

COMMUNITIES OF DIFFERENCE

Knowledge Transfer & the Cosmopolitical

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In the brief time available, I aim to provide a sketch of a complex series of relations that currently define, in general terms, the positioning of universities in relation to government and industry mandates, within the broader context of globalization. Hence, my aim is to make some brief comments on universities within global knowledge economies, the difficulties in giving precise definition to globalization itself and, crucially, how the university sector responds with respect to strategic directions in research capability building. Hence, as the abstract suggests, this paper aims to sketch out two problem fields that are essential to the question of the university: initially the question of the role and pertinence of fundamental research within an environment dominated by funding regimes that respond to applied techno-scientific applications for value-adding industrial production. The second and, to my mind, more pressing question concerns the internationalization of research interests, and within contexts of global knowledge economies, defining a politico-ethical foundation for research agency. With respect to this latter, I will reference some contemporary critical writing that activates the political philosophy of Kant, concerning cosmopolitanism.

Writing twelve years ago, in a book published by the Open University Press in the UK, *The Globalization of Higher Education*, Peter Scott suggests that globalization was the fundamental challenge facing contemporary universities. In their 2003, *Globalizing Practices and University Responses*, Currie et al comment: "He [Scott] believes the threat of globalization is more serious than the challenges faced by universities during the rise of humanism and the scientific revolution; more serious than industrialization, urbanization, and secularization." (p. 4) What has been this challenge, and how have universities fared over the past ten years? We need to recognize, initially, the transformation of nation states into competitive players within a global marketplace, along with the predominance of neo-liberal economic policies, deregulation and, crucially, the encouragement of public institutions to behave in market-rational ways. Thirty to forty years ago there was a massive government-led and funded expansion of the tertiary education sector. It was grounded on social policy concerning access to education as much as it was recognition of economic multipliers with the educating of future labour. Over the past ten years there has been a decided shift from social policy to economic policy with respect to investment in higher education. Currie et al note: "Governments have attempted to coerce universities to become more enterprising and competitive. This has affected the institutions' funding and management concerning the types of research undertaken, student profiles, teaching loads, and collegial relations." (p. 11.)

How do we understand globalization itself in these contexts? Initially it is useful to make a distinction between internationalization and globalization, in the sense that nation states, perhaps from the founding of city states some millennia ago, have had mechanisms for negotiating relations across borders, for exchanges that constitute inter-territorial movements over distance. Initially and most generally, we can see

that globalization presents a different condition, given that the entities that are global are not inter-territorial but supra territorial. They are always already trans-border exchanges without distance. The governmentality of nation states implicates the differentiation of and relations between international economics and global economics. Having said that, it is important to stress that there is enormous diversity of understanding within the field of globalization studies. Holton, in *Making Globalization*, suggests there have been three waves of theorization, the first commencing in the early 1990s is characterized by cross border economic relations with free-trade agreements and increased mobility of labour and capital. This brought into question the role of the nation-state and national economic policy, if not its sovereignty. A second wave brought some sober pronouncements on the more radical prognoses concerning the demise of the nation state. Theories of hyper-globalization mistakenly concluded that cross-border activity is intrinsically trans-national. The third wave emphasizes an understanding of globalization as “a fluid set of processes amenable to the impact of human agency and the design and reshaping of social institutions. The contemporary forms of globalization are not immutable, suggesting that globalization is neither necessarily unjust nor undemocratic. This position links normative issues such as the desirability of a cosmopolitan democratic world order with empirical issues, such as the emergence of what might be called proto-cosmopolitan trends in areas such as the international law of human rights, and the ideals of many global social movements.” (Holton, pp. 11-12.)

With this we may consider three frameworks by which we can understand globalization, initially in recognizing an intensification of flows across political and cultural boundaries, flows of commodities, technologies, information, people, cultural practices and so on. However, what supports the increased intensity of these flows, at another level, are the inter-dependencies of social processes across the globe, engaging regulators, for example the IMF or World Bank, social movements, activists, formal organizations and loose networks. A third tendency or framework is cosmopolitanism, a cosmo-political understanding of the world as a single place, whether that be through an engagement in deep ecology, humanism or a questioning of the foundations to justice as such. I have broadly indicated some impact on the university sector from governments finding their governance needing to respond to new global economic imperatives in terms of a decided shift from thinking education in terms of social policy to using it as an economic driver, and in the process demanding that universities become themselves entrepreneurial. I would like to look more closely at some of the ways universities have had to respond.

In 2002 the Glion Colloquium focused on the impact of global economic imperatives on the university sectors in the United States and Western Europe. The publication of proceedings from this colloquium was aptly titled *As the Walls of Academia are Tumbling Down*, edited by Werner Hirsch and Luc Weber. Perhaps it provides some concrete evidence of the extent to which universities over the past twenty years have significantly shifted what was once thought to be their mission: the future of thinking within the autonomy of their faculties. In his discussion of

the new porosity of the university, Hirsch outlines four porous conditions, or four kinds of walls that have been breached: within the university, between universities, between universities and industries and, fourthly, barriers impeding outreach programmes. He discusses this within the context of what he terms, if a little uncritically, “a global village of knowledge.” There is a driver to interdisciplinarity within universities that now makes those long-standing divisions of disciplines and faculties impediments to innovations in industry-relevant learning or research. There are in fact two drivers here. One is the increasing accountability universities have for the labour markets they aim to serve, thereby having that economic driver defining strategic curricula and the entities that can deliver it. The other is the very rhetoric of increased intensities of border-crossings and the concomitant undermining of the grounded place of identity that defines aspects of globalization. Between universities, particularly since the historic Bologna Agreement, there is the driver for mobility of students between universities. This has been particularly important for the European Union with respect to degree programmes across its member countries. However, this agreement impacts internationally. We are all aware of the extent to which fluctuations in international students impact on departmental budgets. We are also aware of the necessity to engage collaboratively with other universities in multi-disciplinary research teams. The external grant funding mechanisms in New Zealand as well as in the European Union drive universities to collaborate.

Given universities' increased reliance on external funding from industry to support research, the university sector as a whole has become increasingly responsive to industry models for management and core business. Research now necessarily includes a commercialization arm, equal emphasis on consultancies as well as business incubators, often in a technology park environment that houses key industry partners. As a further economic driver, universities have necessarily become increasingly responsive to the broader communities they serve. Hirsch notes that the lifespan of basic knowledge in professional and industry contexts is about five years, opening frameworks for life-long learning programmes. This is extended to universities offering their expertise in helping with start-up companies as a component to an industry-research nexus. Luc Weber emphasizes how we need to differentiate and maintain a relation between a university's responsiveness and its responsibility in these situations where fundamental change is happening. Responsiveness tends to be an agency with respect to short-term demands. It is a university responding to what government, industry, media, society expects of it. As a publically funded institution there is an ethical imperative for this responsiveness. However, universities, certainly in their long Western history, have had a privileged locus within the panoply of public institutions in a nation state. Universities have a responsibility towards society, a responsibility as critic and conscience of society, a responsibility to transmit cultural heritage and, perhaps, to guarantee openness to the possibility of a future for thinking, which means an open possibility for questioning in whatever field. The so-called autonomy given to universities is the securing mechanism for undertaking this responsibility. There is a tension, a contradiction, if not an impossibility that currently faces universities, on the one hand, to ethically and politically maintain a responsiveness to the demands of society and, on the other hand, maintain a politico-ethical autonomy in order to have that ability to respond principally and fundamentally through questioning,

which amounts to saying, through research that itself is fundamental, open and basic. The instrumentalising of a university's research strategy as industry-responsive application concomitant with the demise and disappearance of avenues for fundamental research constitutes the very ground of the contradiction between responsiveness and responsibility, between being a service industry for and questioner of the open possibility of society. Weber's prognosis is not positive, noting that universities are increasingly being confronted with competition, not only from other universities but also from a new educational sector that is growing in response to economic drivers in the post-secondary education industry. There is increased reliance on the business sector for university solvency, decreasing frameworks for intellectual autonomy and increasing the governance of universities to give preference to teaching and research programmes that best guarantee revenue streams outside the government sector. Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, in *Universities and the Global Knowledge Economy*, frame this as a "triple helix" relation between government, industry and universities. Universities have been located as institutions devoted to the "national good" of economic competitiveness rather than the "universal good" of knowledge.

Does the university have a proper destination? I have made reference to the close relation between what I have termed fundamental research as that which openly questions, the autonomy of the university as a locale of the question, and an ethico-political imperative for universities to question. We recognize in this alignment the Kant of *In Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?*, the Kant whose watch-word in terms of the autonomy of individual reason was "Dare to think!" The answer to the question is to question, which is the ground for research and ground for the ability to respond to the autonomy of the university. But does the university have a proper destination that would amount to a response and responsibility for a future for thinking, both at once and impossibly together? If there is a privilege given here to the question, is the university that place where the question-worthy question takes place? Where can a question take place? And, perhaps, what we now name as universities, as those sites privileged to question, no longer know how to question. And where is the university — outside of its Eurocentric history, outside of its Western colonialist history, outside of the America of globalization and the Europe of the new understanding of the nation state? Where, now, does the university take place?

Is this not a question of the cosmopolitical that opens to a question of ethics and politics we recognize, again, initially in the writings of Kant, in his short tract, *Towards Perpetual Peace*? Kant provides three "Definitive Articles for Perpetual Peace," the third of which is "Cosmopolitan right shall be limited to conditions of universal *hospitality*." At its basis, Kant held that no one individual has more right than another to the surface of the earth. Hence all have equal right to it, though individuals have established nations with territorial borders and national sovereignty guaranteeing inalienable rights within one's nation. Cosmopolitanism refers to the fact that no individual can be refused visitation rights in crossing national borders if she or he comes in peace. There is a right to hospitality. It is this universal hospitality that constitutes a universal cosmopolitical state, not a

territorial State, but a condition of possibility for being in the world. The philosopher Jacques Derrida locates a contradiction at the heart of Kant's thinking: on the one hand there is an unconditional hospitality offering the right of refuge to all foreigners. On the other hand, hospitality has to be conditional. There are limitations on the rights of foreigners, for example, to citizenship. Derrida emphasizes that this contradiction does not so much paralyze political action as enables it. I want to conclude by extending this thinking to the contradiction we locate between the university as response agency and the unconditional responsibility of the university to question.

Questioning originates with the foreigner. It is the foreigner, the other language, the stranger, that which is not known that first impresses itself to us in order to open the space for fundamental research, that opens the question of the question as such. For the future of thinking there is no destination that would be outside of hospitality, a universal guarantee to welcoming this foreigner. Universities, if indeed they have a future, will secure it in an impossible space: that which lies between a responsiveness to the already known and knowable, to the demands of a social order, a techno-scientific order, an economic order that construes spaces of learning and research as service industries, and a responsibility, unconditional and infinite to a hospitality for the foreigner. Perhaps, initially, universities need to recognize that their origins do not lie in a Graeco-Roman heritage, nor in the legacies of European expansion, but rather their origins lie in what they have yet to recognize as the foreign that opens them to question.

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