

**A critical study of international higher education  
development: capital, capability, and a dialogical proposal  
for academic freedom as a responsibility**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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**September, 2013**

## **Abstract**

This thesis sets out to critically examine the field of higher education development, as one which is focused on socio-economic inequality and welfare, and determines educational purpose in poorer, or ‘developing’, countries accordingly. My question is whether mainstream development approaches to higher education are really contributing to the provision of more equal education services, or whether they risk reintroducing inequality by treating the priorities of poorer countries differently. To investigate whether there are educational values or purposes common to universities globally irrespective of socio-economic imperatives, I begin the study with a historiographical look at their growth in terms of both ideas of its purpose, and how purpose is realised in actuality. I then trace the emergence of the discourse of international development, and the role that higher education has come to play within it, showing how the field of international higher education development has simplified the notion of university purpose for its own devices. The thesis then looks at underlying assumptions about human nature, defined as the problem of humanism, common to both transcendent ideas of university purpose as well as the development discourse. To avoid the limitations of these assumptions, I argue that a theoretical approach is required that can engage with questions of hybridity and multiplicity in both the history and future of universities, without reducing those questions to abstract ideas. The approach I propose draws upon the dialogism of Mikhail Bakhtin, whose multi-layered understanding of language prevents any one understanding of another person, or of human nature more generally, being considered final. The educational implications for such an approach are finally explored in the concept of academic freedom, which is traditionally conceived of as a right, but is here reconceptualised also as a responsibility.

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors for seeing this project through to its completion with me. I am particularly grateful to Gert Biesta for his clarity of insight and advice throughout, and to Ian Munday for taking up the baton as principal supervisor and for being an excellent mentor. I feel very lucky to have had them both on board, and have greatly appreciated the dialogical process of working with them.

My thanks also to my parents, my siblings, and my grandmother, for all their support, input, and inspiration.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all displaced and exiled refugee academics.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Overview of thesis

This project provides a critique of contemporary global higher education in the context of tensions between traditional ideas of the role and function of universities historically, and the ways in which new priorities are infiltrating policy in the field of international higher education development today. The field of higher education development is understood as particularly relating to the academic studies on, and policy stances adopted towards, the world's poorer countries, described as 'developing'. In these countries, the priorities of higher education are often conceived of as being different to those in the so-called 'developed' world. By looking at two main theories of international development – human capital theory and the human capabilities approach – I demonstrate that underpinning both of these theories is a prevailing emphasis on a particular idea of the 'human', or *humanism*, in international development and development studies. The possibility of realising an idealised notion of the human, whether as an efficient accumulator of skills or self-analyst of wellbeing, allows for the orientation of the role of universities either towards instrumental concerns such as economic growth or the expansion of 'capabilities.' I want to make the case here for considering other important, non-instrumental, dimensions to university education. It is therefore argued that whilst economic and social justice concerns are not unimportant, they remain premised upon a logic that needs to know in advance the ways in which the world, humans, and markets operate before they can prescribe the best course of action for education to take. I will argue instead that there has to be a suspension of this "need to know," if higher education is to do justice to the idea that neither the world nor its inhabitants are fully transparent to human understanding – not least because "human

understanding” has a history of excluding individuals and groups from even being seen as “human” in the first place.

Managerialism, bureaucratisation, and corporatisation are all terms that have become associated with the critique of the assault on fundamental values in universities by financial interests. Through my critique of human capital and human capability approaches, it will be shown that the need to define – or determine – what it means to be human enables the managerial impulse in these approaches, and closes down the possibilities for an open and ongoing conversation on the relationship between humanity and knowledge, as well as the dialogue between different possible “humanities”, or other ways of being human. The conscious attempt to reduce dialogue to a single line of reasoning, or ‘monologism’, can only reproduce inequality or exclusion in education, given that it tends towards enclosure within a single understanding of what is human in, and good for, others. I will make the argument, then, that development is more often a form of *envelopment* than is commonly assumed.

To begin to move beyond the determinism of the human, I make the case for adopting Bakhtinian dialogism as a theoretical approach to interrogating and problematising some of the ‘monologic’ discourses in higher education development, that attempt to manage human development according to an overarching logic. I then explore whether the importance of universities can still be attested to beyond the dissolution of these discourses. To test this importance, the concept of academic freedom is examined to demonstrate the two tendencies, or ‘Janus faces’, of higher education: the one that looks to the past for its heritage and tradition (what is already known); and the one that looks to the *unknowable* quantity of the future (what cannot



yet be known, either about the world or other people). The first establishes universities' 'right to be', and therefore holds academic freedom as a substantive recognition of that right (often then enshrined in law); the second represents universities' responsibility for the education of others and for knowledge that is 'yet-to-be', and therefore sees academic freedom as taking the necessary risks for future generations, in how it views humanity and knowledge. The tension between these two faces of academic freedom is finally explored through unique (educational) actions and utterances on the part of academics and individuals, described in terms of Bakhtinian "answerability". The concluding part of the thesis addresses the educational interest of the study, which is to affirm a responsibility to unknowable outcomes in higher education even in times of adversity, faced by universities in all parts of the world in different ways, not just those demarcated as 'developed' and 'developing'.

## **1.2. *Blackboards: development as 'unfolding from elsewhere'***

In the opening scene of Samira Makhmalbaf's film *Blackboards*, a group of itinerant teachers with blackboards on their backs are travelling along the rocky wilds of Iran's border with Iraq, in search of students. Suddenly, with the sound of gunfire, they all huddle together in a tortoise formation until they realise the danger has passed. The story then follows two of the teachers' ongoing efforts to sell their educational wares to unwilling characters along the way: child smugglers, elderly villagers, nomadic Kurds. What emerges from these frequently comic and often pathetic vignettes is a complete mismatch between the service that the teachers see themselves as being able to provide (i.e. a rudimentary introduction to literacies) and the benefits that their potential students might accrue as a result. One teacher tries to convince the children acting as mules carrying illegal goods over the border that learning to read would give them the

advantage of being able to understand a newspaper; the other tries to persuade the wife he has acquired from force of circumstance (her father is dying of a urinary infection and needs to marry her off) to learn to read the phrase 'I love you' off the blackboard whilst she occupies herself solely with her son's basic needs. In these instances, education as a given good is finding it hard to prove its value in a mutually beneficial transaction. Rather, instruction seems to speak a language whose authority and necessity, although seemingly self-evident to the teachers, does not invite others to respond either to them, or to their own situation. In short, there is no dialogue, either between educator and educated, or between the educated and the content and circumstances of the education they are trying to provide. After all, just being able to read a newspaper is not going to provide either income or escape from forced labour; knowing how to recite 'I love you' from a blackboard is not going to commit the reader to the person from whom they learnt the words.

One defence of the teachers in *Blackboards* might be – though it is not always immediately apparent – that they uphold a traditional idea of education, but are just unable to translate that idea into context, as they themselves have not questioned its given-ness. Contextually speaking, for people living difficult lives in dangerous circumstances, this idealism falls on deaf ears, especially amidst the urgency of survival, when everyone is in far more need of food, money, and family stability than they are of the alphabet or arithmetic. As the director herself has said,

[t]he children have to smuggle every day from one country to another country to stay alive. They just want to be alive. To them, they feel education is useless.

For the old people, the time for them to learn is over. They want to go back to their own country and die in their own country. So education also seems useless.

(Interview with Anthony Kaufman, [www.indiewire.com](http://www.indiewire.com))

In the world that Makhmalbaf presents to the viewer, there is a gulf between a universal ideal and the people's daily existence that education as didactics fails to address.

Education simply for the sake of being literate is not going to prove an incentive in an environment in which such skills can't help even the teachers to become self-sufficient, let alone enlightened about their situation. They too are dependent on others to live.

But to summarise the film as a simple dialectical opposition between the idealist and populist stances would also be to ignore the moments in which meaningful connections *are* made between the teachers and the people with whom they have encounters. In one scene, for example, an old man asks one of the teachers to read his son's letter to him, written from prison in Iraq, where he has been fighting. The teacher explains that he can't read either Arabic or Turkish, but the old man insists until the teacher resolves to offer a conjectured summary based upon the conditions in which such a letter was written, and appeasing the expectations of the father. In this instance, the teacher has not instructed the old man in anything, but (whether the viewer agrees with his actions or not) has responded to another's need for dialogue with their own circumstances – whilst also having to recognise his (the teacher's) own shortcomings. Through this action, he begins to negotiate between the idealism of believing that education might be able to offer all the answers as long as one is instructed in all the right ways, and the confrontation with the limits and realities of necessity and contingency. Meanwhile, the other teacher, Reebair, ignites the interest of one of the

boys when he discovers that they share the same name (which, he explains, means ‘He who walks’, or, ‘The traveller’). The rest of their narrative sees the boy learning to spell the letters in his name, culminating in his copying its scripted version on the blackboard to his delight – immediately before he is shot by border guards. The elation at being able to inscribe one’s own stamp on the world is not one that can be felt totally by anyone other than the boy himself, but can be (partially) communicated via his response.

Makhmalbaf’s film holds a particular attraction as a prelude to the issues I want to explore in this thesis because it imagines a number of elements that will be central to my formulation of an understanding of higher education and its development: communication, the global dimension, responsibility, dialogue, otherness, and contingency. I want to explore the notion that education is not just a matter of trying to bring ideals to a complete realisation, or one of concentrating on instrumental aspects of urgency (as in policy reform). Instead, I will argue that the value of education lies much more in the interactions, or dialogue, that I have begun to describe above, i.e. moments which have meaning given their context, and given the responsibility people feel toward others. However, it will be important to remember that the dynamic force of that dialogue, preventing it from landing on either side of the fence, resides in the acknowledgment that both ideal and practicality have a purpose in expressing an educational tension, and that it is in exploring this tension that theoretical claims can be made, whilst leaving the door open for them to be challenged.

Universities provide a unique site for testing that tension. Jacques Derrida (2002) has written that it is on the border between the realities of contextual

circumstance and the limitless possibilities of ‘what if’ (those realities were different, for example), that the university must “negotiate and organize its resistance” (p.55). This resistance, according to Derrida, has to be more than just the critical resistance thought to be a key activity of the university (Barnett, 1997); it must be ‘deconstructive’ as well, entailing even the questioning of the foundations upon which that critical function rests, if criticality is not to close out alternatives.

I will argue that an openness towards things being otherwise, as in Derrida’s notion of “what if?” (i.e. what if things were different to how I believe I understand them to be), is already constituted in the *unknowability* of the other, the impossibility of achieving a total understanding of another person, another situation, or a field of learning. Each of these has the potential to change, or to be different from how they are currently perceived, in ways that can’t be explained or anticipated by the laws of economics or human reason. In *Blackboards*, just as Makhmalbaf’s teacher has to blunder his way through translating the letter based solely on assumptions about the old man’s family background, the viewer has to make certain assumptions about context, narrative, and language that will be supported by cinematic technique and subtitling in order for there to be any interlocution (i.e. if I as a viewer am to get anything from the film, I must believe that I am invited to at least participate in its conversation, even if it is a depiction of difficulties facing Iranian Kurds). Just as important as the act of education, then, and the *interaction* which it stimulates, is the hesitation that comes about as a consequence of elements that are never fully transparent, either to the teacher, the student, to the observer, because the director makes no claims to any original authorial transparency of understanding. Her questions are the viewer’s questions: Who is the person being educated? What does he or she need from

education? How is it possible to know? What is the nature of the institution in which he or she is educated? Can people become free through education? What does that freedom look like? And also, how free am I in being able to assess these issues?

These questions are certainly already being posed in the fields of comparative and international education. Michael Crossley, for example, has summarised the umbrella agenda of comparative education in the question “[H]ow best can we learn from experience elsewhere?” (Crossley, 2008). Whilst possibly only a term of passing utility in this phrase, I think the idea of ‘elsewhere’ requires significantly greater attention when considering the international dimensions of education. In economic terms, elsewhere could just be seen as foreign market with a currency of its own, which has an exchange value that can easily be converted back into a domestic currency. One educational policy that works ‘elsewhere’ can therefore work just as well ‘here’. To my mind, this calculation ignores the fact the values attaching to educational practice in any one place might trouble its logical conversion, or transplantation, to another. From some perspectives, particularly those most concerned with postcolonialism, this might render all forms of comparative education and international educational research acts of assimilating, or even colonising, elsewhere through assuming the translatability of its values. I don’t believe this need be the case, especially if the dialogue I will propose as being educationally important as much at international as at intersubjective level, is to be sustained. However, I do think ‘elsewhere’ needs to be thought of slightly differently in educational terms: rather than pre-determining it as a known location with transparent and translatable value(s), it might be considered as a place in which value is not yet known, and has to be communicated.

To this end, I have introduced my own questions with an ‘elsewhere’ portrayed by Samira Makhmalbaf, an imagined depiction of realities in a country and culture beyond my experience. ‘Elsewhere’, as I understand it, does not necessarily mean abroad. There can be ‘elsewheres’ in other cultures, other people, ourselves, and our language. My reformulation of Crossley’s question, then, would be: ‘How best can elsewhere be experienced educationally?’. As such, I intend to demonstrate how ideological discourse, principally that of economic and development policy, has distorted the way we understand difference in a language of ‘development,’ in that ideology more accurately describes processes of what I would call ‘envelopment’. Etymologically speaking, the verb ‘to develop’ means to unfold, whilst ‘to envelop’ means ‘to enfold’. I want to draw on this distinction between ‘unfolding’ and ‘enfolding’ throughout the thesis to suggest that the latter denotes a sense of encroachment, and an attempt to bring everything within the domain of one thing. ‘Unfolding’, on the other hand, has the potential to suggest that things might extend from a certain position, but not with the same intention to dominate. In the context of education, I will argue that such an extension comes not just from individuals (teachers and students), but from institutions as a whole, research that stands independently of those that have authored it, and from the cultures and countries from which it unfolds. Development as unfolding, then, relativises to a certain degree the notions of universal progress commonly associated with the term – an association that is more accurately described as envelopment, the imposed universality of any one point of view. If all education is always unfolding from multiple places, then ‘elsewhere’ must be seen as a position from which anyone and everyone can learn something new, rather than somewhere which simply offers a comparison for that which is already known. Development as unfolding is a means by which some of the assumptions about educational progress according to economic

status might be undermined, without suggesting that education is an entirely relative issue.

### **1.3. Rationale**

The impetus for this study arose from the observation that, although higher education is now talked about in global terms and evaluated accordingly, discussion around the direction and purpose of universities varies enormously according to national economic status. Marketisation, managerialism, privatisation, and entrepreneurialism in higher education are considered global issues that potentially threaten principles of ‘The University’ considered by many to be fundamental, such as institutional autonomy, the university as public good, and academic freedom (Barnett, 2000; Walker, 2006; Altbach and McGill Peterson, 2007). The expansion of services to virtual, online, and distance provision has also provoked questions over the degree to which massification is the best and fairest means of educating at a ‘higher’ level, and if anything is being lost as a result (Scott, 1995, 1998; McNay, 2006). In wealthier nations, the debates over state intervention, economic expansion and institutional integrity continue to be largely conducted within the domestic political and academic spheres – though even this luxury is threatened by standardising or commodifying interventions such as the Bologna process (Zgaga, 2012) and the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) (Altbach, 2010; Verger, 2010). In poorer nations, however, policy and funding are often received from – or in partnership with – external sources (McGrath, 2010), especially international organisations such as the World Bank, UNESCO and the OECD. The role of the universities in these countries, therefore, whether in their service to students or to society, is largely determined for them from without. This obligatory outsourcing is clearly not consistent with fundamental principles of autonomy and the



public good already mentioned (given that autonomy can become highly conditional and the public good compromised by increasing pressure to privatise higher education), especially as the debates over the function of universities and their relations to those that they serve rarely occur within the institutions themselves due to dependency and distance. In these instances, higher education development frequently becomes more the concern of experts in the field of development economics and development studies (World Bank, 2002, 2009) instead of being an educational issue, a split which can only drive the developed-developing division further by treating higher education – its priorities and its purpose – entirely differently at either end of the spectrum. To make this point clearer, I will suggest that the economic and social justice approaches to higher education development are in fact more concerned with performative projects of ‘higher development’ than they are with the educational dimension contained within universities.

This project therefore aims at recovering what might be seen as the ‘educational’ element of higher education development, by asking whether there are not educational processes happening in universities worldwide that occur despite economic circumstances and the need to redress social imbalances. To engage this element, it will be important to show the ways in which the field of international higher education development has been constructed to suit certain purposes, and to then show how those purposes might not only be limiting for certain individuals, groups, societies or nations, but that they might be educationally unjust. The argument is therefore necessarily levelled at both the ways in which humanity is currently conceived educationally, and the ways in which that conception might be thought of otherwise, for the good and just treatment of others. This disposition impacts upon whether people (academics or

students) change, and can bring about change, as a result of university education, without being taught prescriptively or told what it is that they must change about themselves, each other, or their societies. I think this is an important point because change often arrives from unexpected and unknown places, or 'elsewhere', so to try and determine the way it takes place can only prevent the unexpected from occurring (being told exactly what to look out for in a film and the context in which to appreciate those things, for example, might limit the way in which a person responds to it). What is explored here is the possibility that this prevention may even extend to the non-recognition of another person's humanity, as indeed was the case in the setting up of universities during colonial times (with the imposition of the idea of a civilised humans based on European ideals), and may also be the case in the discourses of development here discussed.

#### **1.4. Structure**

I see this project as posing three main research questions:

- What is the (educational) role/purpose of universities in a globalised age?
- Is the field of higher education development serving to advance that role/purpose, or is it serving others?
- How can universities be theorised (in educational terms) to best serve that role/purpose?

Whilst the answering of these questions is best brought out in the concluding chapter of the thesis, their interconnectedness is explored in five stages, which constitute the five chapters between the introduction and conclusion. This structure, as discussed further

below, is also essential to the overall methodological approach, which aims to arrive at being an example in itself of the dialogical and answerable educational approach being put forward. The questions being asked, and the structural framework in which they are being asked, are intended to challenge the international orientation of educational practice in universities, by challenging some of the assumptions that accompany those practices (ideas about the politics of international education, its freedom, and its power structures, etc.).

### *Historical context*

The thesis undertakes in chapter two to provide an historical context in light of which contemporary issues concerning higher education and universities can be discussed. I therefore set out a review of the birth and growth of universities since the Middle Ages, their different purposes and the ways in which different thinkers have contributed to new directions for their role and function. This historical contextualisation will serve to show that the university has never been able to exist as abstracted from historical or social circumstance, but is inextricably bound up with economic and socio-political processes. The question that such an analysis poses is whether it is more helpful to posit an ideal of “The University” to which educational activity can aspire, or whether it is more helpful to identify those problems in society (or other countries) which *universities* can most assist in correcting. The juxtaposition of the two suggests that neither is entirely satisfactory: the ideal always risks being too broadly defined, exclusionary and reified in its formulation; the purely corrective orientation is too localised and immediate, lacking in a more global perspective. The contextualisation of the university shows that the theorising of education itself does not exist independently of context, but at the same time is not reducible to its context.

*Field of study*

Whilst the wider theoretical issue in this thesis is that of the role and function of universities today, I have chosen to approach this issue via the more specific (disciplinary and discursive) field of higher education development as an independent discourse. This field relates predominantly to the expansion and cultivation of higher education services in poorer – or ‘developing’ – countries, and its history dates back to the establishment of post-war international organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Foundation (IMF). The reason behind looking at this particular field is to show how easily higher education today can become overwhelmed by those interests mentioned above – i.e. economic or social justice interests – in the name of ‘development’, whilst other educational dimensions might be lost. This survey of the field considers the transition of approaches to higher education development from human capital theory to the increasingly prolific human capability approach (CA). The claim of the latter is that it has moved from a position of understanding education merely as a means for generating wealth and profit, to looking at the other aspects of wellbeing which people stand to gain via a good education.

My argument here is that there are potential benefits that can accrue from either approach, but that the insistence upon a notion of development that upholds a linear trajectory from ‘developing’ to ‘developed’, attaches development too closely to a *single* idea of improvement or progress in education that is not sufficiently open to difference and multiplicity in a global context. The risk in practical terms is that poorer countries are often dependent upon both financial, policy, and ‘knowledge resources’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Publishers, online journal databases, etc.

from wealthier countries or international organisations that steer their understanding of development according to preconceived valuable outcomes. It is argued that in fact the field of higher education development often ignores what might be considered educational issues altogether (including the issue of how best to engage with what is not known – about the other and the world – in education), instead prioritising concerns which uphold singular, or ‘monologic’, views about what constitutes good education and the type of society to be constructed via it.

### *Theoretical problem*

In chapter four, I show that there is a problem common to both conceiving of educational purpose in terms of profit or material gain, and to viewing it as an instrument for addressing social inequality. This is not to say that these are not important concerns, particularly in the case of the latter, but that they are limited by their emphasis on one function (administration, welfare), which in each denies other possible values, both known and unknown. Given the terms human capital and human capability, I have chosen to define this common problem as one of an overemphasis on a predetermined idea of the human, or *humanism*. To ensure a congruency between the history of the university and the field of higher education development, I retrace a history of humanism(s) that is itself often closely affiliated with the growth of universities in Europe, to show how concentrations of power and knowledge within universities have attempted to determine what constitutes the true nature, or essence, of humanity, according to which education is then instrumentalised in realising. The paradox of humanism is that the idea of what constitutes this true nature has always also been subject to change, and yet the drive to discover its final truth has not abated (the same is true of finding the ‘key’ to international development). The more problematic

side to this paradox is that any conception of what constitutes 'the human', also inevitably leaves those considered 'inhuman' outside of its remit, until such a time that that conception undergoes a reformulation (through civil or women's rights movements, for example).

This leads to the possibility that any humanism is a form of exclusion or discrimination, as it relies on other binary distinctions between the civilised and the non-civilised, the developed and the non-developed, the capable and the incapable, to justify the actions it takes in its name. In terms of higher education development, then, there are two important issues to highlight at the end of this section: firstly, that both human capital and human capability approaches risk imposing an idea of the human upon others to legitimate change that may well be necessary but in the process might reproduce some of the inequalities or injustices it seeks to address; secondly, that this imposition of a humanist approach in fact creates an obstacle to the possible freedom (to change) that education might provide, rather than reconciling development, education and freedom. In short, higher education development might be preventing poorer countries from developing (in terms of unfolding) through their policy advice and implementation (or processes of envelopment, from a universal perspective).

### *Theoretical alternative*

The alternative to the humanist approaches described above is put forward as a dialogical approach to theorising education, which explicitly does not assume the true nature of the human in advance of the education it seeks to provide. This is to prevent against the imposition of any singular understanding of the human that risks exclusion or does not invite alternative understandings to form part of a wider discussion. This is

not to say that all education is a conversation about humanity, but to say that education is part of a dialogue which does not assume the relationship between knowledge and humanity, and the utility or value of determining one for the sake of the other, but rather discovers the value of education in dialogue itself. There are two claims made in this section: the first is that dialogue, particularly as formulated by Mikhail Bakhtin, is distinct from both dialectics and discourse theories in the way that it understands communication, meaning and multiplicity. The second is that this understanding of dialogue makes a case for education in general as being a valuable process on its own terms rather than being a means for serving economic growth or individual wellbeing, but also for universities in particular as being dialogical institutions which foster a responsibility for knowledge and others in a way that does not demand prior received instruction (in what constitutes ‘the good’). This responsibility is to be discovered in the other, not so much as an individual other but in the notion of ‘otherness’, which exceeds the possibility of knowing its true nature or essence as embodied by one person.

### *Test case*

Dialogue as an active and responsible engagement with otherness makes a case for freedom in education that neither pertains to the individual as an absolute right, nor resides in ‘knowing’ absolutely what makes a human free. Instead, freedom is a constant invitation to further dialogue with the world and the revisitation of received ideas and knowledge. I therefore argue in chapter six that the concept of academic freedom can be considered as a particular example of this dialogical approach, as well as an educational concept that is unique to universities, but only inasmuch as it is being enacted rather than bestowed.

Once again, I place the concept of academic freedom within a historical context, to show how it has changed and the various purposes it has served and been made to serve. I argue that to formulate academic freedom as a right that pertains to individuals, that protects certain interests and can even acquire a certain exchange value of its own, is to risk reducing it to a passive – and perhaps ultimately then performative – function in university education, rather than emphasising an active responsibility towards otherness that keeps dialogue open. If academic freedom is confined to the same spectrum of those that have it and those that do not – as with human rights and capabilities approaches – then assumptions about equality, development and humanity will continue to be determined in a top-down fashion that cannot break any cycle of dependency. Academic freedom provides an example of the educational purpose of universities not by the outright rejection of its value as a right, but by simultaneously affirming its value as a responsibility which does not assume the value of outcomes in advance.

### **1.5. Methodology**

According to Malcolm Tight's loosely defined list of methodological approaches to higher education research, this project might be understood as a combination of conceptual ("more theorized and theoretical studies") and critical ("studies that set out to critique established positions") approaches to understanding the role and function of universities today (Tight, 2012, p.8). However, I would argue that the thesis also incorporates what Tight describes as "documentary" (i.e. including historical studies and policy analyses) and "phenomenographic" ("exploring different aspects of a given phenomenon") dimensions. I think that my own more generalised methodological approach benefits from, but is not limited to, each of these more specific



methodologies. However, there is a danger that a more three-dimensional approach can blur the exact level of engagement with the issue being addressed, i.e. international higher education development as an educational concern. In attempting, for example, to both critique established theoretical positions whilst also affirming a theoretical approach of my own, the question of whether the thesis amounts to a caution against theorizing universities in certain ways, or a discernible theory of the university in its own right, is a legitimate one. There is also the possibility that the argument tends more towards the abstract theoretical than the practicable, in terms of how ‘real’ universities are dealing with ‘real’ situations today. I see all these positions as presenting challenges, and to consider any one of them independently of the others would be to the detriment of the thesis as a whole. It is the exploration of dialogism in chapter five that articulates the ways in which such a dialogue can be both critical and affirmative. The thesis attempts to redress something of a deficiency in higher education research, acknowledged by Tight when saying that “much higher education research...does not engage with theory to any great degree” (p.10). To engage with theory in this work, however, means both drawing upon resources directly applicable to universities and higher education (historical accounts, policy documents, etc.), as well as those that provide perspectives from elsewhere (Bakhtinian dialogism, for example, often being confined to literary and cultural studies), to provide critical and conceptual dimensions. But to theorise higher education and universities on their own terms also requires engaging with the very problem posed by the thesis itself, the question of what is ‘not yet known’ about universities and their educational purpose. To my mind, there are three possible ways of engaging with this problem that I attempt to enact in the exposition of it.

The first is through a discussion of theorising that gives an account of educational purpose, whilst acknowledging the impossibility of that account being complete in such a way that it universalises the field of educational study. Biesta's (2006, 2010) notion of 'subjectification' is referred to as one way of articulating an educational purpose that is neither entirely socially-oriented nor entirely self-interested (as might be the case if there were too much emphasis on either the socialisation through education, or on qualification), but is an education of the subject that might challenge given conceptualisations of what is inherently 'good' about either society or the self (with the two often being conflated to create an ideal of the 'human'). 'Subjectification', as an ongoing process of becoming a subject in a world of multiplicity and difference, is therefore a reminder of the fact that this subject can never be fully transparent – or 'known' – to the educational researcher.

The second way to engage with the question of 'not knowing' is to deal with an issue still present in the first: the problem of the 'subject' becoming so much the concern of education that there is little discernible departure from the original over-emphasis on the 'human'. Educational theory can address this issue by granting the means by which the subject comes into being (content of education, curriculum, pedagogical approach) as important a place in the discussion over purpose as the subject itself. In terms of method, then, I intend to draw attention throughout to the ways in which there is a tension between a lack of language to talk about the university today (Standish, 2005) – to combat the discourses of efficiency, excellence, and development, for example – and the ways in which the university might be defined by its ability to provide that language itself, given the right circumstances (Masschelein & Ricken, 2009). The suggestion is that the only way to engage with what is 'not known'

in educational theory and research is not to only use the extant language, or to invent an entirely new one, but to show how extant language can both conceal ideological purpose as well as hold new possibilities for the subject of education. The ideological discourse of development, for example, which I see as often being more a process of *envelopment*, has the (etymological) potential for being reconceived as ‘unfolding’ from a position (be it that of a subject, institution, culture) that can not be fully transparent or ‘known.’ I therefore try to assume an educational responsibility in my own work by drawing upon a dialogue with extant resources to open them up to new possibilities for interaction, communication and self-formation at university level.

Finally, I hope to theorise universities as educational institutions in their own right, rather than ones that are simply a stage upon a trajectory that can be explained by an over-arching educational theory. Too many ideas of the university still seem to conceive of it as the last educational gateway between youth and adulthood, a notion that is increasingly challenged by the numbers of people returning to university, or beginning it at much later stages in life. The constantly changing nature of universities therefore has to be a significant factor in trying to understand something of their purpose. The strong historical emphasis placed on each stage of this project is intended to show how the university, and latterly higher education, has evolved in dialogical response to various different forces within and without, to demonstrate how its purpose can never be fully reduced to either. In the contemporary situation, however, I try to draw upon enough examples from ‘elsewhere’, to show that a definitive understanding of what ‘The University’ is, is neither possible nor helpful, and that its purpose should be more defined by its many activities than any singular blueprint. These activities are informed by the concepts of dialogism and responsibility in my thesis, and therefore my

method attempts to enact the dialogical and responsible themes that it undertakes to articulate. I will also try and refer as much as possible to ‘universities,’ rather than use the more commonplace parlance of “the university,” to be as linguistically attentive as possible to institutional multiplicity and differences.

## **2. A history of the idea of the university**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This thesis makes a case for addressing international higher education development in terms of the tensions between universities as historically situated institutions, and the theories of education that inform their purpose, rather than by departing initially from a theory of international development. I want to begin my study of the role and function of higher education by looking at the history of the university and the education it has sought to provide in the past, instead of focusing on the financial crises or privation of rights (access, participation, censorship, etc.) commonly prioritised as demanding immediate attention in academic and policy approaches to higher education development in the present. The parallels between ‘ideas’ of the university and actual practices within the university are presented deliberately here as non-contiguous, to show the importance of not seeing the two as somehow harmonious or symmetrical with one another. Indeed, it is this non-harmony that sustains an educational case for the university that does not prioritise establishing an ‘idea’ of the institution before looking at what takes place within it, or vice versa. The university is therefore presented as being in dialogue with history, knowledge, and societal concerns, as well as being dialogically open to the possibility of its being different in the future (for the sake of future knowledge and future generations).

In the previous chapter I suggested that an inherent problem of comparative education is that it holds that comparisons can be made between educational systems in different countries, but only as long as a universal logic for those comparisons obtains. To allow for the idea that perhaps that logic might look different from the perspective

of those about whom comparative conclusions are being drawn, I made a case for not seeing different educational systems as variations on a theme, but rather as possibly presenting with something entirely new or irreducible to one understanding. Education was described therefore as involving ‘an experience of elsewhere’. The notion behind this ‘elsewhere’ is that it should refer to a place which is not yet known, and therefore to which current standards and qualitative measurements do not apply.

If it is possible to understand education as an experience of elsewhere, this possibility lies in stark contrast to an institutional tradition which is often seen to be very much traceable to a particular somewhere. With respect to the university, this means that both the institution and theories of the institution are widely held to be of European origin and tradition. But despite any geographical or historical accuracy contained in this claim, it does not mean that the university today, in a global context, can or should be considered *essentially* European. The arguments against such a notion are numerous: that at the time of the first medieval universities, there was no such concept of Europe; that what constitutes Europe and a European identity has always been fiercely contested throughout history; that many of the original universities differed as much from each other as many of the global models today; that those universities may have been preceded or influenced by the Arab madrasahs (Herrera, 2011), and even have their roots in Greek culture and the schools of Pythagoras and Plato (Pedersen, 1997); that the ‘American’ university model has been as influential on current global trends as any that preceded it; and that Europe is not a useful construct when thinking about the reach and provision of an international education institution. This is not to reject entirely any reflection upon the history of the university to avoid the past placing limits on the present. Rather, it is to recognise that histories of universities,

in being manifold, always pose challenges for the present, but also possibilities for the future.

This chapter, then, seeks to provide an overview of the evolution of a particular way of thinking about the university that has grown up *within* a European tradition that has as its historical markers the stages of the Medieval (c.500-c.1500), the Renaissance (c.1300-c.1600), the Enlightenment (c.1650-c.1789), the Romantic (c.1800-c.1850), the Modern (c.1850-c.1945) and the Postmodern (c.1950-c.2001). Barnett (2013) has bridged these historical periods in terms that define the university in particular, by suggesting that the idea of the university has gone from being a “metaphysical” university, to being a research university, and latterly an entrepreneurial, or corporate, university. The question in both these sequences is the degree to which the university has simply been subject to – and defined by – historical flux, or by contrast the extent to which it has had an active role in determining historical change. Both are important in understanding how the contemporary university has arrived at what Simons and Masschelein (2009a), following Foucault, have described as a “historical self-understanding,” in that it

refers to a conception of time in terms of a historical process of development, progress or accumulation, and to a conception of space in institutional terms focusing on location and extension.

(p. 206)

The authors are here referring to a historical process whereby modern humanity comes to understand all areas of life (culture, language, national identity) as progressing

according to autonomous processes of development. Within these processes, the individual conceives of both the self and the process as “having a historical mission and heading towards a glorious future” (ibid.).

This self-understanding is, according to Simons and Masschelein, exemplified by the tradition of writing on the ‘idea’ of the university, a practice that both affirms the historical processes of which it declares itself to be a part, whilst ensuring their continuity along a similar trajectory for the future. To attempt to show how any ‘idea’ of the university both responded to its socio-cultural situations, whilst at the same time trying to secure a new direction for them, is to show how the history and ideas of the university are inextricably involved. But the modern “historical self-understanding” also reveals how overarching ideas are often deployed to anticipate and determine change in society – including the university’s position in relation to that change. Simons and Masschelein have highlighted this motivation in the modern university by saying that

[t]he modern university regards itself as an institution that orients society and culture towards progress – that is, it guarantees that change goes in the right direction and involves progress and emancipation.

(ibid.)

The concern is that the orientation arrived at here makes little mention of individual subjects, of the academics and students that participate in both the institution and society, but are wholly reducible to neither. Can a university exist or be conceptualised independently of its academe?



The leap from the Medieval model to that of the Enlightenment formulations in this chapter skips an important development in the period of the Renaissance and the Reformation, but for a specific reason: this development opens the discussions in chapter three which assess the ways in which Renaissance humanism contributed to the growth of the discipline and discourse of the humanities, and thereby defined the humanistic vein that characterises not only the majority of subsequent theorising on the university, but extends also into the field of development, drawing its own ontological<sup>2</sup> conclusions between human wellbeing and the purposes of higher education. So whilst I will return to the significance of the Renaissance revolution, this preliminary approach is intended only to set up the deeply problematic nature of higher education discourse when related to an international development setting. To what extent should the purpose of the university be governed by the legacy of a European tradition? What does the challenge from outside that tradition – or from ‘*elsewhere*’ – bring to a wider understanding of the university’s educational possibilities? The contextualisation is therefore not intended as a legitimisation, but a critique of self-legitimation: the ‘European university’ is presented here both as a deliberately hegemonic problem so as to invite the alternative viewpoints later discussed, but also as historically multiple in its actualisations, to demonstrate that a universal conception of the university’s (ideological, political, and even educational) purpose may be neither desirable nor viable.

Barnett (1990) has gone some way in arguing for the need to provide a theoretical framework in which higher education can be discussed – given that it has

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<sup>2</sup> i.e. based on the idea that things truly exist, rather than being, for example, simply a matter of individual apperception.

previously either only been addressed from an abstracted philosophical point of view, or from a policy point of view. With the aim of “theorizing *educationally* about higher education,” he has put forward six elements for a theoretical framework: value background and historical origins; implicit assumptions in the language; the concept(s) of higher education; the epistemological core; the sociological core; and the ideological core (pp.13-14). This framework is useful in beginning to reflect upon how higher education has arrived at its current state, especially in setting up much of the language which governs and may limit the reach of university purpose today. However, because I think that knowledge, societal orientation and power structures are all implicit in the first three of Barnett’s six elements – except that they address its contemporary rather than historical-traditional nature – I will here draw only on those first three for an introduction to the history of the university, and allow for the other three to be drawn out over the course of the thesis itself. That is to say, for example, that the question of what constitutes knowledge and the way that the university addresses that question underlies all the discussions presented here, and therefore do not require a systematic representation of their own here.

What’s more, because this framework only works retrospectively, there has to be added another element also, which I hope will be the enactment of a dialogical approach itself: the idea that however many voices are invited to contribute to this discussion on higher education and its possible development, the fact that the discussion is situated and therefore many voices will not be accounted for – and never could be – means that, even at its close, the dialogue is just another invitation to begin itself again. Finally, I will eventually want to differ from Barnett in my insistence on the use of the word ‘universities’ rather than ‘higher education.’ Again, this is in the spirit of

dialogism, and the idea that any truth is only as good as the speaking of it, and therefore speaking about the university as reducible to higher (or tertiary) education blurs a problem rather than addressing its inherent difficulties. To talk about universities means here talking about the relationship between ideals and actualities, of which there are always many; to talk about higher education would be to ignore the ideals (or legacy) and generalise the actualities.

## **2.2. The Medieval university**

Historians of universities have often taken their subject to be analogous with the history of modern European thought itself (see, for example, d'Irsay, 1933). Thus an entire swathe of intellectual history stretching from the Middle Ages to post-World War II is already not only bound up within one geographical region, but further reduced to just a number of scattered intensities within that region (i.e. pockets of Italy, France, England, and Germany). In many ways, such histories justify suspicions of exclusivity and elitism in terms of class, gender, ethnicity and other categories that are often held against the contemporary university. On the other hand, to critique universities only within a framework of sustained historical discrimination would be to accept that justified suspicions are the only way to understand the evolution of the institutions. An alternative is to see how they originally differed from each other, and indeed always have since, and that it has been these differences that have allowed the university to continue to provide a unique, though still problematic, educational service.

It is the climate in which the universities emerged that is as important as their official self-identification as such. Cobban (1975) has narrated how Medieval scholarly activity began to gather in a period of “a general sense of unease that Christian

civilization was being infiltrated by disruptive and distorting pagan morality” (p.7), and that the roots of the university “were inextricably bound up with utilitarian values” (p.8) of harnessing education to professional and ecclesiastical needs of society. Pedersen (1997) makes a similar claim about those schools beginning to thrive in the twelfth century:

It should be noted that the twelfth- century schools of Paris, Bologna and Salerno won their renown as *studia generalia* by the merit of their own teaching efforts, not as any result of prompting or support from the social authorities or the church...On the other hand, it cannot be emphasised enough that these specialised schools, far more of course than the lesser cathedral schools, addressed the growing needs of society in just those categories of higher education that were most needed, by producing teachers, physicians, jurists, and theologians.

(p.134)

Already these claims present a challenge to the ideals later set out by models such as that of Immanuel Kant and Cardinal Newman, to be discussed later, which championed autonomy and disinterestedness over any form of utility. Universities, it seems, did not actively encourage any illusory status from the outset; there have always been other interests at stake.

Claims about the nature of the curriculum which spawned the universities, that is, a specific course of learning for a ‘free citizen’ proposed by Plato and expounded as the *artes liberales* by Cicero, have also been questioned. Whilst d’Irsay (1933) is

satisfied with tracing the gradual integration and coherence of the liberal arts curriculum from Plato through to the birth of the University of Paris, Cobban describes the idea of the liberal arts as “*de facto* basis of education in the early medieval period” as “wholly misleading” (p.11). Cobban instead suggests that for the majority of scholars, “the main priority was the speedy absorption of a selected area of learning in preparation for a chosen career” (p.12). Whether or not his version is accepted as the truth, Cobban has posed an interesting problem for educational idealists: if higher education was born into utilitarianism and functionality, does this mean that utilitarianism and functionality constitute part of the essence of a university’s purpose? If this were the case, the current trends of managerialism, entrepreneurialism, and efficiency in global higher education today would appear to be continuations of the medieval priorities that Cobban describes. But if preparation for a career were *all* that happened in a university, wouldn’t it limit the conceptualisation of the freedom of scholars to research, study or teach? The notion of becoming a ‘free citizen’ through education (as explored in later chapters of this thesis) need not come into play at all if freedom is only associated with acquiring the necessary skills for achieving employment and job security.

Even if the early universities placed much greater emphasis on the employability of their students, this is perhaps not argument enough to say that employability accounted for all of their purpose. Nor does such an argument change the fact that universities have taken on different roles, functions, structures and political positions since the Middle Ages, none of which can be necessarily discounted as less valid simply by virtue of this more instrumental idea. Cobban’s own important

observation on the origin of the word university itself is enough to reject such essentialism:

The word ‘university’ has nothing to do with the universality of learning, and it is only by accident that the Latin term *universitas* has given rise to the established nomenclature. For *universitas* was a general word of wide application in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and was used to denote any kind of aggregate or body of persons with common interests and independent legal status.

(1975, p.23)

It is the idea of common interests that I particularly wish to emphasise here, as it introduces the possibility of multiplicity residing within a (comm)unity – one which “works as a kind of laboratory of experience and thinking” (Simons and Masschelein, 2009a, p.246) – which will be an important consideration at both the individual and institutional levels in later discussions. Suffice to say that it implies that there can be no myth of universality in the university, at least in terms of its origins. Almost immediately, for example, notable differences emerged between the collegiate, chancellor-led models of Oxford and Cambridge, and the monarchical, cathedral-centred *studium* of Paris (to which the former were in large part a response, when Oxford received many exiled academics following the political fallout over the role of the friars in the University of Paris). However, as is demonstrated by one final point from Cobban, some of the historical, ideological and linguistic *aporia* woven into the university from the outset require more attention than others:

In its broadest and deepest terms...the humanistic movement of the eleventh and twelfth centuries bequeathed a set of values which were firmly implanted in the universities. Of fundamental importance were the belief in the dignity of man who, even in his fallen state, was capable of the fullest intellectual and spiritual enlargement, the belief in an ordered universe accessible to rational inquiry, and the possibility of man's mastery of his environment through his intellect, cumulative knowledge and experience.

(Cobban, 1975, p.14)

“Belief in the dignity of man”, “an ordered universe accessible to rational inquiry” and “mastery of his environment”, are three components of a monolithic, anthropocentric and hegemonic worldview that represents a radical departure from the idea of an institution whose main purpose, at least according to Cobban, was the “speedy absorption of a selected area of learning in preparation for a chosen career”. The rights to *challenge* ideas of life, liberty and happiness, and most importantly humanity, are seemingly omitted in this phrasing, suggesting that the “ordered universe” to which Cobban refers, is not to be troubled.

### **2.3. The Kantian university**

The transmission of values as being humanly, rather than divinely, received, was forcefully articulated by the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) who wrote extensively on both education and the role of the university. Kant argued that:

Man can only become man by education. He is merely what education makes of him. It is noticeable that man is only educated by man – that is, by men who have themselves been educated. Hence with some people it is want of discipline and instruction on their own part, which makes them in turn unfit educators of their pupils.

(Kant, 2003, p.6)

Kant's insistence on education as a human endeavour was underpinned by his faith in the improvability of human nature over generations through rational inquiry.

Motivation for this action had previously come from the idea of realising an image of perfection (the *imago dei*, the "image of god", or divine *Bild*), either by the externalised following of Christ's example or through the notion that this imprint was already upon the soul (Siljander & Sutinen, 2012, p.4). Kant's elevation of rationality over nature or spirituality meant that education was a concentrated human drive not with the realisation of the divine image as its end, but rather the realisation of 'pure reason' (Kant, 1998).

Arguably, Kant's greatest and most contentious contribution to ideas of the university concern the discourse of reason and the role of the philosophy faculty in furthering rational inquiry (Kant, 1978; 1998). These also arose from a response to a number of crises in late eighteenth-century Prussia, not least the challenges to religious and civil freedom presented by the authority of the church and king. With the threat of the spirit of the French revolution spreading across Europe, Kant's reflections on the university must be seen very much in light of his awareness that learned individuals can and must be at the forefront of such change, as well as a belief that the more



conservative institutions of church and monarchy would do much to prevent such upheaval. In a letter responding to Friedrich Wilhelm's request that Kant concentrate all his efforts on "the progressive realisation of our paternal purpose" (quoted in Kant, 1979, p.11), Kant stresses the fundamental importance of the philosophy faculty in a university to fulfil its purpose of providing a space for public, rather than private, reason. His argument is that whereas the Kaiser would like to see all the faculties enjoined in the one endeavour of furthering the imperial cause, the best service the philosophy faculty can offer is to provide rational reflections on aspects of law and governance. To do so in the best way possible, the faculty must be entirely free from the possibility of coercion on the part of those forces. Kant (1979) describes the faculties of law, theology and medicine as ones which are all in some way beholden to the government, meaning that

the philosophy faculty, because it must answer for the truth of the teachings it is to adopt or even allow, must be conceived as free and subject only to laws given by reason, not by the government.

(p.43)

Kant's notion of truth is one that is arrived at through processes of reason. If the philosophy faculty is to provide the truth, then these processes must be as free from coercion as possible. The freedom of the philosopher is thus one which is completely removed from utilitarian constraints. The responsibility of the philosopher in practising public reason, according to Kant, lies in the fact that he speaks only for himself,<sup>3</sup> as opposed to exercising private reason as part of the more general social machinery

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<sup>3</sup> The gendering of 'the philosopher' is an intentional anachronism here, based upon the terminology that Kant himself would have used.

(which always involves speaking on someone else's behalf, i.e. the Church or State).

Just as Socrates did, the philosopher (above all other learned men) risks himself in this exercise.

Kant's formulation of the relation between reason, truth and freedom, and their institutionalisation in the university, however, is problematic on a number of grounds, but primarily because it conceives of a faculty that actually has no reciprocal motion, either political or ethical, back towards the society which grants its freedom. As such, the bubble in which this institution of abstracted rationality exists can continue to pursue scholarship according to its own strictures, but those strictures are increasingly unavailable to critique themselves. There is neither any one else capable of challenging them from outside, nor is there any obligation on the part of those within the university to expose their faculty to that sort of scrutiny. As Derrida (1992) points out, Kant is motioning towards a purely theoretical idea of the university:

The pure concept of the university is constructed by Kant on the possibility and necessity of a language purely theoretical, inspired solely by an interest in truth, with a structure that one today would call purely constative. This ideal is undoubtedly guaranteed, in the Kantian proposal as such, by pure practical reason, by prescriptive utterances, by the postulate of freedom on the one hand, and, on the other by virtue of a de facto political authority supposed in principle to let itself be guided by reason.

(p.20)

In Derrida's view, Kant failed to recognise that no work can take place within an institution that isn't already entirely circumscribed and constructed along ideological and discursive lines, to allow for that work to take place and in part to determine how it does take place, in terms of the interpretative community that has been created. In short, both the history and philosophy of the university are themselves already coercive factors in its functioning 'freely,' and to ignore that fact is to create an illusion out of both reason and the truth it can provide.

The fact of Kant's having used his promotion to full professor at the university of Königsberg to appoint only colleagues that supported a Kantian outlook (Kuehn, 2001) demonstrates how blinded he was to the ideological underpinnings of pure reason. As Readings (1996) has observed, "[r]eason can only be instituted if the institution remains a fiction," (p.60). This fictionalisation, it might be argued, occurs when the 'idea' of the university is prized above the education that takes places within it. Such a fictional university then cannot begin to account for societal problems if it does not see itself as being to some extent (though not necessarily entirely) bound up with them, as it will only create an abstraction out of the human (or its rational processes) to whom its truths are meant to apply.

#### **2.4. The Humboldtian university**

Thus it was that German Idealism and Romanticism attempted to reintroduce an idea of the human that was both rational *and* natural, with the latter being understood as the reminder of tendencies that prevent intellectual inquiry from abstraction, and tie it back into the society from which it arises. In the instance of higher education, it was Wilhelm von Humboldt who made the most significant advancements of thought regarding

universities amongst the German Idealists of his generation. Humboldt argued that if men were ‘really free,’ there would indeed be no need for State intervention in their development and education, because their work and communities flourish best in this way. He also suggested that national education always runs the risk of tending towards homogeneity, “since it at least presupposes the selection and appointment of some particular instructor,” thereby promoting “a definite form of development” (Humboldt, 2009, p.51). For Humboldt, the roles of Man (sic.) and citizen must certainly interact, but with as little determining of the latter as possible, because “the most beneficial results occur when the citizen becomes spontaneously active in the State itself” (ibid.), rather than being told how to behave in relation to it through education. He writes that the “fruitful relationship between man and citizen would wholly cease if the man were sacrificed to the citizen” (ibid.).

The important concept to come out of Humboldt’s reflections on education as regards the state is that of a new formulation of the notion of *Bildung*, which he described as the linking of the self to the world in “the most general, most animated and most unrestrained interplay” (von Humboldt, quoted in Løvlie and Standish, 2003, p. 2). Whereas previous uses of the word had predominantly referred to the gradual realisation of the divine *Bild* (image) within oneself, or as a following of Christ’s example (Siljander & Sutinen, 2012), Humboldt’s formulation makes a marked departure in education by relating the inner self to the outer whole. In doing so, he draws out three important educational issues: that there is both a *formal* (in a more curricular sense), and a *formative* dimension to education; that the self requires the greatest amount of freedom in order to develop its formational side; and that it is necessary that the self be linked to the world, rather than in opposition to it (Humboldt,

1999; 2009). The formative aspect to education was that which Humboldt prized above formal instruction, because only as such would a freer education produce the spontaneous citizens that would both participate in the world (and therefore in State activity as citizens) and preserve the dynamism of individual intellectual energy that will constantly test the State's legitimacy and purpose for the sake of justice (Humboldt, 2009, p.12).

The significance of this formulation of *Bildung* is great in introducing the complications surrounding the discussions on academic freedom. Because *Bildung* in itself suggests a certain kind of freedom, it seems that there is a potential conflict of interests whereby the individual needs the most amount of freedom in order to develop, but that s/he can only develop in relation to a world that may or may not already provide that freedom. In the case of academic freedom, as will be discussed in chapter 6, this entails questioning the extent to which the community of scholars in a university can be free to teach (*Lehrfreiheit*) and study (*Lernfreiheit*) for their own personal development as well as that of others, whilst requiring that their freedom to do so be officially recognised (as a right). I will return to the subject of *Bildung* as a useful (or not) term in theorising education below, but for now it is worth considering the contribution Humboldt's thought made to the university model specifically.

Humboldt's vision of the university in Germany was one which differed institutionally from the already extant academies – which were run by those with proven ability in certain specialised fields of knowledge – and the gymnasium. The gymnasium's responsibility was to concentrate more on both discipline and analysis of what is already known in a field, whereas the university should be concerned with

freedom and a pursuit of the truth. As Kant's letter to Friedrich Wilhelm indicates, the 'truth' was always in danger of being compromised by external coercion, and influential professors such as Kant looked for both arguments and initiatives in favour of university autonomy. Autonomy would preserve a search for truth uncompromised by external interests, as well as allowing for greater personal development.

The universities of Halle (1694) and Göttingen (1737) had been perhaps the first to make a significant break from the institutions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which were at that time losing large numbers to the "academies" which favoured character-building over learning for its own sake (McClelland, 1980). Göttingen followed Halle's example of combining the gentlemanly education in sporting exercise, languages and new sciences, along with practical instruction in civil service education. However, according to McClelland, it made a claim for being Europe's first modern university on the basis that its operating expenses were largely donated by the estates, rather than coming from the Elector George II. The leading founder of Göttingen, Münchhausen (1688-1770), also ensured that theology played a much less significant role in the university, setting a more secular precedent for the institution in general (McClelland, 1980, p.39), and made a case for scholars not just to study, but to conduct active scholarship through publication also. The modernizing, secular, state-funded institution that emerged paved the way for a second wave of university reform in the eighteenth-century.

The critique of the Göttingen model came from those that saw it as becoming too utilitarian (*ibid.*, p.61). Indeed, in many of the universities in late eighteenth century Germany, the criticisms were ones that would be recognised today as not so alien:

“backward curriculum, lazy and corrupt professors, students interested only in quick degrees as passports to jobs, student dissoluteness, lack of money, a multiplicity of self-duplicating institutions” (ibid., p.69). It was in this context – one in which the universities were possibly on the verge of extinction – that von Humboldt made a bid for a new university education oriented away from specific career paths towards the development of individual character (as the academies had done). For Humboldt, this goal of *Bildung* was to be achieved via *Wissenschaft*, or scholarship (that is more than just personal research or lecture content). Humboldt meant for *Wissenschaft* to be the active contribution to knowledge on the part of scholars who are able to both digest and transmit ideas across disciplines in holistic fashion. McClelland has inferred a political agenda in this approach, in that it attempted to provide the morally best educated for a society in which the state was increasingly demanding technical expertise and qualification.

It is this last aspect that troubles the Humboldtian legacy: just as the liberal arts curriculum quickly became translated into professionalism in the Medieval university, so *Wissenschaft* too became seen as a way of emphasising specialised rather than general knowledge. Although he strongly believed that the “ripest and finest fruit of the spirit” would never be acknowledged in its own time, as it required a period of absorption into the common understanding, he himself fell victim to his own concern that there is always a knee-jerk “wish to see worked out in practice what theory has shown us to be right” (Humboldt, 2009, p.132). With culture and socialisation as the principle concepts around which German idealism gathered, coupled with the constant tendency of state bureaucracy to instrumentalise theory immediately, there was little to prevent the ‘human-citizen’ relation as built through *Bildung* and *Wissenschaft*

becoming a sublimation of individual character formation with scholarship and research. In turn, this sublimation risks gradually refining the ambit of the *Bildung-Wissenschaft* relation, in order to concentrate cultural identity through intellectual endeavour.

### **2.5. The Newmanian university**

If Kant's idea of university autonomy was illusionary (cf. Derrida, 1992), and that put into motion by Humboldt increasingly exclusionary, the possibility of freedom as it relates to an educational institution comes to be seen as something that either has to be vigorously contained, or made completely unconditional. Cardinal Newman's view of autonomy in the university tended toward the latter. Unlike Kant, Newman did not see truth as being the outcome of pure reason, nor did he think that truth was made evident by the scholarship produced by the institution:

The view taken of a university in these discourses is the following: that it is a place of teaching universal knowledge. This implies that its object is, on the one hand, intellectual, not moral; and on the other, that it is the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than the advancement.

(Newman, 2009, p.ix)

For Newman, knowledge was its own end, serving no purpose other than to be continuously engaged with. If the advancement of national culture had been the agenda of the Humboldtian university (or its subsequent integrated incarnations), Newman advocated only a model of becoming cultured solely for the purposes of “the clear,



calm, accurate vision and comprehension of all things” (p.139). Against almost any notion of utility or career-orientation, Newman questioned whether “*acquirements and attainments* [are] the scope of a University Education” (p.127), believing instead that the cultivation of a universal humanity was a good enough cause in itself:

When, then, we speak of the communication of knowledge as being education, we thereby really imply that knowledge is a state or condition of mind, and since cultivation of the mind is surely worth seeking for its own sake, we are thus brought once more to the conclusion, which the word ‘liberal’ and the word ‘philosophy’ have already suggested, that there is a knowledge that is desirable, though nothing come of it, as being of itself a treasure, and a sufficient remuneration of years of labour.

(ibid.)

If knowledge for its own sake is the purpose of education, according to Newman, then the purpose of the university, by extension, must be to provide a space for people to become knowledgeable. Problems, however, arise when the notion of the ‘desirability’ of knowledge is introduced into the equation. For Newman, “Humanity is part of the created universe” (Wyatt, p.21), and, as a Romantic, he placed an “emphasis on the wholeness of the human being” (p.22), capable of “that perfection of the Intellect, which is the result of Education” (Newman, 2009, p.139). The ideas of universal knowledge and perfection of the intellect are brought together in Newman by the notion of culture, albeit one that is distinctly different from that of Humboldt.

For Newman, culture is an expression of human spiritual activity, and therefore merits the most attention in an academic context. His explicit preference for a liberal arts curriculum is one that at the same time only privileges a Western canon, as he did not believe other cultures to be capable of advanced expressions of intellect (Readings, 1996). These prejudices aside, Newman otherwise held that the university should be as autonomous as possible in organising its research and learning activities for the creation of civilised gentlemen in as non-utilitarian and non-mechanical a fashion possible. Newman's is possibly the most ardent defence of the humanities and liberal arts education, but as such is also the least 'free' in what it is willing to entertain in terms of the subject of that education.

## 2.6. The colonial university

The disinterestedness that Newman advanced is called into question by the vision of humanity that he has in mind: a Western, male, literary and spiritual community<sup>4</sup> is what defined Newman's vision of the university, and therefore creates a limited model for expansion globally (see also Collini, 2012). Universities as educational exports had in fact been being set up well before Newman's time. The Spanish conquests of South America saw institutions of higher education being granted university status as early as 1538, when the Dominican Republic's Santo Domingo University was established by papal bull, with the aim of training the clergy to be missionaries (Roberts, Rodríguez Cruz, & Herbst, 1996, p.263). Much the same pattern proceeded right up until the late

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<sup>4</sup> Newman introduces *The Idea of the University* with references to "an independent body of men, setting about a work of self-reformation", supporting a "high theological view of the University" grounded in the confidence that "All who take part with the Apostle [St. Peter], are on the winning side", and will bring about the reunion of England and Ireland's "joint work of teaching", with roots in the tradition started by the University of Paris, "glory of the Middle Ages" (Newman, 2009). Not only was Newman's own vision bound up with a historical tradition of saintly English and Irish scholars, but his appointment at the Catholic University of Ireland was seen by many as politically expedient, because he was an English convert to Catholicism, and might both bring something of the English reputation with him as well as more financial backing (Barr, p.63).

eighteenth century in South America, whereby royal and papal authorisation for the establishment of universities was largely granted to local clergy for the running of courses that were mostly limited to theology, philosophy, and, in some exceptional cases, medicine (Roberts et al., 1996, p.264-266).

In the context of considering how the colonial university might have implications for the university in a globalised age, it should be recognised that the institution's historical function abroad was largely to indoctrinate, proselytise, and manipulate, under the guise of a more long-term and magnanimous concern for colonial subjects than the more expeditious interests of other bounty-hunters abroad, such as slave traders, who saw native populations more as labour resources than ideological investment. Both of these positions can be seen as equally exploitative. However, given that no former colony has rejected universities altogether, whatever their current shape or form, it seems more sensible to engage with their enduring educational value than to dismiss them as valueless on the grounds of the colonial legacy inherent in university education.

The British colonisation of North America was only slightly different from the Spanish in the South in its higher education ambitions, with officials believing that the establishment of collegiate schools would be sufficient to secure loyalty among new generations without posing too great a threat to Anglican authority (Roberts et al., 1996, p.269). What is evident, however, despite the universality of religious approach and/or philosophical doctrine that was being exported to the colonies, is that in every instance concessions – and adaptations – to local circumstance were always being made. In eighteenth century North America, for example, this meant universities having to

contend with greater ethnic and religious diversity among the population, which made denominational demarcations increasingly difficult to support. One consequence of this, according to Roberts et al. was that colleges and universities moved more towards being communities of tolerance, which would later become communities of secularity (p.274). The implication here is that a degree of autonomy was the pre-condition for another gradually evolving fundamental dimension to the (Western) university, that of secularity. As such, an 'idea' of the university wasn't required for this to happen, just as an articulation of academic freedom wasn't required for Kant to make his statement to the king about the importance of the philosophy faculty's autonomy and freedom from coercion in order for him to do so. Ideas are no doubt important in reconfiguring and critiquing universities for the future, but they are always in response to what is happening to, and in, the university at present.

Whilst higher education provision in North and South America has a very long tradition, for better or for worse colonial universities arrived very late to Africa. According to Ashby (1964), missionaries in the late nineteenth century were still more inclined to incorporate secular courses into their colleges rather than risk entirely secular institutions being established (p.14). The British government, and many African leaders also, were equally reluctant to see their power or control threatened by an educated élite, and even when an advisory committee was set up in 1924 to look at education in the colonies, it was another ten years before they began to take higher education into consideration (ibid., p.17). The transition from colonial power to independence therefore entailed a degree of enduring dependence, and the subsequent assumption of higher education responsibilities by international organisations (as discussed in the next chapter) did little to dispense of that notion of dependency.

## 2.7. The postmodern university

As has been made clear thus far, formulations of the best model of the university were invariably constructed around who or what lay within its remit, whether this was defined in terms of curriculum, intervention, or participation. For Kant, Humboldt, and Newman, it was important to decide first on what belonged on the inside of the institution, before it could be said what the purpose of the institution was in relation to what was on the outside (i.e. society, government). The only truth that preserves the ivory tower myth in this respect is an idea of autonomy as self-containment, an idea that allows then for the elevation of universities to the status of truth producers in themselves.

As the medieval universities show, however, these institutions are actually born into already-existing societies, with (competing and conflicting) socio-political discourses and languages of their own, and are therefore borne out of them – as opposed to being independent entities within them. Students and academics are still members of society, and their work draws on life beyond the walls of the university. To think of them otherwise is to generate an abstraction that is intended as self-fulfilling prophecy. Martin Heidegger, for example, in giving his 1933 address as rector of Freiburg University, spoke of the university's essential place in the "spiritual mission" and "historical mission" of the German people (Heidegger, 2003, p.2). Heidegger's "German university" can easily be viewed as the apotheosis of the Humboldtian institution, but only if the latter is interpreted as being the instrument for tying education to cultural identity, which was not entirely Humboldt's aim. Whereas the concept of *Bildung* should have been the principle to both expand *Wissenschaft* whilst

also ensuring the constant opening up of new inquiry within it, the idealisation of the university as the institution to cultivate both ended up fusing the two. According to Zwicker (2011), a sense of entitlement and intellectual aristocracy began to attach to a university education in post-Humboldt Germany that bred, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, not only an assertively masculine and secular patriotism but equally and increasingly the idea that the university sat outside of politics altogether in its state of autonomy and academic freedom.

This feeling of “self-assertion,” as Heidegger would later call it, had implications not only for the students for whom it was thought that personal *Bildung* could only be achieved through as little external influence as possible, thereby relieving them of their sense of social commitment, but also for the academics who believed that their scholarship was entirely without prejudice. Whilst German students were still given a rounded education in “German culture, the German environment, and the German people,” as well as being encouraged to study at more than one institution to gain different perspectives on the experience of student life, this holism was entirely centred around a myth of Germany’s universal history (ibid.). Where colonial Britain was trying to secure its self-identity through expansion of higher education provision abroad (predominantly in India and Africa), Germany was trying to achieve it through entrenchment of an ideal at home.

As Simons and Masschelein have commented, “the idea of national culture no longer provides an overarching ideological horizon for what goes on in the university” (2009b, p.4). In the aftermath of the Second World War, governments in a number of European countries impressed upon their universities the need to move away from the

training of an exclusive, well-educated elite and towards mass higher education for specialisation. Britain's 1963 Report on Higher Education expressed as a particular concern the massive numbers of children being born post-War, and therefore the ways in which education would be able to provide for them and "encourage the cultivation of high excellence" (Robbins, 1963, p.265). France under Charles De Gaulle's Fifth Republic was notoriously bureaucratically- and technocratically-minded, hoping to make higher education more efficient in filling available jobs.

But increased student population in France also took place at a time of massive growth in humanities enrolments, female student numbers, and sexual liberation (Seidman, 2006). The eruptions of student protests in May 1968 – against issues as various as class sizes, to scholarship funding, to selective admissions, to dormitory visits between men and women – arose largely out of a tension between the market-oriented ambitions of government and university administration, and the sense of social injustice felt among students. In the chapters that follow, I will show that this tension is not only a common feature of the struggle to define the university in a global age, but that it would not come about unless certain assumptions about the role and purpose of the university were upheld. The positions I will look at seem to be either directing higher education towards the job market or towards addressing social inequality; I will hope to argue over the course of this thesis that these might not be entirely negligible concerns, but that the university has to also provide something of a space for individual (or subjective) differences to come into being, that are not reducible either to the market or a homogenised idea of society/culture, if it is to continue to be a dynamic force for change.

The alternative, then, is to consider how difference can enter into theorising around the university, without being reduced solely to political issues of presentation, representation and participation.<sup>5</sup> To concentrate solely on these issues is to regenerate a “metaphysics of presence,” to use Derrida’s terms, whereby the only information drawn upon in understanding truth is that made available to us either in empirical data or language. People are reduced to over-simplified characteristics that have little bearing on their capacity to educate or be educated. In order not to make assumptions about either knowledge or the subject (i.e. the human), Derrida insists on the absences in both, the areas which knowledge cannot account for and language cannot express. That is, there are limits to both, outside of which there remains the possibility of things being different. These are limits which have to be always tested.

For Derrida, any idea or ideological position which assumes a position of unity or universality is “a danger for responsibility, for decision, for ethics, for politics” (1997, p.13). The unifying of *Bildung* and *Wissenschaft* in the late nineteenth century German universities anticipates the later dangers made evident by Heidegger at Freiburg. In Derrida’s view, the university has a particular role in ensuring that heterogeneity has a legitimate place in challenging homogeneity (2000, p.205). Critical resistance is put forward by Derrida as “the unconditional right to ask questions not only about the history of the concept of man, but about the history even of the notion of critique, about the form and the authority of the question, about the interrogative form of thought” (p.204). Whereas figures such as Kant, Humboldt and Newman were able to advance theories of the university according to universal categories, then, Derrida is proposing that the purpose of the university is to question the foundations for those

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<sup>5</sup> i.e. numbers of underrepresented and minority groups, attainment and retention initiatives, employability statistics, etc.



categories themselves, and be protected in its cause – because changes in societal structures over time necessitate those revaluations.

Where the events in France of May 1968 troubled the bureaucratic and political infrastructure of the European university, Derrida's questioning of the foundationalism of previous 'Ideas' of the university marks a theoretical break with modernist thinking that was described by Bill Readings as:

...recognising the University today for what it is: an institution that is losing its need to make transcendental claims for its function. The University is no longer simply modern, insofar as it no longer needs a grand narrative of culture in order to work. As a bureaucratic institution of excellence, it can incorporate a very great degree of internal variety without requiring its multiplicity of diverse idioms to be unified into an ideological whole. Their unification is no longer a matter of ideology but of their exchange-value within an expanded market.

(Readings, 1996, p.168)

The "multiplicity of diverse idioms" is an important characteristic that sets up my later discussion of dialogism as a way of engaging this multiplicity without making of the university an entirely relativistic institution. Readings here draws more on the work of Jean-François Lyotard than Derrida to affirm the idea that the university exists as a sedimentation of history and epistemology that obscures truth to such an extent that it is always to be reassessed, rather than one which is either producing truths or true individuals. As such, he reiterates the artificial binary between inside and outside of the institution: "Change comes neither from within nor from without, but from the difficult

space – neither inside nor outside – where one is” (ibid, p.171). This difficult space might be described as the space of difference in which deconstruction occurs, or as an appeal from ‘elsewhere’, beyond the limits of knowledge and a knowledge of the human.

Both Lyotard’s *Postmodern Condition* and Readings’ *University of Ruins* were written largely as responses to a growing culture of standardisation, managerialism, bureaucracy and technocracy in the production of knowledge, specifically within universities, described by Readings as a culture of ‘Excellence.’ The performative nature of this new university narrative (i.e. excellence for excellence’s sake) was largely bound up with the economisation of university services, the idea that they might be instrumentalised for the purposes of efficiency and economic growth (Standish, 2003, p.216). Such an agenda would not necessarily be entirely unfamiliar to the Medieval scholar (cf. Cobban, 1975), but with the expansion of services overseas, it prompts questions about an inherent colonialism within the university. If universities are established abroad with universal ideals at the core of their mission, they risk being incompatible with the norms and values of the cultures and societies into which they are being grafted. On the other hand, to advance a theory of the university that focuses too much on suspicions of homogeneity and less on the possibility of a ‘public good’, as Readings does, may do more to damage its presence as a public educational good than justify its purpose.

Michael Peters (2007) has challenged Readings on the ground that he is perhaps still “too wedded to the idea of the Modern University, an idea largely born out of German idealism and one certainly bearing all the traces of a Eurocentric conception” (p.48),

and has suggested that whilst Readings' is resistant to the 'idea' of the university, his evaluation of it retains a dimension of "ethnocentrism." Peters argues that the university might instead play an important role in challenging cultural homogeneity in a post-colonial age. As I will explore further in chapter six, the argument that universities in non-European cultures need to affirm their indigenous traditions and reject European homogeneity risks making a case for an institution that only exists on the basis that it is 'anti-Western', which could amount to being 'anti-university'. To make this case would be to ignore, as I hope the preceding history has attempted to acknowledge, that the university has always been as different from itself within Europe as it has beyond European borders. The theoretical approaches as well as the practical difficulties of the past have to therefore be engaged with to understand what educational purpose the university can continue to serve, beyond being against everything that it has previously stood for.

## **2.8. Theorising the university beyond Europe?**

A. N. Whitehead (1962) remarked that the history of education is "overladen with inert ideas", because there are always schools of thought in one epoch that are "alive with a ferment of genius, but in the next only "exhibit merely pedantry and routine" (p.2). The history here presented is one in which ideas of 'Man', reason, culture and difference are ones that are all always at risk of being seen as inert in the contemporary university. And yet it has been important to show that these ideas, however inert, do not completely disappear, but are always reappearing in reformulations and new policy approaches. The question that remains, however, is how much the whole idea of the university, amid massive financial difficulties and threats of global standardisation through assessment and rankings, is in danger itself of becoming an inert idea – unless a

justification can be provided that neither makes assumptions nor is afraid to commit to actions. Could too much openness to ‘difference’ without reference to a hegemonic idea possibly leave the university without purpose at all (Zgaga, 2012)? And what does the language thus far associated tell us about the possibilities of (talking about) the university for the future?

Vagueness in the face of this question will not resolve it. Recent attempts such as that of Collini (2012), exemplify the potential detriment of being reckless with language:

A university, it may be said, is a protected space in which various forms of useful preparation for life are undertaken in a setting and manner which encourages the students to understand the contingency of any particular packet of knowledge and its interrelation with other, different forms of knowledge.

(p.56)

The language of protection, utility, preparation all set up the idea of an established framework with a given *telos*, which is then set off by the language of contingency, interdisciplinarity and difference which is contained within it. What this suggests, however, is that contingency is conditioned by the protected space, that difference might be accommodated within its limits, in that the other forms of knowledge are ones that are all already available within that space. What Collini’s formulation does not allude to is the need to risk or even forsake that protection to test the limits of the framework, or the possibility of unexpected forms of knowledge. Collini also implies that universities might be student-oriented and functional in their ‘preparation’ of

students for life; this both denies the research orientation but also the idea that there might be life *within* the university, for all members of its community. A response to the problems posed by Collini's formulation, then, requires a language that acknowledges the risk of scholarly activity in the university that arises from its "difficult space," the social orientation that makes that risk necessary, and the benefit to the individual of making that risk.

Barnett (2013) has pointed out that philosophy has in many ways failed in its criticisms of both the increasingly performative and commodified nature of contemporary higher education, and its Eurocentric legacy, because of a reluctance to commit to any substantive notion of its purpose, for fear that "a never-ending infinite regress of argumentative defences would open up" (p.3). Barnett claims that philosophers such as Habermas and Derrida have thus only been left with thoughts on "the kinds of communicative processes that might characterise a university" (ibid.), which stop short of offering a clearer notion of what a university does or can do, beyond raising questions on exactly that subject – a performative notion in itself. The "empirical thinness" in philosophical versions of the university, then, according to Barnett, needs to be addressed by an "*abundance* of ideas of the university" (p.6), as well as a number of "criteria of adequacy" (p.124) by which they can be assessed. It is difficult to feel satisfied that Barnett has here addressed the problem of empirical thinness in theorising the university; rather, he has proposed seemingly empirical tests (depth, criticality, optimism; scope, duration, locale, emergence, wellbeing, feasibility; vision) but which, in being performed on 'imaginative ideas' rather than existing institutions, can only confirm the quality of assessment. This is because all universities are failing to meet criteria in some respect, whether it is in terms of numbers,

proportional representation, variety of disciplines, academic standards, or resources. Even if it were possible to come up with an ‘idea’ that met all of Barnett’s criteria, those failings would still emerge in implementation.

I think Barnett tries to overcome this difficulty by still trying to tie down the ontological foundations of the university (he still feels compelled ‘to know’ what the university ‘is’), prior to looking at how its various practices affect those who participate in university education. I would argue that educational theory is instead required to both explore practice and engage the dimension of unknowability of those involved in that practice well before any definitive claims about the university can be made – if they need to be made at all. I will later explore the ways in which these two aspects can be held in equilibrium in a discussion of academic freedom, which is both (institutional) practice and (individual) principle in higher education.

In response to Barnett’s (2011) Derridean conception of the university as one which is simultaneously an amalgam, potentially “other than it is,” and an entity which “transcends language,” Zgaga (2012) has suggested that there might be some advantage in archetypal models after all, as they at least present an option between actual universities, between which comparisons can be made, rather than ‘multiversities’ which always abstain from being something. Zgaga’s concern is that over-theorising the ‘university-to-be’ in terms of its possibilities also refuses a commitment to the actual state of things, and that despite Barnett’s affirmation that “the world is in the university and the university is in the world” (2011, p.69), his critique comes from within the university, and is often only critical of reports such as that of Robbins (1963), Dearing (1997) and Browne (2010) in the UK, for example, which come from without.

As both academic and former minister for education, Zgaga has contributed much to theoretically-informed policy in higher education, particularly as regards the Bologna process. In this regard, he has advocated not only the integration of a more standardised European model, but also its export as a global example of modern university education (Zgaga, 2006). The marriage of history and policy in Zgaga brings out a “promotion of intercultural and inter-religious understanding, traditional values of European universities and higher education institutions” (p.ix), but possibly at the expense of considering what ‘elsewhere’ might have to offer Europe in its development also. His approach, whilst steering away from indulging the imagining of Barnett’s “feasible utopias,” itself risks responding to the current hegemony of the American model (which also therefore governs global university rankings) by reinstating a European model that is then also susceptible to falling back into performativity, and the “cultural imperialism, no less, of Western civilization, governed as it is by the demand for legitimation” (Standish, 2003, p.217).

It is my view that both ideal and historical claims have a place in theorising the university, but that neither should presuppose the other, with the one often keeping the question of the other open. Indeed, it may well be the ongoing discussion between what is ‘yet to come’ and ‘what has been’ that defines educational theory as regards the university, but that Zgaga is right to point out that things still have to be done in the present, if justice is to be done to both past and future. Theorising cannot take place outside of considerations of things as they currently are, and this thesis thus aims to draw on a number of contemporary examples of how universities (and ideals associated with their legacy) are being used, adapted and conceived of to different effect. This will

involve firstly looking at the forces acting upon universities in the field of higher education development, and then to move that discussion beyond, to what is or is not happening in universities (possibly largely in part due to the external forces discussed). The questions being asked, then, will be: To what extent are there values which are traditional to the university in a global age? and To what extent do those values impede access to wider resources that may enrich not just the knowledge produced by the university, but the ways in which it conceives of its own purpose in relation to society and the wider world? An over-emphasis on institutional identity may limit not only the longer-term development of universities in a globalised age of higher education, but also impact upon the way that the individual relates to others and society – which brings me back to the discussion of *Bildung*.

## **2.9. Conclusion: *Bildung* as the future of universities' development?**

The contemporary relevance of *Bildung* as an educational term is still very much in debate. Biesta (2002a; 2002b), for example, has argued that the value of the term lies not in its singular truth, but in its historical reformulations, all of which point towards the impossibility of reconciling local and global in the individual's relations with the world. Emphasising a strictly non-normative understanding, Biesta holds that “the crucial point is to *show* that things can be different,” with the caveat that this “is not to claim that the alternatives are better” (2002, p.389). The freedom made possible by *Bildung*, then, is one of thinking otherwise about education, using terms already extant, if sometimes misunderstood. Masschelein & Ricken (2003), on the other hand, have contended that the concept has lost its critical capacity and has instead started to function somewhat as a theoretical mask for policy agendas connected with competence and the ‘learning society,’ whilst among theoreticians the confusion over whether it



relates more to the field of education or to the self still always implies “an understanding of what is human” allied to ideas about autonomy, emancipation and self-direction (p.142). Masschelein & Ricken’s argument is that, even as a non-normative concept, there are normative connotations associated with the idea that invoke a sentimentalism for something that is yet to be realised. Freedom in this line of argumentation lies outside of *Bildung*’s contemporary guise as “a form of self-preservation through permanent exclusion which cannot be generalised” (p.150). Finally, Løvlie and Standish (2002) have suggested that the neo-humanism that characterised the *Bildung* of von Humboldt and Schiller does not mean that a postmodern revaluation cannot revitalise the concept also, especially in its relation to the history of liberal education. Following Rorty, Løvlie and Standish put forward the idea that *Bildung* is as much about describing the relation between self and world as it is about re-describing its own history of ‘edification,’ how it came to be and what more it can offer (p.335). Freedom here lies in dialogue – “whether agonistic or directed towards consensus” – with the world and also the ways in which the world describes itself.

To close this chapter with a conversation about *Bildung* brings together some of the component parts which inform the rest of the thesis, as well as opening out into the second chapter which will immediately reveal those parts as problematic. As with the university, *Bildung* poses problems of history, language and ideas that can define freedom as a political, ethical, and ideological concept in education. The term ‘development’ is similarly bound up with these concerns, and it is interesting to note that in German there are at least three words for the term in translation: *Entwicklung* (evolution, growth), *Entfaltung* (unfolding), *Ausbildung* (cultivation, improvement).

The kind of development I will go on to describe in the next chapter is initially much more one-dimensional (or what I will later describe as ‘monologic’), and therefore demonstrates how language in policy applied to educational fields can limit the freedom of educational practice. In evoking the possibility of *Entfaltung* as an aspect that connects higher education to development, I hope to reengage with the idea of ‘unfolding’ mentioned in the introduction, and one which will be taken up again in chapter three.

### **3. Higher Education Development**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter I looked at the history of the university as an institution that has grown out of responses to forces both outside and within it, to show that any theory of (higher) education cannot abstract the university from the historical circumstances that inevitably shape it. In this chapter I give an overview of the discourse of development which has emerged as a post-war concern for the economic growth and democratic stability of poorer countries. I will then look at how higher education development has arisen as a delayed interest within that field, and the construction of an idea of the university within the scholarship of development economics and development studies. I will then discuss an example of a university – Makerere University in Uganda – which embodies many of the transitional and conflicting concerns of development approaches to higher education. I then look at how the development theorists, particularly those behind the human capital and human capability approaches, subsume education into wider programmes of development, making blanket assumptions about the nature of education and, more importantly, those to whom it is meant to apply. I will argue that these assumptions reveal closer links between the capital and capability approaches than their respective emphases on economic growth and social justice suggest, and that they might do more harm than good by emerging from within a development discourse rather than from an educational field.

My argument as regards higher education will be that the act of supplanting individual development with economic or social development suppresses some of the

educational discussions surrounding the role and function of the university in a global age, privileging over-emphasise – or indeed impose – a single idea of a good education (and, by default, a good human being), whereas part of the value of a university education might lie in the ability to invite, engage with, and respond to a number of viewpoints in order to critically question the validity of any single idea of what constitutes the good.

### **3.2. Development**

The discourse of development as an international politico-economic agenda for multilateral cooperation in global issues largely grew out of two major twentieth century events: the end of the Second World War and the gradual collapse of the colonial era. Given that both were characterised by extreme forms of both physical aggression and psychological indoctrination, the invasion of autonomous states and the attempted destruction of cultures, efforts were made to ensure that greater collaboration, intervention, and dialogue between nations could prevent such atrocities from occurring again – and that those countries that had most suffered would also be compensated by those that had been the worst perpetrators. As part of the outcomes of the Bretton Woods conference of 1944, called to bring stability to international finance systems, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) were both set up, and were loosely based on Keynesian principles advocating intervention in growth and welfare for mutual benefit (Preston, 1996). The IBRD initially concentrated its efforts on European casualties of post-war destruction, such as France, where development was seen more as a process of *re*-development.

The first instance of the discourse of development as aid for those that had not yet been developed is often attributed to President Truman, who took office in 1949 with the promise of “a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing” that would make available all the benefits of industry and scientific knowledge in advanced countries “for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas” (quoted in Esteva, 1992, p.6). The development agenda was thus from the outset one that was fundamentally intertwined with economic growth, in part to distance itself from the cultural atrocities enacted by colonial occupation. Chabbott (2003) has pointed out that the reification of the development ideal has come about not just because of “those who have engaged in efforts to increase economic growth or improve social welfare in less industrialized areas” (p.35), but equally because of the contribution of those that would seek to critique those efforts on their own terms. Legitimation of the development discourse is thus affirmed even in the process of challenging its ideology. I will be looking in chapter five at how some challenges at the level of discourse fall short of addressing underlying issues, by perhaps not considering the ways in which for example, development is possibly an extension of colonialism rather than its replacement. The risk is that a change of discourse only reproduces ideologies contained within previous discourses, and that critique at the level of discourse therefore does not address the traces of one within another.

Chabbott gives one possible overview for the growth of the discourse of international development:

Immediately after the war, international development discourse was broad and fluid, ascribing to individuals rights to social, economic, and political

development, without specifying how those rights would be extended to the vast majority of the world's population who did not at that time enjoy them. Later, in the 1950s and 1960s, the discourse became focused on modernization and national economic growth as the fastest way to expand individual social, political, and economic development to the greatest number of people. In the 1970s and 1980s, confidence in such “trickle down” approaches waned, and attention shifted to poverty reduction. In these decades many international development programs targeted the poor, women, and other historically disadvantaged groups, and focused on strengthening the social services – education, health, family planning – considered necessary to draw these groups into the mainstream of a growing economy.

(ibid.)

Whilst this is a very broad summary of the growth of a discourse,<sup>6</sup> it still draws out some significant points. Firstly, at every stage, development has been a top-down agenda, decided upon by countries and organisations with greater wealth and global power. The globalisation of education has long been criticised for its imperialistic tendencies (see, for example, Apple 2010, and Jones, 2006), with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All agenda providing particular examples. Secondly, Chabbott shows how development is subject to flux in terms of its goals, and that those to whom those goals are applied always have to change direction accordingly, given the financial dependency that is often involved. This aspect is further entrenched in the system of target setting in education, which has not only been criticised for a lack of progress but even regression in some instances in countries that

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<sup>6</sup> Described by Chabbott as “words and phrases that, once externalized, take on an outward objectivity, a reality, that cause them to forget the origins of these concepts” (2003, p.34)

haven't kept pace with the shifting demands (Jansen, 2005). Finally, Chabbott offers a reminder that development has acquired such force as an overarching principle that, when applied to poorer countries, it is seen as the goal to which all other services in society must dedicate themselves, which can only prove chaotic when the goalposts are constantly shifting. As Jansen (2005) has observed about the various conferences pertaining to universal access to education, such as Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000) more recently, "each new landmark conference over the decades acknowledges that the targets have not been met, and then proceeds immediately to set another round of targets" (p.369). With their priorities constantly changing, and being determined for them externally, higher education institutions in poorer countries will understandably find it difficult to 'catch up' with those that are responsible for the changes.

One defence of development, it would seem, might be that after the Second World War, powerful nations discovered a responsibility beyond their own borders, towards those in greater need. The counter to this defence, however, would be to say that this responsibility stems less from a desire to maximise the freedom of other nations on their own terms, and rather to ensure the spread of a particular idea of freedom – or humanity – that accords most with that of the countries seeking to promote it, for the sake of global political stability.<sup>7</sup> As has been suggested, justification for the spread of such a cause is often established in the identification of desirable ends (economic growth, improved social welfare) and then working out policy measures to achieve them.

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<sup>7</sup> It is this protection, or securitisation, of interests that I will argue also characterises academic freedom when conceived of purely as a right in chapter 6, in that both attempt to limit the way that freedom is understood – producing a paradox in the process.

But whilst precursors of this brand of instrumentalism can be found, for example, in the missionary movement and colonial appropriation of territory, the development agenda was the first humanitarian movement that gained ‘universal’ legitimacy in the form of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) – which since 1986 has included as one of its few collective rights the Right to Development – and the establishment of international organisations with global membership. The formally sanctioned and multilateral solidarity entailed in these two movements made the enforcement of their terms almost irrefutable. In terms of both morality and global politics, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 accompanied the economic agenda to help construct a universal global subject, or global citizen, according to the paradigm of the ‘developed’ world.

In many ways, the UDHR has provided a useful reference point for thinking about the necessity for upholding certain universal values, not least because its articles are all apparently self-evident. When article 15 (1), for example, states that “Everyone has the right to a nationality”, there is no reasoning provided as to why this is the case. Why “everyone”? Why “right”? What is “nationality”? The articles therefore offer the potential for questioning universality both in terms of individual critical reflection (“To what extent do I see myself as having “liberty and security of person” in my society? Do I understand what that might mean? Is my liberty and security more important than other people’s? To what extent do I think anyone should have such liberty according to that definition?”), and in the face of large-scale crises such as famine, genocide and warfare. With regards to the former, however, development approaches rarely promote such questioning, nor have they invited revisions of the universal rights with contributions from a wider global debate. It is instead the policy dimension, building on



acceptance of the rights as they are, that has evolved with greater force, functioning primarily as legitimacy for intervention. Intervention, as supported by the narrative of human rights abuse, almost exclusively still operates on the basis that the developed countries intervene in the affairs of the developing. The intervention legitimacy may in part have to do with the way the rights discourse is constructed according to certain values, and in part the international judicial structures that are then able to enforce them. The universality of values is summarised by article 1, which states that

[a]ll human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

([www.un.org](http://www.un.org))

The normative position of the UDHR is contentious from the outset, introducing two near-factual statements (“all human beings are born free and equal”, “they are endowed with reason and conscience”) which are themselves part of an unresolved and ongoing conflict of opinion in the history of philosophy, followed by a normative statement (they *should* act in a spirit of brotherhood) that potentially undermines both those that preceded it. If all human beings are endowed with reason and conscience in the same way, surely they *will* act in a spirit of brotherhood? But if they are free and equal, are they not also free *not* to act in a spirit of brotherhood? The clumsiness of this rhetoric pervades human rights discourse, and makes it all the more questionable when introduced into a development discourse that justifies its actions according to a paradigm that is not even reconciled within itself.

The intervention of international organisations in the former colonies on the basis of both economic and rights concerns meant that, just as some countries were beginning to gain political independence from their colonial occupiers, they would acquire a new financial dependence upon these organisations – dominated by the former colonial powers as well as the United States – for support against total economic collapse. Development, as the quote from Truman shows, was largely constructed in contradistinction to the ‘underdeveloped,’ thereby projecting something of an already extant discourse within both child psychology and colonial policy onto a much wider global scale: it is “a reminder of an undesirable, undignified condition” (Esteva, in Sachs, 1992, p.10). In the same way that many Europeans had long thought of children as uncivilized adults-in-the-making,<sup>8</sup> and their colonial subjects as “Unfinished Europeans” (quoted in Sichermann, 2006, p.41) for the civilizing (Meneses, 2012), so the development agenda posited a subject that lacked the wealth, rights, and therefore level of progress, of prevailing world powers.

Since the 1940s, it has been the task of international organisations to put in place those structures that would enable those processes of compensating the “underdeveloped” through economising, moralising and politicising the subject of development – according to targets, universal standards, and ultimately a particular idea of what it means to be (a good, well-functioning) human. The irony is that the rhetoric also reveals development according to this understanding to be more a process of *envelopment* – i.e. a process whereby everything is subsumed, or ‘folded up,’ into the

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<sup>8</sup> The emphasis is on a European tradition here only inasmuch as it continues an Enlightenment legacy of conceiving of the child as one that must be inducted into a way of life, which bore heavily on attitudes towards colonial occupation also.

same sphere of understanding – than it does to be a process in which people, cultures, and societies are allowed to ‘unfold’ from their positions of social, cultural, or political difference. This will be a useful idea to return to when considering the specifically ‘educational’ nature of the university in the contested field of higher education development, because I will argue that the ‘educational’ is not simply concerned with respecting those differences, but with acknowledging that the only way to allow for the processes of development as ‘unfolding’ from elsewhere will be to suspend a foreknowledge of what those differences are altogether.

### **3.3. Higher education development: constructing the field**

As discussed in the previous chapter, universities in the British and other colonies were predominantly established to educate the expatriate community or a minority of individuals from the native population who would be trained as civil servants, upholding the colonial infrastructure rather than presenting any challenge to it. Samoff (2003) has written that “these institutions often reproduced not only the curriculum, pedagogy, and hierarchical organization of their European models but even their architecture and staff and student codes of conduct” (p.54). Mazrui (1978) has also described how, whilst the rise of industrial capitalism in the colonies generated the economic dependency during the nineteenth century that would endure well into the next, the universities (particularly in Africa) were employed also as mechanisms for “cultural dependency,” in that they perpetuated ideas of “ethnocentrism,” “Social Darwinism” and “religious evangelism” (p.332). The consequence of such cultural dependency has presented with the question of whether universities in “developing” countries can ever be seen as anything other than “distinctly colonial institutions” (Samoff, 2003, p.54), given that their graduates during the colonial era are credited with

having created a legacy whereby the institution is saturated not only with Western modes of reason and social organisation, but having also colluded in depriving education at a ‘higher’ level of any indigenous epistemological challenge to this saturation, especially through the suppression of native languages (Mazrui, 1978, p.336).<sup>9</sup>

Part of the conundrum for many of these universities, as Mazrui has expressed specifically with regard to those in Africa, has been the question of “*how to decolonize the process of modernization without ending it*” (ibid., p.331, italics in original). This question, as was suggested in the previous chapter, has in part begun to be addressed by postmodernism, in that the discourse of modernisation that views human progress as “a more or less linear progression always characterized by a fundamental distinction between the more or less modern” (Samoff, 2003, p.56) has invited not a *decolonisation* of the university, but the possibility of a *postcolonial* theorising of its function in different countries.<sup>10</sup> These forms of theorising are, however, along with the wider tradition of liberal education altogether, often seen still as a luxury rather than a necessity by governments and higher education institutions that have already embraced the development discourse as doctrine (Bloom and Rosovsky, 2011).

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<sup>9</sup> I think it is important to be cautious when raising the possibility of any indigenous knowledge being rediscovered in an ‘authentic’ fashion via the university (see, for example, Waghid and Smeyers, 2012) that might not still be constrained by the same cycles of “cultural dependency” as described by Mazrui; on the other hand, the conformity to one non-native language in education does raise an educational dilemma, in that it does more than suppress diversity in multilingualism, but instead actively seeks the “monolingualism of the other” – a Derridean expression to describe the attempted reduction of difference to sameness through language. This, and the closely related Bakhtinian concept of monologism, will be discussed further in chapter 5.

<sup>10</sup> I would stress the word ‘possibility’ in this sentence, because I think there is good reason to argue that postcolonial theorising may *not* be possible, for precisely the discursive reasons already discussed, i.e. the possibility of ideological tendencies reappearing within postcolonial discourse in the attempt to overcome the colonial.

The intervention of the development discourse in the post-war era was extremely attractive, not least because it had the appearance of being “objective, scientific, progressive, and politically neutral” (Chabbott, 2003, p.35) at a time when withdrawing colonial influence was leaving countries with structures (government, judicial systems) and identities in crisis. With the immediate emphasis on primary schooling, countries across South America, Africa and Asia all signed up for development initiatives that looked to invest in the future economic growth of the country by starting with education at the most basic level. What this meant initially for higher education, then, was that universities were encouraged to either just provide technical or vocational training in (predominantly agricultural) industry, or to disintegrate, or to set up useful partnerships with their former colonial occupiers. Makerere University in Uganda chose the latter route, in going from being established as a technical school in 1922, to being a Centre for Higher Education in 1935, to then becoming affiliated with University College London in 1949. Given the Asquith report’s (1945) recommendation that colonial universities should earn their right to award degrees by charter, Makerere was tested by exams devised in London by examiners from the University of London (Ashby, 1964). During this period of affiliation, UCL would review and often make revisions to all exam questions put to students, with suspicions of ongoing attempts to prevent radical thinking raised as a result. For example, Mazrui (1978) has reported how a number of questions submitted for an entire course on Marxist political philosophy were reduced to just one by the exam board. Whilst the argument could well be made that the importance of the course lay in the teaching and learning of it (akin to Humboldt’s *Wissenschaft*), the point to be

made here is that colonialism as a suppression of thought and freedom in higher education may well have survived the localized physical presence of its perpetrators.<sup>11</sup>

Makerere, an institution that can be seen as emblematic of many of the development shifts throughout the twentieth century, became part of the University of East Africa (UEA – along with Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam) in 1963 and began to award its own degrees, then regaining independent university status in 1970. During this time, the university was viewed by the United States as “an exciting experiment in development economics” (Southall, 1974, p.66). Almost immediately, however, the university fell victim to the domestic troubles of the regime of Idi Amin (1971-1979), during which time academics were persecuted and attendance was severely disrupted. With the reestablishment of a democracy under President Museveni in 1986, the offer of development aid from the World Bank was warmly welcomed. This intervention came at precisely the point at which two notions coincided: the idea that higher education should be prioritised in development programmes as a driver for economic growth, and the idea the privatisation of institutions might be a more efficient way to ensure that education was carried out to ensure better implementation of the first idea. As Mamdani (2007) has described:

At a general level, the Makerere case epitomises the fate of public universities globally in a market-oriented and capital-friendly era. When the reforms unfolded in the early 1990s, they were guided by the World Bank’s then held

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<sup>11</sup> This generalisation did not necessarily apply worldwide: Al-Ali (2007) reports how Iraq flourished educationally in the 1950s thanks to the departure of British military, even seeing good attendance of women at all levels of education – only to see the universities persecuted under the Ba’ath regime and, as I will explore below, problematically reconstructed under the current US-British occupation. Such examples almost give credence to the idea that sometimes countries and their educational institutions succeed better outside of development intervention, although it depends on whose terms success is measured.

conviction that higher education is more of a private than a public good.

Unfortunately for Makerere, the Museveni government in Uganda embraced the World Bank's perspective with the uncritical enthusiasm of a convert, so much so that even when the Bank began to re-think its romance with the market, Uganda's political leadership held on to the dogma with the tenacity of an ideologue.

(p.vii)

As Mamdani's critique suggests, universities during the human capital era of development were subject to the influence of the large organisations that offered them funding and policy advice. His assessment of World Bank intervention makes no attempt to exonerate the role of the Ugandan government at the time; however, he does acknowledge that once these ideas took hold, it was very difficult to prevent the fact that "the forces of self-interest amplified by commercialisation eroded the institutional integrity of the university from within" (p.x). In short, once financial incentives take hold, everyone becomes complicit in pursuing them – to the detriment of other interests.

The World Bank has certainly used its position as a donor to influence research priorities and infrastructure at Makerere. In 2002, for example, it awarded \$5 million dollars for a project aimed at promoting innovation at higher education level to implement decentralisation strategies and educating local government (World Bank, 2002b). Such interventions not only constitute a threat of university autonomy whereby institutions devise their own programmes to meet their students and societies needs, but also an attempt to construct the geo-political landscape according to a particular ideology (in this instance the notion that decentralisation is the best medicine).

It is not surprising, then, that questions of privatisation – whilst not exclusive to the ‘developing’ world – are perhaps some of the most contentious, given some of the relations between university and society, and student and study, that were described in the previous chapter. As Naidoo (2010) has pointed out,

The perceptions of higher education as an industry for enhancing national competitiveness have begun to eclipse the social and cultural objectives of higher education generally encompassed in the conception of higher education as a ‘public good.’ In relation to governance, the belief that universities require a relative independence from political and corporate influence to function optimally, which was in turn linked to the need for guaranteed state funding and professional autonomy, has been eroded (p.71).

One major issue for development in this context is that the privatisation of universities necessarily focuses on expanding teaching at the expense of research, because students pay the fees and will therefore demand, as consumers, more teaching hours for the purposes of achieving a useful qualification. The result is that ‘developing’ countries can rarely afford investment in non-sponsored research, which has led Mamdani to the conclusion that the privation of such resources

can only entrench a global division of knowledge whereby research is concentrated in a few technologically advanced countries - the knowledge-driven economies - with its results disseminated to the majority of humanity living in market-driven economies and therefore fit to be no more than passive



consumers of knowledge with no other future to look forward to than that of clones.

(p.xvi)

The tone is bleak, but Mamdani does describe the potentially highly damaging effects of the development discourse, and the aid that accompanies it, on higher education institutions. His concern is that universities are supposed to set the intellectual agenda for the next generation. In poorer countries, this agenda has to preserve its local commitments whilst not losing sight of the wider global sphere in which all universities participate. Instead, cycles of dependency and passivity – which Samoff (2003) has described as sometimes “aggressively manipulative” (p.65) – deprive universities of this dual function, and in the process deprive both students and academics of a relation with education that is not just received, but reciprocal. These cycles are the two dimensions I now want to draw out with respect to two development approaches, that of human capital, and that of human capability.

### **3.4. Human capital**

In 1967, Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere gave a speech on education in which he informed his audience that Tanzanians had never really “stopped to consider why we want education – what its purpose is,” because “we have never thought about education except in terms of obtaining teachers, engineers, administrators, etc.” (1982, p.235).

The sort of education that Nyerere is describing is an education for skills, or for skilled workers, whereby an investment in people as individual units of potential can bring about a workforce in which labour is equally divided and an economy can grow exponentially according to the increase in skills available for individual acquisition.

Nyerere's speech was made at just about the time that a new school of development economists, in particular T. W. Schultz and Gary Becker, were beginning to define the value of this approach as 'human capital,' or the "...activities that influence future monetary and psychic income by increasing the resources in people" (Becker, 1964, p.1). Schultz observed that trends in economics could not be attributed solely to material investment in productivity, but that an important role was played by those that made those investments, i.e. the "human factors" (Chabbott, 2003, p.54). Becker added that "the most impressive piece of evidence is that more highly educated and skilled persons almost always tend to earn more than others" (1964, p.2). What Becker did not take into account was whether an education geared entirely towards earning left people more or less skilled in doing so.

Whereas individuals had previously been seen as external arbitrators of market operations, human capital theory now integrated them into market operations, creating an inseparability between material and normative value. At the same time, something of an individual's relations to others, and indeed to the self, appears to be lost in attaching all value to market indicators: everyone is subject to the same principle of wellbeing associated with economic standing. When it comes to discussions concerning education, any idea of either a social commitment to others or 'self-formation,' as opposed to self-interest, is lost, because these dimensions are conceived of as inevitable (Unterhalter and Carpentier, 2010). The attraction of still selling this theory as a market model for universities is in evidence in a lot of the rhetoric that institutions and departments worldwide use to describe themselves. Iraq's University for Human Development, for example, has the College of Administration and Economics promoting its "Preparation of Scientific and academic opportunities, by attracting skills and creative human

capacities,” whilst the College of Language looks towards “Working to provide Scientific and social programs in accordance with the development of qualified personnel in different specialties needed by the stage” (<http://uhd.edu.iq>). Human development is here presented as a skills-based, career-oriented programme in education, whereby the value of education is directly related to the qualifications and employability prospects to be gained by it.

Human capital investment remains an almost unquestioned norm of development organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Foundation. The latter’s 1995 education policy review contains the assertion that “Human capital theory has no genuine rival of equal breadth and rigour” (quoted in Samoff, 2003, p.70). This continued belief in the merits of the theory is also in evidence in some of its more recent documents pertaining to higher education development also. Its 2009 text, *Accelerating Catch-Up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa*, sees on its cover a besuited African male leaping up an ascendant line graph that implicitly links an education for a profession to economic progress.<sup>12</sup> The title and accompanying blurb, explaining “why tertiary education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa must become better aligned with national economic development and poverty reduction strategies,” are further reminiscent of how discourse can blur the purpose of education by blurring its field: the ‘must’ not only relates now to ‘tertiary education’ as opposed to higher education or universities in particular, but the geographic specificity singles out the institutions in this part of the world as meriting special attention and particular advice. The university’s function is therefore subsumed into tertiary education more generally, and, according to its location, it must comply with a particular agenda. That

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<sup>12</sup> Elaine Unterhalter has described this formulation as a “pedagogy of consequence” (Unterhalter, 2010, p.96), which instrumentalises the connection between higher education and (knowledge) production.

agenda is very clearly spelt out on the cover, the series title encapsulating all the other elements: 'Human Development.'

As the world's largest funding agency, the World Bank is well-positioned to also be its greatest purveyor of a single development agenda, and to intervening in other countries for the sake of that agenda. The Bank is both committed to its intervention agenda and explicit about its terms, which, according to their 2002 report on *Constructing Knowledge Societies*, amounts to applying "its financial resources and extensive knowledge base toward increased efforts in the tertiary education and science and technology sectors" in order to "create the foundations for democratic, knowledge-based economies and societies" (World Bank, 2002, p.99). The report then goes on to list six forms of intervention that includes science and technology development, as well as institutional diversification. Once more, the term tertiary education detracts from significant ideological underpinnings to the report. These include the privileging of certain forms of knowledge seen to be more important in 'Human Development' than others (i.e. science and technology over the humanities), as well as the reinforced dependency that comes about by asserting itself as the source of provision in both finance and knowledge. What may be most important here, however, is what is *not* being said: that the foundations of democratic societies can be laid without some form of reciprocal engagement in their development by those to whom they are being applied. The World Bank has again presented a paradox by suggesting that the only model of democracy is the one which it brings to the table.

### 3.5. Human capability

The human capital approach, as has been suggested above, has by no means been supplanted. However, over the course of the last thirty years, a new discourse in development has gathered influence, and has found increasing applicability in areas of educational development over the past twenty years. The capabilities approach (CA) effected a deliberate transition from the human capital approach. Sen has voiced an explicit intention in his work on CA to oppose “narrower views of development, such as identifying development with the growth of gross national product, or with the rise in personal incomes, or with industrialization, or with technological advance, or with social modernization” (Sen, 1999, p. 3). In a short series of lectures given in 1982, Sen outlined a view of economics that was primarily concerned with the relations between people and commodities, and suggested a series of questions that should also be asked alongside the consideration of how people control their commodities:

Is he well off? Is she happy? Does he feel fulfilled? Does she have much freedom? Can he get what he wants? Can she do what she would like to do? Is society being good to him? Is she having a good life?

(1985, p.1)

Sen’s questions immediately suggest a diagnosis: both ‘he’ and ‘she’ are people about whom evaluations can be made, as comparable with all other individuals in a given society. In posing these questions, Sen’s aim was to go beyond a merely utilitarian approach to economics which upheld just one measurement of a person’s wellbeing, and expanded it to include “a plurality of focus in judging a person’s states and interests” (ibid., p.2). Thus far, however, it would seem that ‘he’ and ‘she’ are not

individuals with a voice of their own; they are generalised persons who function as the objects of a particular form of analysis. And the position of the analyst is assumed as somewhat objective, outside of the questions being self-referential. Sen's particular blend of development economics and political philosophy is thus being set up as a discipline in very much the same way as Foucault describes any disciplinary process, in that it "organizes an analytical space" for the purpose of getting to grips with "confused, massive or transient pluralities" (1991, p.143).

Sen goes on to describe commodities in a manner that is identifiable with human capital, in that he describes the causality of commodification through the example of the desirability of food: food satiates, provides nutrition and allows people to continue with daily activities as well as bringing them together socially. But this simplistic chain of events does not take into account a person's actual and individual 'functionings,' Sen argues, because it does not tell us what any one person is capable of doing according to variability of provision. The 'functionings' of people in those parts of the world where there is a surplus of food and those parts where there is just sufficient or inadequate amounts, are different not because that food does not carry the same commodity properties of satiation and nutrition, etc., but because what they are able to do with it varies. Similarly, a bicycle, for example, is no good to someone who does not know how to ride it. This is not to make a judgment about quality of life, however, because those with minimal commodities can still achieve happiness through the value they attribute to their own life: the bringing of people together over a small meal may be of greater value than dining in excess alone.

Sen's 'functionings' are therefore both personal and social: the more satisfied an individual is with what they are able to do in life, the greater their contribution to society. But Sen himself is not content with stopping here. In his view, there are people who have convinced themselves that they are happy with their lot despite living in terrible privation and suffering (Hinchliffe, 2009), and there is every reason to believe that these people would value having that suffering removed if it were made known to them or became possible (Sen, 1999). An intervention is thus required, one which is informed by rational judgment and a concern for the welfare of others. The name given to this evaluative intervention is a 'capability,' the ability to evaluate, assess and combine 'functionings' to increase one's own choice and opportunity. The capability approach is therefore defined as "individual freedom as a social commitment" (Sen, 1999, p.282). The sovereignty of the individual remains intact, but only inasmuch as it contributes to a social agenda, i.e. development.

The expansion of the capabilities terminology into 'basic' and 'advanced' capabilities, capability 'sets', and functioning 'vectors' is again consistent with Foucault's observation that discipline – as the disciplines of development studies and development economics that draw upon Sen's work often show – creates a space which "tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed" (Foucault, 1991, p.143), for the purpose of full control. Individual agency, for example, is theorised in the capabilities approach in such a complex fashion that the concept itself seems to take on much more importance than its subjects. This complexity is exemplified in an attempt by Hinchliffe (2009) to clarify the benefits of CA: "...the capability approach gives the deliberating process a clear structure such that the agent is not simply deliberating about random functionings, random 'beings and

doings': she is deliberating about functionings through the grid of capability" (p.409). The objectifying rhetoric here provides an unpleasant accompanying image of a test "agent" being given tasks to complete within a confined and controlled space. Whilst such conditions might be helpful for certain isolated psychological evaluations, they certainly can't be said to aid an understanding of agency that is anything other than a superimposed and artificial "grid". It is difficult to see how this "grid" contributes to an "evaluative space" that claims to offer "freedom as a preference" over "freedom as direct control", rather than a space that is entirely unfree.

Sen's highly methodical evaluations of wellbeing and freedom have not been without criticism (see, for example, Gasper, 2002). The implications of CA as a normative and evaluative intervention in the wellbeing of others will be further explored in Chapter Three also, but before looking at how CA has contributed to a reformulation of interest in the field of development and higher education development more specifically, I want to introduce Martha Nussbaum's significant involvement in the growth of CA. In 1988, Sen and Nussbaum organised a conference for the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER), with contributions from G. A. Cohen, Hilary Putnam, Onora O'Neill and Charles Taylor among others. The text that came out of it, *The Quality of Life*, marks the beginning of Nussbaum's commitment to both the collaborative enterprise and her own personal take on CA. The introduction by Sen and Nussbaum is noteworthy in this respect, not least because of its repeated insistence on one phrase: "we need to know" (1993, p.1). Sen and Nussbaum say that it is not enough to try redistributing wealth and resources across the globe in the form of aid, if it is not known who is benefiting:



We need surely to know about their life expectancy... We need to know about their health care and their medical services. We need to know about education... We need to know about labour... We need to know what political and legal privileges the citizens enjoy, what freedoms they have in the conduct of social and personal relations. We need to know how family relations and relations between the sexes are structured... We need, perhaps above all, to know how people are enabled by the society in question to imagine, to wonder, to feel emotions such as love and gratitude, that presuppose that life is more than a set of commercial relations.

(ibid.)

The intrusiveness and demands of this ‘need to know’ should not be underestimated, because they suggest the possibility of the need to own knowledge, and being able to pronounce on issues objectively as a result of this ownership.<sup>13</sup> Once again, the spectre of Foucault’s disciplinary argument haunts this practice, because it argues that the logic behind discipline is one intended to “‘make’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and instruments of its exercise” (1991, p.170). Foucault’s position is perhaps one that itself is excessively cynical in *Discipline and Punish*, but it does provide a useful caution against seeing the combined logical clarity and humanitarianism of the capabilities approach as a philosophy without problems.

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<sup>13</sup> Ingrid Robeyns has championed CA as one of the best approaches to “take into account interindividual diversity” on the basis that “it starts from life as we know it” (2011, p.1). Much of the controlling impetus of CA is contained in these two phrases, in that it suggests that all diversity amongst individuals can be accounted for (differentiations of gender, race, age, etc. then being converted into functionings and capabilities), with that evaluation being made possible by the givenness of empirical evidence.

In relation to the university and its possible legacy of exclusion, Trifonas (2009) has also noted that the attempt to account for all contingent factors in university operations and management, means that “no space is left to welcome other possibilities for knowledge that exceed the calculability of ‘what it means to know’” (p.313). As I have begun to show, CA is almost obsessed with the idea of calculability in its assessment of others’ wellbeing, in its rhetoric, its lists, and hierarchies. This obsession not only closes down the space for other possibilities for knowledge, but also the space in which other people are invited to express their own experience of wellbeing – the space for dialogical, rather than monological, interaction. Foucault saw this closing down of space quite literally as a form of ‘enclosure’ in building designs such as that of Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon; in the development context, I prefer to highlight the way that approaches such as that of CA seem to attempt a form of ideological ‘envelopment,’ under the rubric of ‘development,’ whether as progress or freedom.

Sen and Nussbaum have set out to ask the “unasked question” that allows mechanical formulae such as human capital theory to continue unchallenged, i.e. the question of whether people have other things to value in life beyond their material circumstance. In this sense they certainly provide an approach that is significantly more nuanced in terms of its attentiveness to individual and localised needs, to which human capital (as a neo-liberal, market-based approach) was blind. What they do not recognise is that it might be impossible to ask all the right questions, or even to know that the unasked questions are the right ones in themselves. One way to put this in simpler terms is to say that capabilities are always a way of compensating for a lack of ability to do something, or an ‘incapability’ (a term that is almost never mentioned in the literature). Incapability would thus always be seen as the inverse of capability, and yet, it has

positive interpretations. The first is that, as a form of ‘negative freedom’ as in the definition put forward by Isaiah Berlin, it represents a freedom *from* the interference of another, i.e. the incapable person, as an object of capabilities analysis, is one whose ability or opportunity has not been created for, or imposed upon, them by other people. In another sense, however, it also represents a subjective position from which it is impossible to know whether that state of the object’s incapability is preferable to the capability being offered or imposed. I can never fully know what is best for another person, a suspension of knowledge that must be seen as important if people are to be treated fairly. This should not prevent knowledge from being imparted, but nor should it be imparted on the basis of an assumed understanding of the other and of what they are capable.

When it comes to the question of development, Sen and Nussbaum’s paths bifurcate slightly. Sen has been more concerned to conceptualise the idea of freedom that capabilities have as their goal and the reasoning that supports it (Sen, 1999; 2002), whereas Nussbaum has concentrated more on determining the nature of the capabilities themselves, and how they can be put into force (Nussbaum, 2000; 2011). In the case of the former, development is almost entirely inseparable from either rationality or freedom: rationality is “central to the understanding and assessment of freedom” (2002, p.19); freedom lies in “the alternatives that a person has reason to value or want” (p.5); there is a reciprocal relation between rationality and freedom that allows for the identifying of particular instrumental and substantive ‘freedoms’; development, finally, “consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency” (1999, p.xii). Education in this sequence falls neatly into the category of removing unfreedoms –

interventions such as wider access and participation, for example – for the expansion of personal choices based on reason.

With the language of unfreedoms, the reader is again presented with a philosophy of lack, in which an objective authority with a ‘need to know’ gathers data according to an established rationality to determine the processes of unfreedom removal. Education is still geared towards political ends, with the consequences for universities potentially being that they function solely as instruments for achieving a particular conceptualisation of how society *should* be constructed, rather than existing in a critical relation with society. Far from radically overturning any conceptualisation of the sovereign individual, Sen is in fact attempting a cautious harmonisation between market forces that provide a compellingly objective reference point, and the localised subjective preferences that ensure that that reference point is not the sole measurement of individual happiness or freedom. The meeting point between economy and individual is society. Peters (2007) analyses Sen’s approach as being one that remains “true to the rationalist assumptions of the tradition of his discipline classically emphasizing individuality, rationality and self-interest,” but performs a shift by “looking both backwards to the original wider social and political conceptions that motivated early thinkers and forward to the demands of development economics to make individual freedom a social commitment” (p.117). As I will explore later, the social orientation that is assumed here translates as one possible goal of education, but compromises or possibly excludes other educational values (such as the incapability of knowing already discussed) by making it the only purpose.

Nussbaum, is seemingly more concerned with the nature of the individual involved in CA, in contrast to Sen's socio-economic orientation. Accordingly, she has been more willing to commit to specific rankings and lists of capabilities such that individuals might assess their own positions against them, whereas Sen has always suspended judgment on the feasibility of drawing up such lists (Sen, 2005). Nussbaum has also consistently referred to the narratives of individuals from her own experience to demonstrate the differences that capabilities can make, to draw them away from abstraction. In many ways, this represents a commitment to bringing CA to fruition in its most substantive form, for the purposes of seeing it realised in policy. At the same time, Nussbaum's individualism invariably reveals itself as an act of imagining otherness in one's own likeness, prescribing universal values under the assumption that everyone would learn to value them if they were only raised to reason in the right way. That right way, for Nussbaum, is through Socratic dialogue (Nussbaum, 2010), a form of reasoning that assumes the communicative capacity of the other in advance. It is via this Socratic dialogue that she is able to include an element of 'not knowing' in her advocacy, for example, of the teaching of non-Western cultures in liberal higher education, because "Our primary goal should be to produce students who have a Socratic knowledge of their own ignorance" (1997, p.147). I will argue in chapter five, however, that Socratic dialogue makes a case for embracing its ignorance based on the principle that, whilst the student may recognise that she does not know everything, that recognition both asserts a position of superiority as regards what is known by another person, as well as indicating that all things are *knowable*. For the moment, I want to make the point that my emphasis on the 'incapability' of knowing goes further than recognising one's ignorance of the potentially knowable, and instead affirms the idea that certain things will never be known – including, most importantly perhaps, the

experience of being another person. As such, unknowability in any particular culture, institution, or individual, is not something to eventually be conquered, but an affirmation of what is “*wholly other*” (Derrida, quoted in Biesta, 2001, p.33).

Nussbaum makes of “the task of understanding” through liberal education an absolute imperative, in which the possibility of fully understanding seems always realisable under the goal of global cosmopolitanism. This assumption again betrays a ‘need to know’ about the other that can only determine what constitutes difference in development, rather than possibly seeing it as the key ‘unknown’ factor that always makes development in different directions possible – whether at an individual or societal level. As Biesta (2006) has pointed out, a true respect for the absolute otherness of another person can only come about through not reducing that otherness to ‘known’ categories: “It is not that we need to know everything about our students before we can take responsibility for them” (p.30). Indeed, development, understood in an etymological sense as ‘unfolding,’ contains much greater potential in being seen as a process by which students ‘unfold’ from unknown positions (‘elsewhere’) through education, a process for which educators are responsible. In this understanding, the incapability of the subject to fully know the object of analysis allows for that unfolding to occur, and I will explore the means by which that happens, i.e. dialogism, in chapter five.

I will refer again to Sen and Nussbaum’s work repeatedly over the course of the thesis, but the main point to take from this short summary is this: there are very few educational texts that don’t – however reluctantly – concede that education involves an intervention of some sort, whether on the part of a teacher, the institution, the

government. CA makes a convincing case for intervening on the parts of others for both political and moral reasons, with education being seen as one way in which the desired end of freedom as an ability to make rational choices in society can be instrumentalised. However, not all educational theorising sees ‘reasoned agency’ as the end of the story – not least because those two words might be seen as self-contradictory if agency is only acquired as a process of becoming inducted into a certain way of reasoning. Indeed, such a process of induction might well, in Sen’s terms, be deemed a process of becoming ‘unfree,’ if it does not allow the individual to think differently, or if it tries to reduce the reasoning of elsewhere to shared understanding. In this sense, it might even be tempting to describe CA as yet another form of colonialism, in its advocacy of universalised notions of the good, and rankings of those notions according to context.<sup>14</sup> Not all educational approaches see the need to *prioritise* aspects of injustice in order to treat people equally (see, for example, Biesta & Bingham’ study of Rancière, 2010). This is not to say that the identification and prioritisation of political injustices should not be tackled systematically, but that such systems cannot fully account, by empirical and quantifiable means, for the ethical treatment of an individual in education. The final part of this chapter looks at how Sen and Nussbaum’s work has been drawn upon by educationalists, and the ways in which the movement from theory into practice risks universalising educational norms once again (Nussbaum unequivocally states that the “capabilities approach is fully universal” (2000, p.6)) but also turning capabilities into a form of capital just as human and identity capital had done before.

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<sup>14</sup> Nussbaum has defended this charge on the grounds that “Sen... is a Bengali Indian; though he has acquired British citizenship and currently resides in the United States, he retains his Indian citizenship and a profound engagement with Indian politics and culture. I am a U.S. citizen, but my work has led me to India for much of my research, as well as to a variety of other nations” (2011, p. 101). Given the possible definition of colonising the other at levels other than those of national identity, these exonerations are largely irrelevant, especially given this study’s exploration of colonising the academic sphere through exclusionary formulations of freedom. Any approach that sets itself up as universal, as Nussbaum’s explicitly does, is open to the accusation that it may be attempting to colonise the worldview of others.

### 3.6. Capabilities and higher education

As with most social justice approaches, CA tends to see education in terms of institutions serving the wider social cause. Whether it is the school or the university (as alternative forms of non-formal education are unlikely to figure much in these considerations), an educational institution is seen as a way of instrumentalising capabilities, equipping people with the basic freedoms they require to expand their well-being exponentially. Melanie Walker (2012) has put the question faced by CA-inspired educationalists quite succinctly:

Faced in our contemporary world with its challenges of staggering global inequalities, suffering, social and environmental sustainability, cultural and political conflict and differences, we therefore ought to ask: What kind of world and what kind of society do we want to work and live in, and what is the contribution of education?

(pp.384-385)

Walker's articulation of a problem says everything about the inherent problems with the stance adopted by CA: the construction of a desired world and society – as well as its undesirable opposite – has to take place before the consideration of the role of education in contributing towards, if not creating, it. Constructing inequality, suffering and difference in this fashion poses as many difficulties as the secondary role of education in resolving them: what is the rational basis for the normative claims being made? Where does the authority to make them come from? And what is the justification in instrumentalising education for the purpose of achieving capabilities? The



expedience suggested by the last question (i.e. the idea that the purpose of higher education is to *create* opportunity, rather than being seen as opportunity) is made clearer when looking at the “‘BIG TICKET’ question” proposed by the Centre for Higher Education and Capabilities Research, led by Walker: “What does a university which takes seriously human development values and human capabilities look like?” (<http://checar.ufs.ac.za> ). This question looks for an image of a university as an abstracted entity, and attempts to draw a line between that image and the instrumentalising of social justice as attached to an idea of the human. Nowhere in this question is there a suggestion that education (which is not even mentioned) in a university is something that happens to different people in different ways; instead, it offers the potential for a blueprint institution (which it has never been) that treats value and capability independently of (human) difference.

The social function of the university seems to vary very little from that of any other educational – or any public – institution, according to CA, and is expressed again by Walker largely in terms of inequalities. Other capabilities-inspired educationalists have also understood higher education almost entirely in terms of what it is failing to achieve. In their volume on *Global Inequalities and Higher Education*, for example, Unterhalter and Carpentier introduce their educational concerns by highlighting how “the mobility of students, staff, institutional forms and virtual communication represent as many challenges as opportunities to increase or reduce inequalities within and between countries” (2010, p.17). The difference between higher education and elementary education, then, would seem to be only that the former has a more global dimension, and so instead of just thinking about inequality at a national level, it is posited as an international problem also. Unterhalter and Carpentier locate this problem

as an ideological struggle between rich and poor countries brought about by the economics of neo-liberalism, but go no further in their argument to suggest that universities might be able to affirm educational values despite these constraints – and thereby condemn them always to reproduce contingency. In a later chapter, Unterhalter suggests that “internationalizing the drive for expanded access and equality of opportunity requires particular technologies and forms of regulation, but not a questioning of substantive pedagogical assumptions” (p.97). The social (or distributive) justice agenda is again prioritised, but the revision of access and opportunity approaches carries no concomitant reassessment of the quality, provision and purpose of a university education, which is simply assumed.

The relationship between CA and higher education, then, is one seen as a global project of addressing inequality in terms of issues of access, participation and representation – therefore predominantly with regards to minority groups or particularly poor countries. This project has therefore also entailed creating lists of capabilities that will benefit everyone, but particularly those who are underrepresented or undervalued. Walker (2006) has made a claim for the need for such a list based on the inequalities of power in higher education pedagogy. Much of her evidence for this claim – as with Martha Nussbaum’s writings – comes from first-person narratives of those that have experienced discrimination, whether on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, or ‘ability.’ The “compelling,” “moving,” and “fearful” accounts all indicate that students have felt politically oppressed during points in their university education. For Walker, this is enough to assert that:

If gender equality and other forms of diversity equality are implicated in distributing education capability then we need pedagogical strategies which take this up practically. Women's education, black people's education, mature students' education, all should arguably enhance agency through knowledge and skills.

(p.113)

Whilst it is not completely clear the form that Walker's new pedagogical strategies will take, there is certainly a dilemma here: do all these different strategies make everyone feel more equal, in that their categories of diversity have equal representation? Or do women just end up feeling more like women, black people more like black people, and mature students more mature? When none of these distinctions seem to allow for subjective complexity that is not reducible to generic identities, what then does this mean for understanding equality? Is it a position of recognising and tolerating difference (guided by the 'need to know'), and simply ensuring that all have access to the same political rights and representation as long as the categories of what is different remain in place? Or is there a possibility for approaching difference – in education and thus development – less in terms of characteristics but as something in which multiple or even infinite possibilities might be at play, i.e. from a position of being incapable of knowing for sure? Equality here would be based more on what is *not* known (or the affirmed incapability of knowing) rather than what *is* known about the other in education. As such there would be less of an obligation to be always compensating one party or another for being underrepresented or undervalued – which would be a never-ending process – and instead treat everyone as if their differences were equal.

This relation between difference and equality will be expanded upon later, but it is important for an understanding of the idea of freedom as an educational ideal that such a concept not be construed as the simple removal of obstacles based on pre-defined categories of injustice. Not only does such a conceptualisation only serve to reinforce those categories, but it might drive further social division rather than equality in education. This possibility is not often considered in CA: Martha Nussbaum's advocacy of African-American studies in the liberal curriculum, for example, does indeed reject the notion that the study of a minority should not be about "identity politics," as it can too easily become, but its importance (specifically in the United States) lies in understanding "how even those African-Americans who were grudgingly included [in academia] were until recently required, as the price of admittance, to repudiate their origins, and to avow the superior value of European civilization" (1997, p.151).

Nussbaum's unwillingness to condescend to what she calls "victimology" goes some way in advancing the idea that African-American studies is not about creating a discipline that seeks to enclose one group within its own history, but is rather an exposure of all students to issues of exclusion and oppression. However, it is her follow-up argumentation that undermines the previous one, where she claims that through an understanding of academic exclusion people "can then try and grasp the complex reactions of shame, pride, longing, and hatred that this academic history must surely have engendered in any rational black person who was made to live through it. And we should acknowledge that such reactions were and are rational" (ibid.). The assertion of "must surely" is the confident outcome of the "need to know," in that it suggests that a "rational black person" is a knowable category available to empirical

understanding. But I think there is an inconsistency in Nussbaum's thinking, not least in the non-commensurability between capabilities and liberal higher education: on the one hand, Nussbaum is making the case for an education that exposes all students to a particular history of exclusion, thereby bringing into play their capability for empathy; on the other hand, she tries to make a claim on that empathy by appealing to an identification with the 'rationality' of the excluded.

The contradiction lies in the fact that, at the time of the exclusion, it was a predominant mode of rationality that argued *for* the exclusion of African-Americans, a mode that was widely accepted on the basis that the latter were *not* rational. Nussbaum seems to feel that the progress made in racial equality has been a gradual evolution towards accepting the rationality of others who appear different, instead of fearing it. As such the hegemony of the enlightened mode of rationality remains intact, only becoming more enlightened for its inclusive and tolerant worldview. The idea that a rationality 'other' than the dominant mode might have caused a rupture in that worldview, forcing it to concede rather than gain ground, is not acknowledged. Thus the capability for empathy is, in returning to a lecture theatre or seminar context, in danger of being another way of asserting Western Enlightenment rationality by challenging issues of identity and exclusion rather than enforcing them. Nussbaum forcefully argues against seeing "one's own habits and ways as best for all persons in all times" (p.156), but is not prepared to go further and question whether rationality itself has a particularly exclusionary history, and therefore one that might compromise both an idea of the university's purpose, as well as the capabilities that articulate that purpose.

Both Nussbaum and Walker have said that any capabilities lists they have come up with are by no means final, and therefore declare their authority to be entirely part of the deliberative process which social justice approaches support. Nussbaum sets out her list in terms of “central human functional capabilities”, and cites them as: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; control over one’s environment (2000; 2011). Her argument for committing to such a list is that it provides “basic political principles that can be embodied in constitutional guarantees” as well as “making the life that includes them fully human” (2011, p.74). Marrying values to the constitution is common to all rights discourses, and only becomes a problem when the value of contesting that marriage is not also recognised, as I will discuss later in terms of academic freedom.

Walker offers her list for capability distribution in higher education as a “starting point for discussion” (p.128), and comes up with eight suggested capabilities: practical reason; educational resilience; knowledge and imagination; learning disposition; social relations and social networks; respect, dignity and recognition; emotional integrity, emotions; bodily integrity. The list is confusing in that it seems to be divided between forms of enabling and forms of protection. The description for the “learning disposition” capability, for example, is given as “being able to have curiosity and a desire for learning” (ibid.). The idea of instrumentalising such a capability is made problematic by questions over how it is possible to assess whether an individual is able to have curiosity. And why aren’t all members of a higher education institution able to have curiosity (from birth, or prior to it), even if they don’t exercise it? Why should their not exercising that capability be seen as something that needs to be taught or corrected, rather than as a matter of individual choice or even laziness? To position

the student entirely in passive terms, or in terms of a “citizen of the world” in-the-making, is to continue to think of her as a vessel for the cultivation of a social ideal, and not as someone whose subjective experience can’t be reduced to that social ideal (Matusov, 2011). If CA continues to be committed to a social ideal that is positioned beyond the university, i.e. as its outcome, it will reduce the possibilities for thought that interrupts accepted understanding and received opinion within the university.

In terms of forms of protection, Walker offers “bodily integrity” as another item on her list of capabilities, which poses another question: why is “safety and freedom from all forms of physical and verbal harassment” an issue peculiar to the higher education environment? Undoubtedly this is a form of political protection that should be advocated across society, but there is little explanation as to what it achieves with regards to pedagogical approach. A university ensuring that its students are free from harm does not mean they have necessarily learnt anything either in terms of knowledge or self-formation. CA – in Walker’s formulation – thus seems to make of a university a space in which all opportunity for becoming a subject through education is circumscribed by social goals that have little to do with education as a process in which challenges to the universality of desired social ends emerge, and more to do with policing education as a means to achieving those goals.

For Walker, such a list is aimed at the twin goals of rationality and freedom – priorities supported by both Sen and Nussbaum for the purpose of ‘reasoned agency.’ As with Unterhalter, Walker identifies the central function of universities as not having changed, in that “the formal aim of universities still centres on conserving, producing through research and disseminating through teaching and learning something we might

call ‘higher knowledge,’ embedded in disciplinary structures, dynamic traditions of enquiry and standards of excellence” (p.110). What is unclear in Walker’s definition is just how the processes of conservation and production which she mentions contribute to the desired end of reasoned agency, and also why the “something we might call ‘higher knowledge’” should be called ‘higher’ at all. Indeed, according to this formulation, it appears that knowledge is only higher because it occurs in an institution that carries the authority to define it as such, an authority granted by a tradition (conservation, disciplinary structures, etc.) which can only ‘produce’ new knowledge as long as it is developed within and according to the rules of that tradition. In other words, the university and the limits of its educational reach must be entirely constructed before knowledge production can occur within them, a construction that has taken place simultaneously with the tradition of understanding rationality and freedom that find themselves the end goal of the capability to be educated. There is no room here then for other ways of thinking about the university, other desirable educational ends – or even thinking about the other at all. Walker thus lays herself open to the charge made by Allan (2010) that “Western universities’ attempts to educate the Other have been limited by an institutionalised Eurocentric myoptics, a standpoint which they remain largely unable to name or understand.” (p.60). Whilst it may be argued that these are all issues that urgency and expediency in poorer or ‘developing’ countries cannot afford, there may be a very good case for counter-arguing that the greatest injustices or acts of inequality are those that do not see the other as equal, but rather as one in need of direction from a higher authority. This is the problem presented by humanist approaches to education, and the one that is presented in the next chapter of this thesis.

### **3.7. Conclusion: capability capital**



The histories, narratives and discourses of colonialism, development, human capital and human capability theory are by no means sequential. They are all overlapping, entangled, as well as conflicting and sometimes inseparable. Common to all, however, is the emphasis on driving one line of thinking to which all others are in service. The subservient role that education plays here has not gone unnoticed by those in the field of comparative education, with McGrath (2010) noting that development takes economics as its lead discipline because of “its dominant place in the dominant development institution: the World Bank” (p.238). Educationalists in this context are not necessarily making the point that education should be given a higher profile, but rather saying that in prioritising the economic dimension, some educational interests might be being (deliberately) ignored or rejected for the sake of pursuing agendas connected to prioritised areas of research and policy. Jansen (2005), for example, has raised questions about “the possible non-educational purposes of targets which seem to be lost in the development mantra” (p.369) and Samoff (2003) has noted that “education as an investment self-consciously ignores the process of education,” dismissing the ways that “education is interactive, replete with discontinuities, and always locally contingent” (p.71). Standish (2013), in relation to the social justice discourse, has suggested that “this tradition of thought has less to say about certain central aspects of education – that is, about the substance of teaching and learning, and about its transformative place in human life,” and that in fact the discourse “is apt to hide the importance of these matters.” These observations identify an ideological problem in development approaches to education, which is that they may often have little to do with education at all, at least in a sense that does not see the educable human as a means for proving a specific educational approach, but rather as an unknowable end in itself.

I have argued that higher education development has in the past ignored what might be considered educational concerns to concentrate on economic concerns. Human capital theory was shown to be particularly guilty of trying to subsume subjective educational interests under one imperative of economic growth. But I have also shown that the capabilities approach devised originally by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum to provide a socially oriented corrective to this market orientation has since seen many (development) educationalists view their field as one entirely circumscribed by issues of political inequalities and injustice – which capabilities are able to correct through identifying areas of lack (of access, participation, etc.) in institutions. The corrections come in the form of lists of capabilities, and in the instance of education, capabilities such as reason and knowledge are put forward by those who have already attained those capabilities, putting them in the position of assessing their value in determining what it is that others ‘have reason to value,’ with a paradox contained in the idea that everyone might come to value the same things as long as they are educated to reason in the same way.

The fact that capabilities are often reduced to lists of basic desired capabilities means that they are liable to carry an uncritical obviousness about them that does not tally with the infinite differences and possibilities for difference in human beings. In the context of the university, Luke (2010) has affirmed that “[w]ithout an undertaking to engage with difference within difference, the risk for university education is the provision of universal truths through generic pedagogies for homogenously defined cultural subjects” (p.61). I think the subjects posited by both human capital theory and human capabilities are universalised and homogenously defined, and whilst this

reductive approach might facilitate the applicability of capabilities, it also risks converting them into a form of capital in themselves, or goods used in processes of production with specific outcomes and/or accompanying advantage. CA reacted against the form of human capitalism that attempted to induct people into the needs of modern industry and the knowledge economy (the discourse to which many ‘developing’ countries are still beholden via the umbilical cord of international financial institutions), instead concentrating on “substantive freedoms” for individual well-being. The irony of this response – at least in Sen’s case – is that whilst it takes some influence from Marx in exposing the power play behind endless production and the cycle of surplus, CA is unable to see the ways in which it reproduces many features of the Marxist critique of capitalism itself, only trading in capabilities over commodities. Indeed, Nussbaum’s rhetoric often seems to embrace a vocabulary of production even when championing resistance to it: “We probably cannot produce people who are firm against every manipulation, but we can produce a social culture that is itself a powerful surrounding ‘situation,’ strengthening the tendencies that militate against stigmatization and domination” (2012, p.44). Within this quasi-militaristic agenda (that sees prejudice and control only as negative forces without, rather than ones that no one, or no society, is fully purged of within), individuals are bound into systems whose forceful control also serves to protect. It is a social culture upon which people are passively dependent for the provision of their capabilities (of which self-awareness is one), the acquisition of which allows them to acquire more (within the boundaries of reasoned agency already acquired), although always with the possibility (surplus) of there being capabilities of which they are not yet aware – things they do not know that they value yet, which ensure the reintroduction of dependency on others to make them aware of those capabilities.

Development in higher education over the course of the last century has thus, in my view, always taken the market as its reference point, whether literally or by understanding the individual as analogous to the market. This is as much the case with human capital as it is with human capability, or what I have termed capability capital. Whereas the former was presented as an economic concern, the latter has presented itself as a socio-political corrective. Both, I believe, continue to contribute to grave differences in the ways higher education provision is perceived of and prioritised in different parts of the world – an injustice that can only contribute to further lack of freedom in university education, rather than compensating for it. Over the course of the rest of the thesis, I hope to begin to show how treating higher education development as an educational concern, rather than simply an issue of education for an ever-changing notion of ‘higher development,’ can offer an alternative approach to valuing the relation between difference and equality in the university, and conceiving of it as having a purpose that is unique to society, rather than subservient to it. The aim will be to show how freedom is not a social entitlement that is received passively via education, but can be seen as an active engagement on the part of all subjects in university research and teaching, in *relation* to social circumstances – and therefore something that can be enacted irrespective of (though not transcending) geo-economic conditions.

Development, which I have described as being more accurately described as a programme of ideological envelopment, will therefore be reformulated as an ‘unfolding’ of institutional purpose through an understanding of freedom based not upon the all-enveloping ‘need to know,’ but a willingness to suspend that need for the possibility of experience arriving from elsewhere.

## **4. Humanism and higher education**

### **4.1. Introduction**

In the previous two chapters, I attempted to show how the theory and history of the university as an educational institution has become estranged from a field of educational interest that has grown up over the last hundred or so years, namely higher education development. The importance of this was not to suggest that only by reconciling historical progress with an abstract notion of progress (i.e. development) can the university rediscover its educational purpose in a globalised context, but rather to say that there may be residual issues common to both that require reassessment before any affirmation of the role of the university today can be offered. The particular problem I want to address in this chapter, then, is that of humanism, or a specific understanding of humanism and how the human is conceived of that may place limitations on the richness of educational experience, or ‘the experience of elsewhere.’ that a university education might have to offer. As Biesta puts it, humanism in the philosophical sense “stands for the assumption that it is possible to know and articulate the essence or nature of the human being and to use this knowledge as a foundation for our educational and political efforts” (p.5). As a result, another danger posed by humanism is that it reproduces some of the (particularly colonial) inequalities that an over-emphasis on a universal ideal of the human instils in the theory and practice of higher education development.

Again, I want to situate this discussion historically, to show first of all how the humanist turn during the Renaissance constituted not only a theological revolution, but also an epistemological revolution in which the universities played an important role –

not least in inaugurating the rise of the Humanities, an area of study that would go on to celebrate human achievement but perhaps at the expense of considering alternative ‘humanities,’ or ‘other ways of being.’ This is not to discredit the importance of Humanities subjects or disciplines in university education, but rather to demonstrate how the elevation of a particular conception of humanity not only to a universal level, but in a way which can be taught and potentially realised through education, can lead to the sorts of problems presented by the colonial administration of universities or the German universities’ lack of resistance to the rise of Nazism.<sup>15</sup>

#### **4.2. Renaissance Humanism**

As with the history and theories of the university, the historiography of humanism as a philosophy has a particularly European flavour. European humanism has been described by Margolin (1989) as “...a cultural and intellectual movement, characteristic of the Renaissance, which opened the way to a transformation of worldview, a renewal of manners and types of knowledge, an enlargement of the sources of literary and artistic inspiration, a reorganization of academic life, a freedom to be critical of traditions and institutions, and a new vision of the human condition.” (p.3). Although humanism as a term was only put into more widespread use in the nineteenth century to describe literary culture in contrast to the scientific, it had been in existence since the Renaissance. As Kristeller and Randall Jr. (1956) explain, the term originally referred to a specific intellectual project on the part of Renaissance philosophers, which tried to develop a formal educational and cultural program based on the Classics and classical authors:

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<sup>15</sup> Whilst Martin Heidegger has become the most notable exemplar of German academics’ Nazist sympathies, he was not alone. A number of publications attest to the complicity and enthusiasm for the on the part of German universities, including *Higher Education in Nazi Germany* (Wolf, 2010, originally published in 1944), *Midwives to Nazism: University Professors in Weimar Germany* (Gallin, 1986), and *Complicity in the Holocaust: Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* (Ericksen, 2012).

They emphasized the ideal of literary elegance and considered the imitation of the Roman authors the best way of learning to speak and to write well in prose and verse...At the same time the demands of the present were by no means neglected for a search after the distant past. The Humanists tried and managed to express the concrete circumstances of their own life and their personal thoughts and feelings in a language and a style largely borrowed from classical models.

(pp.3-4)

In the time of the Renaissance, however, the only person to whom the word *umanista* was applied was a teacher of grammar and rhetoric, although gradually the term became more generalised to mean a lover or teacher of the study of humanity – *Studia Humanitatis* – or ‘the Humanities’ (ibid., p.4). The goal of such studies was to bring students to a realisation of their own humanity, and to “develop a desirable type of human being” (ibid.). This was in contradistinction to other studies such as theology, which served to remind ‘Man’ of his place in the divine order. Erasmus’ famous dictum that “man certainly is not born, but made man” (1990, p.72) summarises one of the main paradoxes of humanism: that it describes the process of becoming human, but that one had to be human already in order to become human (i.e. because of the divine order, neither God nor animal could become human). Erasmus was also talking exclusively about education for boys (as that for girls was thought unnecessary), suggesting problems of inclusion embedded in the humanist ideal from the outset.

Given the great variation in the authors of Renaissance humanism, it is difficult to offer a precise account of the direction in which the movement was gesturing, but a

general proclamation of a new human-centred philosophy is in evidence in all writers with which it is associated. From Pico della Mirandola, to Machiavelli, to Montaigne, there is a defiant notion that Man is in control of his own fate, and therefore that freedom is possible on earth, not just awaiting souls in the afterlife. The ethico-political implications of such an epistemological and ontological revolution were manifold, but the important point was that Man had made of himself a possibility outside of pre-ordained fate, and that the close rational study of Man could realise that possibility. At the same time, in giving Man more responsibility for his own self-understanding, the Renaissance humanists situated Man's position as being much closer to God in this respect, i.e. ascribing to Man greater dominion and advantage over his own environment.

The likes of Pico (1463-1494) and Vives (1493-1540) both made efforts to show how man had been rewarded by God to be both “intermediary between creatures” and “the intimate of the gods” (in Cassirer, Kristeller, and Randall Jr., 1956, p.223). A number of the Renaissance Humanists, such as Petrarca and Pomponazzi, also wrote vigorously against the tide of Arabic influence in contemporary thought from Averroes and Avicenna. Whilst Petrarca was equally as vehement in his indictment of British dialectics, it is worth noting that the growth of humanism as both intellectual strain and pedagogy, developed in part out of a reaction against Arab Aristotelianism,<sup>16</sup> summed up by Petrarca's statement that: “I will not be persuaded that any good can come from

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<sup>16</sup> Access to Aristotelian thought during the Renaissance would largely have arrived second hand via translations and commentaries, many of those produced by Averroes (who himself was not working with the original Greek). Kristeller and Randall Jr. explain that “what [the Humanists] objected to in the organised Aristotelian learning of the universities was not its synthesis with religious values, and certainly not its worldliness and asceticism. It was rather on behalf of a purer and deeper religious life that Humanists on both sides of the Alps opposed Aristotle” (1956, p.5-6). They further show that Averroes' particular interpretation of Aristotle was one that was distinctly at odds with the Christian faith, not least because Averroes devoted himself to arguments for philosophy as rationality as opposed to Islam as faith (p.10).



Arabia” (p.142). Such prejudices (as with the gender bias) suggest that the Italian Renaissance was not entirely inclusive in its ideas of ‘becoming human,’ and that the ideological legacy of the early humanists should not be underestimated, as evidenced, for example, by the notable absence of the Arab philosophers in today’s Western philosophy courses (at least in Britain).

The fact that the growth of humanism coincided with the birth and massive expansion of printing also meant that the influence and authority of a few significant figures could be quickly disseminated.<sup>17</sup> Andrew Melville’s (1545-1622) reform of the Scottish university curriculum (the promotion of languages, philosophy and divinity, for example) at both Glasgow and St Andrews is just one example of how the exposure to radical thought could be both so easily consumed and rapidly implemented (Holloway III, 2011). Humanism as a formally practised school of thought, it would seem, has had as much to do with protectionism, epistemological control, and efficiency in knowledge production as it did with the magnanimous exploration of the human condition. As such, it confirms Foucault’s suspicions discussed in the previous chapter about the near paranoia of disciplinary construction, in that it organises an analytic space for the control of “confused, massive or transient pluralities” (1991, p.143). To believe that humanism is a school of thought that celebrates a single ideal of the human to which everyone should aspire, ignores the political, religious and philosophical power plays that have informed its development, not least through the organized analytic space of the university. This has continued to be the case ever since the Renaissance, whether in the German universities of the nineteenth century, with their emphasis on celebrating national culture through literary study, or in many of today’s universities which see

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<sup>17</sup> Isabelle Stengers has made the interesting claim that it was the printing press that killed the Medieval universities, in the sense that knowledge production became more important than the practices of education (Stengers, 2011, p.12)

science subjects as the best means of producing knowledge for financial gain (or survival).

### **4.3. Humanism in practice**

As regards the relationship between the growth of the university as an institution and humanism as practicable philosophy, Grafton and Jardine (1986) have pointed out that what makes the success of Renaissance and Reformation humanism in Early Modern European education so remarkable is not so much its epistemological turn, as its massive overturning of an already established educational approach in scholasticism (p.xii). Not only was this tradition, according to Grafton and Jardine, “no sterile indoctrination in the authoritative messages of a few selected texts” (p.xiii), but was proving to offer wide-ranging and rigorous education at both school and university levels. And yet the tide of humanism appeared to commit what the authors describe as “the murder of an intact organism” (ibid.). Why? Grafton and Jardine suggest that both systems adapted to new forms of societal structure, with scholasticism being suited to “the needs of the Europe of the high middle ages, with its communes, its church offices open to the low-born of high talents and its vigorous debates on power and authority in state and church” (ibid.). Their argument is that the growth of the humanist system occurred concomitantly with a new Europe of “closed governing elites, hereditary offices and strenuous efforts to close off debate on vital political and social questions” (p.xiv).

Whether or not the authors are being overly generous towards medieval scholasticism, and indeed broad-ranging in their non-differentiated treatment of European countries, the questions posed of the flourishing of Renaissance humanism

are pertinent. To what extent did it constitute an attempt to control the destiny of individuals by concentrating power in the hands of the few with the ability to make such well-reasoned and important decisions, as opposed to recognising the humanity of each individual as potentially different to that of another? Was humanism, as formulated and put into practice in universities, originally a project of selecting those that would preserve and lead a certain idea of humanity, which would remain the desirable if largely unattainable ideal for the majority? If so, it bears strong comparisons with the ways in which colonial universities were later set up, and may also reveal much about the way in which development approaches to higher education continue to obstruct the attainability of that ideal, albeit by different means (the advocacy of private over public institutions, the conditionality of autonomy, the standardisation of what constitutes ‘excellence’).

Grafton and Jardine’s study concentrates on the growth of the humanities and liberal arts as the defining subjects of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as the means for training the ideal citizen. As has already been discussed in Chapter 1, this tradition continued through the Enlightenment and then Romantic revisions of Kant and von Humboldt respectively, with their added contributions of human rationality and *Bildung* (as individual autonomy) (see Biesta, 2006), that led to the strong promotion of philosophy and the arts over other disciplines. What Grafton and Jardine usefully point up, however, is firstly the idea that the residual humanistic impulse (“the zealous faith in an ideal” (p.xvi)) in the humanities today may be what is most damaging to its cause, and secondly that – for better or worse – universities are deeply responsive to changes in societal dynamics and structure, perhaps more so of their own accord than any other formal educational institution.

What can end up happening then is that arts and humanities subjects defend their purpose on the grounds of preserving a tradition which itself requires questioning, whilst universities are increasingly struggling to fund these disciplines because they can't prove themselves of immediate use in rapidly changing times. My argument here is not to defend one position or the other, nor to set up a binary distinction between the arts and the sciences (as questioned by C.P. Snow). Instead, I want to show that resorting to tradition is often understood as the best route towards (self-) preservation in academia, though not necessarily the most fruitful. A reliance on tradition consistently reveals a (particular type of) humanistic strain which inhibits the possibility for, and importance of, change. This is partly because, as has been the case since Kant conceived of autonomy as an ahistorical capacity inherent in human nature (Biesta, 2006), contingency is accommodated within the realm of human reason, rather than being seen as a challenge to it. Humanism is therefore criticised less on the grounds that it attempts to cultivate what is best in humanity, but more for the assumption that those attempts are made from within an existing understanding of humanity.

Grafton and Jardine are keen to point out in their account of humanistic education that what is at issue is not so much its success or efficiency as an approach, but the force of a humanistic ideology that accompanies it. Their recounting of the teaching of Guarino Guarini (1624-1683), for example, demonstrates that this eminent humanist upheld a belief in the cultivation of the human as a whole being, but that the approach was so completely systematic that it can be seen as rejecting entirely the notion of individual self-consciousness in the process, educating instead for a civilised being that was well-equipped with all the competencies of a well-trained public

speaker. In this, the similarities with the capabilities approach (CA) as discussed in the previous chapter, are notable. In Guarini's version of educating the human, *Bildung* – the formation of the individual – is entirely socially oriented, and that orientation itself is carefully constructed according to an ideal dictated by public and political acceptability (in terms of class, gender, etc.). Nussbaum and Walker's various articulations of desirable capabilities that are determined by a cosmopolitan concern for redressing social inequity, perform a similar task – and are therefore equally attractive for policy purposes.

It would seem that Guarini's approach was politically popular, especially prized for its homogenizing of regional differences:

[T]he general approval expressed for Guarino's kind of humanist instruction by the Italian establishment has more to do with its appropriateness as a commodity than with its intrinsic intellectual merits. As long as humanist schools turned out such suitable potential servants of the state, they were prepared to endorse the enthusiastic claims of humanist idealists for their literary studies as 'a storehouse of recorded values', from which the individual acquired 'a general fitness for a humane existence.'

(1986, p.25)

This preparation of individuals in "a general fitness for a humane existence" is one that, in its very articulation, suggests the protection of an established worldview, a way of life, the *status quo*, given its induction into "recorded values." This is precisely the sort of approach that would later be taken in exporting educational services out to the

colonies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when European powers would again be seeking to turn out “suitable potential servants of the state,” who would maintain order rather than question it.

#### **4.4. Beyond humanism?**

There arises a question, then, over the degree to which education with a foundation in humanism is ever free from instrumentality, or the interplay between the ideologies that inform instrumentalisation. If the answer is that it is not, and that education is therefore just a form of constructivism, then educational theory is confronted with the problem of whether it is ethical to induct students into a system according to this interplay. To concede the idea that education is just a way of shaping children as students according to a societal and civil ideal would be to deny the possibility of their having different, or conflicting, understandings of what constitutes that ideal (i.e. ‘the human’), whether at the time of their formal education or after it. If the idea of freedom were to be included in this understanding of humanism, the argument might be that all humans can achieve freedom, but only by virtue of living up to an ideal of what it means to be human.

Human capital and human capability approaches, providing freedom in the form of substantive skills and opportunities, would seem to offer a solution. Human capital hands something of the responsibility for human value over to the market, which is meant to ‘objectively’ regulate wealth and worth in terms of valuable skills. CA, on the other hand, argues for many more variables to be considered in wellbeing, often according to differing circumstances. And yet with their emphasis on the human, there has to still be a concern that these skills and opportunities are intended to produce a single type of human, rather than allow for the human to be an open question. The

danger in the human capability approach, for example, is that a controlled education in what constitutes freedom of choice and social justice, will indeed lead to students an acquired understanding of what constitutes freedom of choice and social justice; what it does not mean is that they will be able to recognise that that understanding is one of many possible understandings. Nor does it mean that when confronted with an alternative, they will be equipped to engage with it in an open fashion.

In many ways, humanism can be seen as a philosophy of controlling the freedom of how 'the human' is understood. According to Emmanuel Levinas, modern Western philosophy has contributed to "the humanity of man reduced to consciousness" (2006, p.50). By this, Levinas meant that human subjectivity, if seen as an individual's conscious awareness of the world around them, would allow for each individual to conceive of another individual's subjectivity in exactly the same way. In turn, this would mean that less mature or less developed humans would be in the process of consciously assuming whatever was imposed upon them (*ibid.*). The idea that a self-conscious rational being discovers its own autonomy in the world has had an enormous influence on attitudes towards education and children's development, particularly in the field of educational psychology as influenced by Vygotsky (1896-1934) and Piaget (1896-1980). Carl Rogers, for example, held as the first proposition in his theory of the self that "All individuals (organisms) exist in a continually changing world of experience (phenomenal field) of which they are the center" (1951, p.481). Rogers' educational approach, by extension, saw the experience of the teacher as impacting directly on the education of the learner, with special sensitivity being required for the student's own individual experience to be taken into account (Rogers, 1969).

The legacy of individual rational autonomy as conscious subjectivity can still be seen today: in 2009, for example, Martha Nussbaum discussed education for human development in terms of a need for each child to be “treated as an individual whose powers of mind are unfolding and who is expected to make an active and creative contribution to classroom discussion” (2009, p.11). Nussbaum’s child, reminiscent of the same generalised object of analysis as put forward by Vygotsky and Piaget, is one whose mind ‘unfolds’ from within (rather than one experiencing elsewhere), and is determined as an autonomous unit who will become an active contributing individual (citizen) by means of the capabilities provided for her.

Nussbaum’s explicit connection between education and psychological development is contained within her understanding of the healthy child as an object of ethical concern, whose education goes on to support the foundations of a healthy democracy also. The assertion is, as Levinas has it, that, even when it comes to ethics, “I can always assume what is imposed on me” (2006, p.51). But this understanding is dependent upon a hermeneutic circle: we know that the child becomes a rational human individual based upon the opportunities provided for her, whilst those capabilities are themselves based upon processes of human rationality that are part of an inherited way of thinking.

But how is it possible to know whether the ‘human’ dimension of rationality is something ‘natural’ or something constructed – and therefore something that inevitably risks exclusion? The problem with social justice approaches to education is not so much that they don’t attempt to address the issues of human prejudice and discrimination, but



that the approach is always one of redress based on wrongs already happened (in, for example, Unterhalter, 2008; Walker, 2012). Moreover, social justice approaches see those issues as occurring within particular institutions and societies, rather than from within a wider understanding of human rationality itself. Nussbaum, for example, puts the question “What is it about human life that makes it so hard to sustain egalitarian democratic institutions, and so easy to lapse into hierarchies of various types?,” to which the answer is “bad behaviour,” which has aspects of the “structural/institutional” type, and those that are “individual/psychological” (2009, p.9), with the latter being strongly conditioned by the former. An institution is diagnosed as being ‘sick’ with social injustice as “bad behaviour,” and solutions can be provided accordingly; what is never questioned is whether the method of diagnosis itself is problematic.

Nussbaum here makes her position very difficult, in that she seems to be suggesting that the greatest obstacle to the achievement of ‘humanity’ (as embodied by a democratic citizenry supported by egalitarian institutions) is human behaviour itself. By consolidating the individual’s consciousness with psychological development, differentiating it from the structure of institutions, and equating bad behaviour with what is socially unacceptable, she fails to see the ways in which both institutions and understandings of humanity have had to change for the better thanks to instances of “bad behaviour.” Although she argues that “people behave badly when nobody raises a critical voice” (ibid.), there is little recognition that a critical voice might often be seen by many as a good example of “bad behaviour”, nor of the possibility that a critical voice might encourage “bad behaviour” (depending on how it is understood).<sup>18</sup> She has

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<sup>18</sup> As will be explored in chapter six of this thesis, the question of academic freedom is an entirely open one in this respect. In 2001, the US academic David Horowitz felt compelled to raise a critical voice as what he saw as the left-leaning indoctrination of students within American universities, educating them only in a certain way of thinking critically. He was sharply rebuked for his conservatism.

to therefore work herself into a position in which a critical voice is something that is taught and learnt “for independent action and for intelligent resistance to the power of blind tradition and authority,” which situates no part of that education within a tradition of authority itself. All of these arguments, then, are premised on preconceived notions of ‘good behaviour’ that cannot be taken for granted as easily as Nussbaum would have them, because they specify norms of humanity “before the actual manifestation of ‘instances’ of humanity” (Biesta, 2006, p.6).

Biesta (2006) has described an urgent need to reconsider the determinism of life choices that appears through the emphasis on the human in education, on the basis that individuals should neither have their ways of being – or ‘subjectivity’ – imposed upon them (whether it is through close readings of the Classics or abstracted ideals such as ‘a world citizen’), nor should it be considered necessary to have those constructions in place “in advance of any manifestation of subjectivity” (p.106). The argument, then, is that the educator can only respect the humanity of the subject by *not* imposing limits or ideals upon him or her; rather, the educator has to maintain a position of “openness toward new and different ways of being” (ibid.) that allow for multiple possibilities rather than just the traditional or inherited ones established in society or the curriculum. The responsibility for this openness, as well as the implications for academic freedom, will be discussed in later chapters, but it is important to mention that in Biesta’s formulation, the notion of ‘humanity’ is not denounced altogether: instead, the openness that is proposed is one that upholds “a responsibility for the humanity of the human being” (ibid.).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> I would argue that the responsibility is as much for the human being of humanity as vice versa.

Biesta's notion of humanity is also seen as the subject's potential *resistance* to, rather than confirmation of, an all-encompassing idea of the human, differentiating people from each other in a way that avoids socialisation in education as a form of homogenisation. This notion of humanity – or even multiple 'humanities' – somehow opposed in its multiplicity to humanism, poses a challenge for education. It asks how education can maintain a purpose of being "more than the simple insertion of the human individual into a pre-existing order" (ibid., p.8), whilst still providing a concrete space, such as the university, which does not simply facilitate that insertion, or protect certain ways of thinking that simply masquerade as 'open'.

#### **4.5. Humanism and the humanities**

This last point brings me to the humanist perspective offered by Edward Said, which will be helpful not so much as a counter to the critique by Biesta, but rather as a negotiation between the possibility of affirming the human, and that affirmation constituting some form of colonialism (or, in Said's terms, Orientalism). This perspective provides an important bridge between the education and development fields, given the potential 'colonising' tendencies in both that lies in the pre-determination of the subject to be either educated or developed. In a series of lectures given to Columbia University in 2000, Said reflected upon his career at the university and the institution's contribution to a specifically 'American humanism.' Columbia, he said, exemplifies the unifying of an idea of liberal education with a curriculum which has had at its heart since 1937 a year's course in "The Humanities" – now with parallel offerings in Western, Eastern and Oriental Humanities.

The canonical approach taken to the study of the Western Humanities is, according to Said, unsurprising in its predominantly classical selections (Homer, Aeschylus, Plato), and “emerged from the so-called culture wars of the 1970s and 1980s largely unscathed” (2004, p.3). The question that this tradition prompted for Said, however, was how to understand the “useable scope of humanism as an ongoing practice and not a possession” (p.6). He pursued his analysis through the clash of cultures narrative brought about by the subsequent events of September 11, 2001, that resorted to crude distinctions between civilization and barbarism to assert ‘humane’ authority. But the reductionisms involved in this kind of dialectic do not lead Said to adopt wholeheartedly the anti-humanist stance of the French school of theory which he sees (mistakenly) as characterized by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault; instead he seeks to show how the humanity of the individual can be subsumed under systems of thought such as the ‘clash of civilizations,’ to the extent that it forgets the possibility of others being on *neither* one side or other of that clash, or of having alternative ‘humanities.’ Despite his concern for otherness in this respect, Said wishes to avoid totalisation in his understanding of humanism (which is an error he identifies in Lyotard, for example). Instead, he resolves that only ‘human’ ideals of social justice and equality can effect (political) change where it is most needed, and that abandoning humanism altogether in this respect would leave many people even more exposed to exploitation and oppression.

Said’s comments provide here a good opportunity to make a valuable point: in many ways, Said could be talking about the Capabilities Approach when discussing social change. I would also want to stress that CA and other social justice approaches, themselves deeply-rooted in humanist and liberal traditions, can have their value in

effecting social and political change. There are very good arguments for kickstarting societal reform through, for example, proportional representation measures that see people from minority or underrepresented groups given the opportunity to show that they are as capable of carrying out certain tasks as those who have dominated the terrain previously. In governments, artistic fields and educational institutions, it has been important to encourage and attract more women, more people of different race, ethnicity, religion and sexuality, as much to give them opportunity as to show others that these categories need not be an obstacle to their success.

I want, however, to raise two issues. The first is that these changes are premised upon generalised categories, as was argued in the previous chapter. To take one example, Amartya Sen has suggested that education can be used to teach women about fertility because “[h]igh fertility rates can be seen, with much justice, as adverse to the quality of life, especially of young women” (1999, p.144). In Sen’s example, women are spoken of in generalised terms, consistent with other human rights approaches. Individually, each woman is a unit that can learn about the adverse effects of fertility, rather than a subject who discovers that her body is as much a domain of political dispute as biological organism, and that her control over its processes will affect her life choices. This is the difference, in more simple terms, between an education that says that women who have fewer children (or even no children) will have more opportunity, and an education that prompts the championing (whether by men or women) of greater rights for working mothers, maternity leave, and childcare. Whereas the instrumentalism and logic of the former might achieve change in demographic statistical terms, there is perhaps no important change in attitude or disposition, the latter senses a need for change. This sense is not something that can be taught in the

same way as simple association between fertility and opportunity, but can only be invited.

The second issue that Sen's example raises is that 'education' is seen as being no different to other social institutions in terms of what it can achieve in the service of social justice, nor are formal educational institutions differentiated from each other. When might women learn about their fertility, at what stage of their development, and why? If educational purpose is simply about understanding what one is capable of in relation to the society one is in, then there is little need for a university as different to a school that educates from the age of five to twenty-one. But if there is a need for reflecting back on what has been learnt, challenging some of the assumptions that have been made, and undoing some of the implicit ties between the self and the societal structure, then perhaps a different (educational) space is required. Whereas the developmental approach is premised on a fundamental understanding of human nature, the critical approach questions that fundamentalism by inviting dialogue between politics and science, rather than premising the former on the latter.

Said took issue with the idea that the sciences are the antidote to humanism (just as the humanities continue to be nostalgic for it). His argument was that this notion rests solely on the direct equation between humanism and specific idea of progress which in fact is not necessarily the aim of research in either the sciences or the humanities. He thus touched upon the problematic issues already raised so far in this thesis: a tension between the seeming transparency of politics (when reduced to issues of equity, access, and participation) and opacity of otherness; the difference between development as progress and change as historically contingent; and the ways in which the human can be

constructed as contrasted with the valuable ways in which those constructions can be resisted (even through the humanities). Interestingly, Said notes that there are very real concerns –for graduates of humanities courses unable to find a job, for example – that suggest there cannot be any complacency surrounding values in a university education if they are not to become abstracted from social existence.

Said also criticises the overemphasis on identity which “has effectively detoured the humanities from its rightful concern with the critical investigation of values, history, and freedom” (p.14). The sorts of identity issues that he might be referencing here are those that have led to a big rise in courses in North America such as women’s studies, black studies, queer studies, etc. The point is not that such courses are not successful in giving voice to minorities and communities that were previously unrepresented; rather, it is to express some hesitation over whether individuals that fall into the categories of those minorities and communities are done full justice by having their identities reduced to those categories. In the film discussed in my introduction, *Blackboards*, the woman to whom one of the teachers becomes married, can be seen no more as representing women in general than as representing ethnic Kurds, no more poor than she is illiterate. Her identity could be reduced to any of those categories, and yet then her subjectivity, being precisely that which is *not* available to conscious observation or understanding and can not be reduced to the consciousness of others either, suffers as a result. She becomes too easily a generalisable instance of social (in)justice, an object of (a) discipline rather than a person in her own right. The fact that she cannot be taught how to read ‘I love you’ on the chalkboard is reflective of the same fact that she cannot be taught how to feel love for the teacher, just as women being taught how to control their

fertility rates are not necessarily learning how to resist an ongoing ideological control over their bodies.<sup>20</sup>

Said's understanding of humanism, especially in its relation to the humanities as taught in American universities, is one which is sensitive and open to the ideological and contingent nature of such study (in a way that the early Renaissance and Reformation humanists were not), and affirms its importance through that sensitivity and openness, and not through "the invention of tradition" (p.25), or the lens of a canon. The less nuanced view of a humanist education is, however, characterised first and foremost by its foundationalism, the idea that there *is* such a thing as a universal humanity, and that by determining what constitutes the 'human,' education can thereby set about instrumentalising its full realisation.

#### **4.6. Martha Nussbaum and the Classical Defence of the Humanities**

In her essay on 'Human functioning and social justice,' Nussbaum aims at "mapping out the general shape of the human form of life, those features that constitute life as human wherever it is" (1992, p.214). According to this design, she describes her approach as "an historically grounded empirical essentialism" (p.208). The oxymoron contained within a 'historical empiricist' position – as contrasted with those of Biesta and Said – is that the empiricism and essentialism evoked already determine the historical ground upon which they are meant to draw. After all, history can only be

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<sup>20</sup> Luce Irigaray has identified the important way in which historical developments often remain one step ahead of women achieving this self-awareness, allowing it to be recycled through the triumph of domesticity: 'If, traditionally, in the role of mother, woman represents *place* for man, the limit signifies that she becomes a *thing*, undergoing resultant mutations from one historical period to another. She finds herself caged as a thing...The mother woman remains the *place separated from "its" place*, deprived of "its" place she ceaselessly is or becomes the place for the other who cannot separate himself from it...She would have to re-envelop herself by herself, and do so at least twice as a woman and as a mother. This would entail an entire modification in the entire economy of space-time.'



understood through the evidence that is available, which is always only ever partial and open to interpretation. In Nussbaum's case it appears that the historical lens is dualistically selective and monolithic: she declares the empirical standards by which she weighs up the historical perspective, and then pronounces the results to be universal (or essentialist). In her own words, hers is "a study of history that focuses on injustices of class, caste, gender and ethnoreligious membership" in the confidence that "this will prompt critical thinking about the present" (2010, p.21). The redistribution of justice that lies at the heart of this endeavour belies the authoritative capacity in which it is undertaken: the categories that Nussbaum cites are ones which she herself has elevated to the status of universal givens for the purpose of critical thinking, rather than subjecting those categories themselves to the same rigours by considering the possibility of their not being held as universal by others.

Universality is here derived from a common human capacity for reason, and Nussbaum supports this point by saying that "we see ourselves and our customs more clearly when we see our own ways in relation to those of other reasonable people" (1997, p.59). The irony of this view is that the 'relation' to others described by Nussbaum is more like a reflection, because it is presupposed by those others being considered 'reasonable' in the way that 'we' understand reason ourselves, meaning that if 'we' do not recognise reason in others, our selves and customs will not be transformed in any meaningful way. Bill Readings has described this use of the third person singular as the "republican 'we'" that "aspires to empire by virtue of its claim to embody the universal will" (2002, p.173). The "republican 'we'" presupposes a "shared interest or identity of its inhabitants" (Simons and Masschelein, 2009b, p.16). It stakes its claim as part of a long tradition in which, as Derrida (1983) puts it, the

“modern dominance of the principle of reason had to go hand in hand with the interpretation of beings as objects, an object present as representation [*Vorstellung*], an object placed and positioned before a subject” (p.9). Nussbaum effects this manoeuvre by representing “other reasonable people” as empirically contrastable with “ourselves,” “our customs,” and “our own ways.” “Man,” says Derrida, “thus ensures his own technical mastery over what is” (1983, p.9). “Other reasonable people” become generalised to the point at which it is possible to say the same for “us” as it is for “them,” because “the detached content of the cognitional act comes to be governed by its own immanent laws, according to which it then develops as if it had a will of its own” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.7).

It is the “republican ‘we’” that enables colonialist and Orientalist sympathies, didactical education, and development policy, because it assumes a generalised position of authority that negates the otherness in “other reasonable people” by suggesting that difference is just a variation upon the rational norm. Bakhtin describes this mode of asserting theoretical validity as one in which, for the individual, “it is impossible to live,” simply because its language of “us” and “other people” is so abstract, it is “as if I did not exist” (p.9). Mikhail Bakhtin is certainly not trying to assert another form of individualism here (as individualism is invariably abstract in its formulations anyway), but is rather exposing the fallacy behind much humanist thinking: that it refuses to confront the problems posed by individual human subjectivity. Indeed, he argues that the key to humanism’s success is its complete indifference to “my unique and actual communion with Being,” and the absurd fact that if it actually described the only way of Being, “*I would not exist*” (ibid.). This is because individual subjectivity cannot be reduced to one theoretical expression of Being.

My critique of Nussbaum's humanism is better expressed by her own stance towards the concept of the 'other.' Nussbaum (2010) acknowledges that when it comes to an education for global citizenship, factual knowledge and logical rationality are not enough if citizens are unable to sympathise with those different from themselves, presenting (as empirical fact?) the notion that "the cultivation of sympathy has been a key part of the best modern ideas of democratic education, in both Western and non-Western nations" (p.96). Drawing upon theories and evidence from psychology and psychoanalysis, Nussbaum makes the case for being able to imagine the experience of another as one which brings us into a closer sense of community (i.e. the emotional dimension of cosmopolitanism). I would not attempt to disavow all forms of constructive imagining in the educational process, but there are instances in which Nussbaum's fondness for the idea actually allows imagining to come too close to knowing.

Where Nussbaum states that the narrative imagination allows "us to comprehend the motives and choices of people different from ourselves" (1997, p.85), the possibility of comprehension is one that actually bypasses difference on the way to reason-based consensus. To understand makes a significantly stronger cognitive claim upon the other than imagining. I would argue that understanding assumes a shared rationality on the part of all individuals that risks reinforcing reductive identity characteristics and stereotypes (what it is like to be a woman, a black person, a homosexual, etc.).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This is not to say that Nussbaum is not alert to the problems of identity politics. In fact, she describes her "goal of producing world citizens" as "profoundly opposed to identity politics," but blames the antihumanist celebration of difference for not seeing that commonality can still be discovered despite differences.

Nussbaum's imagining of another's experience is largely derived from psychological study, again aimed at understanding *rather* than imagining. This is why she insists on the key role of human behaviour. When talking about "bad behaviour," Nussbaum says that people are likely to behave badly when not held personally accountable, and when "the 'other' is "portrayed as an animal or as bearing a number rather than a name" (2009, p.9). She means here that people are treated worst when deprived of their humanity, but in relation to a specific idea of humanity that pertains neither to those doing the depriving nor to the deprived. It is an elevation of humanity as an ideal uncorrupted by bad behaviour, but nevertheless one that can be grasped cognitively for everyone to aspire to. This means that in approaching the 'other' on Nussbaum's terms, that person is to be weighed against the ideal, to the extent that their own humanity can be assessed: a "need to know" how human a person is, prior to seeing what education can do for their greater humanity.

This stance assumes a vast amount of authority on the part of the humanist, and does not recognise the incapability of knowing the true extent of another's humanity. As Levinas puts it, "the meeting with the other person consists in the fact that despite the extent of my domination over him and his submission, I do not possess him" (2006, p.8). This is to say, however much experience I think I have of certain situations (say, for example, development education), and however much a person has sought to benefit from my knowledge (as in seeking policy advice), I should never assume I have full possession of where that request comes from in terms of its conscious intentions. I should always acknowledge that the other has its own voice, rather than that we share a common understanding, because "what escapes understanding in him is himself, the

being” (ibid.). Levinas is therefore arguing that, rather than viewing human subjectivity as everything that is contained within and available to human consciousness, instead the inverse might be the case: everything that makes us human lies outside our conscious understanding. It is for this reason that we continue to pursue relations and understanding with others in order to better situate ourselves.

In Nussbaum’s conception, as with other CA theorists and educationalists, otherness is understood in terms of representation: who is represented, who lacks representation, and who is being misrepresented (as animal or number). But Levinas argues that the relation with the other can not be understood in terms of representation, because then a face has already been given to the other, meaning that it can be reduced to understanding (in terms of race, gender, class, etc.), or at the very least, “imagining.” Instead, he talks of a “bond with the other which is not reducible to the representation of the other, but to his invocation, and in which invocation is not preceded by an understanding” (2006, p.7). If what makes us human lies always outside of human consciousness, then doing justice to the subjectivity of another person must also be a question of not trying to interpret or understand their subjectivity from within human consciousness. Only by not attempting to ‘understand’ the other can justice be done to otherness.

#### **4.7. Humanism as a monologism**

Nussbaum has philosophical and educational heroes – Aristotle, Ralph Ellison, Rabindranath Tagore – and yet within the periphery of her vision they do not seem to speak for themselves so much as contribute force to her call for a universal humanity (or ‘global citizen’), in part because, even across history, their otherness is denied by a

belief in shared understanding and rationality. Tagore in particular is assimilated into this vision as someone who, even in an entirely different context, apparently evinced signs of Nussbaum's preferred pedagogy of Socratic method, which he absorbed through a thorough knowledge of Western literature (Nussbaum, 2010). In this instance, both individual and cultural otherness are inserted into universal reason, appropriated for the purpose of *justifying* universality. In reducing all these voices to her own, and articulating that reduction as a republican 'we,' Nussbaum moves towards a position of what Mikhail Bakhtin calls 'monologism,' which, in ignoring the non-representability of all otherness under the banner of a collective, instead "manages without the other, and therefore to some degree materializes all reality" (Bakhtin, 1984, pp.292-293).

In the case of (Nussbaum's version of) Tagore, elliptical quotations such as "Our mind does not gain true freedom by acquiring materials for knowledge and possessing other people's ideas but by forming its own standards of judgment and producing its own thoughts" (in Nussbaum, 2010, p.71) are reduced to being evidence of Tagore's Socratism. In turn, this Socratism is said to have been cultivated by "a hatred of dead and imprisoning traditions that kept both men and women, as he saw it, from realizing their full human potential" (p.68). It is difficult to assess the accuracy of these statements without being better informed about Tagore's work, but there are a number of points that speak here on the interrelation of education, development, and humanism. Firstly, that Tagore's teaching was not so much effective in itself, as it was evidence of the effectiveness of the Socratic method; secondly, that the Socratic method is part of a tradition, as with the Capabilities Approach, that aims to help people realise their "full human potential," and therefore lends itself to being considered humanist.

In the example of the film *Blackboards* given at the beginning of this thesis, I tried to show the educational importance – as Tagore himself seems to have argued – of giving accounts of experience that express judgment and one’s own thoughts, but also of placing a premium on recognising the limitations of those accounts in offering ‘the full story.’ In placing the human as an ideal, the knowable human becomes the full story, and it is then possible to devise a method – the Socratic being one example – to chart that story from its least developed to its most complete condition. If the method is versatile enough, independent viewpoints and voices can be subsumed into it to support its argument, and institutions can be enjoined to champion its cause. This elevation of the one perspective, which assumes (though does not necessarily possess) its own authority, and under which others are gathered for its support, is described as ‘monologism’ by Mikhail Bakhtin.

A monologism of the human, then, carries with it significant colonial (or orientalist) implications, especially when considering not just education, but universities as global institutions which might embody such a view. Human capital theory, with its limited view of human wellbeing being entirely reduced to material conditions, transmutes this monologic view into policy for universities in poorer countries that encourages education for economic growth. Nussbaum is therefore not the only purveyor of such monologic tendencies in global education, but her combined passion for classical arts and humanities with a strong interventionist belief in worldwide distributive social justice, means that her voice has become one of the most influential both for the humanistic cause (as driven predominantly by the humanities) and for intervention in education development. As she has put it herself,

[w]e should be interested in how other nations are educating their citizens. This is something you can sell to people as just good sense. If we had done this with Pakistan – a lot of the problems just wouldn't be there. The Idea that we don't want to do nation-building has led to the situation [i.e. crisis of the university] that we now have. There are prudential reasons you can give for an engagement with global welfare.

(interview with James Garvey, 2010)

The fact that Nussbaum has been trying to incorporate education, nation-building, and global warfare all within the same field of reasoning here is particular cause for concern, not least because the republican 'we' again prevails in trying to assert universality over each of them.

Nimrod Aloni ranks Nussbaum alongside Paulo Freire and Maxine Green as an exemplar of contemporary "pragmatic humanism". Hers is a voice, he argues, that is freed from

[t]he traditional dichotomies of Left and Right, Radicals and Conservatives, Moderns and Postmoderns, and sets forth a program for reform in liberal education that is committed to universal humanism, moral cosmopolitanism, Socratic reason, empathetic imagination, democratic rule, and multicultural curriculum.

(Aloni, 2002, p.217)



The ideas set out here are all-encompassing, but in fact most can be contained under the first mentioned, and the one I have thus far tried to problematise, that of universal humanism. This idea is also supported by the ‘need to know,’ a foreclosing of the nature of humanity such that its development can then be cultivated. Even the idea of empathetic imagination falls under this determining, because the precondition for empathising with another person, for Nussbaum, lies in knowing the nature of the otherness with which an individual must empathise: imagining what it is like to be a woman, to be black, to be gay, to be disabled. Just as with the monolithic crisis facing global education, these are somewhat imagined categories in themselves, ones which therefore seek to normalise difference as long as it can be observed in “reasonable people.”

#### **4.8. Sharon Todd and the critique of Nussbaum’s humanism**

Todd (2009) cites Nussbaum as “one of the most cogent apologists for cosmopolitanism,” in that she imagines that it is possible to “cultivate” humanity even where there is none. This brand of cosmopolitanism is one which upholds an ideal of universal humanity, whose multiple cultural manifestations can be appreciated from a critical reflective distance. Todd argues, as I have tried to do so above, that Nussbaum effects an “easy slide from the universal idea of shared humanity...to promoting an understanding of other cultures” (p.30). Her reasons again are similar to those I have proposed about the ‘need to know’ subsuming difference and otherness under its own worldview:

Indeed, it appears as though the whole point of developing cultural awareness...is merely a means for recognizing what we share with

others...rather than being a means for facing cultural differences as they appear in encounters with actual people, texts, and the like.

(ibid.)

Todd thus takes up a position that is almost diametrically opposite to that of Nussbaum, in that she proposes to tackle the latter's "problematic structure of intelligibility" (or what I have identified as 'the need to know') by shifting the understanding of humanity away from an ideal, to "an orientation (a responsibility) that responds to human difference" (p.21). Todd also draws on the work of Emmanuel Levinas to consider how, rather than considering education in terms of a face-off between a known problem (global crisis of higher education) and rational solution (ideal of a world citizen), the face has to be turned towards that which it can neither know or rationalise, i.e. the face of the other:

Thus humanity is not a preconceived ideal, but is located in the proximity where self and other meet. Humanity's name *is* the responsibility that is forged out of trauma and the ever-present threat of violence.

(Todd, 2009, p.19)

Both Todd and Nussbaum have articulated a situation of conflict, or violence. But Nussbaum's proposal is that the only way to make sense of that conflict is to generalise the nature of the parties involved (i.e. human nature), and make of the presence of the other "a delightful source of curiosity" (Nussbaum, 2010, p.99). Todd's counter is to remove the security/mask of that generalisation, to expose the humanity of a face that is

not available to immediate recognition, so as not to reduce the other to an object of one's own personal interest.

The relevance of this shift is particularly important in considering the relationship between education and rights. As I have already mentioned in Chapter 3, Nussbaum has declared the capabilities approach to which she subscribes to be closely affiliated with human rights approaches to social justice more generally. This affiliation is based on a fundamental belief, extending from the legacy of Kant's categorical imperative, in universal human reason, which dictates that the moral constitution of human beings must desire for others the same degree of respect which it would expect for itself. The notion of universal rights underpinning the way people act as good citizens, therefore, is one which can't be seen as perfected in any one document (such as the UNDHR), but nevertheless is always to be striven for and to be abided by in those documents until they are revised. However, as Todd observes, this notion inscribes "the spectre of a divided modernity" (2009, p.31) into the commitments of cosmopolitanism, as it struggles to reconcile universal rights with difference, whilst still holding individuals to account in the process.

The spectre of modernity is evidenced in Nussbaum's difficulty over reconciling humanity (or human development) with human behaviour. It is the former that represents the ideal (under which multiplicity is subsumed), but only the latter reveals instances in which humans are individualised and become accountable as such. Human behaviour is too often seen then as something that has to be overcome in the cultivation of humanity (Nussbaum, 2009). But Todd argues that it is only in addressing human behaviour face-on that it is discovered both how to reject "sentimentalism, idealism, or

false hope” (2009, p.9) that might be based on fallacious reasoning as well as risking exclusion, but also recognises the limits of understanding the human that faces us. In rights discourse, actions towards others are determined by moral reasoning, and therefore can be conducted only within the confines of a consensus on rational behaviour. What happens, then, when in a climate in which rational thinking holds that women are not deserving of the vote, a campaigner throws herself under a horse in protest? Is this simply a confirmation of the irrationality of a categorised group that upholds the status quo? Or is it a fissure in that fabric which confronts the hegemonic view with a face that does not reflect its own values, but in doing so shows those values to be open to question?

Todd’s answer to these questions lies very much in affirming the idea that rights can only proceed out of the encounter with radical otherness, rather than preceding any understanding of difference and diversity. The challenge presented by this view, one that is deeply problematic for champions of human rights arguments for universal education, is that education (as a highly generalised concept) can no longer be seen as a right or universal good. Todd presents the argument as follows:

Rights, then, are from the very beginning of human fraternity a responsibility rather than an entitlement...Freedom, which is so central to rights, instead exists in the I’s capacity to respond to the Other; the I escapes the entrapment of its own limitations by encountering and welcoming the other as other.

(2009, p.63)

Todd's move from entitlement to responsibility in conceptualising the nature of human rights is one that will prove particularly pivotal in my discussion of academic freedom in Chapter 6. What I want to highlight at this point in the dialogue staged between Nussbaum and Todd is that, just because education is a practice relating to humans, it does not have to be understood in terms of what constitutes the human, or humanity; indeed, if education is to allow multiple ways of being human to be considered equally legitimate and/or possible, it may be necessary to suspend a subjective understanding of what is human (despite the force of rationality which underpins such an understanding) in the face of radical otherness.

#### **4.9. Conclusion: acting in the face of an unknowable other**

Where I will want to depart from Todd's point of view, in the chapters that follow, is on the issue of facing otherness as one that fully addresses the purpose of education. I think that Todd reorients the ethical relation in education away from the paradox of a concrete-yet-abstract human, in that the discourse of humanism is challenged on the grounds of its determining human nature, and thereby being exclusionary. Where I think Todd's formulation doesn't succeed, is in her overemphasis on a relation to others in education: "It is in relation to others who are not like myself that thought and the capacity to judge across the divide that separates me from my neighbour are provoked" (p.152). The turn towards the absolute otherness – and unknowability – of the other certainly overturns the fondness for a human ideal, but risks replacing it with an entirely new one. In facing others, instead of humanity, Todd asks that we acknowledge that we are all imperfect in doing so. I will argue that unless otherness is considered as much

through the work<sup>22</sup> of others as it is by ‘facing’ them, then those imperfections will soon be smoothed away by a romanticisation of the other that likewise performs an injustice (because, for example, it might assume there to be good where there is none).

On this basis, where education on the basis of universal rights can’t be criticised for not facilitating capability (even if based on an ideal), Todd’s encounter with the other risks being entirely incapacitating, as it has nothing to work with besides doing justice to someone of an unknown quantity. Where rights can incapacitate the subjective intervention of others through imposition, an ethics of the other is in danger of being self-incapacitating. Unless education provides problems and substance in the form of work and knowledge (or “acts of our activity,” to use a Bakhtinian expression), people in Todd’s understanding of the cosmopolitan will lack the language(s), the opinion(s), and the difference(s) to engage the overwhelming nature of that encounter with the other. The other problem with this relation is that it does little to specify what the value is in different types of education, other than that education in general can contribute to this new ethical relation.

In the next chapter, I will show that Bakhtinian dialogue provides a way of thinking through the relation with the other such that it is as much about the richness of substance involved in engaging that relation, as it is about the importance of sustaining that richness as dialogue as part of the educational purpose of universities – not because it can be ascribed to the university as institution itself, but because it is the *enacted responsibility* (or “answerability”) of those within universities. Answerability is not just a responsibility to the subject, which is an ethical condition that exists irrespective of

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<sup>22</sup> Any “act of our activity,” as Bakhtin describes it, which would include the delivery of a lecture as much as its notes, conference papers, publications, texts, students’ exams, etc.

whether one acts upon it, but towards elsewhere as both other and knowledge, which have to be acted upon to gain (educational) meaning. The knowledge dimension introduces a mediated position towards the other, which prevents it from becoming romanticised or knowable. Knowledge also relates to teaching and research activities, making of the responsibility not just an ethical responsibility but an educational one.

To recap on what has been said so far: I have tried to show that humanism is a specific discourse developed since the time of the early Renaissance and that has been particularly pursued in the field of the Humanities, one which celebrates achievements seen to be uniquely human. I have argued that the more foundationalist traditions of humanistic thinking are closely associated both with ideas of development as progress and with colonial or orientalist positions towards the human under the assumption of a universal humanity (which is supported by the universal rights framework). This discourse has received a contemporary re-evaluation in the work of Martha Nussbaum, whose writing bridges higher education, cosmopolitanism, social justice and development issues.<sup>23</sup> The fact that these issues find a nexus in Nussbaum's work is just one example of how the complexities contained in each can still be reduced to a single worldview, or 'monologic' understanding. As has been suggested, the idea that difference can be reduced to the sharing of understanding in reason might in fact constitute a grave injustice towards the other through the assumption of a shared human rationality (which is not to ignore the equally difficult and condescending assumption

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<sup>23</sup> It is the all-encompassing nature of Nussbaum's work that has justified my own substantial critique here. As an interview with Nussbaum in 2010 pointed out, Nussbaum's version of the capabilities approach "gets a large hearing in philosophical circles, but it has had real effects outside the academy too. It's changed the way some governments measure human welfare. The UN's Human Development Index ranks the countries of the world in terms of standard of living alongside such things as lifespan and levels of education. It's in the heads of policy-makers. She's among those behind the Human Development and Capability Association, which, according to its website, has members in over 70 countries promoting 'research from many disciplines on problems related to impoverishment, justice, and well-being.'" (interview with James Garvey, 2010).

that it is always one's own position that effects the injustice, hence the need to not only focus on facing the other).

I have tried to show that the close interrelationship between the philosophy of humanism, the establishment of the humanities, and the growth of the European university demonstrate that there might be residual ideologies contained in both the ideal of the university and its infrastructure that do not necessarily celebrate the values they at first seem to uphold. This is of course only one possible historical reading. It is, however, meant to serve as a reminder that the knock-on effect of the ideal of universal humanity is that those institutions established for the purpose of realising that ideal, might be exported to places in which other ideas of 'being human' become subordinated to the will or force of that institution. Such would be a crude formulation of the colonising implications of an uncritical university, or one that failed to be open to the possibility of *being otherwise* than it is, the openness that makes its own development – or 'unfolding' – possible. This attitude towards 'unfolding,' I will argue, is more a disposition in education than it is a method, and one that pertains more to those within the university than the institution itself. But the institution becomes defined by the way that people act upon their responsibility for that disposition, rather than their ability to capture it as a performance-driven, and performative, process.



## **5. Dialectics, discourse and dialogism**

### **5.1. Introduction**

Thus far I have attempted to show that the field of higher education development is one that is historically situated in terms of a conflation of ideas of the university, residual colonial ideologies, and human rights or social justice discourses. It is also a field governed by preconceptions about the human involved in the process of ‘human development.’ In this sense, development as a term could be seen as being no different in, say, child psychology than it is in the economics of growth, because in both the term refers to the linear progress from one state to another as it appears to empirical observation. This is to say that ‘development’ is often referred to as a term that allows for comparative empirical research between things that are known as being more or less developed, without acknowledging some of the properties that complicate that comparison, i.e. not only the ‘incapability’ of fully knowing, but also the responsibility for attesting to, rather than overcoming, that incapability. These properties are considered the unquantifiable but nonetheless affirmative dimensions of education, and prevent against psychological or sociocultural approaches to development, such as that of Vygotsky, being entirely oriented towards the socialisation of the subject (Matusov, 2011; Wegerif, 2008). Moreover, as some have noted, the language of the likes of Levinas and Derrida on issues such as unconditional responsibility, for example, seem obscure and impracticable up against either the science of psychology or the concrete language and law of rights (see, for example, Chinnery & Bai, 2008).

It is my concern, then, that if education is to uphold the idea of a responsibility towards the other as someone whose human nature is not predetermined along the lines of an individualistic logic and rationality, which would prescribe their rights and opportunities accordingly, it will be necessary to address three issues that can make this case without either closing down the possibility of development altogether, nor opening it up to relativistic interpretation. The first issue I alluded to in the previous chapter as a move from the emphasis on a responsible relation to the other, to a responsibility for 'elsewhere'. Whilst I do not want to introduce too much 'new' vocabulary into an already saturated discourse, I believe that the term 'elsewhere' draws attention away from the notion that 'the other' might refer to a particular person, and become romanticised or idealised in the process. Elsewhere as otherness includes a full range of unknown and unquantifiable factors, such as geographical location, culture, upbringing, and even the parts within ourselves that are not 'known' to us. This chapter looks at how Mikhail Bakhtin's formulation of dialogue seeks to theorise the multiplicity of elsewhere as dialogue, and how it finds a responsible – and 'answerable' – coherence in every individual utterance. In this way, dialogue is understood as both process and outcome.

The second issue is the question of whether we can see dialogue at work enough to say that it does have a place in educational practice, without conceding that it accounts for all practice in a way that would defeat the unquantifiable dimension that it seeks to affirm. This chapter shows that other theories of dialogue have tended to account for too much in educational practice, and therefore leave little space for the unknowable in which people might unfold from elsewhere. The third issue is, then, one of space, inasmuch as it looks at how it might be possible to talk about the university as

an educational space that differs from other forms of schooling and non-formal education. In many ways, and consistent with Bakhtin's notion of 'speech genres,' I think this issue can be addressed as one of language, in which communities of language gather around a particular interest, which then grows in relation to social change. The university is therefore seen as a particular genre of education, which manifests its own responsibility towards, and a dialogue with, elsewhere.

It will be important, in this part of the thesis, to show that a critical attitude towards the past must be possible to demonstrate the interrelated nature of fields, as I have done with development economics and the historiography of the university. At the same time, there must be the possibility to continue to affirm the university as an institution that is unique in the educational service it provides – but possibly only inasmuch as people enact its purpose, rather than define it. I want to do this by demonstrating the limits of some critical approaches to situating higher education in relations of conflict and communication (dialectics and discourse theories), which are themselves too often circumscribed by a foreknowledge of the field of observation or analysis. The reason for doing so is twofold. Firstly, I hope to demonstrate that the problem of humanism reaches across the political spectrum. I have already presented human capital and human capability approaches as those that represent both neoliberal (free-market) and liberal progressive attitudes towards higher education development. But I want to show that this problem also exist in educational theories of the far left ,as I will explore here.

The second reason is a justification of my own methodology. I have contrasted various positions so far in this thesis (e.g. colonialism and development, capital and

capability) and have also diagnosed various discourses (e.g. development, humanism). At each stage I have tried to suggest that such contrasts and diagnoses are helpful in elucidating an argument, and yet cannot account for the full story of education at issue because they are both necessarily selective and always troubled by other contingent factors. It is not possible to give a full historical account of the university, and yet if an argument is to be made about its purpose, then some account must be offered for it not to be entirely abstract. To do so, I might have attempted a dialectical reconstruction of university historical developments, or one which explored the discourses that have informed its current identities. My argument is that both of these approaches operate within a wider sphere of dialogue, one which is itself selective, historically contingent, and open-ended. It is dialogue, therefore, that offers the broadest frame in which to theorise education (and the university), in its self-consciousness and invitation to further discussion.

If education is to be theorised in such a way that it has education as its principal concern, and not an economic or socio-political agenda derived from a humanistic ideal, then an argument has to be made for education being a challenge to that ideal. My argument here will draw upon the dialogical theory of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtinian dialogue is distinguished from other forms of 'dialogue' (those I present as more accurately described in terms of discourse or dialectics) by its being seen as both *preceding* the human that participates in it, rather than being a product or outcome of the human and its (cap)ability to reason, as well as being the existential event of an encounter between people. Finally, I want to address how a dialogical approach to thinking about the university reveals more about its educational role as an institution in which research and learning are as much about providing a space for (the 'unfolding' of

both of academics and students) and knowledge, as they are about preparing a student population for social participation, or providing them with the necessarily skills for professional advancement.

## **5.2. Freirean dialectics**

The work of Paulo Freire is now most commonly remembered for its connection between education and a process of becoming aware of the world, or ‘conscientização,’ by means of which an educator can ensure that his or her students do not simply reproduce established knowledge that might be in place only to secure hierarchies of class or privilege, but can rather build in a recognition of social and ideological concerns into teaching that allow students to take action against oppressive structures. The critical consciousness that Freire develops is one firmly grounded in dialectics, and allows for the overcoming of ideologies and structures by recognising their temporality rather than universality. The privation of such consciousness, as in the widespread illiteracy in Brazil at the time of Freire’s writing, is described as oppression akin to treating humans as animals:

In illiterate cultures, the ‘weight’ of apparently limitless time hindered people from reaching that consciousness of temporality, and thereby achieving a sense of their historical nature. A cat has no historicity; his inability to emerge from time submerges him in a totally one-dimensional ‘today’ of which he has no consciousness. Men exist in time. They are inside. They are outside.

(Freire, 2002, p.3)

To bring about an awareness of temporality, and therefore to transform society within a particular context, Freire draws upon dialectical methods to set literacy against illiteracy, the elite against the poor, massification against *conscientização*. In the case of the former, a new literacy is to be brought about, in which the subject of education no longer learns simply how to read, but how “to read the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Freire’s dialectics therefore rely both upon a consensus on what the world ‘is’ (i.e. the social world of humans, or a wider understanding), and the recognition that the oppositions devised for the method do actually exist. The method thus contains a paradox: whilst it is intended to allow for the subject to participate freely and actively in society as an individual, the reduction of its status to either side of a dualist position robs it of its subjectivity (as something unique and/or unknowable) in the process, instead generalising its nature and its possible understandings of the world.

Mikhail Bakhtin, whose work is discussed further below, was forthright in his understanding of dialectics:

Take dialogue and remove the voices (the partitioning of voices), remove the intonations (emotional and individualizing ones), carve out abstract concepts and judgments from living words and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness – and that’s how you get dialectics.

(1986, p.147)

Bakhtin sensed that no problem was ever as simple as setting one side up against another, because even within the individual there are too many “voices” and “intonations” and “judgments” all jostling for their utterance – let alone within groups

of people. This contradiction highlights one of the main problems of applying dialectics to education: the overcoming of a certain social problem through education can only be achieved by universalising the conditions in which it is experienced, and thereby ignoring those aspects presented as unknowable by the other. To take Freire's example of literacy: it may well be that a new approach to literacy for the 'oppressed' will bring about new forms of active citizenship on the part of those people. However, neither can it be said that those forms of literacy already in place were not in some way oppressive for those already literate in them (in that they did not contain the seeds of critical consciousness), nor can it be said that the new literacy of *conscientização* entirely escapes the accusation that it might reproduce oppression itself.

Freire can be seen as a practitioner of a particular approach to pedagogy that combines both Marxism and development. In his trips to the African continent, he saw that the task of *conscientização* was praxis for the purpose of indigenous emancipation, even if it involved the participation of European educators:

I was happy to see what was important for the European and African youths was the ideological strength informing the struggle to restore self-respect and dignity, which had been usurped by a cruel and colonial machinery. It was clear to me that these European youths were on the side of the popular masses from Mozambique, who were fighting for their freedom. During that meeting we discussed the techniques and literacy methods they were using.

(Freire and Macedo, 1987, p.96)

This passage reveals about Freire's pedagogy the dialectic between colonialism and emancipation ("a cruel and colonial machinery" vs. "self-respect and dignity"), the self-assured empirical basis for that dialectic ("I was happy to see what was important...", "it was clear to me..."), and the discursive method for diagnosing a means of overcoming oppositions ("we discussed the techniques and literacy methods they were using"). Freire, it seems, has already overcome his own 'need to know' here, and is instead comfortable with the knowledge that it is "ideological strength" and "struggle" that are the best indicators that others will overcome that difficulty also. But it is the question of a method that is particularly significant for the discussion that follows. Freire believed strongly in the possibility of a "true humanism," or the condition in which human beings "are beings of relations in a world of relations" (2002, p.102). If that condition is not to be reduced to a "mere explanation of a reality thought to be permanently untouchable" (p.92), a theory is required that guards against "transforming knowledge of the world into an instrument for adapting men and women to the world" (ibid.) and instead permits them to actively engage and transform for themselves. The act of placing dialectics within a human communicative framework, then, is what Freire referred to as "dialogue":

True humanism, which serves human beings, cannot accept manipulation under any name whatsoever. For humanism there is no other path other than dialogue. To engage in dialogue is to be genuine.

(ibid., p.104)

Freire's rhetoric here is reminiscent of Nussbaum's in its evangelism, and its force as such seems to counter exactly the idea that it attempts to affirm: whilst seeking to



invoke a communicative capacity unique to humans that allows them to transform the conditions which might oppress them, Freire is at the same time creating an oppressive instrument – or even, to use the tools he himself criticises, ‘slogans’ – out of this formulation of dialogue (“there is no other path than dialogue”). It is as if the process of *conscientização* can only be justified by binding humanism and dialogue in such a way that they are mutually affirmative (as with the World Bank’s connection between knowledge and development, or CA’s conflation of development and freedom), and yet without any authority or evidence for this fusion other than that of the person that proclaims them.

Despite its advocacy of critical consciousness, then, Freire’s *conscientização* seems to lack somewhat in self-critique, which may have something to do with a conflation of the subject (that would otherwise resist generalisation) with the human (that is the end goal of socialisation). For Freire, the human generates dialogue, and the first is a human actor that bring about dialogue as social activity for the purpose of social change. Because the human is not seen as being individuated,<sup>24</sup> but rather as sitting on one side of a binary opposition (oppressor or oppressed), social change only ever occurs as evidence of an improvement on the old situation, whilst concealing within that change the possibility of reproducing old problems under a new regime or ideology. This is what I have attempted to show through the movement from the regime of colonialism to the discourse of development, or of capabilities taking over from human capital. Before I move on to the possibility that Bakhtinian dialogue avoids this conflation of the generalised human and the individual subject that resists that generalisation, I want to

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24 Biesta uses this term, although expressing a preference for the word ‘subjectification’, to describe “ways of being in which the individual is not simply a ‘specimen’ of a more encompassing order” (2009, p.40).

explore another form of analysis often employed in pedagogical approaches for emancipatory purposes, which specifically attempts to address the ideological motivations underpinning *any* method or agenda, whether it be that which one seeks to critique or one's own. This is Foucauldian discourse analysis.

### **5.3. Foucauldian discourse analysis**

Paulo Freire's work on *conscientização* was a way of developing a theory that would replace existing theories about the transmission of knowledge in education, with one that would marry exposure to existing knowledge with the critical capacity to challenge it. In her book, *Working with Foucault in Education*, Margaret Walshaw talks about the selection of theories that researchers or policy makers choose, which inevitably in some way suit their own purpose:

If a number of different theories are in circulation, one of those theories will provide the policy maker with the insight that is conducive to his or her particular view of the world. Just as failing eyesight over the years requires a change of optical lens, so too will a change in the policy maker's social, economic and political world view prompt a review of thinking about education. It will do more than that, as it turns out. A change in thinking about a process brings with it a change in thinking about the persons directly implicated. For example, a change in thinking about learning will initiate a change in thinking about the learner.

(2007, p.39)

Immediately, Walshaw presents with the possibility of an element missing from Freirean pedagogy: the idea that the subjects of education might individually both transform and be transformed not just by the process itself – which generalises the subject in advance – but by reconsidering the nature of the subject prior to the process. The ‘resource’ she calls upon to effect this reading is that of discourse, according to Michel Foucault’s articulation of the concept.

Discourse, according to Walshaw, can “help us to explain how individuals come to behave, speak, and even think in a way that seems ‘normal’ to them” (ibid.). Discourse analysis, therefore, is the examination of available material (curricula, policy documents, teaching methods) for evidence of such assumed ‘normality’, which offers the possibility of reform by reconsidering what is understood by ‘normal,’ and whether it is not an exclusionary concept. In Freire, for example, the ‘normal’ human condition is characterised by an opposition between oppressor and oppressed, that must be overcome through *conscientização*, but does not consider the possibility that this process assumes a lot about the way both sides conceive of themselves. Freedom, as evoked in the emancipatory method of Freire, is not so much at issue here because the relations between knowledge and power do not ever offer the possibility of thinking outside them; instead, one discourse is always replaced by another, and networks of discourses inform every part of social existence. As such, discourse analysis, according to Walshaw, is less concerned with freedom from oppression, as it is with ensuring that new subjectivities prevent against the saturation or homogenisation of oppressive structures:

The crucial point about discourses...is that they do more than give 'truth' or meaning to the world. They produce particular kinds of subjects as effects of discursive relations. Putting it another way, they position people in different ways as social subjects.

(p.41)

Work that considers directly the implication of Foucault's thought for questioning assumptions about the subject that follow on from the Enlightenment legacy provides illuminating reflections on both its achievements and limitations (Biesta, 2007; Mascchelein, 2006). What's more, Foucault himself was reluctant to have any of his writing transformed into method (1994, p.288). However, the widespread application of Foucauldian discourse analysis (now often referred to in some disciplines by the acronym FDA) gives some indication of how this theoretical approach has been instrumentalised to perform precisely the sort of explanatory technique it seeks to criticise and expose. Walshaw quotes conveniently from Foucault in this respect, when he said that discourses "are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention" (2007, p.42). This notion of concealment allows for there always to be something to be exposed, an agenda to be suspicious of.

FDA thus becomes the tool for exposure, one that is used to explain all manner of social behaviour but again from a position of unquestioned authority. The theory itself assumes a critical viewpoint capable of interpreting the fields with which it engages, but not capable of situating that critical viewpoint as one that has its own particular agenda, hence Wilshaw's 'us and them' opposition in her comment that FDA

can “help us to explain how individuals come to behave, speak, and even think in a way that seems ‘normal’ to them” (ibid.). The error is not Foucault’s (given that he corrected his early suspicions about the capacity of the subject to effect change despite discursive and ideological domination), but rather one of misappropriation, and yet there remains a problem common to both: in order for discourses to be discerned, evaluated, distinguished and analysed, both the tools for performing those tasks and the properties of discourses again have to be predetermined. The unknowable quantity of the other and of elsewhere is not factored into critical position that doesn’t recognise its own incapability of knowing.

I have tried to show in previous chapters that the disciplines in higher education have often served to separate educational interests from each other through discursive partitioning, in ways that overlook their interrelatedness. Development economics, development studies, and education departments may see their fields as having well-defined parameters of concern in terms of economics, development, and education. It may be important, however, if not necessary, to see how those interests are at the same time interrelated, and that their partitioning removes significant considerations from the discussions relating to each. The idea of discourse is one which goes some way in revealing potential areas of interrelatedness, and has allowed me, for example, to suggest that the development approaches of the World Bank and the capabilities theorists might not be as far removed from each other as they would have it believed. A particular strain of humanist discourse which continues to privilege certain understandings and (cap)abilities of the human over human potentiality as an unknowable element, is common to educational approaches from the World Bank, to UNESCO, to Nussbaum, and even in some ways to Freire. Education in these

approaches begins with the (abstract, generalised) human in an originary sense, and from there spins out from an anthropocentric position into the problems of the world.<sup>25</sup> What's more, the atomisation of the human into individual units translates into the vocabulary of capital, capability and production employed by many of these approaches.

As Foucault puts it, “the pre-critical analysis of what man is in his essence becomes the analytic of everything that can, in general, be presented to man’s experience” (quoted in Biesta, 2007, p.40). When it comes to the university, the discursive approach can yield much in the way of exploring how, for example, old and new disciplines have come about, and the relation that they bear on society in a wider context. Foucault observed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) that the psychiatric discipline emerging in nineteenth century Europe came about not because there were new psychiatric illnesses that required immediate specialised attention, but as a result of “a whole set of relations between hospitalization, internment, the conditions and procedures of social exclusion, the rules of jurisprudence, the norms of industrial labour and bourgeois morality” (p.179).

As has been noted by Biesta (2007), Foucault sought to shift the terms of inquiry from the “anthropological configuration of modern philosophy” (ibid.), to challenge the foundations of that configuration. But in doing so, the subjectivity of the subject is thus turned almost entirely out into the social, in that it is born into discourse and becomes a product of all those discourses which it encounters. This is because, as Bakhtin notes, discourse itself is a social phenomenon – “social throughout its entire

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<sup>25</sup> And because of the Renaissance and Enlightenment origins of such thinking, it might be described not just as anthropocentric but Eurocentric also.

range and in each and every one of its factors” (1981, p.259) – and therefore blends both “form and content” (say, for example, the university and its disciplines), without allowing space for individual subjectification (i.e. space in which the subject cannot be reduced to, or exceeds, the otherwise concrete web of discourse).

#### **5.4. Presence and suspicion**

In concentrating solely on discourse – as it is theorised by Foucauldian Discourse Analysis – there is a danger of ending up in a philosophical double-bind. Firstly, the move from “man in his essence” towards discursive critique ignores the fact that there remains a question over the second part of Foucault’s statement, i.e. that everything can “be presented to man’s experience.” The criticism that humanism, as a human-centred philosophy, is inherently metaphysical because it presupposes the truth of its origin, is compromised if the grounds for that criticism are themselves based on the evidence provided to the contrary via human means. The idea of the metaphysics of human essence here can only be challenged by showing how that idea has evolved through interconnected networks and concentrations of power with knowledge (as indeed I have shown with reference to the Italian renaissance humanists and the rise of the humanities), rather than containing any particular proof in itself.

However, the fact that such a critique can only be derived from available knowledge that challenges such hegemonic ideas about the human, raises the critical method to one that might also establish itself as the truth about human ‘being’ or *ontology* (in Foucault’s case, the ontology of knowledge and power relations) by virtue of the ‘presence’ of evidence to support it. To effect a transition from ‘what is known’ about the human to ‘what is known’ about the historiography of humanity neither

precludes the possibility of the latter being a human capacity, nor dispenses with the accusation that it is simply another assertion of discursive power (just as with Freirean *conscientização*). Both are still heavily reliant upon what Derrida described as “the metaphysics of presence,” or the idea that the nature of existence can be gleaned from that which is made present to human experience, rather than being withheld by that which is always absent from understanding.

The other side to this coin is that discourse analysis is often guilty of what Paul Ricoeur described as “the hermeneutics of suspicion” (1970, p.32). Ricoeur’s point was that the combined legacies of the three greater masters of suspicion – Marx, Nietzsche and Freud<sup>26</sup> – in twentieth century continental philosophy, had led to a constant drive to uncover that which drove people to behave as they did (see, for example, the work of Pierre Bourdieu). This drive largely precluded the possibility of causal behaviour, or that individuals as agents might think for themselves, because it was forces outside their influence that informed that behaviour. This wholesale removal of individual agency is one that is also in evidence in much discourse analysis (though inconsistent with the later reflections of Foucault himself on the idea), and leads to difficult questions about an individual’s capacity to act (and to transform), and – perhaps more importantly from an ethical point of view – to take responsibility for actions.

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<sup>26</sup> In the text on *Freudianism* by V. N. Vološinov – often attributed to Bakhtin – the Marxist critique of Freud tends more towards the social constructivism that is apparent in Foucault’s earlier work, whilst challenging the destructive subjectivism of Freud’s psychoanalysis: “What immediately strikes one upon first acquaintance with Freud’s doctrine...is, of course, the *strife*, the *chaos*, the *adversity* of our psychical life running conspicuously throughout Freud’s whole conception and which he himself referred to as the ‘dynamics’ of the psyche” (1994, p.39) It is true that for Vološinov/Bakhtin, in these writings, dialogue does indeed emerge from the dialectical encounter between the subjective and the social. In the texts attributed exclusively to Bakhtin, however, this interaction is less oppositional, because the one is already inherent in the other.



What the tension between the “metaphysics of presence” and the “hermeneutics of suspicion” reveals (in Foucauldian Discourse Analysis as well as other veins of contemporary thinking, including the Capabilities Approach), is a dualistic desire to both withhold judgment as to the ‘truth’ of a thing or another person prior to its presenting itself, as well as committing to the ‘truth’ of one’s own position rather than just adopting a stance of pure suspicion towards the world.<sup>27</sup> What I have suggested so far is that any educational approach that leans too heavily to one side (as I think both FDA and CA do), without acknowledging the tension with the other, risks reproducing the problems that its antagonist presents.

I have argued thus far that neither Freire’s dialectical dialogue nor Foucauldian Discourse Analysis have yet fully appreciated the importance of this tension – not in terms of overcoming it (which would be dialectics), or diagnosing it (which would be to uncover the discourses in operation), but simply emphasising the importance of not landing too categorically on one side or the other. I want to look now at Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of dialogue, and how it might be a useful way of observing this tension, as a way of thinking beyond an ideal of the human that does not seek to confirm that way of thinking’s utility as methodology *per se*. In this context, I hope to return to the idea of development, but this time see it less as the linear march of societal progress according to universal ideals, and more in the sense of an “unfolding from elsewhere”. The tension between metaphysics and suspicion, and the possibility of a new kind of development in education, will thus inform the need for a dialogical approach to thinking about freedom and responsibility in the university.

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<sup>27</sup> As in Sartre’s statement that “hell is other people,” for example.

### 5.5. Bakhtinian dialogue

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) was a literary theorist whose work emerged within the context of Stalinist Russia, and the repressive regime of censorship that accompanied it (Morson & Emerson, 1990). Unlike the Russian Formalists<sup>28</sup>, however, Bakhtin did not want to isolate an understanding of literature from either its particular context or the more generalised implications of ideas such as censorship. For Bakhtin, both the particular and the general would be enacted through a work of literature, and therefore trying to reduce it to an abstracted system would extricate the diversity and interplay of these issues. Bakhtin's own theory of dialogue in the novel emerged from an engagement with the novel as a peculiar form of artistic expression capable of drawing out this complexity, especially through his interest in the works of Rabelais and Dostoevsky. In both these writers, Bakhtin observed a multi-dimensional representation of the world that had not previously been witnessed in other art forms. Bakhtin was drawn to the novel because he identified it as the only major literary genre which had developed – and was continuing to develop – after the written word and the rise of the published book (Bakhtin, 1981). In some senses, Bakhtin's notion of genres connects him quite closely with Foucault in this respect, as he believed that genres organised artistic expression just as discourses organized subjectivity in a social context. But he upheld the contribution of individual activity in this process also:

The prose art presumes a deliberate feeling for the historical and social concreteness of living discourse, as well as its relativity, a feeling for its participation in historical becoming and social struggle; it deals with discourse that is still warm from that struggle and hostility, as yet unresolved and still

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<sup>28</sup> A school of literary criticism in the early twentieth century characterised by an attempt to focus on what was unique about literary study as distinct from any other discipline that sought to explain literature on its own terms.

fraught with hostile intentions and accents, and subordinates it to the dynamic-unity of its own style.

(1981. p.331)

Prose-writing, for Bakhtin, consciously attests to its own historicity, rather than writing of its subject as something that transcends its articulation (as with myth and legend, for example). It is my feeling that Bakhtin's description of prose art's relationship with living discourse bears a strong resemblance to the genealogy of the university I have so far tried to explore in this thesis. The university, as with the novel, is a relatively modern institution, but with antecedents in other forms and other cultures. I have shown so far that it is deeply involved, as opposed to being abstracted from, "becoming and social struggle", and its current status is equally "unresolved and still fraught with hostile intentions and accents." It therefore has something of the flavour of a 'genre' of education, just as the novel is seen as a genre of literature.

As with Whitehead's notion of 'inert ideas, so Bakhtin believed that genres might also have an expiry date, citing the epic as an example of a genre that "has not only long since completed its development, but one that is already antiquated" (1981, p.3). It cannot be fully known when a genre might have run its course (as the novel today may well have done also), just as it can't be declared that a particular discourse has altogether disappeared (as there can always be observable traces of, say, pre-democratic discourses in contemporary democracy). Hirschkop has summarised Bakhtin's analysis of the epic as being a genre which self-destructed through its abstraction from "the present as confusion, conditionality, opinion and subjective decision – the cut and thrust of the public sphere" (1999, p.210). It might be said that

the ongoing nostalgia for an 'idea of the university' that persists in the writings of the likes of Pelikan (1992), Collini (2012) and arguably Nussbaum also, are more symptomatic of the tradition-preserving aspects to the demise of the epic as genre.

The novel, on the other hand, unlike other genres which sought to uphold the legitimacy of their own categorisation through particular practices, techniques and tropes, was the first genre to challenge its own legitimacy *as* a genre because of its reliance on other genres:

The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them.

(*ibid.*, p.5)

Thus the novel is construed of as a uniquely *modern* genre, self-conscious in its awareness of other genres and boundless in terms of its sources of reference.<sup>29</sup> It makes an interesting analogy for the modern university (i.e. since von Humboldt), then, which, prior to massification and globalisation, could also be seen as an institution whose reinvention was dependent upon distinguishing itself from other educational institutions whilst also drawing upon a constant revaluation of the sources of contemporary knowledge.

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<sup>29</sup> The question of whether Bakhtin himself remains pre-disposed towards some of the limiting aspects of modernism, will be explored in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Such an analogy can only go so far, but perhaps prevents Bakhtin's area of study from being seen as exclusive to literary considerations,<sup>30</sup> and also provides questions such as whether the emergence of terms such as 'higher' and 'tertiary' education might be seen as the rise of new discourses, or the replacement of a now outmoded genre. I want to argue in subsequent chapters that the university does not survive because of what it 'is' in any concrete form, but the ways in which its members remain open to dialogue, critique of new languages and ways of thinking, and also the responsibility which those members feel towards knowledge and others.

Bakhtin's confidence in the novel's 'newness' led to his demand for a new approach to literary understanding that no longer depended simply on the self-evidence of stylistic technique, but instead challenged the idea of homogeneity in generic categorisation based upon "the privileged status of a unitary, centripetalizing language shared by its practitioners on the one hand and its students on the other" (Holquist, 1981, p.xxx). Stylistics, Bakhtin held, were concerned solely with "abstract linguistic discourse in the service of an artist's individual creative powers" (1981, p.259), but provided no contextual grounds for the legitimacy of either the abstraction or the creativity – because both were considered outside of the social milieu into which they were born.

To make of novelistic study an evaluative process based on assumed universal qualities was, to Bakhtin, a disingenuous practice that not only created a cul-de-sac for theorising the novel (that allowed for canonical approaches in literature, akin to the principles underpinning the reified status of Western humanities more generally, as

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<sup>30</sup> Or philosophical ones, as he had been strongly critical of Russian philosophers such as Shestov and Rozanov who had seemingly reduced the likes of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche to their own interpretations rather than

observed by Edward Said), but actually ignored the rich potentialities of new meaning which it presented. He criticised this 'monologic' approach as a self-conscious and ideologically motivated distillation of language, subjectivity and values that is consistent with the critique of humanism as a philosophy founded on an ungrounded essentialism of the human:

Philosophy of language, linguistics and stylistics...have all postulated a simple and unmediated relation of speaker to his unitary and singular 'own' language, and have postulated as well a simple realization of this language in the monologic utterance of the individual.

(p.269)

These ideas have been given different expression in philosophy, but are still conditioned by the same "verbal-ideological movements" which themselves then contributed to "the verbal-ideological evolution of specific social groups," and comprised the "theoretical expression of actualizing forces" that "*serve to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world*" (p.270, italics in original). Bakhtin is making no small claim here: the idea is that there is an entrenched association between the conceptualisation of language and its ideological agenda in the social sphere, i.e. by controlling the way language is understood, the relations of individuals to society can also be better controlled. The simplest way to do this is to conceive of both language and the individual as self-contained, as Bakhtin observes. This would provide the empirical basis for all developmental theories of psychology, for example, in which the child acquires language in a process of maturation towards adulthood.

Bakhtin, however, denies the unitary foundations of these assumptions, saying that “a common unitary language is a system of linguistic norms. But these norms do not constitute an abstract imperative; they are rather the generative forces of linguistic life, forces that struggle to overcome the heteroglossia of language” (ibid.). By heteroglossia, Bakhtin is referring to the nexus of voices, genres and languages that are brought together in any one instant, but might have been entirely different in other circumstances – including, for example, if they had taken place just a second later.<sup>31</sup> Bakhtin acknowledges that there are centripetal forces in language that do attempt to create “the firm, stable linguistic nucleus of an officially recognized literary language” (p.271), but argues that the nature of heteroglossia means that the centrifugal forces of language (stratification, the socio-ideological) continue the work of “decentralization and disunification” (ibid.) that keeps language alive. The opposing centrifugal motion sets him apart from the “consensus” theories of both language and politics, in which dialogue is the instrument for resolving differences of opinion between rational individuals. For Bakhtin, language is not always working towards a possible (social) end<sup>32</sup> – it always has an equal motion that resists that end. That resistance, which creates what Bakhtin terms ‘unfinalizability’<sup>33</sup> in any interaction and therefore in the subject, comes from individual subjectivity itself, given that it cannot distil its entire

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<sup>31</sup> Bakhtin’s interest in the work of Einstein and relativity was very influential in his thinking about dialogue and the impossibility of elevating truth to the status of a universal. Einstein’s overturning of Newtonian law is reflected in Bakhtin’s desire to overturn the universality of individual identity, and the impossibility of being in two places at any one time.

<sup>32</sup> Bakhtin’s criticism here is levelled at Hegel, whose own theory of the novel was premised on a dialectical model of not being the same as other genres. The argument is that this produces only a limited understanding of the novel as a genre-in-the-making, because there are only so many things that it can *not* be. The analogy works for any educational approach then, that is similarly premised on providing only what others do not provide – as with CA’s attempt to succeed the human capital approach to development.

<sup>33</sup> Bakhtin describes ‘unfinalizability’ in characters from Dostoevsky’s later novels as “their capacity to outgrow, as it were, from within and to render untrue any externalizing and finalizing definition of them” (1984, p.59).

multiplicity into finalised meaning. In short, subjectivity always exceeds its articulation, which can then only demand further articulation as a result.

### **5.6. The Bakhtinian subject**

Decentralisation and disunification can only come from the speaking subject, in whom both the centripetal and centrifugal forces are operative with every utterance. He argues that it “is possible to give a concrete and detailed analysis of any utterance, once having exposed it as a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language” (1984, p.272). These contradictions and tensions arise from the conditions and possibilities for dialogue within the heteroglot world. The adventure of language lies in discovering what one has to offer in terms of uniqueness as well as what others might share and impart as something new. The development (unfolding) of any one subject is dependent upon the freedom of others to impart experience as language at the same time, which also entails a responsibility on the part of the subject not to assume the nature of otherness (or an other’s nature). Bakhtin reminds his readers that the addressee of any utterance could be any number of people, but that to assume whether they are “like-minded”, “superior”, “foreign”, or “enemies”, closes down the opportunity for communication.

For Bakhtin, then, there is always an imperative for discovering new meaning, because just as another’s nature is never fully available to understanding through language, one’s own language can never be understood as simply received, final or unitary. The ‘developed’ adult’s position towards a ‘developing’ child, might be better considered in terms of the ways in which the child presents both a challenge and a potential contribution to the future of her language, rather than seeing the child as an



object to be inducted into a language that has its own way of thinking attached. Of course, because neither the challenge nor the contribution can be known in advance, a position has to be assumed that allows for change to occur without abstaining from articulation altogether, because dialogue can only be sustained by participation. This is the argument for education being a *responsible*, or ‘answerable’ (to use Bakhtin’s term), intervention.

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin declares that in language, “Primacy belongs to the response”, because in the response is found “the activating principle” for understanding (1981, p.282). The “active and engaged understanding” being explored here stands in contrast to the Socratic position, which takes the speaker as the stimulus of understanding, even if it is to invite a response based on a question. Whereas in Socratic dialogue the question carries with it a monologic invitation, in that it assumes the communicative capacity of the other who will provide the response, in Bakhtinian dialogue the nature of the other’s heteroglot experience might place their response well beyond such an assumption, but without making communication impossible. For Bakhtin, to treat a subject as someone who shares understanding and/or communicative capacity is actually to treat it as an object of one’s own understanding, and therefore to treat the object monologically: “a subject as such cannot be perceived and studied as a thing, for as a subject it cannot, while remaining a subject, become voiceless, and, consequently, cognition of it can only be *dialogic*” (1986, p.161). By means of this assertion, he both emphasises communicability and unfinalisability in language.

To conceive of language as received understanding that can be passed on as information from one person to another enacts the problematic relations highlighted by

both Freire and Foucault, in that received understandings can be distorted whilst the language remains the same, allowing for oppressive structures and ideologies to prevail even under the guise of egalitarianism and liberal democracy. This complexity in understanding any given word, as much in one's own language as between languages, is what I hope to have suggested already in understandings of words such as 'university' and 'development.' As Bakhtin himself puts it,

...all objects, open to dispute and overlain as they are with qualifications, are from one side highlighted while from the other side dimmed by heteroglot social opinion, by an alien word about them. And into this complex play of light and shadow the word enters – it becomes saturated with this play, and must determine within it the boundaries of its own semantic and stylistic contours.

(1984, p.277)

The idea of an 'alien word' is particularly relevant for this study, as it suggests always the possibility of the word emerging from somewhere unknown (i.e. 'elsewhere'), rather than from within the familiar. To uphold a belief that all language resides entirely within the "highlighted" side is not just to believe in its monologism, but to assert that monologism against the unknowable potentialities of language: "After all, one's own language is never a single language: in it there are always survivals of the past and a potential for other-languedness that is more or less sharply perceived by the working literary and language consciousness" (p.66). This is a criticism that Bakhtin levels at purveyors of propaganda and ideologues, but is one that can be extended to any way of thinking that attempts to reduce its legitimacy to the self-evidence of language.

The World Bank, I have argued, provides good examples of such monologism in its policy documents, in which uncritical assumptions about knowledge, development and education all appear to confirm their claims without addressing the problematic of making such claims in the first place. The same can be said of the Capabilities Approach, in that its “need to know” betrays a monologic tendency that overrides the impossibility of *fully* knowing anything, an impossibility that dialogism both acknowledges and celebrates. The monologic tendency assumes the unity of language and the unity of the individual that employs it, and thereby commits a destructive action against the possibility of things being otherwise than they are (or coming from elsewhere), and deny the affirmative nature of that possibility – for the subject, for education, and for freedom. As I will show in the chapter that follows, the implications for education can be discovered in the way that history situates dialogue and its organisation into certain genres, such that freedom takes on a specific meaning within an educational institution such as the university, i.e. academic freedom.

To take a more concrete example of Bakhtin’s own articulation of dialogism, the following is an extract from *The Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, and reflects on the beginning of *Crime and Punishment*:

Before the action of the novel begins, Raskolnikov has published a newspaper article expounding the theoretical bases of his idea. Nowhere does Dostoevsky give us this article in its monologic form. We first become acquainted with its content and consequently Raskolnikov’s basic idea in the intense and, for Raskolnikov, terrible dialogue with Porfiry (Razumikhin and Zametov participate in this dialogue as well)...[Porfiry’s] internally dialogized account is

constantly interrupted by questions addressed to Raskolnikov, and by the latter's replies. Then Raskolnikov himself gives an account of the article, and he is constantly interrupted by Porfiry's provocative questions and comments...As a result, Raskolnikov's idea appears before us in an inter-individual zone of intense struggle among several individual consciousnesses, while the theoretical side of the idea is inseparably linked with the ultimate positions on life taken by the participants in the dialogue.

(1984, p.99)

Deprived of an originary text to which to refer, the multitude of 'texts' (exposure to different languages, voices, ways of thinking) that informs each character's perspective has to find a way of cohering into a single statement. The need to communicate and to respond inevitably means that statements make some concession to communally identifiable styles or forms of language, or what Bakhtin terms 'speech genres' – the language people recognise as being appropriate for a newspaper article as opposed to a football chant, for example.<sup>34</sup> 'Speech genres,' whilst overlapping with each other a lot of the time, allow for meaning to be discovered within them and attached to them. At the same time, "questions and comments" are a reminder that, for lack of an originary and fundamental idea, any statement is always open to challenges or

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<sup>34</sup> Speech genres are described by Bakhtin as being at best "*relatively stable types*" (1986, p.61) He is also keen to point out just how diverse these forms can be, and that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to try and list or recognise them all: "Special emphasis should be placed on the extreme *heterogeneity* of speech genres (oral and written). In fact, the category of speech genres should include short rejoinders of daily dialogue..., everyday narration, writing (in all its various forms), the brief standard military command, the elaborate and detailed order, the fairly variegated repertoire of business documents (for the most part standard), and the diverse world of commentary" (ibid.) The notion of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or a list of basic capabilities, would be antithetical to this idea, therefore, as they reduce a multitude of speech genres to a voice that transcends their multiplicity. The freedom or capability of speech is perhaps most significant in this respect, as it does not begin to account for all the different forms of utterance that might fall under that right, in terms of public vs. private issues, censorship and libel, hate speech, etc.

misunderstandings, given that no one character's dialogical experience is the same. Speech genres themselves can therefore also change as a result. The idea thus emerges less as pertaining to one individual, as in the space between characters, as much in its articulation as in the gaps. Ken Hirschkop (1999) has described the emergence of meaning in Bakhtinian dialogism as a celebration of "the fact that it is always found in the space between expression and understanding, and that this space...is not a limitation but the very condition of meaningful utterance" (p.4-5). Whilst this idea of meaningful utterance might constitute a fairly unstable foundation for conceiving of purposeful activity in the university, it is nonetheless an invitation to participation from elsewhere that does not operate on the basis of presence (i.e. a 'need to know') or suspicion.

In a world away from contemporary higher education, there are parallels to be found between the nature of dialogue in the novel and the purpose of education in the university. Firstly, the 'idea' itself is hidden from view, therefore allowing only for the value of an 'inter-individual' working out of its meaning. Whilst Raskolnikov originated the idea (which itself could only have been articulated from a dialogue with previous ideas), he is placed on an equal footing with his interlocutors as to its validity, in that there is no 'truth' that intrudes upon the discussion to overrule the utterance of any participant. It might be considered, then, that this sets an important precedent for academia: the originality of an idea does not confirm it as truth, nor does it remove from the person who has articulated it the responsibility for that idea. However, what is required is perhaps an understanding of how a person can give a name to the situating of that articulation in a particular context: the reason why, for example, Raskolnikov would defend his idea at this given time and place, to this particular audience. Mikhail Bakhtin suggests that such a situation is defined by its 'answerability', which is the way

in which content meets moral intention within an act or statement. It is an awareness on the part of a person making an utterance, that that utterance does not stand independently of them or the situation (as rights might do, for example), but rather that they participate in it wholly. Bakhtin describes it thus:

The answerability of the actually performed act is the taking-into-account in it of all the factors – a taking-into-account of its sense-validity as well as of its factual performance in all its concrete historicity and individuality.

(1993, p.28)

Where the responsibility described by Sharon Todd in the previous chapter is an infinite one, an ethical disposition to which people are beholden whether they choose to act on it or not, answerability is attributed to the uniqueness of an act that can't be repeated, and for which the person who has performed that act is accountable as a result. Answerability can also only come about by taking into account those actions and utterances to which it formulates a response. And the space for challenge and misunderstanding, as well as the situatedness of the speaker, preserves 'answerability' in every utterance and situation. If Raskolnikov were to claim some truth for his position on the basis of the article having been commissioned by an approved authority (the government, for example), or on the basis of the publication being a recognised authority, then such answerability would become abstracted by deferring to a non-situated party.

The lack of importance Bakhtin seems to attach to truth and a hostility towards the institutions that provide it have been the source of criticism in his work, with

accusations and defences of relativism (Emerson, 1999), and even anarchism (Emerson, 2002). Dialogic subjectivity is particularly subversive in relation to identity, in that the latter gathers around the centripetal forces in dialogue (constructed by genres and discourses), whereas the stratification of dialogue means that identity is only ever a temporal and relatively fragile association, useful for some aspects to community but never to be considered finalised or exclusive. The tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces in dialogue has a particular significance for the understanding of the nature of rights ascribed to groups based on identity (to do with class, gender, race, sexuality, etc.) because whilst these rights might be considered important in an historical context, the identities to which they are ascribed are always overlaid and stratified by other voices, languages and ‘ways of being’ that differentiate the individuals from the identities with which they are associated. Dialogue thus denotes a departure from social justice approaches in education: instead of simply ensuring the rights to representation and access of all, there has to always be a consideration that representation in fact limits the ways in which the person being represented can be, move, think, or speak, because their ability to do so is pre-determined by identity constructs and the rights attached to them. Dialogic subjectivity, on the other hand, resists that definition, and takes ideological discourse and its ‘internally persuasive’ nature as a starting point for the opening out of dialogue from monologic tendencies<sup>35</sup>:

In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else’s...The semantic structure of an internally

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<sup>35</sup> On the narrowness of psychology in this respect, Bakhtin says: “All of this has been studied by psychology, but not from the point of view of its verbal formulation in possible inner monologues of developing human beings, the monologue that lasts a whole life. What confronts us is the complex problem presented by forms capable of expressing such a (dialogized) monologue” (1981, p.345)

persuasive discourse is *not finite*, it is *open*; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal newer ways to mean.

(1981, p.345-6)

The subject is therefore able to find some authority in internal cohesion to the utterance, but its cohesion already partially belongs to the other, and is framed by the context in which it is spoken, making it open to new possibilities of articulation.

### **5.7. Bakhtin and education**

I will now look at some educational applications of Bakhtinian dialogue, to emphasise a need for caution in the face of either a tendency towards methodology or ontology. The way I have tried to discuss Bakhtinian dialogue here is not put forward as a possible new method or tool in higher education development; it is instead put forward as a way of challenging some of the underlying assumptions that might be preventing higher education development from developing, in the sense of the unfolding of individuals and institutions from “elsewhere.” My concern is that the unknowable nature of this elsewhere should not be ignored but affirmed, because what may be at stake is not only the freedom of those not yet represented in discourse, but also those that dominate discourse. This is why the distinction between discourse and dialogue needs to be treated with great sensitivity, and must not allow dialogue to be treated as a form of discourse. To transform dialogue into a method is to elide it with the discourse of methodology, a practice that rapidly becomes performative as was seen in the case of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis.



Rupert Wegerif has contributed a large amount to the literature of ‘dialogic education.’ He has argued strongly against those influences of Marx (especially on Vygotsky) that remain heavily dependent on dialectics (Wegerif, 2008; 2010). Wegerif describes these attempts “to integrate real dialogues and struggles into a logical story of development” as intending to serve a social unity whilst making claims for individual rational autonomy at the same time (2008, p.350). He has also shown convincingly how Vygotsky’s developmental psychology based on dialectics has been undermined by research that shows how children are less likely to learn in terms of seeing themselves as opposed to their mothers, but rather by seeing things from both perspectives at once (2008). As such, there is not so much a clear line of demarcation between child and mother, developed and developing, but rather a space in which “self and other mutually construct and reconstruct each other” (2008, p.353).

Whilst I find a number of Wegerif’s arguments against dialectical approaches to psychological development in children convincing, the solution that he provides in terms of Bakhtinian dialogue seems less to counter the humanist orientation discussed in the previous chapter than to continue to affirm it. Wegerif’s definition of his understanding of dialogical practice is that it “means teaching *for* dialogue as well as teaching through dialogue” (p.18). In the book *Mind Expanding*, this dual motion of dialogue is employed to encourage children to participate more openly in discussions when grouped around computers. Wegerif saw his initial task as analysing “what made the difference between successful and unsuccessful groups” and then trying to discern the “dialogic quality of their relationships,” which included “a willingness to ask each other to help them understand, openness to a change of opinion in the face of arguments

and individuals being able to admit that they had been wrong and someone else had been right” (ibid.).

There are two elements at issue in Wegerif’s diagnosis of the dialogical situation: firstly, that dialogue seems to be much more closely associated with the act of talking rather than the nature of language; secondly, that the subjects under scrutiny should be so available to such analysis says more about the analytic approach than it does about the subjects of that approach. The first issue is one that is confirmed by Wegerif’s later explanation of Bakhtinian thought, in which he explicitly refers to ‘dialogues’ in the plural, which Bakhtin never does. In Bakhtin, dialogue is the interaction between meanings – which are always partly revealed and partly hidden at the same time – that cannot be divided into component utterances or articulations. These component parts allow for the identification of speech genres (didactics, debate, gossip, conversation) but not the dialogue which stratifies those genres. The mistake of seeing dialogue as a form of speech therefore extends to its misunderstanding about the subject in education, in that it is conceived of as a subject that learns according to the way that it speaks (which is also subsumed into the other senses such as sight):

Bakhtin points out that learning from dialogues is always a kind of augmentation. When we really learn from someone else we learn to see the world through a different pair of eyes. It is seldom the case that what we learn means that we have to reject our initial view and replace it completely with a new one. Dialogic learning more often means adding to our range of possible ways of seeing the world.

The fundamental assumption here is that ‘dialogues’ inform us about the other person for the benefit of our selves, premised on the idea that what is already known about others will allow for the possibility of seeing through their eyes (the immanence of sight already confusing the more hidden nature of language in speech). This repeats the mistake made by Nussbaum also when she wrote that “we see ourselves and our customs more clearly when we see our own ways in relation to those of other reasonable people” (1997, p.59). The idea in both is that the other is somehow just a variation on the self, which can lead to ‘augmentation’ in understandings about distortion (which falls back on the enlightened position of the rational individual that observes irrational others), perhaps, but not to doing justice to the wholly other nature of the other. I would say, then, that Wegerif uses Bakhtinian dialogue as a way of *explaining* how children think and interact, rather than conceiving of it as the shared field of possible interactions in which teacher and student, adult and child are found, and whose richness is often concealed by the discourses that organise that field, such as the discourse of ‘learning’ to which Wegerif refers.

It is precisely this learning discourse (which descends into performance measurements, and then performance for its own sake, or performativity) that has been criticised by the likes of Biesta (2007) and Sidorkin (2009). The latter observes that such discourses allow for a stagnation of how education is conceived of, because “most developed nations’ policy makers seem to agree that public schooling is not broken; that it only requires minor modifications” (p.145). Such complacency can be attributed to a confidence in the concrete conceptualisation of the subject of education, and

therefore all that is required is “squeezing more learning out of schools” (ibid.). This is essentially what Wegerif’s dialogical education hopes to achieve, to make children think that little bit better and more creatively than they do, rather than reconsider the nature of the child or education altogether. Sidorkin takes on the latter challenge by also referring to Bakhtin, but not by appropriating his work for an educational method. Instead, Sidorkin’s understanding of dialogism is one of a fundamental ontological condition – and therefore not divisible into the dialogues as analysed by Wegerif.

It is apt that Sidorkin’s early book on dialogism should be titled *Beyond Discourse*, as it immediately suggests that remaining within the framework of discourse analysis will not suffice in reconceptualising the field of education. If there is to be an active subject in education, it cannot simply be the product of discourse. There has to be the possibility that individuals themselves can participate in education, rather than simply be hostage to the discourses operative upon them. This is why he asserts early on that dialogue may *not* be available to the kind of empirical observation suggested by Wegerif: “The secret of dialogue is not in the dialogue itself. It is in the surrounding realities of everyday school life. The dialogical is a direct relation, but the road to it may only be indirect” (Sidorkin, 1999, p.16). Meaning is shared, and cultivated between persons, but its origin is both multiple and never fully revealed, allowing for it to take on meaning specific to the context of utterance, but to retain the possibility of having infinite different meanings in different contexts. Sidorkin discerns in this situation a form of Kantian transcendence – “in dialogue we transcend our immediate situatedness” – that would mean the subjectivity of any one person in this relation cannot be reduced to that of their interlocutor, because this transcendence cannot occur

in the same way for both given the multiform heteroglossia to which they have been exposed.

Dialogue is, therefore, for Sidorkin, a mode of being and not an instrument: “Dialogue is an end in itself, the very essence of human existence” (p.14). The idea that dialogue is an end in itself is not problematic. However, the second assertion leads him back to a fundamental human condition, in which transcendence is also only a way of getting back “in touch with what is essential about us as humans” (p.12). The problem here is not so much that Bakhtin’s dialogism has been *misread* as an ontology, but that it should be thought that the nature of that ontology can be affirmed as essentially human, when such a statement can only be undermined by the dual nature of dialogue itself: that what *is* also always conceals *what is not*, or *what is not yet*. I have tried to emphasise previously that an educational approach that hinges too much on the human, and the relationship between self and other, still risks setting up the other as something either romanticised or knowable in its unknowability. This is why I have tried to stress the importance of intersubjectivity being mediated by language, or ‘knowledge’. The importance then is on the gap in understanding always created by mediated relations, rather than the subject (as person, individual, human) of them (Hirschkop, 1999; Matusov, 2011).

Making a claim for the ‘essential’ bond between dialogue and human existence might well be a monological claim, paradoxically situating dialogism outside of dialogical processes. The same problem stands if trying to define educational purpose as something that is not itself also dialogically mediated, because the interest in, and respect for, another’s response cannot be based on instrumentalism (i.e. trying to

convince others of the rightness of one's opinion), but an ongoing process of value discovery (Matusov, 2011). This is perhaps where Bakhtin's own example from *Crime and Punishment* comes in useful: if the theory of dialogue precedes his articulation of it, and that articulation only takes place *in* dialogue with a reader, then the 'true' nature of dialogue is never wholly given to the possibility of its being understood as *essentially* human. It is an idea that invites the very condition it describes, but that condition is one that is incapable of capturing the idea. This is not to say that dialogue need be entirely relativistic, but its value has to be considered in light of some of the other concerns addressed by Bakhtin, particularly that of answerability and action, that not only give meaning, but also importance, to the ideas of education, development, and freedom.

Sidorkin provides a more helpful contribution to the nature of Bakhtinian responsibility with his passage on participative thinking in *Labor of Learning* (2009). He still sees Bakhtin as being a blend of both neo-Kantian and Marxian influences (with their respective concerns for transcendence and alienation), but this time concentrates on the lesser-studied text *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* to discover how to temper the affirmations of the one with the suspicions of the other – or the 'thoughts' of the one, with the 'acts' of the other. As has been seen with Freire, Marxian pedagogy is often driven by the need for change in 'real' terms, acts of overcoming a particular situation; on the other hand, there are those who believe that education can only produce a change in the individual, one who transcends their own situation through rational processes. Bakhtin's *Philosophy of the Act*, according to Sidorkin, offers a unity of the two that restores the ethical dimension to the former and the social dimension to the latter:

Bakhtin does not make a distinction between thinking and doing; to the contrary, he considers every thought to be an act. However, he explicitly distinguishes the content of a thought from the act of a thought. The content of a thought has no ethical dimension; it does not exhaust or even represent the act of the thought. His critique of theoretical thinking in general and of philosophy in particular, is based on this distinction. The content of philosophy, once it is separated from the actual acts of life, becomes mechanical, technical, and can serve either good or evil. Bakhtin's suggestion is to consider philosophy as an act in connection with the content of thought.

(2009, p.149-150)

As Sidorkin points out, Bakhtin has a particular issue in mind here: how to address the split between theorising and the "reality of the act", such that abstraction and individual existence do not cancel each other out. Bakhtin evokes the Russian word *pravda* to denote the truth-claim of the act in this situation. As opposed to the other word for truth, *istina*, denoting that 'which is,' *pravda* is not universal but contains within it a notion of justice, or *answerability*. For Bakhtin, this is the point at which the theoretical world is encountered by the individual:

What underlies the unity of an answerable consciousness is not a principle as a starting point, but the fact of an actual acknowledgement of one's own participation in unitary Being-as-event, and this fact cannot be adequately expressed in theoretical terms, but can only be described and participatively experienced...I too, participate in Being in a once-occurrent and never-repeatable manner: I occupy a place in once-occurrent Being that is unique and

unrepeatable, a place that cannot be taken by anyone else and is impenetrable for anyone else.

(1993, p.40)

Herein is suggested both the necessity (or even the impossibility of avoiding) and the inadequacy of dialogue, in creating a situation in which the idea precedes its expression in such a way that participation in Being is granted a much higher value than the true nature of Being itself. The ontological orientation remains, and yet the human remains an existential mystery, prompting unfinalisable attempts at unrepeatability, or the constant process of being answerable for that which is said, without being able to have ever fully said it. Matusov (2011) gives the name “dialogic interadressivity” to this idea that “people cannot, and even must not, fully know each other” (p.103) through dialogue, because not only is it an impossibility, but the desire to know the other person fully is in fact “immoral, exploitative, inhumane, and a *killer of dialogue*” (ibid., my italics). These are strong words, and yet show the degree to which dialogue abhors a vacuuming up of the multiplicity of language into overarching, monologic ideas that risk taking others’ nature for granted.

Being answerable for one’s own position is an important part of the considerations of academic freedom to be looked at in the next chapter. The final point to be taken from Bakhtin at this stage is the nature of this answerability, and how it prevents the subject of education from ever being reducible to the other. Bakhtin uses the helpful analogy of translation in this respect, saying that “understanding cannot be understood as translation from someone else’s language into one’s own language” (quoted in Emerson, p.xxxiii). Inasmuch as there can be understanding, it arises from



the centripetal forces of genre and discourse that structure the social context and moment of articulation, but that understanding contains within it the possibility of many understandings because of the stratification<sup>36</sup> of dialogue and the irreducibility of subjects. In these dual forces is to be found, however, an idea of responsibility that is both politically committed and ethically bound. Sidorkin explains that “Bakhtin treats the act as a quasi-transcendental reality, although the act does not transcend the contingencies of mind and language, for answerability does not allow for hiding behind the universals” (p.151).

It is at this point, then, that answerability in dialogue comes into its own in terms of educational import, because, as Bakhtin affirms, “...to live from within oneself does not mean to live for oneself, but means to be an answerable participant from within oneself, to affirm one’s compellent, actual non-alibi in Being” (p.49). In the humanist approaches previously discussed – from the World Bank, to CA, to Freire – progress and development can always proceed towards a final end because they are determined by an original idea, and as such *all* responsibility therefore falls back on the idea (of the human, of the university), rather than the individuals involved in its activity.<sup>37</sup> As a consequence, individuals develop – or are socialised in education – according to the idea, and notions of responsibility themselves are derived in moral terms from that idea as well. Unity of the idea allows for unity of identity, both as it relates to institutions and individuals. If it is possible to say what the university is, then

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<sup>36</sup> i.e. the fact that it is infinitely layered.

<sup>37</sup> The danger in Sidorkin’s *Beyond Discourse* is that dialogue might also become one of these ‘original ideas’, because of the claim made about its essentialism in regard to human existence. This is perhaps why Sidorkin is keen to show that schools only exist as social structures “for the sole purpose of abandoning this structure in favour of a dialogical relation” (1999, p.109). The argument in this thesis is that dialogue can provide a much more affirmative approach to education that neither promotes formal education for formal education’s sake, nor dialogue for dialogue’s sake, but discovers education as a contextualised tension between structural tendencies in society and the uniqueness of individuated subjects as characterised by heteroglossia.

it is possible to say which kind of people it should produce. In Martha Nussbaum's words, "we can produce [via the university] a social culture that is itself a powerful surrounding 'situation'" (2012, p.44). A "powerful surrounding 'situation'", however, sounds very much like the protection of self-interest, or the safeguarding of tradition against differences as well as the discrimination it is intended to prevent. This protectionism arises from the unity of tradition and identity, a unity to which Bakhtin does not subscribe (Vansieleghem, 2006). As will be shown in the next chapter on academic freedom, protecting a space can limit the ways in which that space is considered 'open' in terms of the engagement with difference that can take place within it.

To consider the possibility that the idea is something that only provides a stimulus for development in the fact of its being *unknown* (as in the example from *Crime and Punishment*), rather than a foundation fully available to human cognition or rationality, both challenges the sovereignty (or monologism) of certain understandings of the subject and their predominance in structuring global education. The primacy of the response, however, and the fact that the response contains a multiplicity of experience that is not fully available to cognition, invites participation in the discussion about what might yet be possible for subjectivity, for education, and for the subject in education. It is the same for a novel, a film, a university and an individual: the complexity of discourses, languages, voices and references contained in each at any point in time, both invites participation as well as resisting understanding.

### 5.8. Conclusion: a dialogic university?

Dialogue, in both the novel and the university, has an ontological dimension, and yet neither can be reduced to the ‘*what is*’ of their true nature, if their dialogical potentialities are to remain open to the ‘*what is not yet*’ of their future development. Both the novel and the university share a self-awareness of the ideologies in operation in their work, but it is by engaging (with) those ideologies rather than asserting universal categories over them that both reveal their dialogic value. However, dialogic value – because it cannot be assumed in terms of ‘*what is*’ already – cannot be transformed into an educational instrument. Educational processes and institutions are born out of dialogue, and some are more open to dialogical development (as unfolding) than others. But education cannot employ dialogism as method. To do so would remove the potential for alternative understandings, or the experience of elsewhere.

Both human rights and capabilities are ways of measuring and protecting a specific (and universal) understanding of the human, without incorporating into that understanding a need to risk the understanding itself to better grasp the possibility of being human otherwise, or of the experience of humanity arriving from elsewhere. Bakhtinian dialogism begins to challenge this position by suggesting that dialogue precedes the subject, rather than being something that the subject passively receives (education as information). It precedes the subject not as knowledge – which would then be transmissible as information – but as multiple and stratified forms of language, an exposure to which is always unique in each individual according to its context. It is for this reason, along with the idea that any utterance is a response to the dialogue invited by the presence of another, that each utterance of that individual can be attributed to them in a *responsible* (or answerable) sense. This responsibility is towards

a furthering of the richness of dialogue itself, the ways in which new expression can be discovered and monologic tendencies undermined. It is a responsibility that is quite peculiar to higher education therefore, in which the risk of creating new meaning and knowledge can be considered as important as the right to do so in a protected environment. Protection is for the self, but the risk carries with it an awareness of the social implications of educational activity. Risk, it will be argued, is an important part of the purpose of education specific to higher education, starting with the responsibility of academic freedom.

## **6. Academic freedom**

### **6.1. Introduction**

I have argued so far that there is a lack of coherence between an idealism that continues to attach to the university, and the reality of both its contemporary and historical hybridity (in terms of ideology and practice). I have tried to show that this disparity can be a particular concern when trying to establish and develop universities in countries without a long higher education tradition, because they risk imposing a form of education that might not be sensible to local concerns and culture. I have suggested that the field of higher education development has tried to default on its engagement with these concerns by deferring to economic and social justice motivations that transcend local problems, and thereby offer solutions from a position of ‘knowing’ what is best. These approaches therefore attend more to an idea of ‘higher development’ in which education is of instrumental value, whereas I have argued that education is not just about identifying problems, whether economic or social, and solving them according to existing paradigms of what is good for humanity. Instead, I have suggested that it is just as much about resisting the universalism of these approaches by attesting to the problem posed by the local, i.e. its unknowability. It is my contention that, even in its most local form, i.e. as an individuated subject, the human is multiple in terms of the voices – or ‘polyphony’ – that comprise its makeup, meaning that the subject can neither know itself fully nor know the other well enough to determine exactly what is good for another’s development in universal terms.

Both the knowability of the field and the ‘need to know’ on the part of its analysts are, I have said, characteristics of a broader philosophy that says it is possible

to know what the true nature of the human is, and therefore how that true nature can be realised through education. This is the philosophy of humanism, which, since the renaissance period, has also had a strong affiliation with university education. But my historical critique thus far has shown that, despite undoubted contributions to knowledge and understanding of the world in different ways, the university also has a long tradition of discrimination, exclusion, and elitism. This tradition puts into relief some of the more lofty ideals about the pursuit of truth and cultivation of human perfection, which could be viewed thus as inherently discriminatory, exclusive and elitist notions. It may well be that European higher education institutions survived and indeed thrived under these ideals until the twentieth century, but the massification of higher education and its global expansion has demanded a significant recalibration of the values that lie at its centre. However, whilst the rhetoric of ‘excellence’ has replaced the Kantian emphasis on ‘reason’ or a Newmanian fondness for ‘culture,’ the potential realisation of something ‘essentially human’ remains. Whether as human capital or as human capability, an idea of the human still seems to be attainable at least in development discourse, and indeed provides the foundation for recommendations about the value and purpose of interpersonal relations, institutions, and even existence, as a result.

To uphold the idea that humans are fundamentally in some way the same seems not just flawed but unfair. Whilst it may be that humans do share certain things in common, the means by which it might be possible to know or determine what those things are, are themselves so steeped in historical events and epistemological traditions that have deliberately excluded certain people from being considered human (in terms of their rationality), that the mere endeavour of attempting to narrow down the idea can

only recycle the same prejudices, even if in different guises. In short, the idea of human sameness threatens people's freedom to be different, and to think differently. These prejudices inevitably affect those least in control over how knowledge of the human at any one time is configured and produced. If, however, the idea were posed that the only thing it is possible to know about the human is that it is not possible to know what being human truly is, then the question of human essence can be abandoned in favour of an inquiry that does not attach itself to the realisation of a single ideal or condition.

It could be argued that a lack of such attachment leads to anarchy in terms of educational, and particularly academic, inquiry, because it implies an 'anything goes' mentality. This chapter seeks to show that pure relativism or nihilism can be avoided through an understanding of the mutuality of dialogue and responsibility in higher education (as a 'genre' of education, characterised by a specific history). It does this by exploring a 'test case,' in a concept thought to be unique to the university as an educational form or institution: the idea of academic freedom. Academic freedom has long been seen as a relatively simple concept, and yet one that is notoriously difficult to pin down, especially in terms of the law (Altbach, 2007). It has largely referred, since medieval times, to the freedom of the professor to teach without coercive pressure from outside of the institution, and often – though not always – to the freedom of the student to learn (Altbach, 2007; Tierney, 2004). Wider definitions have included rights to choose what is taught irrespective of departmental requirements, rights to contribute to public discussion, and the right to criticise the university administration (Barendt, 2010).

Having positioned the concept within a historical frame, I will look at how it has come to be considered today as a right that pertains to individuals, protecting their interests in much the same way as human rights do. I will look at how academic freedom might be formulated in terms of both human capital and human capability, how it has been translated into the development context, and finally how it can be theorised to be understood as much as a responsibility towards the open questions of higher education as a right that protects the interrogation of them. Finally, I make the case that both the right and responsibility of academic freedom create the conditions in which it can be acted upon, its ‘answerability,’ a concept that defines activities unique to a university education.

## 6.2. Hybrid origins

Tracing the origins of the emergent concept of academic freedom is by no means as simple as looking at its formal integration into university policy and protection.

Cobban’s *Medieval Universities* (1975), for example, cites a number of ways in which academic freedom existed almost as an informal pre-condition from the birth of the European university. These included the right to determine the curriculum and the *ius ubique docendi*, a recognised right of the holder of a degree from a *stadium generale* to teach at any other university without further examination. These informal pre-conditions served to protect the idea of free intellectual association from the ecclesiastical and secular authorities that granted them legitimacy.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Paris during the fifteenth century, in Cobban’s view, provides a particularly interesting example of how an implicit understanding of academic freedom as a right to question prevailing orthodoxies, formulate an independent curriculum and conduct teaching in an environment largely free from external coercion, led to greater identification with the urban population and clashes with the papacy and religious groups that attempted to wrest control over these aspects (1975, pp.89-95).



Demands on the universities did not come only from the church and monarchy, however. At various points (in Cobban's documentation), the early universities had to put up resistance to student influence and to public expectation.<sup>39</sup> This is not to dismiss their influence on academic freedom's role in defining the purpose of the university, or to say that they sit outside of its remit. However, these events do serve as a reminder that academic freedom has perhaps itself always been *predefined* by response and resistance, prior to being enshrined as right or protection. This is not to dismiss the importance of academic freedom as a right, but simply to say that it serves as an institutional politics of accountability, which, as the following sections of this chapter will show, emerges from specific contextual and critical circumstances.

### **6.3. The institutionalisation of academic freedom**

The idea of a freedom pertaining particularly to the academy or academia finds roots in a Reformation/Enlightenment split between France and England on the one hand, and Germany (or Prussia, more specifically) on the other. Historians such as Israel (2010) have shown how cohesion, collaboration and debate often facilitated by the university, flourished amongst French and English luminaries of the Enlightenment because of extra-institutional flows of knowledge circulating via publishing, freemasonry, the salon culture and coffee houses.<sup>40</sup> In Germany, however, the leaders of thought as the eighteenth century began to unfold – Paulsen (1906) cites Christian Wolff (1679-1754) and Immanuel Kant as particular examples – continued the tradition established by the Reformation leaders such as Luther and Calvin, of steering intellectual influence from

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<sup>39</sup> Cobban has argued that the strength of organized student power in the pre-Reformation era was less to do with changing an established social order, than it was to do with defending students' rights and increasing their participation in university structures. Bologna provides a particular example of student power that "controlled all that was vital to the direction of the academic community and held the doctors in a state of legislative subservience" (1975, p.170).

<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, the Scottish Enlightenment more closely resembles that of Prussia than England in this respect, with many of its leading figures also university faculty.

within the university. As has previously been discussed in Chapter 4, also noted by Paulsen is the fact that it was the philosophy faculty's "rise from servitude to leadership" (1906, p.48) that positioned the university's political defence of a theoretical freedom: to preserve its capacity to offer rational contributions to enlightened thinking on any subject, the philosophy faculty had to be free from the coercion that might compromise the truth value of such reflections.

The first modern German universities to attempt the departure from Protestant coercion in intellectual pursuits were those of Halle (1694) and Göttingen (1743). Paulsen describes the shift in the case of the former as one in which the "older university instruction was everywhere based on the assumption that the truth had already been given, that instruction had to do with its transmission only, and that it was the duty of the controlling authorities to see to it that no false doctrines were taught. The new university instruction began with the assumption that the truth must be discovered, and that it was the duty of instruction to qualify and guide the student in this task" (Paulsen, 1906, p.46). Göttingen, according to McClelland (1980) sought to go even further to avoid the 'aristocratic' inclinations of Halle, forbidding the denunciation of teachers on the grounds of heresy. McClelland sees this germinal formulation as evidence that "Göttingen's freedom to think, write and publish was unsurpassed in Germany" (p.39), and set a precedent for the concepts of *Lernfreiheit* (freedom to teach) and *Lehrfreiheit* (freedom to study or to learn) later enshrined by von Humboldt. Pertaining to academic and student alike, these became the principles of

freedom in the unity of research and instruction characteristic of German university education from the eighteenth century.<sup>41</sup>

The principles of *Lernfreiheit* and *Lehrfreiheit*, as implicit in both Kant's and von Humboldt's thoughts on the function and purpose of the university (and later affirmed in Paulsen's own 1902 talks on the different roles of philosophy, theology and political science professors), relate specifically to the protection of interests of those within the walls of the institution, such that they will best serve those outside by being free from vested interest. Academic freedom in the UK, on the other hand, has largely been conceived of as a set of values that relate solely to the academic, and exist in relation to the law, including: "freedom from state and political interference"; "institutional self-governance and autonomy"; "individual freedom to undertake teaching and research"; institutional excellence"; "security of academic tenure"; "peer review and open and rigorous criticism of ideas" (Universities UK, 2011).

The confusion over what constitutes a 'European tradition' of academic freedom is evidenced in the vagueness of the *Magna Charta Universitatum*, a document drawn up in 1988 by a league of European universities, to describe their enduring principles. Amongst the definitions of the institution itself, the university is described as "an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organised because of geography and historical heritage" and "the trustee of the European humanist tradition." This latter characteristic exists in a paradoxical relation with the university's proposed task, which is "to attain universal knowledge; to fulfil its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to

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<sup>41</sup> As Matthew Arnold admired in 1874: "*Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*, liberty for the teacher and liberty for the learner; and *Wissenschaft*, science, knowledge systematically pursued and prized in and for itself, are the fundamental ideas of that system" (p.165).

know and influence each other” (www.magna-charta.org). If the university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition, presumably all universality of knowledge, geographical transcendence, and the knowing and influencing of others will fold out from within the European humanist tradition. This suggests that an awful lot of work in different disciplines could potentially be carried out simply to confirm what is already known, which is that the European humanist tradition is the source of universal knowledge, and that the task of the European humanist tradition is to continually reaffirm itself as that source.<sup>42</sup>

In the Council of Europe’s 2006 Recommendation 1762 on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy, the *Charta* is recalled to support the view that “Universities should be expected to live up to certain societal and political objectives, even to comply with certain demands of the market and the business world, but they should also be entitled to decide on which means to choose in the pursuit and fulfilment of their short-term and long-term missions in society” (<http://assembly.coe.int>). The Council here not only allows for the instrumentalisation of higher education towards social, political and economic goals, but does so by seeming to confuse academic freedom and autonomy such that they are almost the same thing. This inserts a high degree of conditionality into the idea of freedom that makes possible standardisation processes such as Bologna, which want to be seen to be upholding a tradition whilst also maintaining control over its educational goals of, for example, mobility, access and employability (Eurostat, 2009; Eurydice, 2009).

#### **6.4. The United States: AAUP and tenure**

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<sup>42</sup> This is precisely the view that sustained the catholic missions and subjection of the colonies.

In the European tradition of freedom of research and teaching, a liberty is granted (for the most part to academics) such that its reciprocal motion might be to make others more free through the enacting of that liberty. However, this enactment has been tied solely to the autonomous functioning of the university, and has not tended to reward the status of academics outside of institutional activity. In 1915, the American Association of University Professors made its first Declaration on Academic Freedom and Tenure, which not only attempted to secure greater legal protection for academics in the face of possible dismissal and censorship, by tying its rights for protection not to the institution, but to the constitution instead. This significantly more public and political development in academic freedom was a self-conscious fusion, according to Fuchs (1963), of three different foundations to US notions of academic freedom: a philosophy of intellectual freedom, as originating in ancient Greece; the idea of autonomy for communities of scholars, arising from the European universities; and the “freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights of the federal constitution as elaborated by the courts” (p.431).

The first Declaration on Academic Freedom and Tenure was intended to protect academics as much in their socially-oriented role as public intellectuals as in their socially-removed status as educators (Altbach, 2007). The influence of John Dewey is of significant interest in this respect, as he was both a member of the committee that set up the AAUP and an advocate of the idea that educators had to understand their freedom as a public commitment rather than a security of private interests. As Dewey put it in *The Public & Its Problems*: “...the belief that thought and its communication are now free...is absurd...Removal of limitations is but a negative condition; positive freedom is not a state but an act” (quoted in Karkehabadi, 2009). In Dewey’s view, the removal of limitations to a freedom (or, in Amartya Sen’s language, an “unfreedom”) in

research and teaching holds no reciprocal obligation to act upon the freedom made available by that removal, which is an important part of the social contract between the university and its society. The freedom of the academic therefore has to extend to the public sphere, where his or her freedom of expression remains a protected interest.

But does the expansion of academic freedom into state legislation constitute a greater degree of freedom, or does it just expand the possibilities for abstention from social obligation, given that it is bound up with procedure, promotion and status? The introduction of a juridico-political clause in the theoretical nature of academic freedom, inscribed in the notion of tenure as a guarantee “which governs the fundamental employment relationship between the institution and the dominant segment of the academic work force” (Chait and Ford, 1982), sees the simultaneous inscription of the right into the wider economy: freedom as a precious commodity that links activity to earnings in the workplace. In other words, the hitching of academic freedom onto career progression puts into motion a potentially damaging cycle as regards the practice of academic freedom as social commitment. Junior academics are more likely to be compliant at the early stages of their career so as to secure the foundations of tenure track. There is perhaps also a good chance that the best way to secure those foundations is to generalise the public to whom one is responsible, thereby making research findings more accessible and applicable. And to do so, the tendency would inevitably be to generalise on the basis of the society in which a person is working. But the question remains: if the public were to be seen as made up of individuals all entirely different from each other in unique ways, how could the social obligation of the academic be fulfilled in such a way that is recognised as anything but troubling the idea that there is such a thing as a generalisable ‘society’? What this then leads to is the concern that, by

the time academics have secured tenure, and are in a position to challenge the idea of generalisation itself, it has become either a habit or a necessity for not undermining their previous work. This is perhaps a risk that established academics are not willing to take.

The ‘negative condition’ that Dewey described might then prevail in an atmosphere of economic competition in higher education, where the standardisation of performance measures threaten to transform academic freedom into exactly what Dewey feared, a “state” rather than an “act,” and overturn the necessary risk involved in that act. Tenure best describes the negative freedom contained in the concept of academic freedom, a freedom from outside forces that protects the academic’s position. To explore the positive dimensions to academic freedom, I will consider them first in terms of capital and capability, and later, as Bakhtinian ‘answerability.’

### **6.5. Academic freedom as human capital**

Given the massification and commercialisation of higher education worldwide, academic freedom has inevitably also been inscribed into a system of value, particularly according to the American and British models, which link it largely to the protection of the academic’s position and interests. Practically speaking, the so-called developing world in both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has had very different challenges to face in terms of its establishment and growth of higher education institutions than those of the long-established traditions in Europe and North America. Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009) have recently described various practical difficulties in African universities of: a part-time profession; deteriorating qualifications; inadequate compensation; bureaucratization of the professoriate; the rise of a global academic

marketplace; and the virtual and online expansion of higher education. These factors all contribute to both a lack of competitiveness and job security, and therefore compromises are more likely to be made as to the role of the academic and the degree to which academics are likely to act upon an idea of academic freedom in either research or teaching for the sake of others.

In Jamil Salmi's World Bank publication *The Challenge of Establishing World Class Universities* (2009), there are only four mentions of academic freedom, two of which are cited in lists of features that distinguish world class universities from regular universities. Salmi specifically highlights the lack of academic freedom in Chinese universities. He does not offer his own definition of what constitutes academic freedom, although in the case of the Saudi Arabian King Abdullah Science and Technology University, he commends the idea of private institutions sitting "outside the purview of the Ministry of Education to allow for greater management autonomy and academic freedom" (p.45), which suggests that he does not see academic freedom as lying within the public interest domain of higher education values or characteristics, as Dewey did.

Salmi instead reflects the World Bank position articulated previously in chapter 3, whereby academic freedom is an instrument of institutional management, an individual liberty inscribed into the wider economy of features that separate the world class from the regular according to a system of 'having' and 'not having.' It is the management of these features that allows for evaluation processes to emerge, which thereby ensure that the most efficiently managed institutions are those that best perform. Private institutions might therefore be at an advantage as their management is not liable to disruption from external pressures. Freedom thus formulated is more



closely aligned with the human capital approach of the efficient management of individual liberty than it is about expanding freedoms, or removing ‘unfreedoms’.

UNESCO’s ‘Recommendation Concerning Higher Education Teaching Personnel’ from the *Records of the General Conference* (1997) puts forward a stronger case for a definition of academic freedom as

...the right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies

(p.30)

Freedom here is specifically delineated as a right, and one which pertains to individual academics. The freedom(s) described are then underwritten by the idea that “[t]eaching, research and scholarship should be conducted in full accordance with ethical and professional standards and should, where appropriate, respond to contemporary problems facing society as well as preserve the historical and cultural heritage of the world” (p.30). One possible reading of this condition is that academics are free to do all that they please as long as they abide by all the standards that would prevent them from doing as they please. UNESCO has again presented one of the fundamental paradoxes of the rights-as-freedoms discourse, in that rights are conditioned in such a way that every freedom creates the possibility for an ‘unfreedom.’

## **6.6. Academic freedom as human capability**

As with the discussions over development approaches in both human capital and human capability, then, so the debates over academic freedom in the twentieth century can be seen as slowly being inserted either into discourses of economy or social justice, capital and capability. On the one hand, there are those, particularly within the United States, who defend the need for academic freedom as professional legislation that both upholds “the independence of professors from trustees, colleagues, administrators, students, alumni, and public opinion” (van den Haag, 1963) and justifies a system of employability. On the other, there are those who view academic freedom as a right granted exclusively on the grounds of its social implications, i.e. for the good that comes about as a return on the granting of the liberty. In the case of McGuinness (2002), for example, this latter understanding is derived from the idea that legal protection follows on from a universal moral code, and the right is recognition of the fact that individuals know how and when to act responsibly in accordance with that code. Social stability and cohesion are a direct result of a mutual bond between law and morality.

Even at a stretch, the first position only loosely aligns academic freedom with an educational purpose (that of enabling academics to be free from constraint or coercion), but says nothing of the reciprocal motion as to why this otherwise contractual issue should be educationally necessary, i.e. where academics’ responsibilities lie as part of being so enabled. What is clear is that the education of students is dependent upon the protected freedom of the academics.

In recent years, the teacher-centred concept of academic freedom in the United States has come in for greater criticism, especially from the point of view of asserting student liberties as being as important. Garnett (2009) and Macfarlane (2011), for example, have put forward interesting cases for considering academic freedom as a capability, especially in advancing the cause for academic freedom that pertains as much to students as it does to staff. The attractiveness of this idea lies in its moving away from the generalising and idealising attitude of attaching academic freedom to the university as institution. Both Garnett and Macfarlane adopt a critical stance towards a purely 'negative' articulation of freedom (i.e. one that stresses freedom *from* others), such as that described by McGuinness, who has argued that "most authorities recognize that academic freedom ends when the conduct complained of infringes on the rights and freedoms of others in the community" (2002, p.223). Both Garnett and Macfarlane also respond to the conservative academic David Horowitz's Bill of Rights, designed to assert the fundamental right of students not to have academics' ideological convictions pressed upon them through teaching. Garnett backs Horowitz's ethos, but wants to go beyond simple student rights to offer students greater "reasoned agency" through asserting "positive freedoms" (2009, p.438). Macfarlane also wants to promote greater "positive rights" (in the sense of Sen's capabilities drawing upon Isaiah Berlin) as opposed to simply the "passive" stance that Horowitz's protection against indoctrination agenda offers. Both also couch academic freedom in the US tradition, although Macfarlane makes some reference to *Lernfreiheit* and *Lehrfreiheit*, associating the former with a student's proactive freedom to learn.

The two positions differ slightly, however, in their understanding of the method and outcomes of affirming positive freedoms, with Macfarlane's being the more

sophisticated. Garnett, for example, quotes favourably from the AAUP document of 1915 to support the idea that faculty should “train students to think for themselves” (quoted from AAUP 1915 in Garnett, 2009, p.439), a rhetorically self-defeating exercise that disguises another negative freedom: the freedom from thinking beyond oneself. For all its talk of providing “intellectually open learning environments” (ibid.), then, Garnett’s support of ‘unfreedom removal’ is still one in which the preferred freedoms, designed to replace the unfreedoms, are too easily construed as possible unfreedoms in themselves. A student’s freedom “to explore their major subject in an intellectually open curriculum” (p.442), for example, gives no consideration (however radical) to the idea of any curriculum, or “major subject”, in themselves being threats to openness or freedom of intellect. A liberal arts course based entirely on a history of Western philosophy, for example, could in equal measure be defended as the most intellectually open of its kind, or the most exclusive. It is not my contention that it is necessarily one thing or the other, but rather that Garnett’s easy adoption of capability listing (for which he draws upon both Nussbaum and Walker) for “essential freedoms for liberal learning,” once again does more to support the method through its rhetoric than it does engage with the complexities posed by the people involved.<sup>43</sup> What’s more, all the “positive freedoms” that Garnett asserts relate to the individual student, with no due consideration to the idea that the freedom of any one student may be dependent upon that of the others, i.e. that freedom is not just reducible to rights relating to the self, but may be contained in a responsibility towards the other.

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<sup>43</sup> I would agree here with Anthony Arblaster (1974), who has said in relation to academic freedom that “General slogans invoking freedom have often been in practice a rhetorical camouflage for narrow vested interests” (p.11). In this case, I think CA uses its complex rhetoric to disguise yet another reformulation of humanism, and is unable to either see or recognise the ways in which every articulation of ‘freedom’ contains a notion of ‘unfreedom’ within it.

Macfarlane is more attentive to the issues of inclusion presented by the simple addition of freedoms “to do” things to a list of “freedoms from” having things done to you, because he recognises that the former can still contain a degree of “inculcation of particular sets of attitudes or values” (2011, p.725) that can in themselves exclude others (thereby generating further unfreedoms). He therefore draws a distinction between “domestication” and “empowerment” in liberal education, with an articulation of the former that borders on criticism of Nussbaum and capability listings:

Domestication involves seeking to implant specific sets of civic imperatives such as developing students as ‘global citizens’ or demonstrating that they ‘care about the environment’ and so on.

(2011, p.725)

Macfarlane criticises domestication for its attempt to assert an overriding project, making of education an entirely socialising agenda. The risk, as Macfarlane has noted elsewhere in relation to academics’ professional responsibility, is that sets of values tend to encourage compliance over engagement (Macfarlane, 2011, p.80), the former in many ways being seen as the successful outcome of socialisation.

Empowerment, by contrast, “is centred on students developing critical thinking skills and their own voice” rather than adopting the one provided for them (2011, p.725). Macfarlane actually discusses capability very little in his analysis, but evidently sides more with Sen than with Nussbaum, as his derision towards ‘global citizens’ indicates. However, I think the idea of empowerment addressed in terms of freedoms that a person either has or does not have, couched in the need for developing one’s

“own voice,” continues to create a dialectical abstraction from an educational situation (i.e. how do we know that one set of critical thinking skills makes a person any more free than another?) whilst also asserting an academic freedom that centres upon the self over its other-orientation. The obsession with one’s “own voice” completely overrides the multiplicity of voices that any one person experiences and articulates, as well as their overlap with others around them.

Academic freedom as capability, in both Garnett and Macfarlane, thus still emerges as the right to proactively assert one’s own freedoms and ‘voice’ over others. An aggressive individualism is one consequence of this formulation, but it also has significant implications for contributions to knowledge, academia, and the university environment in general. Education becomes simply about who gets what, who is not getting enough, and how everyone can get (heard) more. It is therefore less about taking risks for the sake of knowledge that might benefit others rather than one’s self, learning from others, and seeing oneself in relation to knowledge and other people, rather than as a force to impose on them.<sup>44</sup>

In many ways the flaw in the reasoning for academic freedom as a capability comes about from its grounding in its compensating for negative freedoms with positive ones. The individual rational subject is still sovereign, and is in no way responsible for the freedom of others. The act of redress is also a retrospective one, and there are those that have rightly pointed out the difficulty of basing a notion of freedom simply on the fact of people not having experienced that freedom previously (Tierney & Lechuga, 2005). Freedom as capability, moreover, remains a quantifiable category, according to

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<sup>44</sup> Arblaster (1975) provides an alternative by reminding that the freedom of one person must actually imply the freedom of an other as being at stake.

which it is possible to empirically assess the degree to which people are free, as long as it ignores the obstacles to that assessment presented by individual subjective experiences of freedom, which I have described as ‘unknowable.’

Whether in the more neoliberal concern for performance measures and outcomes, or the liberal tendencies towards tolerance and stability, there is in both a desire to limit the freedom to disturb those agendas (which is arguably the critical dimension to academic freedom). In Bakhtinian terms, these might be described as monologic tendencies, quite literally the idea that there is a single *logos* governing their claims to legitimacy, to which they must both subscribe and aspire.

My critique of academic freedom as a capability is not, however, a starting point for making a case for introducing moral responsibility towards another as a yet more finessed and nuanced version of the substantive approach to academic freedom. This would again make of responsibility something that pertains to the individual (see also Poch, 1993, and Shils, 1997), rather than an ethical disposition that is summoned by the other. Instead I want to explore the latter possibility, one which draws upon Bakhtinian dialogue to show not only the impossibility of quantifying either one’s own freedom or that of another person, but the affirmative importance of taking that impossibility to be of educational value. To know that my development (unfolding) rests with another (and theirs, likewise, with me) is to have a responsibility towards the dialogue that mediates that relation with the other. A responsibility for dialogue both provides access to the other, sustaining the development (as unfolding) of everyone involved, whilst preventing against universal assumptions about the (human) nature of the other, because the dialogue is always open to misunderstanding and thus unfinalisable. Responsibility

is therefore both brought about by the unfinalisable nature of dialogue (the response constantly compels one to make oneself understood), as well as being a commitment *to* its unfinalisability (the guarding against monologism). This is a very different position to the simple protection of one's right to speak.

### **6.7. Development, decolonisation and academic freedom**

It has been only in the last twenty-five years that the so-called developing countries have taken initiatives to draw up their own formulations of academic freedom according to contextual circumstances. In 1990, for example, the Council for the Development of Social Science in Africa (CODESRIA) met in Kampala to draw up their statement on "Intellectual freedom and social responsibility." The CODESRIA declaration presents with a number of shifts from the positions adopted by the World Bank and UNESCO, but the most significant is that of academic communities in so-called developing countries determining the priorities of their commitments themselves, rather than seeing them as universal.

The document clearly delineates the separation of autonomy from academic freedom by treating it in a different section altogether, and also spells out suggested obligations of the State that insist on non-interference whilst acknowledging that element as an essential relation between State and university, rather than a complete separation (as Salmi advocates in certain instances). Perhaps most important is the clause on social responsibility, seen as integral to – rather than a precondition of – academic activity. Closer in spirit to the Deweyan formulation, social responsibility is described in the Kampala declaration as including various duties: to promote tolerance



towards different views; to approach difference in the spirit of equality; to struggle for the rights and emancipation of popular forces; to show solidarity; to form organisations.

Immediately these present as very different responsibilities to those of preserving a cultural tradition, preventing the university from being brought into legal disputes, or from maintaining global standards. There is a similar degree of conviction about what constitutes prioritised responsibility in the Kampala declaration, but it is certainly less about protecting interests than expanding the field of possible engagement. This field is defined precisely by the idea of academic freedom as much more dynamic, interactive, related – as opposed as static, something to be guaranteed or protected. CODESRIA sees academic freedom as “[f]reedom of opinion, of movement, the right to initiate and develop contacts, the right to pursue intellectual activity” ([www.codesria.org](http://www.codesria.org)). What such a declaration announces, is the need to see the other face of freedom that is not just about securing rights for oneself as an individual, but seeing it as a responsibility towards others. The concept of academic freedom is reformulated in response to a specific set of socio-political conditions, whilst at the same time upholding a sense of the institution that makes that response possible.

CODESRIA does not attempt a complete rejection of the university (as a colonial institution) to make its point. In the past, attempts to teach exclusively in indigenous languages or educate in accordance with indigenous epistemologies, have been necessarily compromised – in terms of their constituting a radical and emancipatory break with colonial education – by structural legacies contained within the institution (the degree, the lecture theatre, the professor, the organisation of disciplines). Anders Burman (2012) has presented this problem by considering the

relationship between language and knowledge, and the possibility for separating them up in the context of Bolivia's attempts to establish 'indigenous universities.' He begins his argument by addressing the semantic issues posed by the term decolonisation:

[I]t may refer to 'development,' industrialization,' 'modernization,' 'patriotism,' 'nationalization,' and 'economic growth,' but it may also denote a forthright critique against, and political measures to respond to, imperialism, capitalism, neoliberalism, racism, sexism, developmentalism, ecological depredation, and (in the area of knowledge production and education) eurocentrism and the overestimation of any tradition of thought coming from the North and the concomitant inferiorization of any indigenous tradition of thought.

(p.103)

The wealth of semantic ambiguity pertaining to the term decolonisation reveals it to be the site of a struggle rather than the solution to one. Moreover, it shows that a dialectics of colonialism/development and decolonisation is reductive, because there cannot be evidence to show that aspects of patriotism, capitalism, racism and even eurocentrism are exclusive to any one side of a dialectical opposition.

Burman pursues his point by considering the problem of epistemology in Bolivian Aymara culture. The Aymara distinguish between different ways of knowing, holding that all spoken language constitutes knowledge that is only ever a matter of opinion, whilst lived experience provides another form of knowing that is closer to fact. The problem with integrating this epistemology into the university arises when teachers lecture on issues of fact, which are (potentially) understood as all derivative from

personal experience, because they are not expressed as opinion. By extension, all textbooks present with the same dichotomy. If the Aymara were to produce their own literature and curriculum to redress the situation, the question put by Burman is whether there is a risk that “a project aimed at decolonizing knowledge and decolonizing the university precisely by way of books and lectures – i.e. in a logocentric, or as I would suggest, a ‘librocentric’ project of decolonization – ends up reproducing the colonial epistemological asymmetries of knowledge production” (p.103). Whilst the educational method looks different, the mode of reasoning remains the same.

The point for academic freedom as regards development and decolonisation, then, is not so much that rights cannot be reformulated, or that indigenous ways of thinking cannot be engaged with in the university. Burman himself commends the potential for indigenous universities in Bolivia to reveal “the colonial roots of modern theories of knowledge” and to acquire “skills in the art of questioning engraved colonial truths” (p.118). The point is that reformulations and indigenous epistemologies, when applied and incorporated into the university, are always going to be conditioned in some way by structural antecedents and ideological precedents. This is why academic freedom, when conceived either as the right to reconceptualise academic freedom as a right (even as a right with a social, rather than individual, orientation), or the right to teach and learn entirely in accordance with an indigenous epistemology, can only partially articulate its function. It is a retrospective, and often reductive, glance at a history of wrongdoings, and one which instrumentalises education for political purposes, risking the reproduction of wrongdoings.

The other half of the story to academic freedom, or its other ‘Janus face,’ to use Bakhtin’s term for any “act of our activity” (1993, p.2), is the story that is not yet told about the future of knowledge and the people that (will) engage with it in the university. Because it is impossible to know how that story will unfold, but because there is the will for it to unfold in the best way possible, the other, unknown, face to academic freedom is that of responsibility – a responsibility for the best education in an unknowable future. This face of academic freedom cannot be enshrined as a right precisely because it is not based on history. It can only be enacted through a dialogue with others and elsewhere that does not attempt to fix an outcome (i.e. the ideal university, or the ideal human) in the future.

#### **6.8. The risk of academic freedom**

I have shown so far that academic freedom is, for the most part, treated as a substantive right that pertains to individuals within higher education institutions. In different ways, this right can be seen as securing the professional development and interests of individuals, ensuring the management and efficiency of the institution, and protecting particular conceptions of the historical and cultural heritage of the university. It is necessarily backward-looking, based upon the evidence of the past which assumes a particular historical perspective. Consistent with my previous critique of human capital and human capability approaches to higher education development, I have argued that to conceive of freedom as a right in any of these ways still allows for an economy of freedom, which reduces the concept to substantive liberties enjoyed by some and denied others. This conception sits comfortably within the human rights tradition with a greater focus on individual freedom and/or liberty than a concern for the freedom of others through the activity of the individual. The difficulty with rights, however, as Burman’s

example of the Aymara has shown, is that they only represent the freedoms of those who recognise the reasoning upon which they are based. Freedom as a right, then, necessitates the mutual agreement on everyone's part that the language of rights is one that is representative of their voice (as an individual, community, culture, nation). This is fine as long as it is agreed that the voice is 'human,' but as examples below will show, this is not always the case.

Once again, it is important to stress that my intention is not to deny the importance of individual rights altogether, in that they can still serve an important political function in highlighting ongoing areas of discrimination and persecution. They therefore relate closely to the 'critical' function of university education, one that is considered by some to be its most important (Barnett, 1997). As regards the importance of a rights approach to academic freedom, I would agree with Peters (2007) when he highlights the importance of "a non-foundational view of rights which recognizes higher education as a purely contingent matter but one that has grown out of a particular historical heritage to develop as a discourse of universal significance within liberal societies" (p.232). However, I want to now explore the notion that it is just as important – if not more so – to emphasise that aspect of freedom which is only discovered in relation to others rather than pertaining to the individual, if sovereign ideas about the nature of the individual (i.e. the human) are not to go unchallenged as being possibly discriminatory in themselves. I will argue that this is the responsible face of academic freedom, and is to be explored in a dialogical relation for which the university provides a uniquely experimental (even if institutional) educational context.

The risks that some people take in the name of academic freedom to advance certain causes cannot be reduced to simply observing a right, or indeed inviting dialectical conflict as a formal necessity for progress; in many cases, academics and students have flouted their rights as institutionally defined to act as they have seen to be in the interests of others – whether the academic community, wider society, or on a global scale. Importantly, as Tierney & Lechuga (2005) have argued, these risks often pre-date their subsequent protection in terms of rights. Indeed, following Foucault, Tierney and Lechuga, suggest that cultures of silence more commonly indicate a repression of academic freedom rather than evidence of its existence, because a “culture of silence can be created that is pervasive to such an extent that individuals do not even consider speaking out” (p.11).

Silence in the face of academic freedom as a right can be seen to denote three things: fear (an asymmetry of power), protest (an asymmetry of justice), or radical otherness (an asymmetry of reason). In the first instance, Tierney and Lechuga (2005) make the point that, just because there were no official cases of lesbian and gay academics being denied the right to investigate ‘queer’ issues in 1950s America, this fact does not mean that rights weren’t being institutionally infringed upon through enforced silence. To say that academic freedom was not denied black members of university faculty in apartheid South Africa would be an equally specious argument, given their lack of representation (Sehoole, 2005).<sup>45</sup> Rule (2006) has also described the

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<sup>45</sup> The 1959 *Extension of University Education Act* coincided with the *Separate Development Act* of the same year in South Africa, the latter grouping people into ethnicity, the former securing higher education according to ethnicity (Sehoole, 2005). The consequences of the “symbiotic relationship between government policy of introducing apartheid in education and how these institutions were governed” (ibid., p.18) included all autonomy being modified by the state, prohibitions on admissions of black students, limitations on employment and promotion of black faculty, and the dismissal of any staff that raised objections. Silence on the part of black academics, as Sehoole notes, can be attributed as much to bowing to “intellectual captivity” as to dismissal, imprisonment, or exile (ibid, p.19).

“historically white” institutions of pre-1980s South Africa as “monologic” precisely because they did not “recognise the otherness of the students and [imposed] unfamiliar and administrative and academic discourses upon them” (p.84). These examples seriously call into question the illusionary Western idea that “universities are social institutions that are communicatively open,” in which “any one of its members can contest any claim by any other one of its members” (Barnett, 2003, p.223). Universities are products of their societies and cultures as much as they are products of an intellectual and academic tradition, and in each individual case there will be instances in which communicative openness is threatened or suppressed, not least because it is interpreted differently.

### **6.9. Readings, Lyotard, and academic freedom’s *différend***

An asymmetry of justice, whereby judicial systems consciously or unconsciously favour certain groups over others, exposes imbalances (of equality, perspective) in the present. The issue of an asymmetry of *voices*, however, threatens the very reasoning that underscores a rights philosophy, rather than simply demanding compensatory clauses or revisions. To explain why this is the case, and why this asymmetry necessitates an understanding of academic freedom as a responsibility as much as a right, I will draw upon the example used by Bill Readings in an essay on Lyotard and the concept of the *différend*.

During the McCarthy period in the United States, early AAUP member Albert Einstein advised a number of colleagues *against* invoking the Fifth Amendment when called to appear before the hearings of the 1950s. In the case of Einstein’s advocacy against his colleagues’ invocation of the Fifth amendment, the academic recognises a

right, but not the judicial terms in which it is framed. In short, there is potential for discussion and even consensus as an outcome, depending on whether the law chooses to enforce or adapt. The ‘genres’ of law and higher education might be in conflict, but they remain intact, because the logic of reason bridges them. The goal is still social justice, only on different terms. As Bill Readings (2002) puts it, drawing upon Jean-François Lyotard’s critique of social justice discourse, “one defends the minority against the totality only in the name of a higher totality, such as universal human rights” (p.170). But what if there are instances in which this defence is not possible because the logic is no longer in evidence, even as flawed logic (as per McCarthy)? What if formal justice, or freedom enshrined as a right, encounters an *impasse* at the level of assumed reason on the part of the other, because the other shows no sign of sharing the same mode of reasoning, or of having a voice that can impart its own reasoning without submitting to the logic of the dominant discourse in the process?<sup>46</sup>

The situation that Readings and Lyotard are describing is called, in Lyotard’s terms, a *différend*, or the point “at which the framework of political representation...performs a victimisation” (p.170). But this is not just victimisation at the level of fear as attached to identity. Instead, Readings and Lyotard are keen to show that this victimisation is insuperable because the other cannot be contained or subsumed within the same sphere of reasoning. Lyotard uses the example of witnesses being asked whether gas chambers were used for the mass extermination of Jews during World War II. The line of questioning means that the only witnesses to verify the accusation are either dead, or automatically discredited by virtue of their being still alive. Readings draws on the fictional example of Werner Herzog’s film *Where the Green Ants Dream*,

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<sup>46</sup> This is in part what was suggested by Burman’s analysis of the integration of Aymaran epistemology into indigenous universities in Bolivia, except that he showed this project to be partially flawed by the non-recognition of the compromises to be made.



in which an Aboriginal group wants to prevent an Australian mining company from conducting blasting tests lest they disturb the dreaming of the green ants. The Aborigines are unable to fight their case in court, not only because of the spiritual framing of their discourse, but because they are unable to elect a single voice to speak on their behalf (the idea is anathema to people that make decisions as a group, rather than deferring to a representative), and because they do not conceive of time, space, property and geography in anything like the same way as those who would seek to pay them off.

In both these examples, the idea is to show that the *différend* is neither something that can be overcome, but nor should it be ignored. It is not about recognising another's right to think differently, which would constitute an attempt to bring the other into a shared (totalised) understanding of reason, identity and rights. Nor does it mean annexing the other as an inaccessible and non-cooperative identity. In these instances, justice is reduced to "the exclusive rule of representation" (Readings, p.173), of which rights are the best exemplar. In the case of Herzog's film, this means that each individual that forms part of the Aboriginal community at issue has their identity entirely reduced to that of their ethnicity. This idea of the *différend*, then, is particularly significant in the discourses of colonialism and development, because both have involved the assertion of a particular idea of the good (and/or human) over others in the name of a higher good.

What the *différend* highlights is the inability of rights as an enshrined form of justice pertaining to the individual to account for heterogeneity, multiplicity, difference and otherness in an age of globalisation. This inadequacy does not lie only with those

who fail to recognise the rights of others because their own rights are more important. It also extends, as Readings describes as being at play in Herzog's film in the form of a judge sympathetic to the Aboriginal cause, to those who seek to be fair by deferring to an abstract notion of humanity. Readings goes so far as to say that, in the film, the Aborigines are effectively "killed with kindness, by the assumption that they are the same kind of people as the white Australians" and that they are "silenced by the very fact of being let speak" (p.180). The latter description cogently summarises my own critique of the idea of academic freedom as a right, or capability. To believe that granting anyone a positive, substantive freedom guards against the possibility of that freedom being the very thing that makes them unfree, is a dangerous one. It makes of academic freedom a purely rhetorical concept, and one which is therefore assimilable to ideological and performative forces, rather than constituting a resistance towards such assimilation.

Rather than be despondent, however, both Lyotard and Readings suggest that there is an affirmative dimension to be found in the *différend*, which is that of a responsibility to attest to it, to bear witness to it. This responsibility can be seen in the example of Einstein. Einstein's argument was that it was the process of questioning itself that violated the amendment, and therefore any appeal under its interrogation was already compromised. In advocating non-cooperation, Einstein waived the recognition of formal democratic process in the public sphere to suggest that the process might do more to harm those that sought to employ it in their defence than to protect them.

Einstein might have believed in the Fifth Amendment's capacity to protect freedom of speech for the individual, but the line of questioning enacted by the

McCarthy trials had produced a *différend* that would disable his colleague's appeals rather than enable them. By voicing his objection, Einstein bore witness to an incommensurability between the law and academic freedom as he saw it. Lyotard was keen to point out that a silent objection did not constitute an abstaining from responsibility: "That the opposite of speaking is possible does not entail the necessity of keeping quiet. To be able not to speak is not the same as not to be able to speak" (p.10). In advocating *not* speaking, Einstein can be seen as having stepped outside of the limitations of academic freedom as a right (which could not protect him), to act upon it solely as a responsibility towards future, as-yet-unknown, others. Because his appeal was to something outside of that language enshrined in the law, it is also possible to say that he was responding to a call from elsewhere, the possibility that the law will change for the better in the future as a result. The same impulse to act upon academic freedom as a responsibility that sits outside the discourse of academic freedom as a right can be seen in the French strikes of May 1968, or the Arab Spring that began in December 2010, both uprisings against anti-democratic systems largely led by students. The outcomes are always unknown, but the responsibility prevails.

Academic freedom as a responsible act need not be limited to these larger gestures: in day-to-day practice, the act of teaching or doing research can similarly be seen as being conducted in a spirit of experiment or risk that goes beyond a compliance with formal regulation or a deliberate antagonism, to act in the best interests of others, the future of others, and other futures. What this means is that academic freedom is not simply a political issue, or an ethical one, but both, and more. It defines the way that all members of the university act, rather than distinguishing some as having more academic freedom than others. It therefore also goes beyond the discourses of either

right or capability, ensuring that there is always a space to act *outside* of the discursive constraints placed upon the individual. The incentive to engage in, or with, that space is brought about by a responsibility *for* the other, which is best acted upon through dialogue, given that relations with the other are always mediated by dialogue.

Lyotard and Readings have therefore made a strong case for thinking about academic freedom in a contingent sense, and also in terms of both what *is* said and done in the name of free expression and inquiry, as well as in terms of what is either *not yet* said or *not able to be* said. I now want to make the case that Bakhtinian dialogism provides a way of not just situating academic freedom in its historic context (critically positioning it as a right), as well as making the case for a responsibility towards the future of the university because of the unfinalisable nature of dialogue, but for acting upon education in the present.

#### **6.10. Conclusion: the act of academic freedom in ‘answerability’**

My argument in this chapter has been to state that considering academic freedom simply as a right does not tell the full story of what the concept entails, and indeed might limit the very idea of freedom that it implies. The negative approach to freedom suffices if one agrees with Ménand (1996) that freedoms “are socially engineered spaces in which parties engaged in specified pursuits enjoy protection from parties who would otherwise naturally seek to interfere in those pursuits” (p.3). Expressed in substantive terms, freedoms are as much a source of suspicion as those sources they seek protection from. I have said of ideas of the university, the discourse of development, and the underlying philosophy of humanism that informs them, that they all risk this paradox of liberty-as-limit within their understanding of freedom, because

that understanding is based on generalisations and abstractions that are borne out neither by historical contingency nor difference at the level of the individual subject. As Bakhtin points out, “Such scientific abstraction is quite justified in itself, but under one condition: that it is clearly recognized as merely an abstraction and is not represented as the real concrete whole of the phenomenon” (1986, p.69-70). Only by situating abstractions within a historical context and recognising that they are answerable to future revision, should they be recognised as helpful contributions to dialogue. Otherwise, they remain monological.

To try and concretise academic freedom as a right, then, based solely upon these generalisations, is to institute at every stage yet more possibilities for unfreedom, hierarchisation, and even an enduring colonialism. As long as academic freedom remains an identifiable and quantifiable notion, it passes into a system of self-interest and self-protection (Barnett, 1988), and an economy of those that have it as opposed to those that don't (through no fault of their own). This sets the stage for a global higher education which recycles inequality whilst championing access, mobility and excellence for all. Even when understood as capability, academic freedom is articulated as a commodifiable ‘opportunity’ to which academics and students are individually entitled, creating consumers of the progressive notion of opportunity to replace consumers of the neoliberal market in skills (as was the case with human capital theory).

Academic freedom as a right only tells half the story of academic freedom because it is retrospective, and is based upon what is already known about the history of

the university,<sup>47</sup> and past injustices upon which it can act. The other half cannot be told because it looks ahead to the university's role in an unknown future. There are two ways to engage with the unknowable half, or 'Janus face,' to academic freedom: either by allowing the right to dictate the outcomes of that future, or to acknowledge that every right is in itself a recognition of the failings of previous rights to create the best future outcomes. If the latter position is accepted, then an ethical position towards the future is required that does not assume the best outcomes in advance, and instead remains open to its possibilities, especially to the idea that those possibilities might arrive from elsewhere, i.e. from a place which retrospective knowledge has not equipped us to anticipate, comprehend, or rationalise.

But an ethical position is not enough to simply redress the balance and restore a uniqueness to university education. There still remains an need for an articulation of actions in the face of such unknowability, the 'act' of academic freedom (which involves a political dimension also). In chapter four, I discussed Sharon Todd's desire to shift educational thinking away from essentialised or idealised notions of the human, towards "an orientation (a responsibility) that responds to human difference" (2009, p.21). I argued that this represents an important shift because it keeps the question of what constitutes the human open. I expressed my reservations about Todd's educational position on two grounds, however: firstly, that she seeks to make the other too central to that position, risking its possible collapse into idealism, or yet another form of humanism; secondly, that her notion of freedom still acts in self-interest, because it is the constant process of trying to retrieve one's freedom in the face of the other. I would argue, then, that in the case of academic freedom, Todd's formulation would neither

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<sup>47</sup> Or, "a history of the university" depending upon whose viewpoint it is being seen from, only one of which has been presented here.

apply to the university as an educational form distinct from others, nor does it imply an openness to 'elsewhere' (i.e. difference not just presented by the other, but by dialogue) that is not acting in self-interest. What is required is an imperative upon acting in the present, that is not contained within an ethical position towards the future that might render a person unable to act (or to educate) for fear of committing an injustice.

Where I think Todd, drawing upon Levinas, fails to give her orientation towards otherness sufficient educational contextualisation and purpose, Bakhtin provides these in the form of dialogue and genre. People are born into dialogue, which is therefore necessarily social, and yet they give personal meaning to existence by participating in dialogue, their response to which is necessarily subjective. Their participation is always unique, because every utterance is made at a unique intersection (and from a unique aggregate) of multiple voices and discourses that constitutes their experience, called "heteroglossia". But dialogue is not just the anarchic exchange of free expression, which would amount to a form of nihilism; meaning is discovered in dialogue via the genres in which utterances gather and are made: "Genres...throughout the centuries of their life accumulate forms of seeing and interpreting particular aspects of the world" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.5). The subject's utterance, therefore, is an expression of their own heteroglossia (the unique nexus of language(s) as experienced and articulated by any one person) in response to the possibility of contributing to further dialogue as represented by the other, as conditioned by any particular genre. Bakhtin argues that genres are not intended here as limitations, but rather sites to reveal greater semantic possibilities (in the context of literature), even those that will not be recognised within their own epoch as transformative.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Bakhtin cites Shakespeare's revolutionising of literary genres as an example.

Genre, therefore, serves up possibility rather than purpose. The point of writing a novel is not to prove what a novel is, but to discover the meanings it can throw up. This idea releases theorising higher education from trying to determine what the university is, if it is considered as a genre. Instead, the university presents with the possibility of exploring, and contributing to meaning. These explorations and contributions occur in relation to a history of the institution as a genre, but extend beyond simply affirming that history (as tradition) by responding to the experience of ‘elsewhere’ that may challenge that history and its accompanying ideology. Any utterance made in relation to the genre that justifies itself outside of its historical context amounts either to an attempt to monologise, or a concession to monologism: “All attempts to surmount – from within theoretical cognition – the dualism of cognition and life, the dualism of thought and once-occurrent concrete actuality, are utterly hopeless” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.7). Monologism is never the opposite of dialogism, but an attempt to disavow the dialogic, and therefore also an absolution of the responsibility entailed in dialogism. Humanism, capabilities, dialectics and discourse, are all monologic attempts to reduce the multiplicity and difference of dialogue to a single way of understanding the world, and in the process absolve the subject of their responsibility towards dialogue, by deferring to a logic that exists outside of it.

Bakhtin argues against the possibility of such deferral through his own conception of responsibility as ‘answerability.’ Answerability on the part of any one person occurs at the moment at which theoretical understanding, historical context and personal intervention coincide:



The answerability of the actually performed act knows a unitary plane...in which its theoretical validity, its historical factuality, and its emotional-volitional tone figure as moments in a single decision or resolution.

(1993, p.28)

Answerability here provides another dimension to the understanding of responsibility as an infinite commitment to the other, which has no context. Answerability instead places the subject at the site of their own utterance, preventing either subjectivity (essential human nature) or the utterance (as universal truth) from being placed outside. As such, the subject is not only responsible for the unfinalisable social dialogue that provides the space for another's expression of experience (as heteroglossia), but is also *answerable* for their own participation in that dialogue by being uniquely situated in a certain time, and certain place. Bakhtin describes this as the subject's 'non-alibi in Being,' "where I assume answerability for my uniqueness, for my own being" (1993, p.42). The importance of answerability, especially in education, is to say that it is not enough just to try and do justice to the other, because that might involve abstaining from any form of action for fear of it constituting an injustice. Instead, answerability says that only through acting in response to an other through dialogue, can a subject position themselves in relation to others, a position that can then be challenged again through dialogue. I would argue that this nears a definition of development as 'unfolding,' a process which does not end but can be marked by answerable instances. When acted upon in relation to higher education as a 'genre,' academic freedom thus gives educational purpose to the university, but only as long as it is continuously enacted, and not enshrined.

## 7. Conclusion

### 7.1. Introduction

This conclusion proceeds in five parts: summary; research questions; applications of study; limits of study. I will first provide a brief summary of the preceding five chapters, and how they interrelate to form a study of an educational problem within a particular educational field, i.e. the lack of “education” in international higher education development. I will then give a reminder of the research questions posed at the start of the thesis, and attempt to address each of these questions in turn. I will argue firstly that the role and purpose of universities is to be discovered in the dialogical interactions of their participants between the local and the global. Secondly, I will suggest that such dialogical interactions cannot occur within the discourse of international higher educational development as it currently stands, with its underlying assumptions about the nature of the human and of progress. At the very least, the language of this discourse needs to be readdressed to expose some of these assumptions, as well as offering alternative directions. Finally, I will address the question of how universities can be theorised in educational terms to sustain both dialogue and development in higher education such that they do not fall back into the more reductive categories and associations previously described (discourse/dialectics, progress/linearity). To do so I will argue that it is important to consider neither “the university” nor “education” as things in and of themselves, but rather both as mutually interrogatory ideas which only acquire meaning through individuals acting upon the (ideological and institutional) tensions between the university *and* education.

Having set out some preliminary responses to my research questions, I want to reiterate the instance in which I have explored this tension in most detail, i.e. in the case of academic freedom. I then want to show how this case is manifest in two examples. The first is a brief reflection on my own writing of this thesis, and whether it stands up to the logic of the case made for academic freedom at possibly the most localised level. I then want to look at the (significantly more important) example of refugee academics, and how one organisation, the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics, might be attentive to the theoretical tension between “the university” and “education” in its work to do justice to the academic freedom of exiled academics. The latter is intended as an example of how the tri-dimensional structure of academic freedom might operate and be enacted at the global level. However, I will suggest that both examples in fact engage necessary aspects of both the local and global in terms of dialogue and responsibility.

The last part of this chapter looks at some of the limits of the study, the scope for further investigation, and areas in which it might usefully be taken up.

## **7.2. Summary**

### Research questions:

- What is the (educational) role/purpose of the university in a globalised age?
- Is the field of higher education development serving to advance that role/purpose, or is it serving others?
- How can the university be theorised (in educational terms) to best serve that role/purpose?

What is the (educational) role/purpose of the university in a globalised age?

What I hope to have made clear in my discussion of the nature of dialogue, as it relates to education and universities, is that a single role or purpose of “the university” is neither useful, nor indeed possible, when talking about the vast differences in higher education offerings around the world that all go under the name of “university.” It is not possible because, whilst many of these institutions might still profess in their manifestos an allegiance to some idea of tradition, I have shown that tradition itself is only a partial representation of the way in which universities have evolved. Scholarly activity that came to characterise university education was taking place long before the need to give a name to its institutional nature, whether it is traced back to Ancient Greece, the Arab *madrasah*, or the monastic schools of the early Middle Ages. The growth of the medieval universities (Bologna, Paris, Oxford, etc.) was as much due to their differing from each other as it was sharing in common characteristics. The canonical practice of coming up with an “idea” of the university, expressed as a singular entity accompanied by definite article, has been seen here as an ahistorical way of trying to overcome the agonistic and indefinite nature of universities that have always been historically-situated, hybrid and plural.

The “definite university,” when it succeeds, has been shown to be often exclusive, oppressive, and even enduringly colonial. The irony, then, is that certain supposedly characteristic concepts, such as “criticality,” “autonomy,” and “academic freedom,” are elevated above and beyond the people practising them. In short, they are often described in terms that define a “metaphysical” university (Barnett, 2011; Zgaga, 2012), one that glosses the complexities of goings-on within universities in favour of an

overarching ideal. Equally, the anxiety over the definite article is what often leads to the ubiquitous declaration of “crisis” in the university, which is again often only a crisis inasmuch as it threatens a hegemonic ideal. The organic and differentiated growth of early universities, then, is to be seen as much in contrast to the market-oriented, bureaucratised, managerialist “entrepreneurial university” as it is to the fondness for any variation on the ideas offered by Kant, Humboldt, Newman, etc. Both seek after what Biesta (2011) has described as “a copy without an original” (p.36). It is the desire to assert origins, and to avoid failure through doing so, that generates both performativity and paranoia in educational practices (Munday, 2012).

The fact that medieval scholars were able to conduct scholarly activities that, amongst themselves, they recognised as such, despite no formal definition of the institution that legitimated those activities, suggests that educational activity need not rely on the definite article to give it meaning. It indicates that such activity in many ways gathers a community of interests, or into a “speech genre,” in more complex ways than those to which the definite article gives credit. If I were to pursue this complexity further through the language of Bakhtin, I would say that ‘the definite university’ bears a strong similarity to Bakhtinian monologism. An ‘indefinite university’, accompanied by the indefinite article, allows for all sorts of possibilities, although possibly too many to prevent it becoming abstract. I have chosen to use the term ‘universities’ in this thesis, because I think it reflects the multiplicity and hybridity of the institution, important in Bakhtin’s emphasis on centrifugal forces in dialogue that are always stratified, and escape being reduced to any one genre, sphere, or idea. At the same time, to speak of ‘universities’ does not dispense of the institutional term altogether (i.e. by deferring to terms such as higher education, tertiary education, or post-secondary education), a

reflection of the concomitant need for centripetal forces such as genre and discourse to give meaning to dialogue.

Dialogism is at once the description of a world of language into which everyone is born, as well as the way in which they are able to act upon language. It is an ontological condition and an existential one. It is both what people experience through exposure to language, and how they contribute to others' experience in response. This is not to say that the role or purpose of the university is to *be dialogical*, nor that education and dialogism are the same thing. It is to show how, for example, universities might have evolved from dialogical activity that gathered into what Bakhtin calls a "speech genre," described as "*relatively stable types*" (p.61) in the general flux of dialogue. The relative stability of universities as a form of education, then, is not attached to the definite article, or a definite purpose.

In a 'globalised age', however, it may not be enough to say that universities gather around communities of localised interest, as they did in the Middle Ages. Indeed, this mistaking of the local for the global leads easily to colonial and universalising understandings of the latter. Derrida, for example, has witnessed this tendency in the human rights discourse which fuses a particular "concept of man" with international law to create a globalisation, or "*mondialisation*," of a Western humanistic ideal: "This *mondialisation* wishes to be a humanization" (2000, p.203). Roxanne Euben (2006) has defined the "globalized world" as one in which "porous borders, portable allegiances, virtual networks, and elastic identities now more than ever evoke the language of mobility, contingency, fluidity, provisionality, and process, rather than that of stability, permanence and fixity" (p.1). The potential for radical encounters with new knowledge

and meaning might seem to be boundless, but Euben also cautions that “such encounters often proceed under conditions of radical inequality between and within regions, cultures, nations, and transnational and subnational communities” (ibid.). There is therefore always both possibility (for change) and possible inequality in the globalized world. I think there is good reason to believe that the two have to be kept in conversation, because an overemphasis on the possibility for change might well ignore the inequality it creates in order to achieve that, whilst a focus solely on inequality might not only reduce the possibility for change, but do so whilst *also* generating further inequality.

The global dimension is not to be seen as a threat to what universities are able to achieve locally, but instead offers an enrichment of dialogue at both levels by acting upon the dialogue between them. This dialogue I see as taking place the whole time through journal publications, national and international conferences, mobility of students and academics to universities across the world, availability of knowledge resources online. The important thing is that the global dimension should not be mistaken for a universal. Dialogism can not amount to universal dialogue, not least because dialogism itself is subject to the same centrifugal and centripetal principles which it puts forward. Dialogism is open to change. Human capital and human capability, however, demonstrate universalising tendencies by seeing potential for change everywhere, but from within an unchangeable theoretical position.

The universal overrides any notion of the global as a world of multiplicity, difference, otherness, or “elsewhere,” instead glossing over these problems by means of cosmopolitan ideals such as the “global citizen.” The “global citizen” constructs a

world whose horizons – of capital or capability – determine the humanity and nature of the subjects within it. Simons and Masschelein, however, prefer to view the global dimension as one in which “someone who is studying and thinking is a person that exposes herself to *the world*” (2009, p.10, italics in original) – rather than someone whom the world creates. Their world, like that of Euben, is “not a place defined by borders and it is not a space ordered by a tribunal, by gatekeepers, and by laws” (p.11). It therefore does not know a logic to what might be called a European university, or a logic to academic freedom enshrined as right in the constitution. It is a world, then, of dialogue, and of possible dialogical response.

Simons and Masschelein’s “world university” conveys the global orientation towards the unknowable that I have tried to describe in previous chapters. The purpose of being part of such a university is, then, “being in the world, being exposed, being out of position, or being captured by questions of living together” (2009b, p.13). This form of participation may seem largely existential, in the sense that it is to do with the exposure to new experience, but the authors also insist on the “responsibility” of students (and academics?) at the world university. This notion of responsibility has no “defined addressee,” but is simply a responsibility to ask the question of “How are we to live together?” (p.16). Whilst I think the question is an important one, and the idea of free speech in universities being addressed “to nobody in particular” (ibid.) expresses the importance of non-discrimination in university education, I think there is a danger that this “world university” places too much emphasis on experiencing the world, and not enough on acting in it. The latter, I think, is important if universities are to ‘unfold’ in the dialogical interaction between local, conflicting interests, and the borderless possibilities presented by the global, rather than become places where people simply



experience the global. I have argued that one way to articulate the need for acting upon dialogue in higher education, as opposed to experiencing it, is through the Bakhtinian notion of ‘answerability’.

‘Answerability’ is a recognition of both borderless world and addressee-less responsibility, but also takes into account the ‘facticity’ of immediate, historic contingency. It relates to a performed act in which an individual is situated in the moment of taking into account both exposure to the world and the limits of the localised environment, both addressing “nobody in particular” and an immediate audience, the other and other knowledge.<sup>49</sup> I think a good example of how this works in practice can be found in Open Access initiatives that have no defined reader, but make research available to all in the hope that others might benefit and respond in unanticipated ways. There have also been recent actions that guard against the protectionist tendencies in academia, such as the so-called “Academic Spring,” a movement led by academics against restrictions on copyright and access to journals.

In answer to the first research question, then, I would say that the role or purpose of *universities* is for its *participants* to keep discovering (its) purpose through *acting answerably* on the *dialogue between the local and the global* (where answerability is a taking into account of both historical contingency and unfinalisable responsibility). This allows for important future questions to be asked about the degree to which some institutions, virtual and online universities, for example, as well as non-secular universities, are answerable in this respect, or whether they sign answerability

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<sup>49</sup> “Answerability” is not necessarily exclusive to the purpose of universities, as it can also be seen as being at a premium (though not always practised as such) in, for example, journalism and governmental politics, for example. In these “genres,” however, it would have to be argued that localised immediacy and the address to much more particular audiences place limits upon the “responsible” dimension to their practices.

over to monologic authority. It also allows for universities to consider the role of the disciplines in the institution, and whether highly vocational courses are in themselves answerable, or whether they bow solely to the received knowledge that dictates “quality and excellence” frameworks. And it equally asks of some arts and humanities courses whether they are simply about exposure to a borderless world, or whether there is an answerable dimension which allows students and academics to situate themselves in relation to that world, to become answerable through a university education.

Answerability as part of a university education lies, I believe, as much in acts such as submitting work which one holds to be one’s own, as it does in, for example, not plagiarising; it is about adopting and questioning critical positions, rather than following prescribed methods; it is equally about not taking critical positions just for the sake of it, or for the deposition of others, but about inviting others to respond in kind.

Is the field of higher education development serving to advance that role/purpose, or is it serving others?

The shortest answer to this question is “no”. As I have described it, the field of higher education development in its current state is one in which the discourses of higher education and development have been fused, largely for instrumental purposes such as national socio-economic development and student employability. This fusion combines the weakening of the purpose of universities as described in the previous section (now generalised as ‘higher education’), and the ideological tenets of the development discourse. In the case of human capital approaches, the supposedly inherent and objective logic of the market is applied to the cultivation of skills amongst humans, which in turn will supply them with the opportunity for both passing on and capitalising

upon those skills, as well as earning new ones. There is little attempt at normativity within this approach, except that the opportunity for acquisition of skills should be made available to all. What is concealed within that premise, of course, is the notion that some skills are more desirable than others,<sup>50</sup> a status they can only have attained according to a logic that has a particular functioning human being in mind. The ideal is not just a human being that with a particular combination of skills might be understood as realising some form of completion; rather, the principal driving force behind a human capital approach is that people should be seeking to expand their capital endlessly, as otherwise the system would come to a halt (see, for example, Becker, 1964). The endless search for acquisition, and the constant production of ‘new’ knowledge that makes it possible (i.e. that leads people to believe that there is always another qualification to be earned if they are to be perfectly employable within any field), introduces a form of nihilism into the provision of education that simultaneously encourages both self-interestedness (one’s self as best investment) and dependency.

Human capabilities have tried to reintroduce into development approaches a moral corrective that redistributes opportunity outside of economic circumstance. The human capability approach is based on substantive claims about the nature of human wellbeing, and as such falls into the category of what Bakhtin describes as “content-ethics,” an ethics which “endeavors to find and to ground special moral norms that have a definite content – norms that are sometimes universally valid and sometimes primordially relative, but in any case universal, applicable to everyone” (1993, p.22). Bakhtin is deeply critical of the “content-ethics” approach, because the leap it makes from turning theoretical propositions into norms is “completely unfounded,” and

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<sup>50</sup> Which nowadays is manifest in the massive increase in universities across the “developing” world with an exclusive focus on disciplines of technology, business, engineering, and applied science and mathematics.

“accepts blindly that the moral ought is inherent in the content of propositions as such” (ibid., p.23). I have shown this to be a difficulty very much at issue in capabilities theorising, in which “individual freedom” is the highest normative principle, from which all functionings and capabilities and “development” itself extend, despite the nature of “freedom” (and/or the “individual”) never being critically theorised in this respect. As Bakhtin puts it, “the ethical ought is tacked on from the outside” (ibid.), allowing for normative principles always to be considered independently of their context.

The consequence is that CA gives the impression of a new path, when it is really manoeuvring within the same vein of reasoning as that which gave credence to human capital: in both there is simply a line to be drawn between two abstract ideas, “human” and “freedom,” and where one applies market economics the other offers substantive opportunity. There is no consideration, for example, that any understanding of the one might compromise the legitimacy of the other. Both give the appearance of a forceful logic, however, by *not* theorising these issues. In positing a universal human confronted with a metaphysical freedom, “the universality of norms [which extend from them] is completely inevitable” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.25), and “the detached content of the cognitional act comes to be governed by its own immanent laws, according to which it then develops as if it had a will of its own” (p.7).

The immanent laws of human capital and human capability drive higher education towards different ends, economic growth and social justice respectively. In doing so, they take into account very few of the *answerable* dimensions to participating in universities. They respond almost entirely to local and immediate circumstances, and

have little interest in addressing “nobody in particular”. Whilst it might be argued that ‘developing’ countries do have a greater urgency to be attentive to immediate issues of poverty and inequality, to reduce university purpose to these issues not only makes them no different to other societal institutions (from the government to the police force), but makes their priorities different to those universities in other parts of the world. This might make sense if the argument was only ever that universities were indeed educational institutions oriented towards the local. But World Bank policy advisors constantly insist on the fact that universities in poorer countries will only become globally competitive in the knowledge economy if they attend to localised economic difficulties first (World Bank, 2002a; 2009). If poorer countries are dependent upon those with greater resources (capital, capability) to inform them of the standards to which they must aspire in order to compete globally, but are at the same time constantly seeing those standards changed (from concrete skills to general wellbeing, for example), then development becomes an endless cycle of dependency that again invites charges of colonialism.<sup>51</sup>

I do not think, however, that the idea of ‘development’ need be abandoned altogether within educational discourse relating to universities. I think to do so allows for the ideological and monological implications of development discourses to reappear in new discourses relating to universities (such as, for example, sustainability), just as there have been seen to be traces of colonialism within the development discourses. Instead, I have tried to articulate an idea of development in its etymological sense of

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<sup>51</sup> There are no development approaches, as far as I am aware, that take any poorer country or group of countries as the “most developed,” and see some of the world’s richest nations as the least. Whilst this might seem like a gratuitous inversion, it puts into relief the nature of hierarchisation, which often has little legitimacy except in its own reinforcement of knowledge and power relations.

‘unfolding’.<sup>52</sup> ‘Unfolding’ is meant to give the idea that development is not a linear trajectory departing from within a particular individual, tradition, or international organisation. Development as ‘unfolding’ could be taking place from anywhere, any particular point in the borderless world. Development, then, is not something that only happens in and to ‘developing’ countries; knowledge can and might unfold from anywhere, not least when it is not anticipated, or when its source is not defined (by the definite article) and depended upon. The implications of development as ‘unfolding’ are intended to trouble the legitimacy of universal claims, not least because they allude to the possibility of their being made by anyone, anywhere.

Whilst ‘unfolding’ might be seen as relativising universal claims, it need not be a relativist position in itself. Dialogue engages universal claims but only inasmuch as it conceives of them as locally situated. “The human,” for example, is seen as a construct emerging from the European Renaissance through the Enlightenment, whose legitimacy is set against a borderless world in which many other such concepts also compete. Development as “unfolding,” then, argues that acting upon that engagement is necessary, but can take place from anywhere (not just from within the self, or as an imposed political programme). I think the idea of development as “an unfolding from elsewhere” is potentially significant in the democratisation of global higher education, as it contributes to the notion that universities are still what people make of them, irrespective of financial resources or the demands of social justice as a representational matter. As such, in response to my second research question, I would say that only if understood as “*unfolding from elsewhere*” can development begin to be understood as an idea that challenges hierarchies in international higher education, and contributes to

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<sup>52</sup> Which the move from capital to capability shows to be a simple shifting of goalposts within the same field of play.

the possibilities of answerability that are limited by *envelopment* approaches concealed in economic and social justice agendas.

How can the university be theorised (in educational terms) to best serve that role/purpose?

I think I have already begun to answer this question by suggesting that one way to approach theorising university education is through language – though perhaps not just, as Masschelein & Ricken (2009) have suggested, through the invention of new languages, but through a careful consideration of the existing discourses and an “answerability” for personal contribution. In this sense, I have tried not to create an entirely new discourse myself, but rather to show some ideological orientations within certain discourses, and how they might be conceived of as more complex, so as to do greater justice to the relations between education, the university, and those that participate in university education. Instead of trying to dispense altogether with residual colonial elements in language and discourse, I have tried to show how universities might always be attentive to them, and be critical of them, so as not to let them reappear in other forms. I have already raised some of these issues as regards given understandings contained in both “development” as an overarching strategy of progress, and also the “republican ‘we’” that gives it force. I want to extend this finally to two terms that reveal further the nature of dialogical education, to show how their overlapping and antagonistic concerns make it very difficult to reduce university education to particular phenomena. Those two terms are “the university” and “education.”

### 7.3. Theorising universities

As I mentioned in chapter two of this thesis, Barnett (1990) has offered a theoretical framework for “theorizing *educationally* about higher education” by putting forward six necessary theoretical considerations, of which I chose to see only the first three as being relevant: value background and historical origins; implicit assumptions in the language; the concept(s) of higher education. My research, I believe, is very much an acknowledgment of the need to be attentive to these aspects. I have tried to offer clear historical perspectives, whilst also recognising that any perspective is necessarily limited. I have discussed the ideological nature of various discourses and assumptions within the field of higher education development. And I have looked more closely at concepts (or one in particular: academic freedom) that might help to both challenge and define something of the purpose of universities today, for the sake of educational change.

Thus far then, I am in agreement with Barnett that theorising higher education ought to take into account these different dimensions. But I have also expressed a point of difference on the matter of the end goal of taking them into account. For Barnett, the aim appears always to be to arrive at a definition of the university itself, what *the* university is *for*. As such, he has come up with three purposes of the university:

1. “to go on expanding the frameworks with which we might comprehend the world.”
2. “the university has the challenge of providing the wherewithal for living at ease with this epistemological mayhem.”



3. “the university has the challenge of developing the competences of living purposefully and even prospering in the world.”

(Barnett & Standish, 2003, p.207)

I want to address each of these issues in turn to show just how I differ from Barnett’s articulation of purpose.

In terms of the expansion of “the frameworks with which we might comprehend the world,” I have found little consistent argument to make the case for *why* this is important. Barnett, as I mentioned in chapter two, has been critical of philosophical approaches – such as that of Derrida and Habermas – to conceptualising the university that draw only on the communicative processes that characterise it, to avoid normative understandings that might descend into performativity. His argument is instead to engage the “supercomplexity” of higher education by inviting an “*abundance* of ideas of the university” (2013, p.6) that all contest in global dialogue due to processes of communicative reasoning derived from Habermas himself (2003). This abundance is in fact today still very much in evidence, with variations on the theme associated by Zgaga (2012) as a thousand flowers blossoming on the grave of the university, with new titles such as “the ‘twenty-first century’, efficient’, ‘world-class’, ‘entrepreneurial’, ‘borderless’, ‘virtual’, ‘market place’ etc. university, but also the ‘moral’, ‘creative’, ‘critical’, ‘not-for-profit’, ‘socially engaged’, ‘inclusive’, ‘public space’ etc. university” (p.419).

To me the idea of “supercomplexity” presents with two problems. Firstly, that if every new idea of the university is still born within the scope of communicative

reasoning, then each must still essentially be derivative of the same idea. As Zgaga observes, the revelation of an emptiness to any contemporary hegemonic ideal, shows that “there is also plenty of yearning for a return to the ‘original fullness’” (ibid.). Secondly, and following on from that, there seems little point in constantly expanding either frameworks for understanding or ideas of the university – described by Barnett (2011) as “feasible utopias” – simply for the sake of it. In fact, the more “ideas” of “the university” that are produced, the more a peculiar absurdity comes to the fore: the (metaphysical) notion that these ideas can compete (in terms of Barnett’s adequacy criteria?) outside of the involvement and participation of individuals. It seems like advocating a rapid and exponential university production which tends either towards nihilism or colonialism,<sup>53</sup> tendencies which both find neat expression in Barnett’s constant concern over the possibility that universities will find themselves “condemned to being behind the game” (p.227). The whole idea of “supercomplexity” does indeed sound like a game, in which academics compete to come up with models in which no actual activity occurs, because the model is more important than making it happen.

In terms of the second purpose, it doesn’t seem to logically follow from the first. If the first purpose of universities is to keep expanding knowledge frameworks for the sake of it, then the purpose of theorising higher education is surely to keep coming up with new ideas of the purpose of higher education, as the game of supercomplexity implies. But the second point then (justifiably) suggests that the constant creation of these frameworks and ideas would lead to an “epistemological mayhem,” causing people to despair because of the constantly multiplying and competing claims being

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<sup>53</sup> Colonising the field of understanding less through the production of meaningful knowledge, but more simply by virtue of the speed at which knowledge is produced. Rancière (2009) has described this in educational terms as “the interminable practice of the ‘step ahead’ separating the schoolmaster from the one whom he is supposed to train to join him” (2010, p.9).

made. But instead of addressing the pointlessness of the exercise, the second purpose suggests that it is important instead to find a way of coping with this pointlessness. As Munday (2011) has pointed out, there is a sense of “sadness” in this gesture that says “at best we can simply accommodate and become accustomed to supercomplexity” (p.50). But there doesn’t appear to be any logic or justification in simply creating chaos just to cope with it.

The third purpose is thus also awkwardly placed in the sequence. In many ways the “competences” it argues for bear a strong similarity to the notion of capabilities, which are also designed to provide the opportunity for living purposefully and prospering. But there is something uncomfortable about Barnett’s strategy in his phrasing. Having suggested that universities are not only intended to generate ever more complexity and abundance, and then having argued that in doing so they must devise ways of not finding such a pointless exercise pointless in itself, the third purpose then goes on to argue that universities must go further. They must not only make themselves feel comfortable with their own endless expansion of frameworks, but must also come up with ways that others might function meaningfully amid the chaos they are creating for them as observed by Standish (2003) and Zgaga (2012). To place this third in the sequence suggests to me that Barnett is arguing for a university that acts as a kind of laboratory, and not one which simply tests ideas and experiments with others, but a laboratory which develops the sorts of techniques for finding meaning in a world which lives in a constant state of (meaningless) meaning production. The only solution to an implied nihilism then is to assert the university once again as something that *is*, or “exists,” by elevating its status to an institution that both creates meaning and the means by which others can discover it in their own lives. I can not see that this is an attractive

message to send out to potential university students. Indeed, I think it could (and possibly should) have the opposite effect of suggesting that meaningful lives might best be lived well away from such a self-perpetuating, self-imposing, and self-important institution. As I have shown, a film like *Blackboards* can provide just such a meaningful (instance of) education without the necessity of a university to do so.

The reason for critiquing university purpose in this way is that I think Barnett betrays one of the main problems with theorising with the aim of capturing the university *per se*: the historical and dialogical process to which higher education is constantly subject means that universities are not things which can/should be ontologically tied to definite purposes and definitions. Barnett's insistence on "*the*" university and its close alliance with the communicative reason that binds its global dimension, still betrays precisely the sort of "grand narrative," or monologism, that his embracing of the "supercomplex world" attempts to leave behind. As Munday (2011) has put it, Barnett's understanding of the relationship between chaos and complexity "represents an attempt to restore unity to the subject through its contemplation of multiplicity in the object" (p.50). To move away from trying to restore unity in this respect is not to say that there is no educational purpose in the university, but that it might have more to do with who is attending the university and what is being taught and researched there, than it does with an institution in itself. In this respect, I have myself insisted, as Standish (2003) does in his response to Barnett's "supercomplex" university, on the responsibility of those that participate in its activities. To introduce this component begins to retrieve something of an educational purpose at the level of subjective participation that is not just the organization of chaos for its own sake.

#### 7.4. Theorising “education”

To theorise the university prior to its participants in many ways prevents them from understanding their relation to the world as anything other than either prejudiced or privileged. In the first sense, supercomplexity makes of the university an institution that offers an education in which every person understands their viewpoint as ultimately compromised by its perspective. In the second sense, the university offers an education which gives the confidence to think that the only way to act is on conviction, not least because “the university” grants conviction that authority (through the awarding of degrees etc.). Neither self-awareness nor self-confidence is necessarily wrong here, but the danger is (an idea of) the institution might be determining these understandings, rather than providing a space in which they might be mutually contested. Again, “the university” thus risks being seen as deciding upon the sort of society it ought to be producing, whether it be comprised of overly-critical or overly-confident citizens.

A different approach is to suggest that neither the university, nor the academic, nor the student, can discover purpose as any of those things, before there is a theory of education to bring them into relation with one another. In *Good Education in an Age of Measurement*, Biesta (2010) argues that before asking questions such as “What is the university for?” as Barnett does, the important question to pose is “the question as to what education is for” (p.3). His argument proceeds “against the background of the remarkable rise of a culture of measurement in educational policy and practice in many countries around the world” (p.5), a characteristic common to many of the human capital approaches to higher education development. There are parallels to be drawn also between Biesta’s critique of “learnification” in education, which has the tendency

to distract from questions of educational purpose (*why* things are done as well as *how*), and my own analysis of the development discourse.

To combat the necessary value judgments involved in measurement practices, standardisation processes, and “learnification”, Biesta recommends thinking about education less in terms of what is “effective” (according to specific norms, values and standards) and possibly in terms also of “educational practices that are not effective, for example because they provide opportunities for students to explore their own ways of thinking, doing and being” (p.14). I would argue that the case I have made against the capabilities approach in education has been very much one in which policy and practice that still belong in the value judgment category of “effective” approaches to education, but has at the same time tempered effectiveness through the provision of opportunity. My criticism is that CA tries to multiply the normative standards by which educational value might be understood, and to increase its availability accordingly, but that that multiplication still departs from the same impulse to “effect” certain standards, themselves derived from a particular understanding of the “good” as it relates to the human.

Biesta disputes the ‘effectiveness’ approach by offering a way of resisting the impulse to realise any particular understanding of humanity and its purpose through education. Like Simons & Masschelein (as well as Derrida, Standish and Todd), Biesta has also emphasised the idea of responsibility in education as one which acts against the generalising nature of education (a possibility in both Barnett and Nussbaum). Biesta’s formulation of responsibility is similarly borderless, but oriented less towards the world than it is towards the other: “the responsibility of the educator...is a responsibility

*without* knowledge of what one is responsible for” (Biesta, 2006). Responsibility is instead “non-universal, singular, unique” (p.64). In being beholden to responsibility, a person will always act in ways that can not be attributed to either society (being awarded opportunities) or its institutions (being given an education), but produces actions of his or her own doing. By contrast, then, to both the qualification and socialising functions of educational purpose (both of which find strong tendencies in the human capital and human capability approaches respectively), Biesta thus emphasises a “subjectification” function also, which is “about ways of being that hint at independence from such orders” (p.21). In my discussions on the nature of dialogism, I have tried to show how this particular mode of theorising also articulates the functions of both socialisation and “subjectification,” by demonstrating both the social nature of dialogue and the uniqueness of subjective participation and contribution within it. I think I am less inclined to try and draw strong distinctions between the two, if only because dialogue holds them to be so impossibly bound up that it is not just difficult, but possibly not helpful, to separate them. The claim, for example, that “subjectification” encompasses the idea that “being and becoming are thoroughly relational and also...thoroughly ethical and political” (p.129), reveals that the social dimensions are already implicit in that idea.

I think my own approach to theorising the field of higher education has differed in two significant ways. Firstly, a concern over the emphasis on the “subject” in Biesta’s function of “subjectification” has led me to try and emphasise equally the ways in which the subject is mediated, to deter from any subject-social dialectic. Whilst for Bakhtin this mediation takes place via the novel and language itself, it could equally be evidenced in Samira Makhmalbaf’s use of the blackboard as a tool that functions more

effectively as disguise, stretcher, and partition in a divorce ceremony, than it does in simply teaching people. By drawing our attention to the blackboard, Makhmalbaf reminds the viewer that it is the film doing the teaching, not her as the director, nor the characters as pedagogues. Like the blackboard, the screen is also a way of both presenting received ideas, surprising with new ones, hiding some things and providing the possibility for others to emerge in the future. In many ways, another person as “other” is like this also, but, as my critique of Todd showed, to position the other as the sole source for teaching, learning, curiosity and experience can invite a fixation on any of those aspects to the detriment of other aspects. *Blackboards* instead offers both knowledge and an experience of otherness, that is not to be reduced to “an other” understood as “the subject” in education. I have tried to articulate otherness therefore as “elsewhere,” to draw attention away from the subject (who will always be to some extent substantially, and intentionally, socialised also) whilst not attempting to ignore the valuable problems it presents with (as in ‘the différend’).

My second concern in theorising the field of higher education development by departing from an understanding of exclusively *educational* purpose, is that this model is perhaps both too broad in understanding education more generally, and too rigid when trying to understand the much wider, interconnected complexities of education, development, and the historical processes that inform them. In the first sense, I would question whether the use of the word “education” is always that helpful as a blanket term to apply to everything that happens under its assumed aegis. My own narrative of the history of the university shows it to be entirely interwoven with political upheaval, philosophical strong-arming, and colonial oppression. To see education as comprised of three functions that potentially sit outside of those issues creates the possibility of



ahistoricism. What is difficult to ascertain in Biesta's formulation, for example, is how far back he thinks his model applies, or whether it is only relevant for the present, and what sort of expiry date it has if it is not to be seen as transcendent. I have instead tried to tread a line in which neither the university nor education is theorised in the other's absence. To do so I have drawn upon a theory of dialogism that engages those elements that reveal both of those concepts to be constantly troubled by their relation with each other, with society, with history, with language, and with individuals.<sup>54</sup> With the idea of unfinalisability at its centre, the invitation to make claims for purpose in both education and the university (as well as university education in more specific circumstances) is constantly open, as are the questions that prevent an answer being absolute. Universities thus both exceed any one theory of education as such, as well as exceeding their own institutional, historical, categorisation.

### **7.5. Theorising higher education development**

Jonathan Jansen has called into question the "zealous pursuit of targets as ends" in development processes, in putting forward the following questions:

Why is it that despite the serious (and acknowledged) conceptual and methodological inadequacies of target setting in education (TSE), monitoring and measurement activities continue to enjoy credibility among major international agencies? Why, despite the remarkable lack of progress – even regression in some cases – in moving towards set targets (Addis Abba, Jomtiem, Dakar, etc.), do development organizations continue to press forward with such

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<sup>54</sup> The risk, as I will acknowledge below, is that dialogism comes to be understood phenomenologically.

processes? Why do developing countries, with no credible plans and (promised) resources, continue to go through the motions of TSE?

(Jansen, 2005, p.369)

These questions are a reminder of Biesta's concern that performance and measurement, particularly when defining what is "excellence" and "world-class" in higher education, not only keep certain countries tied to such "conceptual and methodological inadequacies," but prevent them from taking higher education forward on their own terms. As I mentioned before, this does not demand that all universities instead only formulate manifestos according to local concerns or indigenous knowledge(s). These questions are instead a reminder that universal standards can be deeply incapacitating (even for those they most seek to assist), and that local difficulties are not overcome by an appeal to universal values, norms, or standards, but by engaging the dialogue between local (immediate limitations) and global (a borderless world).

In terms of negotiating, then, the tension between what the university is for and what education is for, I have found it useful to do so firstly in terms of engaging with the question of language (in both), and engaging with the concepts that bring them together. Whilst Barnett (2011) has argued for a university that "transcends language" (p.13), I have tried to engage much more with "the languages we speak and the vocabularies we reproduce" (Biesta, 2011, p.46) as part of a university education, to question to what extent a university education does indeed open "a space to invent new languages, that is, languages required to give a voice to the inhabitants of the world" (Simons & Masschelein, 2009b, p.18), and to respond to the question of whether "there

exists an appropriate language within which to speak of the university” (Standish, 2003, p.216).

The line that I have tried to pursue has been one of enacting the theoretical ideas I have drawn upon, i.e. by drawing out the historical dimension to my arguments (and recognising the limits of any historical perspective), by bringing multiple discourses and perspectives into dialogue with one another, by placing as much emphasis on knowledge as on the ‘other’ in thinking about educational relations. The conclusion I have drawn from this is that higher education, whether for academic or student, and irrespective of the economic situation in which it finds itself, cannot rely on a fondness of the past, a performativity of the present, or a hope for the future alone to enact its purpose(s). The first acts only according to transcendent ideas about an institution that do not reflect the unfinalisable and polyphonic nature of dialogue; the second seeks to finesse certain processes only for the sake of their being finessed (and allows for the possibility of dialogue becoming a performative idea in education if understood only as a communicative technique in the present); the third might fail to educate at all for fear of committing injustices in an as-yet-unknown future.

What I have tried to argue is that all three of these dimensions need to be brought into play. This might seem contradictory given the negative portrayal I have offered of each, but it in fact recognises the necessity of all three. Change, risk, experiment and ultimately dialogue cannot take place in an academic environment if it is not in relation to tradition, i.e. the past. Neither can these developments occur in a responsible fashion if they are not somehow oriented to their possibilities for the future. Finally, to avoid the signing over of all personal answerability to a system of ever-

refined processes, the present has to be seen as moments of uniqueness in which acts and utterances are not socially determined, but “answerable.”

#### **7.6. Answerability in practice: two instances of academic freedom**

An example of how the three dimensions of university education might be brought into play has been provided through a study of the concept of academic freedom. I described its orientation towards the past as the claim made for academic freedom as a right, the humanistic tendency of which is counterbalanced by a forward-looking ethical disposition of academic freedom as responsibility. Because the latter risks never being acted upon at all given the overwhelming nature of responsibility towards the other it entails, I argued finally that academic freedom in the present needs to be seen as a way of those within the university being answerable for the unique actions and utterances they make, rather than deferring that answerability to monologic authority or discourse. This means that an academic, for example, does not publish exclusively if, when, and what she chooses just because she has a right to do so. Nor should it mean that she refrains from publishing for fear that – although she can’t see it now – her well-intentioned study might have dangerous implications for future audiences. Nor does it mean that the best way to resolve the self-interest of the former and the self-sacrifice of the latter is to sign one’s productivity either over to market or social demand (i.e. to publish only according to what is asked of you). Instead, I have tried to make the case that right and responsibility are equally at issue in any situation at which academic freedom is at stake, and that both are brought into play by answerable action on the part of the individual.

To conclude with a chapter on academic freedom does not quite explain its importance in the field of higher education development, however. In previous chapters, I had suggested that both international financial organisations and human rights organisations that were seeking to help higher education in poorer countries, risked reproducing exactly the cycles of dependency (in knowledge, resources, and human capital) that had characterised the era of colonialism. I argued that any development approach to education (as with any other educational approach) that continued to uphold a single ideal of the human at its centre, would only ever be still in danger of imposition and exclusion, however altruistic it purported to be. This risk exists not least because it is unfair to assume that others experience freedom in exactly the same way as “the republican ‘we’”, and that academic freedom functions as a reflection of that assumption in university activity.

The problem with declaring a lack of academic freedom in any part of the world, is that it is a declaration of incapacitation that not only entrenches difficulties already experienced by academics and students alike, but disenfranchises them from global participation by prejudicing the legitimacy of their contributions. If academic freedom is thought to be under threat at the level of the institution or nation state, then all activity arising at that level is often deemed to be compromised.<sup>55</sup> Isolating or alienating areas of knowledge production is as unhelpful as trying to bring them all under one frame of understanding. Some may suffer at the local level without sufficient dialogue with the global; others may become more dogmatic as a result. The inexplicable attraction of calling an institution “a university” means that the term seems to *universalise* the many changes it is undergoing in its name: the Chinese, for example,

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<sup>55</sup> Less in explicit criticisms of research arising from developing countries than through suppressive measures such as a lack of access to international publishing procedures.

are not only sending a large number of students abroad, but are encouraging students from Africa to come to their universities (Spring, 2009); Singapore offers both a “Western-style” education in English in some universities, alongside its Islamic universities (Mongkhonvanit, 2010); Malaysia is hoping to become a regional hub of higher education (Cheng, Mahmood, & Yeap, 2013). In my view, then, there are important questions to be asked about whether universalising (sometimes termed globalising) conceptions of university standards, quality, and ideals, are doing enough to engage these changes, rather than to try and either control them or dismiss them altogether due to their lacking in certain characteristics or qualities.

The problem with considering academic freedom solely as a substantive issue, then, is that the declaration of lack only incapacitates further, allowing for the deeper entrenchment of hierarchies in higher education. Lack of representation in international league tables, the phenomenon of ‘brain drain,’ funding dependent on meeting targets, and insufficient capacity development, all demonstrate the ways in which opportunity and resources for some do not always translate into benefiting university education generally. But for that to happen, what is required is not simply a new theory of development that reorients the direction of opportunity away from either the market or social wellbeing and towards a new marker. Higher education development instead requires an acknowledgement that, for academics and students everywhere, education is as much in their own hands as in those of university management, governments, international organisations, or market demands. To start from this acknowledgement is to see development as a constant process of “unfolding from elsewhere,” in which, despite a lack of rights and resources in some places, all are equally responsible, and can act on knowledge and relations with others to participate in those processes.

### **7.7. Personal answerability**

This thesis is a useful example of my own enactment of the tri-dimensional nature of academic freedom that I have attempted to formulate. It is an effort to take account of the historically-situated growth and expansion of universities worldwide, to question whether they have a common purpose, and whether the possibility of common purpose (if necessary) either compromises educational interests, or is compromised by non-educational interests. As such, the writing of the thesis acts upon the right to do so, the right to research these ideas and present them to critical audiences, and the right to have them institutionally recognised as presenting with original work on the theme if judged to have done so. These acts all relate to structures established in the past, and a critical position towards them (if, for example, I consciously chose to write this thesis as a poem, I would have to expect that it would struggle to be accepted within formal strictures). At the same time, the work is a response to what has been seen as a lack of theorising in a particular area, and as such a response to those upon whom an attempt to address this lack might have an effect. In short, it is conducted out of a sense of responsibility towards others, albeit others that are as yet unknown to me. This responsibility thus constitutes an orientation towards the future that is not conditioned by past problems or present representation. The responsibility is not towards specific persons, as that would then exclude those not represented within that specificity.

The content, however, is exclusive to the genre of education to which it relates (i.e. university education), because if the content were not genre-specific, it would offer no new contribution to the field, nor would it constitute an invitation to respond in itself. To act upon the right of academic freedom is essentially one of obeisance, the

recognition of the necessary minimum in structure and procedure for academic, scholarly and critical activity to be associated with university education. To act on the responsibility of academic freedom is perhaps the more passionate, more revolutionary dimension, which demands action based on borderlessness, and despite all constraint and institutionalisation. But it is in the act of writing a thesis, of committing to paper thoughts and ideas that recognise these almost opposing forces, that academic freedom as individual answerability comes about. Its completion is a declaration of three years work, which may yet go on to be developed in different directions, but for which I will be answerable – even in the future – in the contextual and contingent moment in which it was completed.

### **7.8. The answerability of others**

Another example of the idea of answerability in academic freedom can be witnessed in the issue of academics as refugees. Simons and Masschelein (2009b) have suggested that refugees, the homeless, and illegal immigrants are representative of “the inhabitants of the world who demonstrate the issues of living together as equals,” and are those to whom the university can provide “a voice” by opening up “a space to invent new languages” (p.18). As I have already said, I think the role of language is an important one in (re)investigating the purpose of university education, but I think that the invention of “new languages” has to also pay special attention both to the traces of old languages in the new, and to the fact that many of those for whom it is thought necessary to give a voice, perhaps already have a voice, albeit one that comes from elsewhere and is not easily heard. I think the case of refugee academics highlights the need for sensitivity here, because it involves people with significant knowledge resources who find themselves displaced, and whose contribution to their particular



fields (and therefore for others also working in those fields elsewhere) is often dependent upon localised research, resources, and academic communities. These are people, then, who don't need to be "given a voice", so much as the space to continue to be heard and continue to listen to others (i.e. through access to publications, attendance at conferences, etc.).

Organisations such as Scholars at Risk (SAR) and the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA) have a history of bringing attention to abuses of academic freedom and offering support to academics in flight from dictatorial and persecutory regimes. In part, these organisations can be seen as being very much in tune with the rights approach to academic freedom, in that they uphold the view that their beneficiaries are disabused victims. On the other hand, there is a commitment to finding ways for academics to continue their work irrespective of the potential gains to be made (in terms of brain drain, for example) that overrides the simple defence of a right and suggests that responsibility does not know where its rewards lie, but that the future freedom of oppressed people may depend upon acting on the freedoms available now, i.e. provision of research space, creation of online resources for other exiled colleagues, continuity in other areas of professional development. With many Iraqi academics having fled during and after the latest conflict, and many others now fleeing Syria, the opportunities provided by these organisations to continue their work and reflect on the difficult social problems of their country are a reminder that responsibility as a social orientation and as part of the public role of the university are more significant than abstract conceptualisations of a right.

Despite the efforts of these organisations, I think a greater effort can and should be made by those in universities worldwide to engage with the implications of knowledge as arriving from “elsewhere,” the ways in which it might contribute to both personal and institutional development (as “unfolding”), and the fact that it is bound by an infinite responsibility towards a borderless world and unknowable other. Philip Altbach has recently expressed a concern that the withdrawal of international organisations such as UNESCO and the OECD has left something of a “vacuum” in higher education development policy and research, with only the World Bank making a significant ongoing contribution ([www.universityworldnews.com](http://www.universityworldnews.com)). This thesis has sought to depart from the idea that the intervention of these organisations is a necessity for development in terms of the *educational* activities of the university, as well as accompanying notions of what constitutes “world-class” and “excellence.” Instead, I have sought to make the point that development (as “unfolding”) departs first from dialogical engagement between localised concerns and the “elsewhere” presented by the global. This engagement is enacted by the university’s participants, not the institution itself, and acts answerably upon the tension between past (in the case of academic freedom, a right which is often not in place) and future (a responsibility that exists, as Derrida puts it, unconditionally).

## **7.9. Limitations, scope, application**

### Limitations

I think there are three main limits to this study that I want to address here, one of which is empirical, another critical, and the third a theoretical limit. The empirical limitations of this study are, in fact, more exposed by the lack of empirical examples upon which I have drawn than they are an overemphasis on any particular variable. The reasons for

this are perhaps explained just by having mentioned the alternative: the potential variables (geographical location, historical focus, particular disciplines, teaching and research, public vs. private, academic and student) are so many, that concentrating solely on one might have undermined the overall argument. Because I did not want the use of particular examples to distract from the idea that a dialogical approach to development does not discriminate along conventional distinctions (between “developed” and “developing,” for example), it has been important only to set up those distinctions in order to demonstrate discursive and ideological issues (such as the idea that development is a project of “enveloping” the “developing” into the “developed”). I think that the project could have benefited from more concrete examples, but that it would always have been somewhat compromised by their selection. Even with a small sample of, say, a university from each continent, or one that related to each of the themes (colonialism, development, etc.), I might have had to expend a lot of time on explanations of how each example was also potentially exemplary of its discursive opposite. To call Ghana’s University of Development Studies, for example, characteristic of the uptake of development approaches in African higher education, would be to ignore the fact that the university might be conducting greater ideological *envelopment* through adopting and teaching those approaches (a criticism that even empirical observation on the ground could not fully account for).

Equally, I think that my choices of critical focus could potentially have been different. I suspect this is the case especially with my decision to devote considerable time to critiques of the work of Martha Nussbaum. The reason for doing this relates back to my previous point: the thesis ranges quite widely across disciplinary fields and tries to incorporate a range of historical perspectives also. To avoid individual examples

becoming elevated in their exemplary status, but also to avoid being overly generalising in my own approach, I wanted to provide continuity both in terms of someone whose work bridges the themes of higher education development that I have covered, but does so in precisely the universalising way that my own argument sought to address. I recognise that Nussbaum probably does not consider herself an ‘educationalist’ as such, and that perhaps there are more significant theorists and educationalists who have discussed humanism in education, for example, in a more engaged fashion (e.g. Carl Rogers, or Rudolf Steiner). I hope, however, that the positioning of Nussbaum as a point of reference throughout, has at least demonstrated how universalist theories and philosophies can attempt to account for too much, in a way that a theory of answerability is better placed to recognise the limitations of its critical perspective.

Finally, I want to address a theoretical point about the nature of dialogue. A number of Bakhtinian scholars, including those that write about Bakhtin’s relevance for education, understand dialogism as an ontological theory (Hirschkop, Sidorkin, Wegerif). The issue that this presents is one of whether an ontological theory subscribes too much to a particular way of (understanding) being, albeit one in which the ontology of dialogue precedes being, rather than an ontological subjectivity determining dialogue. Whilst I think this point needs further development, I think my own emphasis on the existential dimension of dialogue allows for its growth in a different direction. This is hopefully made clear by my use of the example of *Blackboards*, one in which the nature of educational experience that might be gained from the film cannot be reduced to an understanding of all the possible variations and combinations of language, discourse, dialogue, polyphony and heteroglossia that might be identifiable within it. The director does not make any pretension to being in control of all those

aspects, and asks that the viewer relinquish some of their desire to determine meaning according to a particular vocabulary also. In this thesis, then, I have tried to show that even a Bakhtinian vocabulary cannot account for that which takes place in experience and education, and my own contributions to the language and discourse of higher education development likewise. This is not to avoid taking responsibility for those contributions, but to acknowledge the future possibility of language and knowledge also emerging from “elsewhere,” rather than from within a received ontological understanding.

### Scope

I think the scope for further investigation in this thesis lies in each of the directions set out by each of the chapters. I think a wider investigation into the histories of the university is possible, to further reveal its ‘hybrid origins’, only some of which could be explored and interrogated here. I think also that the field of higher education development is one which requires greater attention, particular in the area of theory, as this thesis has possibly not been able to do justice to the overwhelming amount of policy that dominates the field. I have only partially covered some of the World Bank interventions in international higher education development, but organisations such as UNESCO and the OECD have played equally significant roles in both orienting its direction and creating confusion about what that direction should be.

Whilst I think that there are many more examples of humanistic tendencies in schools of theory and in education, I am not sure that this is an area that demands greater expansion, as it relies simply on repeating the same criticism. I would consider the most interesting and fruitful areas of further investigation to be: a wider evaluation

of Bakhtin's contribution; more comparative examples of other theorists, particularly those with a more applied interest in education, such as Otto von Bollnow and Klaus Mollenhauer; studies of dialogism at work in the practice of universities and higher education; a more in-depth look at the limitations of Bakhtinian dialogism for the kinds of argument that are being made in this thesis, and how dialogue can be seen as going beyond those limitations in the understanding of development as 'unfolding'.

Finally, I think there are many ways in which the tri-dimensional formulation of academic freedom articulated in chapter six could be explored, and it would be interesting to work collaboratively with others on empirical projects that might draw some of those dimensions out, and test their viability. Also, whilst this study takes academic freedom as a test case of educational activity exclusive to universities, there are others that could be similarly pursued, such as the ideas of university autonomy, critical thinking, and the public good.

### Application

It has been my intent to suggest that the ideas presented in this thesis apply as much in so-called "developed" countries as they do in the "developing" world, not least because academic freedom as a responsibility is shown here to obtain despite any such binary, thereby challenging the correlation between economic advantage and freedom. It would be useful to address this issue further, through empirical studies of universities in which academic freedom as answerability is very much not in evidence, contrasting that with others in which it is practised in spite of constraints upon academic freedom as a right. To begin to free up some of the corollaries between the wealth of institutions and the "freedoms" that might accompany it, which contribute to the hegemony of certain

institutions over others in international rankings (and even, if not especially, those based upon “reputation”), is not to be naïve about the enormous difficulties faced by underfunded universities around the world, and their ability to carry out meaningful research alongside teaching activities with very few resources. It does, however, place an onus on wealthier institutions to not simply protect their own interests, but consider the responsibility towards elsewhere as one which brings its own benefits also. This responsibility is not just one of taking on more foreign students, or employing academics from economically deprived nations. It might involve collaborative research with people whose reputations are not as yet established, or contributing to and supporting schemes that provide greater access to research and journals for free. These are activities whose outcomes are not predetermined, and yet stand to enrich dialogue for both knowledge and others outside of its immediate remit.

#### **7.10. Concluding statement**

This thesis does not make a case for university education as being a “higher” education which gives the opportunity for some to be seen as more “developed” than others. The very idea that either a country or an individual can be “developed” indicates that their capacity for change and growth has ended, which is surely a less desirable condition than its triumphalism might initially suggest. My concern from the outset was that development approaches carve up the world according to binary abstractions, and possibly generate greater injustice through their imposition of universal agendas. I have described development instead as a process of unfolding. Whether it relates to a university, an individual, or a country, development as unfolding presents with the notion of experience folding out from an unknowable “elsewhere” in a “borderless world” of dialogue. In responding to elsewhere as a unique encounter, people can

become answerable for the uniqueness of their own response, an answerability that constitutes their own positioning as an “elsewhere” for others to respond in turn.

These relations and interactions do not require a university for them to take place. On the other hand, the nature of dialogue is such that responses might be entirely chaotic and incomprehensible if they were not organised in some form, according, say, to “genre.” Whether it is a conversation in a café, or reading a newspaper, genres arrange language to provide a space for meaningful engagement, either in the reinforcement of received meaning, or in the creation of new meaning, or the subversion of the genre itself. The risk with establishing any genre is that the characteristics that come to define its space might begin to exercise complete control over meaning and understanding, a tendency described by Mikhail Bakhtin as monologism. So whilst genres, which always overlap with each other, are necessary to give meaning to dialogue, they also threaten to close down meaning in dialogue, to “envelop” it. Universities provide a unique space for education as meaningful dialogue, because university education is a genre that is potentially prevented from falling into monologism by the idea of development as unfolding: an orientation toward elsewhere, and the impossibility of being “developed,” mean that universities should be well placed to both contribute to educational dialogue as defined by their genre (i.e. as knowledge), and resist hegemonic ideals or the construction of borders at the limits of that genre.

Attempts at this kind of construction are in evidence everywhere, from standardisation processes such as Bologna, to coercive drives towards economic growth on the part of organisations such as the World Bank, to the celebration of ‘excellence’



and ‘world-class universities’. By driving ideas and ideals over and above individual contribution, participation and possible destabilisation, these efforts are inherently distrustful of what education in universities is able to achieve, and the experience(s) it is able to offer. This should not be seen as a recent phenomenon: where renaissance humanism gave Europe a ‘monologism of Man’, human capital theory and the Chicago School of economists gave the world a ‘monologism of the Market’. If their undesirability is that rhetorically self-evident, then, it must be worth considering how a university education can be about more than one agenda of either “becoming a human,” “becoming a citizen,” or “becoming employable.” To consider the ways in which it is possibly about all of these things, and more besides, a university education cannot be reduced to either a theory of “the university” or “education.” Its meaning arises from the dialogical interaction between them. I have not had time here to explore all the possible evidence of that interaction, but I have suggested that it *is* in evidence in the answerability of both academics and students, or the ways in which they are able to participate and act meaningfully in relation to knowledge and others. I hope that the contributions I have made here towards alternative formulations, considerations, and theorising are therefore themselves answerable in the way they are discussed. The conclusion of this thesis, then, is a call for others to respond.



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