstalten' ('On the establishment of the internal and external organisation of higher education') (Humboldt, 1810/1959).
9. At this point Mittelstrass comes close to Habermas. Both stress how academic enquiry and argument are embedded in the lifeworld and that the ethics of such enquiry should be regarded as part of a general, universal ethics. According to Robert Deinhammer, however, although there is the possibility to integrate it in an ethics of discourse (cf. Habermas), Mittelstrass' ethics of science remains underdetermined (Deinhammer, 2003, p. 85).
10. I shall not consider his earlier publications on the university (see Derrida, 2004).
11. For an inspiring elaboration of Derrida and the ideas of Levinas with regard to education, see Standish, 2002.
12. In *The University in Ruins* Bill Readings ends up with a similar idea of such an ethos of duty (Readings, 1996).
13. For a critical analysis of the idea of 'orientation' and an elaboration of the idea of a university 'without orientation' see Simons and Masschelein, in press.
14. This paper is a result of an OOI-project, at K.U.Leuven, Belgium. I am very grateful to the other members of the research group, Toon Braeckman, Jan Elen, Barbara Haverhals and Mariette Hellemans, for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I am also thankful to Paul Standish for his generous help in improving the language of the paper.

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