ARTICLES

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RETHINKING THE UNIVERSITY FROM A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST STANDPOINT

For the last two decades, there has been a growing movement within virtually every branch of the human sciences that travels under the name of "constructivism" or "social constructivism." To naive philosophical eyes, this movement may appear to be little more than the research program of cognitive relativism, but in fact it is much more. What constructivism does is to destroy the "facticity" of Kuhnian normal science by recovering from the history of science a variety of contesting parties with stakes in inquiry following alternative paths. Typically, the constructivist will reveal the efforts subsequently taken – the rewriting of history as well as the silencing and coopting of potential opponents – to prevent the original disagreements from ever again being aired in public. These efforts incur a cost that can be seen in the paradigm's current practices, notably its studied blindness to certain questions, facts, theories, and/or people. But like the adept psychoanalyst, the construc-tivist can often raise these blind–spots to self–consciousness.[1]

Clearly, constructivists pride themselves on their ability to make the commonplace exotic, or at least problematic. Yet, ironically, the one site that is common to all constructivists – the university – has managed to escape constructivist scrutiny. Of course, there have been distinguished constructivist studies of the sites in which research, teaching, and service occur within the university – especially of the first sort of sites (e.g. Latour & Woolgar 1979, Knorr–Cetina 1981). But I am hard–pressed to come up with even one study that takes seriously the fact that these three activities compete for the time and energy of the same group of people working for the same institution. Perhaps constructivists have gotten a little too local in their search for local knowledge, letting architecture do the work of ontology! After all, the doors that separate laboratories, classrooms, and conference rooms are

certainly no more important than the careers that are made by regularly walking through those doors.

Admittedly (and unfortunately), this blindness to the university workplace is something that constructivists share with economists and historians of science. Although there are exceptions to what I am about to say here, I will focus on the more typical cases to underscore the neglect of the university that has become second nature in scholarship. (A notable exception is Stinchcombe 1990: 312–340.)

I recently picked up a new book on the "economics of the university" which was neatly divided into sections on the contributions that education, research, and service each made to national productivity. However, I could find no discussion of how these three "factors" or "variables" affected one another under various conditions. Indeed, had I not kept the title of the book firmly in mind, I would never have had reason to think that these factors were emanating from the same institutions.

Of course, the history of science fares a bit better than economics in its recognition of the university, but not as well as might be hoped. The "social" turn that much of the field has taken since Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* has encouraged a focus on discipline-based histories, ones that often highlight differences in patterns of institutionalization between disciplines, between nations – and, indeed, even between universities. But in this last case, the universities are important mainly as places where the discipline under study is instantiated. Consequently, university teaching is discussed only insofar as it contributes to a distinctive style of research that comes to be recognized in the discipline as a whole. In other words, the history of science remains largely a history of scientific research, with teaching and service entering only as promoters or inhibitors of various research programs. This may be history from the standpoint of the professional association, but not from that of the university.

At this point, I will be reminded that there exist entire literatures on the history and sociology of the university that stand apart from anything I have mentioned so far. But taken together, these literatures present a rather schizoid image of the university. Consider the difference between Laurence Veysey (1965) and Joseph Ben–David (1992: 125–254) on the American university. On the one hand, a historian like Veysey is prone to portray the university as an embarrassingly jimmy–rigged and contentious entity that gives the lie to any pretenses that academics might have about becoming philosopher–kings. On the other hand, a sociologist like Ben–David finds the university to be the most splendid product of the invisible hand in modern society (*especially* in the United States), the collective result of free academics adapting to their changing social and cognitive environments.

Both extremes have found a place in the recent debates about the future of the American university that have centered on "political correctness" and "multiculturalism." For reasons that will become clear below, I want to restrict my comments to the Living White Male contributors to these debates. Focusing first on contributors who actually work in universities, the difference between Veysey and Ben–David does not turn out to be as great as it may first appear. The views range between, say, Gerald Graff (1992), who gets "beyond the culture wars" by ascribing positive significance to Veysey's contentious view of the university, and Edward Shils (1992a), who exhorts university administrators to have the courage to resist multiculturalist attempts to shatter the Ben–Davidian image. Despite their differences in what they take to be the nature of the university, the most change that Graff and Shils call for are to particular practices at particular universities. Neither side is calling for wholesale change, let alone the disestablishment of the university.

This underlying satisfaction with the institution of the university – or at least the failure to countenance alternative institutions of higher learning – is especially curious in

the case of a progressive like Graff. The picture of the university as an intellectual pressure–cooker, a house designed always to be divided against itself, is certainly a familiar and attractive one to Leftists – myself included. But isn't it a bit surprising that from this image comes no prognosis about universities mutating or imploding into some other social formation or, for that matter, triggering some larger societal change? Rather, Graff seems to see only more contained conflict in the university's future – and that's all right by him. Such apparent complacency casts the metaphor of the pressure–cooker in a new light, one that calls to mind Joseph Schumpeter's (1950: 145–155) theory about the historical role of the university as a safety valve that lets off the excess steam of intellectuals who might otherwise stir up the masses and thereby the disrupt entrepreneurship and capital accumulation.

So far we have seen accounts of the university as functionally adapted to its social environment – in an almost panglossian manner: "No matter how badly you think the university operates, any other institutional arrangement would be worse – and, in fact, if you look at the university from a long enough perspective, it does not look so bad, after all!" While arch–constructivists would ridicule such a position were it taken of any other contemporary institution, they seem to suspend their scruples when it comes to the one they call home. Again limiting ourselves to Living White Males, constructivist–looking attempts to find the seams and rework the fabric of academic life come mostly from non–academic conservatives, some of whom – through the sales of their books – have managed to get the ear of some university administrators. Why aren't constructivists trying to get the other ear of the administrators by offering competing successor institutions to the university?

My guess is that, when push comes to shove, most constructivists share the panglossian image of the university. As a result, they often find themselves in the intellectually awkward and politically unusual position of defending the "status quo" against what – on the face of it – would seem to be (pardon the oxymoron!) neoconservative social engineers. The important exception to all this is a debate that is brewing *within* the multiculturalist camp, many of whose members are non–white and non–male. No doubt, once our critics from the Right become aware of this dissent in the Leftist ranks, they will try to portray it as the sort of petty infighting that is business–as–usual for academics – even for the most sanctimonious of the politically correct.

Yet, if the previous reactions of conservatives to academic life is any indication, here too they will vacillate in their diagnosis of this infighting between terms that highlight the gratuitous self–importance of academics and terms that point to a crisis in the knowledge system of national proportions. This ambivalence, I submit, however offensively expressed it may be, taps into some historically unresolved tensions in the nature of academic life – tensions to which I will devote this paper, ending with a consideration of the rift currently emerging among multiculturalists. My method will be the familiar constructivist strategy of defamiliarization: to render the necessary contingent, the stable unstable, and the seamless seamy. There is no reason why the conservatives should have all the fun!

The End of the University: The End of Knowledge, Too?

A good way to start is by formally presenting that panglossian image of the university that we all hate to love. About ten years ago, Harvard President Derek Bok provided a serviceable account when he considered what it would be like if the university were disestablished and its various functions were distributed to independent agencies, such as liberal arts colleges for general education, specialized institutes for advanced research and consulting, and independently licensed professional schools for job certification:

While the various functions of the university could be reorganized and redistributed in this fashion, something important would be lost. Neither colleges, nor consulting organizations, nor professional training schools can satisfy society's need for new knowledge and discovery. True, one could look to some sort of research institute to perform this function. But even this alternative would not wholly replace what universities can supply. It is the special function of the university to combine education with research, and knowledgeable observers believe that this combination has distinct advantages both for teaching and for science and scholarship.... Without the marriage of teaching and research that universities uniquely provide, the conduct of scholarly inquiry and scientific investigation, as well as the progress of graduate training, would be unlikely to continue at the level of quality achieved over the past two generations. In a society heavily dependent on advanced education and highly specialized knowledge, such a decline could be seriously detrimental to the public welfare (Bok 1982: 19–20).

Good constructivists should be skeptical about Bok's dire counterfactual prognosis about the threat to public welfare that would follow in the wake of the university's demise. True, the chains of legitimation would be forged differently: Certain people, texts, and courses of study that are now "obligatory passage points" in the quest for credentials would no longer be standing in the way – perhaps others would instead, and conceivably a wider variety of ways of getting around them. Stories like this have been told by those would like to "open up" the university's activities to the marketplace. (Again, unfortunately, these people normally stand to the Right of most of us.)

Now, as it turns out, Bok's thoughts about the detrimental consequences of a devolved university are presented in the course of defending academic freedom – a guild right that academics have by virtue of their place of work, the university, which focuses on the production of knowledge itself and not on the ends to which that knowledge may be put. If the university ceased to exist, say, by its functions being divested in the manner described by Bok, there would be no need for such freedom: the conduct of intellectual labor would simply be dictated by standards negotiated between its producers and consumers, as in any other market–driven activity. Conceivably, then, an academic subject such as "biology" would lose its integrity as a body of knowledge. For example, parents concerned that their children receive a morally appropriate education would insist that the nature of life be taught so as to make the Book of Genesis appear as intellectually respectable as evolutionary theory, while corporate clients interested in resilient organisms on which to test their products would ensure that genetic engineering becomes a pure technology. Similar scenarios can be conjured up for the other academic disciplines.

At this point, we arrive at a delicate chicken–and–egg question about the relationship between the university and the autonomous pursuit of knowledge: Was the university created in order to provide a secure place for free inquiry – as Bok would seem to suggest – or is "free inquiry" itself simply the name given to whatever happens to take place in an institution enjoying the legal status of a university?

If you have consistently constructivist scruples – ones not susceptible to recidivistic forms of realism – then you should have no trouble endorsing the latter of the two options posed in my question. In that case, "knowledge" isn't a special sort of thing that requires the free space of the university. Rather, "knowledge" is a reification of and a rationalization for the social relations that have endured in those spaces we have called the "university" over the centuries. To vivify the point, we might say that once the university has been fully divested of its functions, the pursuit of free inquiry disappears along with it – as such a pursuit has no clear meaning outside of the institutional arrangement of the university. To wax Foucaultian,

we will have then reached the literal *end of knowledge*. Pertinent to this point are my earlier remarks about "biology" losing any clear sense of identity, once it is left entirely to the interests of divergent clienteles. Such a state–of–affairs would be characteristic of what I have elsewhere called *the post–epistemic condition* (Fuller 1993: 281–290; Fuller 1994).

As it happens, I do, indeed, believe that something that could be called the pursuit of knowledge "per se" or "for its own sake" stands or falls with the fate of the university. If you don't agree, then you're simply not a constructivist – at least not on this point. However, I don't mean this as a value judgment: I am simply stating a fact.

From Cloistered Philosophers to Beleaguered Administrators: Constructing the Sites of Knowledge Through the Ages

Historically speaking, the emergence of knowledge as an autonomous pursuit coincides with philosophers establishing fixed places of business on the edge of Athens that required students to live on the grounds of the establishment for a period of time. The sociologist Alvin Gouldner (1965) was struck by this transition from the free–floating, market–style engagements of Socrates and his Sophistic foes to the cloistered, cult–like atmosphere that surrounded the Schools of Plato and the later Greek philosophers. Gouldner offered a social psychiatric diagnosis of the transition. The previous hundred years – what we now regard as the Golden Age of Greece – had been marked by a cycle of wars, culminating in a humiliating defeat for Athens at the hands of Sparta in the Peloponnesian Wars. The Greek philosophers came to believe that this ill–fated volatility was intimately tied to an all too free and easy deployment of reason in the public sphere – the lust for contests and calculated risk–taking which most foreigners took to be emblematic of Athenian culture.

In particular, Gouldner observed that the terms used to characterize the dialectical play of the courtroom were precisely the ones used to describe military combat. Both were treated as "rational" activities in exactly the same sense, only using different means. Both were even protected by the same god, Apollo, a point often forgotten in today's uses of the word "Apollonian." Perhaps the most interesting point of convergence was that one's rationality was displayed more in the artfulness of the arguments or tactics one mobilized than in their actual outcomes. In fact, it would seem that visitors to Athens found the natives peculiar in their eagerness to debunk the exploits of a victorious general, if he lacked a certain "cunning" in his *modus operandi.*

Academic philosophy starting with Plato has largely been a systematic rejection of these, the most distinctive features of the Athenian character. While "self–loathing" may put the point too strongly, I think it is fair to say that the academic philosophers did as much as they could to distance themselves from their polis identity. For example, it is now thought that Plato himself invented the word "rhetoric" as a term of disdain for those philosophers who continued the Athenian tradition of publicly displaying the dialectic (Schiappa 1992). Moreover, the vehicle of reasoning that most easily excited passions and actions – speech – was gradually demoted and disciplined, as students of philosophy were taught to write down their arguments in private before uttering them in public, and to judge what they spoke against what they had written.

Along with the cloistering of reason came a new sense of the spacing and timing of knowledge, one which identified autonomous inquiry with speech that was not tied down to a particular place and time. Places were no longer visible reminders of what to say next to an audience *(topoi)*, but rather rooms that may be filled by a variety of prepared lectures *(chora)*. By the time of the medieval university, these lectures were commonly said to be "contained" in the rooms, a dead metaphor that remains pre-

served today in the idea of the "content" of a speech (Ong 1958). As for the timing of speech, what the Greeks called kairos evolved – or, I should say, devolved – from something that a speaker did to make his words bear on the concerns of his audience so as to prompt timely action, to a matter of decorous conduct that was dictated by events that took place prior to the speech whose only purpose lay in recounting those events (Kinneavy 1986).

However, disembodying knowledgeable speech was one thing; insuring that such speech was continued in perpetuity was something else entirely. It is here that the university as we know it starts to emerge. Academies in the Greek, Roman, and Moslem worlds had depended on private endowments and state protection, either of which could change drastically with the slightest shift in the balance of power. To stave off this volatility, urban scholars in the twelfth century adopted a strategy that seemed to work for craftsmen, who persuaded overextended feudal authorities that they were capable of managing their own affairs. These affairs did not directly compete with affairs of state but centered on the application, transmission, and refinement of a manual art that was deemed to have value above and beyond the livelihoods of the people who happen to practice the art at a given time. Thus, the crafts received corporate charters that enabled them to control membership and draft by-laws in perpetuity.

The scholars had a somewhat tougher case to make for their corporate status than the craftsmen did. You might think that it had something to do with the kind of labor in which the scholars were engaged. But that would be to import our own oversharp distinction between intellectual and manual labor, one that did not apply in the twelfth century. In fact, the scholars were known to the general – which is to say, nonliterate – public for their invention and deployment of various literary technologies, including pens and books, as well as sophisticated systems of dividing up, cross-referencing, and indexing written matter. Indeed, the problem with

granting scholars a corporate status akin to craftsmen was that the scholars spent much of their time, not in reading and writing books, but in deploying their technical skills to "keep the books" – that is, the financial records – of local secular and ecclesiastical authorities. In other words, scholars did not appear to be as singularly devoted to a calling as craftsmen. A lot of their work seemed purely instrumental. To grant a corporate charter to the scholars would thus be already to commit to the idea of a "multiversity" that would permit, if not encourage, scholars to roam off campus periodically to perform "consulting services."

Of course, the scholars managed to allay enough of the suspicions about the impurity of their mission to receive the corporate charters that established the first universities. Yet, it was not without a cost. In order to advertise the purity of their vocation, the scholars attempted to cast themselves as much as possible in the mold of classical Athens – especially its spirit of dialectical engagement and its disdain for manual labor of any kind, including writing itself (LeGoff 1993: 104–105). Of course, the scholastics (as they were now known) continued inventing and deploying ever more sophisticated literary technologies, both on and off campus. However, they refused to take official notice of that fact in how they accounted for their activities – and we live with the consequences of that refusal.

In the short term, the scholastics alienated themselves from fellow manual laborers who dwelled in the cities, which, in turn, led to some early instances of "town-gown" hostilities. But in the long term, I submit, the quest for the sort of autonomy promised by a university charter has forced the scholastics and their successors to repress the role that the material conditions of their labor play in their thought (Sohn-Rethel 1978: 108). A singularly striking example of this repression operating today occurs whenever a scientist, say, describes the totality of her work in terms of the vanishingly few hours per week she actually spends doing research in the lab or intellectually engaged

with colleagues. This incoherence runs still deeper, and I think helps explain some chronic problems of academic self–accounting, the significance of which we are all too inclined to dismiss as the excrescences of philistine bureaucrats and politicians. In particular, why do we academics have such a hard time demonstrating that we are worth what we are paid – or even that we deserve to be paid at all? A major part of my answer turns on what I call *the military–industrial metaphor* in scholarly conceptions of knowledge. This metaphor fuses two distinct ways of thinking about knowledge that do not sit well together. Yet, since the establishment of the university, we have come to use them interchangeably and unreflectively in explaining what we do as academics.

The military side of the metaphor represents knowledge as inquiry – which is to say, a goal–oriented activity whose target is truth, a target which inquirers approximate to varying degrees. Of course, since the target is typically hidden from view –"behind the appearances" – no one ever scores a direct hit. Yet, as we saw in the case of classical Athens, inquirers can be judged by the artfulness of their strategies and tactics. Education, from this angle, is target practice, an activity that calls to mind the spirit of gamesmanship with which examinations are often taken. In its military guise, knowledge is leisured, sporting, and crafty – revealing as little effort as possible.

By contrast, the industrial side of the metaphor refers to knowledge as a laborious process that displays much handiwork and issues in products of various sorts, usually with the understanding that more is always better than less. Indeed, there is no end in sight whatsoever to knowledge production, only an image of indefinite productivity. On the industrial model, education is a form of craft apprenticeship, whereby one acquires the tools and skills needed to produce more knowledge products – not to mention more knowledge producers.

Today we experience the tension of the military–industrial metaphor at several different levels of university life: between hu-mane learning and scientific research; between liberal arts education and professional training. The twelfth century scholastics first experienced this tension as they sought to recover an essentially aristocratic rhetoric of inquiry to legitimate what had become a highly technical form of manual labor. Now, what exactly were the changes that the manual art of writing wrought on the scholarly consciousness? I do not want to recount here the familiar speculations of Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong on the transformative powers of literacy. Rather, I want to focus on what the new technologies for dividing up, cross–referencing, and indexing texts did to education and research, causing them to be linked indissolubly in the academic mind. According to two historians of accounting, Hoskin and Macve, this was the innovation that Peter Abelard called *inquisitio:* the inquisition machine (Hoskin & Macve 1986).

Abelard's inquisition machine consisted of a set of techniques, all second nature to us now but marshalled together for the first time in the service of academic labor. These techniques broke texts down into components that could be compared and combined in any number of ways: books were divided into chapters, chapters into sections, sections into sentences, and sentences into words. Thus was provided the technological "push" for converting a scholarly community into a full–fledged research and education factory. Opportunities for commentaries could be readily generated by comparing one part of a book with another, and then accounting for the difference in one's own writings. Of course, one could ask a student to account for the difference himself, or, for that matter, to account for the difference between a part of a canonical book and a part of his own composition.

Now, I would like to suggest, there are simple and complex ways of, so to speak, "programming" the inquisition machine to resolve the tensions latent in the military–industrial metaphor. The simple ways are fairly benign and familiar. For example, education could be seen in industrial terms,

and research in military ones. In that case, the university would be a place that produces students who are instructed on how to seek the truth. Certainly, this is the way the scholastics would talk when they were trying to don the mantle of the ancients. However, every now and then, the scholastics could turn the metaphor around and sound considerably more modern in their orientation toward their work – if only by drawing attention to the fact that work was being done! In the modern mode, research would be seen in industrial terms – the production of texts – and education in military terms – the examination of students.

More complex resolutions of the military–industrial metaphor don't really become evident for several centuries after the founding of the first universities. What makes these resolutions "complex" is that the military and industrial sides of the metaphor are no longer restricted to particular functions, but have been allowed to to interpenetrate one another in both teaching and research. I will only touch on how this works in the case of teaching. Basically, the status of the examination shifts from being the criterion used for evaluating instructions to its being the very method of instruction. Consequently, students can be mass produced by simply "teaching to" the examination, in which case the quality of instruction is evaluated in terms of the number of students passed.

On the research side, we witness a couple of metaphoric resolutions. First, while texts are produced indefinitely, none is designed to be *preserved* indefinitely. In other words, each text is targeted for eventual replacement at the moment of its production: planned obsolescence enters the knowledge system, and the result is the inquistion to which we have grown accustomed in the natural sciences. The second metaphoric resolution – more familiar to humanists of a deconstructive bent – enables new textual productions by undoing prior attempts at accounting for the differences between texts. In both cases, the inquisition machine is primarily in the job of making work for successive generations of academics. The underlying strategy is the one that was used on Tantalus: *to render increased effort compatible with a receding target.* If you have any doubts about this claim, consider why there have been so few cases – if any – of a research program whose practitioners decided to call it quits because all of their program's problems had been solved.

These complex resolutions of the military–industrial metaphor were first raised to self–consciousness during the Enlightenment, a movement that was, generally speaking, in competition with the universities. Such a situation became possible once some savvy nonacademic intellectuals – *les philosophes* – figured out that the university had reduced the pursuit of knowledge to a set of social relations surrounding the production and distribution of texts, especially books. The critic Jane Tompkins (1980) has observed that during this period, knowledgeable communications underwent a profound transformation.[2] Writings were no longer judged as surrogate speech events by their ability to move a target audience to action. Rather, the written text had become a commodity – something produced either on demand (as in the case of student examinations) or in the hope of acquiring a demand (as in the case of original scholarly works). It is worth recalling that when authors during this period started clamoring for a larger share of publishers' profits, they pointed to the uniqueness and the difficulty of their labors, but not to any proven ability to move particular audiences in particular ways. And so began the modern legal doctrines of copyright. A big part of the story behind the mystification of copyright into "genius" in the early nineteenth century can be told in terms of the author losing *all* hope of identifying an audience that could be moved in desirable, or even predictable, ways. The reader appreciative of genius was thus cast as a rare and cultivated breed that an author would unlikely find in the course of his or her lifetime. For their part, ordinary readers understood their purchase of a book as a license to make virtually any use of the text

that they saw fit.

The ability of *les philosophes* to beat the academics at their own bookish games taught Napoleon a powerful *negative* lesson that almost led to the complete dissolution of the universities under his regime. In characteristic Enlightenment fashion, the failure of the universities was cast as symptomatic of the clerical tendency to retreat behind sacred – dare I say "canonical" – books, which did little to promote *either* education or research. To dislodge the academics from their text–fetish, Napoleon proposed to house education and research in two distinct sorts of institutions, with curriculum dictated by national personnel needs and research by collegial consent. In neither case was any pretense made about a common realm of knowledge – or Truth – that was shadowed in academic writings, as produced in research and reproduced in teaching. This lack of pretense was especially striking in the French research institutes, which throughout the nineteenth century prided themselves on the votes they took on the validity of all proposed inventions and discoveries.

The last heroic effort to preserve the integrity of the university – the one to which all contemporary defenses of the institution ultimately refer – was made by Wilhelm von Humboldt(1970) in his 1810 memorandum, "On the spirit and organizational framework of intellectual institutions in Berlin," a sustained plea for Prussia not to go the route of Napoleonic France. In making his plea, Humboldt drew on the only major Enlightenment figure who did not go out of his way to portray the university as the text–mongering bastion of tradition and superstition. Indeed, this figure spent his entire career in the university. With Humboldt's help, that figure – Immanuel Kant – has convinced subsequent generations to think of the university as the natural place for Enlightenment.

Humboldt's Kantian strategy was to revert to a fairly pure version of the Greek dialectical model of inquiry – albeit one where the dialectic is confined to the walls of the acad-

emy and not spilling into the public square. Plato and Aristotle would have recognized Humboldt's assimilation of all inquiry to philosophizing on subjects at greater or lesser degrees of generality. Any principled distinction between education and research was erased as students entered the university as peripheral participants in ongoing debates – only to gain full status as researchers as their participation in, and ultimately, their guidance of the collective discussion increased.

This rather idyllic picture of the university tried to get around the thorny problem of identifying an object common to research and teaching by pointing to a unity of *practice* in these two signature academic functions. However, the success of Humboldt's strategy must be judged in terms of the exigencies of his situation, two of which are of note here.

First, the Kantian injunction "Dare to know" *(aude sapere)*, so eagerly embraced by Humboldt, really had more political bark than bite. This point can be perhaps seen more clearly by considering the Enlightenment motto, "The truth shall set you free." This motto never provided a political vision that threatened existing regimes because the sense of freedom entailed by "Enlightenment" was purely negative – a freedom *from* prejudices of one sort or another. But no proponent of Enlightenment ever seriously demonstrated that the consistently critical inquirer could simply "back into" the good society in the process of eliminating all the bad ones. And so, as long as criticism and critical frames of mind were all that the university was promoting within its walls, there was little fear that an alternative politics would be forthcoming – and if such a politics were put forth, its failure to have been rigorously derived from the canons of critical inquiry would be duly noted by fellow inquirers, thereby preempting any need on the part of the government to censor or discredit the politicized professor. (If you find this judgment too cynical, I suggest you have a look at the various complaints that Max Weber lodged throughout his career against

colleagues who "abused their academic freedom.")

The second exigency of Humboldt's situation is the one that has been most recently emphasized by historians of Eurocentrism (Lambropoulos 1993). Promoting the military side of the military–industrial metaphor – the dialectic – suited the traditional Prussian self–image, which had acquired a special relevance in the struggle against Napoleon. Whereas Napoleon drew inspiration from portraying France as an analogical extension of the Roman Empire, Prussia turned to Greece for its model of a purer, more original European spirit. This is, of course, the spirit of Aryanism that played such a large role in the consolidation of the German national identity in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century – and whose implications for scholarship were recently subject to systematic critique in Martin Bernal's (1987) *Black Athena*. (The controversial character of this thesis will be discussed below.)

Despite these local tactical successes, the big long–term problem with Humboldt's strategy was that it only continued to exacerbate the scholastic repression of the industrial, productive side of inquiry – indeed, just as that side of the military–industrial metaphor was about to hit its stride in the nineteenth century. The overall result has been the complex resolutions of the military–industrial metaphor that I mentioned earlier – as well as the incommensurable knowledge products and attitudes toward inquiry that can be found in the university today.

If there has, indeed, been this institutionalized form of repression of which I speak, then we should expect to find some defense mechanism, or buffer, that shields academics from routinely having to confront the disparity between the ideology and reality of their practices. Specifically, there should be a class of people in our midst whose job it is to explain why a Ph.D. is needed for teaching at the university, why publications are required for retaining one's teaching post, and why faculty are really doing the job that parents and politicians are entrusting them

to do – not to mention why less grantworthy departments within the university should be partially subsidized from overhead garnered by the more grantworthy departments. The class of people whose job it is to explain these things – and much else – is the university's administration.

In recounting the various developments in academic life that have taken Humboldt's model of the university in directions that he could not have anticipated (and of which he probably would not have approved), sociologist Edward Shils (1992b) focuses on the proportional rise in the number of administrators to the number of faculty. For his part, Shils seems to think that the emergence of a permanent administrative apparatus in the university betrays a lack of nerve on the part of faculty to participate fully in their own self–governance. However, I am not so certain that rank–and–file faculty have the intestinal fortitude needed to reconcile, rationalize, or simply paste over all the discrepant forms of accountability demanded of those employed in today's universities. And it is not clear that even a Harvard President's best impersonation of Dr. Pangloss is going to work much longer.

Multiculturalism and the University as a House Divided Against Itself

Here I want to return to the dissent that is currently erupting within the ranks of the multiculturalists. Because hostility to all forms of multiculturalism remains quite strong, especially from critics outside the academy, one has to look closely to find the internal disagreements – but they are there to be found. Put somewhat indelicately, the main axis of opposition is between *integrationists* and *separatists*. Or, in more delicate terms: the difference is between the *de–centrists* and the *re–centrists*. If one follows the rhetoric of the two camps, there is, respectively, talk of "hybrid politics" and talk of "identity politics." In feminism, it is the talk of Donna Haraway versus that of Mary Daly.

In Afro–American philosophy, it is the talk of Henry Louis Gates versus that of Molefi Asante.

Given the current political climate, there is not much crossfire between the two sides, but every now and then – and with increasing frequency – some sniping does occur. In both cases, charges of "naivete" are lodged, but of decidedly different sorts. In the footnotes of integrationist tracts, remarks are made about the unreflective separatist tendency to repeat the mistakes of "centrist" thinking by replacing Euro– and androcentrism with Afro– or gynocentrism. From the integrationist standpoint, the separatists continue to reify the old binaries – White/Black, West/East, Male/Female – but only now accenting the second term in each binary.

For their part, the separatists usually return the charge more directly, sidestepping the scholarly trappings: As they see it, in a remarkable feat of false consciousness, the integrationists have mistaken the ease of their own academic assimilation for genuine social progress. Indeed, some separatists would go so far as to argue that the integrationists are the ultimate "Fifth Column" of emancipatory politics, as they subject every potential point of common cause to an endless trial by nuance.

In the midst of this crossfire, we begin the see the seams that barely holds the university together, as both sides try to square the Enlightenment circle of converting radical critique to positive politics. Both the integrationists and the separatists are forced to adopt the legitimation strategy common among academics since the early nineteenth century – when it became clear that the universities could not effectively compete with the rest of society in the production and distribution of books and machines: namely, the university would be the place to go to acquire the competence to deal with the artifacts "appropriately."

While this strategy largely conceded that the inspiration for academic work came from outside the academy, at the same time it left open the possibility that academics could

have a reciprocal effect on the character of later books and machines. Thus, many interesting discussions of this issue could be found throughout the university, ranging from "Can criticism improve the writing of literature?" to "Can science improve the development of technology?" Without going into the various answers that have been given to these questions, suffice it to say that academics who gave optimistic answers tended to downplay the extent to which academic labor issues in its own distinctive products that do not have a natural place outside the university.

Consider this point as an exegesis of Marx: It is not simply that it is not *enough* to interpret the world, if one wants to change it; rather, in order to change the world, one must typically do something quite *different* from interpreting it. I think that this aspect of the Enlightenment legacy – whereby the academic is "always already" removed from the field of action – helps explains the impatience that the separatists have with the integrationists. Separatist academic labors naturally tend toward general education and civic activism, whereas integrationist labors are concerned primarily with professional training and research. The separatist wants to proselytize outside the academy, while the integrationist wants to intensify its hold within the academy. Yet, both presume that the university is the powerbase from which any movement must be launched. In that sense, the separatists are no less children of the Enlightenment than the integrationists. However, each side bears the burden of that legacy differently.

A good case that makes this difference in encumbrance palpable is the alternative interpretations given to the first volume of Bernal's *Black Athena*, which systematically unearths the suppression of the Phoenician and Egyptian roots of Greek culture by classical scholarship since its inception in the late eighteenth century.

An integrationist himself, Bernal took his thesis to imply that the early histories of European and Near–Eastern cultures were more intertwined that the so–called Aryan

tradition in classical scholarship had been suggesting for the last two centuries. Bernal diagnoses the fatal flaw of the classicists in terms of their having let nationalistic ambitions and racial prejudice get in the way of pursuing the type of critical inquiry demanded by their own self–avowed Enlightenment values. By implication, Bernal's book is designed to bring such an inquiry to fruition. In this respect, Bernal adopts much the same rhetorical posture as Edward Said (1978) did in that scholarly milestone of multiculturalism, *Orientalism*.

In contrast, several Afrocentric scholars have shifted the focus of Black Athena to the collective psychological plane – in particular, to unconscious racial hatred that may have motivated the near–seamless concealment of the Black legacy to Western culture. Interestingly, the Afrocentrists don't dispute what the legacy is – in other words, they tend to valorize the very qualities and achievements that the West has traditionally valued in the Greeks.[3] Rather, the nub of the dispute is over *whose* legacy it really is. Thus, Bernal–the–rigorous–methodologist is overshadowed in the Afrocentric reading by Bernal–the–vehicle–of– justice, one who enables the Black peoples to regain their rightful place in world history and, by implication, in contemporary culture (cf. Aune 1993).

The point I wish to stress here is that *both* the decentrist and recentrist interpretations of *Black Athena* are indebted to the Enlightenment. The decentrists appeal to the supposed power of consistently applied critical inquiry, while the recentrists appeal to the equally supposed power of revealing hidden truth. The struggle over what to make of Bernal's text certainly has the air of politics and real world effects – but it remains only an air as long as the struggle is staged behind a copy of Bernal's book. What is needed, instead, are more candid discussions with administrators and concerned nonacademics about how to revise – if not replace – the university, taking into account the struggles and fissures in academic consciousness that I have been highlighting in

this paper – most of which have been so far articulated only "at the level of theory," as the Althusserians like to say. Admittedly, this would require that multiculturalists shed some of the university's "protective coloration" as they publicly air their disagreements. However, if we stay the distance, we would finally be taking seriously the idea of the university as a social construction.

Acknowledgements:

NOTES

1. The range of constructivist research is suggested by the following three works: Shapin & Schaffer (1985), on the emergence of experimentation as the paradigm of all natural knowledge in the seventeenth century; Mirowski (1989), on the rise of constrained utility maximization as the paradigm of economic activity in the nineteenth century; Danziger (1990), on psychology's multifarious appropriations of natural scientific methods in the twentieth century.
2. My discussion below of the academic as cultural mediator in the twentieth century also draws on Tompkins (1980).
3. A seminal work of Afrocentric scholarship with strong tendencies in this direction is Diop (1991). Born in Senegal but trained as an ethnologist in France, Diop takes as significant evidence for the stolen scientific legacy of Africa the fact that Western historians have favored the Babylonian over the Egyptian roots of Greek mathematics, even though the Egyptians were closer to the Greek interest in a "pure" mathematics than the Babylonians, who really only had measuring and counting techniques, but no overarching abstract number system.

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